South Asia: After the Bomb

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Abstract

The effect of nuclear weapons has long been debated. Some argue that these weapons have a stabilizing effect on already volatile regions and rivals, while others fear that it will only further escalate tensions. In their book debating a nuclear world, Waltz and Sagan take opposing positions on the effect that the atom bomb had on the territorial issues India has with its neighbors Pakistan and China. The case of South Asia and the bomb is unique in the sense that while they are all ancient civilizations, their current regimes are all the same age. We are thus offered a cocktail of ancient civilizations, young regimes, territorial conflict, and history's most lethal weapon. This paper seeks to discover if the presence of nuclear bombs has impacted the ability to resolve territorial disputes between these nations. After looking at the foreign policy of each country and the history of their development of nuclear weapons, I find that, yes, possessing nuclear weapons has delayed the resolution of this territorial issue.

About the Author

Amrutha Prasad is currently wrapping up and undergraduate degree in Political Science, along with minors in French and Global Studies and a certificate in Arms Control, Domestic, and International Security. Her interests include war and peace studies, security studies, and American foreign policy. As an undergraduate, she worked extensively with the ACDIS Security Studies Group, where she served initially as Vice President of Academic Affairs and is just ending her time as Vice President of Social Affairs. In Fall 2016, she will begin a master's in foreign policy at the Elliot School of International Affairs.

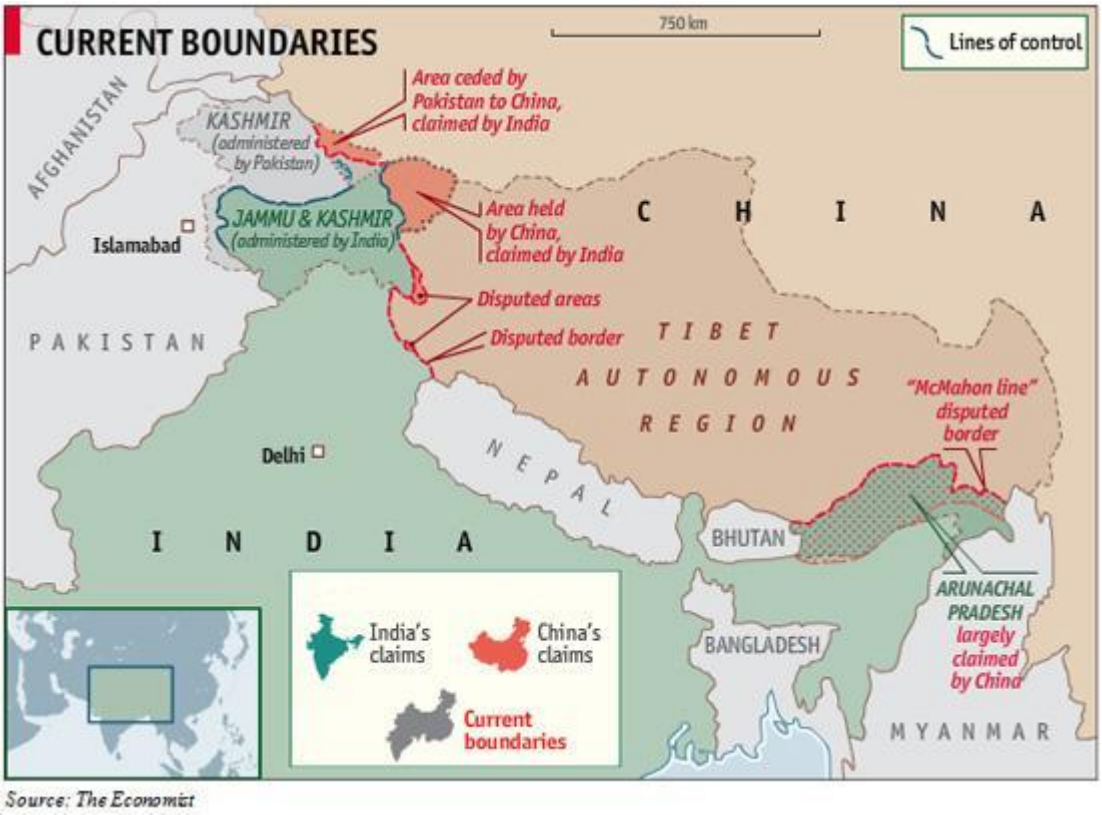
Introduction

The presence of nuclear weapons in South Asia has created a thoroughly unique situation. Although each of the societies there (Indian, Chinese, and Pakistani) has been long established, their current regimes are about the same age. India gained independence in 1947, Pakistan was created that same year, and China was proclaimed a People's Republic in 1949. We are thus offered a cocktail of old civilizations, young regimes, territorial conflict, and history's most lethal weapon. What effect have nuclear bombs had on bilateral relations between India and China and India and Pakistan? Specifically, has the possession of nuclear bombs impacted the ability to resolve the territorial disputes between these nations?

