



WHAT IS BEYOND NUCLEAR EQUILIBRIUM?

POLITICS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

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BEYOND NUCLEAR EQUILIBRIUM POLITICS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

*RICARDO JASSO HUEZO

It is well known by international political theorists that the political units called “States” live in an anarchical system. In this world without general authority, the best ally one can have is oneself. As a British politician —Lord Palmerston— once said, “We have no permanent allies nor permanent enemies [...]. Our interests are eternal and our duty is to serve these interests.”¹ International politics is what Morgenthau called “the struggle for power” —that is for dominance.² Every unit in the system seeks to achieve two major goals: survival and preeminence. Bringing all these characteristics together results in the main pattern of political life in the international system: namely, the balance of power.

In this paper, we will depart from the next research question: after the nuclear tests in the decade of 1990, was there a change in the way India and Pakistan conduct the politics of conflict in their relation? The hypothesis guiding this essay is that, after reaching nuclear equilibrium, direct and open fighting between these two countries expired; therefore, both India and Pakistan have resorted to indirect ways of conducting conflict policies.

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¹ Henry Kissinger, *La diplomacia*, 2nd. ed., 4th. reprint., (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2012), p. 91.

² As it is stated in the very title of his book and through the whole of it: *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3th. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966).

Finally, it is important to single out that the structure of this essay will comprise five main parts: the first, on the historical background and the argument of this paper; the second, on terrorism; the third, on internal conflict sponsoring; and, at last, the fourth, on the issue of economic warfare.

A NUCLEAR RELATION

Shortly after its independence from the British Empire, India faced the partition of its territory and its people in the formation of an Islamic country —Pakistan— seceded from the northern provinces of India. Between the two countries, the territory of Kashmir —strategically important for India and vital for the survival of Pakistan— remained in dispute. Furthermore, the memory of the Partition, the loose ties that it left, and the continuous religious and political struggles between both countries contributed to rising already high tension on the bilateral relation. In this context, a security dilemma developed.

As the perception of an imminent, direct threat arose, both countries sought to increase their military capabilities, but every step they took to strengthen their positions resulted in the same reaction of the counterpart. Growing stronger turned out not to be the solution to the menaces coming from the other side of the border. Moreover, the more military capability they possessed, the easier seemed to use it.

The first direct confrontation took place in 1947, followed by the wars of 1965 and 1971. In view of this scenario, the tendency was for the conflict to grow and, with it, the possibility of renewed direct military struggle. This situation seemed threatening to both countries, so what to do to finish with this status quo of potential war? The answer seemed obvious: acquiring nuclear capability.

Nuclear weapons meant a revolutionary new variable in international politics. Possessing such a potential of destruction, the ultimate weapon, was the perfect instrument of political domination; who may be so irrational to remain unshakable facing a nuclear threat? Referring to history as evidence and example, although military defeat against the United States was almost certain, emperor Hirohito's Japan had already designed a plan of military and civil resistance to face the invasion of the main island —Honshu—; surrender was not an option. Nevertheless, the nuclear explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki resulted in the sudden change of

Imperial Japan's plans for defense; on September 1945, the Emperor announced the unconditional surrender of the Empire of Japan. The monopoly of nuclear power results in hegemony; however, when all the parties in the conflict have achieved nuclear capability, the result is equilibrium.

Nuclear equilibrium, compared to a traditionally-implemented balance of power, is unique. Unlike the former, it does not mean the typical tug of war between the parties; as every unit possesses the ultimate power of destruction, the costs of trying to overcome the equilibrium is enormous. Simply stated, a nuclear balance is a balance of mutually assured destruction (MAD). The first shot would unleash an immediate response, which, therefore, would cause the same reaction by the other side, leading to complete annihilation of the intervening parties.

Notwithstanding the above, the possession of nuclear weapons by the units in conflict does not imply the resolution of the conflict between them. The argument of this work is that, due to the nuclear balance reached by the mid-1990s, India and Pakistan have been forced to change their policies of conflict between them. The political conflict did not banish with the detonation of their first nuclear tests, but it has been necessary to resort to different means of confrontation, prescribing direct military struggle. Furthermore, in order to avoid engaging in diplomatic tensions which could lead to increasing the risk of war and, therefore, nuclear conflict, both countries' post-nuclear policies of conflict need to hide the identity of the attacker, making them seem to be implemented by other actors —buck-passing.

