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Crisis Stability in South Asia: From Brass-tacks to Pahalgam Crisis

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Abstract

In view of emerging crisis situations in South Asia it is important to evaluate the crisis stability in the region. This study aims to evaluate the crisis stability in South Asia while evaluating the chances of preemption in each crisis that has emerged in the region between 1986-2025. This study examines that how the apprehensions of preemption played a key role in the evolving crisis situations in the region and further underscores that just like the previous crises, dangerous alert patterns have been observed in the recent crisis of May 2025 in the further acute form which is casting a dark shadow on the crisis stability in South Asia. Descriptive and analytical approach is adopted to evaluate the data obtained from scholarly articles, books, official reports and statements. The study recommends and concludes that there is a dire need to learn from crisis situations in the region and to make serious efforts to resolve outstanding issues and to initiate confidence building measures between India and Pakistan to ensure crisis stability in South Asia.

Key Words: Nuclearization, First Strike, Crisis Stability, Deterrence, South Asia

Introduction

Nuclearization of South Asia has coped prospects of a major war in the region. This is evident from the fact that before nuclearization India and Pakistan fought three wars of 1948, 1965 and 1971. Since 1980s, chronic issues between the two states, particularly unresolved Kashmir dispute and terrorism, have given birth to multiple security crises between the two countries but these crises never turned to wide spreading and long-lasting armed conflicts mainly due to nuclear deterrence.

During these periods of crisis, Pakistan had serious apprehensions of preemptive strikes due to conventional superiority of rival India. The fact largely affected readiness and decision making in both countries. Apprehensions of preemptive strike has serious repercussions for the crisis stability in the region. In the recent episode of Pahalgam crisis in May 2025, use of stand-off weapons such as missiles with conventional payloads and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) by both sides further aggravated the situation.

This paper aims to discuss the concept of crisis stability and to evaluate the crisis stability in region by discussing the details of the emerging crisis in the region i.e. Brass-tacks crisis (1986), Kargil Crisis (1999), Indo Pak Military Stand-off 2001-02, Mumbai Crisis (2008) and the Balakot Crisis (2019) and in the recent crisis of May 2025. The paper will further recommend measures to ensure crisis stability in the region followed by the conclusion.

Literature Review

In the past, a number of articles have been written on the history of crisis in South Asia with reference to crisis stability aspect. These studies have developed greater insight on the unfolding situations of crisis in the period of overt and covert nuclearization in South Asia.

Sagon & Waltz, (2004) while debating the impact of spread of nuclear weapons in the world analyzed the impact of Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons. Both the scholars have assessed the security of the region in presence of nuclear weapons while evaluating the Brass-tacks crisis, Kargil Crisis and 2001&02 Crisis.

Muhammad, (2020) has analyzed strategic stability in South Asia during the periods of crisis by applying multiple deterrence models. The study has also analyzed the future relevance of these deterrence models in the region. Cheema, (2013) evaluates how nuclear deterrence has played a critical role in diffusing crisis situations in the region. Clary, (2025) has analyzed the recent four days' crisis of May 2025. The study has covered the events of May, 2025 in detail. The study concludes that South Asia is a crisis prone region and escalation may continue to be severe over time.

Material and Methods

This study adopts historical, descriptive and analytical approach to evaluate the crisis stability in South Asia. The research is based on secondary data collected from scholarly articles, books and reports. Past and latest crises between India and Pakistan are analyzed through descriptive analysis emerged between 1986 to 2025. The study evaluates the apprehensions of preemptive strikes in the region and how such apprehensions effect crisis stability in the region.

Results and Discussion

Understanding Crisis Stability

Stability is generally referred to the firmness, permanence, resistance to change and constancy. Although the term 'stability' is used extensively in strategic studies yet the term lacks consensus. To some analysts, stability refers to peace and instability refers to war but this understanding does not address the period of crisis which is neither peace nor war (Hussain, 2005). John J. Mearsheimer, an American International Relations scholar, has endeavored to deal with this dissolution by declaring stability 'as absence of war and major crisis' (Hussain, 2005). This also narrowly defines stability and leads to perceive that war and major crises both represent instability while negating the role of technological advancements, arms races and role of alliances in disrupting stability.

