DETERRENCE AND LIMITED WAR IN THE INDO-PAK CONTEXT

By

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SYNOPSIS

DETERRENCE AND LIMITED WAR IN THE INDO-PAK CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Terms of Reference

1. The term limited war refers only to limited conventional war.

2. Only open sources of information to be utilized.

Aim

3. To examine the theory of limited war in the Indo-Pak context with a view to assess its potential from an Indian viewpoint.

Scope

4. The research examines deterrence and limited war theories. The insight gained is utilized to illuminate the issues of deterrence in the Kargil and Indo-Pak crisis 2002. This facilitates the exploration of conventional space in order to establish its potential in the context of political objectives.

6. Kargil and the Indo-Pak crisis 2002 are both recent, and hence it is not possible to research the basis of decision making to any degree of detail as most information on the subject is classified. This is an accepted handicap of the research under taken.
Hypothesis

7. In the Indo-Pak context, conventional space is available to prosecute a limited war. But the utility of conventional space and the scope of political objectives achievable through limited war are substantially restricted. Brinkmanship, punitive strikes and geographically confined skirmishes will characterize the future forms of war.

PLAN OF THESIS

Plan

8. The thesis is laid out in seven chapters as follows:-:

(a) Chapter I. This chapter contains the introduction that contains the background, statement of the problem in its theoretical significance, the aim, scope, hypothesis and the plan of thesis.

(b) Chapter II. This chapter analyses the theoretical foundations of deterrence and establishes the linkages between nuclear and conventional deterrence. It also seeks to define its applicability in the Indo-Pak context and highlight the fundamental issues that are at stake in a situation where both adversaries possess nuclear weapons.
(c) **Chapter III.** This chapter analyses the concept of limited war in the Indo-Pak context. The potential of limited war is also analyzed with reference to the feasibility of achieving political objectives.

(d) **Chapter IV.** This chapter examines the Kargil conflict through the prism of deterrence to draw lessons on the concept of limited war.

(e) **Chapter V.** This chapter examines the Indo-Pak crisis 2002 through the prism of deterrence and seeks to understand the role conventional and nuclear deterrence in preventing the conflict.

(f) **Chapter VI.** This chapter contains findings and recommendations.

(g) **Chapter VII.** This chapter contains the conclusion.

**BRIEF RESUME**

9. The foundations of limited war theory are laid on the perceived potential of nuclear and conventional deterrence theories. However, deterrence though a widely accepted notion amongst strategists, has not been found reliable. Fundamentally because, the option to be deterred or not lies with the deterree- the object of deterrent menaces. Historically, conventional deterrence has failed often even when chances of victory were perceived to
be low. For more often the alternative of not going to war was perceived as bringing greater disadvantage. Nuclear deterrence on the other hand seems to have survived and prevented conflicts between major powers. But proxy wars became frequent and gave rise to the ‘stability-instability’ paradox. According to the paradox, nuclear weapons provided stability against direct and major conflict but facilitated conflicts of lesser intensity and lower levels. The notion of limited war drew its essential logical sustenance from this paradox.

10. The strategic theory of limited war is an American theory that was born consequent to the Korean war. India adopted the theory as a reaction to Pakistan’s prolonged proxy war and Kargil. It was opined that there existed conventional space below the nuclear threshold to prosecute a limited conventional war. Limited war was postulated to be war limited by means, space and objectives.

11. The theory of limited war however depended for success on a cooperative opponent and clarity in communicating boundaries of the conflict. Both elements were hard to find during a conflict because adversaries are what they are because of lack of cooperation and communication during a crisis or conflict is grossly distorted by what Clausewitz described as ‘friction’. The greatest weakness in the theory was
therefore the inability to control escalation. With there being an overarching possibility of escalation into nuclear dimension. Indian military leaders proclaimed that escalation can be tamed. Pakistan on the other hand declared that nuclear threshold is low and an Indian attempt at force application could result in nuclear war, which understandably both want to avoid.

12. Both countries carried divergent lessons from the Kargil conflict. India perceived it as proof that limited war is feasible. While Pakistan perceived it as proof that India will not widen the conflict due to fear of escalation. The United States brokered the peace. But its interests were rooted in preventing conflict escalating into the nuclear dimension. The crisis of 2002 seemed to provide a field test for India’s theory of limited war. But it did not. It seems that political objectives like ‘Restraining Pakistan from Cross border terrorism’ was beyond the scope of limited war. The prime reason being the existence of nuclear weapons. For even the active role of the United States in defusing the crisis was rooted in the apprehension that Indo-Pak conflict could escalate into the nuclear realm, even though the risks were not high.

13. Thus the Indo-Pak crisis 2002 reflected the fact that though conventional space was available; it was insufficient to successfully attain a substantial political objective. Also, the crisis could be viewed as an
example of brinkmanship. Militarily, punitive strikes based on air power and geographically confined border skirmishes is the more likely form of war. Since escalation control is considered feasible and application of military force done without posturing. This reduces the chances of international intervention.

**CONCLUSION**

14. The fallibility of the theory of limited war in the Indo Pak context lies in the possibility of asking deterrence to do too much. In the nuclear era, prudence demands that deterrence not be taxed beyond its capability. Ironically its capability is indecipherable since it is dynamic and a relational variable. Limited war can thus be only a desperate gamble for both Pakistan and Indian leaders.
The Clausewitzian idea that strategy teaches ‘the use of engagements for the object of war’ can help integrate nuclear weapons into a general framework of strategic comprehension....

...It is unusually difficult to assess the strategic effect of weapons whose engagements after 1945 has been virtual. It is hard to demonstrate just what deterrence was ‘done’ by explicit or latent menaces. Strategic effect can be generated whether or not forces engage in battle. In the cold war it was not only the engines of nuclear destruction that were not committed to real fighting; the conventional forces were restricted to competition rather than combat.

Colin Gray
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CHAPTER ONE

*Prudence is the statesman’s supreme virtue*

*Raymond Aaron*

INTRODUCTION

**Background**

1. Pakistan has been actively promoting a proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir since 1989 and war has been a significant part of its strategy of ‘bleeding India with thousand cuts’. Pakistan’s undeclared possession of nuclear capability gave birth to a notion in Pakistan that India would be deterred from retaliating conventionally. Pakistan’s faith in nuclear deterrence strengthened over time when India continued to tolerate Pakistan’s growing involvement in proxy war.

2. Both countries carried out nuclear tests in 1998. Pakistan has stated that it will use nuclear weapons in extremis. But deliberately prevaricates on the circumstances of use to cloud it in ambiguity, ostensibly to strengthen deterrence. It has claimed that their nuclear weapons neutralizes India conventional superiority and has refused to adopt a “no first use policy”. India on the other hand has adopted a nuclear doctrine that unequivocally declares that nuclear weapons are meant to deter only nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and will never use them first. From all indications both countries have not deployed nuclear weapons thus far and would require preparations before use.
3. Both countries however have acknowledged in the Lahore agreement of 1999 that “the nuclear dimension of the security of the two countries adds to their responsibility for avoidance of conflict between the two countries”. But a couple of month’s later, Kargil conflict erupted. A theory of limited war in the Indo-Pak context was thus born and given a well-publicized birth by the Indian defense minister at a seminar in New Delhi in January 2000.

4. The opportunity for field-testing India’s theory of limited war did not take long in coming. The 13 December 2001 attack on the Indian parliament saw the launch of ‘Operation Parakram’ by India. India threatened war unless Pakistan withdrew support to cross border terrorism. The stand off continued till October and petered off when India decided to demobilize and resolve issues through the diplomatic route.

5. Since limited war has remained a non-event in 2002, an examination is warranted to understand its potential and limitations through the prism of conventional and nuclear deterrence. For ultimately, it is the foundations built on the beliefs systems created by deterrence that the edifice of limited war rests.

Statement of the Problem

6. Three schools of thought emerged after the Kargil conflict. Some believed that conventional war with Pakistan is no longer practicable because of the possibility of the war escalating beyond the nuclear
threshold. This is also Pakistan’s official view. Some others hold the view that a war limited in space, time and objectives is possible and Kargil was cited in support of the argument. This has been India’s official view. A third group believes that a full fledged conventional war is possible, because Pakistan’s nuclear threats are bluffs that must be called, since Pakistan could well be wiped out though we could also suffer severe damage.

7. The idea of limited war is pivoted on the notion that there exists conventional space below the nuclear threshold, which can be utilized to apply military force in pursuance of political objectives. Inherent in the notion was the caveat, that only those political objectives, which were perceived as attainable within the ambit of limitations, could be pursued. But since the perception of nuclear threshold was inevitably ambiguous, how much of force can be applied, where, how and for how long was ultimately determined by the ability to take risks and belong to the realm of the unknown.

8. Since the field test of India’s theory of limited war never took place in 2002, there is need to examine the theory in the light of deterrence theories and the experience of Kargil and Indo-Pak crisis 2002. Such an examination should highlight the potential of limited war in the Indo-Pak context.
**Aim**

9. To examine the theory of limited war in the Indo-Pak context with a view to assess its potential from an Indian viewpoint.

**Scope**

10. The research examines nuclear, conventional deterrence and limited war theories. The insight gained illuminates the issues of deterrence in the Kargil and Indo-Pak crisis 2002. This in turn focuses the research to explore the extent of conventional space in order to establish its potential for force application in the context of political objectives.

11. Kargil and the Indo-Pak crisis 2002 are both recent, and hence it is not possible to research the basis of decision making to any degree of detail as most information on the subject is classified\(^1\). This is an accepted handicap of the research undertaken.

**Hypothesis**

12. In the Indo-Pak context, conventional space is available to prosecute a limited war. But the utility of conventional space and the scope of political objectives achievable through limited war are substantially restricted. Brinkmanship, punitive strikes and

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\(^1\) The former Indian Army’s Director General of Military Operations and his equivalent in the Air Force during the 2002 crisis declined being quoted on the issue. Only open source literature has therefore been utilized.
geographically confined skirmishes will characterize the future forms of war.

**Plan of Thesis**

14. The thesis is presented as follows:-

(a) **Chapter I.** This chapter contains the introduction that contains the background, statement of the problem in its theoretical significance, the aim, scope, hypothesis and the plan of thesis.

(b) **Chapter II.** This chapter analyses the theoretical foundations of deterrence and establishes the linkages between nuclear and conventional deterrence. It explores the strategic utility of nuclear weapons. It also seeks to define its applicability in the Indo-Pak context and highlight the fundamental issues that are at stake in a situation where both adversaries possess nuclear weapons.

