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## PAKISTAN'S PERSPECTIVE ON NUCLEAR DETERRENCE IN SOUTH ASIA

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### ABSTRACT

*The analysis is undertaken to evaluate the lumbering state of nuclear deterrence in South Asia. It ponders to foresee the veracity of India-Pakistan strategic stability by deliberating upon the equivocal doctrines and ambiguity on nuclear weapon postures at both ends. Communication, Command and Control Systems (C3S), traditionally considered as a robust feature of nuclear apparatus, faces an extraordinary challenge in the age of cyber propaganda and disinformation. The escalating tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad over the Kashmir dispute are deemed alarming for the international community as the two countries particularly India possess no ceding traits within its present foreign policy behavior. The successful working of nuclear deterrence depends upon the rationality of state leadership. It is questionable whether it may be so in the case of ruling Bhartiya Janata Party whose war-mongering anti-Pakistan fervor continues to be inspired by religious fanaticism and jingoism. The animus surviving for several decades in India-Pakistan bilateral coalesce has the potential to transform the South Asian region into a nuclear cauldron - the consequences of which would be appalling for states in the region and beyond.*

**Keywords:** Doctrinal ambiguity, Communication, Command, Control Systems (C3S), Kashmir Dispute, Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)

### INTRODUCTION

Nuclear weapons for long have been argued by various pundits as a tool to ensure steadiness in the global confines. With peaceful surpass of successful years without a vibrant full-scale war (particularly among nuclear weapon states), it is stimulated that the world had learnt much from the former catastrophic upheavals. As a consequence of the two great world wars; international backlash against the United States' (US) dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan in 1945 at Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the distinct torments during the Cold War - in particular the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, international relations have deliberately relied upon diplomacy, bilateral negotiations and third party mediation to settle their differences and interests, at the same time piling their nuclear assets in their backyards to envisage to the enemy that there exists another track backed by a 'destructive force' to safeguard state's core interests. In words of Bernard Brodie, 'nuclear deterrence (ND) is the threat of use of nuclear weapons to prevent an attack' (Rajagopalan & Mishra, 2015, p. 205). 'As long as nuclear weapons are around, even in small numbers, deterrence is the safest doctrine to deal with them' (Delpech, 2012).

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The paper prods to confer attention towards the current lumbering state of ND in South Asia with exclusive analysis to the Indo-Pak relations, their unconfirmed and deliberately disinforming nuclear doctrinal postures with reference to existing tensions, and the accusations over Kashmir dispute. The dispute dates back to the 1947 partition of the Indian Subcontinent that led to the independence of Pakistan and India. Kashmir was then a princely state ruled by Maharajah Hari Singh who did not want to join either India or Pakistan. However, the local population was in favor of joining Pakistan. Fearing an uprising by the locals, Maharajah Singh in desperation asked India for military aid and protection, with the latter agreeing only if the ruler agreed to sign the instrument of succession in favor of India. Pakistan termed the instrument of succession of the Maharajah as “illegal and against the wishes of the people”. A war in 1948 resulted in partial control by Pakistan and India, with the areas under the former termed as Azad Kashmir, and under the latter as Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> Both the states to this day claim the whole of Kashmir as an integral part of their respective nation. (Majid & Hussain, 2016).

The commentary ponders whether the sustenance of ND is possible in South Asia, and what aspects can cause the burst of the phenomenon. The current state of ND and strategic stability in South Asia is chiefly dependent on the peace making between Pakistan and India (Evan & Eric, 2014). However, it is surprising to observe that despite waging three conventional wars – in 1948, 1965, 1971, the inclination to settle their disputes by another war still persists, fed by jingoism and irrational nationalism. To contain the risks of a future nuclear war and collapse of ND, mutual understanding of doctrines and clarity among Indian and Pakistan nuclear postures are vital.

As of 2019, the state of Indo-Pak relations seems to frighten the threshold of ND maintained for numerous years across the globe. With India’s largest political party - *Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)* consecutively in realm of power, the modes of perturbing the regional peace have altered with more varieties. In the aftermath of the *Pulwama* attack, a belligerent attitude was seen from the Indian leadership who were responsible for the airspace violation against Pakistan in February. In August, the Indian authorities surprisingly abrogated Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which for decades had given a special status to Jammu and Kashmir - a move that can be termed as equivalent to the alleged Russian forceful annexation of *Crimea* which brought sanctions and international backlash against the Eurasian state. The move has converted the South Asian region into a hotbed of nuclear rivalry and conflict.

