

Pakistan: Nuclear Deterrence and Ideology



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Pakistan: Nuclear Deterrence and Ideology

The nuclear age coincided with the advent of the Cold War. The concept of deterrence evolved in the background of ideological divide. However, both sides kept nuclear deterrence insulated from ideological considerations. This pragmatism was born out of imperative of survival. The two sides also signed the Helsinki Accord in 1975 committing them not to change the territorial status quo in Europe through use of force. Both these conditions, which contributed to stability of deterrence during the worst days of the Cold War, are absent in Pakistan's nuclear policy.

There is no existential threat to Pakistan from India. All four wars in 1947 1965, 1971 and 1999 originated from Pakistan's actions. This is established both by international literature and Pakistani writings. Therefore, making Pakistan's nuclear posture India-specific is not a military necessity, but an expression of an ideology, which sees the history of the sub-continent in terms of Hindu-Muslim clash. Pakistani leaders as well as strategists, recall Muslim rule over India. Latest in this unending series is General Kidwai's speech at the Institute of International Strategic Studies, London. Pakistan seeks not 'parity', which is the stated objective, but domination. General Kidwai has talked of successive rounds of nuclear exchange to maintain escalation dominance. He is the former Head of Pakistan's Strategic Forces Command. His musings in a think tank could be

ignored. But this strand of thinking is also reflected in the statements of Prime Minister Imran Khan Niazi in the Pakistan National Assembly after the Pulwama terror attack, and more recently after the deletion of Article 370 by India in August 2019.

Pakistan has no history; it is an idea. There was no independent state in the present boundaries of Pakistan; there may have been break-away 'subas' (provinces) as the Mughal power waxed and waned. The only exception was Ranjit Singh's empire, whose capital was Lahore and its rule extended up to Kabul. But this was not a Muslim, but a Sikh kingdom. It was India, which entered the United Nations as a successor state in 1947. Pakistan was admitted as a new country. Pakistan's assumption of inheriting the mantle of the Mughal Empire is a delusion, and a travesty of facts. India has 200 million Muslims. It is a plural, secular State.

The Two Nation Theory on which the Muslim League based its demand for Pakistan was shown to be futile in 1971, when the largely Muslim East Pakistan broke away to form Bangladesh. It was denial of ethnic identity and majority status of Bengali population which triggered these events. Instead of recognizing this root cause of its disintegration, Pakistan's leadership blamed it on India. Bhutto played a central role in blocking an understanding between General Yahya Khan and Mujibur Rehman, which could have saved Pakistan from break-up. He used humbling of Pakistan's Army to consolidate his rule internally. Externally, he blamed India and started the quest for a nuclear bomb.

India's decision to become a nuclear weapons state in 1998 was driven by the threat from its northern neighbour, not Pakistan. Pakistan's strategists deliberately ignore this in order to box-in India in the South Asian frame-work, which neither reflects power realities nor India's threat perception. India has shown extra-ordinary forbearance.

India fought a border war with China in 1962. Despite having the technological capacity, it waited for more than 3 decades after the Chinese nuclear test of 1964 before conducting the Pokhran II nuclear tests. The nuclear test of 1974 was not part of any weapons programme. It was certainly not a threat to Pakistan as Pakistani strategists claim to justify the Pakistani nuclear program. India had roundly defeated Pakistan in 1971, when 90,000 Pakistani troops were taken Prisoners of War. India did not need nuclear weapons to threaten Pakistan.

Historically, No First Use policy was chosen by the country enjoying preponderance in terms of conventional forces. During the Cold War period, the Soviet Union chose this policy, while North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) had First Use policy to compensate for inferiority in numbers of conventional forces. India has smaller conventional forces than China, and certainly far smaller than China-Pakistan combined. It nevertheless, chose the No First Use policy. Despite half a century of Sino-Pakistan collusion, it has maintained this policy. This is indeed a difficult choice. This shows India's commitment to a stable deterrent, though she may be justified to review this posture.

