



NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND ASYMMETRIC CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA

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ABSTRACT :

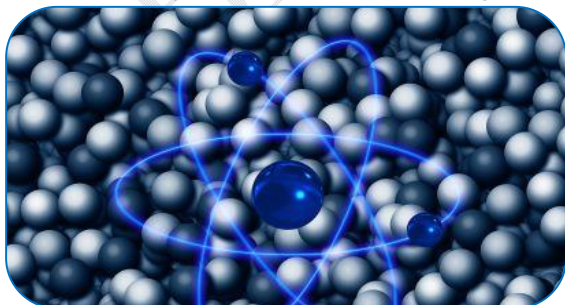
The potential for proliferation of a high scale military and nuclear technology among the Third World states has become a matter of grave concern for the Western powers. The US in this regard is very sensitive and quite specific about the containment of nuclear technology. With the break-up of the Soviet Union, proliferation has become all the more complex and worrying issue for the West.¹ The Western powers are trying hard to denuclearize the nuclear programmers of Third World states like Pakistan, India and North Korea, the dilemma is that these powers themselves are responsible for transfer of the skill of military/nuclear technology to the Third World states. The present paper will examine the Nuclear Proliferation and nuclear postures and its impact, resulted the threat of asymmetric conflict in South Asia. The main aim of this paper is mainly concerned with the protracted, intra-national conflicts to efforts at resolution arises from their asymmetric structure.

KEYWORDS : South Asia, Proliferation, Asymmetric conflict, Resolution, India, Pakistan, peace, War.

INTRODUCTION

The world witnessed a major historical event in 1947 when the South Asia subcontinent, was governed as a one unit from Khyber to Burma since almost last one thousand years, partitioned by the ruling British Empire resulting into two states namely India and Pakistan. The major reason behind partition of the subcontinent was the religious and cultural differences between the Hindus and Muslims. This difference made them hostile towards each other and India having superiority in all aspects, compelled Pakistan to become a security state right after its inception. To expand its superiority over the whole region, the Indian nuclear program started in 1944, even before its independence.

Nuclear proliferation has been the cynosure of international debate since it was first tested during the early period of the Cold War. One of the major concerns is how Asia is gradually becoming a nuclear weapon zone. Many of its populous nations such as China, India, Pakistan, Japan, (and North-Korea) have sought to obtain nuclear weapons for security and status. Interestingly, the more these states seek to concretize their security through nuclear proliferation. Although control of the spread of nuclear weapons has been an aspect of the international agenda since 1946, the Cold War rivalry prevented much serious



attention being paid to it. After the end of the Cold War and again at the conclusion of 1990-91 Gulf War, when Iraq's secret nuclear weapon programme was discovered, nuclear non-proliferation became the number one priority of the leading western nations. In the post World War II era, US was no longer able to enjoy the status of sole nuclear power in the world when in 1949 the Soviets claimed to have this capability. With the emergence of Sino-Soviet rift, China

became determined to have nuclear capability of its own. It was primarily the Chinese nuclear explosion in 1964, which caused India to go nuclear. Consequently it was inevitable for the Pakistani policy makers not to let India have a free hand in the region. One can witness that within a spell of merely 10 years Pakistan was able to acquire the capability of producing its own nuclear weapons. This is how the proliferation of nuclear technology has taken place in south Asia.

Objectives

1. To analyze the challenges of nuclear Proliferation in South Asia.
2. To find the asymmetric as well as symmetric conflicts in South Asia.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

South Asia has been one of the Heavens of human civilization, where lives a quarter of the human race. This region is passing through a difficult situation from the last one century ago - has become the battleground of all the super power countries in the world, resulted the loss of large mass of humanity. The region was the conflict prone subject to continuous political tensions. The worst was the trauma of nuclear proliferation that creates the shelter of asymmetric conflicts in the region (especially India and Pakistan), where the bulk of South Asia lives. Even today the modern nuclear technology and nuclear tests creates a threat like terrorism that looms on the horizon of instability that prepares the region assuming new and complex forms.

Methodology

Historical- descriptive method has been used in this research work. The research has focused on the study of relevant secondary source material published by the governments of South Asian Nations. Further, this work also involves interview method/questionnaire through which responses would be drawn from military officers (former), which can be utilized as primary sources. Persons who did their services in UNO are also going to be interviewed in order to draw and crave truthful inferences. This research study also has drawn material from the documents among SAARC Nations. The main materials that are used through secondary source are books, Articles, published journals and unpublished dissertations and others have been extensively consulted.

