



«INDO-PAKISTANI CONFLICT»

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Abstract: *This article examines the implications of possession of nuclear weapons for war between India and Pakistan. Existing literature derived from US-Soviet interaction during the Cold War may have little relevance to conflicts between developing nations with small and vulnerable nuclear arsenals. Applying power cycle theory within a regional context, this study explores possible global ramifications of a South Asian nuclear arms race.*

Key words: *Deterrence, sovereign, management, diplomacy.*

Introduction. Power cycle theory suggests that Indo-Pakistani military competition may accelerate shifts in the relative power trends throughout Asia, causing abrupt changes in future foreign policy expectations and security that could ultimately affect the nuclear programs of both Russia and the United States. Controlling tensions and de-escalation take on distinct processes and meanings in the Indo-Pakistani context. Conventional deterrence, epitomized by a Cold War strategy of mutually assured destruction, does not fully explain the picture. The threat of mutual annihilation has never been genuine given the physical and cultural closeness of India and Pakistan; consequently, the existential bias in deterrence theory does not shape how India and Pakistan use nuclear weapons. Conventional deterrence theory flexes its analytical muscle more often in cases of immediate deterrence during times of a pressing specific threat than during times of general deterrence where the focus is on preventing military conflict between rival nuclear giants. As such, India and Pakistan manage de-escalation as an exercise in geopolitical weaponry, engaging their nuclear capabilities as political tools to obtain economic and political goals within the wider international community.

As demonstrated by the early 2019 India-Pakistan military standoff, responsibility for crisis management falls on the shoulders of Indian and Pakistani leadership. They cannot count on external countries like the United States to intervene significantly and/or spearhead de-escalation.

In the future, India and Pakistan will have to learn, adapt, and script new bilateral forms of confidence-building measures, drawing more from their shared history and culture than some abstract sense of game theory. Moreover, trilateral negotiations including permutations of the big five nuclear states the United States,



Russia, China, India, and Pakistan are still pertinent. Nevertheless, such a reality will also have to take into account nonstate actors and various terrorist/militant groups that continue to take advantage of emergent situations. This article briefly discusses India's and Pakistan's nuclear weapons programs and stresses the strategic interrelationships in the region extend beyond a simple dyad. This operating framework will speak to the limitations of the bipolar systems-preserving model of deterrence theory when analyzing the South Asian security situation. The article then considers three distinct military conflicts between India and Pakistan that have occurred since 1998: the 1999 Kargil War, the 2001-2 India-Pakistan standoff, and the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

The article uses these conflicts to investigate the nature of escalation and de-escalation especially the role of external diplomacy in defusing various tensions. Finally, the article considers the conflicts in early 2019 involving India and Pakistan, focusing on the immediate events following the 2019 Pulwama attack. This history will explain how tensions arose between India and Pakistan and how both countries not only ratcheted up their aggressive discourse toward one another, but more importantly how they eventually engaged in effective crisis management. Both countries did so in a new way that de-escalated the situation and altered their appreciation for the role of crafting stability themselves. The United States played a less interventionist role in early 2019; consequently, both India and Pakistan had to contend with a situation that did not rely on the diplomacy of external nation-states. The 2019 standoff shows crisis management is a process, a set of dialogues, and an ongoing experiment necessitating limited military confrontations as operational cum-heuristic opportunities.

Partition was the original sin. With the dissolution of the British Raj in 1947, millions of people were displaced during the formation of India and Pakistan as two sovereign nations. The resulting situation was not a political vacuum in the strict sense; instead, the violent partition ensured a complex set of relations and territorial disputes that would remain just as contentious as on the eve of India's independence. Despite diverse ethnicities in their populations, India and Pakistan secular nationstates share kinship with respect to history and culture.

Indo-Pakistani relations have witnessed several violent conflicts over the past decades including the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 and countless other border skirmishes and limited military confrontations some having to do with Kashmir.

Because of this history and the fact both countries possess nuclear weapons, their mutual hostilities have reached a level of concern. At first glance, such



concern is somewhat moderated by the operating frameworks of conventional deterrence theory, or so it seems.

Yet India and Pakistan cannot be thought of as small-scale versions of larger nuclear states; their South Asian-styled path to the nuclear age was heavily influenced by external actors the United States and China who were inextricably part of the nuclear deterrence posture and strategy of both countries.

As a result, becoming a nuclear power did not mean India and Pakistan inherited a classical deterrence theory manual that would automatically apply to conflict between them.

In the early 2000s pundits were debating whether India could maintain escalation dominance. India began to consider developing tactical nuclear weapons as a strategic way to pressure Pakistan to disband or dissuade anti-India terrorist groups. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's Yearbook, India and Pakistan have around 140 nuclear warheads in their respective arsenals.

India has been able to produce plutonium for use in nuclear weapons, while Pakistan is working on transitioning from the production of highly enriched uranium to plutonium.

Conclusion. The SIPRI report also states India and Pakistan are expanding their arsenals and testing capabilities. India has air-, land-, and sea-based missiles, securing a robust second-strike capability. Meanwhile, Pakistan is working toward narrowing the gap to match India's triad by developing a sea-based nuclear missile delivery system. Although India continues to claim a no-first-strike policy, it reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in a preemptive counterforce strike if it believes Pakistan is gearing up for a first-strike attack. Also under its current doctrine, India reserves the right to use nuclear forces first when they are attacked with biological or chemical weapons.

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