Scott D. Sagan has argued that 'it is very fortunate that it was India, not Pakistan, that was the first to develop nuclear weapons in South Asia'.¹ He was referring to the organisational bias of Pakistan, where the military controls the Nuclear policy. 'Pakistan military did not possess nuclear weapons before India tested in 1974, and thus was not in a position to argue that preventive war now was better than war later after India developed a rudimentary arsenal'.² Given its obsession with India, the Pakistan Army would certainly have tried to 'solve' the Kashmir issue and much else.

Pakistan's Policy

Since inception, Pakistan has pursued a policy calculated to create escalatory pressure. Its nuclear doctrine was never formally declared. The ambiguity was part of the policy of **'Deterrence through Uncertainty'**. This was initially spelt out in the 80s. General Kidwai in 2002 mentioned Four Red Lines which would trigger Pakistan's nuclear response. This was almost two decades after Pakistani strategists claimed it had developed nuclear weapons capacity. During the long interregnum, was there a policy vacuum in Pakistan? The answer is no. The policy followed actions first during the Zia period, when A.Q. Khan gave his interview to Kuldip Nayar in 1987. In the 90s, Pakistani statements built-up a narrative of Kashmir as a nuclear flash-point. During the Kargil war, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad made the threat on the 31st of May 1999. Pakistan now talks to developing Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs), and Full Spectrum Deterrence.

Pakistan's actions and statements in crisis have gone beyond the Four Red Lines mentioned by General Kidwai. The Red Lines are defined in defensive terms. But, Pakistan has used its nuclear capacity to aggressively push the envelope to include terror attacks by Jehadi groups without fear of retaliation. Thus the nuclear umbrella extends beyond defensive action in case of an Indian offensive which might imperil Pakistan's existence to creating an enabling environment for 'low intensity warfare' against India. The nuclear threat was held out to block India's conventional response to the Pulwama terror strike in February 2020. Prime Minister Imran Khan Niazi has gone to the extent of threatening nuclear war in response to changes in the Indian constitution and legislature. He held out the threat after the scrapping of Article 370, and more recently even in response to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

Pakistan's Nuclear Policy: Deterrence through Uncertainty

Traditionally, deterrence is based on certainty of retaliation. Pakistan chose the method of deterrence through uncertainty. The policy of ambiguity was partly born out of the clandestine nature of Pakistan's weapon program in the 80s. Partly, this was to avoid triggering the Pressler Amendment which would have cut-off US assistance to Pakistan. It wanted to use the threat without formally admitting a weapons programme. The threat was conveyed through A. Q. Khan's interview to Kuldeep Nayyar in the end of January 1987 when the Indian Army was conducting a military exercise on its side of the border. The interview was an admission of Pakistan's clandestine programme. Though Pakistan's strategists believe that it affected the Indian calculus, it was published only a month later on 1st March 1987.³ By that time the crisis had blown over. Pakistan did not have deliverable capacity till a decade later. The first attempt at nuclear blackmail did lower the threshold for nuclear retaliation even before Indian troops had crossed the international border. It also increased risk of miscalculation.

Red Lines and Policy of Nuclear Blackmail:

In 2002, General Kidwai, Head of Pakistan Strategic Forces Division spelt out the Four Red Lines. These are also purposefully vague, so that Pakistan could create uncertainty and retain flexibility. They are General framed in defensive terms, but disguised as an aggressive nuclear policy pursued by Pakistan. He 'told a pair of Italian physicists that Pakistani nuclear weapons would be used only "if the very existence of Pakistan is at stake."' 'Kidwai elaborated:

“Nuclear weapons are aimed solely at India. In case that deterrence fails, they would be used if:

- India attacks Pakistan and conquers a large part of its territory (space threshold);
- India destroys a large part either of its land or air forces (military threshold);
- India proceeds to the economic strangling of Pakistan (economic strangling);
- India pushes Pakistan into political destabilization or creates a large-scale internal subversion in Pakistan (domestic destabilization);”⁴

General Kidwai’s enunciation of Pakistan’s Red Lines in 2002 took place when India mobilised the following terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament. The threat was repeated at a higher level by Musharraf in his interview to Der Spiegel in April of that year.

