

**Impermanence of Deterrence Regime:  
A Cause of Tactical Instability in South Asia**  
*Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi*

**Abstract**

*The overt nuclearisation of South Asia led to the notion that an all-out conventional war between India and Pakistan was a distant probability, whereas, limited wars on the periphery may not be avoidable between the arch-rivals. Perhaps, to further marginalise the probability of limited wars, which could have serious consequences for regional peace and stability, Pakistan developed sub-kiloton Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs). However, India could not be deterred and Balakot happened. Pakistan's response was prompt and fearless despite India's military capabilities. The Pakistan Air Force's performance in the aerial engagement against the Indian Air Force (IAF) on 27 February 2019, deflated India's dream of punishing Pakistan for its alleged support of the freedom struggle in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). This paper is aimed at investigating the failures of deterrence regime at the tactical level between India and Pakistan, and the consequences of tactical instability at the strategic level in South Asia.*

**Keywords:** Nuclear Deterrence, Strategic Stability, Tactical Instability, Balakot.

## **Introduction**

**S**outh Asian rivals: India and Pakistan view each other's nuclear capabilities through different lens. India assumes that Pakistan's nuclear capability is aimed against its conventional and nuclear capability only and considers that its capacity to wage hybrid war remains relatively unguarded. India's assessment in this regard proved efficacious, particularly in the last two decades, until the Pulwama incident happened on 14 February 2019, in which a Kashmiri youth carried out a suicide attack on India's paramilitary convoy killing more than 40 soldiers. Contrarily, Pakistan views India's conventional as well as nuclear capability workable against its own similar capabilities, but without any space for an all-out conventional or nuclear war, regardless of duration and intensity.

At the strategic level, both India and Pakistan seemingly respect each other's military capabilities, but at the operational and tactical level, the arch-rivals keep testing each other's resolve through limited military engagements. Perhaps, leadership of the two nuclear neighbours is willing to take risks without due regard to the consequences of a military conflict in a nuclearised environment. This paper is based on ground realities of South Asia's security environment, particularly since the overt nuclearisation of the region in May 1998.

## **Theoretical Principles on Deterrence**

The theoretical writings on deterrence suggest that 'nuclear weapons make war unwinnable if both sides have second-strike capability, since either side could utterly destroy the other after absorbing an attack.'<sup>1</sup> Because, 'deterrence depended on the ability

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Kahn and Thomas C. Schelling, quoted in John A. Vasquez "The India-Pakistan Conflict in light of General Theories of War, Rivalry, and Deterrence," in *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*, ed. T.V. Paul (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 73.

to convince aggressors that a military offensive....would be frustrated.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, 'Deterrence can be a technique, a doctrine and a state of mind. In all cases it is about setting boundaries for actions and establishing the risks associated with the crossing of those boundaries.'<sup>3</sup> Also, '.....deterrence is mental. For deterrence to work you have to get inside your adversary's head.'<sup>4</sup> This implies that 'Operational Preparedness' by a state under threat must be to its fullest capacity and its only purpose should be to deny the enemy its mischievous and unjust objectives. Therefore, it was natural for states to quickly gain access to nuclear weapons' capability, especially when they saw its highly destructive power that nearly erased the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945, respectively.

'Deterrence is persuading an adversary (usually by threat) not to take action.'<sup>5</sup> However, for deterrence to be effective, it is necessary that it is credible, and clearly communicated to the adversary of the consequences of its undesired actions. The primary objective revolves around preventing the adversary from using its kinetic means against the deterrent state through credible signalling, posturing, and preparation. The concept was adequately propagated and understood as, 'dissuading someone from an action by frightening that person with consequences of the action.... Deterrence depends on what one can do, not on what one will do.'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>4</sup> Ward Wilson, "Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," (paper, UK Parliament, Written Evidence, Session 2013-14, November 20, 2013), <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writev/deterrence/dic11.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Ward Wilson, "The Myth of Nuclear Deterrence," *The Nonproliferation Review* 15, no.3 (November 2008): 421-439.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *American Political Science Review* 84, no.3 (September 1990): 732-745.

