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Nuclear Deterrence and Indo-Pak Conventional Military Asymmetry: Revisiting Indo-Pak Brastacks Crises 1986-87

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Abstract

India and Pakistan have a history full of wars, conflicts and crises. The two countries were involved in three major wars and different other crises before nuclearization. India and Pakistan had become successful in getting the nuclear weapons capability in 1980s. And after that the two states have been involved in different crises, conflicts and limited war but short of full-fledged war. This article uses qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews from expert informants to look into the understanding of nuclear deterrence in Indo-Pak Brastacks Crisis while highlighting tIndia's nuclear coercion Indo-Pak conventional military asymmetry. The findings explained that nuclear deterrence successfully averted Indo-Pak Brastacks Crisis in in 1986-87 by bridging the gap of Indo-Pak conventional military asymmetry with a psychological impact of ending Indian superiority complex.

Keywords: Nuclear Deterrence; Nuclear Coercion; Brasstacks Crisis; Military Asymmetry; India; Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Brasstacks crisis was one of the serious crises between India and Pakistan in in its history of last seven decades. This crisis first time highlighted the role of nuclear deterrence in Indo-Pak military calculations. Indian intention to go after Pakistan was obsessed with two things. First, it wanted to give a major setback to Pakistan repeating 1971 history. Second, Indian military wanted to destroy Pakistan's nuclear capabilities. Pakistan's counter mobilization in response to India and its deterrence signals played an important role in defusing the crisis.

India and Pakistan faced a serious threat of war during Brasstacks Crisis. It was Pakistan's nuclear threats which stopped India from marching into Pakistan. In this connection, Chakma (2005: 225) argued that Pakistan threatened India of the use of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, in 1999, Agha Shahi, Zulfiqar Ali Khan and Abdul Sattar argued that Pakistan's "recessed" nuclear capabilities helped to avert war with India during in 1986-1987 "Brasstacks" crisis.

Indo-Pak crisis started in 1986-87 when India started military exercises Brasstacks in Rajasthan near Pakistan's border. Lieutenant General (R) Pakistan Army Khalid Ahmed Kidwai said while sharing his experience about Brasstacks:

There was a proper deployment across the border in the garb of an exercise and Indians were ready to cross the border because they (Indian forces) were carrying the ammunition and full ammunition including small arms, infantry divisions and artillery including armors tanks etc (Kidwai, K, A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015).

Furthermore, Amb (R) Syed Tariq Fatimi said that Brasstacks military exercises were a serious threat to Pakistan and if India went ahead to attack Pakistan, Pakistanis did not have other option but to go non-conventional to defend their mainland (Fatimi, S, T., Expert Informant, Interview, 30 October 2015). While Lieutenant General (R) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai further shared his experience as he was the part of the deployment in Rahimyar Khan Sector at Punjab and Sindh border for six months during Brasstacks crisis:

The main thrust of the Brasstacks was meant to come against Rahimyar Khan sector to sever Pakistan's lines of communication at Sukkur and Ghotki, so this was the situation, sitting in the desert for six months, we understood that there was a proper deployment across the border in the garb of an exercise and Indians were ready to cross the border because they were carrying the ammunition and full ammunition including small arms, infantry divisions and artillery including armors, tanks (Kidwai, K, A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015).

The above words of Kidwai meant that Indian mobilization was fully geared with a plan to initiate conventional war against Pakistan and that led Pakistan to counter mobilize. Pakistan responded with counter mobilization which further worried India. The situation between the two countries was further deteriorated. When the forces of the two countries were in an eye ball to eye ball situation on the border and war clouds were looming on the sky of the region, Pakistan initiated deterrence signals and that threatened India. The first statement in this series came from Pakistan's nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, who said in an interview to Kuldeep Nayar, a journalist associated with Observer, London, United Kingdom in January, 1987 that Pakistan has nuclear weapons and if India imposes war on Pakistan, it will launch nuclear strikes against India with the help of its F-16s. The second statement was from President of Pakistan General Zia-ul-Haq in March 1987 in which he admitted, "Pakistan can build a (nuclear) bomb whenever it wishes. Once you have acquired the technology, which Pakistan has, you can do whatever you like" (Hagerty 1995: 95). In response, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi replied to General Zia's statement, "We (Indians) intend meeting President Zia's threat, we will give an adequate response" (Hagerty 1995: 95).

