

A major flaw of the book indeed is its lack of any central argument as to what gives rise to insurgency. The author seems more interested in events following insurgency rather than the ones leading to it. Insurgency as it is well known today is a major problem. Bhaumik himself has conceded that it will not go away, yet surprisingly enough he has not attempted to dwell on its origins, i.e., what factors lead national leaders to disregard their own historical traditions and adopt policies of centralization; is it the fault of the leader or the system? In other words, there are empirical evidences but no theoretical contention.

The utility of the book is further limited by the fact that it has not attempted to make any recommendations as to what is the way out for South Asia. It is quite easy to suggest that the problem exists and will remain so; the onus of the researcher or academician, however, lies in showing (or at least attempting to show) the people the road beyond.

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**P. R. Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Standoff : The Role of the United States*, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1995, pp.1-256, Price Rs.395**

As the century ends, a nuclear specter haunts South Asia more apparently than the 1970s when both India and Pakistan were caught up in a 'latent' nuclear arms race. Recently with the deconstruction of the Soviet Union, the fear of nuclear proliferation has become far more reality than ever before. A strong wind of overt nuclearisation has been blowing in South



Asia. In 1995 the former Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif confirmed that Pakistan did not only have a nuclear bomb, but was capable of using it in case of Indian attack, while recently in India the Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party, widely believed to be the most promising contender of assuming power confirmed that if they would come to power, they would go for nuclear weapons. Thus, the pro-deterrence lobbies both in India and Pakistan are gaining strength. Besides, there has been a major change in US policy towards India. For the first time, the Clinton Administration recognised that as long as China has nuclear weapons, it would be impossible to persuade India to give up its nuclear option and sign the NPT. Likewise Pakistan always makes her nuclear programme conditional to that of India. It is in such context that the book titled, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Standoff: The Role of the United States*, is a timely addition to the existing literature on nuclear proliferation providing useful inputs to the policy makers as well as the nuclear experts. Written just before the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Renewal Conference held in May 1995, Chari has addressed several questions pertaining to the problem of nuclear proliferation in South Asia. This ranges from the question of ambiguous nuclear capabilities acquired by the two South Asian adversaries to American involvement into the nuclear impasse.

In the first chapter, the author discusses nuclear postures of India and Pakistan involving their motivations, capabilities and peaceful nuclear explosions (PNE). What prompted India for instance, towards nuclearisation? In addition to oft-quoted reasons and objections behind India's refusal to join NPT, it has been observed that India has been resisting outside pressure for entering the NPT as her present nuclear policy is premised on two basic lines of action: (i) resisting pressure (maintaining autonomy in foreign policy) and (ii) holding nuclear capabilities as insurance against an uncertain strategic future. While sketching



the origin, development and motivations of Pak nuclear capability, among other factors, India's role has become paramount. The author also looks at the commonalities of their nuclearisation which are: (i) perceiving security threat from each other, (ii) sharing concerns arising from nuclear smuggling from the ex-Soviet Republics, (iii) national prestige and (iv) internal political dynamics existing in their domestic polities. In this context China's role in South Asian nuclearisation has been examined quite extensively. The author also points out the mutual anxieties existing in the entire gamut of their nuclear relationship. He terms India's threat perceptions as multidimensional, while those of Pakistan unilateral.

With regard to their nuclear capabilities the author has made a general estimate supported by mainly Western sources of information. The future of Indo-Pak nuclear programme is related to their ongoing missile development process in which India runs far ahead of Pakistan. With this relative position the author puts India and Pakistan on an interesting common ground in that nuclear capabilities achieved by these two countries are of primitive, fission devices are untested that virtually undermine the efficacy of these weapons. Despite all these revelations regarding nuclear proliferation in South Asia, the US shows visible worry about the nuclear developments in this subcontinent.

