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Nuclearization, Development, and Deterrence in South Asia: An Analysis of Pakistan's Nuclear Posture

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes the development of nuclear weapons between India - Pakistan and explores the foundation of nuclear weapons and the question that how is nuclear weapons impacting the deterrence posture and security of the South Asian region vis-à-vis India - Pakistan? In the South Asia region, India initiated nuclearization in the region. Consequently, Pakistan has acquired sufficient nuclear weapons to counter a potential threat from nuclear India and potentially enhanced the nuclear dimension in the region. Moreover, Pakistan initially adopted the policy of minimum deterrence but upgraded its deterrence to a full spectrum posture because India increased its nuclear weapons and its development. Pakistan is facing grave security challenges from India which can change its nuclear posture during any crisis.

Keywords: South Asia, nuclear security, India, Pakistan, deterrence, weapons

I. Introduction

The South Asian region is one of the resourceful regions of the world. The outlook of this region attracts several great powers. Pre-and post cold war South Asian region has been inspiring the world owing to its unique characters- geography, population, and natural resources. The world's major powers have always been engaged to augment their security, political and strategic interests via this region. South Asia is an important region and it is known as a dangerous region due to India-Pakistan deep rivalry- both states have developed their nuclear weapons (Kimball 2011). Two potential rivals, India - Pakistan, with a history of permanent conflicts and tension have exasperated each other-both have accelerated the arms race.

Multiple contestant conflicts; border combat on the Line of Control (LOC), an unresolved Kashmir issue; active involvement in intra-State conflicts-in Afghanistan; and most importantly, imbalance of power in the region has increased security threat. The acquisition of nuclear weapons, by India- Pakistan, has not lessened deterrence in South Asia. However, India - Pakistan are the prominent states which have embarked on the development of nuclear weapons rapidly (Toon 2019, 1-3). Power asymmetry, the advancement of nuclear weapons among three Southern Asian states, India-Pakistan, and China; have increased the level of tension and expansion of weapons (Tellis 2016).

Whereas, nuclearization between the two states, in South Asia, has all-round implications for regional security, stability, and peace.

The security policies of the two states, India – Pakistan, in terms of their nuclear program have different perspectives and goals. India's nuclear weapons development originated from diverse values, advanced by the two Indian great leaders Gandhi and Nehru, as a "Greater India" (Abbasi 2016). India's old rivalry with China and Pakistan is a "push" and triggering factor that compelled India to struggle to become the "global power". India's ambitions for maximization of power in the South Asian, region (Perkovich 1999, 25-30) have encouraged the expansion of nuclear weapons. India's ambition, to be a rising power, with a role in constructing and regulating the regional as well as global security order (Perkovich 1999) may not strengthen the concept of deterrence in South Asia. Both India -Pakistan have acquired weapons that have the potential to damage each other. Furthermore, the importance of nuclear weapons is closely related to the political values of India-it wanted to gain global status (Rais 2007, 144). Before the nuclear tests in May 1998, traditional-threshold deterrence existed between the two rival and neighboring countries but it is all environmental. The nature of the crisis is imperative factor –it mainly determines the level of deterrence.

Pakistan's objective is not to upset the regional or the global security order and political landscape. It has maximized enough security [credibility] vis-à-vis India. India and Pakistan have had always considered nuclear weapons as an instrument for self-defense and [deterrence] against each other-both have avoided the use of nuclear weapons when they have had an opportunity during the Kargil war and after the Palwama attack occurred in February 2019 and India attacked Pakistan's territory Balakot which resulted in a counter-strike by Pakistan's air force (Feyyaz 2019, 71). The post- Palwama and Balakot incidents indicated that both nuclear states would maintain deterrence capability when required. We can, safely, say that the paradox of stability has been maintained in the region. Practically, nuclear deterrence has successfully prevented a full-scale war. During the acute crisis, if India - Pakistan "climb non-nuclear rungs, they put pressure on strategic stability (Jaffery, 2020) and maintained nuclear deterrence. The Post-nuclearization arena has shown that Pakistan's behavior remained relatively rational during the crisis.

