Stability-instability Paradox and Pakistan-India Relations under Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2014-2020)

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ABSTRACT

The stability-instability paradox enjoys great popularity among scholars examining the nuclear situation in South Asia. It is applicable in Pakistan-India relations as both are nuclear states having nuclear deterrence. Although, both states have not experienced any conventional war since achieving nuclear capability but both have tried to destabilize each other internally on non-conventional level. This descriptive study is an attempt to analyze that how nuclear deterrence has established peace at high level whereas instability at lower level under Prime Minister Modi's government (2014-2020). It also explains some strategic policies of Modi government to use non-conventional tactics against Pakistan i.e. Cold Start Doctrine, Cyber war and hybrid warfare. In the last, this study predicts that Pakistan-India relations will remain uneven and instable in coming years till Modi's BJP remains in power in India.

Key Words: **Stability-instability paradox, Pakistan, India, Nuclear deterrence, Conventional, Non-conventional, Peace**

Introduction

Pakistan and India have been arch rivals since their inception. They have waged almost four direct wars. Their relation usually remains fluctuating and instable and both states blame each other for such instability and interference. Since both states successfully achieved nuclear technology— India in 1970s and Pakistan in 1990s—the nature of their relations got transformed from direct confrontation to indirect one. Currently, a unique feature of their relations shows that both states have not gone into any direct conflict rather tried indirectly to influence each other. Particularly, since 2014 when hardliner Bhartia Janta Party (BJP) came into power in India and Narendra Modi became Prime Minister. His election campaign showed anti-Pakistan and exclusive agendas which ultimately got materialized into his policies. His regime has shown hardliner policies against Pakistan whether politically or militarily i.e. formulating Cold Start Doctrine (CSD), interfering in Pakistan from Afghanistan and Baluchistan, changing Jammu and Kashmir status, claiming surgical strikes against Pakistan and modernizing military. Similarly, Pakistan is always ready for befitting response to India whether military, political or diplomatic. Although nuclear deterrence has prevented any direct conflict

between both states but they are engaged indirectly to influence each other on various grounds i.e. insurgency, cyber warfare or other internal fault lines etc. Therefore, it can be said that nuclear deterrence has created conventional stability but instability on non-conventional level as both states are engaged to subdue each other at every level. Such relations can be well explained through a realist image and stability-instability perspective.

Theoretical framework

Stability-instability paradox is a variant of neo-realism/ structural realism, which holds that international system is anarchical due to the unavailability of any superior authority. In result states behave rationally because they know that no power will rescue them. It is the anarchical structure of international system which compels them to minimise or maximise their security (Waltz K. , 1979). Moreover, structural realism carries two further assumptions i.e. offensive realism and defensive realism. Offensive realism assumes that states want to maximize their power and they intend to maintain their hold or hegemony and favour status quo (Mearsheimer, 2001). On contrary, defensive realism believes that states are security minimiser and they try to secure themselves from any external threat and do not go for extra military capabilities, in other way they believe on relative capabilities (Herz, 1951). Therefore, stability-instability paradox carries the form as a variant of structural realism in which states rely on self-help and they try to relatively minimize or maximize power for their security. In the contemporary international system the only best and secure way for the protection of states lies in nuclear technology, which deter the threats of rival states with each other which consequently, leads to normalization at conventional or upper level and proxies at the non-conventional or lower level among the nuclear states (Schelling, 1980).

Origin

Stability-instability theory was first asserted by Glenn Snyder a scholar of International Relations theory and security studies who published his famous book namely Deterrence and Defense in 1961 in which he presented this new perspective. In this book he explained his argument in details, which became the basic proposition to explain nuclear rivalry and peace in different states (Doyale, 2013). He introduced this concept in his essay first but later it was enlarged in his book. Snyder's essay was attempted to go through and look at traditional powers and their war strategies. According to him ''the point was usually made in the strategic literature that the greater the stability of the strategic balance of terror, the lower the stability of the overall balance at lower levels of violence''(Synder G. , 1961). It was further carried by Robert Jervis who offered a more comprehensive perspective for this paradox in his work "*The Illogic of Nuclear Strategy"*in (1984). According to Jervis ''to the extent that the military balance is stable at the level of all-out nuclear war, it will become less stable at lower levels of

violence''(Jervis, 1984). Moreover, this idea was further enlarged and extended with advanced conditions by Paul Kapur. He hypothesized that nuclear minimizes the war at upper, conventional level and its chances at lower, non-conventional level increase because rival states want to deter for their survival (Kapur, 2008).