Nuclear Proliferation during Cold War

The whole process of nuclear Proliferation in the subcontinent began in India. In early 1950's India initiated its nuclear program and established Bhabha Research Institute.¹ In 1956, the India became the first South Asian country to have a research reactor with enriched uranium supplied by the United States. After China's nuclear test in 1964, India expedited its nuclear program to counter the threat of emerging China and Pakistan simultaneously but propagating to the international community that the nuclear capability of India would be for peaceful purposes not for military purposes.² India conducted its very first nuclear test in Pokhran, Rajasthan with the code name "Smiling Buddha".

Pakistan's reaction was highly strong to the Indian nuclear test since it would have been a quite dangerous equation for Pakistan especially right after the disintegration of Pakistan. The then President of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced to formally initiate Pakistan's nuclear program.³ Pakistan signed an agreement with France in 1974 for the construction of a nuclear processing plant to formally start the process of acquiring the nuclear capability but this whole process was sabotaged by the American government by pressurizing the French and Pakistani governments to cancel this agreement. UK also advised Islamabad to cancel this agreement. Pakistan facing heavy pressure from the foreign powers refused to cancel this agreement resulting into US cancelled military and economic assistance to Pakistan. France later gave in to the foreign pressure and cancelled the contract. Going one step ahead, US Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger had threatened the then Prime Minister Bhutto that United States would make a horrible example of him if he went ahead with the nuclear program which he did and then later on it was claimed by

Pakistan Peoples Party that the threat was actually carried out by overthrowing Bhutto's regime and later giving him death sentence since that judgment still remains as the most controversial decision in the history of Pakistan's judiciary.⁴

After Bhutto's government, Pakistan was in huge pressure by the International community to halt its nuclear program but suddenly the scenario got a 360 degrees turn when Soviets invaded Afghanistan and US direly needed Pakistan as its main frontline ally in this proxy war in 1979. This historical event could be considered as a game changer in the nuclear history of Pakistan which allowed Pakistan to continue its nuclear program smoothly having no restrictions from the US, even US congress issued certification that Pakistan was not trying to develop nuclear capability. India, being annoyed from the shift in US policies towards Pakistani nuclear program, officially affirmed its right to produce nuclear weapons.⁵

In the late 1980's Pakistan has acquired the nuclear technology according to their nuclear scientists, but refrained to public it and building nuclear weapons. In 1988, tensions between both the states were very much diffused when son of Indira Gandhi and daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto respectively met in a meeting in Islamabad to resolve the outstanding issues and signed an agreement not to attach on nuclear facilities of each other. However, soon after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, USA again taking a U-turn in its policies, demanded from Pakistan to roll back its nuclear program. Islamabad reacted strongly to this demand and rejected the pressure from the US and international community over its nuclear program. Seeing Islamabad's refusal to halt its nuclear program, US applied sanctions on Pakistan under Presseler Amendment, however the former failed to stop the latter to discontinue its nuclear program by all means.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was presented to the global community after the deliberations and negotiations of almost 44 years which called to prevent and ban every nuclear explosion or test at any place.⁶ This treaty could be termed as a failure as both the countries who were aimed to be stopped from conducting nuclear tests, didn't sign the treaty and later on conducted nuclear tests. The global community ignored the rigidness in the Indian stance of not signing the NPT and CTBT but started exerting pressure on Pakistan to sign the CTBT but the latter refused to do so unconditionally. During these negotiations, India successfully tested its latest Prithvi intermediate range nuclear missile having the capacity of carrying a nuclear payload to target the whole of Pakistan and China. Islamabad responded to this action by successfully testing its two advanced nuclear ballistic missiles.

A hardliner extremist political party of India, BJP came to power in March, 1998 with a strong anti-Pakistan sentiment and policy. BJP government formally tested its nuclear weapons on 11 and 13 May, 1998 in Pokhran, Rajasthan. This event came as a great surprise and shock to the whole international community especially United States of America since they failed to predict about it.⁷ Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Wajpaye termed these tests vital to ensure Indian security. Global cosituation in the region. Being a major ally of Pakistan, Chinese government also condemned these attacks and urged the countries around the world to exert pressure on India to halt its nuclear program. However, interestingly France, Russia and UK, being the nuclear powers other than US and China remained silent on this issue and didn't impose any sanction on India.⁸ European Union also gave a strong reaction on these tests and termed these tests as a great danger to the global peace and the region. Germany cancelled talks with India on development aid of around \$ 169.2 million; Swedish government cancelled a three year assistance agreement with India worth \$ 119 million while Norway, Denmark and Holland also stopped financial assistance to India.⁹