Pakistan, in order to revamp its defence, called in the *National Command Authority (NCA)* - a body that oversees the policy regarding nuclear weapon, to signal the country’s seriousness against any Indian misadventure (Abbasi, 2019). India’s Defense Minister, *Rajnath Singh* issued a statement in August, 2019 in *Pokhran* (India’s first nuclear test site) bewildered the India’s non-first use policy enlarging the already existing ambiguity. He said: “India is a nuclear power and yet remains firmly committed to the doctrine of *No First Use (NFU)*. India has strictly adhered to this doctrine. What happens in the future depends on the circumstances” (Anwardawn, 2019). Altogether, the fresh occurrences are incessantly affecting the norms and future of ND in South Asia. One may acknowledge the notion that every successive Indian government that came in power was endorsed with the stance to not

discuss or negotiate the concerns about the century long disputed territory of Kashmir (Majid & Hussain, 2016).

ND, a concept that surfaced to abolish the risk of nuclear war between two nuclear weapon entities at present escorts distinct ploys. The lasting fate of the ND phenomenon in South Asia is largely dependent on the bilateral understanding of nuclear doctrines (DND) and clarity in postures between nuclear states. In contrast to previous years, the escalating events have been presented by media platforms of both sides with jingoistic fervor. The advent of the Internet and social media has exasperated the “rules of conflict” being prone to all sorts of propaganda, fake news and disinformation. In such a situation, it is the responsibility of the leadership and the state to adapt to a rational approach for management of the conflict that can become nuclear, rather than allow the situation to worsen merely for the purpose of rallying people and surging their vote banks.

### **SUSTENANCE OF NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AND REALITY OF INDO-PAK NUCLEAR WAR**

The phenomenon of ND is only legitimate until any of the participant states make use of its nuclear weapon. The proposed discussion debates whether the sustenance of ND is possible in South Asia and what aspects can cause the burst of the phenomenon. Nuclear escalation remained 2019's most prominent challenge in India-Pakistan relations. The skirmishes on the borders were a common exertion since years of independence withal the latest move by the BJP government, and its recent attains of broad weaponry than Pakistan keeps the idea of a fissile winter probable.

#### **Ambiguity in Nuclear Doctrines**

The sustenance of ND seems a hefty venture with the hullabaloo, ‘What is the actuality in India's DND?’ It is the current rampant question that has provoked strategic analysts in South Asia. The fact is that similar relative problems subsist in New Delhi's comprehension regarding Pakistan's nuclear strategy, as no concrete doctrinal paper remains available in the public domain by Pakistani authorities. What level of deterrence are the two countries running after? What is the nuclear threshold for India in case they have a re-shifted policy of ‘First use’? All at present can be diagnosed only from confidence-building measures, communication and bilateral talks for which New Delhi always has had a ‘no attitude’ to collude with a ‘smaller neighbor’ (Yamin, 2014, p. 144). As for Pakistan, although they did not release an official DND, their issued speeches and public offerings of authorities had been consistent and never switched ever so often. They have certain selected staff who debate over nuclear decisions and ensures the continuity to the ‘First Use’ policy. The strategy was never confused with NFU schemes or any other. Adil Sultan writes: ‘India might have two separate sets of doctrine - a morally defensible declaratory policy with the NFU commitment for peace time; and a nuclear war-fighting doctrine for a crisis with its principal adversary, Pakistan.’ (Sultan, 1970, pp. 26-52).