However, the stability–instability paradox is one among many new strategic concepts developed during Cold war era that explained why and how "stability" at the conventional level between the two world giant powers went to "instability" at the lower levels of the conflict (Pandey, 2011). That debate is also still relevant in the contemporary international system. This concept was evolved during cold war while two super powers—USA and USSR were confronting proxies against each other without doing direct war (Sultan, 2014). This concept was basically given by Glenn Synder but in true sense it also existed before his essay (Sahni, 2014). Moreover, this concept, after cold war, has been applied to various situations all around the world but its distinct relevance in South Asian region has attracted much of literature. It is because, in this region two traditional rival partners—India and Pakistan hold nuclear technology (Paul, 2005). Stability-instability paradox is explained and described as well as understood from different perspectives according to different regions and conditions.

The Stability-Instability Paradox asserts that when two opponent states have hold on nuclear power and capability then the chance of a direct conventional conflict between them decreases to a higher level. Meanwhile, risk of non-conventional— indirect conflicts, proxies, secret operations and some other types altercations are increased severely (Krepon M. , Nuclear Risk Reduction in South Asia, 2003). As the amount of nuclear risk decreases the chances of conventional confrontation becomes more, while as the amount of nuclear risk increases the chances of conventional confrontation becomes less. Moreover, states attempt to achieve nuclear technology for various reasons i.e. to maintain their international status, to pacify bureaucratic, military, scientific organisations and political interests, and, more importantly, to strong their security (Kapoor, 2016).

Moreover, any state possessing nuclear weapons is safer than the ones without them because nuclear technology is more secure at conventional level for any direct war against its rival. Therefore, strong enemy states are well aware that any confrontation with nuclear rival can lead to destruction of both states. As a result states avoid going for direct war, consequently states succeeded to achieve deterrence (Norman J. McCormick, 2011). Deterrence is achieved and used to preserve status quo and to stop any state altering or disturbing existing order which is suitable for nuclear state. Hence nuclear technology increases deterrence because it shows the immense cost for any state to go against any state which possesses it. It is considered that any benefit from attacking on nuclear state is risky and wane because its cost is very high to pay as the using of nuclear weapons is higher (Brodie, 1946). At upper level states increase their nuclear capability in order to deter each other, whereas at lower level the chances of confrontation are

high, so states try to build and use low range weapons or start proxies. It is because states are rational actors and these are well aware of mutual destruction from the use nuclear weapons, consequently they are limited to low level and make every attempt to stop conflict at upper level, which is safer to engage in small conflict (Synder G. H., 1961).

Variants

Stability-instability paradox has also some variants which, significantly further explain it from various angles. However, a brief account of them is given below:

1. Mutually assured destruction

Mutual assured destruction or mutually assured destruction (MAD) is a variant of version of stability-instability paradox and a doctrine of strategic policies which infers that a full-fledged use of conventional nuclear weapons between two or more than two powers can become cause of complete destruction of both states—first strike sate and second strike state (Sokolski, 2004). It is relevant to stability-instability paradox because in this states being rational actors try to avoid direct confrontation and use of nuclear weapons because these are fully aware that its usage can cause destruction to both of them.

2. Nuclear peace

This version of stability-instability paradox argues that in certain conditions nuclear weapons can resist escalation and cause stability between nuclear states from further confrontation (Gallucci, 1983). Its empirical evidence has been proved by different thinkers from cold war in which two super powers—USA and USSR did not confront directly rather fought indirectly. It was due to nuclear weapons that both states avoid to wage conventional war, so it can be assumed that nuclear weapons can cause peace in international system. However, this notion has also been criticized on different levels.

3. Nuclear optimism

It is a school of thought within nuclear deterrence theory, which believes that nuclear weapons are the main source of peace between states. Moreover, their strong assertion is that nuclear technology is a major resistance in conventional war, and it also believes that nuclear proliferation should be encouraged in order to save world (Keohane, 1987). Additionally, there are renowned diplomats and strategist within Pakistan and India who strongly believe that nuclear weapons bring peace between nuclear states (Krepon M. , 2004).