As far as the crisis stability is concerned, the term is used interchangeably with 'first strike stability' (Wilkening & Watman, 1986). First strike stability exists in a situation when both adversaries fully realize each other's capability to conduct a nuclear attack and both sides avoid race to the nuclear button (Wilkening & Watman, 1986). According to Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, who is a Pakistani scholar of strategic studies, crisis stability is when 'stability is robust during crisis, unsuspected contingencies do not lead to hostilities (Cheema et.al., 2007).

Crisis Stability is the situation, when both the adversaries during crisis confidently wait out to a surprise attack, as they would be able to respond with undesirable damage to the adversary. In other words, stability is robust during crisis and is secured when each side finds no advantage in launching preemptive counterforce attack against other in view of its ability to retaliate. The crisis stability is considered to be delicate as it can be easily disturbed by the technological and economic developments.

When the possibility of enemy's attack is high, the incentive to strike first is calculated on the basis of the cost benefit analysis of going first or being second. whereas, when the possibility of enemy's attack is low, then the incentive to attack is ascertained by the degree of nuclear superiority a state may have on the other which means a state which does not have any fear of enemy's attack may still consider to attack first to achieve favorable war outcome (Wilkening & Watman, 1986).

However, the analysts have a differing perspective regarding one sided first strike advantage. For example, Dean Wilkening and Kenneth Watman are of the view that first strike stability still exists when merely one side holds an incentive to strike first and is not under the pressure to preempt (Wilkening & Watman, 1986). However, other opinion suggest that situation may emerge during a crisis in which the state having large first strike incentive may be tempted

towards higher level escalation though striking first to achieve its aims (Wilkening & Watman, 1986). In such a case, a state having nuclear superiority may find dissatisfaction with the outcome of war and pressure to strike first will arise not from the fear of being attacked but from the desire to achieve required results would be the main motivation of striking first.

Crisis Stability in South Asia

The two South Asian rivals—India and Pakistan-- have fought three wars of 1948, 1965 and 1971 before developing nuclear weapons. Although, the period of overt and covert nuclearization is marked with absence of war between India and Pakistan but South Asia has witnessed the periods of crises i.e. Brass-tacks crisis 1986-87, Kargil Conflict 1999, Military stand-off 2001-02, Mumbai Attacks 2008, Pulwama Crisis 2019.

There is no doubt that the absence of a major war between India and Pakistan since the nuclearization of South Asia is an outcome of nuclear deterrence, yet, the time-to-time emerging crisis in the region carried apprehensions of preemptive strikes. The possibility of preemption by India during times of crises has played a critical role in decision making and subsequent operational readiness of Pakistan. The following discussion will highlight the relevant historical accounts of emerging crises between India and Pakistan to assess the crisis stability in the region.

1986-87 Brass-tacks Crisis

During the early 1980's, Indian military leadership took encouragement from the Israel's preemptive attack on Osirak. Considering the conclusions drawn by Indian analysts and intelligence services regarding Pakistan's enrichment of uranium for one or two bombs, Indian air force deliberated to replicate Israel's model against Pakistan's Kahuta enrichment plant using its newly procured British Jaguar strike aircraft (Ramberg, 2006).

However, two serious concerns emerged that time. First was the international response to such an Indian strike. This concern was expressed by Indian chief of operations that unlike Israel India might not be able to withstand international pressure after launching such a strike in peacetime (Ramberg, 2006). The second concern was of Pakistan's retaliatory strike against Indian nuclear sites and reprocessing plants near urban areas resulting in a serious radiological catastrophe (Ramberg, 2006).