General Kidwai recently gave a speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, where he emphasised Pakistan’s ‘Full Spectrum Deterrence Regime’. This he said was a response to India’s ‘Cold Start’ doctrine. He referred to ‘Operation Parakram’ without mentioning the background – a terror attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001 by Jaish-e-Muhammad based in Pakistan. The group headed by Masoud Azhar enjoys the protection of Pakistan security services. Daniel Pearl of the Wall Street Journal had reported in a series of dispatches that the group was allowed to freely function. His dispatches cost him his life. Pakistan was using the nuclear threat to expand the space for terror strikes beyond Jammu and Kashmir to India’s capital. There is another significant implication of the statement. Pakistan has abandoned ‘credible minimum deterrence’ to embrace a wider nuclear posture with bigger weapons stockpile, and increasing risks.

General Kidwai in his speech made two other points. He stated that 'Pakistan has ensured seamless integration between nuclear strategy and conventional military strategy in order to achieve the desired outcomes in the realms of peacetime deterrence, pre-war deterrence as also in intra-war deterrence'.⁵ **The statement points that Pakistan has gone beyond deterrence to use nuclear weapons for war-fighting.** The second point was 'It is the Full Spectrum Deterrence capability of Pakistan that brings the international community rushing into South Asia to prevent a wider conflagration.' **The use of deterrence to invite international mediation amounts to blackmailing the international community.** This of necessity involves brandishing the nuclear threat at the initial stage of conflict, rather than the final resort. **This means lowering the threshold again for use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to 'prevent a wider conflagration'.**

General Kidwai emphasised that 'I would like to state in very clear terms that **nuclear Pakistan's resolve to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity including Azad Jammu and Kashmir must never be tested.** That might be the minimum lesson to take home from the Balakot-Rajouri skirmish.'⁶ Pakistan's Constitution does not include 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' as part of Pakistan's territory, pending Plebiscite. What the good General has let slip is that the Plebiscite is a formality, and the territory has already been absorbed in Pakistan. Quite apart from the legal position which Pakistan has never cared for, there is another important issue here. While crossing the Line of Control by India is an absolute no, which will trigger nuclear retaliation, it is a permeable border for terrorist activities by Jehadi groups based in Pakistan.

A constant thread which runs through General Kidwai's speech is the need for a 'strategic balance' in South Asia. Credible Nuclear Deterrence does not require balance. Otherwise, China should ramp up its nuclear stockpile till it equals the American stockpile, and India

should do the same vis-a-vis China. What the argument disguises is that Pakistan is aiming at dominance at every stage of escalation, not deterrence. Pakistan already has larger number of nuclear weapons than India as per SIPRI:

World nuclear forces, January 2019:

Country	Deployed warheads*	Other warheads**	Total 2019	Total 2018
USA	1 750	4 435	6 185	6 450
Russia	1 600	4 900	6 500	6 850
UK	120	80	200	215
France	280	20	300	300
China		290	290	280
India		130-140	130-140	130-140
Pakistan		150-160	150-160	140-150
Israel		80-90	80-90	80
North Korea	(20-30)	(10-20)
Total	3 750	10 115	13 865	14 465

Source: SIPRI Yearbook 2019⁷

The table above clearly shows that India with 130-140 nuclear weapons is behind Pakistan with 140-150 nuclear weapons, and China with 280 weapons. It is certainly behind their combined total of 420-430 weapons. **The destabilising factor in the ‘strategic balance’ in the region is Pakistan’s quest for continuously augmenting its first strike capacity to achieve escalation dominance.**

Escalatory Ladder

Step 1: Stability – Instability Syndrome.

