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Deterrence and Diplomacy:

Investigating India's Motives Behind Conflict Deferment
and Pakistan's Endeavors at Conflict Resolution

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Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi¹

Abstract

The doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) established by superpowers of the Cold War era, ensured that there was no war in which their forces were directly involved. Proxy wars between them continued with overt support of rivals in different regions. Hence, both camps established and maintained strategic stability, while paradoxically instability persisted at the tactical level, with the latent risk of a full-fledged war. After closely watching and analyzing the dynamics of nuclear deterrence between the Cold War era super-powers, a consensus emerged among scholars of international relations that nuclear deterrence between the two nuclear weapon states ensured the avoidance of war. In the South Asian context, deterrence was overtly established in 1998 after Pakistan responded to India's resumption of nuclear weapons tests. However, limited military engagements on the periphery continued periodically. Thus, the possibility of border crisis and aerial skirmishes exist. These crises could potentially escalate horizontally and vertically to a level that leaves little space for diplomacy or deterrence to work in concert or independently. This paper analyzes the linkages between deterrence and

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diplomacy, India's motives for conflict deferment, and Pakistan's efforts to move from conflict management to conflict resolution through diplomatic channels to minimize the probability of military confrontations.

Keywords: India, Pakistan, Limited Wars, Proxy Wars, Deterrence, Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution.

Introduction

Cold War rivals – the United States (US) and the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) did not directly engage militarily due to the fear of uncontrolled escalation. This strategy was rooted in the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) as both the superpowers had tested their nuclear weapons and possessed the power to cause massive destruction to life and property in the rival state.

When the Cuban Missile Crisis² (CMC) occurred in 1962, it had become evident that both states had fully grasped the horrible consequences of a nuclear exchange. It had become plain that neither of the superpowers could survive a nuclear war and the only way to prevent Armageddon was to deter the other from initiating war. The US doctrine of massive retaliation by this time had been replaced by the US strategists as its credibility was considered doubtful, with a policy of limited nuclear retaliation option.³ However, proxy wars in several parts of the world supported by the two superpowers, continued until the end of the cold war in 1989.⁴ Thus, stability existed at the strategic level but left space for violence at the lower level. This phenomenon

2. "The Cuban Missile Crisis @ 60: The Most Dangerous Day." National Security Archive, October 27, 2022. <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/cuba-cuban-missile-crisis/2022-10-27/cuban-missile-crisis-60-most-dangerous-day>.

3. Freedman, Lawrence D. "Massive Retaliation." Britannica. Britannica, inc. February 7, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nuclear-strategy/Massive-retaliation>.

4. "The Cold War Overview." BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zy73dmn/revision/2>.

was called the stability-instability paradox.

The stability-instability paradox is also discernable in relations between the two South Asian nuclear powers. An enduring rivalry exists between India and Pakistan over the unfinished agenda of the Indian subcontinent's independence from British tyrannical colonial rule and the emergence of Pakistan and India. The two nations have fought wars, and experienced several military crises, mainly over the unresolved dispute of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), since their independence in August 1947. The 1998 nuclear tests transformed the strategic environment of South Asia to a level where dispute resolution by use of force has become highly improbable but several skirmishes between them have occurred.⁵ However, India in this period has also evaded Pakistan's efforts for a peaceful resolution of disputes between the two states.⁶

Following limited military engagement in February 2019,⁷ India has avoided dialogue with Pakistan. The situation is far from normal between the two nuclear neighbors, with a history of antagonistic relations. Therefore, it is necessary to minimize the chances of another military engagement between the two,⁸ no matter how limited, because the probability of escalation to a nuclear war cannot be completely ruled out. In addition, crisis management in the changing global environment cannot be left to intervention by the US and China, as has been the case in the past. Instead, diplomacy maybe given a chance to find lasting solutions to the disputes between the two rival nuclear-armed neighbors while the deterrence regime is ensuring strategic stability.