(c) **Chapter III.** This chapter analyses, the concept of limited war, in the Indo-Pak context. The potential of limited war is analyzed.

(d) **Chapter IV.** This chapter studies the Kargil conflict through the prism of deterrence to draw lessons on the concept of limited war.
(e) **Chapter V.** This chapter examines the Indo-Pak crisis 2002 through the prism of deterrence and seeks to understand the role conventional and nuclear deterrence in preventing the conflict.

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CHAPTER TWO

Deterrence is a concept for operating upon the thinking of others. It therefore entails some basic pre-suppositions about that thinking.

Micheal Quinlan

CONVENTIONAL AND NUCLEAR DETERRENCE: COMPETING PARADIGMS

What is Deterrence?

1. Social scientists call deterrence a relational variable. Since deterrence is the product of a relationship; it is not something one can generate unilaterally. Also it is a shifting value and hence a variable. Deterrence is a condition wherein a deterree- the object of deterrent menaces-chooses not to behave in ways in which he would otherwise have chosen to behave, because he believes that the consequences will be intolerable.

The Phenomenon of Deterrence

2. At a general level, deterrence is one of the most common modes of behavior between individuals as well as countries. Indeed it is a common feature of human relations in society. Warning signs like “Beware of dogs”, “Trespassers will be prosecuted” are examples of the common practice of deterrence. In all the cases, the attempt is to communicate the deterrent message so as to prevent the act being committed. The idea of deterrence- of deterring someone from acting in unacceptable ways-is,
whether we like to admit or not, built into inter state relationships just as it is built in to regulating inter personal relationships and ensuring behavior within the law in civil society.

3. The threat of war, open or implied has always been an instrument of diplomacy by which one state deterred another from doing something of a military or political nature, which the former deemed undesirable. Nevertheless the large number of wars that have occurred in modern times prove that to use force, even what sometimes looked like superior force, has failed to deter\(^2\).

4. The object of deterrence is to prevent an enemy power taking the decision to use armed force; put in more general terms this means compelling him, when faced with a given situation, to act or react in the light of the existence of a set of dispositions which constitute an effective threat. The effect desired is therefore a psychological one and it is sought by means of a threat\(^3\). The way in which deterrence acts is basically the exact opposite of war, in that, the object of deterrence is to prevent the enemy taking a decision to act, where as the object of war is to force him to take a decision to accept the conditions it is desired to impose on him\(^4\).

5. In the age of conventional weapons, strong states were able to discourage others from attacking them by being able to repel such an


attack—what Glenn Snyder called “deterrence by denial”\(^5\). In the age of nuclear weapons, defense was not practical (this could change if missile defenses become a reality); deterrence was not based on threat of defeat, but instead was pivoted on the notion of raising the cost of conflict to unacceptably high levels—called “deterrence by punishment”\(^6\). In the nuclear age it was the prospect of fighting the war rather than the prospect of losing it, that induced restraint.

6. Deterrence works if a policy maker or a polity decides that it is deterred. The choice is a result of coercion. But they can also choose not to be deterred. Deterrence theory posits a deterrable foe, who should choose to comply\(^6\). There is no way in which the success of deterrence can be assured or guaranteed. This is inherent in the structure of an intended deterrence relationship.

7. Entering into a deterrence relationship transfers the choice to the opponent. Whereas, war though vastly more expensive than deterrence, can be more reliable than deterrence. In choosing war, the choice of the future is in own hands, albeit to an uncertain outcome. But if instead of war, one chooses to deter, the choice of future is transferred to the opponent\(^7\).

\(^6\) Psychiatric Aspects of the prevention of nuclear war, op cit. p 54. (They observed with regard to deterrence theory—“It rests on certain dubious psychological assumptions”.)

8. Throughout recorded history, all out war has been a useful tool of statecraft; the ability of states to resort to the highest level of violence has been a tool of international politics. War according to the Clausewitzian adage was simply the continuation of politics by other means. Nuclear weapons made war potentially so mutually destructive, that its use for achievement of political objectives could only be carried out at the risk of one’s own destruction. Military victory between two nuclear adversaries seemed an impracticable proposition. Mutual vulnerability made a crucial difference in how war could be viewed. Because military victory is now impracticable, the many patterns that rested on the utility of superior force have also been altered. Even a substantial military success cannot limit the damage that the other power can inflict. As a result, force and the threat of it cannot support foreign policy in the similar manner that it did in the past. But this notion was pivoted on the capability that both sides had invulnerable nuclear forces that would survive the first strike and yet inflict what was termed unacceptable damage in retaliation. This came to be the central theme that provided the intellectual muscle in the formulation of the concept of nuclear deterrence.
The Concept of Nuclear Deterrence

9. Nuclear weapons provided the ability to directly target population centers by bypassing the conventional military forces available for defense. It was no longer necessary to destroy opposing conventional military capability to decimate the opponent’s vital centers of power.

10. The concept of nuclear deterrence therefore relied on the ability of the defender to retaliate with nuclear weapons in spite of having being struck first. A capability termed as second strike capability. The concept could obviously work as long as rationality prevailed on both sides. But if deterrence based on massive retaliation was to fail, it would not always be rational to carry out the threat.

11. This internal contradiction, accorded the status of a genuine paradox undermined the theory. But by invoking “the threat that leaves something to chance”, arguing that a potential aggressor could not count on pure reason to dictate its victims response, the theory disposed of the conundrum. Rational decision makers, realize that the laws of reason are unlikely to be obeyed strictly in nuclear war. Even if circumstances logically compelled a rational victim of nuclear aggression to withhold a retaliatory strike, an aggressor would run the risk of inducing spasmodic retribution. Also, the damage inflicted on the victim’s command and

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control system by the aggressor’s attack might in fact preclude any chance of rational behavior⁹.

12. Securing a second strike capability in the name of strengthening deterrence powered the debate on nuclear strategy during the cold war. The operational requirements of a second strike capability was demanding both in terms of resources and evolution of practicable operational concepts. In practice it sparked an arms race that drove the size of arsenals to ridiculous levels¹⁰. Moreover, with the increasing size and sophistication of the arsenals, both sides seriously doubted the capability to absorb a first strike and retaliate with substantial effect. In the Indo-Pak context since arsenals of both are still in the early stage of development, neither country can said to possess a first or second strike capability. But this does not mean that nuclear weapons cannot be leveraged strategically.

**Strategic Utility of Nuclear Weapons**

13. Strategy is about the threat or use of force for political purposes. It involves the ‘use of engagements for the purpose of the war’¹¹. The engagement is to be interpreted to encompass ‘deterrence action’, which

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⁹ Bruce G Blair, *Logic of Accidental Nuclear War*, Brookings, Washington, 1993, p5. Both India and Pakistan being nascent nuclear powers can be reasonably assumed to have only a rudimentary command and control infrastructure. Undeniably it would be the most vulnerable part of the nuclear system.

¹⁰ At peak levels, both the US and Soviet arsenals consisted of 60000-80000 warheads. The Future of the US-Soviet Nuclear Relationship, Executive Summary, CISAC Study, Washington, p36.

is to say threats and latent menaces at work in the minds of those intended to be deterred. Strategic effect is the influence of that threat or use of force upon the course of events. It is therefore wrong to argue that nuclear revolution affected an unbridgeable chasm between military force and political purpose. True, nuclear weapons cannot function, as a military instrument of victory, like air power. But that does not have to mean that these weapons could not function strategically. For nuclear weapons do not score highly in the tactical and operational levels of military endeavor. But they can impact directly on the source of real action- the minds of decision makers- where, in the nuclear era, the actual engagements are decided. Hence they can register impressive scores in the realm of grand strategy and upon policy itself\(^{12}\).

**The Paradox**

14. Deterrence is part of an ongoing strategic process when states interact in their struggle for power and security. Till the advent of nuclear weapons, the struggle over power and the search for security occasionally required competition in the battlefield. With nuclear weapons, it was widely believed that the same struggle for power and security necessitates avoiding the battlefield. No nuclear weapon powers have fought a major conflict thus far. USSR and China were involved in a border skirmish in 1983 as was India and Pakistan in Kargil.

15. Thinking in conventional terms, the notion that success in the competition over security depends on the cooperative strategies represents a paradox. If the distinctive nature of nuclear weapons is recognized and accepted widely, however the paradox recedes. Despite recognition that nuclear weapons required a rethinking about the role of military force, uncertainty over the effect of nuclear weapons on state security relations continue to run deep. Policymakers generally have professed rhetorical acceptance of the need to rethink, but it has not guided policy consistently.

16. During the cold war and even between India and Pakistan after acquisition of nuclear weapons, conduct of military relations, at times, was governed by traditional conventions about use of military force. But when serious consideration of nuclear use was contemplated, war was considered to be an undesirable course of action. Nuclear weapons were viewed simultaneously by their possessors as evolutionary and revolutionary devices.

**Impact on State Power**

17. Contest on the battlefield is the ultimate arbiter in the distribution of power across the international system. The critical question for the state deciding on going to war is whether it will be in a better position in

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relative terms after fighting other states in the system. The calculations of
gains and losses are constrained considerably in a nuclear deterrence
environment. Unlike with conventional weapons, the retaliatory costs
associated with nuclear weapons are clear. Uncertainty exists only at the
level of whether the weapons will be used. In a nuclear deterrence
environment in which certainty exists about the absolute loss from the
nuclear attack, a risk adverse state would incline to cooperate, to produce
the absolute gain of avoiding a nuclear exchange.

18. The slight chance of a response involving a guaranteed level of
unacceptable destruction is more likely to produce war avoidance than a
great chance of a response involving a high but suspect level of
destruction. This is the difference between state security calculations in
nuclear and conventional deterrence environments. Relative calculations
might have driven the development of nuclear forces, but when it comes
to actual use of nuclear forces, states are faced with a strong sense of
absolute destruction. Thus, whereas conventional warfare can be
perceived in terms of relative gains, nuclear war must be conceived in the
context of absolute loss. In a nuclear context, one question guides
decisions concerning war and peace—“How can objectives be realized
without provoking a military response from the opponent?” This differs
significantly from the strategic questions that can be asked in a
conventional environment. There, the possibility of achieving objectives
exists even after an opponent responds militarily. In the former situation, alternatives are constrained by a focus on the possibility of absolute losses; in the latter, relative gains are relevant.

19. The case that there are two competing paradigms of state security relations assumes that a significant dividing line exists between state behavior in security environments dominated by these two different weapon types. Nuclear weapons create a fundamental problem for its possessors, because they create imperatives for cooperation and war avoidance. They are tools of state power that actually create an environment for strategic interaction that itself constrains state power. Power is thus both constrained and enhanced by nuclear possession.

