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Indo-Pak Complex Nuclear Posturing: An Analysis of Bumpy Road from Kargil to Parakram (1999-2001)

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study deals with the question, how the nuclear posturing effected and fueled the already existing complex relationship between India and Pakistan soon after the nuclear detonation in 1998? On May 28th, 1998 when Pakistan detonated its nuclear weapon as a result of India's series of nuclear tests earlier in the same month. Based on the realist assumption, it was presumed that nuclear weapons would equalize 'terror with terror' and will ensure peace. Moreover, Lahore Summit added in the hopes further. However, the dangerous Kargil crisis and dramatic acts of terrorism in major Indian cities added elements to the stability-instability paradox that was entirely unanticipated by Western deterrence strategists. After 2001 attacks on Indian parliament and continuous violation on LOC aggravated the fragility of peace in South Asia. The nature and pattern of relations between the two regional rivals are highly significant for the domestic, regional and global peace and security. However, it is extremely difficult to obtain the reliable information related to the foreign policy and security decision making process due to lack of thorough documentation culture in India and Pakistan. Moreover, the nuclear policy (in particular) on both the sides are kept even more vague thus any research related to nuclear issue in south Asia face this limitation.

Keywords: *Nuclear posturing, deterrence, operation Parakram, Line of Control (LOC)*

Introduction

Immediately after the nuclear tests, the fragile security conditions along the LoC worsened and heavy shelling resulted in substantial human losses in July-Aug 1998 particularly in Neelum Valley (Dawn, Three die in Indian shelling along LoC,

1998). Islamabad was pushed to believe that beside the broader goals behind the detonation, immediately its' a challenge for Pakistan. Pakistan's Prime Minister said, "highly provocative statements were issued and it was said that Pakistan would have to come to terms with its reduced status" (Lavoy, 2009).

The rising temperatures however calmed down after a readiness for dialogue process was shown by both the sides and Vajpayee willingness to visit Pakistan by the bus service approved and welcomed by Pakistan positively. Vajpayee's initiative received appreciation around the world. The summit ended with the declaration named Lahore Declaration which covered all out-standing issues along with "the issue of Jammu & Kashmir issue and denunciation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations". It also quantified that both India and Pakistan will take "immediate steps" to reduce the risk of unauthorized or accidental use of atomic weapons, suspend atomic explosions unilaterally and will work for mutually agreed confidence building measures to improving the security environment. Therefore, the respective governments shall refrain from interference in each other's internal affairs. Hence, both must discuss doctrines with a view to elaborate measures for confidence building in the nuclear and conventional fields, aimed at prevention of conflict" (News, 1999).

In Pakistan 'Indian Peace Gestures' were generally perceived as a move to deflect the world-wide condemnation of Indian act of instigating nuclear arms race in the region. Moreover, there was a sort of disappointment or even resentment over the aftermaths of Lahore Summit in Pakistan. The political circles within Pakistan believed that major concessions have been given to New Delhi by Islamabad during the dialogues. As just few days after the Summit, one of the cabinet Minister of India claimed that "what had been discussed in Lahore had been Indian claims over the part of Kashmir administered by Pakistan" (Bearak, 1999). Moreover, it was alleged that Indian concerns have been entertained whereas Pakistan's apprehensions are subsided in the Declaration. While emphasizing the bilateral relations, reference to 'UN principles as governing the bilateral relations' were absent. Similarly, Pakistan's desire for 'third party meditation' to resolve all outstanding issues including Kashmir was ignored (as India did not favor it). As the Indian official was asked a question regarding 'mediator role' just before the start of summit, he replied that "We do not need interpreters as we speak the same language" (Knowlton, 1999). Further differences between the two countries highlighted when Vajpayee offered a 'no first use' treaty on nuclear weapons whereas the 'no war treaty' proposed by Pakistan's side.

Research Methodology

Both primary and secondary data has been applied in this research. data is taken from book, journal articles and different reports relevant to study. Qualitative interviews have been taken to validate the research. Convenient random sampling is used to identify the specialist for interviews. primary data is taken from various government reports.

