

The impact of Civil Military Cooperation on Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia

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Abstract - Nuclear Weapons are a powerful tool in contemporary international politics, since they act as a crucial element in deciding the strategic bearings of national, regional, and global security. (De Silva, 2012) However proliferation of nuclear weapons increases the chances of a nuclear war. India and Pakistan are the two nuclear weapon states in South Asia that have deep seated enmity over Kashmir. Generally, nuclear powers with similar interest which amounts to a rivalry are considered unlikely to maintain a stable deterrence. Therefore the security of the South Asian region depends- to a considerable extent- on the matrix of nuclear deterrence of India and Pakistan. In this backdrop the possibility of non-adherence to deterrence by India or Pakistan could not be totally ruled out. A scenario of pre-emptive nuclear aggressiveness against each other may result in a worst case security destabilization of the region. One may argue that the nuclear safety of the region is loosely ensured by the vaunted international treaty mechanisms of nuclear disarmament. Furthermore the great powers have also shown a lethargic attitude in pushing India and Pakistan towards regulating their respective nuclear programs to move towards disarmament. The strategic decision making culture of India and Pakistan on Nuclear issues have differences which are poles apart. However India and Pakistan have managed to overcome their inherent problems of nuclear programmes and to avoid the risk of confrontation so far. There are four factors that influence the balance matrix of Indo- Pakistan nuclear relationship. They are the civil military decision making process, the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), events taking place which could lead to pre-emptive nuclear aggression and nuclear programme verification. The civil - military cooperation of both countries stands as a common element in the above mentioned factors. This paper intends to look at the Civil- Military cooperation as a significant element of nuclear stability in South Asia during the absence of several other stabilising factors mentioned above. As Scott Sagan argues 'organizational proclivities in South Asia could be effectively controlled by tight and sustainable civilian control over military'.(Sagan, 2012) This paper further tries to understand the complex issues of civil- military cooperation in India and Pakistan within and between

states (vertically and horizontally) in order to ensure nuclear stability in the region.

Key terms: Deterrence, Civil-Military Cooperation, Strategic Culture

i. INTRODUCTION

It could be postulated that Nuclear deterrence, as a concept, is easy to apply to explain bipolar power matrix rather than multipolar. This argument is further established due to the existence of security dilemma and arms race during the cold war period. Even though some argue, deterrence is not a positive way to gain peace. However these deterrence based concepts have resulted in peace and stability to the international system for past five decades. The collapse of the bipolar world order in the latter half of the twentieth century marked an emergence of new security architecture to cater to the current international system. The mechanics of deterrence and nuclear stability became more complicated and a questionable phenomenon during this post-cold war Uni- multi polar setup. Parallel to these developments in the international system, significant changes occurred in South Asian regional polity. Nuclearization of South Asia is one such change. Despite the less attention given by the IR scholars, Nuclearization of South Asian states has produced worse threats than the conventional nuclear dangers existed during the cold war.

The most serious conflict could occur due to differences of two nuclear strategies of India and Pakistan. Adding to that, the asymmetries in geography, population, resources and international support makes the situation worse.

From the very outset, the Indian Nuclear strategy was described as a part of a political game that was initiated not to use in war but to take the political leverage against their opponents. India's intentions were expressed in a statement made by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in Parliament in May 1998 :

"India is now a nuclear weapon state... We do not intend to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country; these are weapons of self-defence, to ensure that India is not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion."(Nuclear Files 1998)

Even though Indian intention was noble, the ground realities and the naked truth seem to be harsh. The fact of having China and Pakistan, two nuclear rival states, in the neighbourhood makes India more nervous about her security. Therefore India has adopted a security strategy called "Minimum Credible Deterrence" which ensures the 'No first use policy', 'Second Strike Capability' and 'Mutually Assured Destruction'. Academic analysis of these policies looks like they are pure strategic level approaches.

The real problem lies beneath the face value of the above said policy. The major worry of Pakistan is to face the threat posed by the conventional armed forces of India. India boasts of world third largest army and according to a US think tank, India has got the military advantage over Pakistan in both conventional and nuclear weapons. The South Asian experts in this think tank also warned that there will be a possibility that due to this strategic imbalance Pakistan might opt for a nuclear strike against India. (Resnse.com 2012) It is clear that Pakistan has to adopt a Goliath's strategy to outwit India under such unfavourable circumstances. A former US ambassador Dennis Kux, who has served both in India and Pakistan has mentioned in that report

"If you had a full scale war between India and Pakistan, not just skirmishes on the border, India would start winning," "And at a certain point Pakistan, rather than going under, would push the button," (Resnse.com 2012)

Kux further states that in spite of having the combat edge over Pakistan, India is also endowed with the geographical advantage in battle. In his opinion if there is a blitzkrieg¹ type offensive across arid Punjab province which is towards the Afghan border, it could disconnect Islamabad from Sindh. Islamabad is Pakistan's capital and Sindh is the economic heart which is closer to its main port of Karachi. (Resnse.com 2012)

The terrorist attack recently carried out at the Indian Army base in the town of Uri in India-administered Kashmir killed 18 troops. As a counter strike India carried out "surgical strikes" on terrorist camps in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir. (New York Times 2016) These moves made the relations between two nuclear powers more sour.