The lesson drawn by the Pakistan military from the 1998 nuclear tests was that nuclear deterrence frees them for launching conventional strikes. Scott Sagan mentions ‘the Pakistan Army also started the operation with the apparent belief - following the logic of what has been called the “stability/instability paradox” - that a stable nuclear balance between India and Pakistan permitted more offensive actions to take place with impunity in Kashmir’.⁸ Pakistan infiltrated regular troops as Mujahidins across the Line of Control in Kargil in 1999. When India initiated conventional action to throw them out, Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad held out the nuclear threat: ‘We will not hesitate to use any weapon in our arsenal to defend our territorial integrity’.⁹ The Indian counter action involved clearing out the infiltrators from the Indian side of the Line of Control. This was still in the early stage of war; at the time or even later there was no danger to Pakistan’s security. The statement therefore did not emanate from any threat perception, but to pre-empt the Indian response.

There were two assumptions underlying the Pakistani decision to launch Kargil war: the fear of nuclear exchange would (1) inhibit India from launching a retaliation (2) induce the international community to intervene to freeze the situation leaving Pakistan in possession of the territory gained illegally. Both proved to be disastrously wrong for Pakistan. India decided to initiate limited conventional response. Pakistan’s attempt to seek US mediation brought President Clinton’s demand that she withdraw behind the Line of Control. Pakistan had risked nuclear war for limited territorial gains. It failed to realise either its military or diplomatic objective.

Step 2: Nuclear shield for terror attacks.

Kargil was followed by a terror attack on the Indian Parliament organised by Pakistan based terrorist groups on 13th December 2001. This was essentially a de-capitation strike aimed at eliminating top leadership of both government and opposition parties. The event showed that Pakistan was using the nuclear shield to push the envelope beyond terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir to India's national capital. Even from Pakistan's point of view, Delhi is not a 'disputed territory' to be liberated through terrorist action.

There were ways of diffusing the crisis. If the Pakistan Government was not involved in sponsoring the attack, it should have had no objection to handing over those who planned the attack on the Indian Parliament. At a minimum, Pakistan could have initiated action to prosecute the offenders under Pakistani laws. Instead Pakistan chose to hold out threat of use of nuclear weapons against India. General Kidwai spelt out the Red Lines in January 2002, which if crossed could trigger nuclear strike by Pakistan. The obvious intention was to pre-empt any conventional response by India by holding out implicit threat of nuclear exchange. Nuclear weapons were being used to protect terrorist action, which could have killed India's top political leadership.

Kidwai's Statement was followed by General Musharraf's interview to Der Spiegel in April 2002. He stated 'Nuclear weapons are the last resort'. This was followed by ominous warning 'Nuclear weapons could be used.....If Pakistan is threatened with extinction, then the pressure of our countrymen would also be so big that, this option too, could be considered'¹⁰ He had held out the threat before India had taken any military action across the international border. The statement once again ignored the action -reaction sequence in which Indian mobilisation was in response to terror attacks on the Indian

Parliament. Musharraf's Statement was self-contradictory. He was holding out the threat of use of nuclear weapons which he described as weapons of last resort, as the first round in any potential conflict. This amounts to lowering the threshold and raising the risk. This has become part of Pakistan's standard play book.

The attack on the Indian Parliament came three months after 9/11 when international opinion had turned against radical Islam. President Musharraf promised in his speech of January 2012 that Pakistan's soil will not be used for sponsoring terrorism. The promise would be belied again. The Wall Street Journal reporter who visited Bahawalpur, where Jaish-e-Muhammad is headquartered, was murdered. The chief accused in the murder was given shelter by Brigadier Shah, who is presently the Interior Minister in Prime Minister Imran Khan's Cabinet.

Step 3: Mumbai Attack

The terror attack on the Taj Bombay on 26/11 showed that the Pakistan Government either did not care to prevent terrorism, or was unable to do so. In either case, the implications of continuing support to terror activities in a nuclearised South Asia are grave. There is a well-established principle of prosecute or extradite. Pakistan did neither. It has taken more than a decade before Pakistan arrested Hafeez Sayeed, leader of LeT on the eve of the meeting which was considering putting Pakistan on the black-list under the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). It remains to be seen if this process is followed to its logical conclusion or if the master-mind of the operation is released after the immediate pressure on account of FATF is off.