5. Khan, Saira, *Nuclear Weapons and Conflict Transformation: A Case of India-Pakistan*. New York: Routledge, 2009. <https://www.routledge.com/Nuclear-Weapons-and-Conflict-Transformation-The-Case-of-India-Pakistan/Khan/p/book/9780415577823>.

6. "Resolutions 38: The India-Pakistan Question.

7. "Kashmir Attack: Tracing the Path That Led to Pulwama." BBC News. BBC, April 30, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-47302467>.

8. Haque, Shamsi Zia Ul. *Nuclear Deterrence and Conflict Management between India and Pakistan*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc. New York, 2020.

Deterrence and Diplomacy

Deterrence and diplomacy are mutually reinforcing concepts for maintaining peace and stability. As nuclear deterrence is supported by a strong conventional force; diplomacy also needs to be complemented by the elements of soft power that must be based on political stability, robust economy, tolerant society, and a motivated human resource. Henry Kissinger, the top US diplomat of the Cold War era summarized the interdependence of deterrence and diplomacy as early as 1957:

Deterrence is the attempt to keep an opponent from adopting a certain course of action by posing risks which will seem to him out of proportion to any gains to be achieved. Higher the stakes, the more absolute must be the threat of destruction which faces him. But reverse is also true; the smaller the objective, the less should be the sanction.⁹

However, both deterrence and diplomacy have certain serious limitations. According to Ward Wilson, “Deterrence is limited in its application: it only works with those who stop and consider rationally the costs of what they are about to do... deterrence cannot be expected to cover all situations.”¹⁰ He argued that “nuclear deterrence does not appear to be reliable or safe over the long run.”¹¹

Likewise, diplomacy has genuine limitations¹² due to misperceptions or miscalculations regarding the gravity and consequences of an impending crisis. States go to war for several reasons. The most important is the failure of diplomacy to manage or resolve disputes. Deterrence fails due to a lack of will or capability to

9. Kissinger, Henry A. *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*. Routledge, n.d.

10. Wilson, Ward. “Deterrence in the 21st Century,” September 23, 2013. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writev/deterrence/dic1.htm>.

11. Wilson, “Deterrence.”

12. Thompson, Kenneth W. “The Prospects and Limitations of Diplomacy.” *The Review of Politics* 36, no. 2 (1974): 298–305. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0034670500022610>.

avert a military engagement. Therefore, states must work to avoid war or lower-level conflicts. Both parties should endeavor to explore the possibility of conflict resolutions for lasting peace and stability.

Deterrence Defined

The concept of deterring a potential aggressor is as old as warfare itself. However, in modern times, the term draws reference from the use of nuclear weapons in 1945 by the US which demonstrated the widespread destruction that these weapons could inflict.¹³

Enormous destruction that the nuclear weapon could cause made them unsuitable for warfighting as an adversary possessing nuclear weapons could also retaliate with equal or greater force. Bernard Brodie was of the view that, “if an aggressor feared retaliation in kind, he would not attack.”¹⁴ He famously wrote, “Thus far, the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on, its chief purpose must be to avert them.”¹⁵ This concept led to the establishment of MAD during the Cold War. A firm belief in the efficacy of this doctrine dissuaded the US and USSR from directly engaging militarily, even for a limited war.

Wilson is of the view that, “Deterrence is persuading an adversary (usually by threat) not to take action.”¹⁶ The pre-requisites

13. “Nuclear Deterrence.” Atomic Archive, May 2021. <https://www.atomicarchive.com/history/cold-war/page-15.html>.

14. Brodie, Bernard. “Implications for Military Policy.” Air Force Magazine. Yale University, June 2013. <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/PDF/MagazineArchive/Documents/2013/June%202013/0613keeper.pdf>.

15. Brodie, Bernard. “The Atomic Bomb and American Security.” Yale Institute of International Studies, Occasional Paper no. 18, (Fall 1945). See also an expanded version of this paper in Bernard, Brodie, “The Absolute Weapon.” New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1946.