The plan for attack on Kahuta was proposed by Indian military leaders. The government of Indra Gandhi, initially considered the plan of attack but rejected later on. By that time, the inclinations of Indian military leadership went underground and re-emerged in most dangerous form of Brass-tacks crisis of 1986-87 (Sagon & Waltz, 2004).

The crisis was started in late 1986, when India initiated an unprecedented military exercise labeled as 'Brass-tacks' in Rajasthan which is an Indian province near Pakistani border. This exercise engaged around 250000 Indian troops and 1500 tanks with live ammunition, counter-offensive simulations and Air-Force strikes (Sagon & Waltz, 2004). Such a military maneuver was threating for Pakistan and taken as an Indian attempt to launch a military offensive against Pakistan under the cover of military exercise (Muhammad, 2020).

By that time, the regime of Gen. Zia ul Haq in Pakistan was engaged in Afghanistan against Soviet occupation. Under the apprehension of two front war e.g. one side in Afghanistan and other side against India, Zia regime decided to rely on nuclear weapons capability along with conventional force posture (Cheema, 2013). In its attempt to avoid war with India and to effectively counter the situation, Pakistan counter mobilized its attack formations in Punjab--opposite to Indian Punjab --- while maintained defensive posture in the Sindh province---opposite to Rajasthan (Cheema, 2013).

Pakistan signaled the possibility of nuclear weapon use and nuclear deterrence was exercised for the first time in Indo-Pak strategic calculus as a balancing factor. By that time, Pakistan had conducted cold tests of its early weapon design between 1983-1984 (Muhammad, 2020). Pakistan, through an interview of Dr. A.Q. Khan to Kuldip Nayyar, confirmed its possession of nuclear weapon (Cheema, 2013). Then, General Zia, in an interview by the Weekly Time Magazine also reiterated the same in a less provocative manner (Cheema, 2013).

Although, these two interviews were published after the peak days of the Brass-tacks crisis, however, the offer to Kuldip Nayyar to meet Dr. A.Q. Khan was in the context of India's threatening military moves against Pakistan (Cheema, 2013). Indian leaders felt under pressure and perceived an official hand behind these interviews (Cheema, 2013). Eventually, crisis was diffused without transforming into an anticipated large-scale war.

Element of preemption during Brass-tacks crisis could be understood considering the preventive war thinking of the then Indian Chief of Army Staff, General Krishna Swami Sunderji. 'New Delhi's Intentions' reveals that General Sunderji was of the view that Indian security would be undermined by Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons. So, he purposefully designed Brass-tacks exercise to provoke Pakistan. Ultimately, in the fog of war, India could launch offense against Pakistan's nuclear sites and take out its nuclear program (Sagon & Waltz, 2004). The memories of the Lieutenant General P.N. Hoon, the Commander in Chief of the Western Army during Brass tacks also revealed that Brass tacks was not merely a military exercise but a plan to launch fourth war against Pakistan (Sagon & Waltz, 2004).

For the same reason, Indian Army did not issue full notification of the exercise and did not use special hotline when Pakistan requested the information about the ongoing operations during the crisis (Sagon & Waltz, 2004).

Nuclearization of South Asia 1998

In May 1998, in its endeavor to establish its strategic superiority over Pakistan, India conducted nuclear tests and BJP officials started to issue provocative and threatening statements with respect to Pakistan one after another. Indian Prime Minister Attal Bihari Vajpayee, in his first interview after nuclear weapons test, expressed his resolve to use nuclear weapons in self-defense (Ashraf Khan, 2005). On May 18, 1998, L. K. Advani, then Indian Home Minister, issued warning to Pakistan and demanded to give up its anti-India policy and its stance on Kashmir in view of changed geo-strategic situation (Ashraf Khan, 2005). Indian leaders were assuming that after nuclear tests, India would be able to settle Kashmir Issue on its terms. However, Pakistan's 'tit for tat' response on 28 May, 1998 led India to initiate 'Lahore Talks' and built momentum to address outstanding disputes between two countries and the core issue of Kashmir.

