

## THE DETERRENCE VALUE OF PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS: AN EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT

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### Abstract

*This article aims at investigating the correlative relationship between Pakistan's national security and its nuclear capability. In this endeavor, the prism of neo-realism has been employed to logically explore and describe the character of Pakistan's national security aspirations with nuclear weapons. Subsequently, this proposed correlative relation has been tested against four empirical accounts. Soon after its inception, Pakistan began to experience grave external security threats to some of its core values - political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Pakistan employed various security tools of internal and external balancing other than nuclear weapons to protect its core values against the threats of war and coercion of India. But, it could not secure the intended results. For example, three major wars with India: 1948, 1965 and 1971 (disintegration of the country and creation of Bangladesh) challenged national security of Pakistan immensely. Further, post India's Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) of 1974 strategic environment decisively influenced Pakistani decision-making elite to exploit the utility of nuclear weapons as a credible tool of internal balancing. Since the configuration of nuclear weapons in its national security policy, Pakistan has successfully neutralized the Indian strategies of war and coercion. For example, the accounts of Brasstacks*

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*Exercise of 1986-1987, Kashmir Crisis of 1990, Kargil conflict and military standoff of 2001-2002 demonstrate the centrality of the nuclear weapons viz-a-viz national security of Pakistan.*

## Introduction

Pakistan experienced grave external security threats to its core security values - political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, soon after its inception in 1947. India, Afghanistan, and later on the USSR attempted to undermine its core values in one way or another.

In order to guard its core values, Pakistan employed various security means of internal and external balancing. Under the strategy of internal balancing, Pakistan endeavored to strengthen its conventional forces. Whereas under the strategy of external balancing, Pakistan inked various multilateral security pacts - like SEATO and CENTO, and the bilateral Defence Pact with the U.S. during 1950s. Further, Pakistan explored the strategy of reconciliation with its adversaries.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Pakistan negotiated various security agreements with India during 1950s. Ironically, none of these security policies could shield Pakistan during 1971 War. Consequently, it had to experience the torment of disintegration. Subsequently, its threat perception intensified manifold in the wake of India's so-called PNE in 1974. Stephen P. Cohen aptly delineated the security situation of Pakistan in 1970s in the following words:

*Some regard Pakistan as a latter-day Prussia, strategically placed to the south of the Soviet Union (and a ready-made surrogate for the American strategic plans), but others speak of Pakistan in terms of eighteen century Poland - to be swallowed up piece by piece by its neighbours – or expect it to be crushed in a vise whose jaws consist of the Soviet Union to the north and India to the south. At best, Pakistan might be an Asian Finland, required to subordinate its security policy to the will of its powerful neighbours.<sup>2</sup>*

Pakistani decision-making elite, after appreciating fully such perilous national security landscape, decided to orchestrate nuclear weapons programme, in 1974.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Pakistan contemplated nuclear

<sup>1</sup> Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *The Armed Forces of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (London: University of California Press, 1984), 135.

<sup>3</sup> Zulfqar Khan, "The Development of Overt Nuclear Weapon States in South Asia," (unpublished Ph.D's thesis, submitted at the department of Peace Studies, in Bradford University, 2000), 173.

weapons as an essential means not only to recover, but also to ameliorate its national security. As, Bharat Karnad forthrightly endorsed the relevancy of nuclear weapons with reference to national security:

*The fact of the matter is that nuclear weapons have had their importance significantly enhanced as the ultimate safeguard of sovereignty and as enforcers of peace obtained on one's own terms.<sup>4</sup>*

Since the maturation of military-oriented nuclear programme in 1984,<sup>5</sup> Pakistan has competitively neutralized India's strategies of war and coercion on several occasions. The focus of this article is to apply the prism of neo-realism to dissect the behavior of Pakistan in acquiring and retaining nuclear weapons with regards to its national security.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Specifying national security**

National security, generally, means the protection and promotion of the fundamental values of a state against internal and external threats. Nevertheless, there is no consensus among states in relation to the fundamental national security values and sources of threats. Consequently, different theoretical paradigms like realism, liberalism, Marxism, and feminism specify the concept differently. David A. Baldwin warned that the concept of national security could be dangerously ambiguous if used without specification.<sup>6</sup> The principle of specification generally includes variables like that of security for whom, from which threats, and by what means, in the first instance. It is important to mention here that the lens of realism has been employed in this article to describe the concept of national security. For realists, a state's highest duty lies in its own preservation. While defining the core values of a state, John M. Collins has distilled the national security interests as:

*The only vital national security interest is survival - survival of the State, with an acceptable degree of independence, territorial integrity, traditional life style, fundamental institutions, values, and honor intact.<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>4</sup> Bharat Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons & Indian Security: The Realist Foundations of Strategy* (New Delhi: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2002), 4.

