

Pakistan: Indispensability of Nuclear Security

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Abstract

Pakistan and India's relationship is primarily based on a perception of mutual vulnerability. Furthermore, the US-India nuclear deal and the growing Indian conventional capabilities have also enhanced Pakistan's insecurity. Pakistan relies on its strategic assets to offset India's conventional advantage. Because of stability-instability paradox, the strategic stability is expected to remain elusive. South Asian nuclear security tangle could only be stabilized if the nuclear rivals formulate their strategies on balanced perceptions by realistically fathoming the perils inherent in the conception of a limited conflict posture under the nuclear overhang.

Keywords: Nuclear security, Neo-realist, Globalist, Regionalist, South Asia, Nuclear Deterrence, NPT, Indo-US Nuclear Deal, NSG, Kashmir.

Introduction: Security for Survival

In essence, the danger of widening gulf of conventional military and strategic asymmetry between India and Pakistan is naturally enhancing Pakistan's sensitivities regarding its national security. In fact, the concept of security was shaped during the heydays of the Cold War, and its referent point was 'both geopolitical and to a large extent, values and principles.'¹ In the realm of security, three theoretical perspectives came into vogue after the end of the Cold War: international security structure was premised on 'neorealist, globalist, and regionalist' principles.² However, the South Asian security complex, which had direct 'insecurities' that were linked to India's and Pakistan's domestic and external threat perceptions that consequentially 'not only maintained, but considerably escalated' due to their hostility toward each other. Mutual 'securitisations' between

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¹ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structures of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 283.

² *Ibid.* p 6.

India and Pakistan were later on 'bolstered by the nuclearization of the military rivalry.'³ Obviously, the nature of their relations exacerbated tensions, which gradually led to intensification of their rivalry that influenced both countries' nuclear policies. The parameter of Pakistan's nuclear security is intensely security-centric. Its nuclear capability and security are ostensibly directly linked to its survivability as a viable sovereign state. As security is correlated to its existence, therefore, it continues to influence its policies in a highly security conscious culture. Hence, Pakistan perceives security from multiple lenses – state, internal and external security, and securing of its strategic assets and infrastructure. In fact, the latter is a potent instrument in the hands of a state to ensure its existence in view of threats from its conventionally, economically and strategically much stronger rival – India. Therefore, nuclear security is a core pivot of Pakistan's strategic capability that is so essential in ensuring its sovereignty and independence.

The geopolitical environment and the growing spate of violence engineered by Al-Qaeda and its Taliban affiliates make the issue of security of its nuclear arsenal much more critical for the country. In the context of South Asia, the existence of nuclear weapons has made a total war less probable between India and Pakistan. But, both countries still devise divergent strategies to gain maximum advantages over each other. In addition, their regional strategy of deterrence has also created a situation of stability-instability on the subcontinent,⁴ which has made bilateral security relations of both states hostage to their bitter history. Because of stability-instability paradox, the strategic stability is expected to remain elusive. Secondly, nuclear security,⁵ which is directly linked to existence of a viable deterrence, does not operate only in crises like situation; in fact, it reinforces prudence and moderation in peace time as well. Thirdly, in the context of 'absence of security,' and living in 'fear, with dangers arising from one or more threats is further complicating the situation.'⁶ While in the realm of nuclear security, Pakistan already has export control system that was evolved 'over the last decade through indigenous efforts that have been informed by international best

³ Ibid.p 104.

⁴ See Glen H. Snyder, "*The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror*," in *The Balance of Power*, ed. Paul Seabury (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1965).

⁵ See Terence Ball, '*Power*,' in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, ed. Robert E. Goodwin and Philip Pettit (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

⁶ See Frank Furedi, *Culture of Fear* (London: Continuum, 2005).

practices and cooperation' of US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).⁷

Post-9/11 World

In the post 9/11 world, Pakistan's threat perceptions and the general situation of the region had encouraged it not only to consistently, systematically, and physically combat the menace of terrorism, but also through a host of measures overhauled its safety and security architecture. Pakistan plugged the weaknesses in its existing non-proliferation and safety and security regimes. The principles of Pakistan's nuclear non-proliferation policy are based on adherence to the ideals and norms of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) despite its refusal to sign the Treaty due to Indian rejection of the NPT. However, Pakistan is signatory to a number of regimes, including the Convention on Nuclear Safety since 1994. Pakistan, on January 22, 2001, established Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA), under the obligations of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) programme of International Nuclear Safety. The PNRA functions on the pattern of IAEA's Advisory Group on Nuclear Security (AdSec), and it consistently re-evaluates and endeavours to improve its nuclear safety and security architecture.⁸ In fact, the Taliban activities in Pakistan generated negative perceptions and concerns over the security aspects of Pakistan's strategic arsenal. But, different US policymakers, including President Obama stated that, 'We have confidence that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is safe; that the Pakistani military is equipped to prevent extremists from taking over those arsenal.'⁹ Moreover, scores of US and Western leaderships, including US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Head of the US Central Command too have reposed confidence in the Nuclear security system of Pakistan. Pakistan takes its nuclear security seriously: as reported in the news, all nuclear nations take the security of their weapons very seriously,' writes Stephen Younger of Los Alamos National Laboratory.¹⁰