Kargil Crisis: A Dangerous Escalation

In the confused regional conditions, hyperbolic hopes produced by Lahore Summit combined with the disenchantment within Pakistan over peace overtures that Kargil conflict broke out. Though it was generally assumed after May 1998, that presence

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of Nuclear weapons will be a deterrent force and will annihilate all the chances of war between India and Pakistan. However, just one year after the nuclearization of south Asia 'Kargil crisis' erupted. Nuclear capability neither prevented both from initiating the crisis nor it stopped the nuclear posturing throughout the crisis. Along with the dangerous nuclear signaling both the sides not only flung the nuclear threats to each other bluntly but also took serious and pro-active steps to put their arsenals on state of high alert and promptness for urgent use. Which clearly indicates the will to use the weapon against the adversary.

During the extreme height of crisis prime minister Vajpayee proclaimed that "India is ready for all types of eventualities" (Times of India, 1999). Beside the harsh rhetoric, both the sides (according to multiple reports) showed promptness to make the nuclear weapons ready for use. Former senior director for South Asia and Near East Affairs at the US National Security Council, Bruce Riedel revealed that the U.S intelligence agencies had discovered few worrying indications that Islamabad was arranging their nuclear arsenals for probable placement. He further added that, "we could all too easily imagine ... a deadly descent into full scale conflict all along the border with a danger of nuclear cataclysm" (Dhanda, 2010).

A journalist Raj Chengappa, (who had close contact with Indian army personnel) reported comprehensively for 'India Today' that "in the course of the Kargil Crisis, New Delhi activated all its three types of nuclear delivery vehicles and kept them at what is known as Readiness State 3 - meaning that some nuclear bombs would be ready to be mated with the delivery vehicles at short notice.' He tells that 'The air force was asked to keep its Mirage fighters on standby. Even an Agni missile capable of launching a nuclear warhead was moved to a western Indian state and kept in a state of readiness" (Chengappa, 2000). John Gill conducted a study on the Kargil Crisis armed operations, he pointed out the New Delhi's inclination to intensify the crisis in case the desired objectives are not accomplished. He further added that, "the only restriction imposed by the New Delhi government to Indian armed forces was not to cross the Line of Control (LoC). However, civil and military establishment kept the 'Cross-LoC Operation' option open and kept on conveying the threat of escalation through public statements by senior officials" (Gill, 2009) (Lavoy P. , 2009). By the end of June 1999, when the crisis in Kargil were on its highest peak New Delhi start considering the other options like Cross-LoC Operations and use of air force to achieve the results swiftly. Inclusion of air force in the crisis made the situation extremely harrowing one. However, cancellation of nationwide military leaves, increase of shelling on LoC, repositioning of naval forces and mobilization of offensive ground forces by New Delhi along with the borders of Pakistan and India made the situation extremely dreadful. As Pakistan too started taking counter offensive initiatives in response (Lancaster, 1999).

Later India's offensive intentions were exposed by US officials that Washington had spotted proofs that "In the desert state of Rajasthan, elements of the Indian army's main offensive 'strike force' were loading tanks, artillery and other heavy equipment onto flatbed rail cars for offensive use and were preparing to move forward" (Lancaster, 1999). Sources from India also confirmed the ongoing preparation activities on both the sides of LoC and along the frontiers in Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Jammu & Kashmir (Chengappa, 2000). Washington Post reported that there was an apprehension present among the U.S officials that the continuously

coming dead bodies of Indian soldiers' homes and media headlines will increase the political pressure on Indian government (Hindu national BJP) to respond Pakistan more forcefully particularly when the elections were approaching in few months. Moreover, it was feared that India might open another front with Pakistan if it failed to counter Pakistan backed mujahidin in Kargil and the two countries may engulf in a full-fledge battle (Lancaster, 1999). New Delhi in order to prevent Islamabad from focusing wholly on Kargil front, decided to mobilize its troops on multiple fronts. She deployed its forces on the international border with Pakistan and tried to ensure the stable position at the strategic level (The Kargil Review Committee Report, 1999). Hence, New Delhi retained all the options open to intensify the conflict at any stage in any circumstances.

