

DETERRENCE AND STABILITY IN SOUTH AISIA

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ABSTRACT

In the South Asian region, there are several threats to peace in security. Major source of conflicts between India and Pakistan is an issue of Kashmir which has remained unresolved. Thus India and Pakistan have not yet been able to develop friendly relations. Pakistan since its establishment in 1947 has made efforts to normalize relations with its neighbor, but Indian response was discouraging. The conflicts among these two states have disturbed the balance of power in the region which has been maintained by nuclear weapons. Pakistan and India realize the value of nuclear deterrence, due to which war could be averted several times after over nuclearization of both countries. Regrettably, the evolving trends at regional and global level do not fully guarantee the continuation of strategic stability, attempting to weaken the deterrence regime. Indian cold start doctrine and proactive strategy are efforts in the same direction. With massive investment in conventional arms buildup and offensive posturing, India is repeatedly attempting to undermine the credibility of deterrence regime thus adding to uncertainty, therefore, a phenomenon of 'No War No Peace' will continue to dominate the regional landscape of South Asia. The aim of this paper is to explore the factors which contribute instability in the region. It also analyzes the nuclear doctrines of India and their impact on over all security of the region.

Keywords: Balance of Power, South Asia, Deterrence, Strategic Stability, India-Pakistan Equilibrium

INTRODUCTION

Trilateral nuclear deterrence namely China-India-Pakistan has been the factor of stability in South Asia. However, for Pakistan, it has deterred India from intensifying conflicts or using more

¹ As this is academic discourse, therefore, comments, analysis and findings given in this article are author's own and have no relevance with any organization.

conventional forces, during past escalations. During Kargil episode of 1999, 2002 escalation and deterioration in diplomatic relations following 2008 Mumbai attacks, Indian leaders anticipated using retaliatory strikes by conventional forces against Pakistan but later on refrained from adventurism, due to credibility of nuclear deterrence and near strategic parity between two South Asian neighbors. Apprehensions originate due to lack of transparency in strategies, postures, vague red lines, lack of early-warning capabilities. It is reassuring that Pakistan and India are now cooperating in the nuclear field by signing bilateral agreements on nuclear activities.

There is a general perception in Pakistani society and certain academia that if Pakistan had failed in developing its nuclear weapons, India would have attempted to complete its unfinished agenda of bringing Pakistan back into India's fold. Indian nuclear weapons development programme has proved to be a blessing for Pakistan as it provided opportunity to respond in kind. It helped Pakistan in achieving foolproof guarantee against foreign aggression. Admiral Mike Mullen, has appropriately understood the value that Pakistani nation towards nuclear programme by saying, "These are highly valued weapons for Pakistan. So they go extra mile to protect them" (www.tribune.com.pk).

Nuclear policy of Pakistan is security driven and specific to visualized threat, which is deterrence and defence of sovereignty by maintaining "credible minimum nuclear deterrence". Pakistan will maintain required conventional capability as well to strengthen deterrence.

ANALYTICAL DEBATE ON FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO UNCERTAINTY IN SOUTH ASIA

Hot Spot Issues and Flash Points: South Asia continues to be most unbridled place in the world with several unsettled issues like water dispute, Jammu and Kashmir which add to instability. Therefore, unless the issues at hand are resolved amicably, mere presence of nuclear weapons makes this region more volatile and risky.

Security Doctrines and Military Spending: Three important considerations of security doctrines, deterrence & stability and escalation control need to be comprehensively understood. It is basically the security doctrine determines the parameters of stability.

In case of nuclear weapons, the numbers do not matter much, however, these get influenced by assured second strike capability and Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) defence system. Thus deterrence stability and escalation control can be effective when two sides have balanced military forces. Pakistan and India are perceived to be responsible nuclear states but unfortunately, while carrying out the reappraisal of the strategic environments, India ignores Pakistan's concerns and generally remains fixated on China. India's military forces are poised against Pakistan as these can't be redirected against China due to hilly terrain limitations. Indian western border with Pakistan covers the plains of Punjab and desert of Thar. Mechanized military potential is ideally suited for employment in desert and plains, while serious limitations exist with regard to their application in hilly terrain and areas with high water tables.

