"Review and analyze the India-Pakistan nuclear tensions in light of your knowledge of nuclear dilemmas."

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"The splitting of the atom has changed everything but our way of thinking, and hence we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe."

- Albert Einstein

There has long been a dichotomy between the South Asian powers of India and Pakistan. This invisible barrier is deeply rooted in a history of religious, political, and social differences. While India-Pakistani relations have indeed been tentatively termed as "peaceful" for certain periods of time, it is evident that the advent of nuclear proficiency has only augmented their perceived differences in a way that has reformed the two nations into nuclear competitors. The powers-that-be in both nations are engaged in a virtual tug-of-war: however, both sides have the capability to singlehandedly obliterate the opponent in an instant. This is a variable that cannot be ignored, and is one that has changed the face of the tenacious South Asian political and military balance.

The essence of the nuclear conflict in South Asia can be traced to the post Indo-Pakistani war in 1974: Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto assembled various national nuclear scientists in order to leap into nuclear development. Soon after this timely meeting, India tested its first nuke in May of 1974 and proceeded with five nuclear tests by 1998. When Pakistan finally completed its first successful nuclear weapon, it was clear that the advent of such an end-all-be-all weapon system served as more than just a counter to rival India's own nuclear weaponry. Indeed, Pakistan, with its numerically inferior army, navy, and air fleet, wielded its nuclear arms as an impenetrable force field of doom. The power of the one-shot kill nuke grossly outweighed mere manpower.

Pakistan's glowing armor of nuclear weaponry allowed it some confidence regarding territorial exploits. General Pervez Musharraf commanded forces as they penetrated the lush environments of the Kashmir province. Pakistani troops crossed the Line of Control, which was the *de facto* border between the Indian controlled state and the Pakistani region. This invasion prompted an Indian counterattack and international denunciation of the Pakistani actions. [1]

It is no mere coincidence that this Kargil War occurred shortly after Pakistan acquired nuclear proficiency. Pakistan further asserted its growing role as a South Asian nuclear power and nuclear weapons played a very important role in Pakistan's perceived military might. Beyond giving Pakistan the confidence to invade Kashmir (a confidence that crumbled in the face of worldwide disapproval), nuclear weapons were often indirectly referenced in order to warn India of Pakistan's military strength. This policy of deterrence soon faded, however, as the international community supported India – Pakistan could not ward off the economic and social consequences of diplomatic isolation with its nukes.

Pakistan nearly fell into a policy of brinkmanship. U.S. intelligence reports said that Pakistani nuclear warheads were slowly being moved to the Line of Control – conceivably for use against the Indian opponents. The idea of this was to push the war to the brink of a *nuclear* war so that India would be forced to make geopolitical concessions. However, at the behest of President Bill Clinton and others, Pakistan withdrew.

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[1] Bruce Riedel, *American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House,* Centre for the Advance Study of India Policy Paper, University of Pennsylvania, 2002

From the Kargil crisis, it is evident that nuclear accomplishment carries with it consequences that amount to more than just increased firepower. The raw power of nuclear weaponry instills a deity-like conviction in its wielder. Pakistan engaged in brinkmanship with its offensive push into Kashmir. Because it could not win a conventional war, Pakistan invaded with its nuclear abilities - casting a very real shadow on the situation.

While the Kargil war ended with the threat of diplomatic sanctions against Pakistan, the current nuclear crisis has yet to be completely resolved. On December 13, 2001, Islamic terrorists attacked the Indian Parliament.[2] India responded by flushing the Kashmir region with Indian troops – purportedly to reign in on the numerous Islamic militant camps in Kashmir, which India claimed were being controlled by Pakistan. With this reaction, the chasm between India and Pakistan became inexorably tied to religious differences, adding a whole new obstacle to peace in South Asia.

As this new crisis coincided with the attacks on the World Trade Center on U.S. soil, India sought to take advantage of the western crusade against Islamic terrorism and cut off communication with Pakistan, declaring General Musharraf to be the mastermind behind the attacks on the Indian Parliament. It is important to note that during this time, guerilla fighters in Kashmir fighting for independence also posed a very real threat to both sides – Pakistan and India. While both sides

[2] Mohammed Ahmedullah, "Indian Air Force Advocates First Strike Capability", *Defense Week*, 2001.

made claims that the other side respectively controlled the militants, there is no solid evidence to bolster those allegations.

