

(Book Review) The India Pakistan Nuclear Relationship: Theories of Deterrence and International Relations by *Eswaran Sridharan*

NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability
2018, Vol. I (2) Pages 161-164
njips.nust.edu.pk

(Routledge, 2007)

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The book titled ‘The India Pakistan Nuclear Relationship: Theories of Deterrence and International Relations’ offers a collection of insightful articles by different Indian and Pakistani authors. As the title suggests, the scholarship contained in the book mainly deals with the South Asian nuclear posture. The study further aims at examining the question of adequacy of deterrence and international relations theories at explaining the nuclearization doctrine of the two countries. The book also takes into account the cold war experience of deterrence and the application of those experiences to the episodic conflicts between India and Pakistan. It is a comprehensive study of nuclear doctrines of two competitors that explains theoretical relevance to nuclearization in the light of historic antagonism between the two countries. It paves the way to understand the transition that the Indian and Pakistani nuclear doctrine has been through. In doing so, the authors have also based much of their work on the monumental contributions of Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver, Bernard Brodie, Glenn Snyder and others. The following passages offer a general chapter-based analysis of the publications in the book.

Sridharan in his introductory chapter acquaints the readers with the significant uniqueness inherent in the paradoxical South Asian region. He clears the predicaments about the India-Pakistan nuclear posture by highlighting that the dynamics of the region’s nuclearization and deterrence lie at lengths from the USA-USSR episode. He examines the underpinnings stemming from the pre and post nuclearization conflicts between India and Pakistan. Sridharan holds that India’s nuclear behaviour (ever since its explicit nuclearization) rests mainly on three pillars. These pillars include India’s search for an international status, its security imperatives against Pakistan and China and finally the need emerging out of its domestic politics. Sridharan’s central focus in the introductory chapter is to establish the adequacy of the deterrence theory to explain the aforementioned factors apparent in the Indian nuclear behaviour. The author is convinced of the fact that India’s domestic environment has an incredible role in shaping up its nuclear behaviour. While

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attributing immense significance to the contextual milieu that led to the nuclearization of both countries, the author establishes the neo realist strand of IR theory as the ideal niche to examine the course of South Asian nuclearization. That said, in Sridharan's view, the deterrence theory and the traditional IR theory still need ample redefinitions in order to be able to define the South Asian nuclear framework. Hence, by closely scrutinizing the Pakistan centric and Indo centric strategies pursued by India and Pakistan respectively, Sridharan's fundamental emphasis is to communicate the proposition that nuclear deterrence can be implied as a significant means of conflict resolution under certain circumstances as well.

Sridharan goes on to establish the grounds for constructing the relevance of international relations and deterrence theory to the South Asian nuclear discourse. He attempts to look into the institution of alternative theoretical paradigms that can add to a relatively profounder understanding of the subject. His main argument in this regard borrows from the teachings of Muhammad Ayoob and Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver respectively, the notions of subaltern realism and regional security complexes to explain South Asian nuclear conundrum. The author has explained how the classic determinants of realism defectively fit the third world veracities. Shridharan holds that the core value of deterrence theory is the centrality of survival. Applying this to India and Pakistan, he mentions endless instances where the two countries found themselves on the verge of a full scale war in post 1998 nuclearization, yet they did not resort to the atrocious option. In his view, India practices what Patrick Morgan referred to as the 'general deterrence'. General deterrence implies the maintenance of a broad military capability by a state to deter any possible attack rather than issuing specific threats to specified opponents. Sridharan also comprehensively questions the stabilization of deterrence as a guarantor of preventing future wars in the noticeably confrontational India-Pakistan relationship. While doing so, Sridharan vehemently rejects the widely believed assumption of denuclearization. Denuclearization of the South Asian region as a guarantor of peace and conflict resolution, in his view, is not at all necessary. However, initiatives such as extensive cooperation in economic, political and social spheres can serve as backers of regional stability.

Rasool Bakhsh Rais, one of the well-known academics in Pakistan, elucidates three main themes in his contribution in the book. Firstly, he explores the dynamics and credibility of Pakistan's No First Use (NFU) policy. Secondly, he tries to uncover the potential consequences of the nuclear deterrence stability i.e. that how far has it been successful in curtailing a limited conventional warfare. And finally, Rais attempts to gauge the impact of US presence in Pakistan (at the time of publication) over its nuclear stability. His contribution communicates the effect of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine on the overall regional stability. Rais has based much of his findings in the chapter on two broad assumptions. These include, firstly, the nuclear weapons must be treated as instruments that prevent wars and not the ones that can be put to use in the hope of maximizing winning potential. Secondly, the presence of nuclear weapons alone is not enough for averting war given the quarrelsome nature of India- Pakistan relationship. The author considers that Pakistan's nuclear goals are very modest. All it seeks is to ensure national survival against an historic larger adversary. Adding to this point of modesty, he asserts that it

is undesirable for Pakistan to match India militarily. The inherent nuclear imbalance must and will stay no matter what. Pakistan rather needs a credible, effective nuclear capability but at minimum variable level. In a comprehensive conclusion, Rais asserts that Pakistan must learn from the Cold War episode that ambiguity, risk propensity and doctrinal flexibility are sufficient tactics to avert wars. And while having a considerable lead in conventional warfare and a noticeable gap in the nuclear resources, it is beneficial for Pakistan to continue with its NFU stance in years to come. Rais vehemently labels South Asia as a region that lacks strategic autonomy. Rais's conclusions offer Pakistan some piece of advice i.e. that given its economic stature, Pakistan must declare credible minimum deterrence as its nuclear doctrine. Also, it must chose to engage in a constructive dialogic process with India on all security issues. Lastly, in Rais's view, it is critical for the two nuclear countries of the region to establish an effective control and command system.