As per the data revealed by Sipri, Pakistan's military expenditure in 2015 are "\$9.5 billion and India's budget for defence in 2015 is \$51.3 billion" (www.dawn.com). The nature in defence related procurements and expenditures indicates that "87 % of Indian annual defence budget less procurement is spent for maintenance and improvement of Pakistan specific defence related infrastructure while 76% of procurement budget is Pakistan specific. More than 80% of Indian arsenal is Pakistan specific and around 90% of command & control organizations are Pakistan leaning" (www.nation.com.pk) and bulk of India's military and heavy military equipment is organized for Pakistan.

Indian Cold Start Doctrine: Ever since the adoption of Cold Start doctrine by India, the efficacy of deterrence has become very delicate with potentials to trigger a nuclear war and making it difficult to exercise escalation control by either side. The terrorist groups have no boundaries. Because of technological advancement, they operate internationally and physical barriers in the form of international boundaries do not matter much. In addition, both India and Pakistan have common problems; there is a growing tendency to radicalize the society on both sides thus encouraging terrorism.

Despite Pakistan's clear position, India still propagates that the limited war despite nuclearization is a possibility, therefore is "involved in non-kinetic applications in Balochistan and rest of Pakistan" (www.en.wikipedia.org). These conflicting ideas and approach of nuclear deterrence reinforced by India's Cold Start

doctrine lead to further instability and weaken the deterrence regime especially the nuclear deterrence.

Summary of Uncertainty and Destabilizing Factors for South Asia: There is a long list of destabilizing factors impacting South Asia's stability and security with few mentioned as under:-

- Indian nuclear doctrine is based on 'No First Use', yet retains option of first strike if attacked with chemical or biological weapons. The cold start doctrine has backup support of nuclear strategy which is dangerous scheme.
- The asymmetric gap continues to grow and over the next one decade, there will be serious conventional inequalities because Pakistan has neither intentions nor economic resources to match India. It is very disturbing that the international community applies double standards. Land forces ratio between two countries remains at about 2:1 in India's favour. Location matrix of Indian Land Forces is reflective of their bias towards Pakistan. "Out of 13 Indian Corps, 7 are deployed against Pakistan while majority of airbases and naval assets are also poised against Pakistan" (www.paktribune.com). Land forces' training is also oriented towards Pakistan. 7 exercises conducted in proactive mode in last half a decade reinforce this argument. In the naval forces domain, "78% of frigate, destroyer, missile corvettes/boats, mine hunters/ sweepers, landing crafts, and diesel-powered submarine class ships are directed against Pakistan" (www.nti.org). Air power when pitched against location and training orientation of Indian Air Force makes it poised towards Pakistan.
- India's determination to develop its ABM defence system is has also consequences on deterrence and its stability. Although, no investment on ABM defence system can guarantee that every weapon that has been directed towards a specific target will be confronted with and stalled before it lands, one out of ten might still fall thus defeat the very purpose of this costly ABM defence system. Nonetheless, even if it has psychological value only, it would still force the other side to cater for this factor while working out the 'credible minimum nuclear deterrence'. Thus Pakistani side would look for more options to maintain credibility and strategic stability.

- Indo-US nuclear deal is a matter of concern for Pakistan and China due strategic repercussions. “123 Agreement has provided India all that it needed and struggled since 1974” (www.google.com). Thus the qualitative and quantitative improvement of Indian nuclear inventory will have inferences for stability in South Asia.
- The Fissile Material and Cutoff Treaty (FMCT), which Pakistan wishes to call Fissile Material Treaty (FMT) which demands elimination of all stocks of fissile material and also forbids its supplementary production. The proposed treaty gives a comprehensive clearance to keep fissile material for production of nuclear related arsenals with no fear of accountability. International community is keen to see a stable and prosperous South Asia by encouraging both India and Pakistan to cooperate rather than compete in nuclear and conventional weapons.
- Terrorism related to the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) is another destabilizing factor which has regional as well as international implications. Acquiring or developing a nuclear weapon by the terrorists seems implausible unless the terrorists are fully sponsored by a state that has the capability. Nonetheless, development and use of radiological dispersal devices employing orphan sources is a possibility. Such materials are available in most of the countries of the world.
- Pakistan's policy of first use of nuclear weapons adopted under compulsion to address asymmetry in conventional military has added stability and strengthened the deterrence regime.