<sup>5</sup> "Scientist Affirms Pakistan Capable of Uranium Enrichment, Weapons Production," *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Lahore), February 10, 1984.

<sup>6</sup> David A. Baldwin, "The Concept of Security," in Paul F. Diehl, (ed.), *War*, vol. 1 (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2005), 12.

<sup>7</sup> John M. Collins, *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices* (Maryland: United States Naval Institute Press, 1973), 1.

Similarly, Baldwin also opines that: "the concept of national security has traditionally included political independence and territorial integrity as values to be protected."<sup>8</sup> The preceding description facilitates us in extracting that a state, generally, considers political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity as its core values. Now question arises that either these values perceive threats from internal or external sources. Under the anarchic order of international politics, realists argue that threats of use of force or actual war are the perennial features of the interstate relations. Kenneth N. Waltz forthrightly claims that "among states, the state of nature is state of war."<sup>9</sup> So, one may safely establish that states, primarily, perceive national security threats from each other. Another related aspect of national security which requires specification is security by what means. According to realists, a state guards its national security with the instrument of its national power. Therefore, each state competes for its relative power. Wolfram F. Hanrieder, while synthesizing the correlative relationship between the variables of power and security, contends that "security and power are closely related."<sup>10</sup>

Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences confirms these aforesaid deductions and explains the concept of national security as, "the ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threats."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, another question arises that how much security a state is required to guard these values. National security is a relative term. Absolute security is unattainable. Thereby, Baldwin evinces security as "a low probability of damage to acquired values."<sup>12</sup> A state may have more or less security depending upon the availability of scarce resources and other policy objectives.

Apart from these specifications of the concept, yet there are some other specifications like 'at what cost, and in what time period'.<sup>13</sup> But, Baldwin argues, "Not all of the dimensions need to be specified all the time."<sup>14</sup>

### Neo-realism and state security

Neo-Realism considers structure of international system crucial to explain the behavior of states with respect to their national securities.

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<sup>8</sup> Baldwin, "The Concept of Security," 8.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1978), 102.

<sup>10</sup> Wolfram F. Hanrieder ed., *Arms Control and Security: Current Issues* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1979), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Morton Berkowitz, and P.G. Bock, "National Security," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 11 (New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1972), 40.

<sup>12</sup> Baldwin, "The Concept of Security," 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-12.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Waltz has explained international system on the base of its structure. According to him, the structure of international system is grounded on three principles: 1) all units of the system are internally alike; 2) the ordering principle of the units in the system is anarchic; and 3) there is uneven distribution of power among the units. He considers first two variables constant - as all units are functionally alike and arranged under one ordering principle. By indicating this fact, he establishes that uneven distribution of power is the only independent variable, which directs the behavior of all units. Under such structural settings, each unit functions on the principle of "take care of yourself". So, this realization of self-security drives states to maximize their relative power.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, neo-realists have been divided into two different strands - defensive realists and offensive realists, on the question of how much power states want. Offensive realists contend that states are potentially revisionist actor. Thereby, states indulge themselves into open-ended struggle for power.<sup>16</sup> They claim that maximization of power is the ultimate goal of any state. However, Waltz criticizes this view and claims that it is destabilizing, and self-defeating perspective. Rather, he opines that states tend to be status quo oriented. They seek only appropriate amount of power for their security.<sup>17</sup>

From the above interpretation, one may easily deduce that defensive realism presents the likely behavior of a status quo state. On the other hand, offensive realism explains the probable outlook of a revisionist state. If we cautiously observe the pattern of international relations, we can easily find that the international community of states essentially comprises on these both kinds of states. Offensive and defensive neo-realist paradigms help significantly when a researcher aims at explaining the character of mutual interaction of a status quo and a revisionist state. Glenn Snyder aptly described that "...the two theories could work in tandem - the one chiefly explaining the security behavior of status quo powers, the other the behavior of revisionist states."<sup>18</sup>

John J. Mearsheimer admonishes status quo states that a potential revisionist state may adopt the strategies of war and black-mail<sup>19</sup> to maximize its power. He proposes "balancing and buck-passing" as likely counter strategies to overwhelm the potential adversary. States can do internal or external balancing acts in order to deter or even to fight a war with adversaries. In internal balancing, a state strengthens its own defence at the expense of its resources, while in the external balancing, a state can

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<sup>15</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 93- 106.

<sup>16</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 126.

<sup>18</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, "Mearsheimer's World-Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security: A Review Essay," *International Security* 27, no. 1(summer 2002): 158.

