

Strategic Dynamics of Crisis Stability in South Asia

Journal of Asian and African Studies

2022, Vol. 57(7) 1357–1375

© The Author(s) 2021

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/00219096211054396

journals.sagepub.com/home/jas

**Iftikhar Ali** 

University of Malaya, Malaysia; Karakorum International University, Pakistan

Jatswan S. Sidhu

University of Malaya, Malaysia

Abstract

In contrast to the pervasive confidence that the development of nuclear weapons ensures peace and stability by making wars too expensive to fight for, South Asian strategic stability has drifted into nasty security competition through arms race with an episodic crisis that continues at the sub-conventional level. Deterrence studies that were relegated to the bins of history soon after the end of the Cold War received a renewed interest of scholars on the subject since the demonstration of deterrent capabilities by South Asian rivals in 1998. A new wave of deterrence studies has developed in the current multipolar world with some scholars adopting Cold War models of analysis in the contemporary realms of South Asia, whereas others are attempting new analytical approaches. This article aims to offer a fresh look at how to provide a clear concept of strategic stability, how strategic stability is applicable in contemporary South Asia and what the recent crisis between India and Pakistan being interwoven with terrorism tells us about crisis stability between the two countries under the shadows of nuclear weapons.

Keywords

Deterrence, nuclear weapons, strategic stability, crisis stability, stability–instability paradox

Introduction

Since India and Pakistan conducted their nuclear explosions in May 1998, the relationship between the two has remained intricate and marred with different crises that are inextricably linked with the potential escalation to the level of nuclear exchange. Kashmir region to which both the countries lay claim has become the *casus belli* for all crises and wars between both the neighbors armed with nuclear weapons. The situation on the Line of Control (LoC) that divides the disputed territory continues to be tense and the hostility between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has every possibility that any crisis may escalate into a war—a war that may result into exchange of nuclear weapons. Since the introduction of nuclear weapons in the security calculus of South Asian rivals,

Corresponding author:

Iftikhar Ali, Department of International and Strategic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Email: Iftikhar.ir@kiu.edu.pk