The point of concern is that all the calculations made by various expertise are still indefinite, and whether a stable ND can be maintained in this state of opacity. The unclarity or disinformation that India has intendedly or unintendedly fabricated regarding its ‘First Use or No-First Use Policy’ within the entire international arena

has damaged the credibility of Indian nuclear doctrine re-launched with modifications in 2003. The fluctuating public statements of authorities for several uninterrupted years have given fumes to multiple conclusions. Is it a discord ongoing among the senior authorities upon the doctrine, or is it part of some stern propaganda? If it really is, the results are not likely to be favorable. In his 2018 book *'The Strategy Trap'*, Lt. Gen Prakash Menon instills the detail. He scripts that the nation's ND was under critique among the Indian authorities since ever the exclusively 'no-first use'. 'It would be challenging to survive a first strike and strike back due to the possibility of damage to nuclear arsenal and its control and command system. A bolt from the blue attack is the worst operational scenario that has the possibility of preventing nuclear retaliation' (Menon, 2018, p. 84). The writer shares a key argument that India's military, which is responsible for processing the nuclear attack, was not consulted while manufacturing the doctrine. The discrete in military and government became a sole reason for the misty nuclear policy. The renowned Indian diplomat and National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon opened another controversy in his book *'Choices'* - "Circumstances are conceivable in which India might find it useful to strike first, for instance, against a nuclear weapon state (NWS) that had declared that it would certainly use its weapons, and if India was certain that the adversary's launch was imminent" (Menon, 2018, p. 85).

In an obscure environment, it is not rational to ignore the statements of key leadership and only stick to what the Indian nuclear doctrine has to say. The analysis of various scholars has recognized the Indian Nuclear Doctrine of 2003 as a confused paper. The critique of the doctrine does not pause to First Use - the stage is further paved for countless evaluations on 'Credible Minimum deterrence' (CMD) of India. The adepts propose that 'the CMD concept itself might be a problem because of the possible contradiction between minimum and credible' (Rajagopalan, 2016). With the accelerating pace of condemn within Indian officials, the government pulled its gears on many occasions to reassess the nuclear module. In March 2012, a non-official task force of strategic analysts put together by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies in New Delhi, also produced an alternate nuclear doctrine for India (Sarkar, 2012). Later in 2014, Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP showed few bulky steps towards modification, but the government felt its contend in the First use policy (Rajagopalan, 2016).

Pakistan has improved from "credible minimum deterrence" to "full spectrum deterrence", but the apprehension remains the same. India, along with a written nuclear policy, puts together a great deal of perplexity not only domestically, but also at the international platform. Whereas Pakistan, in the absence of a black and white statement, is quite certain of its nuclear blueprint. It is staunch with the policy of 'First use' and maintenance of ND. India audits whatever the Pakistan verbal doctrine instills, but indorses the postulation as perverse in words of Lt. Gen Prakash Menon: "When Pakistan promotes the notion that its nuclear capability will be used early in a conventional conflict, what it logically means is that, at that point Pakistan has decided to commit suicide. It is an obvious military bluff meant for political effect." (Menon, 2018, p. 102). The disinformation and misconception of the opponents' nuclear position therefore reside on both ends. The matter can only be sorted through proficient tracks of diplomacy, CBM and one to one dialogue to guarantee the future of lasting ND in South Asia. Adil Sultan has picked up: "In a nuclear contest, mixed signals could trigger unintended responses that could lead to an action reaction

syndrome, and therefore have adverse implications for regional deterrence stability” (Sultan, 2019).

### **Nuclear Command and Control Setup**

Nuclear forces and the Communication-Command and Control System (C3S) have immense role to play in the prolongation of ND. The first strike can only be responded if the country withholds a competent C3S. Although the ultimate decision to make the utility of a nuclear bomb resides with the state leadership, a trained military is equally vital as they are the performer of actions. An ordered mission can only be practiced profitably with efficacy if the command and control is robust and the nuclear squad is well aligned and wholly skilled to interpret the psyche of the opponent force. The book ‘Strategy Trap’ inculcates: ‘Survivable and operationally deployed nuclear forces; robust command and control system; effective intelligence and early warning capabilities; comprehensive planning and training of nuclear staff are identified as imperative for the deterrence to prevail.’ (Menon, 2018, p. 82).