<sup>19</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 12.

make a defensive alliance with other states, especially with major powers in order to contain the dangerous opponent. With the buck-passing strategy, state tries to rub shoulders with the great powers to check the aggressor while it remains on the sideline. As a matter of fact, the strategy of buck-passing is more intriguing, but it is very hard to achieve in the prevalent international system, as major powers, generally, display reluctance to protect the other state from its adversary at the expense of their own precious resources. So, one may assume that only the strategy of balancing is feasible for the states in order to guard their survival against the adversaries' strategies of war and black-mail. Now question arises either external balancing or internal balancing is appropriate. A deep analysis would endorse that nuclear revolution has strengthened the value of internal balancing in comparison to external balancing. Lawrence Freedman forthrightly deliberated the relevancy of nuclear weapons under internal balancing strategy for national security that:

*Nuclear weapons provide an ultimate guarantee of security against external aggression and thus, in principle can potentially protect the most vital interests in the most hostile environments, while avoiding dependence upon allies.*<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, Waltz also endorsed that "defense and deterrence are strategies which a status quo country may follow, hoping to dissuade a state from attacking."<sup>21</sup> These theoretical perspectives of neo-realism enable us to understand the character of national security aspirations of India and Pakistan. History has documented that India never remained status quo. It has always pursued national security policies to maximize its power in the region. It is continuously exploiting every possible opportunity to maximize its power at the expense of vital security values of other regional states. The track record of Indian foreign and defence policies is loaded with such examples. Contrarily, Pakistan, since its inception, is behaving essentially like a status quo state. It has drafted its national security policies to secure only appropriate amount of power to guard its national security values. And, it is quite evidential from its various national security endeavors, since independence to date. These include conciliatory approach towards its adversaries, formation of external alliances, relatively up-gradation of its conventional forces, and eventually acquisition of nuclear weapons. A holistic dissection would reveal that all these bids of Pakistan were aimed at securing merely balance of threats rather than balance of power.

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<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "Great Powers, Vital Interests and Nuclear Weapons," *Survival* 36, no. 4 (1994): 39.

<sup>21</sup> Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities", *American Political Science Review*. 84, no. 3 (September 1990): 732.

## Pakistan's threat perception

Pakistan considers deterrence value of nuclear weapons as an ultimate guarantor of its survival in ever-changing regional and global security settings. As a matter of fact, Pakistan did not abruptly conceive nuclear weapons as an appropriate mean for its national security. Rather, Pakistani decision-making elite gradually realized the value of nuclear weapons. This evolution of nuclear thoughts occurred due to Pakistan's geographical characteristics, unsettled borders, lingering dispute of Kashmir, offensive capabilities and intentions of India, its own inability in maintaining a conventional deterrent against India because of resource constraint,<sup>22</sup> its failure in seeking security guarantees from external powers and off course the incidents of 1965 war, 1971 defeat and of 1974 PNE of India. Apart from these direct motivational factors, there were some other supplementary factors like Pakistan wanted to attract the due attention of world powers in resolving its contentious issues like Kashmir, with India, to strengthen its diplomatic clout during any erupted crisis and to elevate the morale of its relatively weak conventional forces. In sum, all these direct and indirect motivational factors were principally security-driven. Thereby, one can strongly argue that Pakistan sought acquisition of nuclear weapons only to enhance its national security. Aliuddin has forthrightly explained this point and stated that:

*Nations in a position such as Pakistan's with a genuine concern for security and a history of conflict with hostile neighbours tend to lean on the first justification - that of security through an independent nuclear deterrence. Nuclear deterrence can be a substitute for usually optimistic and misplaced dependence on allies and outside sources of weapons. It can also strengthen a country's bargaining position. Given the ineffectiveness of the NPT, an indigenous nuclear capability appears as a desirable guarantee against threats to national sovereignty.*<sup>23</sup>

It would be useful here to appreciate these motivational considerations in-detail. Pakistan's geographical contours lack sufficient strategic depth. Its main communication infrastructure is prone to India's offensive formations. Its main population centers locate very close to international border.<sup>24</sup> Its major industrial zones are concentrated in Punjab which shares a large border with India. Pakistan also contests

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<sup>22</sup> Kamal Matinuddin, *The Nuclearization of South Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 49.

<sup>23</sup> Aliuddin, "Pakistan's Nuclear Dilemma", *Seaford House Papers* (1990): 8.

<sup>24</sup> A.Z. Hilali, "Pakistan's Nuclear Deterrence: Political and Strategic Dimensions," accessed August 14, 2008, <http://www.sam.gov.tr/perceptions/Volume7/Dec2002Feb2003/PerceptionVolumeVII3AZHilali.pdf>

disputed territories like Jammu and Kashmir, vaguely demarcated borders like that of Rann of Kutch and Siachen glacier. Since the appearance of the concept of nation-states at the international level, frontiers inherit considerable significance. Moreover, the significance of the protection of frontiers becomes manifold for a weak state like Pakistan - as territories elevate national power through different ways.