In this whole episode, Indian Chief of Army Staff General Sundarji seemed willing to go for an attack on Pakistan but Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi did not seem willing to opt for the option of war. In one of the high level meeting, General Sundarji argued that India should go after Pakistan. General Sundarji also said that an Indian attack will also be focused on destroying Pakistan's nuclear installations. General Sundarji further said that Indian cities can be protected from Pakistani counter attack (probably nuclear one) when asked how? General Sundarji couldn't justify.

One of the senior official from Indian ministry of defense argued that the two states have lost a lot in their previous wars and they cannot afford to have another one (Sagan 2001: 1071).

In the meantime when the crisis was in its full swing, Dr A.Q Khan's statement of issuing nuclear threat against India impacted the situation and made India rethink its plans. Therefore, it can be said that nuclear threat from Pakistan's side deterred India. In this connection, Kidwai added that A.Q Khan's interview delivered a clear message to India that Pakistan had the nuclear weapons capability and it could be used if India attacked Pakistan (Kidwai, K, A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015).

It was the nuclear factor which influenced the international community on the one hand and pressurized the leaders of the two states on the other hand to negotiate with each other and diffuse the tension. In this connection, Kidwai clarified that the nuclear factor was introduced in those six months of Brasstacks crisis in 1986-87 and that alerted the international community and demanded its role in defusing the tension between the two states because the two armies were fully deployed and fully armed at the border (Kidwai, K, A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015). Furthermore, Kidwai defending the role of nuclear factor shared his experience:

There was January I think, I remember, there was a final alert in which there were intelligence reports that next morning the Indians are going to attack Pakistan. I think that somewhere on 22 or 23 January 1987, so sitting in the desert, we waited the whole day that the attack will be developing any time and we were monitoring the Jaisalmer and the border in front of us but that day passed, the second day passed, the third day passed and then off course the political efforts were launched in which Zia ul Haq and Rajiv Gandhi communicated and they agreed to defuse the tension. Why did they agree to defuse the tension? I think, there is no reason not to believe that the nuclear factor played its part (Kidwai, K, A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015).

While Marwah agreed with Kidwai and Fatimi that there was the presence of nuclear weapons on the two sides of the border, "both states were suspected of having bombs in the basement" but contradicted Kidwai and Fatimi on the role of Pakistan's nuclear weapons in threatening India as he added that the nuclear deterrence did not have any role in defusing Brasstacks crisis in 1986-87 (Marwah, O., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 25 January 2016). While Das was not on the same page with Marwah, Kidwai and Fatimi as he contradicted all of them and argued that "Although Brasstacks was a military exercise to provoke Pakistan. I would not give much credence to nuclear deterrence in this one, but Pakistan predictably used the nuclear card to remind India of the possible escalation ladder" (Das, P., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016). Furthermore, Nye as a neutral analyst said that India and Pakistan had the nuclear weapons capability during 1986-87 crisis and it was less developed, but it played a deterrence role (Nye, J, S., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016).

2. India's Nuclear Coercion In South Asia

Indian PM Narendra Modi said in a speech during his election campaign in April, 2019 that Indian nuclear weapons are not meant to be used for Diwali but against Pakistan. These sorts of immature statements from leaders of the nuclear weapon state aimed at threatening Pakistan with the use of nuclear weapons are creating a strategic instability and becoming a cause of concern not only for Pakistan but for the whole international community. Furthermore, Indian lust for developing thermonuclear nuclear weapons is further contributing a threat for its neighbours and bringing further dent to strategic stability in South Asia.

It has been noticed in last three decades that India has followed aggressive conventional and nuclear policies against Pakistan. It has been trying to initiate limited conventional war against Pakistan.