Pakistani strategy to counter Indian military might is named "Full Spectrum Nuclear Deterrence". Pakistan's strategic community believes that even though India ensures the refrainment from 'First Strike', she is promoting a provocative behaviour towards Pakistan by

deploying her conventional forces closer to the Pakistani borders. India's initial strategic approach towards Pakistan was designed, based on former defence minister George Fernandez's non aggressive non provocative defence policy. Later Indian "Cold Start Doctrine" was especially developed to counter Pakistani threat. This doctrine will bridge various branches of India's military in order to conduct swift offensive operations against Pakistan as cohesive fighting groups. Cold Start doctrine is designed to strengthen India's conventional forces in order to prevent a nuclear retaliation from Pakistan. Pakistan argues that India wants to keep Pakistan on toes and such aggression must be countered by appropriate measures. So far the deterrent value of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal has only served at the strategic level. Pakistani strategic community thinks that if Pakistan does not respond to 'Credible Minimum Deterrence', India could exploit the gaps at the tactical level through the Cold Start² and Proactive Operations. Therefore Pakistan envisages the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons to the game as the most practical solution. Pakistan has now developed short-range tactical nuclear weapons to be used in case of any limited conventional offensive from India. These weapons could be launched up to 60 kilo meters. "Haft IX Nasr" is such a missile with the ability to carry a nuclear warhead. (Carnegie Endowment, 2016)

ii. NUCLEAR POLICY MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION

During the past decade, concept of Credible Deterrence has become the centre of the Indian Policy. The Indian military was involved in both nuclear planning and operations in order to achieve credibility to deterrence. According to the *Hindu* the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been briefed that sweeping modifications to the command and control structure of India's nuclear weapons are urgently needed. Highly placed government sources have told the *Hindu* (*Hindu*; 2014) that the reforms had been called for operational control of the arsenal to be given to a full-time chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee (CJSOC). He should be a four-star officer, drawn by rotation from the three armed forces, limited to a two-year tenure. (*Hindu* 2014) The civilian principal in the Indian side has intended to establish an efficient civil military institutional mechanism to manage the nuclear arsenal. (Kampani, 2016)

Throughout the past years the Indian defence structure has gradually offered the military an opportunity to co-participate with the professional (Scientific) agencies. These agencies initially had dominated over nuclear planning in India. In fact the first nuclear test in India was

¹ This is the German word for "lightning war," It means a sudden campaign on enemy with the concentration of offensive weapons.

² Different branches of India's military conducting offensive operations as part of unified battle groups.

only revealed to a select few of the Indian Military community. The first Indian nuclear weapon -test code named Pokaran I a.k.a. Smiling Buddha- was conducted in 1974 under extreme secrecy. Besides Indira Gandhi, only two of her advisers, Parmeshwar Haksar and Durga Dhar, were kept informed about this. Indian Veteran journalist Raj Chengappa asserts that Indian Defense Minister Jagjivan Ram was not provided with any news of this test and came to learn of it only after it was conducted. Indira Gandhi administration employed no more than 75 civilian scientists, while General G. G. Bewoor, the Indian army chief, and the commander of Indian Western Command were the only military personnel who were privy to the development. (Chengappa, 2000)

In George Perkovich's paper on India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation he says that

"The tests were a bold step and a firm bid for Indian power in the international system. But the public declarations of government officials betrayed the absence of a coherent, analytically buttressed national security strategy. The driving forces behind the tests - the scientists and engineers - could never claim expertise in military-strategic affairs or in international relations, nor had any deep understanding how nuclear weapons would affect India's relations with Pakistan, China, the United States, and others over the mid and long terms". (Perkovich, 1999)

Times have passed since the first nuclear test and India has achieved considerable advancement as a nuclear power in South Asia. According to India's latest strategy tri-service Strategic Forces Command (SFC), which is mandated to execute nuclear operations, and the Strategic Planning Staff (SPS), which is tasked to undertake long-range planning and to provide independent advice to India's Nuclear Command Authority (NCA), are two new developments (Kampani, 2016). In introducing such institutions, India has elevated the position of military as a co-participant with the scientific agencies.