Undoubtedly the Indian leadership did not appreciate the emergence of Pakistan as an independent state, in 1947. Indeed, they desired to unravel the partition process.<sup>25</sup> Thereby, the Indian leadership posed numerous direct and indirect threats to Pakistan. In this connection, Indian leadership manipulated the due geographical, institutional, military<sup>26</sup> and economic share of Pakistan at the time of and immediately after its independence. Henceforth, Pakistan inherited weak conventional forces. Pakistan was lacking in training institutions, weapons and equipment and above all economic resources to boost its armed forces. Later on, Pakistan tried to upgrade its inferior conventional forces vis-à-vis India with the help of the US and the European countries. In its bid, Pakistan joined military alliances like SEATO and CENTO in mid 1950s. However, Pakistan could not develop its conventional military capability enough to deter India in 1971 due to the limited supply of weapons and equipment from its allies, arms embargos from the US during 1965 war, its own failure to initiate the required indigenization process of weapons production, its failure in establishing a sound economy to support military expenditure and lastly, the absence of consistent and competent national security strategies.

Since 1950s, Pakistan endeavored hard to seek external security shield from external powers primarily from the US and later on from China. However, it failed in getting substantial security cover against India. Even, China refused to intervene militarily on the behalf of Pakistan during 1971 War.<sup>27</sup> After the PNE of India in 1974, all nuclear powers did not accept Pakistan's request for positive security guarantee against the Indian nuclear threat. In the absence of security guarantee from the world's major powers, Pakistan's threat perception increased manifold.

Lastly, the post 1965, 1971 wars and Indian PNE in 1974 security appreciations compelled Pakistan to seek nuclear weapons as a reliable source of internal balancing. Post 1965 war security policy evaluations unearthed that the Kashmir issue would continue to exist as a major irritant in India-Pakistan relations.<sup>28</sup> Second, the notion of conventional inferiority vis-à-vis India was revisited among Pakistani policy makers. Third, Pakistan's multilateral and bilateral security pacts did not provide

<sup>25</sup> Abdul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Calcutta: Oriental Longmans, 1959), 242.

<sup>26</sup> Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1967), 182-88.

<sup>27</sup> Bhumitra Chakma, *Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.



any substantial political, military, psychological clout to Pakistan against India. Similarly, the debacle of 1971 brought certain security apprehensions among decision-making bodies of Pakistan. For instance, Pakistan could not deter India conventionally. India did not respect Pakistan's territorial integrity and political independence. And, India would not miss any opportunity to ruin Pakistan as an independent and sovereign political entity. No external power could be considered reliable during the need of hour.

Subsequently, the Indian PNE in 1974 appeared a direct threat to Pakistan's existence.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Islamabad perceived that India could also use its nuclear capability to blackmail it. Chakma has forthrightly described the threat perception of Pakistan that developed in the wake of Indian PNE in the following words, "Islamabad considered the Buddha Smile as a threat to its very survival and an instrument of 'blackmail' and 'coercion'."<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Pakistan also decided to acquire nuclear weapons because of some of the supplementary motives. For instance, Pakistan wanted to strengthen its diplomatic stature during crisis situation and to restore the morale of its weak armed forces and of its people that was lost in the wake of 1971 defeat. Cheema has succinctly pointed out this dimension and stated that:

*Bhutto not only saw the development of a nuclear weapons capability as psychologically reassuring for the armed forces and the population at large but also as a diplomatic leverage against friends and foes alike.*<sup>31</sup>

Another supplementary factor was that Pakistan wanted to draw the attention of world powers in resolving its contentious issues like Kashmir, with India. Kheli aptly elaborated this Pakistani motive in the following words:

*The big powers have somehow come to accept the occurrence of conventional wars, the accompanying defeats and territorial occupation - the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War and the resultant dismemberment of Pakistan being a case in point. The use of unclear "device", on the other hand, is totally unacceptable.... To hold this weapon, then, is automatically to involve the major powers in the*

<sup>29</sup> Zalmay Khalilzad, "Pakistan and the Bomb", *Survival* XXI, no. 6(November/December 1979): 246.

<sup>30</sup> Chakma, *Nuclear Weapons*, 21.

<sup>31</sup> Zafar Iqbal Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policy Under Z.A. Bhutto And Zia-UL-Haq: An Assessment," *Strategic Studies* XIV, no. 4 (Summer 1992): 8.