20. The key difference between nuclear and conventional weapons is in the strategic environments that each creates. The security interaction found in a conventional environment is guided by practices and conceptualizations that are distinctive from those guiding relations in a nuclear environment. The strategic environment itself represents an intermediate structure between the state and system, which can constrain or promote certain actions.

21. The independent ability of weaker states to create incentives for larger states to avoid military confrontation with them is a new phenomenon and the Indo-Pak conflicts / crisis in Kargil and 2002 are prime examples. For the decision on war will ultimately hinge on the
perceived value of stakes involved. Given the conceptual and practical
difficulty of dealing with such an outcome, pervasive acceptance of the
nuclear paradigm is doubtful. Pakistan’s pursuit of a proxy war in Jammu
and Kashmir under a nuclear umbrella strained the linkages between
nuclear peace and proxy war. India proclaimed that conventional space
existed for application of military force and was illustrated by the Indian
enunciation of the concept of limited war.

Paradigm Clash: Conventional versus Nuclear

22. The practices associated with conventional warfare are distinct
from the laws, theories and applications that should guide thinking about
nuclear conflict. In essence, there are two definable paradigms of military
security: one in which the organizing construct rests on preparing to fight
and win the war, another in which war avoidance is the underlying goal
of military preparations. What is intriguing about the first fifty years of
the cold war is that both the nuclear and conventional paradigms on war
coeXisted simultaneously. Super power relations were conditioned by the
existence of assured destruction capabilities. These relations however
were conducted in an international system in which conventional forces
were prevalent and conventional notions of security were dominant.
While super power relations were captured by the logic of the nuclear
paradigm, they were not immune from applications and thinking
dominant in the conventional paradigm.
23. The idea that there exists a realm of state security relations that does not fit the conventional paradigm does not mean that the traditional view of military force has been replaced. Nuclear weapons alter state security relations when they are mutually possessed by opponents. In this realm of security relations, the practices and concepts natural to strategic environments dominated by conventional weapons may have little consequence. Yet since conventional war still dominates state security relations in most of the world, the theories and instrumentations as well as the practitioners associated with conventional war remain highly relevant. The cold war approach to nuclear weapons—attempting to fit them into conventional notions of war while treating them as revolutionary devices, had a Janus like quality because two distinct conceptualizations of security seemed simultaneously relevant. Even though, nuclear and conventional paradigms rest on fundamentally different assumptions.

**Contestability**

24. The significance of nuclear weapons is found not only in their high levels of potential destruction, nor in the speed at which such levels can be achieved but in a limited range of interactions produced by being capable of achieving high levels of destruction quickly. The combination of rapidity and scope of damage means that the costs inflicted on an opponent by nuclear use cannot be effectively contested. This is the
fundamental difference between conventional and nuclear warfare. The
destruction associated with conventional weapons requires a degree of
time and effort that ultimately allows the possibility of adaptation on the
part of an opponent. The opportunity to contest or the belief that one can
contest the costs that is threatened by the use of conventional force forces
is tied directly to the nature of weapons themselves. Militaries and
societies can adapt to the disruption and destruction possible by
conventional weapons even at severe levels. By contrast, nuclear
weapons are capable of inflicting costs so quickly on such a vast scale,
with lasting effect, that little adjustment can be made to blunt these costs
to a significant degree. While conventional weapons allow for adaptation
to costs, nuclear weapons permit little more than the absorption of
punishment. Ultimately the incontestable nature of nuclear weapons
constrains the range of interactions between states in a military deterrence
environment and alters the range of options available to states
contemplating use of force.

25. States relying on a strategy of conventional deterrence will tend to
have an intense focus on relative power because the retaliatory costs that
they can threaten are ultimately contestable. With conventional
deterrence there exists the potential for finding technical, tactical and
operational solutions that may reduce or completely circumvent the
threatened level of retaliatory costs. This prospect fuels the intensity of
relative calculations since both the state considering the initiation of war and the one trying to deter it know they must react quickly to each other’s moves. While the costs of modern conventional warfare may be extremely high, the concept of winning still endures as reflected in ideas like limited war.
CHAPTER THREE

The political object- the original motives for war-will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires.

*Carl Von Clausewitz*

**INDO-PAK LIMITED WAR**

**Genesis of Limited War**

1. The American theory of limited war in the nuclear period was developed to explain what occurred in Korea as a source of possible precedent for future conflicts. The core inspiration was limited conventional war as in Korea, but the theory ventured into the zones of tactical nuclear war and even limited strategic nuclear war. The idea was to achieve the utilization of force in the nuclear era without suicidal consequences.

2. The theory was criticized for its assumption that a reliable grammar of limited war could be applied that would dominate both the logic of policy and tame many of the problems of friction, chance and uncertainty. It seemed to elevate technique and operational virtuosity over politics. The theory required a cooperative foe. Since war has no rules, limits in limited war had to be asserted, and if possible defended.

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16 Carl Von Clauswitz, On War ,op cit p 85-86,101-2, 119-21, 140. Clausewitz describes them as a unholy trinity that can prove lethally disabling.

17 Colin S Gray, op cit, p335.
Diverse polities, distinctive personalities, different motivations to fight, as well as different feasible styles of war, frequently threatened to make a mockery of limited war. Vietnam demonstrated that the American theory was flawed. For it was realized that it was one thing to wage war in a limited way in support of limited objectives; it is quite another to wage such war to a successful outcome.\(^{18}\) Understandably India too cannot escape its pitfalls though there are contextual differences.

**Limited War: Indian View Point**

3. The Lahore declaration issued at the end of the meeting by Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in early 1999 affirmed “that the nuclear dimension of the security of the two countries adds to their responsibility for avoidance of conflict between the two countries”\(^{19}\). But Pakistan’s betrayal at Kargil a few months later forced a rethinking in India and gave birth to the theory of limited war.

4. In January 2000 at a seminar held at Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis (IDSA) the defense Minister George Fernandes and the then Army Chief, Gen VP Malik, expressed official Indian views on Limited War. In his opening address the Defence Minister explained the rationale

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\(^{18}\) Ibid, p336.

\(^{19}\) Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the Indian and Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Lahore, Pakistan, February 21,1999,<http://www.indianembassy.org/south_asia/pakistan/mou(lahore01211999).html>
of Limited War:

“We had understood the dynamics of limited war .... Nuclear weapons did not make war obsolete; they simply imposed another dimension on the way warfare could be conducted......So the issue was not that war had been made obsolete by nuclear weapons, and that covert war by proxy was the only option, but that conventional war remained feasible, though with definite limitations, if escalation across the nuclear threshold was to be avoided...”

5. At the closing address of the seminar, the then Army Chief, Gen. VP Malik, stated:

“The rationale for limited wars is economic considerations, risk of high casualties, international pressure and the nuclear factor”....Limited war is characterized by limitations, which tend to control its conduct and space. It could be limited in time, geographical area, or force level. In the Indian perspective, when we talk of a limited war, it could range from the kind we have been engaged in Siachen since the eighties, the Kargil war in the recent past, to future wars, which could be fought by us in confined sector(s) along our long frontiers. It is not possible to outline the exact contours of any future war with great deal of certainty.... The whole scope and conduct of limited war would be governed by the end state.”

20 www.idsa-india.org/newpap-sph.html
6. Jasjit Singh, the Director of India’s think tank, IDSA in an article, ‘Dynamics of Limited War’ defined Limited War-

“If nuclear war and total global war are no longer viable propositions as an extension of politics by other means, the only choice available to states to use destructive force for political purposes is through limited conventional war, sub-conventional war with military type weapons, and the use of coercive military force without necessarily resulting in war. The overall result has been a reducing potential of war down to limited wars...”

7. Speaking at a seminar in Nov 2002, Gen VP Malik elaborated on the concept of limited war -

“The fundamental point for a limited war is that it is a political process conducted for bargaining. The aim is not to win but rather not to lose and fight in such a way that the enemy is forced to settle for peace.....There is a linkage between deterrence and escalation. Capability to wage a successful conventional and nuclear war (if necessary) is an important deterrent. A war may well remain limited because of a credible deterrence ...Continuous control of the escalatory ladder by the political and military leadership is important”

Pakistan’s View Point

8. Pakistan holds a different view and General Musharraf has stated in a speech on 12 April 1999, that the possibility of conventional war between India and Pakistan was virtually Zero because of mutual

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21 Jasjit Singh, Dynamics of Limited War, Strategic Analysis, October 2000 Vol. XXIV No. 7, p 1205.

vulnerability and nuclear weapons, but proxy wars were not only possible but very likely.23

9. This clash of Indo-Pak belief systems typically reflects the stability-instability paradox24. Both views seek refuge in images that are individually beneficial. The main point being missed is that in the nuclear era security cannot be unilaterally sought, but is instead now wholly dependent on mutual cooperation especially in the realm of escalation.

**India/Pakistan Nuclear Strategy**

10. India has declared that its nuclear capability is only to retaliate. But it has also implied that its response strike would be a large scale, society destroying one. India wants Pakistan to understand that there is no scope for nuclear bargaining through limited strikes. India has therefore taken the position that it will respond with a massive strike even if Pakistan used a low yield weapon against an Indian target, even inside Pakistani territory25. India wants Pakistan’s choices in the event of war to be limited to conventional defeat or nuclear obliteration.

11. Pakistan has not accepted this two choice option. It wants to create more options. Towards this it has chosen an employment strategy that is

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24 The U.S. and Soviet Union avoided war during the cold war, while jockeying for advantage in myriad ways, including proxy wars and a succession of crises that became surrogates for direct conflict. This tense standoff in which much blood and money was expended, but without direct conflict, was described as the stability-instability paradox.
25 The Draft Nuclear Doctrine states, “any nuclear attack on India and its forces shall result in punitive retaliation with nuclear weapons” (clause 2.3). The position with regard to forces has been reiterated by Defense Minister Fernandes (Military Option if diplomacy Fails, The Hindu, January 3, 2002).
different from India. It has taken the position that it will use nuclear weapons if certain vaguely defined red lines are crossed like territorial loss, military loss, economic strangulation and internal stability has crossed\textsuperscript{26}. Pakistan has also stated that it will use nuclear weapons in a graduated manner, starting with counter military targets\textsuperscript{27}. Pakistan’s hope is that it can make India’s retaliatory strike limited by the logic that even a full weight Indian strike will not be able to prevent Pakistan from initiating a retaliation, which will cause far greater damage than Pakistan’s initial strike.

