



Nuclear Deterrence: Pakistan's Only Option Against Indian Threat of Full-Fledged Conventional War

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Abstract

States usually utilize all available options in order to secure it against its adversaries. Pakistan also followed the same path after experiencing a setback in its third war against India in which it lost the territory of East Pakistan; it was a defeat difficult to digest as more than ninety thousand Pakistani civilians and soldiers were taken as war prisoners by India military which had made an intervention inside East Pakistan. This defeat eventually led Pakistan on the path of nuclear weapons programme. It became successful in acquiring nuclear weapons capability in the 1980s and considers it a source of security against India as it bridges the gap of India and Pakistan's conventional military asymmetry. This research has looked into the role of nuclear deterrence in averting full-fledged war between India and Pakistan between 1986-87 and 2016. This research uses qualitative methodology with thematic analysis. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with expert informants. The major objective was to assess the role of nuclear weapons in bringing restraint on Indian side and averting full-fledged conventional war between India and Pakistan. This research finds that nuclear deterrence successfully deterred India from initiating full-fledged conventional war against full-fledged war against Pakistan.

Keywords: Nuclear Deterrence; Kashmir Dispute; Kargil Conflict; Terrorism; India; Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Pakistan considers that nuclear deterrence has brought stability in the region as it averted full-fledged conventional war between the two countries between 1986-87 and 2016 as it created a restraint on Indian side otherwise Indians with superior conventional forces would have opted for a conventional war against it. This research has looked into Pakistan's claim regarding the role of nuclear deterrence in averting full-fledged conventional war between India and Pakistan within last three decades after the two states' nuclearization. This chapter discussed two themes Indo-Pak Kashmir dispute and

terrorists' role which deteriorated India and Pakistan's security relations and brought the two countries at the edge of war and then discussed five Indo-Pak crises which had the germs of full-fledged conventional war.

Nuclear deterrence had a vital role in Pakistan's strategic policy as Pakistan considers that its nuclear weapons have stopped India from launching conventional war against it as said Ex Amb (R) Syed Tariq Fatimi, Special Assistant to Pakistan's Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs (2013 to 2017) while giving Pakistan's official position.

Pakistan believes in maintaining what the experts call a "Minimum Strategic Deterrence Quality" to our program. Pakistan, with its very limited capacity and its much smaller budget allocations is far behind especially in the conventional weapons field and therefore, Pakistan has to maintain strong and robust program in order to maintain the strategic balance in the region. We are not seeking parity; we are not engaged in the business of counting our weapons or matching one against the other but what the strategic experts call the strategic balance. I would think that this is a program that the world should accept as arising from Pakistan's very legitimate requirements to ensure its defense. Again, I repeat that it is not instruments, we do not see the instruments of war but as instruments to prevent war from being unleashed in the sub-continent.

2. Literature Review on India and Pakistan's Nuclearization

Studies have been made by Long and Jaipal (1977) and Kapur (1980) about India and Pakistan's path to nuclearization. While Long and Jaipal (1977) discussed India's will to go for getting nuclear weapons, Kapur (1980) added that Pakistan was fast moving on the track to become a nuclear weapon state. A study conducted by Long and Jaipal (1977) discussed about India peaceful nuclear test conducted in 1974 and discussed about the future perspectives whether India will opt for manufacturing nuclear weapons or not. A study done by Kapur (1980) discussed about Pakistan's scope as becoming seventh nuclear weapon state in the world and thinks that the two states will opt for nuclear weapons.

Rais (1985) and Thomas (1986) discussed India and Pakistan's path to nuclearization. While Rais (1985) thought that Pakistan's dependence on the US and the West will hinder its development as a nuclear weapon state, Thomas (1986) were of the opinion that Indian's nuclear path is guided by China and Pakistan's nuclearization. A study made by Rais (1985) discussed the prospects of Pakistan becoming the nuclear weapon state and said that Pakistan's dependency on the US and West in military and economic spheres will hinder it from becoming a nuclear weapon state. A study made by Thomas (1986) discussed the development of India's space and nuclear program and stated that the threat India possessed from China and Pakistan determines its route to space and nuclear weapons program.