*problems that may lead to its use, or in the solutions that may preclude its use.*<sup>32</sup>

These preceding direct and indirect motives eventually forced Pakistan to appreciate nuclear weapons as valuable security shield. Kheli has aptly summarized Pakistan's appreciation of nuclear weapons and described that:

*Rather, the nuclear option is, in the Pakistani view, a means to an end: namely, national security. In the absence of conventional military power and satisfactory diplomatic alternatives to ensure security, the Pakistanis see the nuclear option...as a deterrent by presenting to the would-be attacker a credible threat of massive destruction.*<sup>33</sup>

### **Pakistan's national security with nuclear weapons: an empirical account**

Nuclear weapons are performing an important role in guarding Pakistan's national security. Nuclear weapons were figured in Pakistan's national security policy as a functional deterrent against external aggression and of any blackmail or coercion since 1987. To determine the role of nuclear weapons in Pakistan's national security, four empirical accounts have been studied in this research piece. These cases include: 1) Brasstacks Exercise of 1986-1987; 2) Kashmir Crisis of 1990; 3) Kargil Crisis of 1999; 4) and Military Standoff of 2001-2002.

#### **Brasstacks exercise of 1986-1987**

Brasstacks crisis erupted in late 1986 when the Indian military initiated a massive military exercise just twenty miles away from the international border in the Rajasthan sector, alongside the Pakistani province of Sindh. It was the biggest military exercise in Indian history-as it had involved the mobilization of two armored divisions, one mechanized division, and the six infantry divisions. The troops were carrying live ammunition.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Indian troops were also enjoying full-fledge air support from the Indian air force. According to various security analysts, India had four main objectives in launching such mega military exercise along with the Pakistani borders. First, India intended to pressurize Pakistan in ceasing its alleged support for Sikh community which initiated

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<sup>32</sup> Shirin Tahir-Kheli, "Pakistan's Nuclear Option and U.S. Policy," *Orbis* 22, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 362.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>34</sup> Abdul Sattar, "Nuclear Issues in South Asia: A Pakistani Perspective," *Pakistan's Security and the Nuclear Option* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1995), 72.

arms insurgency inside India for a separate homeland.<sup>35</sup> Second, India wanted to test its newly developed “Sunderji Doctrine” comprising on the concepts of mechanized, mobility, and air support.<sup>36</sup> Third, India was probably conceiving to initiate a war with Pakistan, so she could, in the pretext of war, cut Pakistan into two halves. Fourth, Indian military leadership was also interested in launching preemptive strikes in order to neutralize Pakistan’s nascent nuclear capabilities, once and for all.<sup>37</sup> In sum, these four Indian motives behind Brasstacks operation clearly depicted that India was contemplating to employ the strategies of war and blackmail against Pakistan.

On assessing these intensions of India, Pakistan not only mobilized its armed forces, but also activated its diplomatic channels. Pakistani leadership appreciated that such conventional means would not work effectively. Consequently, Pakistan felt it important to exploit the deterrence value of nuclear weapons to guard its national security against the threats of war and blackmail. In the first instance, Pakistan engaged in indirect nuclear signaling to India. In this context, Pakistani leadership arranged an interview of Dr. A. Q. Khan on March 1, 1987. This interview was simultaneously published in Islamabad, New Delhi, and London. In his interview, Dr. A. Q. Khan stated that:

*What the CIA has been saying about our possessing the bomb is correct and so is the speculation of some foreign newspapers.... nobody can undo Pakistan or take us for granted. We are here to stay and let it to be clear that we shall use the bomb if our existence is threatened.*<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, Pakistani government, to retain the policy of nuclear ambiguity, astutely refused to endorse the authenticity of the interview. In the following days, the then Pakistani president Gen Zia-ul-Haq also got engaged in nuclear signaling in a comparatively less provocative manner. While giving interview to Time Magazine, he stated, “Pakistan has the capability of building the bomb whenever it wishes.”<sup>39</sup> Several security analysts are of the opinion that the indirect nuclear signaling of Pakistan

<sup>35</sup> Cheema, “Conflict, Crisis and Nuclear Stability in South Asia,” paper presented at a workshop on New Challenges to Strategic Stability in South Asia, University of Bradford, in July 2004, accessed December 20, 2009, accessed on October 7, 2010, <http://www.sassi.org/pdfs/Cheema.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Devin T. Hegarty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Weapons: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), 96-97.

<sup>37</sup> Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace: The Secret History of India’s Quest to Be a Nuclear Power* (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), 322-23.

<sup>38</sup> Kuldip Nayar, “We Have the A-Bomb, Says Pakistan’s ‘Dr. Strangelove’”, *Observer* (London), March 1, 1987.