Step 4: Pakistan combines First Use with a Policy of Challenging Territorial Status Quo

Pakistan is unique amongst the nuclear weapons powers to combine First Use posture with a policy of challenging the territorial status quo. The contending sides during the Cold War had signed the Helsinki accord pledging not to change borders through use of force. This removed nuclear threat from the arena of border management. Nuclear weapons were the weapon of last resort, rather than used for making territorial gains. Pakistan has been trying to change the territorial status quo in Jammu and Kashmir through a terror campaign despite its clear commitment under the Simla Agreement to respect the Line of Control. Its oft repeated slogan is that Kashmir is a nuclear flash-point.

The use of nuclear threat to pre-empt the Indian response to conventional or sub-conventional threat, such as terror strike has the effect of lowering the threshold for launching a nuclear strike. A nuclear strike could be launched not to forestall Indian offensive deep inside Pakistan's territory, but even limited conventional response to acts of terrorism or infiltration in the Indian territory.

Step 5: Pakistan the Only Country to Link Economic Pressure and Internal Disturbances to Nuclear Strike

Kidwai's Four Red Lines go beyond territorial defence or destruction of its land or air forces to economic strangulation and internal destabilisation. This goes beyond any definition of deterrence or actual action of all other nuclear weapons states. By this logic, former Soviet Union which remained under US sanctions for most of its existence should have unleashed nuclear strike against that country. Or it could have blamed its adversary for disintegration of the Soviet Union due to internal reasons, and made it a target of nuclear strike.

The economic issues have to be dealt with in terms of well-established norms of international law, rather than threatening Armageddon. Pakistan should address concerns of ethnic and linguistic minorities in that country, rather than blaming India and brandishing nuclear weapons.

Step 6: Proliferation

In 2003, 'The A. Q. Khan network's illegal transfer of nuclear weapons technology and materials to Iran, Libya, and North Korea' were revealed.¹¹ While Pakistan military blamed A. Q. Khan, it is inconceivable that proliferation on such a scale, for so long could have taken place without Pakistan government's knowledge and approval.

Step 7. Development of Tactical Weapon

'Pakistan has operational plans and requirements for nuclear use integrated within its military war fighting plans'.¹² With the testing of the NASR Missile in 2011, Director Strategic Plans Division (SPD) General Kidwai declared that 'this test has consolidated Pakistan's nuclear deterrence at all levels of threat spectrum'.¹³

Development of tactical weapons goes beyond deterrence to use of nuclear weapons for war fighting. In the process, Pakistan has lowered the threshold for launch of a nuclear strike. The decision also signified Pakistan going beyond its declared policy of 'credible minimum deterrent'.

Step 8. Blocking Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty

Pakistan has blocked Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) negotiations in Geneva. Behind this lies the quest for continually expanding Pakistan's stock-pile of Fissile Material. This has transformed Pakistan's policy from Minimum Credible Deterrence

to a reckless build-up of a weapons programme which has no justification in terms of its defence needs. But the continued stalemate caused by Pakistan in the Commission on Disarmament has implications which go beyond the region. Build-up of stockpile of fissile material would undoubtedly contribute to proliferation risks elsewhere too.

Step 9. Jihad, the Mindset of Pakistan Military

While Pakistan claims that its nuclear weapons policy is India-specific, its military's links with Jehadi organisations could have global ramifications. *After 9/11, General Mahmud was sent to Afghanistan to persuade Mullah Omar to hand over Al Qaeda leadership to avert war. General Mahmud instead gave him the opposite advice. While General Mahmud was removed by Musharraf presumably under American pressure, the incident is a cause for concern. The screening procedures which the SPD boasts of do not apply to senior-most echelons of the Pakistan Army, who set the policy.*

Much before General Mahmud or General Kidwai came on the scene, General Aslam Beg had given the call for strategic defiance of the west. The statement against the US was made at the time of first Gulf War, when Pakistan's closest allies were facing existential threat from Saddam Hussain and needed American support. The episode showed that jihadi fervour could over-ride Pakistan's pragmatic thinking. General Gul Hassan, another influential figure who influenced Pakistan military thinking for more than a decade had close links to many of these Jihadi elements.