The post-nuclearization (1998) arena rapidly altered the security doctrine in South Asia. Initially, Pakistan decided the policy of minimum deterrence- aimed to reduce merely the political and strategic instability in the South Asian region. Owing to the growing Indian hegemonic designs; Pakistan has greatly upgraded its deterrence position to buttress its security and enhance stability in the region. The development of nuclear deterrence in the South Asian region can be traced back to 1998 when both states tested their nuclear weapons and declared [them] de facto nuclear states. In fact, the acquisition of nuclear weapons, in fact, has strengthened the path of deterrence in the region. In South Asia, the concept of deterrence is a complex subject to comprehend in the strategic environment- South Asian region, as we know, South Asia is a different region as compared to other regions in the world- no two historical [nuclear] rivals exist as neighbors except South Asia where India - Pakistan both have more nuclear weapons and minimum deterrence. To explain the content we have raised three questions; why did Pakistan acquire nuclear weapons? What is the threat of nuclear weapons development on the stability of South Asia? What challenges Pakistan is facing and what are the available

options to secure stability vis-à-vis India? This paper explains the questions theoretically and empirically.

II. Assumptions of Nuclear Deterrence

A lot of work has been done on Pakistan's nuclear weapons –several scholars have posited assumptions, predictions, and concerns vis-à-vis India- because Pakistan's nuclear weapons provide security stability, and develop the strategy of deterrence in South Asia. Payne and Dale (2002, 163-146) have explained the concept of deterrence as: Deterrence is fundamentally based on an expressed threat that exacts a cost greater than the potential benefits of an adversary's unwanted action, leading an adversary to avoid that unwanted action. It can be based on a threat of punishment, where a state threatens to destroy assets that are valuable to its adversary if its own assets are destroyed-Deterrence can also be based on a threat of denial, where a state takes the action of convincing its adversaries that their unwanted actions, such as an invasion, will be stopped and they will not achieve their military or political goals.

The main proposition of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is based on the assumption that a potential aggressor can be dissuaded from provocative action or war by the threat of unacceptable damage (Thee 2020, 65). Keeping the nuclear weapons and maintaining the deterrence may not be possible in the region as the two rivals, India and Pakistan, have two different postures [behavior]. Every (nuclear) state has acquired nuclear weapons for security purposes but their use is determined by the strategic environment.

Chellaney (1991) believes that "nuclear weapons are not instruments for fighting wars. Their military value actually derives from the political effects of the existence of nuclear arsenals, including their ability to define and shape political stability between rival nations and blocs and signify power in relations between states". South Asian security dilemma has incredibly increased the nuclear weapons and development. In South Asia, China's role in shaping nuclear strategic relations has been pivotal (Arora; Sanjeev 2020)-Pakistan and China enjoy old friendly relations. Both have posed a grave threat to India's conventional security. South Asia region has become a nuclear-armed triangle, where all three states- India, China, and Pakistan- have fought wars on their borders. China and India had fought their first war over the disputed Himalayan boundaries in 1962, and India-Pakistan fought wars in 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999-constant conflict and tension is going on LOC.

India's nuclear policy was initiated in the late 1940s under the leadership of Prime Minister Nehru (Lo 2003). Britain left the South Asian Subcontinent and left India and Pakistan to fight over Kashmir which compelled both India - Pakistan to increase their weapons. India tested its first nuclear weapons in 1974. Pakistan had decided to develop its nuclear weapons during Ayoub Khan's era, the first military ruler, but at that time the then Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, opposed the idea-later he himself initiated the same idea when he came in power in the early 1970s (Umar 2020). Bhutto's, nuclear policy, continued under General Zia-ul-Haq who dismissed Bhutto's government in 1977.

There has been a bulk of literature from traditional to modern that explains different aspects, effects, or scenarios of Pakistan's security policy vis-à-vis its nuclear weapons and deterrence in South Asia. Since nuclearization (1998) of South Asia, nuclear security of the region has been the main issue of debate among scholars of diverse disciplines. The literature is divided between two groups of scholars on whether nuclear weapons play an effective and comprehensive role in preventing major conflicts or promote escalation between the two traditional rival states mainly in South Asia. Some Scholars view nuclearization as an imperative factor that reduces the risk of conflicts and wars between India - Pakistan- but this assumption has proven wrong after the Palwama attack when India was (seriously) ready to strike against Pakistan (Jeffery 2019).

The brief literature review shows that scholars ignored a particular behavior of the state which exists during crisis-the the president of the United States, Truman, ordered to drop a nuclear bomb on Japan in a special environment though the US developed its nuclear weapons for "peaceful purposes". It was called Atom for Peace. The contemporary international system has redefined the concept of 'deterrence' and 'peace- it is based on environment and posture.

We know that "India - Pakistan share the long-standing and highly developed theory of deterrence that emerged from the Cold War" (Jaspal 2014). Though the Cold War was ended between the US and the Soviet Union but regional Cold War, in South Asia, continues. Nuclear deterrence has prevented full-spectrum war in South Asia, yet it would be erroneous to assume that nuclear weapons provide complete security against the military threat; however, nuclear weapons maintain the balance of terror (Beg 2016)-but these are not the guarantee of peace. Pakistan's behavior has always been defensive-whereas Indian nuclear policy is offensive-defensive.

