

**STRATEGY
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**ARMS CONTROL & DISARMAMENT
BETWEEN
INDIA & PAKISTAN - AN APPRAISAL**

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The Paper examines the possibilities and prospects of exercising the option of arms control and disarmament to improve adversarial relations between India and Pakistan. The experiences of arms control and disarmament regimes in Europe and the Middle East are discussed to assess their feasibility in India-Pakistan scenario. Finally, the conclusions are drawn concerning opportunities for a peaceful South Asia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
OVERVIEW	2
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	6
CONCLUSIONS	14
CONCLUDING REMARKS	18
ENDNOTES	19
BIBLIOGRAPHY	21

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its labourers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.

-Dwight D. Eisenhower

INTRODUCTION

"The conflict between India and Pakistan continues to dominate the strategic disunity of South Asia, despite global and regional structural changes over the decades".¹ In the aftermath of the Cold War the optimism of India-Pakistan rapprochement grew. However, the expectations quickly fizzled out. Both the countries remain embroiled in their antagonism and peace continues to remain elusive. The chequered history of India-Pakistan relations is a saga of mistrust, suspicion and animosity. There have been periods of comparative calm but peace and cordiality have been a far cry.

This paper will examine the option of arms control and disarmament in the context of India-Pakistan relations and establish its viability, draw conclusions and recommend broad framework for its implementation. The paper will also discuss the experiences gained from arms control and disarmament regimes in Europe and in the Middle East, their application to India-

Pakistan scenario, the conditions prevailing in South Asia which are favourable or repugnant to arms control and mutual disarmament and finally draw conclusions whether this option has prospects and opportunities for a peaceful South Asia.

OVERVIEW

"Relations between India and Pakistan have been marked by stops and starts since the two states were created in 1947. Born in conflict, they have never resolved fundamental differences in their view over the state of Kashmir or number of lesser issues, and indeed some in India still question the very existence of Muslim Pakistan, disputing the need for two nations on the subcontinent."²

In the nature of conflictual relationship of these two countries, one characteristic stands out clearly and that is the use of force in pursuit of the national security objectives. Deterrence and coercion rather than reassurance and cooperation to promote security and other national interests have been the norm. The use of force as a pre-dominant element of national policy is more applicable to India since India is militarily, politically and economically stronger of the two. Pakistan has been following suit having no other viable option left to preserve its territorial integrity and sovereignty. It has been responding to use of force with force. Both the countries have gone to war three times; 1948, 1965, and 1971. The first two were due to the protracted dispute over Kashmir. The 1971 conflict occurred due to Indian interference in East-West (Pakistan's two wings) differences over provincial autonomy

and latter's military support to the separatist elements of the East Wing. The Indians cashed in on the opportunity to dismember Pakistan and to help create a new independent country of Bangladesh-erstwhile East Pakistan.

The mutual suspicion and lack of security have set in motion an unending arms race between the two countries. Again the onus of responsibility for initiating the competition for accumulation of arms lies with India as historically it can be proved that Pakistan has never been in the lead in acquiring a military capability which has upset the power equilibrium in the region. It is India which has traditionally upset the military balance leaving no choice for Pakistan to respond with arms initiatives to offset the imbalance. The point can be proved by citing two examples of this cause and effect relationship. The Indians conducted their nuclear test in 1974. Pakistan started its nuclear programme in the late 70s after the Indian nuclear explosion. The alleged development of an "Islamic Bomb" by Pakistan in collaboration with and monetary assistance from some Islamic countries was given wide coverage in the Western Press during this time. Similarly, the Indians started their ambitious missile development programme in the mid 80s. Pakistan is trying to match up this threat by indigenously developing a credible response.

From the Indian perspective, it perceives China as a major threat to its security and has always used it as a pretext to

their militarization. India has historically justified their military might by linking it to China-Pakistan combined threat. This has never been the reality. Over the years, India has ironed out its major border disputes with China and since then there has been substantial progress in improvement of bilateral relations. Exchange of high powered military delegations and cooperation between their war colleges reflects warming of relations. Although this Sino-Indian rapprochement policy is in the forefront, the ongoing ambitious missile development projects and other military related research activities in India is causing great concern to Pakistan.

The fifty years history of conflict notwithstanding, intermittently both sides have made reconciliatory efforts and use of diplomatic channels to mend the fences and bring about a lasting peace. These efforts have led to various mutual agreements aimed at bolstering confidence and security between the two countries. These confidence and security building measures have helped in shaping the bilateral relations in a positive manner. However these measures as elsewhere in the world, are only the first step towards peaceful resolution of the issues and not a dispensation of other peace initiatives.