Even a cursory look at the role of Kashmiri militants shows that these allegations were only helping this "common enemy" of India and Pakistan. In a sense, Kashmiri guerillas were throwing fuel onto the fire, basking in the chaotic cover provided by the clash of the two South Asian powers.

Because of India's outrage, the threat of a nuclear war loomed on the horizon. Indeed, Pakistan's own General Mirza Aslam Beg exclaimed that "you can die crossing a street… or you could die in a nuclear war. You've got to die some day anyway."[3] This Pakistani refusal of a "no-first-use" policy marked an important delineation between Indian and Pakistani nuclear policy.

Since the world changing events in 2001, India's defense spending has increased annually. India ordered various new planes and carriers from other countries, signaling its willingness to expand its conventional arms in an attempt to supplement its nuclear capabilities.[4]

POLICY

It is interesting to note the evolution of Indian nuclear policy from 1998 to present day. Immediately after India's first nuclear tests, major nuclear superpowers rose in anger, citing that India violated the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. However, international lawyers disagreed: Andrew Mack wrote in the

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[3] Eric Arnett, 'Nuclear Testing and Stability in Asia', Sixth Beijing Seminar on Arms Control, 1998, Shanghai, China

[4] Mohammed Ahmedullah, "Indian Air Force Advocates First Strike Capability", *Defense Week*, 2001.

Australian Law Review: "India's tests didn't violate the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) because India is not a signatory to it."[5]

While India claimed various reasons for its nuclear proliferation, they are easily refutable. First, India claimed that because of nuclear neighbors, such as China, it deserved the right to develop nuclear weapons. But China-India relations had been pristine for several decades, with the last noted clash between the two regional powers being in 1974! Furthermore, India claimed that Pakistan was a covert nuclear state. This too does not justify the nuclear path for India, as there was no proof to this claim. In fact, both of these reasons were convenient for India. Many historians have asserted that the role of previous western Imperialism, combined with an Indian ambition to become a regional superpower, motivated India's embarking along the nuclear path.

Much of the sudden shift in India's nuclear policy from an abolitionist standpoint to a proactive testing agenda came with the arrival of the Bharatiya Janata Party into power. With arrival of the BJP into the Indian hot seat, the nuclear abolitionists, the Nehruvians were ousted. At the heart of the BJP was a clear war hawk mentality that believed in a form of Indian manifest destiny. The BJP took the idea of India as a regional superpower to heart with its nuclear policy.

The underlying power that sustained the BJP's policy stemmed from the consequences of nuclear knowledge. The nuclear bomb is "undisinventable," as the limiting factor on nuclear capability is knowledge. This knowledge cannot be abolished once introduced into the world. The BJP essentially bought into the idea of

[5] Andrew Mack, *Australian Law Review*, 1998

atomic triumphalism. If India's Western predecessors had the bomb as an ultimate wildcard, India must too.

It is interesting to note this abrupt change in policy from atomic dread to atomic triumphalism. While the Nehruvians claimed that the bomb was a horrible weapon of destruction, the BJP felt it was necessary in order to allow India its "deserved" role as a regional power. Was there another way to achieve this goal? For issues of national security, does a nation *require* the atomic bomb in order to be fully protected?

While the BJP initially argued for India's atomic capabilities by citing national security, there is an important facet of the issue of core security to consider: the idea of a threat. A country with only conventional arms capabilities is not as much of a national security threat as a country with nuclear capabilities. The very existence of India's nuclear bomb may have prompted flaring arms races in the South Asian region. Is it too presumptuous to consider that Pakistan's imminent threats in the Kargil War and subsequent conflicts would have ceased to exist had India scrapped its nuclear bomb program? In this sense, the idea of common danger and the sheer one-hit-kill aura emanated by the existence of the bomb can create a domino effect to spiral regional balances out of control. Essentially, the bomb was an unfounded variable upsetting the tenacious balance in South Asia.