Cortright and Mattoo (1996) and Carranza (1996) discussed India and Pakistan's nuclear weapons programmes. While Cortright and Mattoo (1996) were of the opinion that Indian elite were not in favour of pursuing nuclear path, Carranza (1996) saw the expected problems faced by India and Pakistan if the states do not shun the policy of pursuing nuclear weapons path. A study made by Cortright and Mattoo (1996) discussed about Indian elite's thinking about Indian nuclear options and said that Indian elite was in the favour of a nuclear ban. A study made by Carranza (1996) highlighted India and Pakistan's nuclear thinking and argued that if the two states did not opt to follow the international community, both may face problems in result of isolation.

Saksena and Thakar (1998) and Misty (1998) discussed the US reaction to India and Pakistan's nuclear weapons tests in 1998. While Saksena and Thakar (1998) argued that the US attitude towards India and Pakistan was not strict in connection to imposing restrictions, Misty (1998)

stated that the US restrictions did not put much impact on India and Pakistan. A study conducted by Saksena and Thakar (1998) discussed about the US dealing with India and Pakistan after the nuclear weapon tests of the two countries in May 1998 and stated that the US seemed flexible in putting sanctions against India and Pakistan after their nuclear weapon tests. A study done by Misty (1998) highlighted Indian development in space programme and stated the India is moving on fast track in its development on space programme and it is even faster than the other states following this path in the developing world. A study conducted by Misty (1999) discussed the US policy towards nuclear weapon states of India and Pakistan. A study done by Misty (1999) further argued that the US sanctions imposed against India and Pakistan did not produce required results.

Srivastava (2000) and Yuan (2001) discussed India's nuclear advances and its position in Asia after nuclearization. While Srivastava (2000) came to know about India's quick growth in nuclear and missile technology, Yuan (2001) witnessed India as a major power in Asia after getting nuclear weapons challenging Chinese writ in the region. A study done by Srivastava (2000) discussed India's growing missile ambitions and said that Indian planners are confident about getting major advances in missile technology to make their defense stronger, but these Indian policies are proving to be a setback for the nonproliferation regimes. A study made by Yuan (2001) highlighted India after its nuclear tests in 1998 and stated that Indian nuclear weapon tests posed a serious challenge to nonproliferation efforts on the one hand and posed a challenge to China on the other and it has changed the status quo in Asia.

Gupta (2001) and Chakma (2005) discussed Indian nuclear weapons programme. While Gupta (2001) doubted Indian nuclear status to give it favour at the world level, Chakma argued that security factor led India to opt for the path of nuclearization. A study made by Gupta (2001) discussed about Indian nuclear programme and argued that although Indian nuclearization will benefit it to counter regional threats, but it will not be able to give incentives to India at the international level. A study made by Chakma (2005) highlighted India's nuclear tests of 1998 and argued that although prestige, technological and domestic factor played its role in the nuclearization of India, the security factor was the most important one as the security situation had been changed in post-Cold War era.

3. Indo-Pak Kashmir dispute and Nuclear Deterrence

Kashmir dispute and Kashmir insurgency had been a main source of all the crises occurred between India and Pakistan after nuclearization. India and Pakistan have been involved in different disputes since their independence in 1947. Kashmir dispute is one of those disputes inherited by the two countries which is still lingering on after 70 years of the thorny relations of the two South Asian nuclear weapon states. Kashmir is the cause of major rivalry between the two states. Kashmir has been the cause of all Indo-Pak wars fought in 1947-48, 1965, 1971 and Kargil conflict or war in 1999 whereas Kashmir dispute has further led to five crises in 1986-87, 1990, 2001-02, 2008 and 2016. The recent Indo-Pak crisis in 2016 conveyed the message to the world that how much sensitive is Kashmir dispute in the world and pictured South Asia as the nuclear flash point.