An incisive analysis of Indo-Pakistan relations would reveal that amongst the issues that have led to antagonism between them, the issue of Kashmir lies at the core. This issue has been largely responsible for two armed conflicts as mentioned

previously. It has also created war like crises on several other occasions. For both countries the issue is so vital that neither of the two seems to be prepared to show any flexibility in its stance. For Pakistan, it is a matter of principled stand to support legitimate and fundamental right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people recognized by the UN. For India, it has become a prestige point not to withdraw its claim on Kashmir and the survival of its secularism. A Hindu writer Harinder Bajwa writes,

" In Kashmir, one thing is as certain as death and taxes that India will not let go, international and militant pressure notwithstanding. Any government that does , so will destroy itself. And there is a broad consensus in India and that is that if Kashmir is given independence or allowed to join Pakistan because it has a Muslim majority, it will be tantamount to conceding the idea of religious states and sounding the death-knell of India's secularism".³

India does not accept mediation by a third party. It has refused to accept repeated offers of reconciliation by various US governments. Given the complexity of the Kashmir issue and the inflexibility shown by both sides to deviate from their established positions, there is no hope that this issue will be resolved in a foreseeable future. A military solution is not a viable option now because neither of the countries is in a position to impose its will on the other. The policy of 'deterrence by bluff' and pronouncements on 'a nuclear weapon option' in India and in Pakistan 'an ability to assemble' has further stalemated the military response. There is now a need to

explore other avenues to bring about peace and tranquility in the region which has turned extremely volatile. Arms control and disarmament measures have been used successfully in the past to promote peace and stability in a region.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Arms Control and Disarmament. Before further dilating upon the subject, it would be appropriate to lay down definitions of two key terms arms control and disarmament so that there is no confusion arising out of semantics.

" The terms are often used synonymously, but arms control actually refers to limitations in the quantity or quality of certain types of weapons, while disarmament seeks to eradicate arms, either in their entirety or by respective groups. According to Thomas C Schelling and Maron H Halperin, the objectives of arms control are: to reduce risk of war; to reduce destructiveness when war occurs and to reduce the cost of providing an adequate military defense. The objective of disarmament is the complete elimination of war and the weapons of war as one option in the settlement of dispute between nations. Disarmament may be mutual or unilateral."⁴

Historical Perspective . "The history of arms control agreements can be traced back as early as 1139 when Pope Innocent II attempted to ban use of the crossbow".⁵ Recently in the twentieth century, the following important treaties were concluded: Washington Naval Treaty (1921) pertaining to productions of vessels. Geneva Protocol of 1925 on Bacteriological and Chemical weapons, The League of Nations Disarmament conference of 1932 and the Second London Naval

agreement of 1935. Except for the Geneva protocol, other agreements did not succeed.

After World War II, the Baruch and Gromyko plans of 1946 proposed the elimination of nuclear weapons but were unsuccessful due to cold war. In 1952 the UN established the UN Disarmament Commission and in 1954 the Sub Committee on disarmament which were disbanded in 1957. Following the 1962 Cuban Missile crisis US and Soviet negotiators successfully concluded the limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the first of several hot lines agreements 1963. Later US-Soviet relations further improved and various agreements were concluded; Seabed Arms Control Treaty(1971), the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War(1973), the Threshold Test Ban Treaty(1974), the Peaceful Nuclear Explosion Treaty(1976)and the two SALT Treaties. The Geneva Summit(1985)between President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev opened the door to new talks resulting in INF Treaty in 1987, and the promise of additional negotiation to reduce or to eliminate entire classes of nuclear and conventional weapons.

Experiences of Europe and Middle East .The arms control efforts in Europe and the Middle East provide a basis to build on the peace process in South Asia. There are a number of similarities and differences which can be drawn. However, care must be taken not to attempt to apply them indiscriminately without taking into due consideration the peculiar socio-economic,political and security environment existing in the

region. The historical and cultural setting of International politics in South Asia is more diverse than Europe or North America due to ethnically and religiously more diverse societies. As against NATO versus Warsaw Pact, in Asia India-Pakistan and China-Indian border disputes are the major flash points. Stalemate between roughly two equal parties does not exist in South Asia and there is not yet a willingness to set aside force as means to alter the status quo. Despite these differences the US- Soviet experiences are relevant to South Asia to a certain degree.