<sup>39</sup> William R. Doerner, “Knocking at the Nuclear Door”, *Times Magazine*, March 30, 1987, p. 42.

did a positive role in diffusing the crisis. Cheema has endorsed the role played by nuclear weapons in diffusing the Brasstacks crisis and contended that:

*To defuse the Brasstacks crisis, Pakistan relied upon its nuclear weapons capability—this being the first time in the history of the Subcontinent that nuclear deterrence was invoked. The channels Pakistani reportedly employed in signaling an incipient deterrent capability, however, were unconventional and indirect.<sup>40</sup>*

Similar kind of observation also came from the former foreign minister of Pakistan Abdul Sattar. He ranked the role of nuclear weapons very significant in defusing the Brasstacks crisis and stated that:

*Predictably, Pakistani forces made counter-deployments, which were considered threatening by India, although that was perhaps not the only reason why the crisis was defused. South Asia watchers consider the restraints imposed by the nuclear environment to be a prime factor in the happy ending.<sup>41</sup>*

### **The Kashmir crisis of 1990**

In the late 1980s, Kashmiri freedom fighters succeeded in developing a full-blown secessionist insurgency in the Indian-held Kashmir. New Delhi blamed Pakistan for providing material assistance to the Kashmiri militants. On this pretext, India again mobilized its armed forces along with the Pakistani borders. Indian leadership had two main objectives behind this mobilization. First, India wanted to coerce Pakistan for ceasing its political and moral support to Kashmiris. Second, Indian military leadership was also inclined in carrying out surgical strikes against Pakistan. To pressurize Pakistan, India moved and deployed its main striking forces along with the Rajasthan border in the South and put the forces in defence mode in the North. The then Indian Prime Minister, V.P. Singh, warned Islamabad in the Lok Sabha, "Our message to Pakistan is that you cannot get away with taking Kashmir without a war. They will have to pay a very heavy price and we have the capability to inflict heavy losses."<sup>42</sup> He also cautioned Indians to be "psychologically prepared" for a war against Pakistan.

In order to neutralize this imminent grave threat to its national security, Pakistan mobilized its armed forces. But in the backdrop of its conventional asymmetries vis-à-vis India, Pakistani decision-making elite

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<sup>40</sup> Cheema, *Conflict, Crisis and Nuclear Stability*, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Sattar, "Nuclear Issues in South Asia," p. 72.

<sup>42</sup> The Times of India (New Delhi), April 11, 1990.

again decided to invoke nuclear deterrent against any Indian bid to wage war or to blackmail it. Yet, it is a question mark among the academic circles till today that how Pakistan did nuclear signaling to India during the crisis. Apart from this debate, it is a recognized fact that the nuclear capability induces caution in the minds of the decision makers. Cheema described, "The crisis ended due to fear of escalation, nuclear deterrence and the US mediation."<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the role of nuclear weapons was more distinctive. Pakistani Senator Mushahid Hussain believed that:

*During May 1990...Pakistani policy-makers and defence planners were convinced that it was the Indian fear of Pakistani nuclear retaliation that deterred India from attacking Pakistan although its ground troop deployments were apparently poised for a surgical strike against Pakistan.<sup>44</sup>*

Similarly, the former Indian Army Chief Gen. Sundarji also admitted the essential role of nuclear weapons in defusing the crisis and stated, "because of nuclear deterrence, the menu of Indian response to Pakistani provocation in Indian-held Kashmir no longer includes launching a bold offensive thrust across the Punjab border."<sup>45</sup> Former foreign minister of Pakistan Abdul Sattar again applauded the role of nuclear weapons in guarding Pakistan's national security during 1990 crisis and claimed, "The nuclear capability was again a factor in defusing the crisis that erupted in 1990 following the uprising in India-held Kashmir."<sup>46</sup>

### **The Kargil conflict of 1999**

The Kargil conflict kicked off in the spring 1999, when a small contingent of Pakistani army occupied some of the seasonally vacated Indian posts in the Kargil sector. However, literature is replete with conflicting explanations regarding the causes behind this maneuver of Pakistan. Most of the explanations are either too parsimonious or too biased. Few Indian commentators have described the episode of the Kargil war as another reflection of the revisionist behavior of Pakistan.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Shaukat Qadir, a Pakistan-based security analyst, has opined that the ambitious personality traits of the individuals, who were part of

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<sup>43</sup> Cheema, *Indian Nuclear Deterrence: Its Evolution, Development and Implications for South Asian Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 408.

<sup>44</sup> Mushahid Hussain, "The Nuclear Issue and South Asia: Security via Deterrence," *The News* (Rawalpindi), April 24, 1994.

<sup>45</sup> Hegarty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Weapons*, 99.

<sup>46</sup> Sattar, "Nuclear Issues in South Asia," 72.