Kargil Conflict- 1999

Lahore talks were still underway, when conflict in Kargil took place in 1999. This was the first major crisis after nuclearization of South Asia. The crisis triggered when Pakistani Army endeavored to regain the control of strategic posts along the Line of Control (LoC). The situation escalated when India reacted expeditiously by mobilizing its armed forces including deployment of its air force (Muhammad, 2020).

Three months' intense conventional fight was coupled with the fear of use of nuclear weapon by either side (Sasikumar, 2019). Both India and Pakistan adopted mode of tacit nuclear signaling during the conflict. US officials revealed that Pakistan had taken preliminary measures to raise alert levels of its nuclear forces (Sagon & Waltz, 2004). India's Chief of Naval staff expressed readiness to counter nuclear strikes. India further moved its missiles and increased the alert level of its forces (Sasikumar, 2019).

The chances of preventive attack remained present during the entire conflict period. Although, Indian forces remained on the Indian side of LoC but Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpai threatened to launch attacks inside Pakistan. Furthermore, India's preparation of heavy artillery and tanks in its Rajasthan province to launch an offense against Pakistan was also reported by the US (Sagon & Waltz, 2004).

The hostilities eventually ended in July 1999 as a result of the visit of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Washington D.C. and decision to withdraw forces from Kargil (Sagon & Waltz, 2004). Professor Tomothy Hoyt wrote in his book written on Kargil Conflict that although India mobilized its forces in Rajasthan yet India's hesitation to escalate the conflict at international border articulates that it was deterred (Cheema, 2013).

Military Stand-Off (2001-02)

After 9/11, the US campaign against terrorism encouraged India to exploit the situation in its favor somehow and the phenomena of preemptive attack emerged in its acute form in South Asia. The purpose was well served in December 2001, when a group of non-state actors unsuccessfully assaulted Indian Parliament. India blamed Pakistan for attack and threatened to launch military attack against Pakistan.

Public opinion in India was inflamed and demands for military action rose up. At that time Prime Minister Vajpayee's Party was endeavoring to win four crucial polls so it became a 'minimum political necessity' for BJP government to at least move its forces (Sasikumar, 2019). The Indian government blamed Jaish-e-Mohammad behind the daring attack on the Parliament and demanded extradition of its several operatives from Pakistan. In addition to that, India also mobilized approximately 800,000 troops under 'Operation Parakaram' to its border with Pakistan for several months, which was the largest troop mobilization since 1971 (Sasikumar, 2019). In January, 2002, the General S. Padmanabhan, the Indian Army Chief conveyed that the Indian military buildup at the border was not merely an exercise but they have many other options (Sagon & Waltz, 2004).

In response, Pakistan counter mobilized its forces to the border and signaled the possibility of nuclear use in case Indian attack on the border (Muhammad, 2020). This was followed by 'eye ball to eye ball' confrontation of India and Pakistan in 2001-02 military standoff for several months.

In his television address to the Indians, Prime Minister Vajpayee indicated to fight a decisive war with Pakistan (Sasikumar, 2019). Both India and Pakistan issued threats of possible nuclear use during the stand-off. In an interview to the German Magazine, Pakistani President expressed his resolve to use nuclear weapon in case of threat to the existence of Pakistan (Sasikumar, 2019). As a result, nuclear exchange became a possibility.

Unlike the previous crisis, both countries had sufficient nuclear delivery means to inflict unacceptable damage upon each other. During the crisis, India and Pakistan conducted ballistic missile tests as tacit nuclear signaling to the other side. India carried out a series of flight tests its Agni ballistic missiles while Pakistan reciprocated by conducting flight tests of Ghauri, Ghaznavi and Abdali missiles. Despite the fact the tests were pre-notified yet the tests were considered provoking and reckless (Yusuf, 2004).