In fact, it is the impermanence of the deterrence regime that makes its application unique.

### **South Asia's Conundrum**

India challenged Pakistan's nuclear opacity and carried out multiple tests in May 1998. Pakistan responded without any delay with more tests to join the de-facto nuclear club. India received the message and Prime Minister Vajpayee undertook the 'Bus Diplomacy' visit to Pakistan's second largest city of Lahore through Wagah land border where he was received by then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. At the conclusion of talks on 21 February 1999, the landmark 'Lahore Declaration' was signed in which both sides agreed to intensify joint efforts on all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>7</sup> However, before the 'Lahore Declaration' could be executed, the Kargil Conflict<sup>8</sup> took place, which certainly surprised India.

On 10 August 1999, India shot down Pakistan Navy's Atlantique reconnaissance aircraft in Sir Creek area.<sup>9</sup> The incident further raised the level of tension between India and Pakistan, however, it failed to catch the attention of the West, especially the United States (US) due to 9/11. This event had major impact on the regional security environment, which were exploited by India to hurt Jammu & Kashmir's struggle for self-determination by declaring the Kashmiri freedom movement as 'terrorism'.

As the US was preparing to launch 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in Afghanistan to punish the Taliban government for its alleged support to al-Qaeda in October 2001, a group of Kashmiri freedom fighters

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<sup>7</sup> UN Nations Peacemaker, "Lahore Declaration," (February 21, 1999), <https://peacemaker.un.org/indiapakistan-lahoredeclaration99>.

<sup>8</sup> The Kargil Conflict 1999 occurred when Pakistani troops occupied the vacant Kargil Heights during the winter months.

<sup>9</sup> The Atlantique Incident was an event in which a Pakistan Navy Atlantique patrol plane, carrying 16 people on board, was shot down by the Indian Air Force for alleged violation of airspace. The episode took place in the Rann of Kutch area on 10 August 1999.

attacked the Indian Parliament on 13<sup>th</sup> December the same year. India blamed Pakistan for the attacks and demanded that Pakistan curtail the activities of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).<sup>10</sup> Pakistan immediately condemned the terror attacks on the Indian Parliament, but India initiated huge military build-up on its borders with Pakistan to coerce the latter into taking serious punitive actions against the alleged terror outfits. The year-long standoff between Indian and Pakistani forces brought the nuclear neighbours to the brink of an all-out war.

The progress of India's nuclear doctrine was reviewed by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) which met on 4 January 2003. India's nuclear doctrine revolves around the concept of 'No First Use' against Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS). However, it promises massive nuclear retaliation against a nuclear strike on its territory or its forces anywhere.<sup>11</sup> Whereas, Pakistan's nuclear doctrine is based on credible nuclear deterrent with no commitment towards non-use of first use in the aftermath of a massive conventional attack (by India). It now rests on comprehensive deterrence and its development of TNWs is to ward off threats from India's larger military force.<sup>12</sup>

However, these prevalent concepts on deterrence regimes as a strand of strategy have, outlived their utility over the years and need

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<sup>10</sup> P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Stephen P. Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process: American Engagement in South Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 152.

<sup>11</sup> Prime Minister's Office, "Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews Progress in Operationalizing India's Nuclear Doctrine," (January 4, 2003), <https://archive.pib.gov.in/archive/releases98/lyr2003/rjan2003/04012003/r040120033.html>.

<sup>12</sup> "Pakistan needs Short-Range Nukes for Deterrence against India: Govt Advisor," *Dawn*, March 24, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1171574/print/print>.

to be studied for their practicality,<sup>13</sup> particularly in South Asia's context. Although, the respective nuclear doctrines of the Cold War rivals - the US and former USSR - maintained strategic stability and the two superpowers did not engage militarily directly, however, proxy wars continued around the globe.<sup>14</sup> It is argued that, 'New nuclear states such as India and Pakistan are, inevitably, drawn towards nuclear war by their need to undertake low-level aggressive actions to maintain the credibility of their nuclear forces.'<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, for deterrence to be effective, it is necessary that the deterrent can create doubt in the mind of the adversary, about the resolve to eliminate it, without which the adversary will not be deterred. This is for a situation where one is on the offensive. However, if one is on the defensive, even then, one must be able to create doubt in the mind of the adversary that one does not care about the life and property of its citizens, and therefore, will leave no stone unturned, should the situation so arise and eliminate the adversary after surviving a first strike or even attacking it pre-emptively.