16. Ward, Wilson. “The Myth of Nuclear Deterrence.” The Nonproliferation Review, December 16, 2015. https://www.academia.edu/4916942/THE_MYTH_OF_NUCLEAR_DETERRENCE#:~:text=THE%20MYTH%20OF%20NUCLEAR%20DETER-

of an effective deterrent posture include the possession of credible nuclear capability and clear communication to the adversary of the price it might have to pay if it attacks. The objective of deterrence is to prevent an opponent from deciding to use a military instrument. More generally, this means persuading an opponent in a given situation to act or react in light of the existing set of dispositions that constitute an effective threat.

For deterrence to effectively serve its purpose, the adversary must take the deterring state's capability, capacity, and intent to inflict unacceptable loss of life and property seriously.¹⁷ It is therefore essential to understand the mind of the opponent's politico-military leadership to ensure that the adversary state is deterred. In case, a state is unable to create fear of irreparable loss for the aggressor state, deterrence will be ineffective. The inability to completely internalize the concept of deterrence clearly may perhaps be a major reason for its possible failure, as a strategy of war and conflict avoidance.

Diplomacy Explained

The art of diplomacy is to make the opponent feel that the proposal made by a state would not harm the opponent's interests and would promote its own interests by peaceful means. It must project sincerity of purpose and not let an iota of doubt be perceived by those sitting across the table.¹⁸ Essentially, diplomacy paves the way for the advancement of a state's national interests. It plays the most important role in the international system, between states bilaterally and at mul-

RENCE%20Ward%20Wilson%20Nuclear,used%20as%20a%20justification%20for%20possessing%20nuclear%20weapons.

17. "Focused Deterrence in Depth." RAND Corporation. February 2022. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL261/better-policing-toolkit/all-strategies/focused-deterrence/in-depth.html>.

18. "The Art of Diplomacy: 75+ Views Behind the Scenes of World Politics." Munich Security Conference, February 24, 2022. <https://securityconference.org/en/publications/the-art-of-diplomacy/>.

tilateral forums. Diplomacy is not only the front line of defense for any state, but an enabler as well for protecting its interests

internationally.¹⁹ For instance, hectic lobbying takes place for a considerable period before a multilateral treaty or agreement is placed for voting at the UN or other multilateral forums.

The word “diplomat” can be de-constructed to consider the person to be “dedicated,” “integrated,” “precise,” “loyal,” “objective,” “meticulous,” “active,” and “tangible.” A person with such sterling qualities dedicated to promoting state’s interests can achieve much bilaterally. However, the US Department of State defines diplomacy as “The art and practice of conducting negotiations and maintaining relations between nations” and a “skill in handling affairs without arousing animosity.”²⁰ According to Paul Kreutzer, “The essence of diplomacy is communication between different parties with the goal of reaching agreement on an issue or on a basis for state interaction.”²¹

Efficacy of Deterrence as a Tool for Conflict Resolution

Some 2500 years ago, the Chinese sage Sun Tzu had warned the emperor that one must not spend one’s energies thinking of whether the enemy would attack or not, but rather invest efforts in the preparation of such defensive mechanisms that the enemy does not even contemplate an offensive action for the fear of unfavorable consequences.²² Perhaps, Sun Tzu was referring to Credible Minimum Deterrence, the policy that Pakistan adopted soon after declaring itself a nuclear power in 1998 in response to India’s stream of tests. However, the age old concept became a central piece of academic writings and military preparedness. The introduction of atomic weapons transformed the strategic

19. “The Art of Diplomacy.”

20. Kreutzer, Paul. “Ten Principles of Operational Diplomacy: A Proposed Framework.” American Diplomacy Est 1996, June 2014. <https://americandiplomacy.web.unc.edu/2014/06/ten-principles-of-operational-diplomacy-a-proposed-framework/>.