\textbf{Analysis of Limited War}

12. **Objectives.** Limited war would entail unilateral limitation of political and military objectives. Conveyance of self imposed restrictions poses several difficulties. The adversary could perceive it as unlimited and unacceptable. If Pakistan wishes to avoid escalating a conflict, how will it cope with an outcome that is militarily and politically unfavorable? If India wishes to avoid a nuclear first strike, there would be difficulty in conveying political and military saliencies. Operational necessity may not permit India from indicating geographical limits to the conflict. Indicating political limits will allow Pakistan to better plan its response.

\textsuperscript{26} Lt Gen Khalid Kidwai, Director General of Pakistan’s Strategic Plans Division. Quoted in Paolo Cotta-Ramusino and Maurizio Martellini, \textit{Nuclear Safety, Nuclear Stability and Nuclear Strategy in Pakistan}.

13. **The Problem of Escalation.** The acid test of limited war is in the ability to control escalation. Escalation control cannot be a unilateral process though it might well be in the interest of both. In situations where trust is absent and communication channels are closed, the ability to control escalation would be substantially eroded. During such periods of strained relations, declaratory statements lack credibility and will be insufficient. Once fighting begins, bilateral diplomacy between India and Pakistan would likely be quite limited, or cease altogether. Instead, diplomacy would likely be directed at third parties, multilateral, and international organizations. The fog of war and resultant friction will pose insurmountable problems to clarity of communications. It is also possible that escalation may result inadvertently. The fundamental reason for such an escalation could spring from the sheer momentum of military operations resulting inevitably in friction and fog of war. Large scale air operations could pose a threat or damage some major element of Pakistan’s nuclear forces. These elements could be Pakistan’s nuclear delivery means (aircraft and missiles), and command and control systems. Pakistan could perceive such attacks as deliberate attempts to neutralize its nuclear arsenal and hence contemplate its use before loosing them. Air Power has been considered to be a major source of escalation in any conflict. This is due to fact that air operations necessitate a spatial expanse that is characterized by speed of operations and vastness. The necessity
to gain control of skies inevitably results in the initial air power application being directed to destroy the air power assets of the adversary. Thus there is an inevitable escalation in spatial extent of the conflict and more importantly is the issue of inadvertent degradation of the adversary’s nuclear assets. But on the other hand in comparison to land forces, air power is ideally suited for punitive strikes. Since aircrafts can strike and return quickly. The escalation and de-escalation span is therefore negligible. Considering the superiority of the Indian Air Force over the Pakistan Air Force, there is no doubt that air power is the ideal instrument to execute punitive strikes. But its impact in a larger conventional conflict would definitively be escalatory.

14. **Questionable Assumptions.** The methodology for conduct of limited war by the political and military leadership in the Indo-Pak context remains uncertain. If the notion of limited war rests on the assumption, “The escalation ladder would be carefully climbed in a carefully controlled ascent by both protagonists\(^{28}\); it demands cooperation, which is invariably absent or in short supply during a crisis / conflict. The notion does not also take into consideration the Clausewitzian unholy trinity of friction, chance and uncertainty. The situation is compounded also by geographical proximity that make missile and aircraft flying time woefully inadequate in terms of warning and reaction. Both countries have

inadequate surveillance, intelligence and command and control capability. Moreover rationality may be at a premium when fear generated in a crisis impinge on the diverse decision making structures which in Pakistan’s case is completely military influenced. The Indo-Pak nuclear equation is also characterized by limited force structures that depend for delivery on aircraft and missile capability. Both capabilities are amenable to dual use of conventional and nuclear warheads. It would not be possible to distinguish between an aircraft carrying conventional and an aircraft carrying nuclear weapons. There is also the proclivity of military forces to acquire logic of its own that is disconnected from the political objectives. There are many historical examples of militaries striking out on offensive actions unknown to their civilian superiors. Soldiers often interpret policy maker’s injunctions that allow them maximum operational discretion.29 All these issues make escalation control difficult especially at the military level. Escalation control therefore requires that military operations be circumscribed by politically imposed restraints that are respected and understood by both sides. A requirement that could be considered as wishful thinking during an ongoing war.

17. **Faith in Nuclear Deterrence.** Some believe that since India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons, both countries will never use them and Pakistan’s threats are bluffs that must be called. Therefore escalation if

any will remain in the conventional realm. To them the notion of limited war is anathema and an unnecessary and self imposed restraint. This view seems to place an undeserved faith in nuclear deterrence and ignores completely the fog of war and inadvertent escalation.

18. **Playing the Nuclear Card.** In any future war, Pakistan will flash its nuclear card as early as possible in order to invite international intervention and neutralize India’s conventional edge. The nuclear card though fundamentally incredible will have political utility. Pakistan’s military leadership could even feign to acquire the madman image. Even a time bound threat to nuke New Delhi/ Bombay unless India ceases operations may trigger a population exodus that can do tremendous political and economic damage to India. Coupled with international intervention there would be tremendous pressure on India to halt operations. Indian reaction would depend on the interests at stake and risk acceptability of the political leadership. One could however argue that such a situation can be avoided if the speed of India’s operational success exceeds Pakistan’s and the international community’s speed of reaction. A demand that cannot be met with the existing Indian conventional force structure.

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30 This view is based on interviews with some senior officers of the Indian Air Force.

19. **Conventional Space.** In practice, the ‘grammar’ of war and strategy shows policy what is, and what is not possible. Although the political dimension of strategy necessarily is logically superior to the operational military dimension, the latter field tests the viability of the goals generated by the former. Since control of escalation required a cooperative opponent and also since it had linkages with actual operational plans, it was never clear as how the Indian military planned to conduct a limited war with more than a reasonable degree of assurance that war will not escalate into the nuclear realm. Though conventional space exists, the extent of usable conventional space remains untested. But the space is certainly hemmed in and restricted by a host of uncertainties that makes a decision for war look like a desperate gamble.

20. Some lessons were learnt during the Kargil conflict of 1999 and Indo-Pak crises 2002. But as is often the case, two adversaries may learn divergent lessons from the same conflict and the extent of conventional space remains in the eyes of the beholder.
CHAPTER FOUR

Pakistan’s military establishment had entertained ideas of deterring Indian nuclear and conventional capabilities with its nuclear weapons and carrying out a brash, bold strike to liberate Kashmir which would go unchallenged if the Indian leadership was weak and indecisive.

Kargil Committee Report

KARGIL: DETERRENCE PERSPECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

1. In May 1999, Pakistan exploited an opportunity to occupy several posts in the Kargil sector that was vacated by India during the winter. India decided not to cross the Line of Control (LOC) and succeeded by July 1999 in forcing Pakistan to withdraw from Indian territory albeit at the costs of substantial military casualties and intervention by the United States.\(^{32}\)

Pakistan’s Motivations

3. The Kargil committee report cites Pakistani writings to reveal the likely motivations for undertaking the Kargil intrusions. The prime politico-strategic motive cited is “to internationalize Kashmir as a nuclear flash point requiring urgent third party intervention”\(^{33}\). The report further postulates that Pakistan is likely to have undertaken the Kargil intrusions based on the

\(^{32}\) J N Dixit, “Pakistan Machinations in Kargil”, Hindustan Times, 7 Jul 1998. Dixit states, the major reason for United States mediation was the fact that the conflict could escalate into the nuclear realm.

assumption that Pakistan’s nuclear capability would forestall any major Indian conventional response; and the International community would intervene early, to enable Pakistan, to bargain from a position of strength. The deductions drawn by the Kargil committee are however rooted in the theory of nuclear deterrence. According to the basic tenets of the theory, nuclear weapons can deter the use of nuclear weapons by one’s adversary through the threat of mutual destruction.

**Pakistan’s Nuclear Capability**

4. Historical evidence of Pakistan’s growing involvement in Jammu and Kashmir suggests that its involvement growth curve trajectory paralleled its nuclear capability. Pakistani nuclear capability at the time of Kargil consisted of a very limited (20-30) but unknown number of nuclear warheads in the 20 KT range. Its delivery capability restricted primarily to few aircraft (F 16/Mirages) suitably modified. In 1992 Pakistan received from China about thirty M 11 missiles with a range of about 300 kms. The M 11 missiles were reported, to be capable of carrying a nuclear warhead and could probably be deployed in the field within days of an order to be operational. Though Pakistan had earlier carried out several tests of short range (Hatf and Shaheen) and medium range (Ghauri) missiles, none of

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34 The correspondence of the acquisition of nuclear capability and the prosecution of war is illustrated in Jasjit Singh, Pakistan’s Fourth War, Strategic Analysis, Aug 99 vol. XIII No 5, IDSA, p 691.
35 The Kargil Review Committee Report, op cit, p192.
them were operational at the time of the Kargil war. In summary Pakistan at the time of the Kargil conflict possessed an opaque and highly limited undeployed nuclear weapon and delivery capability. It is with this capability that Pakistan supposedly wove its paradigm of nuclear umbrella to prevent escalation and internationally leverage the nuclear flash point card.

**Pakistan’s Beliefs and Nuclear Threats**

5. The roots of Pakistani belief that nuclear deterrence will prevent India from any major conventional reaction lay in their misperception that they had successfully deterred India in 1984, 1987 (Brass Tacks) and the 1990 crisis. This was supposedly achieved by Pakistani nuclear threats. Please refer to Appendix A for details. Pakistan was convinced that they had prevented an Indian conventional attack through these threats. Deterrence they concluded had worked.

**Indo-Pak Situation: Competing Bluffs**

6. Indo-Pak nuclear threats are fundamentally incredible because of the possibility of mutual destruction. So when Pakistan promotes the notion that its nuclear capability will be used early in a conventional conflict, what it logically means is that, at that point, Pakistan has decided to commit suicide. It is a military bluff meant for political effect.

7. India on the other hand threatens massive nuclear retaliation in combination with limited conventional war. Limited war objectives are

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inherently incompatible with maximal penalties. To risk all for modest objectives appears nonsensical. And if the penalty is not credible, risk-taking by one side will likely prompt risk-taking by the other. Backstopping limited war with the threat of massive retaliation would therefore appear to run the familiar risks of escalation. Western deterrence strategists have dwelled at length on this dilemma. Neither adversary, as Robert Jervis has written, “can confidently move into an area of significant concern to the other without great risk of incurring very high costs—if not immediately, then as a result of a chain of actions that cannot be entirely foreseen or controlled.”