While one is striving to create doubt in the enemy's mind, it is important that one has no doubt in one's own mind that one will act regardless of the consequences if vital national interests are threatened, no matter how strong the enemy is. For example, Pakistan's then-Prime Minister Imran Khan's warnings to India in the post-Pulwama environment that 'Pakistan will not think but act in the same way to India's misadventure,' were not taken seriously by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Balakot happened. However, once Pakistan lived up to its leadership's resolve and

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<sup>13</sup> Zia Ul Haque Shamsi, "Nuclear Deterrence and its Nuances," *Daily Times*, February 13, 2021, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/723318/nuclear-deterrence-and-its-nuances/>.

<sup>14</sup> Korean war (1950-53), Vietnam War (1955-75), Arab-Israel War (1973), Soviet Afghan War (1979-89), to mention a few.

<sup>15</sup> James Lo, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: Theory and Practice," *International Journal* 58, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 395-414.

Pakistan Air Force (PAF) shot down two Indian Air Force (IAF) fighter jets the very next day, Prime Minister Modi must have realised the importance of the warnings.<sup>16</sup>

The lack of clear understanding at the leadership level about the concept of deterrence is perhaps one reason for its failure as a strategy of war and conflict avoidance. Leadership, particularly in developing countries, fails to understand the concept, and therefore get engaged in violent conflicts with equal opponents as well as unequal adversaries.<sup>17</sup> It is necessary that academia takes the lead to drive home the concept of deterrence and its efficacy as a strategy of war and conflict avoidance, as was initially envisaged by Bernard Brodie.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, there is a need to do things differently and introduce a new theory of '**Ready Deterrence**,' to create doubt in the adversary's mind. However, the theory of 'Ready Deterrence' by no means proffers deployment of nuclear weapons, not even Low Yield Weapons (LYWs). Its main purpose is to ensure that no nuclear state undertakes any misadventure against another nuclear state; no matter how limited it is in scope and intensity.

The idea of 'Recessed Deterrence' was coined by Indian strategist Jasjit Singh, who defined it as, 'credible nuclear weapons capability which a country is able to draw upon for political and diplomatic purposes, and is able to deploy a nuclear arsenal within a defined

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<sup>16</sup> "Pakistan PM Imran Khan promises Action if India shows Pulwama Proof, Warns against Any Rash Move," *Economic Times*, February 19, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Iraq's President refused warnings of dire consequences for his invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1991. Likewise, the Taliban government of Afghanistan failed to read the post 9/11 environment and suffered another invasion by a superpower, the United States.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Brodie, ed. *The Absolute Weapon* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1946), 69.

time-frame and effectively use it physically for military purposes.<sup>19</sup> Whereas, the concept of 'Non-weaponised Deterrence' was proffered by George Perkovich with a view that, 'that the two parties could retain fissile materials and nuclear weapon components but would stop short of manufacturing warheads.'<sup>20</sup>

The primary purpose of the above theories was to keep the nuclear equation out of contention to avoid any miscalculation, accidental firing, and ensure the safety and security of these dangerous tools during any conventional military conflict. The theory of 'Ready Deterrence' aims to counter 'Recessed Deterrence' and 'Non-weaponised Deterrence.' These theories heavily favoured India, which is a five times larger conventional power than Pakistan. Therefore, the theory of 'Ready Deterrence' looks to ensure that no military engagements take place at all for the fear of escalation resulting in an unthinkable nuclear exchange. This theory is aimed at creating fear and terror of Pakistan's diverse nuclear weapons programme in the heart and mind of the adversary, and who can go to any length in creating a space for war to punish the adversary for its alleged involvement in cross-border interventions.