According to a security analyst, Qaiser (2016), India has developed five doctrinal shifts in January 2003; they are:

- Moving from finite deterrent posture to credible minimum deterrence
- Induction of the caveat to its no-first-use policy
- Use of nuclear weapons in response to biological and chemical weapons attack
- Nuclear retaliation not only against the territorial attack but also against the threat to Indian forces anywhere in the world
- Legitimizing a pre-emptive doctrine.

Contemporary India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has revisited the No First Use (NFU) policy of nuclear weapon (s) doctrine. However, the post-Palwama incident dramatically changed India's nuclear posture. Raj Nath Singh, Indian defense minister, indicated in his statement that "India may consider its No-Fist-Use nuclear policy (Ranjan; Laskar 2020). Previously, India itself opted for the NFU policy in 1999-when Pakistan responded to India's second nuclear test in May 1998. Interestingly, Pakistan never defined or opted NFU doctrine.

Keeping in view India's nuclear posture during acute crisis- Kargil, Palwama, and post Balakot incident environment, many experts have developed the new doctrine of nuclear weapons development between India - Pakistan. They view the nature of the

crisis as a decisive factor in using - not using the nuclear weapons-the new technology plays a prompt role indecision-making timelines (Lalwani 2020). The balance of nuclear weapons is not imperative between the two rivals. The nuclear weapons, mainly, increase insecurity, instability, and uncertainty in the region like South Asia.

Some scholars assume that "deterrence would not work in future just like it did nothing to prevent war in the past. The two nuclear powers, India - Pakistan, have changed their defense and security policies - there is no such law in international relations that the nuclear states never make war with each other (Hagerty1998, 23-24); the international system is considered "anarchic" (Waltz 1979).

The nuclear option may deter nuclear war in the South Asian region, but not the military operations against each other (Hagerty1998). Post-nuclearization and weaponization by the two states have augmented the "probability of the nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan is gravely high, considering the two states engaged in the direct military conflict in 2000 (Chari 1999,50) when they deployed massive forces on borders after India's parliament attack-Pakistan had to deter by nuclear and conventional strength. Since the eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, in the nineteen years, India - Pakistan have increased and developed their nuclear capability-and India's posture is irresponsible to use the 'nuclear card as a threat in the environment of the present Kashmir crisis (Masood 2019).

III. Brief Historical Over View

In the 1980s, Pakistan's nuclear weapons were the main concern for Indian policy makers-they could perceive the nuclear threat from Pakistan not from China (Pant; Joshi 2018).In 1957 Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) was established. The main objective, of the commission, was to train the scientists [researchers] to set up a nuclear reactor (Ahmad1999, 181). Thus Pakistan established the ministry for science and technology during the Ayub era- Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was leading this ministry. He was enthusiastic to acquire civilian nuclear technology- and training from the US- the only state which had developed atomic technology and weapons named as "Atoms for Peace program" (Kaplan 2020).

The 1970s era was immensely critical and important for Pakistan in acquiring nuclear technology mainly due to three reasons; firstly, the cessation of East Pakistan and the military's surrender in December 1971. Secondly, Kashmir dispute. Thirdly, the Indian dominance in conventional weapons. Prime Minister Bhutto was well informed about the rapid development of the Indian nuclear program-Bhutto decided to launch the nuclear program in 1972. In his speech, Bhutto said, "We will defend our country using any means necessary and build a nuclear capability second to none. We [Pakistan] will eat grass for 1000 years, if we have to, but we will get there" (Khan, 2012).

For the acquisition of nuclear weapons, Bhutto constituted a team of competent scientists and engineers to evolve the blueprint of a Pakistani nuclear bomb. Among all the scientists, a key figure was Abdul Qadeer Khan who worked in the Netherlands. Dr. Khan came to Pakistan at Bhutto's request in 1975 to build a nuclear weapon [bomb] for Pakistan. Pakistan's route to the bomb was through the enrichment of uranium using high-speed gas centrifuges. Khan founded the Kahuta Research Laboratories (KRL) to build and operate a centrifuge plant.