<sup>47</sup> Jasjit Singh, "The Fourth War," in *Kargil 1999: Pakistan's Fourth War for Kashmir*, ed. Jasjit Singh (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 1999), 120-121; Y. M. Bammi, *Kargil 1999: The Impregnable Conquered* (New Delhi: Gorkha, 2002), 89-90.

the then Pakistani chain of command, were the root causes of it.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, conventional wisdom dictates that Kargil conflict cannot emerge in the strategic vacuum. Some of the leading South Asian security analysts have established that Pakistan initiated the limited Kargil offense to balance some of its historical strategic and tactical grievances vis-à-vis India. These historical grievances include India's illegitimate occupation of Kashmir, its role in Pakistan's disintegration in 1971, its occupation of Siachen Glacier in 1984 and subsequently its perpetual incursions along the Northern Line of Control.<sup>49</sup>

On the pretext to overwhelm this limited maneuver of Pakistani troops, India heavily reinforced troop, weapons and equipment in the entire sector. Indian Air Force was called on too. Moreover, Indian leadership also started to rationalize other options-like widened the conflict across the other Pakistani borders along with the threat of nuclear weapons. According to an Indian study, nuclear warheads were readied, and delivery systems, including Mirage 200 aircrafts, short-ranged Prithvi missiles, and medium-ranged Agni missiles, were prepared for possible use.<sup>50</sup> These developments aggravated Pakistan's threat perception. To guard its core national security values, Pakistan decision making bodies decided to invoke nuclear signaling. Nonetheless, Pakistan did restrained nuclear signaling. The official Kargil Review Committee report of India, on December 15, 1999, confirmed that Pakistan conveyed "veiled" nuclear signals to India during the conflict.<sup>51</sup> Ostensibly, U.S played important role in defusing the situation in July 1999. But, the distinctive security commentators believe that the nuclear capabilities of Pakistan performed decisive role in restraining India from further escalation. For instance, Timothy Hoyt succinctly contended, "India's mobilization in 1999 was obvious - the army cancelled leave, and moved elements of mechanized units to the borders of Gujrat, Rajasthan, and Punjab - but its reluctance to consider horizontal escalation strongly suggests that its was deterred."<sup>52</sup> Waltz has also endorsed, "Kargil showed once again.... that the presence of nuclear weapons prevented escalation from major skirmish to full-scale

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<sup>48</sup> Shaukat Qadir, "An Analysis of the Kargil Conflict," *Rthe USI Journal* 147, no. 2(April 2002): 24-30.

<sup>49</sup> Feroz Hassan Khan, Peter R. Lavoy, and Christopher Clary, "Pakistan's Motivations and Calculations for the Kargil Conflict," in *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict*, ed. Peter R. Lavoy (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 68.

<sup>50</sup> Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, 437.

<sup>51</sup> The Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000),243.

<sup>52</sup> Timothy Hoyt, "Kargil: The Nuclear Dimension," in a book on Kargil, Naval postgraduate School, Monterey, California. Quoted in Cheema, 'Conflict, Crisis and Nuclear Stability,' 9.

war.”<sup>53</sup> The preceding elaboration establishes that nuclear capability of Pakistan successfully harnessed India from initiating a full-fledge war against it.

### **The military standoff of 2001-2002**

On December 13, 2001, five gunmen attacked the Indian Parliament. Fourteen people died including the five suspected terrorists. India, without clearly establishing the whereabouts and connections of these suspected attackers, held Pakistan responsible for it. Actually, Indian leadership inclined to manipulate the global anti-terrorism campaign against Pakistan. India mounted its largest mobilization in the past thirty years and concentrated troops and equipment along the Pakistani borders. India relocated its air assets along the LoC and borders with Pakistan. India also moved its naval ships to the Arabian Sea, closer to Pakistan.<sup>54</sup>

On December 19, 2001, India's Home Minister, L. K. Advani sent demarche to Pakistan conveying India's intensions for launching surgical strikes against the alleged Islamic militants undertaking Jihad in Kashmir.<sup>55</sup> It was a direct threat to Pakistan. Soon after this, the Indian army chief, General S. Padmanabhan evinced that the recent military buildup was not an exercise and stated, “A lot of viable options (beginning from a strike on the camps to a full conventional war) are available. We can do it.... If we go to war, jolly good.”<sup>56</sup> Later on, Pravin Sawhney, a leading Indian analyst, claimed that in January and June 2002, the Indian army was fully prepared to attack across the LoC.<sup>57</sup>

From the outset, Pakistani leadership denounced the terrorists attack on the Indian Parliament. In order to counter the threats of Indian war and of coercion, Pakistan activated its armed forces. Pakistan also energized its diplomatic channels. On measuring the gravity of Indian threat, Pakistan again transmitted nuclear signals to India. During the crisis, the official channels of communication between Pakistan and India were totally disrupted.<sup>58</sup> This untoward development compelled both nuclear powered states to heavily rely on intermediary and indirect channels of communication. Both countries attempted to send nuclear signals through public statements. In this connection, President Musharraf,

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<sup>53</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz and Scott D. Sagan, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 115.