While recognizing that it is exceedingly difficult to understand the thought processes of decision makers, this paper hypothesizes that the possession of nuclear weapons makes territorial disputes even more difficult to resolve. In order to answer these questions, this paper will draw upon research in deterrence theory, which allows us to consider questions related to how likely a state is to be attacked if it possesses nuclear weapons. Additionally, the countries will be analyzed in terms of motivations to proliferate. Following an analysis on the impact of nuclear

weapons on each country's foreign policy and their respective behaviors during conflict with each other, the paper will look at each country at the supranational level, in order to determine long-term policies towards nuclear weapons. In order to draw conclusions, evidence will be presented from other academics that investigate the effectiveness of thermonuclear weapons, commonly known as "hydrogen bombs", as tools to keep peace, as well as looking at the statistics for the number and outcomes of bilateral interactions that India has had with both Pakistan and China. Lastly, based on these conclusions, the paper will investigate the ability to make policy predictions for other countries.

Almost since the time of Pakistan's creation and India's gaining independence from the United Kingdom, the two neighboring countries have been engaged in conflict over the rule of Kashmir, a region to the north of India and to the northeast of Pakistan. In an attempt to settle the dispute, they established a "line of control" (LOC) in 1972, effectively dividing it into India's Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan's Northern Areas. In addition, India also has a territorial dispute with China over Aksai Chin on the western front of Kashmir, as well as India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, claimed by China as the Tawang district as a part of South Tibet. These disputes led to a war between the two states in 1962, which resulted in a humiliating defeat for India. Lastly, in 1963 Pakistan ceded a portion of the Kashmiri lands to China, adding to the amount of disputed lands between two of Asia's largest powers.



(The Economist 2012)

A few scholars have advanced the argument that Kashmir is irredentist in nature. Irredentist questions are those of pan-nationality involving territories that are currently administered by other states but that share ethnic or cultural ties to the state laying claim to these territories. As shown by Vasquez in "The War Puzzle Revisited" territorial conflicts are those most likely to lead to war until they have been resolved. Thus, as far as conventional engagement goes, peace is impossible until there is a clear victory and territories are firmly established (Vasquez 2009).

Two theories of particular importance are deterrence theory and nuclear peace theory. In direct contrast to the results put forth by Vasquez, deterrence theory hypothesizes that the possession of nuclear weapons automatically makes any potential conflict so disastrous that they

never involve themselves in any. Nuclear peace theory takes this idea one step further and argues that nuclear weapons have the potential to induce stability. Thus, these theories both posit that in introducing weapons with major potential for destruction potential and by making a situation more unstable, nuclear weapons may actually contribute to peace and security (Waltz 2013).

These two contradictory positions put China, India, and Pakistan in a unique position. On the one hand, war is inevitable because of the questions of territory and irredentist claims. On the other hand, war is arguably impossible because each of these states is a nuclear power and the damage inflicted on any other parties would be too great to risk significant conflict. Notably, possessing nuclear weapons has not prevented conflict between the parties; despite testing in 1998, India and Pakistan fought the Kargil War in 1999, fought using entirely conventional weapons. Further, while the Indo-China border dispute has not escalated to all-out war since 1962, there is regular military activity on that border (Pandit 2014).

Recent advances in nuclear weapons technology have enabled states to select strategic targets such as military command bases to avoid laying waste to cities. An example of which are intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). China developed ICBMs in 1975 and India tested the Agni V in 2012 and 2013 (CIA 1976). These reduce the risk of nuclear war and make limited and controlled conflicts possible. Even more reassuring in the case of Sino-Indian border disputes is that both states have adopted no-first use (NFU) policies towards nuclear weapons, swearing not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict. Thus, if the conflict manifests as a war once more, it is most likely to be settled by means of a conventional conflict.