Peter Lavoy, Senior Lecturer at the Naval Postgraduate School, California writes 'The revelation of A. Q. Khan's reckless secondary proliferation activities and information that two Pakistani atomic scientists met members of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan created further

concerns over Pakistan's nuclear security.¹⁴

Global Jihad

Osama bin Laden was living in Abbottabad, when he was killed by US commandos in 2011. This is close to Pakistan's military academy at Kakul, and barely 120 kms from the capital Islamabad. Pakistan also attracted Al- Zarqawi who came to Peshawar in 2000.¹⁵ After 9/11, he joined Al Qaeda and Taliban against the US. On return to Iraq, he led the Sunni uprising till he was killed in 2006. Khalid Sheikh, credited with planning 9/11 was a Pakistani Islamic terrorist. He was captured in Rawalpindi in March 2003.¹⁶ Pakistan obviously has certain attraction for the Jihadi elements.

The permissive environment which allowed global Jihadi groups to gravitate to Pakistan was no accident. It was the product of a policy of the Pakistan Army to use these elements in pursuance of its geo-political goals. C. Christine Fair cites writings of Brigadier Iqbal in the Pakistan Army Green Book in 2008. He recommended that the policy of bleeding the enemy through guerrilla warfare "requires the retention of credible nuclear deterrence throughout".¹⁷ She adds 'Pakistan, from the beginning of its existence, has created, nurtured, supported, trained, financed, and deployed Islamist proxies'¹⁸

The growth of extremist philosophy has led to 'reverse indoctrination' of the Army and ISI. The attempts on the life of Musharraf involved insiders. The 'Lal Masjid' (Red Mosque) operation against a group of Islamic vigilantes was the beginning of Musharraf's down-fall. It will not be easy to insulate Pakistan's nuclear assets from the spread of extremist philosophy.

Pakistan moves around its nukes by road. Many international commentators have written about the risk this poses in a country, which has witnessed growth of extremist philosophy. But the real

danger is the challenge from inside. The attacks on Qamran Airbase and Mehran Naval Base are believed to involve insider elements.

Failing Economy

Till the 80s, Pakistan enjoyed a higher rate of growth than India. Atif Mian in his article captioned 'How to Fix Pakistan's Crashing Economy' in The New York Times of December 10, 2019, said that 'During the 1980s, in per capita terms Pakistan was richer than India, China and Bangladesh by 15, 38 and 46 percent. Today, Pakistan is the poorest. Its most recent gross domestic product growth estimate was only 3.3 percent, barely sufficient to keep pace with population growth.' He added:

'Pakistan's Federal Government is effectively bankrupt. Last year, the sum of interest payment due on the government's debt obligations and pension payments owed to retired employees was more than the federal government's net revenue. **The entire government machinery, including the military, is running on borrowed money.**'¹⁹ (emphasis mine)

Pakistan is the only nuclear weapon state surviving on repeated IMF bail-outs. It is currently receiving its 13th such package. To paraphrase General Kidwai, Pakistan has 'been there, done that'. But the previous 12 packages failed to bring about any lasting improvement. In fact, Pakistan has discovered a novel use of its nuclear status. The implied threat is that a nuclear weapon state cannot be allowed to go down under. While the immediate crisis may have been tided over, the long-term problem remains. Pakistan has one of the lowest savings and investment rates in South Asia. According to the World Bank figures for 2018, Gross Capital Formation as percentage of GDP was 17 percent for Pakistan, as against 31 percent for each of Bangladesh and India.²⁰ The investment rate for 2017 stood at

16.09 percent for Pakistan, 30.11 percent for Bangladesh and 30.94 percent for India.²¹

In terms of Human Development Index (HDI), Pakistan lags behind Bangladesh and India. Pakistan stood 152nd (HDI 0.560), Bangladesh 135 (0.614 percent) and India 129 (0.647).²²

While there could be many reasons for the decline, Pakistan's runaway military expenditure is a major cause. It eats away resources needed for development. The budget reflects the Army's corporate interest, not a genuine threat. A policy of continuing build-up of nuclear weapons stockpile will accelerate this downward slide.

