

Date: _____ Day: _____

Topic: Nuclear Deterrence and Escalation in the Recent Indo-Pak Crisis

Outline

1- Introduction

Thesis Statement: The nuclear deterrence played a vital role in the de-escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan. The nuclearization of the two countries established the norm of "peace through strength". However, the persistent threat of nuclear escalation must be addressed through diplomacy and mutual cooperation.

2- Historical Context and Evolution of Indo-Pak Nuclear Programme

Case in Point: India's "No First Use Policy"

Case in Point: Pakistan's "Full Spectrum Deterrence"

3- Role of Nuclear Deterrence in Indo-Pak Crisis of 2025

a) Nuclear deterrence provided a level playing field to two disproportionate nations

Case in Point: India as a world's largest country by population, seven times bigger geographically, third largest economy of the world.

b) Nuclear deterrence as a shield against India's hegemonic tendencies

Case in Point: India's "Cold Start Doctrine" vs "Pakistan's Multidomain Operation"

c) Reassurance of territorial integrity through nuclear deterrence

Case in Point: Calculated use of military equipment by Pakistan

d) Psychological warfare along with nuclear deterrence paved the way for peace talks

Case in Point: Donald Trump's mediation after the news of "National Command Authority's meeting"

e) Nuclear deterrence ensured "peace through strength"

Case in Point: Rejection of "India's

New Normal" doctrine

4- Risks of Escalation in a Nuclear Environment

- a) ^{Risk of} Nuclear escalations fuelled by religious sentiments

Case in Point: India's "Operation Sindoor" Vs Pakistan's "Operation Banyan-um-Marsoos"

- b) Escalation management by Pakistan's armed forces

Case in Point: Six jets shot down of PAF, when they could hit more

- c) Threats of future escalations as conflicts still exist

Case in Point 1: Indian support to BLA in Balochistan

Case in Point 2: Water sharing models in Indus - Basin

- d) Persistent nuclear proliferation by both countries

Case in Point 1: Pakistan has 170 while India has 180 nuclear warheads (SIPRI)

Case in Point 2: Indian defense spending \$ 77.4 billion while

Pakistan is set to spend 2.55 trillion Rs. for year 2025-2026

e) The role of major world powers in the future escalations

Case in Point Future alliances in the context of WWI

5- Nuclear Security in South Asia - The Way Forward

5.1) Promotion of bilateral dialogue

5.2) Mutual respect and cooperation

6- Conclusion

Nuclear deterrence reassured territorial sovereignty; de-escalation through escalation management

The invention of the nuclear bomb changed the dynamics of the conventional warfare. Especially, after the nuclear apocalypse in Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the nuclear weapons have just become the showpieces to establish deterrence. The South Asia is a complex region with ~~three~~ two nuclear powers i.e. India and Pakistan. The partition of India brought the decades of instability and rivalry in the region. As the two countries were divided on ^{the} religious lines, the wounds of hatred ^{got} became even worse with the passage of time. The colonial masters did not bother to resolve the critical geographical and humanitarian issues between two countries. These issues became a reason of several conflicts. Both the countries got engaged in several wars over geographical conflicts, in 1948, 1965, 1971, 1999. The most recent military escalation was experienced in May 2025. India accused Pakistan for killing 26 civilians in Pchelgam through cross border terrorism. The

war continues for four days. According to reliable news sources, both the countries were literally on the verge of nuclear war. ^{But} The matter of the fact is that nuclear deterrence played a vital role in the de-escalation of tensions. The nuclearization of the two countries has established the norm of "peace through strength". However the persistent threat of the nuclear escalation must be addressed through diplomacy and mutual cooperation.

The ~~nuclear~~ ^{atomic} program of Pakistan was started in 1962. The Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) launched **Rehbar 1** with the cooperation of America. At that time, the atomic program was only concerned to fulfil the electricity needs of the country. However, when India launched "**Operation Smiling Buddha**" and became a nuclear power in May 18, 1974, Pakistan ^{perceive} ~~took~~ it as a threat and Bhutto launched the nuclear program of Pakistan. Owing to the pressure of International

community, India become a signatory of "no first use policy" - a policy which prevents India to ^{not} use a nuclear bomb first in a the conflict. On the other hand, when Pakistan declared itself to as a nuclear power on May 28, 1998; the country adopted the "full spectrum deterrence" against Indian aggression. It makes Pakistan free from any kind of obligation towards "no first use policy". In this way, Pakistan has a upper hand to utilize its nuclear capabilities during a conflict.

In a recent military conflict, nuclear deterrence provided a level playing field to two ~~dispro~~ disproportionate nations. India is a world's largest country with a population of 1.5 billion while Pakistan's population is only 240.49 million. India is seven times larger ^{than Pakistan} in terms of territorial ownership. Moreover, India is the third largest economy of the world while Pakistan has a fragile economy which is highly

Date: _____ Day: _____
dependent on the loans from the International monetary organizations. The possession of nuclear arsenals has faded these inequalities and provided an equal chance to the both nations to defend their motherland.

As India largely follows the Israel's **Cold Start Doctrine** → a military strategy which allows India to achieve short terms military gains by targeting terrorist facilities in Pakistan within a small period before International intervention. The adoption of doctrine is actually the manifestation of Indian hegemony across the region. The similar strategy was adopted by India on May 7 (midnight); when five cities of Pakistan were targeted. However, Pakistan did not hesitate to retaliate and adopted a **kill chain strategy** - a multidomain operation which interconnected the Pakistani's military equipments with sensors and radars in air, ground, and space. The nuclear deterrence alongwith effective strategic ^{acumen} helped Pakistan to shot down Indian fighter jets.