As far as Pakistan's perception was concerned, General Pervez Musharraf claimed on July 2nd that, "India had created a serious imbalance in its system of forces. It had bottled up major formations inside Kashmir, leaving itself no capability to attack us elsewhere and most seriously, had left the field open for a counteroffensive with which we could choke the Kashmir Valley. We had no offensive designs on the international border and were reassured that India's offensive capability was restricted to Kashmir" (General Pervez Musharraf). Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif while addressing the nation on July 12th shared his views that, "going by the attitude of India, it did seem to us that New Delhi was moving rapidly towards the war.... Its naval power was moved close to our shores and its nuclear missiles turned towards us. The Indian air force was put on red alert" (News, 1999).

Deterrence failure: An Analysis

Nuclear weapons neither stopped Pakistan and India moving towards the conflict nor it obstruct the dangerous nuclear posturing from both the sides. Neil Joeck commented on Kargil war, "What is clear is that nuclear weapons did not prevent war" (Joeck, 2009).

Initially Washington put overt and covert pressure on Pakistan for de-escalation and was reluctant in playing mediatory role due to Delhi's sensitivities on third party involvement particularly on 'Kashmir issue'. However, Pakistan on the other hand was keenly interested in the pro-active and impartial U.S role for the resolution of Kashmir conflict. Bruce Riedel narrates, "By late June the situation was deteriorating fast.... Casualties were mounting on both sides. Our intelligence assessments were pointing toward the danger of full scale war becoming a real possibility" (Lavoy P. , 2009).

Multiple objectives can be inferred from the Islamabad's behavior throughout the Kargil crisis. Most of the analysts claim that the Kargil operation by Pakistan's army was affected by what is called "mission creep". Moreover, Kargil cannot be analyzed as an 'isolated conflict or crisis' as it is entrenched in the extended history of Indo-Pak grievances over Kashmir dispute. However, to internationalize the Kashmir issue, or to seek the third party mediation for the resolution of Kashmir dispute can be the motives or objectives in the backdrop of Kargil War, but the crisis smashed every illusion that the overt nuclear postures would act as a restraint during India-Pakistan military conflict (Cirincione, 2002). As declared nuclear capabilities neither prevented Pakistan to plan along with the line of control nor did it stop India to dare to extend the war. Moreover, dangerous signaling, and competition in risk taking was witnessed from both the sides during the crisis.

Post - Kargil Regional Tensions

1. Aircraft (Atlantique)

A significant level of tension remained existed between both the countries, though Kargil heights were evacuated by Pakistan by mid of July and India ratified the claim. The tension over Kargil dispute barely subsided, that Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) surveillance aircraft (Atlantique) of Pakistan was shot down by Indian Navy, with air to air missile on August 10, 1999 resulted in killing of all 16 officers on board, in Marshy Sir Creek area (disputed area between India and Pakistan) along with the international border. The incident reintroduced the tension and PM Nawaz Sharif said that “the Indian action is barbaric, naked aggression and it will further complicate things and cast [a] shadow over the peace process between the two countries” (Dawn, Three die in Indian shelling along LoC, 1998). Moreover, India was accused of collecting the Pakistan’s plane debris from inside the territory of Pakistan (Dawn, Three die in Indian shelling along LoC, 1998).

2. Musharraf in Power

The military coup by General Pervez Musharraf on October 2nd, 1999 next important development. Musharraf showed appeasing gestures towards New Delhi government however, restated his firm commitment to Kashmir dispute. While giving an interview to Indian newspaper ‘The Hindu’, he said that every type of diplomacy has been tried and failed to normalize Indo-Pak relations, because Kashmir is the core issue, only real conflict and bone of contention, which has not been addressed, whereas the remaining issues are just the minor (Parthasarathy, 2000).