8. The critique of massive retaliation by Henry Kissinger and other Cold War deterrence strategists still rings true—“Given the power of modern weapons, a nation that relies on all-out war as its chief deterrent imposes a fearful psychological handicap on itself. The most agonizing decision a statesman can face is whether or not to unleash all-out war; all pressures will make for hesitation, short of a direct attack threatening the national existence…A deterrent which one is afraid to implement when it is challenged ceases to be a deterrent”

**Lessons for Deterrence**

9. **Nuclear Card.** In any future war situation, Pakistan will flash its nuclear card as early as possible in order to invite international intervention and neutralize India’s conventional edge. Indian reaction would depend on

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the stakes involved. The nuclear card though fundamentally incredible can carry political utility and have strategic effect a la Clausewitz’s equivalent of the engagement.

10. **Escalation Control.** The Kargil war is considered illustrative of a conflict in which escalation was successfully controlled. The peculiarities of the Kargil war are however noteworthy. Pakistan sought to disguise aggression through a façade of mujjhahideen having carried out the operation\(^ {39}\). India announced its policy of not crossing the LOC. But signaled its resolve to escalate by the forward movement of its strategic formations, and the reinforcement of the Western Fleet of the Indian Navy by the Eastern Fleet. The Kargil Review committee report concludes that these moves deterred Pakistan from escalating the conflict\(^ {40}\). But this conclusion is founded on the assumption that Pakistan intended to escalate the conflict and was prevented from doing so. Whereas from all accounts of Pakistani objectives and the intercept of the telephone conversation between General Musharraf and General Mohammed Arif, the Chief of General Staff suggest that Pakistan had no intention to escalate and had asked their air and ground people to stay back\(^ {41}\). The Pakistani Navy kept well away from Indian Naval deployments and the Air Force did not react to use of air power within Indian Territory, though the Indian Air Chief had initially expressed

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\(^{39}\) The Kargil Review Committee Report, op cit, p 97.

\(^{40}\) Ibid, p 105.

\(^{41}\) Transcript of Telephone Conversation, Hindu, 11 Jun 1999- “Now the air people and the ground people will stay back and the situation will be OK”.
the view that use of air power would escalate the conflict. What the Indian moves probably achieved as the Kargil Review committee report states is that it sent a clear message that all intruders will be evicted at any cost. For India the stakes were high enough to escalate, if necessary. Deter it did not, because the Pakistani game plan was to use the clandestine nature of the intrusion to prevent escalation.

11. **Nuclear Linkage.** Pakistan sought to link India’s signal of resolve to the nuclear flash point issue, which in any case was one of their political objectives. The details of Pakistani threat and its attempted linkage are given in Appendix. The important nuclear lesson of Kargil was that such linkage would be easier in future conflicts.

12. **Political Caution.** India took a political decision not to cross the LOC and conveyed it equivocally. However, India’s rationale for not crossing the LOC has been interpreted differently. The official Indian view is that it was aimed to discredit Pakistan and bolster India’s image as a responsible nuclear power. Pakistan on the other hand believed that India’s decision reflected the impact of nuclear deterrence and bolstered their image of India as a ‘soft state’. One could postulate that things would have been different if nuclear weapons were not present. This view is buttressed by the historical fact that India reacted differently in 1965. But the more important point to note is the fact that the boundaries of the conflict was circumscribed.

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42 Kargil Report, op cit, p 232.
politically, communicated to the adversary and respected by both. It was a cooperative endeavor but to expect such cooperation during future conflicts may be imprudent.

13. **Crystallization of Belief Systems.** Pakistan believed that nuclear weapons had constrained Indian response options and therefore they can successfully use nuclear deterrence to support aggression and proxy war. They felt that the thresholds of conflicts could be raised and had successfully taken greater risks. Indians believed that a limited war against Pakistan can be fought and won despite the presence of nuclear weapons. This clash of belief systems represented the potential for a future war. Both sides imbued deterrence with different potentialities. These beliefs sustained and laid the foundations of a potentially dangerous situation. The situation did not take long in coming and beliefs systems were soon put to test in the Indo-Pak crisis 2002.
CHAPTER FIVE

Once on the tiger’s back we cannot be sure of picking the place to dismount.

George Ball

INDO-PAK CRISIS-2002: DETERRENCE REVISITED

Build up to Crisis

1. On 1st Oct 2001 a suicide attack on the Jammu and Kashmir state assembly by Pakistan based Jaish e Mohammed (JeM), left scores dead. India reacted by stepping up artillery attacks of Pakistani military posts on the LOC in order to step up military pressure. Concurrent diplomatic campaign to highlight Pakistan’s sponsoring of terrorist activities continued.

2. The second incident was the attack on the Indian parliament in New Delhi on 13 Dec 2001. This attack for which the Pakistan based Lashkhar e Toiba (LeT) claimed responsibility, outraged the Indian government. The attack elicited global condemnation and persuaded the U.S. to ban the LeT and JeM. The magnitude of the incident forced the Indian government to alter the terms of engagement with Pakistan and threaten Islamabad with the prospects of a limited conventional war. India mobilized its armed forces and Pakistan followed suit.

3. On the political front, India downgraded diplomatic relations by recalling its ambassador, cutting its consular strength and placing similar
restrictions on Pakistan. India declared that all land and rail links with Pakistan would be suspended from 1st January 2002 and flights of Pakistani aircraft through Indian airspace were banned. By early January borders were mined and Indian strike formations deployed.

4. The diplomatic and military build up was meant as a signal to Pakistan, that India’s threshold of tolerance had been breached. A strategy of coercive diplomacy seemed to be underway.

**Initial Crisis Eases**

5. Succumbing to India’s coercive diplomacy and exertions of U.S. diplomacy, on 12 January 2002, President Musharaff spelled out a sweeping domestic reform agenda in an address to the Pakistani people. He declared the government’s resolve to detoxify Pakistani society of the poisonous influence of militant, sectarian and radical Islam and build a more humane, secular and liberal alternative. To achieve the objective, the Pakistan government banned militant and extremist Islamic groups involved in sectarian campaigns. Their offices were sealed, leaders arrested and funds frozen.

6. Musharaff’s stated intentions temporarily defused the crisis. India ruled out demobilization of its armed forces until such time as the Indian government was convinced that Pakistan had indeed reduced support for cross border terrorism. In the interim, India had demanded that Pakistan turn over 20 individuals accused of terrorist crimes committed in India.
India decided to continue with a wait and watch policy and forces on both sides remained in an eyeball-to-eyeball situation.

**Second Crisis**

7. Just when it seemed that the Indo-Pakistani military standoff had begun to show signs of de-escalation, tensions flared up again, in response to terror attacks in May 2002 by Pakistan-based insurgent group in Jammu. Pakistan's President Perez Musharaff claimed that his government lends only moral and political support to disaffected Kashmiri militants fighting Indian security forces in Kashmir. Exasperated with Pakistan's mendacity, the Indian government threatened war.

8. In turn, Pakistan expressed alarm at the threat of war and warned India of a ferocious response. Please refer to Appendix A. Musharraf threatened that if attacked, Pakistan would take the war into Indian territory. More ominously, Pakistani government representatives have made it plain that if pushed into a corner by its larger and more powerful neighbor, Pakistan would not hesitate to use its nuclear arsenal in self-defense. To reiterate this point, Pakistan conducted a succession of ballistic missile tests in the last week of May. Although the tests were

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aimed primarily at a domestic audience, they once again highlighted the dangers of larger conventional war in South Asia.

9. At United States prodding, Musharraf made his May 27 speech reaffirming compliance. Pakistan again reiterated its assurance to end cross border insurgency. Thereafter military tensions that peaked in late May and early June, wound down by end June. Both India and Pakistan took steps to defuse military tensions. In an acknowledgement that Pakistan is indeed taking positive steps to halt cross-border infiltration, India lifted the over flight ban imposed on Pakistani commercial jets; the naval armada massed in the North Arabian sea was ordered back to its home base. Both countries took steps to upgrade diplomatic relations and undertake steps to stand down from wartime alert.

**Role of United States**

10. The United States emerged as the principal mediator between India and Pakistan and led international diplomatic efforts aimed at conflict avoidance\(^{44}\). The salience of the nuclear factor and the war in Afghanistan in driving American diplomacy was indeed significant. Washington was well aware of Pakistan's past involvement with the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and its role in aiding and abetting the cross-border insurgency in Kashmir. But it also believes that President Musharraf's regime is perhaps

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\(^{44}\) Colin Powell: “U.S. prevented Indo-Pak War”, Indian Express, New Delhi, 18 Jul 2004. Quoted as one of the achievements of the Bush Administration at a roundtable for correspondents in Washington 20 May 04.
the best antidote to Islamic militancy in Pakistan. Therefore, the United States attempted to safeguard its emerging partnership with India by leaning on Pakistan to terminate support for the Kashmir insurgents in a manner that avoids humiliating President Musharraf publicly or compromising his domestic credibility. Above all, Washington has sought to prevent a nuclear conflagration in the region.

**Role of Deterrence**

11. So even if the role of deterrence in the Indo-Pak crisis 2002 cannot be proved, some cause and effect relationship are discernible. The presence of nuclear weapons resulted in India adopting the concept of limited war and Pakistan embracing the notion that India will not respond conventionally to cross border terrorism. When India threatened war, Pakistan retracted albeit temporarily. At that point it could be said that nuclear weapons had tilted the scales against war. This is indeed a significant strategic effect on the continuum of the Indo-Pak strategic process. India’s limited military challenge to the Indo-Pak status quo was an indication of continued frustration. But may also be an indication of successful deterrence by Pakistan of more dangerous aggressive acts by India.

12. At the operational level, India could have a hoped for a quick victory in January 2002, since Pakistan had to move several of its formations from its western borders that were supporting the United
States war in Afghanistan. Though presence of U.S. armed forces in Pakistan would have complicated military operations and involved significant negative political fall out. But conventional deterrence therefore could have failed. But didn’t, most probably because of Musharaff’s 12 January speech. But in May 2002, the prospect of a quick Indian victory had receded, since both armed forces had been mobilized for nearly five months. Surprise was difficult. However, if the Indian operational objectives were indeed limited, the possibility always existed. In any case the nuclear cloud could not be wished away and in many ways seemed to have fulfilled its role-prevention of large-scale conflict. In both instances the role of nuclear deterrence amongst other factors seems the overarching factor that prevented war, since the root cause of American diplomacy and India’s decision of no war lay the nuclear factor.

13. Nuclear weapons remained the central determining factor in the standoff. The deterrence effect of nuclear weapons has played a major part in both the creation and management of the crisis. Nuclear deterrence was manipulated by India, Pakistan and the United States to serve their individual needs.