Pakistan's approach to nuclear weapons is slightly different. While they have a range of ballistic missiles, they are yet to develop ICBMs. Unlike India and China, they have opted to use

nuclear weapons only defensively rather than choosing a no first use policy. This does not necessitate that they first be attacked with nuclear weapons before proceeding to use theirs, but that nuclear weapons can be used in case of conflict. This is worrisome as if Pakistan were ever in a war, it could escalate into nuclear war. Further, India has both a higher military capability and higher defense spending when compared to Pakistan; this serves both as a potential threat and driving force in Pakistan's refusal to adopt a no-first use policy- so that they have a deterrent and a credible force with which to counter attacks (Global Firepower 2013).

Of the many reasons states proliferate, the idea of prestige and/or status come into question. According to Sherrill, one of the many reasons states proliferate is the prestige attributed to a nuclear weapons state (Sherrill 2012). This idea is useful in predicting the mentalities of nations and their decision makers. Nuclear weapons help states assert dominance in a states region. China proliferated in response not only to protect against American aggression but also to assert dominance in the region. India did so in response to China as it did not want an unfriendly neighbor to dominate the continent, and Pakistan proliferated in order to show greater military parity with India (Miller 2014).

This theory can also be applied to interpreting why these territorial disputes are proving difficult to resolve. Territory is such an essential part of a state that if one were to relinquish a portion of it, it is interpreted as weakness while nuclear weapons are seen as a symbol of power and dominance. Territory is equated to resources and so if they are weak enough to relinquish something as important as territory, then they could be viewed as too weak to have a voice in international forums. These are only some of the issues raised as to the actual power of a country in the case of territorial disputes, added on to the perceived prestige of being a nuclear weapons

state. Merely because they are nuclear weapons states, each of these countries has more prestige and status to lose than they otherwise would.

Fear of the loss of status or prestige does not preclude states from trying to cooperate so as to avoid conflict. A large part of the peace between India and China was the Panchsheel or Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which was signed in 1954 (Ganguly, Pardesi 2009). These principles were mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. Although this agreement deteriorated eight years later with perceived Indian interference in Tibet, the Panchsheel regained its status of importance in the 1970s (Panchsheel 2004). Sino-Indian relations soured once again when India tested nuclear weapons but since then relations between the two states have improved. Additionally, as Garver argues, Sino-Pakistani understandings do not prevent cooperation between China and India (Garver 2001). Although each country monitors the others' alignment with the United States for fear of their power, they are better able to come to agreements and bridge diplomatic divides on a regional and/or bilateral level. Thus, the more two countries are economically tied together the less likely they are to fight each other, as put forth in democratic peace theory.

Mitra and Thompson also find that recent rhetoric between India and China has improved, and is reflective of each looking at the other as more of a partner than an adversary (Mitra, Thompson 2005). In a significant shift, India and China signed agreements in 2005 during the Chinese premier's visit to India in which India recognized China's claim to Tibet and China recognized India's claim to Sikkim, a Himalayan state. This is not to say that their territorial disputes have been resolved but as a result of discussions and diplomacy, these questions seem to be moving towards resolution. Of further importance are trade relations

between India and China which developed as a result of India's economic liberalization in 1991. These trade relations play a key role in softening tensions between the two states and ensure that any skirmishes do not get out of hand.

It is possible that a similar course of action could be used with regards to Pakistan, by not only deepening cultural, diplomatic and trade ties between the two countries, but attempting processes of reciprocity in terms of recognition of territory. As mentioned by Taneja et al in their 2011 paper, despite an unfavorable political climate, India and Pakistan have not diminished trade relations (Taneja et al 2011). However, Indo-Pakistani trade relations take place erratically with nationalism soon overtaking a sense of economic pragmatism. Further, if this trend of nationalism overtaking other interests continues between India and Pakistan, it will continue to reverse any thawing between the two parties and no real progress will be made on any front for the foreseeable future. Despite having achieved "nuclear maturity" in the aftermath of the Kargil War and the 2001-2002 standoff, matters tend to remain tense on the Line of Control with both parties continually preparing for an attack from the other. Thus, the Indo-Pakistani economic climate is often a function of the climate on the border. Juxtaposed with this view, there is the dynamic between India and China, as countries aspiring to become fully developed economies. They cannot afford to have the sword of a territorial dispute constantly hanging over their heads.