Pakistan's nuclear policy during Bhutto's era remained comprehensive- with states those helped in transferring nuclear technology and enriched uranium to Pakistan for its nuclear technology. To achieve nuclear technology; Pakistan signed an agreement with France in 1974 for the construction of a nuclear processing plant to formally start the process of acquiring the nuclear capability (Lewis:1976).To oppose Pakistan's attempt in the acquisition and making of nuclear weapons, the US and the UK pressurized the French and Pakistani governments to cancel this agreement. This resulted in the cancellation of the agreement as well as the US imposed economic sanctions on Pakistan in 1979. The US pressure on Pakistan to abstain from buying a nuclear atomic reprocessing plant from France was the US policy to restrain Bhutto's strong "defense" policy. The US Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger, came to Pakistan to deliver a tough message to Bhutto that the US "would make a horrible example of him if he went ahead with the nuclear program" (Dawn, 2013) - it was claimed by Pakistan People's Party that the threat was actually carried out by overthrowing Bhutto's regime.

In the decade of the 1970s, Pakistan endured immense pressure from the western countries to incapacitate its nuclear program. The international political landscape extensively changed when the Soviet Union expanded its influence and invaded Afghanistan in 1979. The US wanted the Soviet decline and greatly needed Pakistan's help. Pakistan became the "frontline ally" (Akhtar, 2008, 49-73). Pakistan's policy to be a partner of the US against the Soviet Union changed the map of international politics-meanwhile; Pakistan continued its nuclear program and the US did not raise any fundamental questions.

In the mid-1980s Pakistan had made its nuclear bomb. The Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan and the US had achieved its goals. The US started to raise its objection and pressurized Pakistan to roll back its nuclear program. Pakistan, however, refused and disappointed the US. Consequently, the US and its allies imposed sanctions on Pakistan. Despite enormous US pressure, Pakistan tested its nuclear weapon in late May 1998 followed by India's test. India - Pakistan emerged as nuclear powers. The international community broadly criticized these tests but both India and Pakistan continued and increased their nuclear weapons.

1V. Pakistan's Deterrence Posture

India - Pakistan both have legitimate nuclear policies in developing nuclear weapons. India's major concern vis-à-vis security is not only Pakistan also considers China as a major security threat. Therefore, India's nuclear posture is quite unpredictable.

Mazari (2004, 1-20) compares India and Pakistan nuclear behavior as: The nature of the two postures, as well as the manner in which they enunciated, reflect the difference in the purpose of the two states' in 1998. For India, its nuclear capability was status-driven as opposed to Pakistan's security-driven acquisition of nuclear capability. Because Pakistan's nuclear capability is strictly within the context of its security, it has not sought to exploit this capability in terms of political projection - thereby showing up the absurdity of the notion of its capability being an 'Islamic bomb'. The Indian rationalization of its nuclear capability fits far more neatly into the Hindutva projection of power by the BJP government.

Minimum credible deterrence was maintained in 1998 between India - Pakistan. The post-nuclearization environment, in South Asia, defined the obvious deterrence posture of Pakistan. By the policy of "minimum credible" deterrence, Pakistan's civil and military governments have declared that it would avoid an arms race and nuclear competition in the region; it would maintain and also upgrade the credibility and integrity of deterrence forces, and would not react to its adversary's weapon-to-weapon tests-but gradually policy was changed as India continued development of its weapons (Kristensen; Oelrich, 2009).

Originally, Pakistan designed its nuclear deterrence posture. There were two main options; a) the war denying deterrence which required a minimum number of weapons, b) the war fighting deterrence which required a large number of nuclear weapons (Lieble 2019, 157). Pakistan has declared that it does not believe in the need for "nuclear parity" and desires to maintain a deterrent equilibrium to balance the threat caused by India's superiority in conventional weapons and consequently the threats proposed to Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan has had always looked at the posture of minimum deterrence as a "dynamic as opposed to the static concept". The dynamic concept inherently implies the prospects of arms buildup with a focus on Indian military capabilities and modernization efforts very carefully.

Minimum deterrence policy, primarily, focuses on the potential of nuclear forces which means that large numbers of nuclear weapons are not required if a state has a limited number of nuclear armories to deter the enemy. The main objective of 'credible minimum deterrence' is to maintain peace, however, Pakistan's nuclear posture incriminates that Pakistan needs to deter its traditional enemy, India, that has threatened Pakistan to stop water that flows from a disputed territory, Kashmir.