Against the backdrop of Indo-Pak nuclear standoff, Chari attempts to portray American concerns and policies upon which its nuclear policy towards South Asia is grounded. The policy of blocking Indo-Pak efforts to develop nuclear capabilities is being exercised by three mechanisms. These are (i) the Tarapur impasse, (ii) Cryogenic engines debate and (iii) the Pressler Amendment. Precisely, the present US non-proliferation policy towards South Asia seeks to "cap, then overtime reduce, and finally, eliminate the possession of weapons of mass destruction(WMD) and their means



of delivery." The author has rightly put forward a paradox in this chapter, which reads "Pakistan seeks a clear nexus between the non-proliferation and the Kashmir problem and for that matter, any substantive confidence-building measures that might be envisaged between the two countries. India does not accept this nexus, but seeks to establish a linkage between the Indo-Pak nuclear impasse and Sino-Indian nuclear question." (p.80)

Then the author has closely examined the basic options available to India and Pakistan in connection with their nuclear policies. According to him, the options are : (i) to go overtly nuclear, (ii) foreclose the nuclear option, or (iii) continue in the present state of strategic ambiguity despite its unsatisfactory condition. While examining these options he has brought out merits and demerits of each option. The proponents of minimum deterrent force premised on a small clandestine stock of nuclear weapons coupled with a strategy of nuclear uncertainty, has received a critical assessment by the author. However the case for overt nuclearisation has been analysed within the framework of a Cost-Benefit analysis where Chari reflects that the costs outweigh the benefits arising from overt nuclearisation.

So the due course, according to the author, will have to be nothing but keeping the nuclear option open in a state of suspended animation as this issue is deeply embedded in the plebiscitary politics of both countries and virtually there is no way to retreat.

The author then poses another question: would this nuclear ambiguity termed as the Indo-Pak nuclear standoff, provide stability in South Asia? The author has rightly argued that sweeping generalisations suggesting that nuclear weapons could either stabilise or destabilise Indo-Pak relations are not possible because these are irresolvable propositions and would hopefully remain unproven assertions (p.125). Rather nuclear weapons



introduce a new and qualitatively more potent danger to the existing Indo-Pak impasse.

Whatever the deleterious consequences stemming out from Indo-Pak nuclearisation, the reality on the ground is that both India and Pakistan have developed a national awareness with regard to retaining nuclear weapons. It has become part of wider ruling elites' belief system or doctrinal premise. The bottomline is that India and Pakistan run their respective nuclear weapons project in the absence of any public knowledge or debate leading to speculation and suspicion about the true nuclear technological capacities available to sustain a viable deterrent posture based on nuclear ambiguity and ensure its credibility.

Chari as logical continuation, has mentioned the most serious recent crises in Indo-Pak bilateral relations, which have significant implications for their deterrent postures as they took place with suspected nuclear overtones. Among them the most important are: the 1987 Brasstacks Exercise and the 1990 Indo-Pak crisis over the reinforcement of Indian troops in Kashmir. In the backdrop of their undeclared nuclear power status, it is widely held that the resolution or defusion of these crises was possible due to the existence of nuclear ambiguity. But the author has a different view in this regard. Chari holds that it was not the threat of mutual damage as a focal point of balance of terror situation in South Asia, but prudent leadership prevailing in the subcontinent, threat of conventional warfare and above all, the role of external disuasion that made avoidance of war possible. Here lies the role of the United States, that has been demonstrated even if partially in its efforts to prevent the deployment of surface to surface missiles by India and Pakistan. The USA has already expressed its concerns by pursuing a 'step by step approach to cap, then reduce and finally eliminate' both WMD and the ballistic missile delivery system (acquired either indigenously or with foreign support). Indian prestigious Agni and Prithvi programmes and Pakistani



attempts for acquiring M-11 missiles with their associated technology from China have precipitated US concerns and drag her to play a constructive role in this region.

While discussing strategic dimensions of missile deployment, Chari argues that the missile development programme is rather detrimental to regional security in the sense that prompts the US to pursue carrot and stick policy towards South Asia. While the arms control view expresses the concerns about further instability through proliferation, the militarist view calls for stability through nuclear weapons. Amid dilemmas and confusions regarding the costs and benefits of missile deployment, both the countries continue their programmes and the USA keeps on its pressure to restrain their nuclear programmes. This, in no way, reduces the prospect of another Indo-Pak crisis, be it conventional or nuclear.