Just like Kargil conflict, the dangerous alerting pattern was once again repeated in this crisis (Sagon & Waltz, 2004). Anticipating the possible attack on its nuclear forces, Pakistani Government raised the alert levels of nuclear forces and moved missiles to the new locations (Sagon & Waltz, 2004). According to analysts, moving of the ballistic missiles close to the international borders during the military stand-off, demonstrated that the incentive for first strike was increased for both sides (Thies & Hellmuth, 2004).

Though the military stand-off was ended as a result of combination of factors including nuclear deterrence, however, India continued to create the grounds for a preemptive action against Pakistan. At international level, India gained sympathy as democracy fighting against terrorism. Since 9/11, the BJP government used the term 'cross border terrorism' instead of 'infiltration' or 'insurgency' (Ashraf Khan, 2005). Such a fall out of US doctrine of prevention was predictable. Indian leaders, in their attempt to create grounds for preemption against Pakistan mentioned the precedent of Iraq invaded by the US (Sasikumar, 2019). Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha while drawing a clear parallel between Pakistan and Iraq declared Pakistan fit for launching preemptive strike (Sasikumar, 2019). In April, 2003, Yashwant Sinha further projected Pakistan as a better case of preemption than Iraq (Cheema, et.al., 2007).

However, US Secretary of State Colin Powell dismissed Indian justification by negating any similarity of Iraqi case with Pakistan. Furthermore, official US spokesperson in his statement negated the reasoning of equating Pakistan with Iraq (Ashraf Khan, 2005). Yet, Indian continued to justify preemptive attack against Pakistan and raised the requirement to take bold steps for this purpose (Ashraf Khan, 2005).

Mumbai Crisis (2008)

On 26 November, 2008, a small group of militants attacked a hotel in Mumbai and adjacent buildings resulting significance human casualties. This triggered another wave of crisis in the region. India suddenly attributed the attack to Lashkar e Taiba- which had been banned by the Pakistani government during the 2002 border stand-off- and blamed Pakistan for supporting militants.

Some of the Indian media pundits, former bureaucrats and military personnel favored to launch 'limited military strikes' across the line of control using special forces (Sasikumar, 2019). Indian government led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was under public pressure for going easy on Pakistan (Sasikumar, 2019). Unlike 2001-02 military stand-off, India did not mobilize its forces but India threatened to conduct aerial surgical strikes in Pakistan as a retaliatory measure against the headquarters of the militants India considered responsible for attack (Muhammad, 2020). In response, Pakistan mobilized its air force and promised to give befitting response (Muhammad, 2020).

During this crisis, although, nuclear weapons did not play a direct role, yet their presence did influence the behavior of both the neighbors (Muhammad, 2020). According to Vipin Narang, nuclear deterrence worked in the crisis as Pakistan's asymmetric escalation posture restricted Indian leaders from implementing retaliatory options that could otherwise be considered (Sasikumar, 2019). Former Indian Chief of Army Staff, General Shankar Roy Chowdhury explicitly indicated that India's conventional military strikes were deterred by Pakistan's threat of early first use (Sasikumar, 2019).

Balakot Crisis (2019)

As Kashmir has been a disputed region and during past 73 years, violence has been erupted due to ongoing insurgency due to illegal occupation of Indian Occupied Kashmir. The latest outbreak of violence erupted when a young Kashmiri boy carried a suicide attack into a convoy of vehicles on 14 Feb, 2019. Around 40 Indian paramilitary personnel were killed in the attack (Ullah, 2020). Just like always, Indian government blamed Pakistan based terrorists i.e. Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and promised revenge. However, Pakistan denied any involvement in the incident and offered full cooperation with respect to the incident (Ullah, 2020).