Although India did develop nuclear capabilities, it was a longtime proponent of nuclear abolition. Indian ambassador Savitri Kunadi exclaimed in Geneva in 1998 that "India has consistently maintained that the only credible guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons lies in their total elimination. Until this

objective is reached, as an interim measure, there exists an obligation on the part of nuclear weapon states to assure non nuclear weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as also that these weapons will not be used as instruments of pressure, intimidation, or blackmail." [6]The Indians subsequently labeled the controversy regarding the Indian nuclear tests "Western hypocrisy". This supposed hypocrisy was attacked directly numerous times by American and international writers alike. Stephen Glover wrote "How odd that America should take this line. What was and is good for it and the West is apparently not good for India. The United States has carried 1,032 nuclear tests since 1945, the last being in 1992. Until it let off five last week, India had only done one test - in 1974. America is still in possession of some 12,000 nuclear warheads, whereas India is thought to have about 65 and, in the view of some defense experts, cannot even bolt these on to the missiles it has developed. The United States is a very large nuclear power. India a very tiny one."[7]

As Pakistan developed its nuclear capacities with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's founding of Pakistan's nuclear program, tensions in South Asia became palpable. Pakistan claimed that its nuclear program existed as a response to India's program. This perceived security risk supposedly prompted Pakistan's own development. After India's first nuclear bomb test in 1974, Bhutto exclaimed that Pakistan must develop its own "Islamic bomb" to counteract India. This statement alone deserves some analysis. A part of the dichotomy that exists between Pakistan and India draws

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[6] *Plenary Meeting of the Conference on Disarmament,* Geneva, 6 Aug 1998
[7] Stephen Glover, "Why India Should Have the Bomb," *Daily Mail*, 19 May 1998

its roots to religious differences. Both countries have had a history of wars, invasions, and conquests, which each believing that it is in the right. Because of this, Pakistan's own nuclear program was developed as a new weapon to herald the rise of its Islamic might – or so it was implied. However, Pakistan's completely un-opaque ambitions dissuaded its international financers – mainly France, which backed the construction of a nuclear power plant in Karachi. During this ordeal, the U.S. emerged as an almost parental figure, intensifying its pressure on other international backers to withdraw from Pakistan's increasingly able nuclear program. Pakistan eventually grew to be able to sustain its own nuclear program, although it was sustained with the help of foreign backers. Because of this and because of its comparatively weak economic system, Pakistan struggled to support its nuclear program.

Amidst all the strife, what then, were the bilateral measures taken in order to ensure that the tension in South Asia did not boil over into a full-fledged nuclear war? Most of these steps led nowhere, however, a significant step toward peace in South Asia was taken as President Zia of Pakistan proposed to the Indian government a process to curb the clear arms race in South Asia. These steps included a joint agreement for international inspection and a requirement that neither country would attack the others nuclear facilities. These drafts were tabled until the 1990s. While President Zia did make an active attempt to curb the South Asian arms race, it is clear that he had other motives. Pakistan's nuclear weapons program was extremely costly, especially because China was the main financer of its

materials. A liquidation of Pakistan's nuclear assets would greatly ease the stress on the embattled President.

EMERGENT DILEMMAS

It is here that we can stop and draw some needed comparisons in order to better comprehend the situation. Both Pakistan and India have nuclear weapons by 1998. Tensions are escalating with both demanding control of parts of the same province, Kashmir. Just as in the Korean War, several policy decisions regarding the nuclear bomb have to be considered. Nuclear weapons are immaterial – their existence brews terror in either side, especially because of strained relations. Because of the very unique implications from the very unique bomb, there were several options available in terms of general nuclear policy for both India and Pakistan, just as in Korea. With a policy of massive retaliation, the nuclear threat would be played up. Conventional threats would be less than threats in the face of the looming power of the nuclear bomb. A strong offense is a strong defense – this is the slogan adopted by massive retaliation. The United States in the Korean era specified this policy for a number of reasons: the Communist threat was a single, unified danger; it could avoid Communist-inspired wars like the Korean War, and nukes were cheaper per material cost than conventional forces. India was in a similar situation. The reality for the Indian people was this: their "Communist threat" was the northern threat of Islamic militants, which they believed as being backed by Pakistan, another overarching threat. However, India chose to forgo this policy of massive retaliation. Why? The answer to this lies within the not-so-subtle traditional standards set by the Nehruvians and the manifest destiny proponents -