For managing the standoff Chari advocates track-two or people-to-people diplomacy which could ooze up overall bilateral relations of India and Pakistan. Peaceful method of solving bilateral problems envisaged in the Simla Agreement remains a formidable key to the management of Indo-Pak nuclear standoff. There is a need to broaden trade and cultural relations, go ahead with an Oslo-type process based on quiet diplomacy and discard stereotype mutual images. Both the countries will have to address their real national security problems, that have been plaguing India and Pakistan for a long time. Chari puts forward some courses of actions to manage Indo-Pak nuclear standoff. First, the author turns our eyes to the solution of the Kashmir problem by the acceptance of the *de facto* line of control as the international border and thereby, recognises the division of Kashmir by according it *de jure* status(p.156).

The second most important area of managing the Indo-Pak tension is to initiate and sustain a process of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). Both the military and non-military dimensions



of CBMs may be exercised in bringing stability and peace between the two countries, although the present level of CBMs is entirely dissatisfactory. Against this background, the Clinton formula has recently been set in motion aimed at bringing Pakistan's nuclear programme within 'verifiable capping regime' thereby could put pressure on India for entering a similar verifiable and inspection dispensation. In reality, this has brought significant changes in US nonproliferation strategy in South Asia of which the most critical one is the increasing appreciation by the US about India's security concerns with China which according to the author must be factored into Indo-Pak nuclear equation.

Because of the regional and global dimensions of this problem of Indo-Pak nuclear standoff, a serious initiative must be undertaken for arranging regional dialogue. Chari has identified two tracks of this dialogue: Sino-Indian track and Indo-Pak track focusing upon the nuclear issues. The agenda of such dialogue must include the establishment of guidelines to avoid inflammatory declarations reflected in frequent issues of bombastic and bellicose statements regarding nuclear capabilities.

Within the ambit of Indo-Pak dialogue two proposals—pledges not to conduct nuclear tests or to use nuclear weapons first—belonging to the genre of military CBMs at the nuclear level have been explained at length. As an agenda for the US, Chari has put forward a number of measures ranging from controlling the leakage of fissile materials from the former USSR to promoting a global Zero Ballistic Missile (ZMB) regime.

In the concluding chapter, Chari has focused wide ranging issues like Indo-Pak nuclear deterrence, US concerns about the question of stability of their nuclear standoff, the role of China as a balancer or trouble-maker in Indo-Pak arms race, the changes in US post-Cold War nuclear doctrine and the NPT Renewal and Review Conference of May 1995. Importantly the root of US



concerns about the subcontinental nuclear deterrence lies in the reality that both India and Pakistan are generally believed to be threshold or near nuclear or crypto-nuclear status. For that reason, according to the Clinton Administration, Indo-Pak subcontinent would be the most likely place for future use of WMD, including nuclear weapons. This view is cemented by the two recent Indo-Pak crises (popularly known as nuclear crises). Despite US concerns and her efforts for denuclearization, this region has now reached in the era of post-proliferation, which warrants rather making it 'nuclear safe' than freeing it from nuclear weapons. This has obviously solidified existence of Indo-Pak nuclear deterrence although enormous doubts prevail as regards of true value of this deterrent situation or even whether these two countries possess nuclear capabilities in real sense.

Subsequently, this has generated an impasse centering around nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan. Chari terms this situation as nuclear standoff instead of nuclear deterrence, limited or ambiguous. Contrary to popular assertion, Chari points out that due to technological unsophistication supported by the experts in this area, nuclear deterrence prevailing in South Asia has a minor role in stabilizing bilateral relations between the two arch rivals—India and Pakistan. Chari continues, "the more pertinent conclusion possible at this stage is that nuclear weapons have no relevance to the real security problems lying between India and Pakistan/ the expected or assumed stabilising effects of nuclear deterrence in the Indo-Pak context are therefore largely illusory because they have no relevance to addressing this range of their real security problems" (p.220). Given the above scenario, the US response insofar seems to be excessive as both the nuclear and missile development programmes by India and Pakistan are in primary stage. This might compel the US to revise its nonproliferation strategy in South Asia.