Islamabad rejecting all international pressures tested its nuclear capability in the late May 1998 and announced its formal entry in the nuclears' club. India and Pakistan emerged as world's sixth and seventh officially declared nuclear powers. The global community widely criticized the Pakistani response and imposed sanctions. Even other South Asian countries including Sri-Lanka, Nepal, Maldives and Bangladesh felt highly insecure from these tests while Bhutan congratulated India for the tests. The global community including US strongly condemned the Indian tests and imposed a variety of sanctions on New Delhi, many countries called back their ambassadors for consultation on emergent.¹⁰

Outlook of Proliferation in South Asia

The motives and evolution of the nuclear programs of India and Pakistan and the gradually shrinking impact of Western non proliferation efforts to date make it more realistic to focus on the outlook for proliferation in the region than on the non proliferation policy options. Whatever course adopted by the United States will be but one factor in nuclear decision making in South Asia, and not by any means the decisive factor. A report prepared by the Congressional Research Service for the Sub-committee on Arms Control, Oceans, International Operations and Environment of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee judged on the basis of open literature that Pakistan "might be able to produce as much as 50 kilograms of plutonium a year" by the 1990s from its reprocessing program, though it would be of questionable quality for weapons use. The report judged that the prospects for producing enriched uranium were more doubtful, but argued that it was prudent to assume that Pakistan could also produce some weapons grade enriched uranium. This would permit the production of some nuclear explosives, but not an arsenal.¹¹ The same report judged that on the basis of its reprocessing capability and considerable supplies of spent fuel from its indigenous heavy water reactors India would likely enter the 1990s "with a capacity to produce an arsenal of nuclear weapons."¹²

Nuclear Capability of India and Pakistan

Indian and Pakistani nuclear programs are notably asymmetrical, reflecting the differing priorities and resources of each country. India maintains a broad based, energy oriented program which envisions a three stage effort involving 1) natural uranium fuelled reactors; 2) a fast breeder reactor program fuelled with plutonium from the first phase and; 3) a thorium-uranium fuel cycle utilizing India's large reserves of thorium sands.¹³ Except for the use of plutonium produced by a small research reactor to conduct its nuclear test in 1974, the Indian effort is not overtly geared to a weapons program. The comprehensiveness of the Indian effort, however, provides a natural cover for developing a nuclear weapons option, especially given India's emphasis on "self-sufficiency," a code word for the maximum avoidance of international safeguards. Due to its scarce resources and limited scientific manpower numbered in the hundreds of nuclear scientists and technicians versus some 18,000 or more for India-Pakistan's¹⁴ efforts more clearly suggest a strategy to develop a nuclear explosive capability in advance of a balanced civil nuclear program. This is primarily a reflection of its limited resources and first priority being given to security considerations, as Pakistan is even more energy deficient than India.

Nuclear proliferation in South Asia is in part a consequence of the security dilemma existing in the subcontinent. Security dilemmas arise when a state's mechanisms for increasing its security negatively impact the security and threat perceptions of other states. As one expert stated, the South Asian nuclear security complex involves several security dilemmas, including Pakistan/India, India/China, and Russia/United States.¹⁵ A further security dilemma dyad is that of the United States and China, since it has an impact on attitudes in India and Pakistan, and helps shape their nuclear decisions.

The 1998 Nuclear Tests

Domestic politics represented the single most important factor in the 1998 tests, but threat perceptions also compelled changes in security policies. Decision makers in India, captivated by the ideal of their country's rise, concluded that India's newfound status should be coupled with coming out of the nuclear closet. In this light, nuclear weapons were seen as the chief currency of power on the world stage. In turn, this forced Pakistan to work seriously on its nuclear program with a fast pace. India announced its formal entry to the nuclear weapon program in May 1998 with five nuclear tests at Pokhran, Pakistan's, having, nuclear capability at that time, replied back in merely two weeks with six nuclear tests and became the seventh nation in the world and first Islamic country to join the nuclear countries club.¹⁶ After the tests, neither country was well-prepared for the implications of becoming declared nuclear powers.