⁷ Michelle Marchesano, 'Meeting the Nuclear Security Challenge in Pakistan,' *Partnership for Global Security, February 21-22, 2008* (Washington, DC: U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration, and John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 2008): 1.

⁸ See Zulfqar Khan, 'Pakistan's Non-Proliferation Policy,' in Islamization of Pakistan 1979-2009, *The Middle East Institute, Washington D.C.*, <http://www.mei.edu> (accessed on 22 May 2013).

⁹ Jon Meacham, 'A Highly Logical approach: A Conversation with Barack Obama,' *Newsweek*, May 16, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/197891> (accessed on May 19, 2013).

¹⁰ Stephen M. Younger, *Endangered Species: How we can avoid Mass Destruction and Build a Lasting Peace* (New York: Ecco, 2007), 93.

Most significantly, in case of Pakistan, the imperative of robust security plan and cordon around its critical strategic assets is much more vital in view of its security concerns vis-à-vis its adversary. As far as the security culture of Pakistan is concerned, its nuclear devices are unassembled and maintained under a stringent monitoring system, which includes its weapons-grade material as well.¹¹ Therefore, to believe that a few thousand Taliban could possibly 'terminally disrupt – or even manage to take over and control' of¹² its nuclear assets, despite a highly professional army, and robust safety and security architecture,¹³ is out of step with the ground realities. Now, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates are in a state of disarray, if not in obliteration, in the wake of massive onslaught by Pakistani and US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan,¹⁴ and operation Zarb-e-Azab. In addition, overwhelming majority of Muslims do not subscribe to the medieval ideology of Al-Qaeda and its Taliban associates, which consider themselves in a state of war with Pakistan, and other conservative Middle Eastern Muslim states as well.¹⁵

Mutual Vulnerability

Pakistan's and India's relationship is primarily based on a perception of mutual vulnerability. Apparently, the aggressive posture of India and the absence of arms control agreement mechanism between the two have created a security dilemma in the region. Furthermore, the US-India nuclear deal and the growing Indian conventional capabilities have also enhanced Pakistan's insecurity thereby strengthening its resolve to sustain a credible deterrence posture against India. However, the country will also have to upgrade its deterrence and safety and security capabilities regularly with the changing global and regional situation.¹⁶ Actually, Pakistan relies on its strategic assets to offset India's conventional advantage.¹⁷ Some of the recent geopolitical developments, which have destabilised uneasy relationship, include:

¹¹ John Mueller, *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167, 169.

¹² *Ibid.* p 167.

¹³ Zulfqar Khan, 'Pakistan's Non-Proliferation Policy.

¹⁴ Mueller, *Atomic Obsession*, 165.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Ivo Daalder and Jan Lodal, 'The Logic of Zero: Toward a World without Nuclear Weapons,' *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2008): 93.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

1. The Indo-US nuclear deal and scores of other science and technology transfer agreements, which are expected to qualitatively and quantitatively increase India's nuclear and scientific research and development potentials.
2. Nuclear Suppliers Group's (NSG) special exemption to India to acquire nuclear technology and materials despite India being a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
3. International Atomic Energy Agency's grant of India-specific safeguards.
4. India's acquisition of ballistic missile defence (BMD) system is considered a hedge against Pakistan's deterrence posture against economically and militarily much stronger adversary.
5. Non-resolution of Kashmir dispute and the uneasy concept of regional stability are impacting the whole gamut of issues, including security of nuclear arsenal.
6. Last, but not the least, India's signing of nuclear cooperation agreements with number of NPT/other states, is furthermore enhancing Pakistan's anxiety and sense of vulnerability.

