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Nuclear and Missile Race in South Asia-Relevance of Military Structuring

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While the rest of the world is undergoing fundamental changes, only South Asia is not learning its obvious lessons. The South Asian situation is totally centred on the unrelenting hostility between India and Pakistan. Due to Indo-Pak antagonism South Asia remains locked in an unstable situation of neither war nor peace. The two neighbouring countries have fought three wars and the Kargil crisis is referred to as a fourth war. In the wake of nuclear tests in May 1998 and the abandonment of nuclear ambiguity for our overt nuclear weapon status, tensions between India and Pakistan have touched new heights. The Indian sub-continent is far more likelier to witness a nuclear attack/exchange than NATO/Warsaw Pact ever did. This is because after half a century, Indo-Pak relations are less extensive than were those of the US and the former Soviet Union at the height of cold war. The strategic reality in South Asia is truly alarming. Recent developments particularly Kargil episode have only confirmed the belief that India and Pakistan are in dire need of a new peace paradigm because contemporary forms of insecurity are incompatible with conventional paradigms of international relations. The existing no war-no peace situation along the line of control, the daily mortar and artillery shelling, attempts to infiltrate and the strong retaliations cause great concern for international community and especially peace researchers.

According to the author while a lot of work has been done on Non-offensive Defence in regard to Europe, South Africa and East Asia but there is no comprehensive work on military restructuring or NOD in South Asia. The present study is an attempt to fill this gap. The purpose is to learn lessons for South Asia from military restructuring experiences of other regions. Whether poor cultures like India and Pakistan can afford expensive nuclear and missile race? Whether Non-Offensive Defence (NoD) and Military Restructuring can be applied to South Asia? How conversion process in Europe and elsewhere can be made beneficial for nuclear and missile programmes of India and Pakistan? The book under review seeks to find answers to these and similar questions.

The book is divided into 8 chapters. The introductory chapter explains concepts like NoD and MIL. It lays stress on the good intention of NoD doctrine which aims at reducing the risk of military confrontation and improve climate in international relations. The next two chapters deal with nuclear and missile race between India and Pakistan. It is rightly pointed out that nuclear weapons or deterrence is not going to prevent India and Pakistan from engaging in strategic conflict. Significantly, one year after possessing nuclear weapons both fought limited war in Kargil. Both are swayed by a false sense of security based on nuclear ability. It is mythical as there is a wide gap between acquisition and ability to deliver weapon system. Actually it hardly alters the existing situation. By acquiring nuclear capability they have acquired parity, bringing the focus

back on conventional warfare. In other words, India and Pakistan have gained nothing by acquiring nuclear capability. The real danger is that deployment of ballistic missiles with nuclear warhead can make deterrence ineffective and can further make both unstable politically and economically.

The fourth chapter highlights the fact that while military expenditure in rest of the world is declining rather steeply in case of US, UK and Russia in the past-cold war years but it is matter of great concern that it is rising in South Asia. Needless to say these poor countries cannot afford to spend so much in defence as they need resources for unfinished work in social and economic sectors. Allocation of spending to the defence and defence-related industrial sectors is not conducive to the economic development of both countries. It is argued that adoption of NoD would eliminate the chain of action-reaction-escalation in the arms race. The NoD would definitely be an economically wise investment in the long run. What is required is a gradual phasing out certain weapons system replacing with more NoD-compatible ones.

The next chapter throws light on military restructuring experiences of Russia, Western Europe, South Africa, China and US and the lessons to be learnt by South Asia. It makes it clear that concepts of NoD and military restructuring became popular and operational since mid eighties and several important countries have been adopting this path. China factor occupies a significant place in the nuclear and missile race in South Asia and forms the subject matter of sixth chapter. India's nuclear programme has everything to do with China as it has to do with Pakistan. China is helping build a nuclear and missile Pakistan. It has not only provided complete M-11, M-9 and M-18 missiles but it is also providing blueprints and equipment to Pakistan to build a plant for making missiles that would violate the Missile Technology Central Regime (MTCR). How and why the war situation was created in Kargil recently?

According to the author Pakistan's game was to open a new infiltration route in Kargil, cut off the Srinagar-Dras-Kargil Leh Road and push militants into the valley. The latest infiltration was intended to obtain leverage vis-à-vis Indian advantages in Siachen. By pursuing a policy of restraint and not crossing the line of control, India also won the diplomatic war with even Pakistan's close allies like China and US turning their backs on it. Last chapter comprises of conclusions and suggestions. A number of measures are recommended to ease tensions between India and Pakistan. NoD related suggestions to control arms race have also been given.

In the absence of adequate political will in India and Pakistan to settle the dispute, the continued expansion of confidence-building measures is of considerable importance. Given the incipient nuclearisation of the region, the prospect of nuclear war make NoD and military restructuring quite relevant. The book is a timely and useful publication. Not only scholars but also policymakers are sure to benefit from this scholarly work. The book is brief enough for readers in a hurry.