3. Indian Plane Hijacking

Just few months after Atlantique incident, another shocking event took place and once again twisted the international attention towards Kashmir. A plane of Indian airline flight IC-814 hijacked by armed men during its flight from Nepal to New Delhi in December 24th, 1999. The plane landed at Amritsar airport (India’s city) and demanded refueling. Surprisingly, the Indian authorities refused to refuel the plane however, allowed to take off. The next nearest option for hijacked plane was Lahore airport of Pakistan, however, Pakistan authorities refused to authorize the aircraft to land on its territory but due to dead fuel levels, it was allowed to land, refueled and insisted to leave (as the apprehension was that Pakistan would be linked and blamed in the matter). The plane then landed at Dubai airport and finally at Kandahar airport Afghanistan. An anonymous militant group ‘Islamic Salvation Army’ accepted the responsibility of the event and demanded the release of few active militants in Kashmir including Maulana Masud Azhar (captured by Indian forces in Kashmir). Pakistan categorically rejected Indian claim that the hijackers are Pakistani nationals. Taliban officials played a mediator role between the hijackers and the India. Later hijackers left the aircraft as Indian government approved to release three persons including Maulana Masud Azhar.

4. The Agra Summit

The Agra Summit was the most significant peace initiative and it unlocked the means to break the ongoing deadlock in the region. It was organized on July, 15-16,

2001 after an abrupt policy shift by New Delhi, who was previously persistent not to deal with non-democratic and unconstitutional government of General Musharraf. The summit engrossed the massive media attention and welcomed by all the global powers including United states. The summit aroused hopes for meaningful and result oriented negotiations regarding the normalization of relations between the two nuclear neighbors along with solution of all outstanding issues including Kashmir dispute. President Musharraf himself elevated that he is going to visit India with complete authority and power to negotiate over all outstanding issues including Kashmir. Moreover, he consulted all the political parties (24th June) of Pakistan and received wide ratification from rightist parties as well as from general public.

Several exclusive meetings were held between President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee and both stressed the need to establish constructive cooperation to move forward out of historic legacy of hostilities. Moreover, the President held meetings with All Parties Huriyat Congress leadership, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi (Congress party leader) as well as the journalists. The summit ended in despondency in spite of high expectations and even both the sides remained fail to agree upon a joint statement and remained obstruct to their orthodox positions.

Despite the fact that Agra summit failed, yet it provided the opportunity to both the regional powers to show some gestures of goodwill. Prime minister Vajpayee accepted the invitation to visit Pakistan (second round of talks) by President Musharraf through a formal letter (Naqvi, 2004). Furthermore, then foreign minister of India Jaswant Singh remarked in Lok Sabha that, "The caravan of peace is in motion. The dogs of war cannot deviate this process" (Dawn, 2001).

9/11 Impacts on South Asia

There was hardly a little improvement in Indo-Pak relations that it again started deteriorating after 9/11 attacks. India put on hold all sort of talks with Pakistan and took more firm stance immediately after terrorist attack on United States. Furthermore, in late September, 2001, Vajpayee announced the discontinuation of negotiations initiated in Agra and declared the reconsideration of Musharraf's invitation to visit Pakistan in the coming months (Dugger, 2001).

Islamabad's perception of New Delhi's behavior in changed regional and international environment became more evident. When General Musharraf while addressing the nation, accused New Delhi, for conducting false propaganda campaign against Pakistan to defame it and to harm its interests regionally as well as globally. Moreover, Munir Akram during the United Nations General Assembly's debate on 'International Peace and Security', blamed India for trying to exploit the current 'War on Terror' for adventure and blackmailing Pakistan. He stressed the world community to discourage India for initiating 'pre-emptive campaign' against Pakistan to fulfill its 'narrow selfish desire' to gain concessions over Jammu and Kashmir dispute (Dawn, 2001). Security conditions in the region further declined when 29 people killed, on October 1st, 2001 as a result of bomb blasts in Jammu and Kashmir Assembly. Jaish.e. Muhammad was blamed for the attack by PM Vajpayee as well as by CM of Indian-held Kashmir Mr. Farooq Abdullah. Moreover, Pakistan was demanded to hand over Moulana Masood Azhar to India. In a letter to President Bush, Vajpayee warned Pakistan that "there is a limit to patience of the people of India" (Aneja, 2001).