<sup>54</sup> Khan, “Pakistan-India Military Standoff: A Nuclear Dimension,” *IPRI Journal* III, no. 1 (Winter 2003):109.

<sup>55</sup> *The Times of India* (New Delhi), December 20, 2001.

<sup>56</sup> “Army Ready for War, Says Chief,” *The Statesman* (New Delhi), January 12, 2002.

<sup>57</sup> Pravin Sawhney, “Conventional Parity with Pakistan,” *The Pioneer* (New Delhi), June 29, 2002.

<sup>58</sup> Rahul Roy Chaudhury, “Nuclear Doctrine, Declaratory Policy, and Escalation Control,” *The Stimson Center*, accessed November 5, 2007, <http://www.stimson.org/southasia/pdf/ESCCONTROLCHAPTER5.pdf>

in his televised address to Nation on Pakistan's National Day on March 23, 2002, conveyed indirectly nuclear signaling to India and stated that:

*By Allah's Grace, Pakistan today possesses a powerful military might and can give a crushing reply to all types of aggression. Anybody who poses a challenge to our security and integrity could be taught an unforgettable lesson.*<sup>59</sup>

Ostensibly, President Musharraf did not use the word of nuclear weapons, but the words of "unforgettable lesson" had a clear connotation of nuclear retaliation, if India crosses the frontiers of Pakistan. Subsequently on May 30, 2002, President Musharraf again aired nuclear signaling to India while saying, "Even an inch" of Indian incursion across the Kashmir divide will "unleash a storm that will sweep the enemy...the people of Pakistan have always had faith in the ability of the armed forces to inflict unbearable damage to the enemy."<sup>60</sup> Again, President Musharraf avoided the word of nuclear weapons but "unbearable damage" could only be done with the nuclear weapons.

Eventually, this compound-military crisis ended without converting into a hot war between India and Pakistan. Admittedly, the US diplomacy, and the conventional deterrent of Pakistan jointly played a mentionable role in the diffusion of the crisis. But, the nuclear capability of Pakistan again played a prominent and visible role in containing India. Sridhar Krishnaswam noted that Pakistan's strategy of offensive defence, nuclear and conventional deterrence, and determination to resist the perceived Indian "hegemonic attitude" were the other factors that had restrained India from initiating a limited conflict.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Waltz also lauded the role of nuclear weapons in curtailing the crisis of 2001-2002 and restoring the peace in the South Asia. He notes:

*The proposition that nuclear weapons limit the extent of fighting and ultimately preserve peace again found vindication.*<sup>62</sup>

Subsequently, Sawhney, while evaluating the role of nuclear weapons in ceasing the crisis during 2002, openly admitted that nuclear weapons had played the prominent role in diluting the clouds of war in South Asia.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Accessed December 12, 2007, [http://www.infopak.gov.pk/President\\_address\\_23March.htm](http://www.infopak.gov.pk/President_address_23March.htm)

<sup>60</sup> The News International (Rawalpindi), May 30, 2002.

<sup>61</sup> Sridhar Krishnaswam, "We Can Take Offensive Into Indian Territory: Musharraf," The Hindu (Chennai), May 27, 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Waltz and Sagan, The Spread of Nuclear Weapons, 124.

<sup>63</sup> Sawhney, "Conventional Parity," The Pioneer, June 29, 2002.



## Conclusion

The preceding account reflects that the deterrence value of nuclear weapons has played a distinctive role in protecting Pakistan's core security values against any external threats of war and blackmail. Leading Pakistani scholar is of the opinion that had Pakistan possessed a nuclear deterrent in 1971, "The dismemberment of Pakistan could have been averted."<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, Indian leadership is perpetually contemplating various strategic options - Ballistic Missile Defence, expansion of its nuclear programme and the Cold Start doctrine, to exploit prevalent regional strategic settings in its favour. Thereby, it is imperative that Pakistani leadership should remain upright in conceiving and subsequently adopting pragmatic counter strategic options in accordance to its national security interests. As, Albert Wohlstetter rightly cautioned nuclear states, "Deterrence demands hard, continuing, intelligent work, but it can be achieved.... The balance is not automatic".<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Mahbubul Haq, "Internal Nuclear Threat to South Asia," *Regional Studies*, XIV (1996): 27.

<sup>65</sup> Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," *Foreign Affairs* XXXVII, no. 2(January 1959): 221-22.