India and Pakistan have resorted to the following strategies in their post-nuclear conflict relation: first, sponsored terrorism; second, sponsored internal movements; third, economic warfare; and fourth, alliance formation. Surely, what is expected with these measures is not to ultimately defeat an undefeatable rival, but to make it negotiate and agree on concessions; this by means of attacking State's legitimacy and what is called "latent power."³

³ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), p. 60.

TERRORISM

The first post-nuclear policy of conflict analyzed for the case of India and Pakistan is sponsored terrorism.

[...] states might use terrorist groups to manage the strategic and political costs of rivalries. [...] States now use terrorist movements to ‘manage’ their interstate military rivalries by using them to exact real costs on rivals [...] while preventing higher-stakes and more costly military conflict.⁴

Furthermore, ...

States can reduce the international and domestic political costs of rivalry by actively providing clandestine support to terrorists. Use of terrorist groups as military proxies against rivals also provides the advantages of strategic ambiguity and plausible deniability.⁵

These are the reasons why resorting to sponsoring terrorism has seemed as a rational policy in the post-nuclear, Indo-Pakistani conflict.

It has been internationally well-known that Pakistan is a State that sponsors terrorism. It has used this instrument on two main fronts: on the one hand, since the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s, in Afghanistan by helping the Taliban; and on the other hand, in the Kashmir front against India. Lashkar-e-Taiba (The Army of the Pure), Jaish-e-Muhammad (The Army of Muhammad), and Harakat ul-Mujahidin (Movement of the Companions of the Prophet) figure as the most important terrorist groups sponsored by the Pakistani State against India. As it can be noticed by their names, Pakistan exploits extremist Islamist thinking to turn it into terrorism and use it as a political instrument. For example, in a Lashkar-e-Taiba’s pamphlet titled “Why are we waging jihad” it is stated the “restoration of Islamic rule over all parts of India,” as one of the objectives of this organization; while it declares India as an enemy of Islam.⁶

Among the most notorious attacks Pakistani-sponsored terrorist groups have carried out are the 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines airplane, the 2000 attack on the army barracks at the Red Fort, the 2001 attack on Srinagar airport, the attack on

⁴ Michael G. Findley, James Piazza, and Joseph K. Young, “Games Rivals Play: Terrorism in International Rivalries,” *Journal of Politics*, 74 (2012), p. 236 and 237.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁶ Jayshree Bajoria, “Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure) (aka Lashkar e-Tayyiba, Lashkar e-Toiba; Lashkar-i-Taiba),” *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 14, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/lashkar-e-taiba-army-pure-aka-lashkar-e-tayyiba-lashkar-e-toiba-lashkar--taiba/p17882>, accessed December 14, 2015.

the Indian parliament in that same year, the 2006 attack on the Mumbai commuter rail, and the 2008 multiple attacks in Mumbai. Logically, as it is in its interest to keep the identity of the planner hidden, Pakistan has always denied its links with terrorist groups and their acts. However, Pakistani officials as former presidents Musharraf and Zardari have declared that their country has indeed backed such organizations; “[t]hey were indeed formed. The government turned a blind eye because they wanted India to discuss Kashmir. [...] It is the right of any country to promote its own interests [...],” stated Musharraf.⁷

Pakistani interests in promoting and sponsoring Islamic terrorism in India has mainly been to make India sit and negotiate a settlement on the Kashmir dispute; while using these organizations as a force of instability in Kashmir which may question Indian authorities’ control. Trying to make its rival negotiate, while making Kashmir seem as unable to be governed is Pakistan’s strategy of using terrorism as a policy of conflict in a post-nuclear bilateral relation.

India’s sponsored terrorism has a main different characteristic from Pakistan’s; while the latter has used terrorism as a means to make India negotiate on the Kashmir dispute, the former has resorted to sponsored terrorism as an instrument to divert Pakistan’s attention from Kashmir and to weaken Pakistan’s internal legitimacy. India has backed attacks against its neighbor not just in Pakistani territory, but also against its forces placed in Afghanistan, by helping and sponsoring groups that use terrorism as a tactical instrument —as anti-Pakistan, Afghan movements and insurgent groups at Baluchistan.

The agency carrying out this sponsorship and even sometimes the actor behind the attacks has been India’s RAW (Research and Analysis Wing).