"The US-Soviet and European experience suggest that incremental progress towards narrowly focused but meaningful confidence and security building measures can be made between hostile and suspicious states, at least if a mutual deterrence relationship exists that makes revision of the status quo by force seem unattractive. The nuclearization of the three major actors of South Asia is likely to create such a mutual deterrence relationship, making the prospects for CSBMs there more hopeful for the future".⁶

Similarly the experiences gained from the Middle East have useful application in resolving Indo-Pakistan disputes.

"Like the Arab-Israeli arena, South Asia especially the Indo-Pakistan dyad, is characterized by conflictual relationships. The conflicts involve long-standing disputes over substantive issues, including territory, but also reflect, and therefore perpetuate deep seated antipathies and mutual suspicion connected to question of political and communal identity and images of self and other; the Indo-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir clearly

incorporates all these dimensions. As in the Arab-Israeli case, instability in South Asia is accentuated by plethora of internal security threats formented by real or perceived transfrontier support".⁷

The South Asian region has certain differences which have positive implications for promoting peace in the area. These differences are; no party denies the legitimacy of the other and the adversaries maintained normal, if volatile, diplomatic, and commercial relations and direct communications. The process of conflict resolution and normalization of relations is facilitated by such conditions such as recognition of each other's overeiignty and existence of direct communications channels rather than the absence of these.

Indian Perspective. "New Delhi sees Pakistan and China as brother enemies-potentially fraternal partners, but by circumstance and choice dangerous antagonists".⁸ This summarizes the image of Pakistan and China in the Indian security perceptions. Both are seen as a potent threat to India and therefore India's security policies are directed against both the threats simultaneously or individually depending upon the situation. Both China and Pakistan are considered responsible for causing armed conflicts with India with little or no fault of the latter. "Indians also see an asymmetry in each relationship: Pakistan and China are more guilty than India of causing conflict and war, and India has more often offered cooperation and war-

avoidance".⁹ The Indians believe that their ineptitude and gullibility in the past has encouraged both China and Pakistan to go to war for resolution of their disputes. They believe that Pakistan is solely responsible for the application of force as instrument of policy and initiator of hostility. Pakistan is abetting separatist feelings in Indian Kashmir and nurtured anti-India sentiments in Pakistani Kashmir and used force to annex Kashmir. Pakistan tries to seek parity with India and has overstepped legitimate security threshold. Pakistan has succeeded in securing the support of USA, China and the Muslim countries which has escalated the detention in the region. Pakistan governments have used threat from India as a distracter to cover up their own internal problems and instability thereby resorting to confrontation with India as a strategic endgame. India's record of cooperation has been splendid and this has been construed by Pakistan as a weakness and exploited to its own advantage. Pakistan does not want to negotiate on Kashmir issue because of its internal politics. The prospects of cooperation are brighter in a bilateral arrangement without indulgence of a third party; unless Pakistan becomes democratic, secular and internally stable as perceived by India, only then lasting peace can be reached between the two countries.

India considers China guilty of initiating conflict and use of force similar to its view about Pakistan. China occupied Indian territory by force against their expectation and may

resort to some kind of strategic deception in future. China is supporting secessionist activities in India's North East. China has interfered in South Asian disputes with special reference to Pakistan. China does not accept India as an equal power.

"China's view of a cooperative solution of the border dispute is shallow and is based essentially on the notion of a swap, whereas India's view is moral and based on established international law and practice; India has consistently avoided in interfering in China's internal affairs, especially Tibet even when the Chinese were fomenting rebellion in India; India has not interfered with China's relations with third parties and indeed has tried to advance these relations; real cooperation will probably be impossible until India achieves military and economic parity with its northern neighbour".¹⁰

Pakistani Perspective. Pakistan perceives that the main threat to its security emanates from India.

"Two critical dimensions define the Pakistani-India conflict today: the psychological dimension and the structural dimension. From the Pakistani perspective the Indian leadership continues to be perceived as one that persistently refuses to accept the finality of the creation of Pakistan".¹¹

Over a period of time there has been a change in the manner in which the Indian politicians express their disapproval for the partition of united India. But the central theme of their statements has been to emphasize the cultural, social and religious commonalities between Hindus and Muslims to prove that these two communities do not differ a great deal. "The Pakistani psyche has undergone subtle shift in its perception of India as a result of its experiences in the three Indo-Pakistan wars, the

last of which led to the break up of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh".¹²

Pakistan increasingly views its strength negatively in relation to India and looks for a viable response to ensure defense of the homeland. The search for an adequate conventional response has motivated them to develop a nuclear capability which can be used to produce a nuclear response should the circumstances so warrant.