Table 1 further explains the basic difference between the three theories dealing with deterrence regimes in the South Asian context:

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<sup>19</sup> Debalina Ghoshal, "India's Recessed Deterrence Posture: Prospects and Implications," *The Washington Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (January 2016): 158-170.

<sup>20</sup> George Perkovich, "Non-Weaponized Deterrence: The Case of Pakistan," *Strategic Studies* 17, Special Issue (Autumn & Winter, 1994): 138-169.



**Table 1: Contemporary Deterrence Theories for South Asia**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Theories</b>	<b>Core Concept</b>
<b>George Perkovich</b>	Non-weaponised Deterrence	'... two parties could retain fissile materials and nuclear weapon components but would stop short of manufacturing warheads.'
<b>Jasjit Singh</b>	Recessed Deterrence	India must develop 'credible nuclear weapons capability which a country is able to draw upon for political and diplomatic purposes, and is able to deploy a nuclear arsenal within a defined time-frame and effectively use it physically for military purposes ...'
<b>Author</b>	Ready Deterrence	Pakistan must be prepared for an early interface of its nuclear arsenals to ensure its territorial integrity and sovereignty against the five-times larger conventional Armed Forces of India.

**Source:** Author's own.

Perhaps, it is for this purpose that India is not interested in the resolution of long-standing disputes with Pakistan, including the doable Siachen and Sir Creek,<sup>21</sup> so that it has a reason to initiate hostilities at the time and place of its choosing. In order to counter the ongoing negative narrative, it is incumbent upon Pakistan to do things differently and only what is in its best national interest.

If Pakistan's leadership thinks that by adopting 'Ready Deterrence', it may be put in the West's bad books, one needs to remember that the country has been there ever since it developed nuclear capability. Moreover, policymakers must understand that appeasement is failed strategy as it fails to hammer in its declared nuclear policy and fails to avert a war with India, no matter how limited, and then during military engagement, it opts for adopting a nuclear posture.

Therefore, the significance of PAF's successful action against IAF under 'Operation Swift Retort', which led to the re-establishment of the deterrence regime, cannot be over-emphasised. PAF's action was in line with the principles of deterrence, which lays greater emphasis on credibility than on capability. Perhaps, it is necessary to underscore that if the deterrence lacks credibility in its pronouncements or the intent of the leadership, it loses its effectiveness, because the adversary would not be deterred by mere rhetorical onslaught.

Pakistan's leadership was cognizant of the fact that failure to respond to Indian aggression would mean a sign of weakness, thus, paving the way for repeated aggression. In that situation, it would have become extremely difficult to re-establish deterrence against a five-times larger adversary which has offensive designs. Moreover, had the PAF not responded on 27<sup>th</sup> February - the next

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<sup>21</sup> Zia Ul Haque Shamsi, *Nuclear Deterrence and Conflict Management between India and Pakistan* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2020), 41-63.

day of India's Balakot strike -there would have been numerous surgical strikes by Indian Armed Forces in different forms and at different times and places, because India's hard-line Modi government would have felt emboldened by the weakness shown by Pakistan. By doing so, India would have embarrassed Pakistan's Armed Forces as and when it wanted, and regularly tested Pakistan's resolve and capability to respond. In either case, Pakistan would have been forced to both succumb to India's pressure and give up its support to Kashmir's freedom movement, or retaliated irrationally to India's strikes, thus, leading to conflict escalation. However, Pakistan's decision to level the account immediately a day later is similar to its response against India's surprise nuclear tests of May 1998.

### **Application of 'Ready Deterrence' in South Asia**

Both India and Pakistan have acted in accordance with the precepts of 'Ready Deterrence' at different occasions. Pakistan, in May 1998, responded to India's nuclear tests immediately, thereby proving its readiness to respond correspondingly to any evolving situation. India, during the Kargil conflict, retaliated to Pakistan's ingress across the Line of Control (LoC), and did not rest until Pakistani troops started to withdraw as per the understanding reached between then-US President Clinton and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after the 4 July 1999 Kargil Summit at the Blair House.