Twelve days later, on the night of 26 February 2019, Indian air-force launched aerial raids in Balakot region of Pakistan administered Kashmir. Next morning, in its media briefing, Indian Ministry of External Affairs shared the news of conducting 'non-military preemptive strikes' against 'terrorist hideouts' in Pakistan (Ullah, 2020). India did not claim to avenge the incident

and called its action as a preemptive strike. Indian Ministry mentioned that the preemptive strike was conducted on basis of credible intelligence and justified its necessity in response to imminent danger (Ullah, 2020).

India claimed to kill more than 300 non-state military actors in the strike but could not provide any solid evidence of terrorist casualties in the preemptive strike (Ullah, 2020). Pakistan denied any killings and considered the Indian military attack on its territory as an act of aggression and violation of its state sovereignty (Ullah, 2020).

In response, Pakistan Air Force, in an aerial encounter shoot down two Indian Air Force Aircrafts out of which one fell inside Pakistan's side of LOC and captured the pilot of India's MiG-21 aircraft. Subsequently, India's triumphant rhetoric soon converted into misadventure that caused a serious pressure for its government. There were report revealing Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's consideration to launch missile strike against Pakistan if captured Indian Pilot was not retuned (Lewis, 2019). Pakistani Prime Minister was also indicated his preparedness to respond 'three times over' in case of Indian strike (Lewis, 2019).

While the crisis was not ended, Pakistan also caught India's conventional submarine close to Pakistan's territorial waters in the Arbian sea. The submarine was part of India's those Navel assets during the crisis that include its nuclear submarine, Arihant. The deployment of Arihant was a serious escalatory measure meant to deter Pakistan from considering the early use of nuclear weapon (Muhammad, 2020).

The crisis was eventually ended due to a number of reasons with no direct role played by nuclear weapons however, presence of nuclear weapons influence decision making on both sides but the element of preemption remained alive throughout the crisis. Successful air strike by Pakistan demonstrated credibility of Pakistan's conventional forces in an asymmetrical environment.

Pahalgam Crisis (2025)

Another episode of South Asia crisis series finally ended with the announcement of ceasefire by India and Pakistan in the evening of 10th May, 2025 (India and Pakistan both, 2025). The crisis that was started with the killings of 26 civilians by the terrorists at the tourist spot in Pahalgam, Indian Administered Kashmir on 22nd April, 2025 added new ingredients in the standard Indo-Pak crisis recipe (What Washington Can Do, 2025).

Just like ever, soon after terrorist attack, India accused Pakistan for backing terrorists involved in Pahalgam attack without providing any credible evidence (Shaikh, 2025). For the first time in a crisis, the suspension of bilateral agreements was invoked by India and Pakistan. While accusing Pakistan of involvement in the terrorist attack, at first, India suspended the longstanding Indus Water treaty of the year 1960. In reciprocation, Pakistan announced the suspension of the Simla Agreement of 1972 (Hussain, 2025).

Among other measures, both countries downgraded diplomatic presence in their High Commissions declaring defense advisors as Persona Non Grata. SAARC visa exemption was suspended by both countries with an exemption to Sikh pilgrims. Pakistan also suspended its bilateral trade with India and denied its airspace for Indian airlines (Akhtar, June 2025).

The situation further intensified, when India carried out missile strikes inside Pakistan's mainland under the operation named "Operation Sindoor". The strikes involved Rafale Jets loaded with SCALP Missiles and Hammer bombs using pretext to hit 'terrorist infrastructure' in several areas of Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Akhtar, May 2025). The first ever aerial dogfight at the night of 6-7 May, 2025 wrote history of nuclear age. The fight included more than 40 Pakistani fighter jets, including JF-Thunders, J-10 Cs and F-16s. The Indians side utilized more than

80 Indian Aircrafts including Rafales, SU 30 MKIs and MIG-29s. The aerial clash caused downing of 5 Indian aircrafts (Akhtar, May 2025).

In order to respond continuous provocation from Indian side, Pakistan further launched an operation against India named *Bunyan um Marsoos* on 10th May, 2025. With the US intervention the ceasefire was finally announced at the evening of 10th May, 2025.