Although India had been releasing nuclear threats during 1980s and 1990s but it prepared its missiles during Kargil conflict and threatened Pakistan that if full-fledged war occurs, it can consider all available options including nuclear one. According to Krepon & Dowling (2018), Indian nuclear signaling was clear from its missile readiness during Kargil conflict and further confirmed by Indian National Security Advisor Barjesh Sharma's statement, "crossing the line of control was not ruled out, nor was the use of nuclear weapons". Krepon & Dowling further narrate:

Raj Chengappa's account, based on heavy sourcing within India's nuclear enclave asserts that India activated all three types of nuclear delivery vehicles and kept them in what is known as readiness state meaning that some nuclear bombs would be ready to be mated with the delivery vehicle at short notice. The air force was asked to keep Mirage fighters on standby. DRDO scientists headed to where Prithvi missiles were deployed and at least four of them were readied for possible nuclear strike. Even an Agni missile capable of launching a nuclear warhead was moved to a western Indian state and kept in a state of readiness.

Later on, it was Indo-Pak 2001-02 crisis when India mobilized about half a million troops on the border with Pakistan with an intention to go for a full-fledged conventional war against Pakistan. There had been a counter mobilization from Pakistan's side to thwart a possible Indian attack. The tense situation continued throughout 2002. According to security analysts, an accidental war was imminent. During the crisis times, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee visited front lines and told the soldiers to be ready for a decisive battle with Pakistan. The Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes publicly said that Indian missile systems were in position. Such a statement from the defense minister amounted to indications that India would not hesitate to use nuclear if its armed forces faced reversal in a military conflict with Pakistan.

Besides the political leaders, the statements by the top military officials also have threatened to use nuclear weapons against its adversary in South Asia. One such statement was made in by Indian Air Force Chief, Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa that the Indian Air Force had the ability to locate, fix and strike nuclear targets inside Pakistan, adding that the IAF has the capability to carry out a full-spectrum offensive at a short notice to counter any threat to India and can sustain operational vigilance for an extended period of time. In January, 2018, India's Army Chief stated, "We are not going to say we cannot cross the border because they have nuclear weapons. We will have to call their (Pakistan's) nuclear bluff".

Similarly after the Pulwama suicide attack and subsequent incursion into Pakistani territory by air, India had reportedly threatening to go for a missile strike against Pakistan. India has been constantly in pursuit of enhancing its nuclear capabilities in order to achieve strategic upper hand against Pakistan. It is now developing thermonuclear weapon. India had first claimed to have that out of five nuclear tests it had carried out one was a thermonuclear test.

Adrian Levy from The Center for Public Integrity while writing in Foreign Policy Magazine writes that India has been in pursuit of manufacturing Thermonuclear weapons which could upgrade India as a nuclear power and deeply unsettle Pakistan and China and for that purpose India had built two top-secret facilities at Challakere, Karnataka. These sites would be the South Asia's largest military-run complex of nuclear centrifuges, atomic-research laboratories and weapons and aircraft-testing facilities.

Levy has also reported the view point of a retired official who had served in the nuclear cell at Indian Prime Minister's office; the apex organization that supervises the military nuclear program,

the official told him that India needed a thermo-nuclear bomb to maintain credible minimum deterrence.

However, there are reports from credible sources that Indian scientists have been working on these weapons in the last few years. In its 18th July issue Indian newspaper, The Hindu reported gist of a lecture delivered by D.R. Chidambaram. Dr. Chidambaram is a leading nuclear scientist and a former Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission of India. He has reiterated that India had successfully tested a thermo-nuclear could or device in May 1998 and had all the required data. No further tests were therefore needed implying that India could or was already engaged in making thermo-nuclear weapon.

Furthermore, Indian path towards thermonuclear weapons is confirmed by Russ Wellen (2016) by quoting Gary Samore, who served from 2009 to 2013 as the White House coordinator for arms control and weapons of mass destruction, who said: "I believe that India intends to build thermonuclear weapons as part of its strategic deterrent".

3. Indo-Pak Understanding of Nuclear Deterrence

Although the nuclear deterrence prevents the two countries' from initiating war against each other but India and Pakistan's continues modernization of conventional and nuclear weapons is creating trouble for the strategic stability in the region as Pakistan's strategic nuclear weapons did not seem to be enough to deter India from initiating limited conventional war against it and this led Pakistan to lower its nuclear doctrine by introducing Tactical Nuclear Weapons against Indian initiated Cold Start Doctrine. This Pakistan's step has stopped India to initiate limited conventional war against it. This has been better described in the words of Marwah who said that both states are indulged in a relationship of "Balance of Terror" and all the crises between India and Pakistan fall in this category and "there is no clear winner or loser in case of these two nuclear weapon states because both think to have achieved their objectives" (Marwah, O., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 25 January 2016). Marwah further added:

Neither of the two countries knows precisely where any initial use of nuclear weapons by either would end up in their continuing stand-off. Pakistan talks of employing battlefield nukes in case of a superior Indian conventional assault. India said that it would respond with a massive nuclear riposte to any use of nukes by Pakistan. Both may breathe fire and brimstone at each other, but neither can do much in any major way (Marwah, O., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 25 January 2016).