RAW set up two covert groups of its own, Counter Intelligence Team-X (CIT-X) and Counter Intelligence Team-J (CIT-J), the first targeting Pakistan in general and the second directed at Khalistani groups. The two groups were responsible for carrying out terrorist operations inside Pakistan [...]. [A] "low-grade but steady campaign of bombings in major Pakistani cities, notably Karachi and Lahore" was carried out.⁸

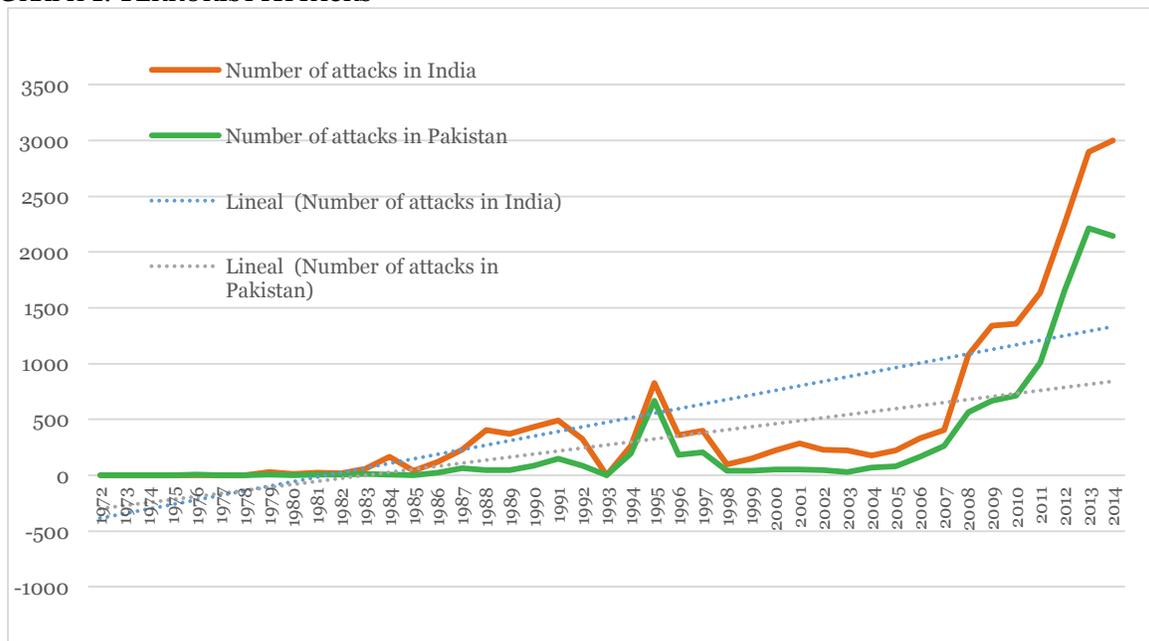
⁷ SPIEGEL, “Spiegel Interview with Pervez Musharraf: Pakistan is Always Seen as the Rogue,” *SPIEGEL*, October 4, 2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-pervez-musharraf-pakistan-is-always-seen-as-the-rogue-a-721110.html>, accessed December 5, 2015.

⁸ Jayshree Bajoria, “RAW: India’s External Intelligence Agency,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, November 7, 2008, <http://www.cfr.org/india/raw-indias-external-intelligence-agency/p17707>, accessed December 5, 2015.

However, despite Pakistani claims of Indian-sponsored terrorism planning and carrying out attacks in its territory in the last decade, there is no determinant evidence to argue that the Indian State has continued to pursue politics of terrorism sponsorship against Pakistan. Nonetheless, India has not stopped to economically and militarily back rebel groups in Pakistan and against Pakistani government in Afghanistan and Baluchistan; it is important to note that these groups are accountable for several attacks as the one in Loralay in January 2015, where “[m]ilitants fired five rockets on the checkpoint before opening indiscriminate fire with automatic weapons.”⁹

The next graph (GRAPH 1.) shows the number of terrorist attacks in India and Pakistan.

GRAPH 1. TERRORIST ATTACKS



SOURCE: self-elaborated with data from National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, *Global Terrorism Database*, University of Maryland and the Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>, consulted on December 5, 2015.