Washington Congressional Research Service delineates that the Nuclear Command and Control System, NC2S is responsible to gather information on the threats to the national security of state. It then communicates it through the chain of command to the President, recommends the President with all the on ground choices for a response, conveys the President’s selected retort to the forces on the pitch, and regulates the activity of those forces (“Defense Primer: Command and Control of Nuclear Forces”). It is claimed that the ND in Cold War era survived between the US and Soviet Union because of eligible nuclear teams on mutual ends. McGeorge Bundy, the national security adviser (during the Cuban Missile Crisis) notified the US president: ‘We had photographs of Soviet nuclear missile sites under construction across the island of Cuba.’ John F. Kennedy was fully convinced to release their Turkey planted missiles on Moscow, “You’ll never believe how close we came”. (History.com Editors, 2010). The on-time message to Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and the ability of US advisors to identify its authenticity paused a catastrophic burst of ND.

Unfortunately, in the case of India and Pakistan, we cannot expect that a situation alike to the Cuban crisis can be tackled appropriately impeding a nuclear disaster. Robert S. McNamara, US Secretary of Defense, the witness to missile tragedy marks: ‘We were lucky, but not only lucky. I believe we would not have survived those thirteen (13) days had not the president shaped and directed the ways in which his senior advisers confronted the crisis’ (“Arms Control Today”). Nikita Khrushchev, with his peace message he had prepared to steal the show, could have triggered John F. Kennedy’s egoism. The two leaders with, exclusive guide from their Command and Control advisors, sensibly controlled a nuclear detonation, whereas such a deal of modesty and reasoning, dubbed in the words of Thomas Schelling as ‘brinkmanship’, is ill-expected from Indian authorities under the leadership of Narendra Modi, a stern follower of Fascism and RSS ideology. (Powell, 2003, pp. 86-118).

In this contemporary era of technology where cyber tools are tending to dominate intuitive adeptness, not only firm leadership and a trained command nuclear force is a prerequisite, but also latest supercomputer equipment is also mandatory to

subjugate the opponent. Martyn Wingrove, a techno analyst describes that an adversary in a limited span of time can hijack radar. With evidence of past incidents, he notifies: ‘the system display showed the radar to be working correctly, including detection thresholds, which were presented as perfectly normal throughout the duration of the attack’ (Wingrove, 2018). The state is alarming as a third party can magnificently cash from the animosity of India and Pakistan to win its own political objectives. With the innovation in cyberspace, each country with a nuclear weapon in its possession is equally exposed to terrorism and broken arrows (Kerr, 2011, p. 4).

New Delhi’s largest nuclear power plant was confirmed to face a cyber-hijack in September 2019 (Das, 2019). The Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) in Tamil Nadu is credited to have Russian stakes in its management. The government came to know of the activity in the late hours of operation. On gaining expertise consultation with Moscow-based Cybersecurity firm *Kaspersky*, the entity was exposed. A North Korean hacker group ‘*Lazarus*’ was allegedly labelled for the cyber penetration alleged to explore several trusted data and is prophesied to visit again. The overriding element, which cannot be ignored, is uncertainty still reigns supreme in the position, as the alleged cannot be attributed with credibility and assurance. In the words of Prakash: ‘perfect intelligence does not exist in the real world’. The Washington Post identifies ‘India’s critical infrastructure is vulnerable to attack’ (Das, 2019).

### **THREAT TO SOUTH ASIA NUCLEAR DETERRENCE**

India’s advancing K-Missile Family and the deployment of nuclear submarines for sea-based second-strike capability through submarine-launched missiles (SLBMs) are stimulating Pakistan to acquire the parallel in standards (Mian, 2019). These submarines are captive to conceal in the ocean during an attack, to launch a retaliatory response even if the victim country has been made unable to wage a land-based reciprocal strike (Afzal, 2018). The great powers have a major role to play in the changing criterions of the ND in South Asia. With prolonged bonds with the United States, New Delhi had gained support in achieving the ballistic missile capability and swifter space program. It stands in the limelight since 2017 for its regular defense imports from the US, Russia, and across the world. An exclusive divergence is detected in Indian import partners. Around 62% arms were purchased from Moscow; while the heavy advanced military gears were supplied from Washington, giving boom to the Indo-US and Indo-Russo relations. In prominence, the weights included long-range maritime patrol aircraft, strategic transport aircraft and combat helicopters. Tel- Aviv remains its third largest weapon import partner. India rose fourth with the highest military spending expenditure of US\$66.5 million in 2018. The quest was estimated to reach US\$18 billion solely with Washington in 2019 (Wezeman & Kuimova, 2019, p. 5).