The findings narrated that Kashmir dispute and Kashmir insurgency had been a main source of all the crises occurred between India and Pakistan after nuclearization. The findings further considered Kashmir insurgency and Kashmir dispute as the major source of confrontation between India and Pakistan, and it will continue to become the hot spot in their relations with each other in the future. The findings also considered Kashmir dispute as a source of future crisis between India and Pakistan. In this connection, Kidwai said, "Kashmir issue is the root cause of the conflict; it should be resolved in a way that both parties should be claimed as winners. You should not resolve it in a way

where one should be winner while other should be loser” (Kidwai, K, A., Expert Informant, Interview, 19 November 2015) while Akram said that Kashmir dispute and Kashmir insurgency can lead these two nuclear weapon states to difficult situations and quoted the words of former United States President Bill Clinton who once said that South Asia has become most dangerous place in the world (Expert Informant, Interview, 14 November 2015). Furthermore, Cheema, P.I added that the situation has been changed in Indian and the issue has become more complicated as a big number of Kashmiri people have lost their lives and one of the estimates of the dead people is about one hundred thousand people in their freedom struggle against India (Cheema, P.I, Expert Informant, Interview, 13 November 2015).

Furthermore, Pakistan's nuclear weapons have given it a confidence to support Kashmir insurgency because with the arrival of nuclear weapons in South Asia, the option of full-fledged Indo-Pak conventional war is off the table. In this connection, Marwah said: “I don't see any impact of the role of nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan on Kashmir – possibly the Kargil war, but very tenuously and very indirectly” (Marwah, O., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 25 January 2016) while Das said that Pakistan's nuclear weapons have put the option of Indo-Pak full-fledged war off the table and given it confidence to continue with its support to Kashmir insurgency (Das, P., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016). Furthermore, Nye as an international analyst that Kashmir remains the major dispute between India and Pakistan and can lead them towards war (Nye, J, S., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016).

To sum up, Kashmir dispute was the cause of major rivalry between India and Pakistan during all crises. Pakistan's support to Kashmir insurgency had caused crises between the two countries in the past. Though, nuclear deterrence has not been able to resolve Kashmir dispute, it helped to avert war between the two nuclear weapon states in times of crises. Until Kashmir dispute is resolved; both states will continue to suffer from crises one after another.

4. Terrorists' role in Deteriorating Indo-Pak Relations

The findings narrated that the terrorists had been responsible for taking India and Pakistan into crises on after another after the nuclearization of the two countries. Since long the terrorists have been a source of confrontation between India and Pakistan. most of the crises between the two states have been in result of terrorist attacks on Indian mainland. If we look at Indo-Pak Brasstacks crisis in 1986-87 where India conducted its military exercises near Pakistan's border were with an intention to punish Pakistan for its support to insurgencies in India Punjab and Kashmir. Basically, the increased insurgency in Punjab was the main source which led the two states to indulge each other in serious Brasstacks crisis. Second, India and Pakistan came to face each other in another crisis in 1990 when India threatened Pakistan of war consequences. This crisis occurred when the insurgency reached at its height in Kashmir in 1990 and that led India to think of the option of going after Pakistan.

Third, the two states fought a limited conflict or war in 1999 at Kargil sector in Indian held Kashmir. India accused Pakistani soldiers of crossing into Indian territory and occupying its check posts while Pakistan rejected Indian claim and argued that Kashmiri Mujahidin are fighting with Indian forces at Kargil. This crisis was serious in its nature and could have resulted into all-out war. Indians became successful at diplomatic fronts to convey message to the international community that Pakistani forces have entered their territory. Under extreme international pressure, Pakistan decided to withdraw its forces from Kargil. Finally, Pakistan's withdrawal defused the tension between India and Pakistan. Fourth, India and Pakistan came at the edge of accidental war during 2001-02 crisis. The terrorists attacked Indian parliament in December 2001. India alleged Pakistan that its backed terrorist group has launched terrorist attack on Indian mainland. India, under internal pressure started

mobilizing its forces for conventional war against Pakistan but its mobilization took a longer period and gave space to Pakistan to counter mobilize and the United States diplomacy to cool down India. Though the forces of the two countries remained on border throughout the year 2002 but the war did not occur. International experts believe that there was an extreme threat of accidental war during Indo-Pak crisis 2001, 02.