Intolerant Society

Atif Mian in his article on Pakistan's Crashing Economy in New York Times mentioned religious extremism as one of the two factors inhibiting Pakistan's progress. He states:

‘Decades of patronage by successive military and civilian governments for promoters of religious hate has created a culture of institutionalized intolerance. The result has been devastating for society. Thousands have been killed, communities have been ripped apart and hundreds and thousands of people have been displaced or forced to flee the country altogether.’²³

The percentage of minorities in Pakistan came down from 23 percent at the time of partition to 3 percent now. **Pakistan carried out ethnic cleansing of minorities years before the term was coined.** The minorities have been provided reserve seats. But the seats are divided amongst national parties in proportion to the number of seats they have won. **Thus, minorities cannot chose their political alignment to safeguard their political interests. This choice is to**

be made for them on the basis of relative performance of political parties. This essentially **neutralises** minorities as a factor in national politics. The Objectives Resolution declaring Pakistan as an Islamic State is now an integral part of Pakistan's Constitution, relegating minorities to second class status. Religious extremism is not limited to fringe elements of Pakistan's politics. Their agenda has been adopted by the mainstream parties.

'Azad Jammu & Kashmir'

The United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) resolution, as well as earlier United Nations Security Council Resolution of April 1948 had actually asked Pakistan to withdraw forces under its control from Jammu and Kashmir. Withdrawal of Pakistani forces was a pre-condition for Plebiscite. Instead, Pakistan went ahead to consolidate and perpetuate its illegal control. Pakistan's official narrative omits this background. Both the 'Azad Jammu & Kashmir' Interim Constitution and Pakistan's Constitution rule out any option for the people of the territory, other than its accession to Pakistan. Pakistan's chosen method in 1947 as well as 1999 was to seize territory through force and deception. Azadi (freedom) is a slogan to deceive the international community. The worst victim of this charade are the people of 'Azad Jammu & Kashmir' & Gilgit-Baltistan. Their fate is subservient to Pakistan's Strategic needs.

Lessons of Kargil

Interestingly, General Kidwai's account omitted the Kargil war, which was the last military engagement between India and Pakistan. It exposed the fallacy of many assumptions held by the Pakistan Army. It also brought out the civil-military divide. Pakistan Army cabal who plotted the adventure assumed that the fear of escalation to nuclear level will restrain Indian leadership from giving a

conventional response to Pakistan's intrusion across the Line of Control. They were proven wrong. This was indeed not the first time Pakistan had under-estimated the Indian resolve. It had done the same miscalculation in 1965, when it launched Operation Gibraltar. The second major miscalculation was that its 'all weather friend', China will intervene. Pakistan turned to Washington for mediation only after Musharraf drew blank from China. The third assumption was that mediation will freeze the situation while Pakistan was still in possession of Indian territory. The US instead asked Pakistan to withdraw; India had already made clear that it will keep fighting till the Indian territory was cleared of the invaders.

The civilian government had played along with the military's plan. Nasim Zehra writes that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was briefed after the Pakistan Army had already intruded in the Indian territory. 'The Prime Minister was presented with a *fait accompli*'²⁴ 'Elected Prime Minister opted to go along with the *fait accompli* presented to him by the military'²⁵ Nawaz Sharif's acquiescence in the decision points to the power equation between civilian and military leaders, which is heavily weighted in favour of the latter. This also has implications for decision-making on nuclear issues, which are even more tightly controlled by the military. The command and control for decisions on war and peace rests entirely with the military.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif wrote to the UN Secretary General on 27th May, 1999 that '...Kashmir has now become a nuclear flashpoint, and its Resolution is absolutely necessary for peace and security in the region.' The letter added 'It is certainly not in the interest of world peace; in my view, two nuclear powers should never be in a state of conflict'.²⁶ Unfortunately, the script went horribly wrong for Pakistan. A month later, Nawaz Sharif had to make a dash to Washington to seek US help. Musharraf later blamed Nawaz Sharif for giving in. Was the civilian Prime Minister sure for peace

without Army being on board? Indeed there was no reason for him to take such a step if Pakistan Army was winning. The US mediation was sought to provide Pakistan a face saving formula for its retreat after its situation had become unsustainable.