Above said words of Marwah clarified that both India and Pakistan are not going to take any risk which could lead them to the use of nuclear weapons. Although both states threaten each other with statements but deep down know that they cannot fight a conventional war in the presence of nuclear weapons. While looking at the Indo-Pak understanding of nuclear deterrence, it comes to know that both South Asian nuclear weapon states have adopted different connotations. India considers nuclear deterrence as an instrument of averting nuclear war between the two nuclear adversaries while Pakistan considers its nuclear weapons as an instrument of providing it security against Indian conventional and nuclear threat. Indians have opted for No First Use 'NFU' policy while Pakistan is not ready to follow Indian offer to sign 'NFU' pact. This situation is better defined in Das's words, "Pakistan's success in creating an effective deterrence across all spectrums has been its lack of NFU and its willingness recently to even use tactical nuclear weapons on its own territory against Indian forces if there were ever to be an incursion" (Das, P., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016).

Although Pakistan earlier reiterated that it will use nuclear weapons against the adversary only in a condition when its survival will be at stake but now it has changed its position and argued that it will use tactical nuclear weapons against Indian soldiers even in an Indian initiated limited conventional war. “In the case of India’s deterrence relationship with Pakistan, it is accepted that the doctrines of the two countries are mismatched. India intends to deter nuclear use by Pakistan while Pakistan’s nuclear weapons are meant to compensate for conventional arms asymmetry” (Menon 2014). The above lines by Menon meant that both India and Pakistan have different stances regarding the use of nuclear weapons and that is problematic. This was further explained by Singh (2015), who said that India considers nuclear weapons as weapons of creating deterrence against Pakistan’s nuclear use while Pakistan considers these weapons as weapons of war fighting and this gap in the understating of the nuclear deterrence makes the two countries at risk of nuclear exchange.

Both India and Pakistan understood the nuclear deterrence in its real sense and were not ready to disturb the balance. Although there is a difference of stance on nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan as India has opted for the strategy of ‘No First Use’ of nuclear weapons in war whereas Pakistan differs with India in its stance and has opted for the use of its nuclear weapons in conventional war but the two states know deterrence relationship in a better way and they are just testing each other’s nerves. Furthermore, although two states have taken steps by initiating Cold Start Doctrine and introducing Tactical Nuclear Weapons which result in strategic instability, both states understand that it is not easy to launch a conventional war in nuclear environment because it keeps the risk of nuclear escalation open.

It has been witnessed that while India has been threatening Pakistan with conventional war, Pakistan has made up its mind to fight India with its entire means in result of any Indian initiated conventional war. In this connection, Kidwai gave the example of the major nuclear weapon states the US, USSR and China which continued negotiations to defuse the tension in times of crises between them even during Cuban Missile Crisis, during crisis in Europe, though the bombers and submarines were put on alert but the negotiations did not stop but here Indians say that they do not want to indulge into talks with Pakistan and want to fight and if that is Indian position then “they (Indians) should be ready to face consequences” (Kidwai, K. A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015). Kidwai further highlighted Indian immature attitude in this way:

It is a political immaturity and off course; the Indian military has also been playing its role to make them comfortable in reinforcing this concept that we have space and we can punish Pakistan. I ask, what can you do to Pakistan? Nothing, u haven’t done anything yet, you can only fire mortar bombs on the line of control (LOC), a nuclear power, which claims to be a third, fourth or fifth biggest military of the world can only fire a mortar bomb on the LOC and this is the lesson, you want to teach to Pakistan. They (Indians) can’t do anything and this is a very immature approach (Kidwai, K. A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015).

These words by Kidwai highlight the sensitivity of the security relations prevailing between India and Pakistan where India wants to punish Pakistan and in response it finds Pakistan ready to fight with both conventional and nuclear weapons. The tough stance from Pakistan’s side is making India to rethink the option of fighting a conventional war against its adversary.