As can be noticed, since 1899, in the immediate aftermath of the nuclear tests that assured that both parties have reached nuclear parity, the tendency of the occurrence of terrorist attacks in both countries increased until 1995; this was followed by a time

⁹ The News Paper Staff Correspondent, “Seven FC Men Killed in Loralai,” *Dawn*, January 13, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1156640/seven-fc-men-killed-in-loralai>, accessed December 5, 2015.

of stability in the tendency; and finally has notably boosted since 2005. It is evident that not every terrorist attack can be attributed to the Indo-Pakistani rivalry; nonetheless, as it is shown in the *Global Terrorism Database*, most of the attacks took place in Kashmir, in its surrounding regions, or in regions with strong separatist sentiments; and were conducted by insurgent and rebel militias—in the case of the attacks in Pakistan—and by Islamic and rebel militias—in the case of India. It is evident that the nuclear balance between India and Pakistan resulted in the resorting of new conflict strategies, such as sponsoring terrorism.

BACKING INTERNAL INSTABILITY

Together with sponsoring terrorism, both countries have supported insurgent and rebel groups. Sometimes acts of these sponsored rebels can be classified as terrorism; other times attacks by self-named terrorist groups can be attributed to these internal insurgencies. One of the difficulties of analyzing internal insurgent groups in both countries is that the line between terrorists and rebels is sometimes vague.

Pakistan has historically backed insurgent groups in India, specifically in the Kashmir region. Since Partition, rebel groups to the Indian rule in Kashmir emerged; however, they did not remain independent, but, on the contrary, in order to advance their interests of ending India's dominance in the region, they have accepted Pakistani aid in their struggle. As ex-president Musharraf declared, "Pakistan had its own proxies, [and] India had its proxies[, too]."¹⁰ For Pakistan, "[s]ponsoring militancy in Kashmir is regarded as a relatively cheap and effective way [...] [of conducting conflict policies], while simultaneously creating a bulwark of instability along the country's vulnerable southern flank."¹¹ Even more, ...

At least 91 insurgent training camps have been identified in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK), the bulk of which lie contiguous to the Indian districts of Kupwara, Baramulla, Poonch, Rajauri and Jammu. Basic courses

¹⁰ Jon Boone, "Musharraf: Pakistan and India's Backing for Proxies in Afghanistan Must Stop," *The Guardian*, February 13, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/pervez-musharraf-pakistan-india-proxies-afghanistan-ghani-taliban>, accessed December 5, 2015.

¹¹ Peter Chalk, "Pakistan's Role in the Kashmir Insurgency," *Rand Corporation*, September 1, 2001, <http://www.rand.org/blog/2001/09/pakistans-role-in-the-kashmir-insurgency.html>, accessed December 5, 2015.

run for between three and four months, focusing on weapons handling, demolitions, and urban sabotage.¹²

India, for its part, has been accused of supporting rebel groups in Pakistan, mainly the Baloch Nationalists. Pakistani director general of military operations, Ahmed Shuja Pasha directly accused India, among other countries, that “India ha[d] established nine training camps along the Afghan border, where they are training members of the Baloch Liberation Army[; and that] India and the UAE were funding and arming the Baloch.”¹³

India, as its neighbor, has also carried out proxy operations; as it has been stated by *India Today*,

Between October and November 2011, [...] TSD [—Indian Tactical Support Division—] had claimed money “to try enrolling the secessionist chief in the province of a neighbouring country” and “Rs1.27 crore (Indian currency) to prevent transportation of weapons between neighbouring countries.” In early 2011, TSD claimed an unspecified amount for carrying out “eight low-intensity bomb blasts in a neighboring country,” according to this weekly Indian magazine.¹⁴

The policies of supporting internal dissident movements have seemed as an alternative to traditional conflict policies to both States in the aftermath of nuclear balance. As it has been argued above, the reaching of nuclear parity has made direct, military confrontation enormously costly, because of the risk of a nuclear escalate; therefore, among other instruments, India and Pakistan have resorted to supporting rebel groups inside one another’s territories. In the context of nuclear equilibrium, nuclear powers make war in the disguise of third parties — “proxy war”—, as it has been the case for the Soviet-American conflict in the Cold War. These measures aim to destabilize State control over its society or over its sphere of influence, in order to divert its attention and the importance it gives to certain contentious issue in its relation to other State; this without engaging in open, face-to-face combat.

¹² *Loc. cit.*

¹³ Saba Imtiaz, “MPs told Russia, India and UAE involved in Baloch insurgency,” *The Express Tribune*, The international New York Times, December 3, 2010, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/84902/wikileaks-india-russia-supporting-baloch-insurgency/>, accessed December 5, 2015.