In SIPRI Fact Sheet March 2018, India remained the first in the five largest weapon importer countries, not only in Asia, but also throughout the world. India is rapidly hurrying its conventional and non-conventional weapon development as witnessed by the statistical data of recent defense installments giving more chances to the ND parity to an asymmetry. Michael O’Hanlon of the Brookings Institution puts down in his new book ‘*The Senkaku Paradox: Risking Great Power War Over Small Stakes*’: ‘This lack of attention is especially critical in the current era of great power

competition' (O'Hanlon, 2019). India has been a continuous provoker in persuading Pakistan to increase its stockpiles and military potentials. The May 1998 nuclear hook was also motivated by the New Delhi weapon test. In case of Pakistan, the criticism may erupt in Western policy discourses, as Beijing - the economic giant of Asia, is known to play its role in pillaring its defense aptitudes, but the matter of fact is explicit that Indian behaviors and nuclear coercion is the rationale for Pakistan's actions.

Islamabad, despite utmost support of China, never crafted any aggressive technology before it became an inclusion in Indian arsenals – meaning, Pakistan's nuclear weapons are designed as defensive rather than being of aggressive nature. Former head of Pakistan's Strategic Planning Division (SPD), Lt. Gen Khalid Kidwai, famously called Pakistan's nuclear weapons as “peace bombs”. The current instability in ND is resultant of India's second-strike clasp. For a decade the two countries have devoted a considerable expenditure for the buildup of conventional plus non-conventional armaments. As per the statistics of 2018, the Indian nuclear warheads since the year 1998 test have increased from 3 to 140 weapons. Whereas the nuclear arsenal of Pakistan is attributed as ten times bigger, triggering from 2 to 150 weapons. The two possess nuclear carriers, Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs), ballistic missile technology, whereby India's missile range is estimated to reach even further ends of China and Pakistan. The element that conventional forces of New Delhi are much superior, Islamabad has to maintain a higher standing with its nuclear stakes. The strategic stability is thus pursued on behalf of nuclear pre-eminence. Whenever a new defense appliance is invented or purchased, the level of ND upon Pakistan enlarges. With the Indian naval growth and acquisition of Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM), Islamabad is once again forced to upgrade its arsenal capabilities. Although the task seems colossal in the present economic situation, with already devoted substantial amount of yearly budget on nuclear weapon management, it is not an unlikely expedition for Pakistan. Col. Dr. Ghulam Qumber guides under the ‘Rational Deterrence Theory’:

“Pakistan would have to rely, as per the theory of rational deterrence, on the second strike ability to retain escalation equality – and thereby maintain deterrence. Acquiring second-strike capability is meant to preclude deterrence-failure in accordance with the rational deterrence theory. Second-strike capability strengthens deterrence by removing the incentive to launch a first strike. The possession of the second-strike capability by both sides serves to strengthen the framework of deterrence. The increasing military imbalance in the region is demonstrated in the following couple of risky developments impeding strategic stability in South Asia. These risky developments include India's second-strike capability through SLBMs.” (Tehsin, Ali, & Qumber, 2019, p. 338).

It can be asserted that if the existing great and major powers had not underpropped New Delhi in its martial resources, the defense and commerce imperatives would have developed cosmic interdependence between Indo-Sino relations required for the peace of South Asia to curtail. The burst of ND by any future fissile mishap or a broken arrow in South Asia can therefore be attributed to a great power sow. Vipin Narang, the renowned Professor at MIT Security Studies corresponds ‘[by acquiring nuclear submarines as sea-based deterrent] India is trying

to right a strategic imbalance created due to Pakistani doctrine of asymmetric escalation which made nuclear war fightable and winnable for Pakistan' (Tehsin, Ali, & Qumber, 2019, p. 1).

## **REMINISCENCE OF COLD WAR NUCLEAR DETERRENCE IN SOUTH ASIA**

It is an irrefutable datum that international states replicate the policies and stratagems practiced by each other at some other time in history to keep their statecraft in run. Under its shadow, South Asia is a consequence of great powers sow. With the US and USSR acquiring nuclear powers of an eccentric category of weapons, 'not just another class of weapons', as declared by Smitu Kothari, fostered the two in a wanted or an unwanted arm race (Kothari & Mian, 2003, p. 137). Similar version was performed in the Indo-Pak coalesce. The set likewise reluctantly or unreluctantly had to continue the management of their nuclear weapons and reactors in a sharp aggregate and effective quality. With India becoming a nuclear power, Islamabad was forced to do so.