21. Kreutzer, “Ten Principles.”

22. Clavell, James. *The Art of War: Sun Tzu*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1983.

environment and created a powerful instrument that denied the enemy the use of military power.²³ Therefore, the race to acquire nuclear weapons capability began when the world saw its immense destructive power once the US dropped it over the two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the fateful days of 6 and 9 August 1945.

In South Asia, the nuclear equation has prevented an all-out conventional war but limited wars due to protracted disputes have continued at the peripheries causing concern about potential horizontal or vertical crisis escalation. The nature of military force between India and Pakistan has changed in the last seven decades from all-out conventional wars in the pre-nuclear era to limited military engagements in Siachen, Kargil, and Pulwama-Balakot, under the nuclear overhang, to an all-spectrum hybrid war.

In the last two decades, India, with the active support of its allies, has made concerted efforts to undermine Pakistan's national interests.²⁴ However, Pakistan's response to India's hybrid war – as exposed recently by European Watchdog “DisInfoLab” through the “Indian Chronicles”²⁵ – has been of great significance. The people of Pakistan have remained steadfast behind their government and armed forces to ward off India's efforts of creating chaos and disunity among the populace and federating units.

Pakistanis were subjected to brutal attacks in the past by suicide bombers who were trained, funded, and facilitated by Indian

23. Dunn, Frederick Sherwood, and Bernard Brodie. *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*. Harcourt, Brace, 2009.

24. Wasif, Afnan. “Impact of India's Hybrid Warfare on Pakistan's National Security.” *Pakistan Today*. Pakistan Today, June 12, 2022. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/06/12/impact-of-indias-hybrid-warfare-on-pakistans-national-security/>.

25. Alexandre, Gary Machado Alexandre, Roman Adamczyk, and Antoine Grégoire. “Indian Chronicles: Deep Dive into a 15-Year Operation Targeting the EU and UN to Serve Indian Interests.” *EU DisInfoLab*, November 18, 2021. <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/indian-chronicles-deep-dive-into-a-15-year-operation-targeting-the-eu-and-un-to-serve-indian-interests/>.

intelligence agencies. At least 40-50 such attacks were inflicted each year at different locations including places of worship, shopping malls, and schools besides target killings of military and religious leaders. The Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) of Pakistan suffered the brunt of these attacks carried out under the ambit of hybrid war as they were supported by a well-planned media campaign.²⁶ The objective was to create a perception that the capacity of Pakistan's armed forces to protect military installations and personnel was inadequate.

India made use of all elements of hybrid war in an attempt to weaken Pakistan from within and make it a pliant state. If India had succeeded, it could then resolve all the disputes with Pakistan including Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) on its own terms. As part of the hybrid strategy, Indian armed forces personnel deployed on the Line of Control (LoC) fired recurrently on the military and civilian targets on the Azad J&K (Pakistani side). Moreover, it used its intelligence agencies for espionage and sponsoring some Baloch nationalist elements to raise alarms for alleged injustice meted out to them by Pakistani authorities in Western capitals. This has been exposed by the DisInfoLab's report. India, according to the report, has been spreading anti-Pakistan propaganda for 15 years through some 750 fake media outlets all over the world.²⁷

India also used its diplomatic leverage effectively to hurt the economy and reputation of Pakistan by accusing it of money laundering and terror financing.²⁸ Information warfare and propaganda campaigns were other tools deployed by India to create internal chaos and exert pressure from outside, to make Pakistan agree to its terms for peace and stability in the region. To achieve its objectives, India was able to garner some local

26. Wasif, "Impact of India's Hybrid."

27. Dunn. "The Absolute."

28. Siddiqui, Naveed. "'Irrefutable Evidence': Dossier on India's Sponsorship of State Terrorism in Pakistan Presented." Dawn, November 15, 2020. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1590333>.

support from small groups of so-called separatists and nationalists, as well as religious militants who could be easily lured for personal gains.