Again in 2019, Pakistan re-established deterrence by adopting the 'Ready Deterrence' approach when India crossed the international border on the night of 25-26 February. In fact, then-Prime Minister Khan had sent a clear message to Prime Minister Modi that Pakistan would not think rather act, if India undertook any misadventure.<sup>22</sup> However, Modi miscalculated Khan's resolve and

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<sup>22</sup> "Pakistan PM Imran Khan promises Action if India shows Pulwama Proof, Warns against Any Rash Move," *Economic Times*.

initiated a deep thrust attack on mainland Pakistan in the middle of the night. Although, IAF's mission failed to inflict any damage to life and property in the general target area, Balakot, barring a few trees, Pakistan's response was in line with the precepts of 'Ready Deterrence.' Next morning, on 27 February 2019, PAF carried out multiple strikes in broad daylight and also shot down two IAF interceptors in the process.

Looking at the historical account of the Cuban Missile Crisis (CMC) of 1962, Modi's miscalculation of Khan's resolve is similar to that of Soviet leader Khrushchev's assessment about US President Kennedy. The Soviet leader assumed that Kennedy being young and inexperienced, would perhaps not take any extreme action against Soviet placements of Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) on Cuban soil. However, Khrushchev failed to realise that the US leadership does not operate in isolation. It has an organisational process for strategic decision-making. Kennedy, soon after getting reports of Soviet missiles on US shores set up an Executive Committee (ExComm), which dealt with the crisis in an organised manner.

Likewise, former PM Khan had not issued a warning of retaliation to India's impending aggression following the Pulwama<sup>23</sup> incident in isolation, rather did so after consultations with the National Security Committee after the incident happened.

Pakistan, on multiple occasions and multiple tracks, has tried to convince India that there is no space for war between the two nuclear neighbours, no matter how tense the relations are, and all disputes, including that of J&K, need to be resolved through dialogue.<sup>24</sup> For this, Pakistan remains open to dialogue, either

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<sup>23</sup> A Kashmiri youth, Adil Ahmad Dar carried out a suicide attack on a convoy of Indian paramilitary police in Pulwama, on 14 February 2019, killing at least 40 soldiers.

<sup>24</sup> Imtiaz Alam, "In letter to PM Modi, Pakistan's Imran Khan makes Fresh Appeals," *Hindustan Times*, June 8, 2019.

bilaterally or through the active participation of international players, and organisations. India's doctrinal developments, aimed at pushing Pakistan against the wall, particularly in an environment of ever-increasing conventional asymmetry and economic disparity, somehow compelled Pakistan to develop Low Yield Weapons (LYWs), or non-strategic weapons, to plug the gap in respective capabilities.<sup>25</sup>

India aspires to play a leading role in the region for which it has developed strategic partnerships with the US. India may punish Pakistan for its support to Kashmiris' struggle for self-determination, to break the status quo. To counter India's designs, 'Pakistan may pre-empt India's strategy of attempting a kill through non-kinetic means, which could be supplemented by limited physical force at an opportune time, under the influence of Pro-active Operations (PAO).'<sup>26</sup>

Pakistan desires to move on and improve its relationship with India in the entire spectrum of international relations. However, India has threatened Pakistan of massive nuclear retaliation<sup>27</sup> if the state contemplates using LYWs against invading forces, in case its armed forces are unable to withstand the massive conventional force asymmetry.

## **Conclusion**

Deterrence of any kind, type, and substance has a shelf life. Perhaps, this is one reason that deterring states as well as the deterred state keep on doing things differently to maintain or dilute the effects of deterrence, respectively. South Asia's situation is no

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<sup>25</sup> "Pakistan needs Short-Range Nukes for Deterrence against India: Govt Advisor."

<sup>26</sup> Shamsi, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 126.