Chari believes that despite Indo-Pak refusal to join the NPT or a fullscope safeguards regime, they will not venture towards overt nuclearization. Chari has dismissed some popular myths quite astonishingly that Indo-Pak nuclear capabilities are nebulous to either threaten the nonproliferation regime's integrity or each other's national security in any substantive manner. Even meaningful stability cannot be achieved in this way. Chari has found that the dangers emanating from the Indo-Pak nuclear standoff are mostly imagined and the response made by the US is exaggerated. This requires refocusing of US attention rather on basic issues that lie in contention between two uneasy South Asian neighbours (p. 236).

Thus, Chari ends up rebuffing two streams of thought among the advocates of nuclear deterrence in South Asia - proponents of overt nuclearization emphasising nuclear transparency and the adherents of limited deterrence or nuclear ambiguity. Chari argues that level of the development of WMD along with associated delivery systems does not pose any serious threat to the security of South Asian subsystem. This may be deduced by mentioning that the US has no role to play for halting spread of nuclear weapons in this region. This raises a big question to the readers: what purpose did it serve? Was it designed to allay excessive US concerns regarding nuclear proliferation in South? Or was it to send the message to India and Pakistan that they have to go far in order to justify their possession of nuclear capabilities? Or was it aimed at proving the futility of the strategy of nuclear deterrence in South Asia? In other words, the possession of nuclear weapons will not ensure their security, which are chiefly of intra-state nature and the inter-state disputes prevailing between them, may be resolved through the mechanism of CBMs. Therefore, apparently it is undoubtedly a serious attempt to make the nuclear hawks in South Asia disillusioned about their paradigm of balance of terror. Nonetheless going



between the lines of the book what has been revealed is that Chari has made an internal critique of the theory of nuclear deterrence in South Asia, where actually lies the great strength of this book.

Another strength lies in his confident and bold assertion that the 1987 and 1990 Indo-Pak crises were not nuclear ones, although different sources tend to argue that these were nuclear crises. For instance, following the 1990 Indo-Pak crisis, Richard J. Kerr, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency(CIA) declared, "It was the most dangerous nuclear situation we have ever faced since I have been in the US government." However, this is absolutely a bombshell for the adherents of nuclear deterrence. Lastly, this is comprehensively written with lucid language and thematic coherence that has made it a useful resource for both research and teaching purposes.

Despite the aforesaid strengths, this book has few shortcomings. First, the author fails to understand, as the supporters of nuclear deterrence argue, that in Indo-Pak context even opaque proliferation or nuclear ambiguity could deter aggression without overt demonstration of their nuclear prowess and direct nuclear threats against adversaries. Second, although the author squarely criticises all the nuclear options available to both India and Pakistan, he fails to explore any realistic alternative in this regard. Third, like most of the Indian authors, Chari being hostage to the so-called China syndrome, took up the uncalled-for task of overemphasising China's role in South Asia's nuclearisation and missile race. Fourth, while Chari provides a great deal of useful information and insight into the present situation of nuclear proliferation in the subcontinent, more attention would have been given to the intellectual context of symbiotic linkage between South Asian nuclearisation and the US role. Last but not the least, Chari fails to provide a critical assessment of US role by demystifying the double standards or the contradictions observed



at various times. For example, the US is not concerned about the nuclear programme of Israel as it suits her security interests. It becomes fretting when the states hostile to its interests are engaged in acquiring nuclear capabilities well exemplified in the cases of North Korea, Iran, Algeria, Iraq even India and Pakistan. However, this may be demanding too much from a book that already makes a valuable contribution to both South Asian security studies and theoretical debates about the logic of nonproliferation and the logic of nuclear deterrence.

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