In the strategic realm, the Indian restructuring of its doctrines and institution of offensive blitzkrieg-type strategies, unfortunately, threaten the occurrence of conflicts and wars on one hand; and on other, it would tantamount to deliberately destabilizing the existing fabric of nuclear deterrence between the two countries.¹⁸ Furthermore, it can lower Pakistan's conventional threshold level, in view of already widening gulf of asymmetry in the conventional force levels of two countries. This clearly negates the very concept of rational deterrence theory,¹⁹ which emphasizes the need for rationality in doctrine and policymaking spheres to sustain the strategic balance between nuclear adversaries. This crafting of

¹⁸ See Farzana Siddique, 'India Doctrinal Orientation: Causing instability in the Region,' *CISS Insight* (February-March 2013).

¹⁹ See Frank C. Zagare, "Classical Deterrence Theory: A Critical Assessment", *International Interactions*, 21, no. 4 (1996):368: <http://cas.buffalo.edu/classes/psc/fczagare/Articles/Classical%20Deterrence%20Theory.PDF> (accessed on May 2, 2013).

offensive doctrines has enhanced mutual vulnerability,²⁰ but, at the same time, has increased the prospects of destabilizing the semblance of strategic posture between India and Pakistan. Secondly, it appears that, both countries are following the US-Soviet Union pattern of devising offensive 'doctrines of "strategic stability" through mutual vulnerability.' A contemporary strategist, Vipin Narang posits that presently the objective of nuclear weapons, especially in South Asian context, has three distinct aspects: 'a catalytic posture,²¹ an assured retaliation posture, and an asymmetric escalation posture.' First two aspects – catalytic and assured retaliation postures, were quite predominant during the Cold War, while the asymmetric escalation posture was not in the toolkit of Western policymakers during the Cold War. But unfortunately, the asymmetric escalation doctrine is embedded in the strategic perceptions and doctrinal moorings of contemporary India vis-à-vis Pakistan. Therefore, present day South Asian nuclear security tangle could only be stabilized if the nuclear rivals formulate their strategies on balanced perceptions by realistically fathoming the perils inherent in the conception of a limited conflict posture under the nuclear overhang. Operationalisation of coercive power potentials by a stronger country would spontaneously trigger a quantum response from Pakistan, to neutralize former's escalation dominance and compellence as instruments of policy. Nuclear deterrence, writes Samir Paul Kapur, is being pursued by Pakistan as a bargaining chip against India. Therefore, stability-instability paradox that sustained peace during the Cold War in Europe cannot be automatically applied to South Asian environment.²²

It is observed that the prospects of stability-instability paradox can too be made relevant to South Asian security situation, if, the predominant power demonstrates a cautious policy, especially with regards to employing strategies of escalation dominance and compellence, while pursuing bilateral diplomacy and confidence and security building measures. This would go a long way in stabilizing their deterrent postures and eventually could lead to resolution of bilateral disputes. Moreover, if the nuclear weapons could play a

²⁰ David S. Yost, 'Analysing International Nuclear Order,' *International Affairs* 83, no. 3 (May 2007): 549-74

²¹ Vipin Narang, 'Posturing for Peace? Pakistan's Nuclear Postures and South Asian Stability,' *International Security* 34, no. 3 (winter 2009/10): 38-78..

²² Samir Paul Kapur, 'India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia is not like Cold War Europe,' *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005): 127-52.

'stabilizing role in East-West relations' during the Cold War,²³ then, why it cannot perform the same role in contemporary South Asia. Furthermore, essentially both countries failure to transcend from their crises ridden past history, including non-resolution of disputes, and India's formulation of highly destabilizing strategies like the 'Cold Start Doctrine,'²⁴ is persistently impacting their relations and the regional peace.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

In the context of nuclear non-proliferation, following developments are also affecting Pakistan:

1. Since the signing of the NPT, Pakistan has demonstrated a commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation vision, which India had always claimed for itself and attached to international nuclear disarmament issues.
2. Pakistan had initially supported the draft NPT and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, but, could not join these initiatives due to peculiar regional security imperatives and India's non-adherence on the pretext of discriminatory nature of these regimes.
3. During the 1970s and 1980s, Pakistan had proposed regional level nuclear non-proliferation initiatives, and none were accepted by India.²⁵
4. There is an ongoing debate and pressure on the nuclear weapon states (NWS) and the non-NPT NWS, to fulfil the promise of nuclear disarmament (as enshrined in the Article 6 of the NPT), and to move toward "global zero" ideal, as envisaged by President Obama.²⁶

²³ Tanya Ogilvie-White, *On Nuclear Deterrence: The Correspondence of Sir Michael Quinlan* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, (2011), 37.

²⁴ See Walter C. Ladwig III, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine", *International Security* 32, no. 3 (winter 2007/08).