Fifth, the terrorists attacked Mumbai and launched series of attacks at various places where they killed 174 people and injured many others. This incident created fury in India. India alleged that Pakistan supported group has launched terrorist attacks on Indian mainland. Indian government seriously decided of acting against Pakistan. Though India has started working on limited war doctrine named as Cold Start Doctrine since 2004 but due to its initial phase it could not be activated against Pakistan. Though Indians decided to conduct air strikes into Pakistan's territory, but they could not do it because of the quick response of Pakistan Air Force. Finally, the last crisis occurred between India and Pakistan again in Kashmir where insurgency and protests reached at height after the killing of young insurgent Kashmiri leader Burhan Wani in 2016. This row of violence continued for many months. In the meantime, there was a terrorist attack on India military headquarters in Uri, Kashmir on 17 September 2016 which resulted in 17 Indian soldiers dead and many others injured. This resulted in crisis between India and Pakistan. Afterwards, the two sides seemed to be preparing for war. India claimed of conducting „Surgical Strikes“ inside Pakistani controlled area of Azad Kashmir killing 40 terrorists and destroying six terrorist launch pads. Though Pakistan denied Indian claim but the international observers and defense analysts such as Ayesha Siddiqia, witnessed heavy firing on the border on that night and believed Indian soldiers had crossed LOC (Line of Control) but it was about 200 meters and not two kilometers as claimed by Indians (BBC Urdu 30 September 2016).

The terrorism has been a serious threat to region's stability in South Asia. It is not terrorism itself, but a state supported terrorism which is bringing two states towards confrontation. Terrorists have been responsible for almost all the crises occurred between India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan are busy in fighting sub conventional war in each other's state. Kashmir is the basic dispute which has fueled insurgency in the region, and it needs to be resolved to end militancy in the region.

India and Pakistan are involved in sub conventional warfare. The two states are supporting the terrorist activities in each other's countries. Both India and Pakistan are supporting the insurgencies on the two sides of the border. Pakistan has been supporting Kashmir insurgency since long while India has been involved in support insurgency in Baluchistan. In this connection, Akram added that India previously alleged Pakistan of supporting militant groups which were involved in terrorist attacks against India but now what Indians are doing is the same thing by supports insurgency in Baluchistan for what they blamed Pakistan and they are involved in supporting terrorist activities in Pakistan's different areas especially in Baluchistan (Expert Informant, Interview, 14 November 2015). Furthermore, according to Akram, Indian National Security Advisor clearly said in one of his statements that Indians are involved in supporting militants in Baluchistan (Akram, Z., Expert Informant, Interview, 14 November 2015).

Although the support to terrorists in launching terrorist attacks on Indian mainland from Pakistan's side is causing serious problem, but India has been trying its best to stop such terrorist attacks by strengthening its internal security option because it has been difficult for India to opt the option of conventional war against Pakistan in the presence of the nuclear weapons. Although the terrorists are powerful and could lead India and Pakistan towards war, Marwah doubted their role in bringing two states at the edge of war. In this connection, Marwah said:

Unless there is some version of an „Islamic State“ growth and assault in Indian Kashmir or India (as in Syria and Iraq), a regular conventional war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir is unlikely. After Kargil, Pakistan has few military options in Kashmir – and its few covert terrorists injected into Kashmir are regularly picked up and/or eliminated. As for the attack on Parliament in 2001 or as on Mumbai in 2008, they remain pinpricks for which Indian counter-measures are constantly being upgraded and are acquiring a degree of capability which is sufficient to thwart any long-term losses. (Marwah, O., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 25 January 2016).

Above said words of Marwah narrated that India has the capability to counter Pakistan supported terrorists launching terrorist attacks against India. Further, Marwah was confident of India's counter terrorism measures in dealing with terrorist activities (Marwah, O., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 25 January 2016). Finally, Marwah doubted terrorist capacity to take the two states towards conventional war (Marwah, O., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 25 January 2016). While on the other hand, Das disagreed with Marwah and said, “state sponsored terrorism has the potential to take any country to war” and terrorist actions inside India force it to go after Pakistan supported militants inside Pakistan's territory and furthermore, Pakistan's increased dependence on nuclear weapons and its policy of not accepting “No First Use” Pact makes the situation more complicated (Das, P., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016). Das further showed his concern about Pakistan's position on the use of tactical nuclear weapons against Indian soldiers inside its territory in any Indian initiated military action and warned that “any such conflict has the potential to go up the escalation ladder very quickly” (Das, P., Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016). Nye, as a neutral analyst showed his concern that the terrorists have possibly become powerful and they can lead India and Pakistan towards confrontation as it happened during Indo-Pak 2001-02 crisis and 2008 crisis (Expert Informant, Email Interview, 9 February 2016).