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An Indian ex-high commissioner to Pakistan G. Parthasarathy remarked that “If the United States can travel thousands of miles to take out terrorist camps, I do not see why India shouldn’t do so when our cities are bombed and our legislatures attacked” (Dugger, 2001). While commenting on Srinagar attacks, Pakistan’s Foreign Office said that “Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations”. However, at the same time it was added that the ‘act of terrorism’ was aimed at “maligning the Kashmiri struggle for their right to self-determination” (Rediff, 2001). The political temperature of the region raised when General Musharraf blamed New Delhi for “trying to draw mileage out of the situation” reaffirmed that they have power to defend their homeland against any type of aggression (There is a Freedom Struggle Going on in Kashmir, 2001).

In the meanwhile, India sent its Foreign Minister to UK and US to gain more diplomatic support where he claimed that “in Kashmir same international parameters of terrorism should be applied, by outlawing the groups and freezing their assets as Washington has done with other terrorist groups after 9/11” (Dugger, 2001) and tried to convince U.S that “Pakistan is part of the problem of terrorism and not a ‘part of solution” (Haniffa, 2001).

To mellow down anger and harsh rhetoric from Indian camp following October 1st, General Musharraf called Indian PM Vajpayee and conversed for 15 mins on Oct 7th. He stressed the need for dialogue and not to intensify the regional tension. However, Vajpayee was of the view that “the exercise is meaningless, if Pakistan remains ‘Unifocal’ on Kashmir moreover, culprits of violence have their bases in Pakistan and nothing has been done to capture them”. General Musharraf assured the investigation of any such group’s existence in Pakistan (Naqvi, 2004).

Vajpayee’s signals to conduct operations against terrorists on October 11th, was interpreted in Pakistan as possible military action against suspected terrorist camps in Pakistan administered Kashmir. Pakistan’s Foreign Office spokesman responded the situation and said that “Pakistan desires to settle all issues through peaceful means. However, Pakistan’s armed forces are ready to face and repulse any aggression” (Dawn, Troops Movement Cannot Be Ignored, 2001).

The United States smelled the growing escalation in South Asia and sent a special envoy foreign Secretary of state Mr. Colin Powell in the region on October 15-17. On the eve of Mr. Powell’s visit eleven of Pakistan’s border posts shelled by Indian forces. The Director General ISPR of Pakistan, General Rashid Qureshi, remarked on the occasion that “India was seeking to gain attention in the wake of September 11th events but the ‘limit (sic) to which Indians are going, I am afraid they will have to face the consequences”. He further added that “we cannot ignore completely that there have been movements of troops in occupied Kashmir, where there are already more than 650,000 troops. Indian troops movement was far from the ordinary’ and there had also been a movement of aircrafts to forward areas where they [Indians] normally do not go” (Dawn, Troops Movement Cannot Be Ignored, 2001). Pakistan proclaimed just two days later that, Pakistan’s armed forces are put on high alert in view of the forward movement of some of the Indian troops and air force assets.

Added to that, Pakistan’s leadership particularly General Musharraf successfully managed to convince Mr. Powell during his meeting, that Kashmir conflict is the sole reason behind India-Pakistan contentious relations and U.S needs to involve

itself for the resolution of the dispute. He shared the details in a press conference on October 16th. Although Powell's visit to South Asia lessened the tension but the 'words war' triggered from both the sides. In Oct 2001, on his visit to Siachin Mr. L. K. Advani asserted that India will follow 'proactive policy' and will strike the terrorists, rather than waiting for the terrorists to attack us (Jayaram, 2001).

Subsequently, Indian High Commissioner was called by FO Pakistan and protested over the threatening and inflammatory statements by the Indian camp. The India kept on rebuffing, resumption of negotiations proposed by Pakistan, in upcoming UNGA summit in New York and said, "there appears to be no time for such a meeting" (Sahay, 2001).

To respond the constant allegations from Indian side, and to highlight the Kashmir dispute to international community, General Musharraf used the UNGA as an appropriate forum. On November 10th, 2001 while addressing UNGA emphasized the dire need of resolution of unsettled disputes present for decades' despite of UNSC resolutions. While countering the Indian narrative of 'cross border terrorism' with the state-terrorism', he raised a big question that, "The question is whether it is the people asking for their rights in accordance with UN resolutions are to be called terrorists or whether it is the countries refusing to implement UN resolutions, are perpetrators of state terrorism" (Haider, 2001). Musharraf kept on accusing India for trying to take advantage of evolving regional and international conditions against terrorism as a result of 9/11. He proclaimed that "Our old foe appeared busy in preparing for adventurism against us through various excuses and tactics" (The News, 2001). The continuous reports of LOC violations with heavy artillery made the regional security conditions more uncertain moreover in less than two months, both the countries entered into another crisis in 2001-02.