"Pakistan perceives itself as having recognized the new power imbalance on the Sub-continent and as having made concessions on a number of issues in relation to India since the Afghan crises. Furthermore these concessions are perceived as having gained little substantial response from India".¹³

The structural dimension of Indo-Pakistan conflict is the internal issues of India having spillover effects to the neighbouring countries. India is faced with Tamil and Sikh militancy as well as rise of the Hindu fundamentalist elements. India always tries to implicate Pakistan in these issues and internationally projects Pakistan as a sponsor of terrorism in India.

"US threats to label Pakistan as a terrorist state have only encouraged India to capitalize upon this and accuse Pakistan of aiding terrorism in India. Ofcourse Pakistan has a commitment to provide assistance against Indian repression in what it calls Occupied Kashmir, which has been recognized as disputed territory within the UN itself and therefore is not integral part of India".¹⁴

The Pakistan's approach to arms control has been dominated by its security needs in relation to India. For Pakistan to

match India's conventional military strength is an onerous task and a heavy drain on its economy. It has thus redefined its security in terms of maintaining credible deterrence as defense to face a major threat from India. On the nuclear issue it feels that the US and its allies approach is highly discriminatory towards Pakistan's nuclear program. This has not only retarded the regional non-proliferation but has also politicized the issue.

"The negative political interventionism, whether in the form of isolation or deprivation of technology and aid, has made it difficult for the government in Pakistan renounce the acquisition of nuclear weapons, because of anticipated domestic fallout".¹⁵

Pakistan has always looked outside the region to external powers and mechanisms to ensure its security and territorial integrity. It has tried conventional military means, alliances, UN diplomacies, friendship with China and the Arab world, but none of the above has delivered what Pakistan has been trying to achieve.

There is a growing feeling in Pakistan that the time is ripe to declare their nuclear weapons capability openly.

Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs)

Despite the hostile nature of India-Pakistan relationship, both countries have covered a lot of ground in trying to stop escalation of tension and promote confidence and security. Because of these efforts certain CSBMs are in place which can be used as a spring board to further advance the process of

normalization of relations through various arms control and disarmament mechanisms. These CSBMs are: Agreement on bilateral relations signed on 3 July 1972 (Simla Accord); Agreement on prohibition of attack against nuclear installations signed on 31 Dec 1988 (No attack agreement); Agreement on prohibition of chemical weapons; Agreement on prevention of air space violation and establishment of hotline between Director generals of military operations of the two countries.

CONCLUSIONS

A critical review of the factors which have shaped Indo-Pakistan antagonism would reveal that the question of arms control and disarmament related to these countries is much more complex and multi-dimensional than a jigsaw puzzle or other similar issues in other regions of the world. The jingoistic feelings aroused by the political leadership to suit their self-centered political motives and to consolidate their power over a period of time have further complicated the issue. With every year passing without serious efforts of conflict resolution through peaceful means mainly the Kashmir issue, more and more complexities are adding to the security scenario.

The arms control and disarmament option is almost a non-starter if considered in the context of India-Pakistan only.

"A rationale presented by leading government officials of New Delhi and Islamabad to justifying the current state of their weapon's programme is an analogous to the 'Ocean Food Chain'-big fish eats little fish that has just eaten little fish. China created its nuclear deterrence with fears of Moscow and

Washington in mind. China is feared by India and India is feared by Pakistan".¹⁶

It, therefore, follows that any arms control and disarmament initiatives between India and Pakistan are inconceivable without Chinese involvement. "The adversarial nature of the Indian-China relationship is both pivotal to any real progress in regional arms control and is for many outsiders the most difficult problem to fully comprehend".¹⁷

Many argue that the arms control proposals are impracticable without having some sort of parity, conventional or nuclear between the belligerents. Negotiations on arms control can only start when both India and Pakistan discontinue their nuclear policy, openly go nuclear and declare their specific nuclear capabilities or number of nuclear weapons already acquired or which can be produced. In my opinion, similar kind of environment of mutual deterrence already exists between them through nuclear ambiguity and no significant advantages can be derived from an open nuclear policy to facilitate the process of arms control. It is believed that in the recent past armed conflict between India and Pakistan was averted on two occasions; in 1987 and in 1990 because of the existence of nuclear deterrence though opaque in nature.