Although India and Pakistan have different stances relating to their nuclear policies; both states better understand the nuclear deterrence relationship and are not going to disturb it because of the risk of nuclear escalation. Both states are involved in balance of terror relationship. In this connection, Dr. Onkar Marwah, Distinguished Fellow at Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) at New Delhi, said that both India and Pakistan understand that they are engaged in

relationship of “balance of terror” and neither side will try to disturb this equation because they better know what will be the consequences if they fight a war despite whatever their statements are because sometimes they have to satisfy their public by giving antagonistic statements (Expert Informant, Email Interview, 25 January 2016). Whereas Das also agreed with Marwah and argued that both India and Pakistan produce different versions of the definition of nuclear deterrence with India having “No First Use” policy which means on Indian side the nuclear weapons are only having a purpose to deter nuclear attack from Pakistani side whereas Pakistan does not follow Indian version and narrates wider definition of nuclear deterrence in which its nuclear weapons are meant to provide it a security against any Indian aggression and is ready to use nuclear weapons even in a limited conventional war and it has been witnessed that Pakistan even releases nuclear threats during small crises and is not ready to sign “No First Use” pact with India (Das, P., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016).

4. Discussion: Nuclear Deterrence and Indo-Pak Conventional Military Asymmetry

The anarchy in the international system leads states towards nuclearization. Sagan (1997: 57) contended that Neorealist believe that the international system is anarchical in its nature and states need to rely on self-help for its defense against other states. Sagan (1997: 57) further added that this element of insecurity leads states to opt for nuclear weapons because in its perception these weapons are so dangerous that it will deter the adversary from launching a conventional or nuclear war against it.

India and Pakistan’s relationship had been full of animosity throughout the years. It was an Indian conventional military threat which led Pakistan on the way of nuclearization. Wirsing and Robert (1982: 598) argued that Pakistan’s strategic preoccupation with India is of four major reasons, namely the fight over Kashmir, deep distrust between the two countries, India’s conventional military superiority and its vulnerability to India because of the long Eastern frontiers, and lack of strategic depth. Ganguly (2013) argued that Pakistan, while having a small nuclear power and research programme, only embarked upon a dedicated nuclear weapons programme shortly after its disastrous military defeat at the hands of its principal adversary, India in 1971. Pakistan’s policy makers, both civilian and military alike, had quickly come to the realization that in the wake of the breakup of their country, they were largely confined to a status of permanent conventional military inferiority.

Indo-Pak conventional military asymmetry started soon after independence. With Indian fear in mind, Pakistan went to join the Western anti Communist alliances in a search to get support to modernize its weaponry and get alliance partners’ support in case of its war against India. Oren (1994) argued that the states go for the alliances to increase their military capabilities. Although India and Pakistan have experienced different crises after its nuclearization but all those crises have been defused without fighting a war. India and Pakistan’s increased military asymmetry has made Pakistan more dependent on its nuclear weapons for its security against Indian conventional military threat.

Pakistan with the help of its nuclear weapons had been able to fulfill the gap of conventional military asymmetry with India. Further, the restraint noticed on Indian side was only because of the fear of nuclear escalation otherwise Indians had gone for a conventional war against Pakistan in past crises. Pakistan’s increased reliance on its nuclear weapons was only because of its failure to match Indian conventional military capabilities. Indo-Pak gap in conventional military capabilities had been widening with the passage of time which also led India to initiate Cold Start Doctrine and it was the reason for Pakistan’s introduction of tactical nuclear weapons.

The gap for conventional war which motivated India to go for war mobilization against Pakistan had its basis in the increased conventional military asymmetry of the two countries. In this connection, Jones (2002) disclosed a serious gap in conventional military capabilities of India and Pakistan while looking at the data from 1970 to 2000 and considered it as source of bringing instability between the two states and expected as source of future crises. Furthermore, Kidwai opposed Jones (2002) view point and argued that Pakistan and India are not facing conventional military imbalance but it is conventional military asymmetry because of difference between the two terms as military imbalance means there are serious gaps between the two countries conventional military capabilities which cannot be filled while conventional military asymmetry means that there had been no serious gaps between the conventional capabilities of the two countries and if we look at India and Pakistan's conventional military capabilities, it becomes clear that there are no serious gaps at the conventional layer (Kidwai, K, A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015) and further in this connection he said:

There are no serious gaps in Indian and Pakistani army, air force and navy but there is conventional military asymmetry which means there are differences in numbers between the two states, difference in army to army ratio is relatively low, air force and navy, there is difference (Kidwai, Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015).