To further understand the nuclear deterrence dynamics of South Asia, it is necessary to distinguish between the deterring and deterred state. Generally, a relatively smaller and weaker state acquires deterrent capability due to an existential threat. Pakistan's quest for nuclear capability was to deny another Indian military adventure like the 1971 war by India after it went nuclear.²⁹ However, India insists that there is space for a limited war under the nuclear overhang, primarily to push back Pakistan's development by 10-12 years through a short, swift, and destructive war, without crossing the nuclear threshold.

If Pakistan was a deterring state, India did not feel deterred in 2019 and the Balakot incident took place regardless of its poor execution. Whereas, in 1999, if India was the deterring state, Pakistan was not deterred, and Kargil happened. As far as the execution of Kargil is concerned, Pakistan gave India a perfect surprise. However, the international and regional environment was not conducive to such a military operation soon after the two countries had conducted nuclear tests in May 1998. Hence, Kashmir was declared the most dangerous place on earth by the then US President Bill Clinton.³⁰

Moreover, Pakistan was labelled as the aggressor for which Indian diplomacy carried out an extensive exterior maneuver, whereas Pakistan lacked application due to various domestic, political, regional, and extra-regional reasons. Pakistan's failure to achieve its politico-military objectives, despite initial successes through surprise and deception, greatly helped India to move

29. Zaidi, S. Akbar. "Special Report: The Breakup of Pakistan 1969-1971." DAWN.COM, December 15, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1359141>.

30. Akram, Zamir. "The Most Dangerous Place in the World." The Express Tribune, February 21, 2019. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1915703/dangerous-place-world>.

closer to the US. India seized the opportunity to initiate a 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue that lasted over two decades and culminated in an understanding of *Global Partnership and Indo-Pacific Cooperation*.

Additionally, India signed a couple of agreements with the US that would strengthen strategic cooperation between the two states, under Basic Exchange and Cooperative Agreements (BECA). Under this agreement, India becomes eligible for access to state-of-the-art intelligence and communication tools that will enable it to receive real-time pictures in any future conflict with Pakistan or China.

India's Motives Behind Conflict Deferment

Despite global concerns about the dangers of another war and the risk of escalation between India and Pakistan, the former continues to avoid any meaningful effort for dispute resolution and strategic stability in South Asia. The two states have had wars, conflicts, and crises, on other disputes as well, not just on Jammu and Kashmir. They engaged militarily on the issue of Sir Creek in April 1965. However, the confrontation remained localized. The situation became alarming due to a series of minor incidents, which forced Pakistani troops to attack and capture the Indian post of *Biar Bet*. Pakistan was in an advantageous position to cross the 24th Parallel, but its politico-military leadership exercised restraint, perhaps to avoid horizontal escalation.³¹ The matter was referred for arbitration. The then British Prime Minister Harold Wilson headed the UN Tribunal to resolve the boundary dispute.³² Again in August 1999, immediately after the Kargil conflict, a Pakistan Navy (PN) reconnaissance plane "Atlantique" was shot down by Indian Air Force fighter jets for an alleged airspace

31. Haque, "Nuclear Deterrence."

32. "India: Application of 'Most Favored Nation' Clause under Treaty with the Netherlands (Tribunal Decision)." KPMG, September 2022. <https://kpmg.com/us/en/home/insights/2022/09/tnf-india-application-of-most-favoured-nation-clause-under-treaty-with-netherlands-tribunal-decision.html>.

violation.³³

The Siachen conflict, initiated by India in 1983, continues till date, despite the inhospitability of the glacial terrain in which troops have to operate, and global concerns regarding climate change – the deployment of forces and use of explosives on the glaciers cause them to melt at a faster rate. The wars on the Jammu and Kashmir issue in 1948 and 1965 ended with the Karachi and Tashkent agreements respectively. As no serious headway was made by India towards dispute resolution, the possibility of another conflict between India and Pakistan cannot be completely ruled out. However, since the overt nuclearization of the region in 1998, while an all-out war between the two adversaries has not occurred, peripheral wars within the conflict zones have continued at regular intervals. No serious effort for the permanent settlement of the issues has been made mainly because India has not shown any interest in this goal.