Similarly, Pakistan reassures territorial integrity through nuclear deterrence. The calculated use of military equipment including drones and missile attacks on Indian Gujarat, Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOK), and Indian mainland sent shockwaves to one of the biggest armies of the world. The Indian government was not expecting such a fierce response. However, Pakistan played its cards very well to reestablish deterrence by showcasing a deliberate, and calculated use of military arsenals.

Furthermore, psychological warfare along with nuclear deterrence paved the way for peace. On May 10, 2025, the Prime Minister of Pakistan convened the meeting the National Command Authority - a body which deals with the usage of nuclear weapons. As the news started circulating, it raised eyebrows of the leaders around the world. The

Trump administration, which was showing no sign of interest for the conflict; got into action. The Indian foreign ministry was pressurized to not underestimate the enemy. It later lead towards the ceasefire which was announced by the American President Donald Trump on the same evening.

Subsequently, the nuclear deterrence laid the foundation of peace. The news of ceasefire broke India's dream to become a regional hegemon. It not only protected the sovereignty of Pakistan but also played a crucial role in destroying the expansionist aspirations of India. The India's **"New Normal Doctrine"** was burned down to the ashes. The Modi's regime was criticized for withdrawing from the war which later served as a political ^{downfall} ~~demise~~ of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP). The politics of hatred got defeated by nuclear ~~deter~~ deterrence.

One of the major reasons

of the heavy military escalations, was the hatred fuelled by religious sentiments. Although, India pretends to be a secular country but the so called "**Operation Sindoor**" burst the myth of Indian Secularism. Sindoor represents a hindu married women. So, this operation largely represented the interests of Indian hindu population by sidelining the other minorities. On the other hand, Pakistan is an Islamic state and people are ~~binded~~ bound by the bonds of religion. The "**Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos**" helped in reviving the sentiments of patriotism, leading the country towards cohesion. In the war of hatred and patriotism, Pakistan stood firmly due to the heavy support of its people.

Secondly, the escalation management by the armed forces helped in de-escalating the things. According to the **Reuters**, Pakistan had the choice to shot down more than six jets of India. However, Pakistan Airforce, showed restraint to

prevent any provocation of nuclear escalation. However, it is an empirical fact that poor economies like Pakistan cannot withstand a long duration full scale war. In these kind of circumstances, the use of nuclear weapons seem to be inevitable which can wipe the humanity ^{from South Asia} in just few hours.

Apparently, the conflicts between India and Pakistan are still largely present. The issues of Kashmir, water sharing models in the Indus-Basin, and cross border terrorism have been aggravating day by day. The Indian involvement in provoking the Separatist movements in Balochistan, pose an existential threat to the Sovereignty of Pakistan. Moreover, water conflict over the distribution of water still holds a significant threat to the lives of 240 Million people. Additionally, the provoking statements from the ^{both} Indian sides regarding war, make the situation even worse for the future peace.

prospects.

In addition to this, nuclear stockpiles of both the countries are continuously growing; posing a great threat to the region's security. According to the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**, Pakistan has estimated ^{about 170} nuclear warheads while India has about **180** nuclear warheads. Both the countries are involved in huge transactions related to warheads. Pakistan imports about 81% of military equipment from China, 7% from France and 6% from Netherlands. While India purchased about 36% of its military equipment from Russia, 33% from France, 13% from Israel, and 10% from the USA. Moreover, the continuously growing defense budgets of both the countries are a major concern for region's security. India is set to spend about **\$77.4 billion** while Pakistan to spend **2.55 trillion rupees** on defense for the year 2025-26.

Apart from this, the risks of ^{nuclear} future escalations looms largely due

to the regional and international alliances. In ~~Sub~~^{Asia} Continent, Pakistan have allies like China, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. On the other hand, India have strong allies like Russia, France, and Israel. The United States of America changes sides, based on their interests. The politics of interests had been a major cause of conflict during World War 1, mainly due to secret alliances. If personal interests continue to be the basis of partnerships, the sub-continent will be covered by the dark clouds of danger.

Therefore, the nuclear security in Asia should be the concern of the major stakeholders and beneficiaries. India and Pakistan should engage in constructive bilateral dialogue. The Shimla Agreement of 1972, Delhi Agreement 1973, Lahore Declaration 1999, and Agra Summit 2001, could be used as the examples of mutual cooperation for the resolution of disputes. The South Asia has a lot of potential in terms of

Date: _____ Day: _____
economic growth. The two arch
rivals should learn from the
European history to convert
rivalry into constructive economic
growth.

In a nutshell, India and
Pakistan are two nuclear armed
nations with tensions. The recent
escalation between India and Pakistan,
was a first large scale military
escalation which spread largely
towards ^{the} mainland of both the
countries. After the **Cuban Missile
Crisis of 1962**, it was a first
instance in the human history
where two nuclear armed nations
were on the brink of a nuclear
aggression. India's aggressive military
tactics in the name of eradicating
terrorism within Pakistan's territory
were the blatant violation of
the country's sovereignty. Pakistan
retaliated fiercely and negated the
"new normal doctrine" of India. Pakistan
reassured sovereignty through nuclear
deterrence and avoid aggressive nuclear

Date: _____

Day: _____

escalation. However, the hegemonic attitude of India might lead the two countries towards nuclear apocalypse. Both the countries should avoid provoking statements and engage in constructive dialogue to prevent future nuclear escalations.