14. The crisis was the closest both countries came to testing their respective belief systems regarding limited war in a nuclear environment. In the end, both countries claimed victory. India believed that it had
succeeded in coercing Pakistan to admit its armed support to insurgency and extracted promises to withdraw support\(^{45}\). On the other hand Pakistan claimed that it had succeeded in deterring India from launching a war and its conventional deterrence had succeeded\(^{46}\). In hindsight India knows that Pakistan’s reneged on its promises and its coercive diplomacy had only minimal and marginal success.

15. There were divergent voices in India about who deterred whom. The Prime Minister said that war was imminent at a point of time and that his government was prepared for nuclear war if it was to come about. President Kalam stated that without nuclear weapons, war would have been a certainty. The former army chief V.P.Malik, disagreed and asserted that nuclear weapons neither eliminated nor reduced the risk of outbreak of hostilities\(^{47}\).

16. However, it could be argued that India’s decision to adopt a wait and watch policy after Musharaff’s 12\(^{th}\) January and May 2002 speech, was influenced by other issues too. The pressure by the U.S. and the uncertainty of the ability of limited war to deliver were also significant factors. But at the root of these factors the nuclear issue was omnipresent. Nuclear blackmail need not be one of using nuclear weapons. It is enough


\(^{46}\) Muharraf’s speech at Attock, ‘We defeated the enemy without a war’, Quoted in Hindu 13 Dec 2002.

\(^{47}\) VR Raghavan, Manipulating Nuclear Deterrence, Hindu, 3 July 2002.
to create conditions for their use, to bring about a response from major powers. This was adequately demonstrated in the crisis.\textsuperscript{48}

17. However, General Padmanabhan, India’s army chief dismissed the notion that it is Pakistan's nuclear capability which deterred India from going to war on those two occasions. He said, "When we assess our adversaries, we assess all [their] capabilities. We had evaluated it [the nuclear capability] and were ready to cope with it".\textsuperscript{49} The statement reflected the Indian belief that a conventional war could be fought successfully under a nuclear shadow.

18. An Indo-Pak war would have been disastrous for the United States war in Afghanistan and would have given a reprieve to elements of the Taliban and Al Queda. This was also against India’s interests. Overall, an Indo-Pak war may benefit the Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan, by facilitating their ascendance to power if Pakistan suffered losses in the conflict. Pakistan also would require the services of insurgents during the conflict to destabilize the Indian line of communications in Jammu & Kashmir. Further the question of economic costs of war to both India and Pakistan coupled with uncertainty of whether the end state achieved would be in India’s interests. Overarching these issues was the possibility that a limited war may escalate to the nuclear dimension. The extent of impact of the nuclear shadow would be impossible to scientifically

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, VR Raghavan
\textsuperscript{49} Praful Bidwai, Musharaff’s speech raises nuclear danger, 2 January 2003, www.antiwar.com
ascertain but its significance is undeniable. It could be rationally assumed that the presence of nuclear weapons must have helped tilt the scales against war.

**United States Influence**

19. India and Pakistan claimed gains from the manipulative nuclear exercise. India obtained a promise from Pakistan to the Bush administration on ending cross border terrorism. It also obtained breathing space to proceed with elections in Jammu and Kashmir. It obtained United States commitment to keep Pakistan on track to come down on terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

20. Pakistan obtained the critical advantage of India’s plans of going to war being put on hold. The United States obtained India’s willingness to accept it as a facilitator to finding a solution to the Kashmir question. It certainly ended the high probability of war by its exertions. It has emerged as a guarantor of peace between India and Pakistan.

**Lessons Learnt by India**

21. By pushing the 2002 crisis to the brink, India believed that it succeeded in getting the Bush administration to lean on Pakistan. The war scare succeeded in placing terrorism in South Asia in the same context as the war against the Al-Qaeda network. Coercive diplomacy only works, however, if the threat of coercion is viable. Therefore, India’s mobilization can’t be repeated over and over again.
22. India believes that its nuclear deterrent neutralized Pakistan’s. Previously, Pakistan used the nuclear threat to its advantage. This time, India has successfully called Pakistan’s bluff. Brinkmanship, then, can be a viable policy. India is increasingly confident that potentially dangerous policy options will not prompt a nuclear catastrophe.

23. India believes that US primacy is now more of help than a hindrance. US intervention in the last two crises has benefited India. India has not only accepted US “facilitation,” it has maneuvered the US into being the guarantor of Pakistani promises.

24. Brinkmanship can have significant negative economic consequences. The US decision to issue a travel warning and to evacuate non-essential personnel was most unwelcome. Some recalibration of tough messages might be necessary in the future, since the international community is prone to overreaction.

**Lessons Learned by Pakistan**

25. The combination of conventional and nuclear deterrence works. By sending strong messages and by mobilizing its forces, Pakistan believes it called India’s bluff. India they believe talks tough, but don’t fight. Because deterrence works, Pakistan need not make fundamental changes to suit India, or succumb to pressure from India.
26. Pakistan’s position on Kashmir maybe eroding internationally, especially in the United States. However, Washington still needs Pakistan for its continued operations in Afghanistan. Washington can’t be entirely in India’s camp. Pakistan’s support for jihadis going across the Line of Control has to be modulated. But Pakistan won’t give up its Kashmir position in return for nothing.
CHAPTER SIX

The fatal problem is that history as we know it yields no grounds for optimism that a positive kind of peace can be constructed to a degree which precludes the appearance of objective threats to security.

Colin S Gray

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

Transformation of War

1. The fundamental problem of prosecuting a limited war is rooted in the clash between two definable paradigms of military security: one in which the organizing construct rests on preparing to fight and win the war (conventional paradigm), another in which war avoidance is the underlying goal of military preparations (nuclear paradigm). Paradoxically both the nuclear and conventional paradigms on war coexist simultaneously.

2. This fundamental discord gives rise to a plethora of problems regarding application of military force in a situation where both adversaries are armed with nuclear weapons. The effect is pervasive at all levels but more so at the strategic and operational levels. Military planners are therefore confounded as most military plans tend to carry within them the seeds for mutual suicide.

3. War is therefore increasingly replaced by threats and brinkmanship. Since nuclear weapons impacts directly on the minds of
decision makers, they produce strategic effect on the course of events in the form of ‘deterrence action’. These ‘virtual’ engagements take place in the minds of adversaries. The clausewitzian notion that strategy is about ‘engagements’ for the purposes of war, finds realization. This is reflected as brinkmanship which emerges as a substitute to war waging.

4. There is also a clash between Indian and Pakistani beliefs regarding the utility of nuclear weapons in the ongoing Indo-Pak strategic process. Pakistan’s perceives its utility as deterring conventional and nuclear war. India considers its utility only to deter nuclear war. This clash of perceptions results in Pakistan attempting to leverage nuclear weapons and India responding with the concept of limited war. But this clash will not render both nations to inactivity. But instead recourse to war will remain a low probability while recourse to brinkmanship will gain probability. Brinkmanship tends to treat escalation as a strategy and bestows undue faith in deterrence.

**Reliability of Deterrence**

5. Historically, conventional deterrence though a preferred tool of military strategy has been unreliable, since strategy and plans can be constructed to circumvent the adversary’s own strategy and plans. Nuclear weapons induce fear; human behavior in such circumstances is undependable for rational thinking and unpredictable for inducing actions that one expects the adversary to take. This shaky psychological
foundation of nuclear deterrence presents a danger that is best avoided. Deterrence can fail also due to inadvertence and accident. Brinkmanship based on a misplaced faith in deterrence is therefore an extremely risky undertaking that could be justified only by the stakes at issue. It would therefore be foolish to practice brinkmanship without preparing for the consequences of its failure.

**Conventional Space**

6. Officially, India acknowledges that there are definite limitations to the conventional space available for prosecution of limited war. The perceived space is a unilateral mental construct based on a judgment regarding rationality of the adversary. But the theory of limited war is not easily amenable to operational solutions due the fear of escalation and is understandably prisoner to the clash of conventional and nuclear paradigms.

7. The nature and scope of political objectives determine the expanse of conventional space required by the military. The moot question has been whether the perceived conventional space is sufficient to meet the military’s need to ensure achievement of given political objectives. The objectives itself could change during the course of the crisis/war. The larger the conventional space required, greater the risks of advertent or inadvertent escalation into the nuclear realm. There is thus considerable difficulty in achieving substantial political objectives through war.
Pakistan’s nuclear threats aimed for effect at not only at India but also at the international community particularly the United States could also act as another dynamic determining the extent of conventional space.

8. One of the significant determinants of conventional space would be escalation through application of air power if it was accompanied by major offensives of ground forces. But on the other hand air power is ideal for punitive strikes since there is very little time between escalation and de-escalation.

9. In the Kargil conflict, conventional space was restricted unilaterally by India’s political decision makers. But at the same time political objective was also confined to getting Pakistan to withdraw. So there is no doubt that conventional space exists. Doubts remain as to the scope of political objectives that can be achieved and this dilemma was illustrated during the Indo-Pak crisis 2002.

10. The Indian political objective in the Indo-Pak crisis 2002 was to get Pakistan to stop support to cross border terrorism. The military strategy to achieve the political objective is not known to any degree of certainty. But a range of options was available from punitive strikes, capture of territory, the destruction of Pakistan’s war fighting capability, or a combination of some or all. But the fact is that none of the options were exercised.
11. The root cause for restriction of options and war avoidance seems nuclear weapons. Since, it was a significant factor amongst others in the United States playing such an active role\textsuperscript{50}. More importantly, it appears that the Indian political leadership was not fully convinced that the application of military force would be able to achieve the political objective of Pakistan relinquishing support to cross border terrorism. Nuclear deterrence can be seen to have worked in Pakistan’s favor. India’s concept of limited war stood repudiated. Conventional space was either inadequate or unusable for achievement of India’s political objectives.

**Nuclear Signaling**

13. There appears to be considerable confusion and ambiguity in both New Delhi and Islamabad in sending, as well as receiving, critical signals during the 2002 crisis. In fact such is the case with the entire history of Indo-Pak signaling. Please refer to Appendix A for details.