The aforementioned research has highlighted nuclear deterrence and irredentism supplying us with contrasting theories for predicting events in South Asia. However, before launching into a discussion of deterrence theory as is applicable in this region, it must first be defined. This theory states that the possession of nuclear weapons will stop or prevent an attack on the state that possesses them either for fear of annihilation (if the attacking state does not possess them) or for fear of mutually assured destruction (if the attacking state does possess

them). The idea of mutually assured destruction is that if two nuclear powers strike each other with their nuclear arsenals, in attacking the other party with their nuclear arsenals, they are both doomed, or their destruction is mutually assured. Thus, nuclear war is highly unlikely, if not impossible.

It is in South Asia that this theory will truly be put to the test. As established in the previous section, the territorial issue that sits between China, India, and Pakistan is not one that will be easily resolved. So how does deterrence theory apply here? India and China went to war in 1962 and ended in a conclusive Chinese victory, two years before China tested their first nuclear weapon, in 1964. On the other hand, India and Pakistan have continued to have serious confrontations on their border, most notably the Kargil War, after developing nuclear weapons. Thus, perhaps deterrence theory can only be applied on a case-by-case basis. Here, it can be applied to the Sino-Indian conflict as neither party has engaged the other in a significant form since China developed a nuclear arsenal. Added to this is the fact that both of these countries have signed onto no first use policies, meaning that even if their dispute were to escalate into another war, the likelihood of it becoming a nuclear war is very low. While the historical approach taken by Vasquez shows us that territorial issues are most likely to lead to war, and thus the most probable course of action for the Asian powers to solve their territorial conflicts, it is most likely to be a limited conflict on a conventional scale similar to the Kargil War (Vasquez 2009).

Contrarily, deterrence theory does not apply in the case of India and Pakistan. As evidenced by the aforementioned Kargil War, these two countries are able to engage each other in a limited war, using conventional tactics alone. Thus, while deterrence could, theoretically, be applied to the case of India vs. China as both countries adopted the policy of NFU, it could be

argued that it does not even exist in the case of India vs. Pakistan as neither country is afraid to engage the other. This is a clear violation of the tenets of deterrence theory. However, the matter gets sticky when one begins to consider whether nuclear weapons are even in the picture- that is, why are India and Pakistan comfortable engaging on a conventional level, but not comfortable with escalation. Perhaps their wariness of escalation is proof of deterrence theory being applied in this case, for they fear that if one uses a nuclear weapon against the other, it dooms them both.

So what does the outcome of deterrence look like in the case of India and Pakistan? In the case of Indian and Chinese deterrence, we saw increased trade and diplomacy. However, in the case of India and Pakistan, increased dialogue is showing signs of helping the two nations work more closely. For instance, when the Indian parliament formed a new government in 2014, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was invited to new Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony. Both states have also been known to employ something known as "cricket diplomacy". While it may seem trivial- as though importance is being detracted from diplomacy and undue importance is being given to a sport, such cultural ties have the ability to strengthen ties between the two countries. As can be surmised by the name, cricket diplomacy is simply using cricket as a tool to either better or weaken diplomatic relations between the two countries. Since both India and Pakistan are former colonies of the British Raj, cricket is a common cultural thread between them. This form of diplomacy was recently exercised between these two parties in 2011 when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh invited his Pakistani counterpart Yousuf Raza Gilani to watch the Cricket World Cup Semifinal in which both countries had qualified.

On a deeper level, relations between India and Pakistan seem to be improving. Despite the 2008 terrorist attacks in India that disturbed relations on a political level, their economic

cooperation and exchange remained largely unaffected by it. Notably, this trade stability is relatively recent as the rise in political tensions halted almost all trade until the early 1970s, when both countries began to build an economic relationship. With the establishment of the WTO in 1995, Pakistan was granted "most favored nation" status by India soon after (De 2013). This status is important as it allows for non-discriminatory trade between two countries. However, the strength of relations between South Asia's two largest economies, India and Pakistan, seems irrelevant when in 2011 their trade with each other accounted for less than half a percent of India's total trade and 5.4% of Pakistan's (De 2013). Until quite recently, one of the most important economic breakthroughs between these two countries was the 2005 Joint Communiqué produced by a meeting between Pervez Musharraf and Manmohan Singh (Khan 2009). This Communiqué rang of optimism and the promise of greater economic integration between the two neighbors. Of even more significance is Pakistan's agreement to work towards granting India MFN status as India work towards doing away with their "negative lists" or lists of items that could not be bought and sold from the other (Taneja et al 2013).