Will development of TNWs change the scenario next time around? The strategy of flexible response presupposes that the other side will play by the same rules. As India has made clear, use of nuclear weapons against Indian forces or civilian anywhere would invite massive retaliation. The basic dilemma inherent in the concept of limited war is that you cannot risk total destruction for limited gains.

Pakistan military has not reconciled itself to the fact that there is no scope for terrorism as a strategy for war in a nuclearised environment. The Jihadi elements it bred has caused enormous collateral damage. This included the attack on Peshawar Army School and weakening of the writ of the State.

Nuclear Deterrence or Nuclear Blackmail?

Pakistan holds out threat of nuclear exchange in situations of local conflict, or even before a conflict has taken place. Instead of relying on nuclear weapons as weapons of last resort, the threat is held out in the initial stage only to create a perception of crisis. After the Pulwama attack in February 2019, Prime Minister Imran Khan gave a hard-hitting speech threatening tough response. Unlike in the past when Pakistan issued a statement condemning terrorism, there was no such gesture this time. After deletion of Article 370, PM Imran Khan in his speech in Pakistan National Assembly on August 6th 2019 sketched out a scenario of rapid escalation. He said that **both India and Pakistan are equipped with weapons that you know - a clear hint to nuclear weapons**. He said that in a conventional war with India, Pakistan might lose. He said that in such a case, Pakistan

will not sit back but retaliate. There was no threat of military action by India. Pakistan was indulging in nuclear blackmail to influence India's internal processes and invite international attention.

Referring to the Pulwama-Balakot incident, General Kidwai mentioned in his speech in IISS, London:

‘.....nuclear India should have concluded that in an active military conflict situation, especially a limited one with nuclear armed Pakistan, while it may be easy to climb the first rung on the escalatory ladder, the second rung would always belong to Pakistan, and that India's choice to move to the third rung would invariably be dangerously problematic in anticipation of the fourth rung response by Pakistan.’²⁷

General Kidwai's has used language reminiscent of Dr. Strange love. India has the policy of No First Use. India chose retaliatory strike in Balakot away from any population center to minimise collateral damage. The danger comes from Pakistan's attempt to combine First Use with a campaign of cross-border terrorism. Pakistan military has persisted with its armament programme at the cost of country's development. It now lags behind Bangladesh in terms of most indices of social development and economic growth.

General Kidwai in his speech lauded Pakistan's successful experiment with democracy. The last change was not quite the democratic transition he describes. Nawaz Sharif was forced out on the basis of interpretation of an obscure Article 61 of Pakistan's Constitution inserted by the military leadership. As he described it, he was 'found guilty for not declaring the money he never received.' Prime Minister Imran Khan stresses 'accountability'. But no General has been held accountable. The leaders of the two main opposition parties - PML-N and PPP have been exiled. The absence of democracy

has compounded the problem of command and control. The nuclear assets are under the control of the military.

'Kashmir as a nuclear flashpoint' has become part of Pakistan's standard play book in any crisis. This is of course subject to the law of diminishing returns as Pakistan found out during Kargil war. The attempt to use nuclear weapons as a diplomatic tool has lowered the threshold and increased risks. They are to be used not to meet existential threat, but border skirmishes. Pakistan's Nuclear policy is an expression of 'ideology', not 'deterrence'. The continuing nuclear build-up in the quest of 'Full Spectrum Deterrence' has impoverished its people and increased the risks.

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