¹⁴ Umar Cheema, “Ex-Indian Army chief admits sponsoring terrorism in Balochistan,” *The News International*, October 21, 2013, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-209274-Ex-Indian-Army-chief-admits-sponsoring-terrorism-in-Balochistan>, accessed December 5, 2015.

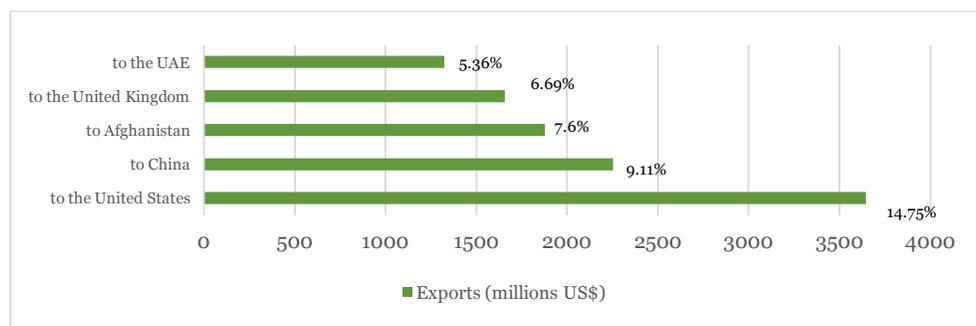
WAGING WAR IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

The political instruments noted above are considered raw, violent means of conducting political struggle; however, there are less violent and direct methods of fighting in international politics, too, despite being as hard as the former. One of these is what has been called “economic warfare.” This kind of combat aims for weakening what is called a State’s “latent power:”

[it] constitutes the societal resources that a state has available to build military forces. Although there are always a variety of such resources, the size of a state’s population and its wealth are the two most important components for generating military might. [...] Wealth is important because a state cannot build a powerful military if it does not have the money and technology to equip, train, and continually modernize its fighting forces.¹⁵

Pakistan, as the economically weaker party in the conflict, has been seriously limited to resort to economic policies of conflict. As having an economy of nineteen percent the size of India’s,¹⁶ it has been forced to seek to increase economic ties with more economically powerful countries, as China and the United States. This is reflected in the data on its exports (GRAPH 2.), where the United States and China figure as the most important buyers of Pakistani products in 2014; this, at the same time, makes Pakistan deeply economically dependent toward these two countries. Pakistan, simply stated, is not a rival for India in the economic sphere; nor can it take relevant economic measures in the political struggle against its neighbor.

GRAPH 2. PAKISTAN EXPORTS



SOURCE: self-elaborated with data from World Trade Organization, “Pakistan Trade Summary 2014 Data,” *World Integrated Trade Solution*, <http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/PAK/Year/2014/Summary>, consulted on December 5, 2105.

¹⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 60 and 61.

¹⁶ Patrick Clawson, “The Relation between Security and Economics in South Asia”, NDU, Washington, D. C., December (1997); quoted by Sanjaya Baru, “The Strategic Consequences of India’s Economic Performance,” in Kanti P. Bajpai and Harsh V. Pant (eds.), *India’s Foreign Policy. A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 174.

What is the importance of the economy in the Indo-Pakistani Conflict? During the decade of the 1960s, until the 1980s, Pakistan's economic average growth rate reached six percent; this for an India growing at an average of 3.5 percent at the time implied a direct challenge, increasing the potential of a military threat from Pakistan. This rates of growth in Pakistan were mainly caused by foreign economic aid from China and then from the United States during the Soviet-Afghan War. Hand-in-hand with a growing and stable economy, Pakistan increased its military capabilities and developed nuclear weapons.¹⁷ This is the reason of the importance India gives to resorting to economic means for attacking Pakistan's latent power; it is a matter of weakening and prevention for India, its policy is one of maintaining Pakistani economy in such a low profile as it has been during the last twenty years.

Due to the economic importance India has achieved in the international economic system, Pakistan's potential allies, as China and the United States, can not pursue policies that may endanger or hurt their economic relations with India; in this respect, Pakistan ranks second for its allies regarding economic issues. Besides recent plans for establishing an economic corridor between China and Pakistan have been strongly opposed by the Indian government; India has already resorted to its tactic relations with rebel groups inside Pakistan, mainly Baloch Nationalists who have already declared opposition to such an agreement.¹⁸ This move for economic integration has meant for India a new front in the economic warfare against its struggling neighbor.