Pakistan is following the policy of 'minimum deterrence'. In 1998, Nawaz Sharif's government introduced the policy of "Credible Minimum Deterrence". However, the nature of conflict and tension between India and Pakistan drastically influenced Pakistan's policy; India's nuclear posture has not the same as which was opted in 1998s. Therefore, South Asia's rapidly changing security dynamics have also changed Pakistan's policy. In 2013, National Command Authority (NCA) opted for the policy of "Full Spectrum Deterrence" to deter "all kinds of external threats" (Ahmad; Hashmi; Kausar 2019, 92). But in international system leaders' behavior

Pakistan has transformed and improved its deterrence posture vis-a-vis India. Increasing Indian's weapons, conventional and non-conventional, have greatly persuaded Pakistan to revisit its nuclear posture in the South Asian region. India initiated a missile race in South Asia and tested Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) in 2006. Indian BMD is considered a grave threat to instability in the South Asian region. India's air power and Sea-Based capabilities are increasing; ambition to transfer its navy into a Blue Water Navy with aircraft carriers- thereby nuclearizing and destabilizing the whole region including the Indian Ocean (Pant 2009,279-289). Consequently, Pakistan's upgrading of its deterrence posture is also owing to the absence of Arms Control Regime (ACR) as well as the regular nuclear and military Confidence Building Measures (Ham 2018-2019) between India - Pakistan, which resulted in the development of weapons.

V. Pakistan's Nuclear Weapon: Challenges and Choices

In terms of nuclear security; the main challenge for Pakistan is to safeguard and manage its security and avoid indulging in a costly and never-ending arms race in South Asia. India, being a big state, with a huge economy, and military, poses a great threat in the region. India spends a huge budget on its defense. As compared to Pakistan India has the objective to gain 'global power' status. Pakistan, however, is concerned with its security and survival by India. Pakistan has acquired the nuclear capability to safeguard its sovereignty – which has been challenged and threatened by India. India's constant attempt to destabilize Pakistan is proven-there is no ambiguity (Dawn 2020).

Pakistan is surrounded by hostile neighbors (India, Afghanistan). Thus complex security environment compelled Pakistan to develop its weapons and increase 'nuclear deterrence' policy. The advancement of technology is playing a pivotal role in increasing arms in the South Asian region. It is imperative for Pakistan to enhance its security capability. India has been presenting Pakistan as a 'terrorist state'. Indian Prime minister NarendraModi has attempted to isolate Pakistan in the world (Dawn 2016).

Pakistan, however, convinced the international community that 'India is funding terrorist groups to destabilize Pakistan" and presented a dossier in the United Nations (Dawn 2020). In 2017, the National Security Advisor (NSA), AjitDoval, floated his doctrine of "defensive offense strategy" that aimed to strike against India's enemy from (Vicky 2017) .The main objective of Doval's doctrine is to neutralise Pakistan's policies vis-à-vis Kashmir and Afghanistan. Since Modi's government came to power in 2014, there has been an exceptional change in the Indian military strategy- so Pakistan needs to revisit its security policies accordingly.

After the Indian testing in Pokhran in 1974, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Bhutto, wrote to the international community that how could India's nuclear weapon threat Pakistan's security- and requested the UN Secretary-General for proposing a "Declaration and Establishment of Nuclear Weapons Free zone in South Asia (Ahmed 1979). Pakistan's objective was to restraint a conventional balance and conflict resolution between the two traditional rivals in the South Asian region. Pakistan also proposed nuclear-free South Asia in 1998-Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, proposed the idea for peace but India did not reciprocate Pakistan's proposal. Keeping in view the security environment and India's nuclear posture Pakistan greatly developed and increased its nuclear weapons. Pakistan's quest for nuclear weapons remained its priority when India continued the development of nuclear weapons.

V1.Conclusion

Security dilemma provided a great opportunity to Pakistan to build up its own nuclear technology to meet the security challenges. However, Pakistan's nuclear posture during the acute crisis, in February 2019, provided evidence to the entire world that Pakistan is a responsible nuclear state- it has acquired its weapons for defense, not for offense. India - Pakistan have acquired nuclear weapons. Both have fought three wars over the Kashmir dispute which is a longstanding issue between India and Pakistan. Post-nuclearization (1998) South Asia region has become a dangerous place owning to the two nuclear rival states. Both India-Pakistans have initiated missile race and their development though produce deterrence but the use of nuclear weapons may cause a great catastrophe in the whole world.

Nuclear posture can be determined by the prevailing security environment. India adopted a policy of 'No First Use' of nuclear weapons but it has indicated to revisit it in 2020. The deterrence element may not work without rationality and wisdom- . In February 2019, the world witnessed- how two states, India-Pakistan, were convinced to avoid nuclear war. In fact, Pakistan's nuclear posture does not matter if India has decided to use its nuclear weapons against Pakistan. Sanity would prevail when rational leadership considers pros and cons, preferences, and priorities. India, under Modi, has opted irrational course vis-à-vis Pakistan. Thus Pakistan behaves according to the 'compelled' security environment.

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