EXPLORATION OF THE PHENOMENON OF ‘NO WAR, NO PEACE’

The notion of ‘no-war no-peace’ exists with fluctuating intensities since past few decades but has progressively acquired severer magnitudes for Pakistan. In addition to being ‘cost effective’, major factors that have contributed to bleeding climate of ‘no-war-no-peace’ include shift in regional dynamics after 9/11, curtailed space for conventional war and exploitable inner fronts, especially in case of Pakistan. Ground realities decree that the appearances between conventional and unconventional wars have become blurred and there is little that now divides the two. One is witnessing a harmonized use of, diplomatic, economics, psychological political, intelligence, information and military apparatuses against each other. In such a

climate, trade, bilateral talks, cultural contacts and few other social gestures are also going along with varying intervals.

Both countries continue to enhance their conventional and nuclear arsenal despite knowing that they cannot afford war but are unable to sustain a durable and positive peace. 'No war no peace situation' has increased space for 4th Generation and sub-conventional warfare. It also includes ferocious manipulation of religious and sectarian conflict and increasing ethnic cleavages into full blown strife mainly in economic structures. Its sphere also includes manipulation of global sensitivities like extremism by use of diplomatic maneuvers thus posturing danger to strategic assets. Cultural invasion and cyber warfare aimed at disrupting economic, military, administrative functioning and even impeding relationship in sports and derailing resumption of international sporting activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING STRATEGIC STABILITY AND ENDURING PEACE FOR SOUTH ASIA

Few proposals which might help the two sides while addressing their ongoing and upcoming crises and disputes are:-

- Nuclear arsenals are political ones, therefore, if the deterrence fails, it means that nuclear armaments have failed. However, TNW are dangerous which allows nuclear cards to come into consideration earlier than anticipated. Therefore, two countries may discontinue the options of TNW and let the nuclear strategy take effect at strategic plane for stability.
- While India might go along with the idea as proposed but will Pakistan too give the option of TNW in view of India's Cold Start doctrine? Probably, no. Therefore, if both countries are desirous to see a unwavering South Asia, the India has to reconsider the efficacy of Cold Start as it has polluted the strategic environment with serious consequences.
- Pakistan is not likely to increase its military spending due to struggling economy. A combination of conventional weapons and assured second strike capability, reinforced by ABM system and posturing of robust navy may force Pakistan to review and its nuclear threshold for strengthening the deterrence regime. Both countries may freeze their defence budget to build trust and non-hostile posturing.

- India's ABM defence system would not make any difference in case of war, but it has psychological value. India should give up its ABM program to help enhancing their confidence. India's decision to freeze ABM program will surely help Pakistan in capping its nuclear programme to existing level.
- A need has been felt to get a permanent solution of instability-inducing elements which induce escalation. These are command and control, nuclear posturing, varying perceptions on the notion of “limited” war, and nuclear risk reduction measures.
- FMCT is considered as Pakistan specific, therefore, warrants a comprehensive review on existing stockpiles and avoids their misuse.
- Political stability in this region is vitally important. However, India continues to use Afghanistan for destabilizing Pakistan especially fuelling unrest in Balochistan, which has to be avoided for enduring stability in the region.
- Quest for national and regional stability demands alteration of approach by the regional powers. There are three possible ways for bringing stability and reducing tension. Firstly, the issues are resolved on tangible terms. Complex nature of issues like Kashmir and water lowers the possibility of its practical manifestation without a change in approach and mind set. Secondly, stake holders accommodate each other and demonstrate accommodation. Thirdly, status quo is accepted by the weaker nation as fait accompli. Whatever option is taken, there is a need for a policy of rising peace, lowering all kinds of kinetic and non-kinetic guards against each other. Both countries must initiate a methodical and result oriented dialogue for resolving bilateral issues. The relationship needs to be based on sustained and durable mutual trust.

CONCLUSION

It is the shared obligation of the international community to help this region in resolving unsettled disagreements. The notion of strategic stability has to widen from a narrow focus on military and politics, which links economic, political, military and social issues. Enduring stability demands consistent efforts on de-escalation,

confidence building, economic development and progress for entire region.

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