The 2025 Indo Pak Crisis is the manifestation of the fact that the mere existence of nuclear deterrence is not enough to achieve strategic stability (Akhtar, 2025). Although the confrontation prevailed four days by the pace of the crisis was much faster. The crisis suddenly became intensified resulting in conventional force deployment, increasing possibilities of miscalculation and first strike temptations (Sargana & Sargana, 2025).

Both India and Pakistan fired new types of weapons that were never used earlier in the battlefield. For example, for the first time, India used BrahMos cruise missiles and European SCALP-EG while Pakistan used conventionally arms short range missiles-- Fatah-I and Fatah-II (Clary, 2025). Such exchanges of missiles heightened the risk of miscalculations.

The chances of misinterpretation cannot be ruled out too. As missiles can be launched with conventional and nuclear roles both. In case, adversary fears that the upcoming missiles may target its strategic capabilities, inadvertent escalation may take place (Five Key Concepts, 2025). It was, therefore, after Indian attack on Nur Khan Air Base near Pakistan Joint Staff HQs, US officials were concerned that the Pakistan may interpret Indian attack as a threat to its strategic infrastructure. This concern led the US (which was earlier reluctant to indulge in the situation) to facilitate de-escalation between India and Pakistan (Five Key Concepts, 2025).

Conclusion

Since 1980s, the history of crises in South Asia reveals a great propensity of crisis eruption in the region mainly due to unresolved disputes between India and Pakistan and terrorism. However, due to existence of nuclear deterrence, frequently emerging crisis could not be converted into full fledge war. The fact somehow preserved the status quo in the region and conventionally stronger India could not be able to launch a full fledge vis-à-vis Pakistan.

The accounts of the recent crisis of May 2025 reveals that in future, there is a likelihood of eruption of crisis in the region in which India may endeavor to exploit the space of conventional conflict under the nuclear overhang that may bring further instability in the region.

It is the high time to learn the lessons from the history and the recent experience. Both South Asian states—India and Pakistan—jointly need to take measures to ensure crisis stability in the region through developing a mechanism to address terrorist attacks, reinvigorating arms control and confidence building measures and resolving the longstanding Kashmir dispute.

Recommendations

There is a dire need to learn the lessons from the outcomes of the past and recent South Asian crisis to ensure crisis stability in the future instead of following the deadly trajectories and escalation dominance patterns. If the corrective measures are not taken in the region, the security in South Asia will again be at the brink of perilous war. Following measures are required to be taken to ensure crisis stability in the region:

1. As historical evidence suggests that blame game, misattribution of terrorist attacks and subsequent warmongering in response to a terrorist attack has never paid off especially to India. There is a need to negotiate and develop a mechanism between India and Pakistan to cater the issues of terrorist attacks in both countries systematically. A terrorist attack at the confined location should not put the lives of billions of people of South Asia at risk as both

states are nuclear weapons states. The mechanism may include communication, intelligence sharing, joint investigations, forensic analysis and neutral verification bodies.

2. Confidence building measures and arms control measures have been considered central for ensuring crisis stability during the Cold War. It is therefore, a number of arms control measures were negotiated. Although, the contemporary era is observing an arms control crisis at international level between USA and Russia. Furthermore, the efficacy and effectiveness of arms control measures in South Asia is also questioned. Still arms control negotiations and implementation of existing agreements provide at least a vent to a pressure vessel. So, reinvigoration of confidence building measures and arms control measures is necessary.

3. Finally, decades old Kashmir dispute is the core of India Pakistan rivalry that has been the trigger of wars and most of the crises in the region. Unfortunately, the sedimentation of emerging and contemporary issues has covered the core issue that time to time becomes the epicenter of the crisis jerks in the region facilitating stability instability paradox. The resolution of Kashmir dispute and all the other disputes between India and Pakistan is essential for security and for most types of stabilities in the region.

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