The Attack on Indian Parliament and Operation Parakram

In the premises of parliament house in New Delhi, few armed intruders entered and tried to attack or reach out central hall of the parliament however, after armed clash with security men all the assaulters were killed. L. K. Advani while addressing Lok Sabha, dubbed the incident as "India's 9/11", and proclaimed that "all the five terrorists involved in the attack on the parliament were Pakistani nationals" (BBC News, 2001). He vowed to entered in 'a decisive phase against terrorism' and stated further that "Pakistan was a product of the indefensible Two-Nation theory. A theocratic state with an extremely tenuous tradition of democracy unable to reconcile itself to the reality of a secular, democratic, self-confident and steadily progressing India, whose standing in the international community is getting inexorably higher with the passage of time" (The Hindu, 2001).

Moreover, a type of stern response was demanded by Indian media (as the one taken against Afghanistan by U.S and its allied forces). The responsibility of the attack was not claimed by any of the group however, Indian government immediately accused LeT, LeJ and ISI for planning the attack. The allegations were denied and condemned by the groups. Furthermore, the chairman of United Jihad Council (UJC) suspected Indian Intelligence Agencies for engineering the incident "to bracket the Kashmir freedom struggle with terrorism" (Reddy, 2001). Similarly, General Musharraf condemned the attack immediately and categorically rejected the accusations against ISI. He thus demanded for the concrete evidences and offered

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joint investigation. In addition, he hinted that it might be a 'conspiracy planned by India itself' to defame Pakistan and Kashmir freedom struggle (Haque, 2001).

On the other hand, Vajpayee addressed the nation and pronounced that, "it was a warning to the entire nation. We accept the challenge" (BBC News, 2001). War hysteria further aggravated with the resolution passed by Indian cabinet that stated, "we will liquidate the terrorists and their sponsors wherever they are, whosoever they are" (Khare, The Hindu, 2001). Shiv Senna leader (Hindu militant group) Bal Thackeray asked to 'take revenge. Whereas, the extremist leader Ashok Singhal pressurized Indian government to extend the battle "across the border" following the Israel footsteps and "Don't just protest" (MaheshVijapurkar, 2001), (The Hindu, 2001).

New Delhi declared, that major powers of the world will be briefed regarding Pakistan's involvement in the parliament attack. Moreover, on December 21st, 2001, Indian High Commissioner was called back which further intensified the contentious conditions in the region. Islamabad didn't respond in a similar fashion. However, General Musharraf commented it as 'very arrogant and knee-jerk response' (Cherian, Frontline, 1999). Foreign minister of Pakistan blamed New Delhi for drawing to the "conclusions without conducting and allowing an impartial inquiry. If India believes that its allegations are right, then India should take the matters to the Security Council of the UN for impartial determination" (Rediff News, 2001).

The escalation kept on mounting as India cut off bus, train and air services (Samjhota express initiated after Agra summit suspended as well) and ban was imposed on Pakistan not to use Indian air space. India start mobilizing its military on the larger scale including pulling away its troops from China border to Pakistan border with the codename 'Operation Parakram' (valour) on December 19th. Moreover, India stopped civilian trains in the areas near Pakistan-India borders in the Rajasthan province and started deployment of troops through special train service (The Hindustan Times, 2001). To counter the threat Islamabad too decided to operationalize its forward defense lines, instigated medium – range missiles and cancelled all types of leaves in arm forces. New Delhi in response placed Prithvi missiles on the northern region of Punjab thus brought Islamabad under its striking range (Krepon, 2011).