the BJP. The Indians did not want to put all their eggs in one basket per say – the nuclear basket – while a lot of fighting was still conventional. Instead, conventional forces played a very real role, while nuclear weapons were used as a final threat. This is the policy of deterrence, which Indian policymakers slightly modified and put into action.

Pakistan, on the other hand, did not and does not fit into the mold created by the U.S. in the Korean War era. Instead, Pakistan released its own doctrine with the help of Benazir Bhutto. Under its rules, Pakistan would not assemble a nuclear device unless it sensed an imminent security threat, and would not export nuclear technology to other countries. This served to assuage international qualms about Pakistan's increasingly unstable economic and nuclear situation. After Musharraf's military coup, policy went up in the air and tension seized the area. The U.S. instituted sanctions (later to be removed because of Pakistan's frontline involvement in the War on Terror). After the sanctions were removed, in 2006 Musharraf released a statement saying that Pakistan will *not* ever enter into an arms race with India because of the economic strain that emerges as a result of such proliferation. However, this raises the question – putting aside the issue of economic self-harm, would Pakistan have stood up to India and openly made a military bid for Kashmir?

That is one question that is difficult to answer. On the surface, from the historical Pakistani willingness to self-assert itself as a South Asian power, it seems as if Pakistan would continue fighting in the Kashmir region. However, prospects of global sanctions, nuclear threat of India, and Kashmiri rebellions would serve to

dissuade the cause. India believes Kashmir as a fundamental part of the country. For India, the emotional and nationalistic harm done by first the secession of Pakistan and then the Kashmiri bid for independence was too much to stand. The Indian government will fight tooth and nail to hold on to what it can in Kashmir.

The Kashmiri struggle is almost juvenile in its fundamental nature. A beautiful woman pulled in two directions by two men – that is Kashmir. Every tug on either side causes the woman great anguish. Although Kashmir was formally divided with lines of control for each country that held a piece (India, Pakistan, and China), both Pakistan and India were said to have financed covert groups to infiltrate the illegal zones. How long until nuclear weapons enter the equation?

The fear of covert terrorist groups in Kashmir gaining access to nuclear weapons is likely to be a factor that dissuades Pakistan and India from fully committing to a war in that region. Instead, both countries skirt around the issue with only a part of their military forces. While global terrorism is thought to be an unfounded variable in the nuclear equation, the Kashmiri terrorist groups are thought to be covertly financed by one country or another – while surreptitious and underhanded, this does allow for some control over the terrorist's access to nuclear weapons. Neither India nor Pakistan would be foolish enough to provide them with such capabilities, as both see the nuclear bomb as a symbol of power.

One of the main issues to consider in a bipartisan analysis of the South Asian conflict is the fundamental difference between Pakistan and India – the way their people think. Over time, India has become more westernized – starting with the British colonization, especially in the middle of the 20th century. Pakistan, on the

other hand, is both religiously and traditionally very different from India. While India enjoyed independence from England and developed a knack for western ideals, language, and devices, Pakistan remained in the pseudo-conservative, hardliner, and traditionally Muslim mindset. This, while seemingly unrelated to the idea of nuclear power, is at the core of the difference that prevents both countries from seeing eye-to-eye on many subjects.

What does this mean for the nuclear issue? The use, motivation, and upkeep of nuclear weapons are inexorably all tied to the fundamental nature of the people in either country. The leaders in both India and Pakistan tailor their ruling philosophies with one ultimate goal in mind: the happiness of their people. For Pakistan, that goal is tied to its conservative, traditional mindset; in India, this is related to the uber-liberal nature of the populace. Historically, India has maintained a democratic electorate with good relations with the international community. Pakistan has gone through various coups in light of differing ideals. Religion is a major factor in determining these differences: traditionally, Islamic ideals are more conservative than the primarily liberal diversity reflected in India. However, this is by no means a blanket statement.