Pakistan's efforts at conflict resolution were frustrated by India's deliberate attempts at conflict deferment. India assumes that it will be able to cow down Pakistan to accept its terms for dispute resolution once the latter is weakened through hybrid war and unrelenting arms build-up. India also feels emboldened after joining Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) and signing the BECA with the US as its strategic partner. BECA is expected to provide India with the much-needed technological support of real-time information and geo-spatial intelligence during its aerial operations against Pakistan, which was not available to it for its response against China during the Ladakh showdown of 2020.

33. "Summaries: Aerial Incident of 10 August 1999 (Pakistan V. India): International Court of Justice." Aerial Incident of 10 August 1999 (Pakistan v. India). International Court of Justice, June 21, 2000. <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/119/summaries>.

Pakistan's Endeavors at Conflict Resolution

Pakistan has made numerous attempts in the past to resolve its disputes with India, including Jammu and Kashmir, in post-war agreements or diplomatic engagements during periods of relative peace – the Karachi Agreement following the First Kashmir War in 1948; Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 following the water blockade by India; Tashkent Agreement after the 1965 War; *Rann of Kutch* Tribunal decision of 1968; *Simla* Agreement of 1972 and many more in recent decades including Lahore Declaration of 1999, and Islamabad Declaration of 2004. These efforts reflect Pakistan's intent to resolve active disputes with India. Each one of these disputes can potentially flare up into a military confrontation. However, India's reluctance and deliberate avoidance of the peaceful settlement has remained a cause of serious concern for Pakistan. Each dispute has a history of military engagement that was avoidable. The *Rann of Kutch* military confrontation in April 1965 in the areas close to Sir Creek and the downing of PN Atlantique aircraft by India after overt nuclearization by the two adversaries, could have been prevented. Likewise, India's aggression in the glacial region of Siachen was uncalled for where more soldiers from both sides died due to extremely harsh weather rather than in military operations.

The Kashmir wars of 1948 and 1965 also deserve mention. Pakistan is not absolved of the blame for initiating Operation Gibraltar in 1965 and Kargil conflict in 1999. However, India continues to refuse third-party intervention for the resolution of any active disputes. Perhaps in India's assessment, the decision may not go in its favor – though India had accepted third-party facilitation in the past, including that of the World Bank for Indus Waters Accord 1960, Harold Wilson Tribunal for *Rann of Kutch* Award 1968, and President Clinton's intervention in the Kargil conflict of 1999.

The strategic environment of South Asia is far from normal. Both India and Pakistan perceive a two-front threat – India in its east

with China in the Ladakh region, and in the west with Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir, and Pakistan in its east from India and post-US Afghanistan in its west. Therefore, the probability of Pulwama- and Balakot-like operations cannot be ruled out, and the tit-for-tat strategy may not always work as it did in February 2019. Moreover, the strategy carries the risks of escalation, which may have unknown consequences. A glimpse of the possible future scenarios was visible on the 26 June 2021 incident, when two drones crashed on the roof of an IAF building in Jammu Air Force Station, causing minor damage to the installations. As usual, India blamed Pakistan for providing equipment and support for the subject attack.³⁴ However, India failed to get the support or sympathy of any notable world capital.

In this complex, uncertain, and evolving volatile environment, the probability of miscalculation and misadventures has grown manifold, and this must be addressed urgently. Yet the two nuclear neighbors are not on talking terms. Formal discussions between the two have been suspended since 5 August 2021, when India unilaterally abrogated Article 370³⁵ and Article 35A of its constitution, which accorded some autonomy to the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in certain defined realms. The nascent backdoor diplomatic exchanges between India and Pakistan have also been discontinued due to India's stubborn approach to the Kashmir dispute.