Along with that several measures were taken by Islamabad to deflect global pressure, arrested around fifty prominent personnel's of LeT, JeM and froze their bank accounts. But the New Delhi rejected the measures by calling them 'cosmetic' and kept on pressurizing Islamabad by hinting the unilateral abrogation of 'Indus Water Treaty' signed between India and Pakistan in 1960. Additionally, the list of 20 terrorists was prepared by India and demanded Islamabad to hand over them to Indian government. General Musharraf denied the presence of any terrorist out of the list in Pakistan. Escalation mounted as about one million armed forces were standing on both sides of LoC and reports of exchanges of fire were coming more often. Government of Pakistan warned that due to mounting Indian pressure on its eastern borders they might pull back their troops present on Afghan border (where fight against Al-Qaida and Taliban's was going on) towards eastern borders and The Washington Post reported similar story on January 1st, 2001.

Kathmandu SAARC summit too remained failed to provide any breakthrough, though hopes were attached to it. General Musharraf during his speech in SAARC summit suggested that “The way forward is to make SAARC genuinely potent and through it sink differences, resolve disputes on the basis of sovereign equality..... I extend a genuine and sincere hand of friendship to Prime Minister Vajpayee. Together we must commence the journey for peace, harmony and progress in South Asia” (Naqvi, 2004). Then he surprisingly moved in the direction of Vajpayee and extended handshake and received the positive response. Later Indian PM in his speech expressed his hope that President Musharraf will not allow any terrorist activity to be launched against India in future from its territory.

British PM, Tony Blair’s visit to the South Asia aroused the expectations once again however, failed to reduce the regional temperatures. As the shelling on LoC killed five soldiers of Pakistan. President Musharraf on January 12th, addressed the nation on Pakistan’s television and banned JeM as well as LeT, called for international mediation for resolution of Kashmir dispute but took firm stand and stated that, “Kashmir runs into our blood and there was no question of having any compromise on it. I want to address here the international community, especially the United States, that we are against terrorism and condemn it and now you play a role to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Pakistan would continue extending all political, diplomatic and moral support to the people of occupied Kashmir’ (Dawn, 2002). Though mixed type of response was received from New Delhi but the conditions did not improve and unabated military pressure continued in the region.

U.S secretary of state Collin Powell was sent once again to the region on January 16th, 2002 and steady lull was noticed, yet the risk of conflict remained there. Director CIA George Tenet expressed while briefing the Senate Committee on Intelligence that, “The chance of war between these two nuclear-armed states is higher than at any point since 1971. We are deeply concerned, that a conventional war - once begun - could escalate into a nuclear confrontation” (Saez, 2003).

2. The Tenser Second Phase

Hardly after three months, a new and even more tenser chapter opened in Indo-Pak relations on May 14th, when an army base near Jammu assaulted, resulted in 33 killings mostly civilians. The Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen and the Al-Mansooreen in Indian – administered Kashmir took the responsibility of attacks. In the meanwhile, Indian government started accusing and giving belligerent statements against Pakistan. Moreover, Indian Lok Sabha was told by PM that “India would retaliate” and Fernandes proclaimed that, “it seems that we are heading towards a war with Pakistan”.

Pakistan’s FO spokesperson condemned the incident strongly and rejected Pakistan’s involvement in it. He accused that the Jammu event and retaliation threats from India are actually planned to divert the attention of world community from Muslims genocide in the Indian province of Gujrat. Moreover, to sabotage the U.S peace efforts for the region, the attacks are once again coincided with the visit by high level U.S representative in the region (Dawn, Troops Movement Cannot Be Ignored, 2001).

On the other hand, to ponder over the evolving situation, Cabinet Committee on Security held a meeting on May 17th and thought-out all options including striking

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militant training camps in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, contravention of diplomatic ties with Pakistan, and revocation of Indus Water Treaty. Finally, Islamabad was asked to recall its High Commissioner (The Hindustan Times, 2002). The armies on both the sides were on red alert, regular border skirmishes, shifting of civilian population, increased violence in Kashmir and assassination of Kashmiri leader Abdul Ghani Lone turned the south Asian security situation more precarious. Shaheen missiles (750 km range) were installed by Pakistan.

Uncertainty regarding looming war aggravated when Vajpayee on visit to Jammu and Kashmir talked to his soldiers along Pakistan's border said, "Whether our neighbor understands this signal or not, whether the world takes account of it or not, history will be witness to this. We shall write a new chapter of victory. Let's work for victory. Be prepared for sacrifices. But our aim should be victory. Because now it's time for a decisive fight" (The Tribune, 2002).