These above given words of Kidwai, an expert informant clarified that Pakistan has not a greater difference in the ratio of its conventional forces in comparison to India as its army, air force and navy can face Indian threat of war. There is also another aspect which gives Pakistan an edge and it is Pakistan's strong security relations with China which frightens India as Indians think that China may open a war front against India in any Indo-Pak conventional war. India is at the stronger edge in conventional military forces against Pakistan but if India goes for a conventional war against Pakistan, there are chances that China also opens a frontier against India and that makes the sense for India to prepare on a two-front warfare (Varthaman 2017).

India and Pakistan are fast growing nuclear weapon states. Missile capabilities have been the focus point of the two countries' security policy. Both states have been busy in developing its missile capabilities on the modern lines, but Pakistan's nuclear and missile capabilities are thought to be stronger than India's nuclear and missile capabilities. While looking at the nuclear and missile forces, Pakistan remains ahead of India, "In many of the areas relating to missiles and submarines, India remains behind China and Pakistan, with the help of China continues to nip at Indians' heels. Indeed, all analysts say that in terms of the numbers of nuclear weapons, Pakistan remains ahead of India" (Joshi 2018).

Although Pakistan had tried hard to fill the gap of conventional military asymmetry with its strong nuclear and missile programme but the gap at the conventional layer is further increasing with the passing time as India has been investing more money on its conventional military capabilities. In this connection, while Kidwai discussing the role of nuclear factor in filling Indo conventional gap said: "The nuclear factor of Pakistan has not only filled that gap but it has greatly equalized" but expressed his reservation that this difference in Indo-Pak conventional military asymmetry is further going to be increased in the coming 10 years as Indians are planning to invest \$ 100 billion in defense (Kidwai, K, A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015). Furthermore, Ladwig (2015: 730) authenticated that Indian defense budget has doubled since 1997 growing at an average of 6.3 percent per year and further added that the newly Indian elected government of BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi made sudden increase by eleven percent, raising the amount of military budget for the year 2015–2016 to \$39.8 billion. Pakistan's Ex Ambassador Zamir Akram said that Pakistan's nuclear factor has greatly contributed in filling the gap of Indo-Pak conventional military asymmetry.

This was further confirmed by Akram who added that the rapid increase in Indian defense budget in comparison to Pakistan's defense budget creating a concern for on Pakistan's side as it seemed difficult to tackle it as India is presently the world's largest buyer of conventional weapons, with upwards of \$100 billion expected to be spent on modernizing its defense forces over the next decade" and according to many analysts, "Indian military modernization is threatening Pakistan's conventional deterrence" and is a reason for Pakistan's increased dependence on nuclear weapons capability as it has developed tactical nuclear weapons (Zamir Akram, Expert Interview, 14 November 2015).

Although India's conventional military capabilities are stronger than Pakistan's conventional forces but there are doubts that whether Indian conventional forces can outclass Pakistan's conventional military capabilities. It seemed while looking at last seven crises that although India mobilized its conventional forces for going after Pakistan but could not take a final decision to launch a war. In this connection, Ladwig (2015: 766) confirmed that Pakistan with the help of China and other major powers have been able to maintain its sufficient conventional military capability with which it can stop Indian conventional military edge. Furthermore, Akram referring to deterrence optimists' viewpoint who claimed that Indian military lacked the capability to launch a conventional war against Pakistan and some of them are even of the view point, "it is actually Pakistan which is shifting the conventional balance in its favor" (Expert Informant, Interview, 14 November 2015). Akram's viewpoint was further confirmed by Ladwig (2015) who argued that Indian military cannot outclass Pakistan's conventional military strength with its conventional military modernization and also fails to create element of surprise during Indo-Pak crises in the past.