4. Nuclear pessimism

This is another perspective within stability-instability paradox that holds view that existence of nuclear weapons can cause war within states. According to this availability of nuclear weapons can endanger states for conventional war and this presence maximize the chances of war (Joeck, 1977). Therefore, it is believed in stability-instability paradox that nuclear weapons are the cause of anarchy in the world and due to them states fight, conspire and wage war against each other in the form of open or convert.
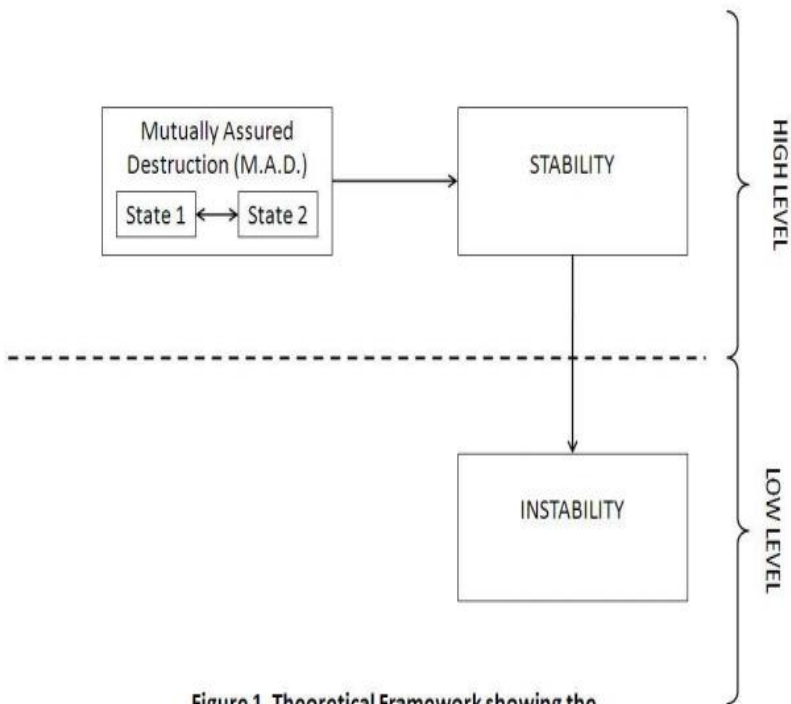
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework showing the
Stability/Instability Paradox based on Waltz (2003)

Cold Start Doctrine vs. Short-range nuclear weapons

It is a strategic doctrine which was promulgated by Indian government under Modi which asserts that Pakistan can be punished without waging full blown nuclear war (James, 2019). The name Cold Start denotes the wish to avoid a full-scale nuclear war. It means Indian forces making immediate and hard inroads into Pakistan. Such strikes will be limited in scope so as not to give any reason to Pakistan to launch a full-scale retaliation. Surprise is an important element of the Cold Start

doctrine. Additionally, the offensive mobilisation of troops takes a lot of time. As the rival country can not only prepare for a response but also activate international diplomatic channels to counter attack. On contrary Pakistan also issued her short-range nuclear weapons to counter Cold Start Doctrine. Thus, it is explicit that both states are aware from Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) and trying to influence on non-conventional level particularly from Indian side because she openly advocates it.

Indian surgical strikes claim and Pakistan's response

On September 18, 2016, an attack was happened in Uri—Jammu and Kashmir area. Indian government charged Pakistan and announced to retaliate for avenge as per CSD. Consequently, Indian government claimed a surgical strike in Pakistan territory and killed two dozen terrorists from Pakistan side Line of Control. Pakistan refuted the claim and announced strict retaliation on such adventure of India (ISPR, ISPR , 2019). Similarly, India claimed another surgical strike in Balakot, Khyber Pakhtonkhwa province of Pakistan and killing hundreds of militants and their training base. Pakistan again refused and announced to retaliate and she did it as a result Indian jet was shot down and their pilot Abhinand was captured on 27th February 2019 (ISPR, ISPR Official, 2019). Such actions and counter actions by both states were on non-conventional warfare where none of both tried or even threatened to use nuclear weapons. Hence, nuclear deterrence established stability on conventional level where as instability and worst relations on non-conventional level.

Role of India in Baluchistan

Pakistan believes that India is interfering in Baluchistan and supporting local insurgency there. It also believes that India is directly involved in ethnic divide in Pakistan, violence in Karachi and other sectarian conflicts within Pakistan (Faisal, 2019). Previously, Indian spying network was exposed in Pakistan where eight members of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad got ousted from Pakistan in November 2016. They were found involved in creating trouble and unrest through their intelligence bureau. Pakistan's Foreign Office claimed that they had contacts with the Tehreak-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)—a terrorist organisation in Pakistan. This issue was raised in almost every meeting between the Indian and Pakistani leadership. They have also been reminded of their support for the Baloch Separatists and TTP to destabilise Pakistan through India's expanded presence in Afghanistan. Moreover, Afghanistan is also considered as a facilitator of the Baloch insurgents. It is believed that the training camps, weapons, and money are all being provided to them through Afghanistan (Dawn, 2009). Moreover, Kalboshan Yadav, an Indian Naval spy, was also captured by Pakistani intelligence agencies who revealed about his assigned duties by Indian government. He accepted that he was tasked to create mess and support insurgents

in Balochistan in order to sabotage China Pakistan Economic Corridor (DAWN, 2017). This also shows that India is very careful about waging insurgency war against Pakistan and it is using every tactic that can damage Pakistan at non-conventional level where as prevent any conflict at conventional level.