To warn the world powers, letters were sent (to U.S President George Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Russian President Vladimir Putin), by Indian PM that New Delhi is running out of patience over issue with Pakistan. To counter Indian act, Pakistan's foreign minister too transcribe letters to the presidents of UNSC and UNSG to play role in de-escalation. The grim security condition of the region became more obvious when a travel advisory was issued by the U.S for its citizens to leave the region followed by the many other countries including New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Japan and UK. Consequently, hundreds of western citizens along with diplomat's families left the region in early June. However, after mid of June decrease of escalation was noticed but the troops on both the sides of international border remained there, in Oct, 2002 Indian government declared the withdrawal of troops.

Results and Discussion

The multiple situations emerged after 1998 nuclear tests provided an ample evidence that presence of nuclear arsenal in South Asia did not adequately deter the regional escalation. Both India and Pakistan were prompt in nuclear posturing, both conveyed overt nuclear threats at multiple levels and their actions indicated the readiness of nuclear arsenals. To hurl the nuclear threats, ballistic missiles were tested, harsh rhetoric in public and military addresses and provocative press conferences remained common tools. Sometimes both the sides toned down to show the gestures of seriousness on nuclear matters just to refract the international pressure. In the Kargil confrontation, the availability of nuclear weapons on both sides did not prevent war but were willing to compete.

The tenuous situation in south Asia continuously remained shaky following the Crisis 2001-02. The prevailed conditions were highlighted by the ruptured Indo-Pak Peace process and risky advancements in the nuclear and military doctrines (India's Cold Start Doctrine and Pakistan's Full Spectrum Doctrine). The Peace process initiated with the encouragement and strong nudge by the U.S, stained with substantial tensions, came to the verge to failure. Additionally, notable practical steps were taken to increase the credibility of nuclear threats from both the sides. New Delhi while responding the media report regarding deployment of ballistic missiles Shaheen I (800 Km range) proclaimed that India has already instigated its missile system on the borders. Similarly, according to the reports, Haft-I & Haft-II

missiles were moved to eastern part of Punjab by Pakistan as the tension heightened after December later been activated at Kharian base. To counter Pakistan, New Delhi also instigated and declared its Prithvi missiles to northern part of Indian Punjab in December. Moreover, movement of forty-seven railway cars were reported from Sargodha where it is assumed that Pakistan stores its nuclear warheads as well as the missiles. Additionally, in the middle of crisis on May 25th and 27th Islamabad successfully tested short and medium nuclear capable missiles which indicates that the two countries were busy in more advanced and sophisticated nuclear war fighting capabilities without paying any heed to the dangers of nuclear escalation. Moreover, both the sides claimed to teach their adversary an unforgettable lesson if its survival would be at stake.

Washington has a strong history of managing/influencing the Indo-Pak crisis publicly and sometimes behind-the scenes. This mediator role by the United States in all crisis in general and in dangerous Kargil crisis - 2000-01 crisis was too timely to avert full-fledge wars. However, the crisis between India and Pakistan are often managed but never focused to resolve all outstanding issues. This subsiding of core issues particularly the Kashmir issue leads to the repeated eruption of crisis between south Asian nuclear powers. Moreover, the mediator or stabilizer role of major powers particularly US has also been exploited by the India and Pakistan on number of occasions particularly in the post 9/11 era when US stakes were badly attached with south Asia. Both the nuclear adversaries used the nuclear posturing to extract as many concessions as possible from the changed international and regional security dynamics. Additionally, such restraining US influence may not always influence the behaviors and decisions in future conflicts and the circumstances may also change.

The frequent occurrence of these crises, their intensity, the instability caused by them at the strategic level, and the way the crisis was managed or dealt, shows that the introduction of nuclear weapons cannot be thought of as a guarantee of deterrence stability in the region. Thus, here the conclusion can be drawn that the “probability of nuclear posturing” leading to “deterrence failure” at any stage, reasonably exists despite the presence of nuclear arsenals and there is unprecedented potential for catastrophic or unthinkable outcomes.

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