Washington could never trust the forthcoming steps of USSR, and neither can the India-Pakistan duo. In simple and less thorough realist creed, 'the states are not certain about the intentions of other states'. The vista is enough to conclude that managing a stable ND is a prerequisite for a nuclear state with its opposition in order to survive in an anarchic world (Mearsheimer, 2017, p. 37). In spite of the end of the Cold War between the two former superpowers, the strategists continue to look at the conflict as the prime case study for the successful implementation of ND, continuing to drive important lessons, guidance and conceptions to this day. The countries of South Asia, exclusively India and Pakistan are discerned occupied by the Cold War spell - they look forward to the various insights of the two former superpowers for their strategic calculations. The rhythm in the India-Pakistan arsenal upgrade is very much overlapped by the Cold War US-USSR military development.

The enmity of the United States and Soviet Union from the Cold War was a lipid-limp display of ND, which encouraged the need to develop further concepts beneath its paradigm. The nuclear escalation, nuclear threshold, first strike and extended or limited deterrence are concept dated to that time. Patrick M. Morgan, a professor at University of California, claims that Cold War deterrence settled into a distinctive pattern with the release of following key characteristics (Patrick M. Morgan, 2012, pp. 85-107):

1. Dependence on enormous numbers of vastly destructive weapons – far more than necessary – making it likely a deterrence failure would be catastrophic.
2. Reliance on threats of retaliation more than defenses to deter nuclear or massive conventional attacks, but maintenance of extraordinary levels of standing peacetime conventional forces for deterrence of lesser attacks.
3. Many strategic nuclear weapons, eventually most, kept on constant high alert.

All is today scrutinized in the pattern of India-Pakistan rivalry. Robert Peters, justifies the maintenance of nuclear arms and their escalation, as 'potential adversaries of the United States have concluded that upgrading and diversifying their nuclear forces is vital to their defense posture and to prevailing, whether at the negotiating



table, on the battlefield or in future crises with the United States' (Tyler, 2008). The labor to end nuclear capability and rivalry with USSR is witnessed in literature. Dr. Helen Caldicott, an Australian anti-nuclear advocate jots in her book 'The New Nuclear Danger' regarding the disarmament efforts during the Clinton regime under the concept of 'Mutual Assured Safety' (MAS) and 'Cooperative Denuclearization' (Caldicott, 2002, p. 20). Les Aspin, Clinton's Secretary of Defense, initiated this nuclear disarmament posture, but the course of action failed majorly not because of his death, but in fact due to the fear of opponent's functional nukes, which required deterrence on every cause. Therefore, the world had to settle with 'Mutual Assured Destruction' outliving to this day in South Asia (Gardner, 2019, pp. 1-8). The nations groomed their nuclear campaigns by making each other believe that any preemptive strike would be responded with a muscular second strike, and deterioration will be on equal degree in both fields. The confidence building measures – CBM, among New Delhi and Islamabad too begun with a firm pattern in 2004, however the results are evident and crystal clear with both states coming at the verge of war 'under a nuclear overhang'.

The Cold War's East-West nuclear animosity is tossed with India-Pakistan enduring hostility. While Washington was overtaken by capitalism, in its neck of the woods was rising communism in Moscow. In the case study of India, it is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, RSS Manifesto. With George Kennan 'Long Telegram' (1946), US paved its path to the containment of communist mindset. Modi has been alleged to foster India on the basis of fostering Hindutva ideology, especially in Jammu and Kashmir. Scholars are beginning to acknowledge the foreseeing instincts of analysts and leaders who had very early pointed that the peace of South Asia will be broadly concerned with Kashmir's chaotic territory. Thérèse Delpech - a French international relations expert, in her RAND publication identifies that the relations of India-Pakistan will have global implications. Stanley Wolpert writes in his book *India and Pakistan Continued Conflict or Cooperation* - "No Asian conflict has been more deadly, costly or intractable than one which continues to divide India and Pakistan over Kashmir". Tughral Yemin in his book *The Evolution of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia* pronounces Kashmir as a nuclear flash point. Former US President Bill Clinton called Kashmir "a ticking time bomb" which is likely to explode in near duration (Rehman, 2019).