\textsuperscript{50} George J. Tenet [Director, Central Intelligence Agency] Testimony Before The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Mar. 19, 2002.

http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/senate_select_hearing_03192002.html, “Both India and Pakistan are publicly downplaying the risks of nuclear conflict in the current crisis. We are deeply concerned, however, that a conventional war-once begun-could escalate into a nuclear confrontation.”
RECOMMENDATIONS

14. **Major Conflict Avoidance.** In a situation where both India and Pakistan are armed with nuclear weapons, major conflict avoidance must be a political objective as was acknowledged in the Lahore agreement. Ironically at certain thresholds in political affairs, reason may have to be replaced by structured force as a final arbiter for resolving issues. The sword of the statesman must remain, even with the knowledge that technique and military virtuosity provide no easy answers to force application in the nuclear age. Practically however punitive strikes and geographically confined skirmishes emerge as the political preferences albeit with questionable ability to produce substantial strategic effect. Thus the effect of military force application is confined to influencing the status quo and not changing it significantly. Both conventional and nuclear deterrence are unreliable. India must therefore pursue nuclear risk reduction measures and other confidence building measures\(^{51}\). However, military strategy and plans must cater for failure and deal with a situation where options for application of force are politically circumscribed.

15. **Politico-Military Interaction.** The contours of conventional space must be sketched by political restrictions within the ambit of which the armed forces should plan their operations. Such restrictions will call for a

\(^{51}\) Some measures are in place, but they are insufficient. Several measures are on the table and are being addressed in the ongoing Indo-Pak composite dialogue as of Sept 2004.
continuous review; military planning will have to get used to being kept under a tighter political leash. A closer interaction between the political leadership and military leadership is thus called for. Since understanding risks of operational plans is essential for political decision making regarding war. This would require full utilization of the National Security Council and its subsidiary structures. Paradoxically military preparations must cater for failure of deterrence and thus retain a full spectrum capability.

16. **India’s Nuclear Strategy.** India must move away from the strategy of massive retaliation. Limited war objectives are inherently incompatible with maximal penalties. To risk all for modest objectives appears nonsensical. And if the penalty is not credible, risk-taking by one side will likely prompt risk-taking by the other. It may well be true to object that there are no attractive nuclear strategies on offer, but that objection cannot mitigate the responsibility to seek the best among the bad in the realm of strategic necessity.

17. **Political Objectives.** Though the Indian military leadership has no alternative but to plan for the entire spectrum of war to cater for failure of deterrence and ensure credibility, what is imperative is the need for clarity regarding the linkages between military force, political objectives and risks involved. Political objectives that are perceived to lie along the higher risk spectrum should be communicated to political decision
makers through institutionalized interaction. One should also be mindful of the fact that objectives with which belligerents start wars do not stay fixed during its course. Furthermore, the means adopted by India will be determined as much as those adopted by Pakistan.

18. **Nuclear Threshold.** Nuclear threshold will remain a nebulous mental construct. The nuclear factor must be taken care at level of political objectives and by whatever political restrictions imposed on application of military force. This in turn would be determined by the interests at stake, degree of risk aversion and Indian reaction to Pakistan’s military leadership playing the nuclear card.

19. **Strategic Doctrine.** India must fashion its strategic doctrine in relation to Pakistan’s, on a categorical acceptance that Pakistan will resort to nuclear weapons in extremis; this notion should be the fulcrum of strategic doctrine. India should therefore consolidate and augment its nuclear and missile capacities. This would signal a determination that should be tangible enough for Pakistan to take note of.

20. **Military Strategy and Plans.** Military strategy cannot escape the shackles that are a product of the clash between the nuclear and conventional paradigms. But military planners have no other choice but to evolve their strategy and plans to fulfill political objectives even if it carries within them the seeds of mutual destruction. Risk of escalation must be catered for and the best must be sought from what is definitely an
awkward situation for military planning. This therefore would entail planning along the complete spectrum of war even though their probability seems low. There is also a dire need to reconcile the divergence of views with respect to impact of nuclear weapons on limited war between the services especially the army and the air force. Only a joint doctrine will resolve the issue.

21. **Nuclear Signaling.** If both countries want to behave as responsible nuclear powers they must attempt to make signaling clear and unambiguous, in an attempt to communicate the signal intended, not convey unintended signals. They should deliberately limit the number of actors initiating signaling, as well as attempt to end contradictory signaling. Also attempt to understand each other’s principal signalers and the internal dynamics operating within respective political systems. Attempt also to undertake a back channel of communication which can be trusted to provide an accurate interpretation of signals during a crisis period. This would need to be authorized at the highest political levels, as well as insulated from existing political tensions.

22. **Missile Defenses.** The central lesson from Pakistan’s nuclear blackmail is clear. Without neutralizing Pakistan’s nuclear calculus based on the first use of nuclear weapons, India will not be able to bring effective military pressure to end cross border terrorism. Moreover
deterrence is inherently unreliable and the possibility exists of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal falling into the hands of jihadi elements. India must make a robust effort that would involve acquisition of missile defense systems from abroad as well as the initiation of a substantive national research and development effort to create indigenous capabilities in missile defense technology. Such a capability must be also backed by a second strike sea based capability.

23. **Restructuring.** In the contemporary regional situation the greater probability for application of military force is in the punitive strike mode. Air power and ground based long range fire power assets are better suited for punitive strikes. India needs therefore to develop capacities to hit back routinely and hurt without creating a crisis. To adapt such an approach it needs to restructure so that it can punitively hit Pakistan *without posturing*. Necessary restructuring and modernisation of military assets therefore needs to be carried out while ensuring faster institutional response.
CHAPTER VII

The closer the character of war approaches absolute war, and the more the outlines of war involve the interests of the combatant nations, the closer the interconnection of all war events and the more urgent the necessity to think about the last step before taking the first step.

Von Clausewitz

CONCLUSION

1. The threat or use of politically motivated force is structural to the human social condition. Indo-Pak history yields no grounds for optimism that a positive kind of peace can be constructed to a degree which precludes the appearance of objective threats to security. Political hostility between India and Pakistan must find expression in some form. Before the nuclear era, war was a highly probable option. But in the nuclear era any war even limited war has acquired high risks and pulls greater international attention. But since use of force may become necessary, war transforms and is reflected in forms like brinkmanship, punitive strikes and localized skirmishes. This in turn severely restricts the achievement of any substantial political objectives by the use of force.

2. With the experience of Kargil and the Indo Pak crisis 2002, it is reasonable to assume that war between the two countries- as a
continuation of policy of seeking territorial changes by ‘other means’ should be ruled out due the horrendous risks involved. Ending cross border terrorism must remain a high priority for India. This objective may be best realized not by going to war but by engaging intelligently with Pakistan, by building international pressure and appealing to democratic constituencies in Pakistan, and taking firm internal steps to deal with terrorism and infiltration. But if negotiations and pressure does not succeed the statesman cannot be totally deprived of the instrument of war. Restricted conventional space is available. Thus military preparations must focus on the feasible forms of war. Seeking the forms of ‘other means’, in a nuclear environment is the challenge for military planners. Certainly the solutions lie outside the box. Most obviously punitive strikes without posturing is one obvious operational capability that India must acquire.

3. During the cold war, deterrence was said to have worked because it was not asked to do too much. So while there is scope for application of force between India and Pakistan, the scope is limited by a host of issues most significant of which is escalation by design, inadvertence or accident. In the Indo-Pak context it might well be the case that deterrence might fail, if it was asked to do too much. Limited war in the Indo-Pak context may not have been born as yet and it is doubtful that whether it will survive its birth.
Appendix A

(Refers to para 5 of chapter 4)

A HISTORY OF INDO-PAK NUCLEAR SIGNALLING52

Pre Kargil

1. In 1984 Pakistani government threatened to retaliate with “all the means at its disposal” though the use of nuclear weapons was neither specifically mentioned nor excluded53. This threat if intended as a nuclear threat was an outright bluff as Pakistan probably achieved nuclear weapon capability only in 198754.

2. In 1987 during Operation Brass Tacks, when Pakistani and Indian forces faced each other, S K Singh the Indian Ambassador in Islamabad, was summoned to the Pakistan Foreign Office and Zain Noorani the Pakistan Minister of state for Foreign Affairs asked him to convey a message from Gen Zia, “If India took any action not conducive to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, then Pakistan was capable of inflicting unacceptable damage on it. Pakistan’s action would not be

52 (This is a compilation based on “Nuclear Doctrine, Declaratory Policy, And Escalation Control” by Rahul Roy-Chaudhury. He is Research Fellow for South Asia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London.


limited to northern India alone but also to facilities outside the North”. When asked whether this implied an attack on Bombay, the Pakistani Minister replied that it “might be so”.\(^{55}\) A nuclear threat was also publicly conveyed by Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan, Pakistan’s chief nuclear scientist, in an interview published after the end of the military exercise in the British Observer newspaper.

3. In 1990 when a tense situation in Kashmir prevailed, the Pakistani Foreign Minister Sahibzada Yakub Khan visited India from 21 to 23 January. He met the then external affairs minister I K Gujral and Prime Minister V P Singh. In both these meetings he referred to the tense situation in the valley and hinted that this situation could get out of control. I K Gujral in his meeting with the Kargil Review Committee recalled that Yakub Khan was very melodramatic and was reading from a prepared note. He used terms (in Urdu) like “fire would be spitting from the skies and there would be a holocaust”\(^{56}\). Gujral was authorized to give a firm reply to Pakistan, which he did.

**Kargil**

4. During the Kargil conflict of May-July 1999, nuclear signaling by Pakistan was restrained. This appears to have been due to Indian military action limited to its own side of the Line of Control, along with the Indian

\(^{55}\) Ibid. p 191

\(^{56}\) Ibid. Note 17, p 79.
political leadership signaled restraint in the use of force across the LoC. The official Indian post-conflict review - the Kargil Review Committee Report of December 15, 1999 reveals that Pakistan conveyed only veiled nuclear signals to India during the conflict. On 30 May 1999, soon after India employed air power in the Kargil conflict, the Pakistani Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shamshad Ahmad, told the News/Jang newspapers: “We will not hesitate to use any weapon in our arsenal to defend our territorial integrity”, given the overt nuclearisation of Pakistan in May 1998, this threat had obvious connotations. The statement was denied the same night by the Pakistan foreign spokesman by saying that the foreign secretary had been completely misquoted and his comments reported out of context. The nuclear threat however made International headlines and may have served albeit marginally the Pakistani purpose of linking the war to the nuclear issue.

**Indo-Pak Crisis 2002**

5. The ten-month border confrontation (December 2001 - October 2002) was the longest period of military mobilization by both countries since their independence in 1947. A variety of nuclear signals took place, flight tests of ballistic missiles, public speeches - to the public and the

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57 Amit Baruah, The Hindu, 31 May.
armed forces - and press briefings. These also emanated at multiple levels in both countries the political, military, and bureaucratic leadership.