<sup>27</sup> Ali Ahmed, "The Direction of India's Deterrent," Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, September 30, 2011, <http://www.ipcs.org/focusthemselvesel.php?articleNo=3471>.

different. From No First Use (NFU) to massive retaliation for India,<sup>28</sup> and minimum nuclear deterrence to all-spectrum nuclear deterrence for Pakistan,<sup>29</sup> South Asian arch-rivals have been changing the goalpost to draw the maximum benefit of their nuclear capability. Rightly so because a war of any nature and character between the two nuclear neighbours would not remain localised, and therefore, may expand beyond borders.

Perhaps India and Pakistan understand the consequences of a nuclear conflict between them,<sup>30</sup> but what they do not understand is the seriousness of a limited war on the periphery, which may expand horizontally as well as vertically. The probability of an all-out military confrontation between the two nuclear neighbours may be limited but would have far-reaching consequences if started.

It is argued that 'states with nuclear weapons do not go to war with each other.'<sup>31</sup> The border skirmishes between the erstwhile Soviet troops and China's border security forces alongside Ussuri River<sup>32</sup> in 1969 was not considered serious enough to be declared as a war between the two nuclear states.

Likewise, the Kargil conflict of 1999 between India and Pakistan remained localised and did not expand horizontally or vertically, to cause alarm for the theorists proposing that nuclear powers do not

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., quotes Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee General Padmanabhan.

<sup>29</sup> "Pakistan needs Short-Range Nukes for Deterrence against India: Govt Advisor."

<sup>30</sup> Wilson, "The Myth of Nuclear Deterrence."

<sup>31</sup> Baya Harrison, "Fallout at Kargil: The Nuclear War that Never Was," *Monsoon-Asian Journal of Brandeis University* III, no. 2 (2005), [https://people.brandeis.edu/~monsoon/articles/harrison\\_kargil.htm](https://people.brandeis.edu/~monsoon/articles/harrison_kargil.htm).

<sup>32</sup> The Sino-Soviet border conflict was a seven-month military conflict between the Soviet Union and China at the height of the Sino-Soviet split in 1969.

fight wars directly. However, the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan causing limited military engagements at regular intervals amply prove that while nuclear weapons may act as deterrents at the strategic level, they cannot guarantee tactical stability in the presence of unresolved disputes. Lodhi argues that 'deterrence is not always a factor for stability as claimed by some.'<sup>33</sup>

Nuclear deterrence regimes failed to avert limited military engagements on the periphery,<sup>34</sup> and hence, raises the probabilities of Pakistan's nuclear posturing through LYWs for the purpose of re-establishing intra-war deterrence. The same may be construed by India as a possible first-use of these weapons by Pakistan. This may lead to India's nuclear posturing to deny Pakistan's first-use of these weapons, thereby initiating an unthinkable nuclear exchange by both, either concurrently in anticipation or one after another in retaliation.

Most analysts believe that 'nuclear crises are repetitive in South Asia because their outcomes are not decisive. Until a process of reconciliation is underway, the next crisis always waits in the wings.'<sup>35</sup> In fact, peripheral disputes, Sir Creek, and Siachen, are perhaps an outcome of one core dispute of J&K, which 'remains one of the most enduring and unresolved conflicts of our times.'<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Maleeha Lodhi, "The Kargil Crisis: Anatomy of a Debacle," *Newsline* (July 1999): 1-6.

<sup>34</sup> Kargil Conflict (1999), military standoff between India and Pakistan (2001-02), Balakot strikes (2019), to mention a few.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Krepon, Rodney W. Jones, and Ziad Haider, ed. *Escalation Control and the Nuclear Option in South Asia*, (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2004).

<sup>36</sup> T.V. Paul, "Causes of India-Pakistan Enduring Rivalry," in *India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*, ed. T.V. Paul (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

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The situation in South Asia remains uncertain. The two nuclear neighbours do not have full diplomatic presence in each other's countries, and do not miss an opportunity to target the opponent on world fora. The dialogue process to look for a negotiated settlement of any of the protracted conflicts has been discontinued since India unilaterally annexed the state of J&K on 5 August 2019, hence, raising the probability of a repeat of Kargil, Pulwama, and Balakot.

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