At present India's Nuclear Command Authority is chaired by the Prime Minister who is empowered with the authority over the entire nuclear arsenal in India. In the event of a crisis, the NCA orders the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) to standby the arsenal. The SFC, working with experts at the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), is then tasked to work through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSOC) to coordinate the launch of warheads with air and missile-delivery platforms held by the three armed forces.

According to Pakistan army sources the details of Pakistan Nuclear Doctrine and command remains uncertain because Pakistan wants to maintain strategic ambiguity on those details. Pakistani nuclear command system is based on a three-tier structure which consists of The National Command Authority (NCA), The Strategic Plans Division (SPD), and The Tri Services' Strategic Forces Command. The NCA which was created by the government the year 2000 is the supreme authority in the nuclear command and control system. It is a ten member body including The President (chairman), The Prime minister (vice-chairman) and the Chief of Army Staff. The SPD is responsible for formulating nuclear policy, strategy, and doctrine to assist the NCA, implementation of the NCA's decisions, designing strategic and tactical plans for the use of strategic forces. This body is headed by an army director general supported by 50-70 officers from the three services.

The Services Strategic Forces supporting nuclear Command is responsible for tactical level operational control of nuclear weapon delivery systems while keeping the NCA responsible for overall strategic matters. This includes technical, training, and governance of missiles and aircrafts that would be used to deliver nuclear weapons.

iii. THE CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS

Indian and Pakistani strategies are reflecting complications of bilateral deterrence models in a smaller cold war type context. The anomalies leads to dangers of this 'mini bi-polar regional nuclear deterrence structure' are becoming more prominent each day where the consistencies between two countries have been deliberately ignored. Even though there are many international legal regimes prevailing to stop nuclearisation of states South Asian nuclear counterparts have chosen an autonomous path to develop their own nuclear regimes. In this backdrop the nuclear stability of the region has become a fragile factor which is totally lying at the hands of decision makers of respective states.

The decision making process of the nuclear states in South Asia is a combination of civil and military participation. Therefore the civil and military strategic decision making culture of two nuclear states has a great influence of the nuclear stability in the region. Civil-military relations of a state are considered as an important element to establish nuclear deterrence stability. According to Scot Sagan, when a state develops a nuclear arsenal, it should be initially integrated into existing military forces and initially

managed through existing civil and military institutions. (Sagan, 1994) He further argues that there are two ways to look at the civil military relations of a nuclear weapon state. First is that how the nuclear weapons are influenced by civil or military relations. It is depending on the way that the civil and military want to respond to a perceived threat. Whether they are hawks, doves or moderates the national interest, Institutional prestige and other military and political conditions have an influence over their decision making. (Sagan, 1994). Secondly Sagan says that impact created from the massive destructive nature of the nuclear weapons also has an influence over the civil and military decision makers. The ferocity of nuclear weapons essentially calls for a civil control over it since the civil control generally doesn't favour to offer quick responses to a perceived threat.

iv. CONCLUSION

India and Pakistan have a constitutionally limited role for Military in national security decision making. Both countries are following the British tradition of total civilian control. However Pakistani Nuclear Command structure entails higher military representation in strategic and tactical decision making than that of India. The time to time emergence of military governments in Pakistan have set up the platform for the military leaders to be involved more in political decision making.

The Indian 'Minimum Credible Deterrence doctrine' ensures 'No first Use', 'Second Strike' and 'Mutually Assured Destruction.' The Indian Nuclear program has been controlled by elected leaders who often are tarnished with characteristic corruption. India theoretically has no preparations to use or plans to integrate nuclear weapons in to the military doctrine of the Armed forces. However the cold start doctrine on deployment of forces looks provocative to Pakistan.

The counter strategy of Pakistan, the 'Full Spectrum Nuclear Deterrence' includes tactical level nuclear weapons to wage a limited war against the enemy. In such case, again there will be heavy military involvement in the nuclear program.

The scientific communities of two countries are very influential and efficient. However, criticism was levelled at some Pakistani scientists about clandestine nuclear misbehaviour. Dr. A Q Khan was accused of technology proliferation. In India, prominent scientists like Dr. Abdul Kalam turned in to a politician and held the presidency of the government. In researcher's opinion there could also be a possibility of a conflict that may crop up between the institutional and the professional communities of nuclear programmes. To everybody's relief, so far there are no signs of such conflict in two

countries. However due to the prevalence of seriously corrupted party politics there could be a possibility of nuclear programmes going out of control due to disagreements between military and scientific communities of the respective countries. If the military representation of the bodies is disproportionate, they could influence the rational decision making by the sheer clout of their numbers. It is advisable that political communities of respective countries be vigilant on this fact in future structural changes.

v. REFERENCES

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