Hybrid /Cyber warfare

Hybrid Warfare is a military strategy that asserts political warfare, irregular warfare and cyber warfare with other influencing methods such as fake news, diplomacy, and electoral intervention. India is actively involved in exploiting these fault lines in Pakistan since the Prime Minister Modi's BJP government in India. Such type of conflicts are driven which are a combination of natural and synthetic reasons and these conflicts pre-exist almost within every single country in the world with different intensity, but these conflicts do not catalyze political change unless external actors support or aggravation is present and India is working constantly to create such divisions against Pakistan (Bilal, 2020).

Moreover, some time ago a network of 265 fake local news sites with named after invalid newspapers and media outlets across 65 countries which were being used to publish anti-Pakistan coverage and serve Indian governmental interests were exposed. Such websites were captured by the EU DisinfoLab—an EU-based NGO—exposed on researching sophisticated disinformation campaigns, the operations were traced back to a group of Indian companies, NGOs, and think tanks. Various websites i.e. 4newsagency.com, eptoday.com, and timesofgeneva.com etc. were operated by Indian government members. However, the exposers expressed that those websites were found a large number of articles and op-eds related to minorities in Pakistan as well as other India-related topics (Hindu, 2019). In addition to it, twitter is also used as cyber warfare against each other where different trends are run on various issues. Such actions also show that both states have agreed upon not to go on conventional rivalry rather stay at non-conventional level to subdue each other.
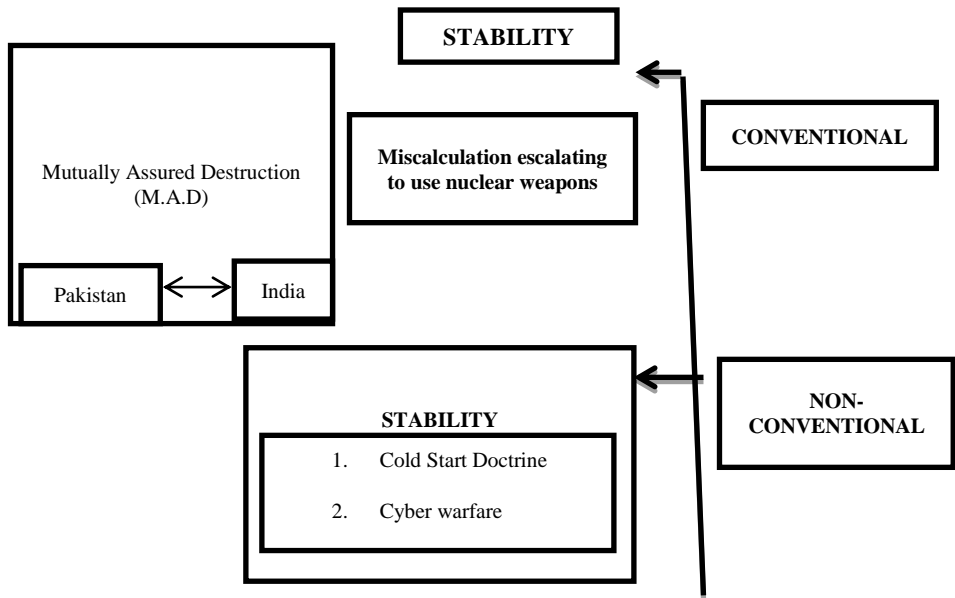
Figure.2 Conceptual Framework illustrating the concepts and variables to be measured while applying stability-instability paradox in Pakistan-India relations

Conclusion

This study concludes that stability-instability paradox between Pakistan and India is observable in many dimensions and strategic policies of the both arch rivals Pakistan and India. Narendra Modi government's Cold Start Doctrine (CSD), infiltration in Pakistan from Afghanistan, assisting insurgents in Baluchistan, waging cyber warfare and hybrid warfare clearly show non-conventional ambitions to destabilize its rival state Pakistan. However, from realist perspective, normalization in Pakistan-India relations is too difficult during Prime Minister Modi because his conservative ideology against Pakistan has political benefits for his regime. Although Pakistan has always taken diplomatic side to resolve issues with India i.e. release of Indian pilot Abhinandan after 26 February incidents but India's posture is hostile on Line of Control standoffs or hostile statements of repetitive surgical strikes against Pakistan. Their bone of contestation is Kashmir and its peaceful resolution is necessary for the region because only this issue can trigger any conventional adventure between the both states as Modi government is ready to take any risk for its survival in India. Furthermore, world powers can play an important role to resolve Kashmir issue that can eliminate the clouds of nuclear war from South Asian region. Meanwhile, Modi government seems committed to engage Pakistan from non-conventional fronts as its political existence badly needs

such adventures or strict response against Pakistan therefore Pakistan also looks ready to counter such possible action from India.

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