To sum up, it is not the terrorism creating problem between the two states but a state sponsored terrorism which is causing crises between India and Pakistan and leading the two states towards war. Both states support insurgent groups against each other and provide them with all sorts of backing. Terrorists are not themselves so strong that they can lead the two nuclear weapon states towards war but both states' involvement in sub-conventional war which is causing the trouble in the region.

5. Role of Nuclear Deterrence in Stopping Full-Fledged Conventional War

Professor (R) Dr Zafar Iqbal Cheema, President of the Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad explained: It has been stability but a very fragile stability, always being feared, it will breakdown but it has not broken down. There have been many crisis, Kargil crisis, 2002 crisis, we have many crises but so far neither war has broken out between India and Pakistan nor there is a complete breakdown of deterrence. Cheema, Z, I., Expert Informant, Interview, 13 November 2015 However, the same period has witnessed six crises between 1986-87 and 2016. These crises occurred when India threatened Pakistan of war consequences. Some of these crises were so serious that there were threats of accidental war breaking out on the border because the forces on the two sides were in an eye ball to eye ball situation with each other. Threats of war by India and the continuous tension at the border after 2 nuclearization of the two states have made Pakistan's claim that nuclear deterrence provided it security against India difficult to be justified. The nuclear arms race started soon after Worls War 2. The horrors of nuclear war were aptly described by Winston Churchill when he said, “...it may be that we shall by a process of sublime irony have reached a stage in this story where safety will be the sturdy child of terror, and survival the twin brother of annihilation” (Rauchhaus 2009: 1). The

opponents of nuclear deterrence oppose the claim of nuclear optimists about the role of nuclear deterrence during cold war as unjustified. This may imply that in reality, nuclear deterrence did not really work (McCoy 1999).

In addition, deterrence pessimists provide examples from history and argue that nuclear weapons as strategic military options have failed to provide states with adequate security relief. They cited the example of Israel, a nuclear weapon state, which failed to deter its non-nuclear Arab neighbors from waging war against it in 1973 (Narang 2010a: 43). Additionally, the United States, despite being the first nuclear weapon state, was unable to deter Soviet Union's military advancements in Eastern Europe before and after 1949. Additionally, Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China came into conflict in late 1969 and seemed to be at the edge of war and were ready to engage in one despite being nuclear weapon states. During the period of crisis between the two countries, the Chinese leader Mao Zedong even boasted that even if half of the Chinese population are killed in the war, they will still be able to defend their mainland. The Indo-Pakistan problems can be traced to the time of partition of the sub-continent by the British in 1947. Thousands of people who were migrating from one state to another were massacred during the partition. Additionally, there is also the unresolved status of Kashmir. Its accession to India started the Kashmir conflict in 1947 which led to the first Indo-Pakistani war in 1947-1948. Two more wars were fought by both countries; one was in Kashmir in 1965 and the other in East Pakistan in 1971. Shaikh (2006) explained that a key factor which kept the conflict alive is "Pakistanis" revisionist stance on Kashmir as the unfinished business of Partition" and that "hedged by nuclear weapons" this conflict has become even more "crisis prone". Nuclear deterrence is a vital component of Pakistan's strategic policy. It is essentially targeted against its traditional foe, India. It was initially started for civilian purposes; however, Pakistan's nuclear programme was eventually diverted to serve military ends in the 1970s, following the dismemberment of East Pakistan in the 1971 war with India. Since then, Pakistan started investing a huge amount of money on its nuclear weapons programme. The regional conflict as a result of Soviet invasion into Afghanistan in 1979 gave Pakistan a geo-strategic advantage to pursue its nuclear weapons programme, and the conflict averted the US from discouraging Pakistan's nuclear ambitions. Furthermore, being a US ally, Pakistan received both economic and military assistance. Pakistan took advantage of this regional conflict to manufacture nuclear weapons in the 1980s. The new era of nuclear rivalry between India and Pakistan began when India started a large-scale military exercise named "Brasstacks" at the end of 1986, aimed at Pakistan. This resulted in a military standoff between the two countries as Pakistan retaliated by mobilizing its forces at the border. Leaders of both countries started to make nuclear threats to one another, raising the nuclear alarm in the sub-continent. The situation raised serious concerns among the international community that pushed for the mitigation of the crisis. The relations between India and Pakistan deteriorated further after they both tested their nuclear weapons in 1998 of which since then, has led to one crisis after another between the two states (Hoodbhoy & Mian 2002). Pakistan has now changed its previous position of using nuclear weapons as a last resort and adopted a new stance in which it will use tactical nuclear weapons to stop Indian-initiated limited war against Pakistan. Pakistan claims that the Indian Cold Start Doctrine has forced it to change its stance. Goshal (2015: 9) added that the main objective of nuclear weapons is to strengthen deterrence, not only averting war but also preventing conventional conflict. He further mentioned that tactical nuclear weapons have a destabilising effect and does not serve the interest of deterrence in a real sense, and the best solution is to get rid of tactical nuclear weapons. 5 Since the emergence of the nuclear element, India and Pakistan have faced one crisis after another, and some of it were just short of full-fledged war 1.