Hence, it is clear that India and Pakistan are potentially headed down the same path as India and China- one of increased cooperation and diplomacy that promises to bring unprecedented development, stability, and prosperity to South Asia. It would also fundamentally alter everything currently known about the dynamics of South Asian politics, diplomacy, and the like, turning the region into a hotbed for growth. As relations improve, each of these countries would become more powerful on the international scale and increase India and China's status as emerging powers. It could perhaps even make them the leaders of the Brazil-Russia-India-China bloc of countries. As mentioned previously, one thing to guard against would be any growing antagonism between these two powers. While it is undeniable that this vision of the future has a

bipolar distribution of power, this bipolarity has the ability to be amicable and stable or antagonistic, frayed, and volatile.

Alternatively, one cannot help but recognize the potential relevance of the stability-instability paradox. This idea states that there can be greater stability in a system of two opposing nuclear powers as they automatically become more wary of fighting each other while there is increased instability on a lower level as there are more proxy war among smaller, less powerful states. This idea could come into play as India and China ascend the international ranks and become increasingly important players in the international arena. However, which states would become the proxy states is yet to be seen. Further, it is not yet known whether this could be applied to India and Pakistan. On the other hand, this theory need not only apply to international powers, but nuclear powers as well. In that case, lower level proxy wars are a possibility between India and Pakistan as well, although the states that would partake are undetermined.

The Cold War can serve as a model of the stability-instability paradox for India and Pakistan. The story reads the same; two volatile nuclear powers that could spark a war between them at any given moment. Yet, even during the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union had created their own stability- by never outright fighting each other but allowing smaller proxy wars. There are some very important differences to be noted here, though. For one, the sheer difference in the total number of warheads that the two Cold War powers had (which was near 70,000 at the height) and the total number of warheads that India and Pakistan possess (currently estimated at 120 each for a total of 240) (Isaacs). Secondly, the closest the Cold War powers ever came to actual nuclear war was during the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, India and Pakistan have already gone to war. Thus, as shown by S. Paul Kapoor, the Cold War can't be used as a model for nuclear South Asia as conditions in the latter are not derived from the stability-

instability paradox as much as they are from a combination of escalatory tactics and diplomacy (Kapur 2005).

What can be garnered from this Cold War model for South Asia is the way in which the Cold War powers cooperated, that is, through the SALT treaties. The two SALT Treaties or, Strategic Arms Limitation Talks were the product of two rounds of trilateral talks that led to the START or Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties. These treaties were centered on arms control and reducing the number of nuclear warheads that each country possessed. Due to the nature of the way that South Asia proliferated, these talks would need to be trilateral. Further, the total number of nuclear weapons possessed by China, India, and Pakistan *together* is less than what either of the Cold War powers *currently* have (CNN). Thus, even if they were to sit down for trilateral talks, the scope for the amount of progress they can make is limited by their possession of fewer nukes. However, the potential impact of China, India, and Pakistan even having such talks is quite important. If, for example, they were to make a Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, such as the one made by the US and USSR, this alone would help contribute to the continued non-use of nuclear weapons in South Asia.

Lastly, there is more to Indo-Pakistani cultural ties than just cricket. Before 1947, they were one country. During the violence of partition, a part of India was cut off and turned into another country, leading to a lot of displacement of people. Recently, there have been an increasing number of grassroots movements seeking to reestablish contact between or unify families that were separated and lost during Partition. Thus, while India and Pakistan may have a significant religious difference between them, they have many cultural ties, shared history, and to some extent, a shared population. This strong "bottom-up" type of association reflects a potential ability for both countries to come together and overcome their differences.

The current situation of the world shows little likelihood of there being another case similar to the relationships between China-India-Pakistan. These cases cannot be considered a model of how nuclear-power dynamics can take place, but there are some broader lessons from the behavior of these three states that could potentially be applied to other cases. While there are no other nuclear powers that also seek to resolve a territorial dispute, the evidence presented in this paper shows the importance of economic relations and diplomatic ties. These are both important in terms of ways to collaborate and, perhaps more importantly, ways to punish each other without directly escalating a conflict to war. Perhaps the most important conclusion that this paper has made is the cross between the conflict of nuclear deterrence and irredentism. Based on the evidence provided above, it can be safely deduced that the irredentist movement will take precedence but the fear of nuclear war will definitely play into the dynamic. Thus, as in the cases of India-China and India-Pakistan, states with a territorial conflict between them attain nuclear weapons are more likely to pursue peaceful methods to resolve their dispute. These peaceful methods may not necessarily work, either these cases or in those in the future, but they cannot be faulted for trying.

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