Talks on arms control and disarmament can be conducted by strong, determined and bold political leadership on both sides. The two countries have experienced political instability and weak

governments in the recent times specially in India where split mandates, deep political polarization and a hung parliament have prevented formation of any strong government with a clear majority to pursue any major peace initiative and engage in any meaningful dialogue with Pakistan. In the recently concluded general elections in India, no political party could win a clear majority the Bhartia Janta Party(BJP), the Hindu Nationalist Party has done better than their main rival party 'Congress' but could form the coalition government with the help of other small political parties. In Pakistan, political instability has been experienced due to some serious constitutional and judicial crises. Though the present government has a clear majority in the parliament yet it faces major political challenges with the consolidation of the opposition. So, by and large on a comparative basis India is not in a position to respond favorably to any arms control proposals because of the present fragile government in the country. Moreover BJP has traditionally kept an aggressive stance towards Pakistan. It believes in revival of Hinduism rather than secularism and the use of force as a predominant instrument of national policy.

The CSBMs existing between India and Pakistan have helped in diffusing the tension in the past. However, it would be naive to expect anything substantial from these measures to bring fundamental changes in the security environment. These measures have not been put to test in a potentially grave crisis yet. It

is the core issue of Kashmir which can lead to such a serious crisis. Other issues or irritants have either been created because of it or exacerbated by it. This dispute has been largely responsible to push the two countries into a continuous security dilemma and resultant arms race. Unless Kashmir issue is resolved peacefully, arms control initiatives have no prospects to succeed. However, the resolution of the Kashmir issue will not usher in an era of arms control and disarmament automatically because of Indian security concerns with regard to China. Nevertheless, For Pakistan it will considerably reduce tension with India and provide sufficient motivation for the latter to even consider unilateral reduction in its defense expenditure irrespective of Indian reciprocity. For India, it will have to negotiate similar arrangements separately with china.

Huge defense expenditures of both the countries have seriously retarded the economic progress and social uplift of the people. The decision making elite of the two countries has started realizing the ill effects of this non-development outlay. However, they find themselves in a state of quandary as to how should they mould the public opinion to make them accept new realities and support their policy. The political leadership is apprehensive of the massive public outcry in the event of a settlement of the Kashmir issue contrary to their aspirations and expectations which have been nurtured and shaped by them and

their predecessors. They lack the courage or vision to take bold initiatives because they fear the wrath of their constituencies. The Indian leadership has a greater responsibility being the champions of the biggest democracy of the world to act out of the box, show accommodation and magnanimity, and respect for international opinion expressed through Security Council resolutions.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The US has consistently tried to bring both India and Pakistan to negotiation. It has tried for nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia but in vain. This underscores the fact that peace initiatives have to come from New Delhi and Islamabad rather than from Washington, otherwise peace will remain elusive in South Asia. The bottom line is that the political leadership of both the countries has to review their bilateral relations and the resultant brittle standoff so that both the nations can enter into the next millennium without fear of a nuclear holocaust. The history of arms control and disarmament is not very encouraging. It is a very slow, tedious and painstaking process. If it was so easy, the world would have been a bed of roses.

Word Count: 4615

ENDNOTES

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²Neil Joeck, "Mutual Security Pledges and Prospects for a Non-proliferation Regime." in Mending Fences: Confidence and Security Building Measures in South Asia, eds. Sumit Ganguly and Ted Greenwood (Westview Press, 1996), 131.

³Professor Doctor M.A Hussain Malik, "Kashmir Conflict, the Cause of Frustrated Economic Take off in India and Pakistan-A Politico-Economic Assessment" Pakistan Defence Review, No. 1, Volume 5, (June 1993): 46dj

⁴Jaffery M. Elliot, and Robert Reginald, The Arms Control, Disarmament and Military Security Dictionary, (ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1989), 272.

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⁸Kanti P Bajpai, "Conflict, Cooperation and CSBMs with Pakistan and China: A view from New Delhi" in Mending Fences: Confidence and Security Building Measures in South Asia, eds, Sumit Ganguly and Ted Greenwood (Westview Press, 1996) 16

⁹Ibid., 16

¹⁰Ibid., 24

¹¹Shirin M. Mazari, "Conflict between Pakistan and India: A view from Islamabad", in Mending Fences: Confidence and Security Building Measures in South Asia, eds. Sumit Ganguly and Ted Greenwood (Westview Press, 1996), 48.

¹²Ibid., 48.

¹³Ibid., 49.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 51.

¹⁶John J. Schulz, "Riding the Nuclear Tiger: The Search for Security in South Asia", Arms Control Today volume 23, No. 5 (June 1993): 6.

¹⁷Ibid., 7.

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