During the Brasstacks crisis of 1986-87, India and Pakistan were on the edge of a full-fledged conventional war. The second crisis with a nuclear dimension between India and Pakistan occurred just three years after the Brasstacks crisis. This crisis mobilised the international community to intervene and stop the two states from opting for war. The third crisis in this series was the Kargil conflict which occurred in 1999. It was also the first crisis after overt nuclearisation of India and Pakistan. Some analysts including Sagan and Kapur called it the limited war because India faced a serious incursion from Pakistan, and it led India to use every option available to throw intruders out of its territory. These analysts challenged the claim of deterrence optimists that nuclear weapon states do not fight wars by arguing that the Kargil conflict completely nullified the nuclear deterrence theory. The fourth crisis between India and Pakistan occurred as a result of the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001. This incident led to mobilisation of war on both sides and seriously threatened the outbreak of accidental war. After the Indo-Pak 2001-02 crisis, India changed its military doctrine and started working on a limited war doctrine called the Cold Start Doctrine which was initiated in 2004. This Indian initiative to avail the space of limited war² against its adversary caused Pakistan to feel worried about its own security and it started thinking about the options in dealing with this newly emerging threat from India. Pakistan was able to identify a gap at tactical level which India wanted to benefit from. Pakistan started filling this gap by manufacturing tactical nuclear weapons as a means of counteracting India's limited war doctrine.

In 2008, another crisis erupted between India and Pakistan after the terrorist attack on Mumbai. It created a serious tension between the two states but did not result in war mobilization. Nevertheless, India did attempt to carry out an airstrike¹ States with many objectives expand war on many fronts in many territories and use all types of weapons to target both military installations and civilian places. ²States with limited objective start war with opening one front on a limited territory and use limited weapons to target only military installations against Pakistan but failed to execute the plan. The sixth and the last crisis between India and Pakistan occurred in 2016 when India claimed of launching surgical strikes inside Pakistani controlled territory of Azad Kashmir. Although this crisis did not result in war, it highlighted the seriousness of the situation prevailing in South Asia.

6. Conclusion

The continuous change in the military doctrines of the two states since their nuclearisation has witnessed unending rivalry between India and Pakistan. India initiated the Cold Start Doctrine and changed its military strategy from "mobilise and hit" to "hit and mobilise". Pakistan's developed tactical nuclear weapons prompts analysts to revisit the Indo-Pak security situation and the six Indo-Pak crises between 1986-87 and 2016. Based on the above discussion it is proved that the nuclear weapons played an important role in providing security to Pakistan against Indian threat of full-fledged conventional war.

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