India and Pakistan remained hostile throughout period after the two states' nuclearization and it was noticed that the two states were indulged into border provocations all the times which caused heavily losses on the two sides but did not convert into a conventional war. In this connection, Zaki argued that India is trying to create a gap in conventional capabilities of the two countries and has adopted hostile posture towards Pakistan, initiated border provocations with continuous shelling into Pakistani territory and made Pakistani territory open to Indian aggression and this is because it wanted to provoke Pakistan to make first move in initiating conventional war while on Pakistan's side, its disparity with India in conventional capabilities does not allow it to indulge into conflict with India (Zaki, A., Expert Informant, Interview, 11 November 2015). Zaki's viewpoint was further endorsed by Sultan (2012) who said that although the nuclear weapons have been able to fulfill the gap of Indo-Pak conventional military asymmetry but the increasing gap with the passage of time is creating a concern on Pakistan's side and further in this connection, he added:

Nuclear weapons play a central role in Pakistan's military strategy. With increasing conventional imbalance, and India's attempt to challenge the credibility of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent at the strategic level by exploring space for a limited objectives war, Pakistan's reliance on the nuclear weapons has further increased (Sultan 2012: 163).

The above said words of Sultan (2012) clarify the changing conventional military postures in South Asia which creates a challenge for the strategic stability in the region. Pakistan feeling worried about Indian limited war posture has gone for increased reliance on nuclear weapons in dealing with Indian threat. Pakistan does not consider nuclear weapons as a separate entity and considers it as a part of its conventional military capabilities. It asserts that these weapons can be used in the conventional war when Pakistan is faced with an extreme security situation. In this connection, Kidwai while addressing at Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference in 2015 said that Pakistan's nuclear weapons are part of its conventional forces:

I (Kidwai) don't think they (nuclear weapons) are seen as separate weapons, they're not seen as separate weapons. They (nuclear weapons) reinforce the deterrence, there is a deterrence value within the conventional forces, the combine of the army, air force, navy has a certain deterrence value, notwithstanding the conventional asymmetries that we keep talking about. There is a healthy balance between the conventional forces on either side. The nuclear forces are very much integrated as a backup force in some kind of situations, which we would like to call the larger nuclear strategy. If we, because in terms of our planning, we talk of, of course, the national strategies, and we talk of the nuclear strategy, and the military strategy, the operational strategy at the three or four tiers. Nuclear strategy integrates the land operations of the conventional forces, and of the, at a point in time when the nuclear forces might also come into play, so it is one integrated whole (Kidwai, 2015, Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference).

Indians also know that Pakistan's nuclear weapons have contributed to its security as it has fulfilled the gap of Indo-Pak conventional military asymmetry and it has also restricted India to initiate conventional war against Pakistan. In this connection, Marwah said that there is a conventional military asymmetry between India and Pakistan which is further going to grow because India has the financial capacity to modernize its conventional military capabilities and it is busy in doing so while Pakistan has to depend on other states for defense assistance in money and material especially on the United States, China and Saudi Arabia (Marwah, O., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 25 January 2016). While Das admitted that India is superior in conventional military capabilities than Pakistan and it is the only reason for Pakistan's increasing dependence on nuclear weapons (Das, P., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016), Nye as an international analyst said that Indian superiority in conventional forces makes Pakistan more dependent on its nuclear weapons and though the nuclear weapons have created a restraint on Indian side but the danger of miscalculation always remained there (Nye, J. S., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016).

The nuclear deterrence makes Pakistan confident at the conventional level as it helps it to fulfill the gap of conventional military asymmetry with India (Ahmed 2013). There is also no guarantee against a war breaking out. A conventional war cannot be guaranteed to stay conventional. It can be argued that Pakistan's signaling of conventionally prepared is good in the sense that it will deter India at the conventional level.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, Pakistan's use of nuclear deterrence played an important role in averting full-fledged conventional war during Indo-Pak Brasstacks Crisis in 1986-87 otherwise the situation would have been different and Indians had attacked Pakistan.

Pakistan's nuclear weapons have effectively filled the gap of Indo-Pak conventional military asymmetry. Therefore, Pakistan is more secure in its post nuclear era than its pre-nuclear era in which it fought three wars with India and lost half of its territory. India and Pakistan have sufficient nuclear learning. Both states understand the nuclear deterrence relationship of the two states. Both states are involved in 'balance of terror' relationship and no one of the two wants to disturb this equation. Both states better understand each other's limits and do not want to test each other.

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