²⁵ Zulfqar Khan, 'The Politics of Nuclear Non-Proliferation with Particular Reference to South Asia,' *IPRI Journal* V, No.1 (Winter 2005): 86.

²⁶ See Daalder and Lodol, 'The Logic;' and Office of the Press Secretary, and The White House Press Release, 'Remarks by President Barack Obama,' April 5, 2009.

5. In the present security environment, it would be unrealistic to expect Pakistan to adhere to the NPT as non-nuclear weapon state (NNWS), to join the CTBT, or to accept the proposed Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty in its present shape, in view of its prevalent threat perceptions and growing asymmetry between India and Pakistan.

Divergent Approaches: Regional-cum-International-Centric

In the South Asian context, Pakistan has always insisted for a regional-centric approach (ascending - bottom to top - from sub-regional to regional and then to international) in order to resolve the bilateral disputes and to stabilize the asymmetrical security architecture. On the contrary, India, due to its inherent desire to equate itself with the international arms control and disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation diplomacy, has persistently urged for a top to bottom (descending - from international to regional & sub-regional level) approach. Their divergent approaches to different regional issues have kept both countries apart and in a perpetual state of mistrust. This state of a mistrust prevented them to 'transcend past experience'²⁷ for a more pragmatic and realistic lens to tackle their bilateral issues. India and Pakistan's non-transcending of fearful and mistrustful past would continue to place both countries' relations on non-pragmatic edge. In fact, the security of a nation-state is quite a diverse subject, which encompasses political, socioeconomic, and societal to military security aspects. Therefore, it is imperative to view the subject in a comprehensive perspective, instead of viewing it from a single lens. However, transcending of mistrustful past could go long way in finding a constructive approach to resolve all their outstanding disputes.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, apparently, the dimensions of international security and violence/conflict roots have shifted toward the regional and sub-regional dynamics. Therefore, evolution of region-specific principles for the architecture of framework for arms control and non-proliferation would obviously stabilize the security situation of South Asia and impel India and Pakistan to head toward bilateral conflict resolution mechanisms. However, India, since

²⁷ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p.256.

independence had consistently insisted for a uniform approach to all international issues, and it refused to sign different non-proliferation regimes on the rationale of being discriminatory and 'apartheid,' including the NPT,²⁸ the approach it has abandoned while seeking a nuclear deal with the US and waiver to the NSG.

The zenith of regional-centric security and deterrence approach would be to institute a series of measures to streamline the whole gamut of both countries' foreign and security policy calculus. Additionally, whether tactical nuclear weapons or strategic weapons are integrated in their military doctrines, even then, there is a space to calibrate strategies that do not undermine each other's national security. As both countries' conventional war-fighting capabilities and other non-military elements of security are asymmetrical, therefore, testing of Pakistan's threshold level would be highly destabilizing and dangerous for peace and security. Institution of confidence and security building measures along with resolution of bilateral issues may minimize, if not remove altogether, the possibilities of India crafting a so-called limited war fighting-type plans under the nuclear overhang. Furthermore, it is argued that both countries should find a deterrence stabilization plan to balance the regional security equation.

Conclusion

It can be deduced that nuclear security, especially between NWS and Non-NPT NWS, in the rapidly fluctuating current international situation, is a resilient instrument in the hands of states to cope with the emerging challenges to their security. It's especially so in the wake of changing nature of world politics from the traditions and norms of Westphalia to post-9/11 hegemonic-driven political structure. Therefore, the imperative of nuclear security of Pakistan requires astute handling by its policymakers. Nowadays, complexity of world politics²⁹ is premised on multi-dimensional facets, where salience of nuclear weapons persists inspite of call for 'global zero' and institution of variety of regimes, treaties and measures, and commencement of Nuclear Security Summit initiative. Other elements of strategic competition between the states based on multidimensional aspects

²⁸ Zulfqar Khan, 'The Politics.'

²⁹ Christopher P. Twomey, 'Asia's Complex Strategic Environment: Nuclear Multipolarity and other Dangers,' *Asia Policy* 11 (January 2011): 56.

would also continue to be a force to be reckoned with in the coming decades. However, the significance of states' internal security and governance system would continue to persistently determine the states' capabilities, relative position in the hierarchical world, and its future direction in the foggy international political structure. In the realm of societal security, strengthening of socioeconomic fibre, system of governance, justice, and law and order, domestic stability, and other elements of non-military security, would enable Pakistan to sail through the morass and burden left behind by the previous regimes. Essentially, it requires multilateral, internal as well as external, approaches to security to robustly face the emerging security challenges of the 21st century.