6. In an attempt to understand nuclear signals during the 2001-02 border confrontation both in terms of conveying stated intentions, as well as assessing respective intent and capabilities, the examination is done in two phases. The first phase can be defined as the period between the terrorist attack on Parliament on December 13, 2001 and the attack on the Army residential camp in Kaluchak on May 14, 2002; the second phase covers the post-Kaluchak period till the end of the crisis in mid-June, 2002.

**Phase I: December 13, 2001 - May 14, 2002**

7. Within two weeks of India’s mobilization, New Delhi and Islamabad were exchanging navigational coordinates of their nuclear installations and facilities on January 1, 2002, as they had done for the past thirteen years, in accordance with the bilateral agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities (December 31, 1988). Both apparently felt that continued notification was an easier option than refusing to do so unilaterally. Especially, as the agreement had no security implication of any significance, with both states deliberately continuing to neglect to notify each other of one
nuclear-related facility each, without any consequence. However, this may have sent mixed signals to each other of reassurance that nuclear-related CBMs were insulated from the upheavals of politics, although this may not actually have been the case.

8. The first nuclear signal from Islamabad emanated from Pakistani President Musharraf’s speech on the occasion of Pakistan’s National Day on March 23, 2002. Not only was his speech seen in New Delhi as a reversal of his January 12 promises, but it was tinged with a warning to India of an ‘unforgettable lesson’ if it dared to challenge Pakistan. The unforgettable lesson was seen as alluding to the use of Pakistani nuclear weapons to counter an Indian conventional attack across the LoC. Although there was no official response to this nuclear signal by the Indian Cabinet, Defence Minister George Fernandes criticized Musharraf’s statement as childish.

9. Surprisingly, the second nuclear signal from Islamabad came at a time of relative calm along the Indo-Pakistani borders. On April 6, 2003 the well known German weekly newsmagazine, Der Spiegel, published an interview with Musharraf, quoting him as saying that in the event that pressure on Pakistan became too great, as a last resort, the atom bomb is also possible. The sensational title of the interview, ‘Kashmir Conflict: Musharraf of Pakistan threatens India with Nuclear Bomb’ added to its
impact. The translation of Musharraf’s statement reads as follows, "Using nuclear weapons would only be a last resort for us. We are negotiating responsibly. And I am optimistic and confident that we can defend ourselves using conventional weapons... only if there is a threat of Pakistan being wiped off the map, and then the pressure from my countrymen to use this option would be too great". Amidst much sensational international press coverage the following day, the spokesman of the Pakistani Government clarified that Musharraf had actually said that the use of nuclear weapons is only as a last resort, if all of Pakistan were threatened to disappear from the map. Significantly, Prime Minister Vajpayee publicly declined to comment on Musharraf interview.

10. During this phase, the only exceptions to New Delhi’s policy of avoiding all nuclear signaling, took place, perhaps inadvertently, with Indian Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Padmanabhan’s press conference on January 11, 2002. While the COAS statement was contradictory to India’s unstated policy on nuclear signaling, what was equally interesting was the response to this statement from the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Within hours, in an unprecedented manner, Defence Minister George Fernandes, publicly repudiated the uncalled for concerns caused by the army Chief’s observations. In a written statement,

58 “Musharraf aims to reassure on nuclear danger”, Disarmament Diplomacy, Issue No. 64, May-June 2002.
59 The Hindustan Times, January 12, 2002.
Fernandes pointed out that nuclear issues should not be handled in a cavalier manner.

11. However, within two weeks of George Fernandes statement, India flight-tested its medium-range Agni ballistic missile on January 25, 2002, on the eve of its Republic Day. Although Pakistan was provided advanced notification of the missile test (along with the P-5 states), in the spirit of the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (February 21, 1999), it was clear that a nuclear-capable ballistic missile with special characteristics had been tested. Notwithstanding the statement of the official spokesperson of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) that "this (test) is not directed against any country", considerable publicity was given to the range of the missile - 700 kms - with the implicit signal that it was, quite clearly, a Pakistan-specific nuclear-capable missile.

**Phase II: May 14, 2002 - June 17, 2002**

12. During this period, the war signals from India was at an all-time high, with New Delhi appearing hard-pressed to continue threatening the use of force, whilst deliberately ignoring Pakistan’s nuclear signaling, which came fast and furious. An added dimension to India’s policy appeared to be a public appeal to the international community to reign in Pakistan’s support of terrorism.
13. On May 20, Union Home Minister L.K. Advani said the Government would go ahead and win the proxy war like we did in 1971. However, on May 21 in Jammu, Vajpayee stated that he did not see any war clouds. In Kupwara, the following day, addressing Army personnel, he contradicted his earlier statement by emphatically asserting that the time has come for a decisive battle and we will have a sure victory in this battle. In Srinagar the next day, questioned on his statement on war clouds, Vajpayee stated that the sky may be clear, but sometimes even when the sky is clear there is lightning, but he hoped that lightning would not strike. In a formal statement issued on the occasion, Vajpayee was quoted as having stated that India was preparing for a decisive victory. These statements were perceived by Indian security analysts as referring to a possible surprise attack against Pakistan.

14. These were, arguably, the most important though confusing and apparently contradictory - Indian pronouncements at a critical juncture of the crisis. But, at the same time, it appeared intended to impact on Islamabad and Washington, especially the latter in indicating limits on India’s patience over Pakistan’s perceived intransigence.

15. This was reflected a few days later as well. On May 26, a day before Musharraf’s well-publicized second address to the nation, Vajpayee gave a stern warning to Pakistan, while, at the same time,
stressing the critical role the international community could play in
reigning in Pakistan, and averting a war. From the northern hill station of
Manali, where he had ostensibly gone on holiday after his visit to Jammu &
Kashmir, Vajpayee reflected that we should have given a fitting reply
the day they attacked Parliament.

16. Partly in response to the war rhetoric emanating from New Delhi, a
senior member of the Pakistani Cabinet, Lt. General Javed Ashraf Qazi,
told the official Iranian News Agency (IRNA) in Islamabad on May 22
that Pakistan would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons if its survival was
at stake. As Minister for Railways, and a former Chief of the ISI (1993-
95), Qazi stated, "If it ever comes to the annihilation of Pakistan, then
what is this damned nuclear option for, we will use (it) against the
enemy," He added, "if Indians will destroy most of us, we too will
annihilate parts of the adversary. If Pakistan is being destroyed through
conventional means, we will destroy them by using the nuclear option, as
they say, if I am going down the ditch, I will also take my enemy with
me”.

17. A week later, Pakistan’s Permanent Representative to the UN in
New York, Munir Akram, asserted his country’s right to use nuclear
weapons against India’s conventional superiority. At a press conference
in New York on May 29, his second day in office, Akram stated, "we
have to rely on our own means to deter Indian aggression. We have that means and we will not neutralize it by any doctrine of no first-use". Accusing India of having a license to kill with conventional weapons, he queried how can Pakistan, a weaker power, be expected to rule out all means of deterrence?

18. Although none of these Pakistani statements were ever denied, or alleged to have been, misquoted by the media, additional pronouncements were made to alleviate their impact, in view of possible negative international public opinion. In an interview to the Washington Post published on May 26, Musharraf attempted to downplay the threat of nuclear war. On being asked to describe the circumstances in which he would consider using nuclear weapons if war were to erupt, he said, “it is such a question which I wouldn't like to even imagine, frankly, that we come to a stage where this is due. But let me give an assessment that this stage will never come. We have forces. They follow a strategy of deterrence. And we are very capable of deterring them. I really don't think we will ever reach that stage, and I only hope and pray that we will never reach that stage. It's too unthinkable”.

19. Nonetheless, in the midst of this rhetoric, Pakistan flight-tested three types of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles. Although Islamabad also unilaterally provided New Delhi (along with the P-5 and other
neighbouring states) with advanced notification of these tests in the spirit of the Lahore MoU, their timing could not be missed. On May 25, the North Korean-based Ghauri (Hatf-5) (1,500 km range) medium-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile was tested, followed by the Chinese Ghaznavi (Hatf-3) (DF-11) short-range (300 km range) the next day. Two days later, coinciding with the visit of British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, to Islamabad, Pakistan launched the Abdali short-range (180 kms) ballistic missile. Taking place as they did, amidst the presence of some 5,000 American military personnel in Pakistan, deployed in view of the war on terror in Afghanistan, these tests also sent a strong message of independence of military action.

20. Although Pakistan nuclear signaling public statements and missile tests were viewed as extremely provocative by New Delhi, there was no reaction to them in kind, for fear of invoking Kashmir as a nuclear flashpoint. New Delhi therefore tried to react nonchalantly to these developments. India publicly scoffed at Pakistan’s ballistic missile flight tests.

21. At the May 28 press conference, Jaswant Singh for the first time publicly expressed disappointment that Musharraf and some of his Ministers were speaking "very casually about nuclearisation. He stated that this tantamounted to nuclearisation of terrorism, adding that in this
we see an example of how promotion of terrorism and the threat of nuclear weapons is being held simultaneously. The international community has to take note of the seriousness of these two dangers. A few days later, Defence Minister George Fernandes, participating in the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri La dialogue in Singapore queried why world opinion is not reacting to such open threats of Pakistan on use of nuclear weapons. Is this not an attempt to blackmail India and the rest of the global community?

22. Prime Minister Vajpayee went even further a few months later, when he stated that dark threats were held out that actions by India to stamp out cross-border terrorism could provoke a nuclear war. Addressing the 57th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, he warned that nuclear blackmail had emerged as a new arrow in the quiver of State-sponsored terrorism. He went on to say, that to succumb to such blatant nuclear terrorism would mean forgetting the bitter lessons of the September 11 tragedy.60

23. The only exception to New Delhi’s circumspect, and largely restrained, policy on nuclear signaling to Pakistan during this phase to strenuously avoid any mention of nuclear weapons, as well as deliberately ignore any nuclear signaling from Islamabad arose, quite

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unexpectedly, from an interview of the senior-most bureaucrat in the MoD. In early June 2002, Defence Secretary Yogendra Narain told the New Delhi-based weekly newsmagazine Outlook that India would retaliate with nuclear weapons if Pakistan used its atomic arsenal; both countries were therefore required to be prepared for mutual destruction. However, in a manner similar to the Government’s reaction to General Padmanabhan’s press statements in January 2002, a public denial was issued. Ironically, the press release from the MoD itself, stated, the Government makes it clear that India does not believe in the use of nuclear weapons. Neither does it visualize that it will be used by any other country.

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