Another economic measure isolating Pakistani economy has been India's "Look East Policy," which aims can be summarized as "[...] increasing strategic interaction with ASEAN, Australia, and Japan and the attempts to create a new regional group around the Bay of Bengal, [while] excluding Pakistan."¹⁹ Intentionally or not, it is clear that India is following an economic plan that is reducing Pakistan's opportunities to increase its economic bonds in its immediate international neighborhood and in other regions.

¹⁷ Referred chapter, p. 173 to 175.

¹⁸ Zafar Zulqurnain Sahi, "India's Unhealthy Obsession with China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," *The Express Tribune* with *The International New York Times*, June 2, 2015, <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/27940/indias-unhealthy-obsession-with-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/>, accessed December 5, 2015.

¹⁹ Sanjaya Baru, referred chapter, p. 175.

This is the situation that emanates from the political field into the sphere of economics, regarding Pakistan's and India's positions in the world economic system. On the one hand, Pakistan, unlike India, is unable to wage economic war against its rival neighbor; the only option available for it is to bandwagon with major economic powers, as China. On the other, India, due to its increasing economic importance and power, can resort (and has resorted) to economic measures in its political struggle against Pakistan, as a way of preventing it from strengthening and avoiding highly costly, direct military confrontation with it. Economic policies of conflict supplement the post-nuclear conflict measures noted earlier, making, as a whole, what can be called a post-nuclear grand strategy toward neighboring conflict.

FINAL THOUGHTS

What is beyond nuclear equilibrium? Is there finally the desired lasting peace? Or, as many writers have wondered, are nuclear weapons "weapons of peace"? The answer to these questions is short but certain: after nuclear parity there is still conflict, the struggle for power is simply never-ending. However, political instruments change in order to avoid direct nuclear confrontation; as none of the struggling parties can afford such expensive costs, the means become more diffuse, indirect, and deceptive.

Sponsored terrorism seems a rational policy to implement. Political costs are diffuse; economical ones, low. It is only needed to support a radical (religious or political) cause and extremist militants will do the rest. It is useful for destabilizing internal order, imposing high costs on internal legitimacy, and for striking strategically or symbolically-important targets; while the identity of the sponsor remains covered by the extremists' irrationality. As the Pakistan and India cases have illustrated, this is a useful instrument of conflict in a post-nuclear, contentious relation.

Supporting internal trouble-makers appears as a rational instrument, too, in carrying out indirect confrontation. Again, taking advantage of internal extremist political groups appears as a useful way of advancing one's interests in the context of a relation stuck in the logics of nuclear balance. By means of increasing the power and scope of internal enemies of the State, a country can make its rival to divert its

attention from contentious issues and to make it negotiate or give up on certain conflictive topics; while hiding its identity of the one pulling the strings, thus, avoiding the direct costs of conflict. India and Pakistan have supported and sponsored rebel and insurgent groups in one another's territories, as a means of advancing their political interests in the contentious relation that exists between them; while, avoiding direct confrontation by buck-passing their responsibility on the issue.

Finally, economic warfare, despite being a more direct and open instrument, is also a useful way of carrying out politics of conflict in a post-nuclear contentious relation. However, as a more complex instrument, it is necessary to have achieved significant, international, economic power; otherwise, it is almost impossible to make a profitable use of it. Pakistan has been unable to use economic means in the struggle against its neighbor; while India has resorted to this instrument as an important component of its general strategy toward Pakistan, which aims to weaken its latent power while avoiding a direct clash with this country.

It is evident that, after reaching nuclear parity, a change took place in the way India and Pakistan carried out their contentious relation. Direct confrontation became inconceivable and absolutely irrational, as it may trigger a nuclear response from one of the struggling parties, which may have resulted in the same response by its counterpart; in short, an open war like the ones of 1947, 1965, and 1971, may have turned out into mutually assured destruction, making direct war irrational. As it is stated in the hypothesis which has guided the argument of this work, in view of the above, both countries have been forced to resort to indirect ways of waging war.

After nuclear balance, there is no peace but war by new, indirect, and diffuse means; nuclear weapons do not solve political contentions, they just lock out the possibility of open war, making nuclear power resort to different means to clash for their interests in the struggle for power. There is no such "weapon of peace;" weapons are for war, and war in the anarchic system which is the international realm is endless.

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