India argues that a compromised solution to Jammu and Kashmir might lead to its Balkanization.³⁶ A few smaller states in India are

34. "Pakistan's hand likely in Jammu drone attack, say sources." *The Hindu*, July 11, 2021. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pakistan-hand-likely-in-jammu-drone-attack-say-sources/article35267649.ece>.

35. Khokhar, Fakhar Un Nisa. "Abrogation of Article 370 as Unconstitutional and Unjust Step: BJP Politician." *Radio Pakistan*, September 8, 2019. <https://www.radio.gov.pk/14-09-2020/abrogation-of-article-370-as-unconstitutional-and-unjust-step-bjp-politician>.

36. Datta, Devangshu. "Balkanization Fears and Threats: What Aurangzeb Can Teach New India in 2021." *Business Standard Column*. *Business-Standard*, January 2, 2021. <https://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/balkanisation-fears-and-threa>

demanding separation from the Indian Union, and the separation of Jammu and Kashmir may give impetus to their freedom movements. Moreover, India traditionally showcases “Kashmir” as a symbol of its secular ideology. But this argument is no longer valid as India is fast morphing into a Hindu state and drifting away from its so-called secular character.³⁷

Conclusion

States go to war for various reasons, and the acquisition of nuclear weapons by certain states depends on numerous factors. According to Saira Khan, “Studies revealed that the motivations for acquiring nuclear weapons derive from systemic, domestic, and individual factors... [and] security [is] the primary driving force for most states’ tendency to proliferate.”³⁸ If security is the primary reason for South Asia’s nuclearization, it is here to stay. This would however make the role of diplomacy far more important than ever. The most significant factor that has perpetuated the adversarial relations between India and Pakistan is the failure of diplomacy in dispute resolution.³⁹ Secondly, deterrence also failed to avert lower-level military confrontations in the past. Therefore, it is necessary that at least one state should work to avoid a direct military engagement as the failure to do so may lead to an unintended escalation and unthinkable first use of nuclear weapons by either side at a certain point during the war. Unfortunately, nothing is working in South Asia. India has remained successful in its strategy of conflict deferment, so that it can increase the force differential with Pakistan to a level where the Pakistani conventional force deterrent

ts-121010200064_1.html.

37. Wilpert, Gregory. “De-Facto Annexation of Kashmir Means India as a Secular State Is Ending.” *New Cold War: Know Better*. New Cold War, August 31, 2019. <https://newcoldwar.org/de-facto-annexation-of-kashmir-means-india-as-a-secular-state-is-ending/>.

38. Khan, “Nuclear Weapons.”

39. Saeed, Aisha. “Has Diplomacy Failed Pakistan–India Ties?” *Daily Times*, November 1, 2022. <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1020870/has-diplomacy-failed-pakistan-india-ties/>.

effect is marginalized.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the international community watches the situation from a distance. Perhaps the world is waiting for a strategic shock much stronger than Covid-19, and only then, it may rise to give the people of Jammu and Kashmir their much-delayed right of self-determination, as promised through numerous UN resolutions.⁴¹ The subject needs a lot more deliberations by academia and scholars so that the leaderships of the two states understand the gravity of the situation and move towards conflict resolution from the present state of conflict deferment. Perhaps, the strategy of conflict management is too risky in the prevailing strategic regional environment. No matter how limited a military conflict may be, the probability of conflict escalation exists as the two nuclear adversaries do not have a formal dialogue forum for initiating a process for permanent peace in South Asia.

40. Mizokami, Kyle. "Inside India's Strategy to Beat China and Pakistan in a Conflict." *The National Interest*. The Center for the National Interest, November 7, 2020. <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/inside-india%E2%80%99s-strategy-beat-china-and-pakistan-conflict-172215>.

41. Ahmad, Zeeshan, and M A Mir. "Promises Unfulfilled: 71 Years on, Kashmiris Pay for UN Silence." *The Express Tribune*, January 5, 2020. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2130632/1-promises-unfulfilled-71-years-kashmiris-pay-un-silence>.