Following the Kargil war and the imminent threat of a Pakistani nuclear attack, India released a doctrine of "no-first-use." In this policy, India maintained that its nuclear weapons existed for the sole purpose of nuclear deterrence, and that it would strike only when struck first. Explicitly, it said India "will not be the first to

initiate a first strike, but will respond with punitive retaliation should deterrence fail."[8]

This doctrine is based on the premise of credible minimum deterrence. India sought to maximize the deterrent effects of its nuclear arsenal in any way possible. In fact, a Indian official was quoted as saying that a "no-first-strike *policy* does not mean India will not have a first-strike *capability*."

In 2003, India formally created its Strategic Nuclear Command. This entity acts as the caretaker for all of India's nuclear capabilities, and even nuclear policy. The amount of power allocated to the SNC was kept in check by the civil policy decisions of the Prime Minister, who was the only one with the capacity to order a nuclear strike itself.

To this day, India abides strongly by its "no-first-use" nuclear doctrine. According to the Strategic Security Project, "Despite promoting a test ban treaty for decades, India voted against the UN General Assembly resolution endorsing the CTBT, which was adopted on September 10, 1996. India objected to the lack of provision for universal nuclear disarmament "within a time-bound framework." India also demanded that the treaty ban laboratory simulations. In addition, India opposed the provision in Article XIV of the CTBT that requires India's ratification for the treaty to enter into force, which India argued was a violation of its sovereign right to choose whether it would sign the treaty. In early February 1997, Foreign Minister Gujral reiterated India's opposition to the treaty, saying, "India favors any

[8] Leonard Specter, *Nuclear Proliferation Today*, Vintage Books, New York, 1984

step aimed at destroying nuclear weapons, but considers that the treaty in its current form is not comprehensive and bans only certain types of tests."[9]

CONCLUSIONS & SUMMARY

It is evident that a number of very real dilemmas emerged from the acquisition of nuclear technology in South Asia. Ironically, this technology that both India and Pakistan cited as useful for societal advancement and alternative energy was also used to threaten the opponent with nuclear war and annihilation. Even security concerns cannot be held primarily responsible for these acts of proliferation for India. It is true that India's defeat by the hands of China in 1962 and strained relations with its immediate neighbors may have contributed to India's fear for her national security and further nuclear proliferation; however, certain domestic factors played important roles in this decision.[10] The advent of the BJP to power changed the political face of India by transferring political power from the Nehruvians to a party that very clearly supported Indian manifest destiny. In this way, India's national identity and global ambitions accelerated its nuclear program. Here, the ideas of India's moral superiority and global access play a role in this idealistic view. In order to resolve these two ideals, India's leaders turned to the sweet beckoning of nuclear weapons.

After an initial proliferation of nuclear weapons in India, Pakistan armed its own nukes. This created a cycle of sorts, akin to mutual assured armament! Pakistan, after a variety of military coups and economic distress, developed its own

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[9] Federation of American Scientists, *http://www.fas.org*

[10] George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: the Impact on Global Proliferation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999

nuclear program to pursue what it considered its rightful possession– Kashmir. This spurred the Kargil War, international tensions, and a nuclear threat next-door. Desperate measures allowed Pakistani policy to fall into brinksmanship, with no clear exit strategy. Ultimately, economic distress prompted General Pervez Musharraf to make the decision for his people: halt its nuclear program unless under *direct* nuclear threat.

Delving into the variety of nuclear dilemmas in the South Asian region has provided insight not only into the reasoning and mind games behind the scenes of the policymaking, but it has also shown the absolute nature of the Indian and Pakistani people. This nature is inherently reflected in any decision the leaders make. However, in a modern world with the advent of nuclear weapons, both countries are converting to a more modern thought process. In all cases, however, national security, a belief in moral superiority, and a desire to enter the "nuclear club" remain dominant themes in South Asia.