



International Journal of Sociology and Political Science

Online ISSN: 2664-7745; Print ISSN: 2664-7737; Impact Factor: RJIF 5.48

Received: 26-02-2020; Accepted: 11-03-2020; Published: 27-03-2020

www.sociologyjournal.in

Volume 2; Issue 1; 2020; Page No. 14-15

Causes of Nuclearisation of South Asia and its impact on regional security and stability

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to look at the causes of south Asian nuclearisation and its impact on south Asian regional security and stability. It would help to understand why India and Pakistan goes nuclear. The findings would be based on the vivid arguments of prominent scholars. The paper also presents the nuclearisation debate of South Asia in briefly. It also discusses the relevance of classical nuclear deterrence theory in the context South Asia.

South Asia has an important role in world politics. India and Pakistan are nuclear countries of Indian subcontinent from May 1998. After the nuclear explosion by India and Pakistan in May 1998 significant changes were seen in geo-politics of this sub-continent region. After nuclear explosion in 1998 Arms – Proliferation Race started in this region. Generally Nuclear weapons are considered as the power of currency of a nation. Some scholars consider nuclear weapons helpful in maintaining peace and stability in a region. On the other side some scholars reject this argument and consider nuclear weapons as weapons of mass destruction (WMD). They suggest that nuclear weapons do not establish peace and stability in a region instead they bring insecurity and instability. According to them spread of nuclear weapons are dreadful and unsafe. Regarding to nuclear proliferation classical nuclear deterrence theory considers that if two nations have nuclear weapons than the chances of war are less likely as the cost of war rise in relation to possible gains.

Keywords: Nuclearisation, Nuclear, currency, maintaining

Introduction: Historical background

India had exploded its peaceful nuclear explosion code name as "Buddha smile" on 18th may 1974 at Pokhran Army Test Range of Rajasthan. Whereas Pakistan was also developing the nuclear weapons covertly from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto regime but Pakistan officially declared its nuclear status on 28th may 1998 after the second Indian nuclear test (code name –operation Shakti). If we look through the historical perspective India and Pakistan have fought three full-fledged wars in 1947-48, 1965 and in 1971. After nuclear explosion of 1998 by India and Pakistan they did not engage in a full-fledged war although situations of limited war occurred many times. Pakistan has been weaker in conventional armed forces. So it blackmails India through nuclear weapons. Pakistan uses nuclear weapons as an alternative to deter India's traditional armed superiority. Beside this, India's nuclear capability and ability is greater than Pakistan's capability but Pakistan wants to equal India in the field of nuclear technology. China the neighbor country of India and Pakistan too, is a nuclear power. China has territorial disputes with India and it helping Pakistan nuclear development program. United States of America also plays an important role in this region. America has also its military, economic strategic influence in this region.

This region has been a guide to world peace and tolerance. After the nuclear experiments of India and Pakistan disputes started to arise in this region related to stability and security. In these circumstances the question became relevant that whether the presence of nuclear weapons will be helpful in establishing peace and stability or it will put a question mark on the

security and stability of this region? Regarding to these political analysts has expressed their thoughts. Some of them think nuclear weapons helpful in maintaining peace and stability in a particular region. They are known as nuclear optimist. Contrary to those a school of thought emerged which considers nuclear weapons dangerous for regional peace and stability. They think that due the presence of nuclear weapons the possibility of nuclear war increases. This leads the whole world into a horrible situation. This school of thought is known as 'nuclear pessimists'; raise the concern for the security of nuclear weapons. According to them if nuclear weapons fall into the hands of non-state actors like terrorist groups the whole world will be in danger. Major proponents of nuclear optimist school are KennethWaltz, Sumit Ganguly, C. Raja Mohan, and Rajesh RajaGopalan. Major thinkers of nuclear pessimist school are – Scott D Segan, Kanti Bajpai, Paul S. Kapur, AchinVanaik, Zia Mian, Smitu Kothari etc.

Why India and Pakistan go nuclear? Both India and Pakistan had their own clarification being nuclear weapon state. Few of them include national security, self-dependence and national pride. Many scholars describe different causes for India and Pakistan being nuclear nations. Pakistan had specific reasons to go for nuclearisation. Pakistan has insecurity feelings towards India since its creation. It wanted to deter India's conventional military superiority. Pakistan also wanted to become leader of Islamic world. In this context scholars have different views about why India and Pakistan took decision to develop nuclear weapons. Ashok Kapur describes the factors which are responsible for development of nuclear weapons by any

country. These factors are - national pride and prestige, national security and survival, self-dependence, domestic environment, international circumstance etc.

Prominent scholar George Perkovich stated that domestic factors were important in Indian nuclear proliferation. According to him India went for nuclearisation because domestic politics and willingness of bureaucrats and scientists. These factors were more important than security causes in context of China and Pakistan. According to Sumit Ganguly the major reason behind India go nuclear was the security challenge posed by China and Pakistan. He further stated that China became nuclear in the year of 1964 and it was direct threat to Indian national security. Beside this china was also helping in Pakistan's nuclear program. Some reports revealed that China was transferring nuclear technology to Pakistan covertly. Pakistan has many territorial disputes with India. According to him Pakistan since its creation had the insecurity feelings towards India. It had been week in conventional armed forces. So that Pakistan wanted to deter India through nuclear weapons. South Asian Marxist scholar Achin Vanaik argues that the ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bhartiya Janta Party is responsible for India's nuclear enthusiasm. BJP's election manifesto clearly indicated that if they come into power they will develop a nuclear bomb. The Hindu elite class mentality culminated in 1998 nuclear explosion.

Pervez-Hoodbhoy counts two main reasons behind 1998 nuclear explosion of India namely – Hindu Chauvinism and National prestige.

Some scholars said that the classical nuclear deterrence could be applied in the context of South Asia. According to this theory if two nations have nuclear weapons they will not go for a war. Scholars like Sumit Ganguly assume that nuclear deterrence theory can be applicable in South Asia. Ganguly in his book "India Pakistan crisis in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons" argues that nuclear weapons do prevent the states to go for an all-out war. He quotes some incidents between India and Pakistan to prove his statement like Kashmir issue and Prakram crisis. Another prominent scholar Paul S Kapur holds a contrary opinion and believe that it is not nuclear deterrence that prevents states to go for all-out war, instead there are some factors like diplomatic pressure and domestic circumstances which lead to de-escalation. At present concern for safety and security of nuclear weapons of India and Pakistan is being expressed. Some scholars expressed that if Pakistan's nuclear weapons fall into the hands of non-state actors like terrorist groups then the security of this region will be in danger. Beside this, these two countries are geographically connected with each other, if nuclear war happens then the result will be very destructive.

After discussing all ideas and causes regarding nuclearisation of South Asia, it can be said conclusively that classical nuclear deterrence theory cannot be applied in South Asia. Indeed nuclear weapons are able to reduce war in South Asia in special context to India and Pakistan but it is only successful to limiting the wars. After nuclear explosion of 1998 India and Pakistan didn't fought any full-fledged war but limited wars happen between both the countries like Kargil crisis, operation prakram and India-Pakistan standoff 2019. So classical nuclear

deterrence theory is partially applicable in the context of South Asia.

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