Bharat Karnad takes an aggressive nationalist view and vehemently dismisses any relevance of deterrence theory to the India Pakistan nuclear posture attributing it to the sheer incompatibility of their resources, size, power and most of all their military might. Karnad asserts that the possibility of India and Pakistan to land in a nuclear warfare is beyond comprehension for various reasons. Primary among such reasons is the fact that the two countries were once a single entity and share a certain level of cultural coherence till date. The most significant deterrent in the region, Karnad holds is the US presence in Pakistan (at the time of publication). The most glaring aspect of the entire chapter is the contrasting determinants of India's and Pakistan's nuclear policy that Karnad draws as the basis of his central argument regarding the inapplicability of deterrence theory to this case. In his view, the decisive determinants of Pakistan's nuclear policy are uncertainty, ambiguity and ambivalence. Indian nuclear doctrine on the other hand, based on minimum credible deterrence and no first use presents an ideal doctrinal discourse that characterizes reasonableness, maturity, moderation and responsible, economical use of nuclear weapons. He concludes by considering that it is in India's own national interest to make Pakistan feel secure.

In his brief, but very comprehensive contribution to the book, Rajesh Basrur has aimed at attributing meaning to the phrase credible minimum deterrence. He asserts that though CDB has been India's and Pakistan's declared nuclear policy, its complete enunciation remains scanty. Basrur begins by problematizing the term minimum. In his view, both the countries have evidently failed at defining the meaning that they take from the term minimum. He makes an effort to highlight the contours of competing paradigms to explain nuclearization of the two countries. In doing so, Basrur has also chalked out some agreeable features of minimum deterrence. Unlike other authors in the book, Basrur equates India Pakistan relationship with the Cold War episode and asserts that the two affairs differ only on the account of policy behaviour. He concludes by pointing out that though complete eradication of nuclear weapons is not possible in the region, resorting to credible nuclear deterrence is the best option that India and Pakistan have. That said, it is of great significance to define the threshold of the terms credible and minimum.

Riffat Hussain is the second Pakistani contributor to this book. While most of his work is in lines with the scholarship already brought to limelight by other authors in the book, his contribution does have some salient arguments. Hussain has his focus centred mainly on examining the nuclear options in the contingencies between India and Pakistan while observing the nuclear and conventional capabilities of both states. One of the most significant points that Hussain makes is, his explanation of the post 9/11 nuclear milieu in South Asia. He has also shed light on the paradox inherent in the deterrence strategy, while declaring a willingness to abstain from using the weapons that suggest otherwise. Considering India's adoption of the NFU policy, Hussain asserts that the policy despite being popular, has failed to garner the desired acceptance, even from Pakistan. It does appear relevant in the post 9/11 atmosphere however. Concluding his comprehensive analysis of the conventional and contemporary policies, Hussain holds that India and Pakistan need to carve out CBMs and arms control agreements in collaboration with each other in order to make them more rewarding and successful.

Varun Sahni's broad analysis takes into account the stability-instability context with special reference to India Pakistan conflict. He tries to make sense of stability-instability juncture while basing it on the state behaviour of India and Pakistan in the past four major crises including the 1986-87 encounter, the 1990 episode, Kargil crisis and the 2002 chapter. He considers India's and Pakistan's incompatible nuclear doctrines, their divergent territorial ambitions, the offense-defence (im)balance and other such factors of the this shared and historic asymmetric warfare, as imperative to study while making a case for South Asian nuclearization. His concluding thesis dismisses the stability-instability paradox as a viable explanation for India-Pakistan nuclear posture. In Sahni's view the complexity of nuclear studies of the two states transcend beyond the bounds of such an explanation.

Generally, the book offers in-depth analysis regarding subjects that are imperative for the understanding of India Pakistan nuclear posture. It takes into account almost all features of the troublesome relationship shared by the two countries. The scholarship contained in the book, though thick and dense in its nature, has the potential to enlighten the reader of the aspirations, structure/typology and challenges of India-Pakistan nuclearization. The chapters in the book, coming from both sides of the border, present the prevalent view regarding nuclearization in both the countries. However, a certain presence of biased views can be sensed in some parts of the writings. Especially Bharat Karnad's assumptions that out rightly dismiss Pakistan's nuclear capabilities are a bit hard to accept. The most commendable feature of the publications contained in the book, is their tireless effort towards bridging the gaps between theory and practice while simultaneously gauging the state behaviour *vis-à-vis* policy framework.