Resolution of Asymmetric Conflict

It is a truism that most protracted conflicts do not end in a negotiated settlement but in victory for the incumbents, as with Nigeria and Biafra, or for the insurgents, as in East Pakistan. Part of the reason for this is the difficulty of starting and continuing successful negotiations between parties involved in an asymmetric structure that works against starting negotiations and concluding compromise settlements in a number of ways.¹⁷

One of the one side relational asymmetries makes difficult for many protracted conflicts to achieve a mutually hurting stalemate, which many writers argue is a precondition for negotiations to be contemplated by embattled leaders. Many protracted intranational conflicts seem to achieve, for long periods, conditions of mutual standoff, with insurgents unable to force incumbents toward concessions by inflicting unacceptable costs, and incumbents unable to do more than contain insurgency within reasonable limits. As John Darby has argued with respect to Northern Ireland, some asymmetric conflicts can be "contained" in the sense that their damaging effects can be confined to limited geographical areas or social strata and thus become reutilized and bearable.¹⁸

In such situations, other changes might bring about a desire for a negotiated settlement on the part of one set of leaders. Kriesberg suggests that one such factor might be a major change in other conflicts in which one party-usually the incumbent-is simultaneously involved, while major switches in fortune-short of final triumph or disaster-also raise the possibility of negotiation for one side.¹⁹ While such factors may be influential in the decision-making process of one party to an asymmetric conflict, however, that asymmetry ensures that the other side is unlikely to be similarly affected. As Holsti pointed out succinctly over twenty years ago, it is necessary for both sides to come simultaneously to the conclusion that negotiations are worthwhile for negotiations to have any chance of beginning, let alone succeeding.²⁰

On the other hand, if the integrated party wishes to begin discussions leading to an agreeable and, it is hoped, stable long-term solution with its adversary, the problem arises of finding a negotiating partner that can bargain in any meaningful way, coherently represent the other side, and deliver and guarantee any agreement that might be reached. The experience of the British government 1921 in negotiating a treaty with the representatives of Sinn Fein, only to have the latter movement split over accepting the agreement, with the intransigents fighting another war aimed at repudiation, is only an extreme example of the dilemma created by such structural asymmetry.²¹

Finally, it is also important to recall the fact that asymmetric conflicts tend to draw in outsiders as patrons and supporters of one or of both sides in the struggle. Inevitably, this creates a two-tier problem, if and when participants decide the time has come to seek a solution, as opposed to a victory,²² Processes have to be devised to deal initially with the mode of the withdrawal of the patrons, who inevitably have developed their own interests in and agenda for the conflict, and then to deal with the issues in the core conflict itself. Examples of conflicts where one tier of the process has been accomplished but not the other the war in Afghanistan is merely one of the most recent examples-indicate the difficulty of dealing with such complex, asymmetric structures.

CONCLUSION

It is very important for both India and Pakistan, as nuclear neighbours, to change their relationship. Evidently, the international community must seek early resolutions to their intractable political conflicts. Though conflict resolution seems a distant goal in South Asia, there is an urgent need to prevent formal nuclear and conventional force deployments. Violent military policies and engagement in an unrestricted arms race with inadequate safety measures and communications is a recipe for instability and crisis. Greater cooperation and the construction of a mutually acceptable framework for a stability regime will not happen, however, without resolve, willingness to compromise, and outside facilitation. This work has proffered possible risk reduction and confidence-building measures based on the identification of conditions that cause instability. The United States and the West more generally could help by sharing experiences, expertise, and technology. Political considerations, as well as bureaucratic interpretations of non-

proliferation regimes and export control requirements, have so far stymied the development of meaningful cooperative efforts to build stability arrangements. Such assistance has been regarded by many in the West as "rewarding" Pakistan and India for proliferation. However, in the current situation enhancing Indian and Pakistani capabilities to ensure stability and peace and providing incentives to reduce the risks of a nuclear war is a goal that necessitates reconsideration of previously accepted principles and practices.

It is quite evident that a nuclear all-out war between Pakistan and India is certainly not out of option. There were almost two scenarios where a nuclear all out war was just one step away but the 1.5 billion inhabitants of both the states were lucky on both the moments but will fate be always lucky and give lifelines every time, certainly not. Not only more than billions of inhabitants of subcontinent will suffer from this war but the whole region will be affected. Therefore, there is a dire need of promotion of solid and influential dialogue and confidence building among both the states since this military rivalry has curtailed the level of socio-economic development of both the states to a greater extend. The goal of a welfare state couldn't be achieved by both the countries without eliminating this rivalry. If European states which fought wars for hundreds of years could now remain in exemplary peace and harmony why India and Pakistan having their ideologies Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia –Towards World War-III intact can't, develop friendly ties which will be in the interest of the 1.5 billion people residing in the region.

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