## **NUCLEAR DETERRENCE IN SOUTH ASIA - WAY FORWARD**

The issue of current state of ND stability and sustenance has been thoroughly touched through distinctive salient factors that may contribute in the burst of Nuclear Doctrinal Policy (NDP). Under the probing, it is concluded that the existing state of nuclear deterrence in South Asia is fragile and unstable. The doctrines, which were kept ambiguous or secret for somewhat reasons, and state perceived wisdoms, are lethal for the sustenance of NDP. Dr Ghulam Qumber argues under the rational deterrence theory: 'Clarity in doctrine provides stability to a situation of rational deterrence. In an enduring situation of ND, if simultaneous measures directed toward deterrence stability - conventional parity, doctrinal clarity and nuclear détente, were not initiated, the region would continue to suffer from deterioration in strategic stability'. By keeping the doctrine vague and aggressive, India aims to keep its maximum opportunities of massive retaliation, nuclear utility policies and flexible

response open for all times. The broad expansion in the range of its arsenal and second-strike capability, is involving Pakistan in a stern spiraling arms race.

The role of great powers and international organisations is crucial in obstructing the burst of ND in South Asia. With a pause of several years, in 2019 an open request was made from Pakistan to the United Nations to look upon the rising atrocities and lock down in Srinagar. However, with morn the institution remained unsuccessful in forcing India to lift the lockdown. The recent Indian manoeuvres and Kashmir curfew evolved as a challenge to the credibility and potentials of institutions, international law and the major powers, as New Delhi is also a major international trading partner. The United Nations and Pakistan stand concurred on the barb of self-determination right for Kashmir. However, India to this date holds the belief that it can forcibly keep the Kashmiri population under its decree. The United Nations Human Rights Council's report has encrypted the list of Indian vehemence in Kashmir since June 2016 to April 2018, but it is a grief that the record, instead of showing a decline, has swollen out.

## **CONCLUSION**

ND, a pioneer strategic connotation of the Cold War continues to have important ramifications for the globe, and South Asia - considered as one of the most nuclear-war-prone region. India and Pakistan have come a long way in developing and then modernising their nuclear arsenals. It remains an all-important dilemma whether ND - responsible for dissuading full-scale war between the two, would continue to remain so, in the wake of important regional and international developments. The massive Indian modernisation in nuclear and conventional weaponry most certainly has important ramifications for Pakistan's deterrence and nuclear strategy. The acquisition of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system in particular, would be detrimental to regional stability. India has since then parted ways from the Nehruian ideology of "Non-Alignment", and has openly sided with the United States against rising China. Furthermore, despite all its dubious record on human rights in Kashmir and against religious minorities, it is a respected member of the international community.

Pakistan needs to continue its diplomatic efforts at all international forums labelling India as an "imprudent nuclear weapon state". ND is based on rationality of state leadership, it is therefore uncertain as to how far in the future can it be maintained in the wake of Indian jingoism, media disinformation and arms race. Pakistan may be required to modernise its existing nuclear weaponry and acquire a reliable "assured second-strike capability" in the form of nuclear submarines to maintain required levels of credible ND. It is also essential for leadership of the two states to come up with 'détente-like' situation as experienced during the Cold War to engage in meaningful dialogue and outcome such as an Arms Control agreement. However, it must be kept in mind that any arrangement in place must not go against the core security interests of the state. In the age of mass media, the leaderships of both India and Pakistan owe it to their people to establish an unbiased platform for the consumption of general public (in the spirit of democracy) at large regarding nuclear issues, developments and agreements between the two states as a means to avoid interference from any third parties as a result of disinformation, fake news and propaganda.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Azad Kashmir has its own President and Prime Minister. It also has a national anthem, emblem and its own flag. Kashmir Day is celebrated in Pakistan on 5<sup>th</sup> of February. Pakistan has repeatedly called for plebiscite in lines of numerous UN Resolutions on Kashmir to be held by people of Azad and Jammu Kashmir, which has never been held.

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