

Book Review

Nuclear Deterrence and Conflict Management Between Pakistan and India

- Author: Dr. Zia Ul Haq Shamsi
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Reviewer: Hamail Tahir¹

Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi is an expert in Strategic Studies, who focused mainly on Pakistan and India's Deterrence Dynamics in the South Asian Region. The book is an inspiration to many who have an interest in understanding nuclear deterrence between two nuclear-borne states, Pakistan and India. Additionally, what makes this interesting is the fact that both are arch-rivals and share a border.

The book has done justice to explaining how both countries maintain their nuclear deterrence and strategic stability in an uncertain environment where miscalculation and accidental use are at heights. The Indian Perspective (Offensive Realist) of nuclear weapons proposes the narrative of deterrence against nuclear strikes whereas Pakistan's (Defensive Realist) perspective propagates the idea of nuclear weapons as a deterrent against conventional and nuclear war. The author has in-depth analyzed and explained the foundation of the issue of Kashmir as a bone of contention between both states where India's narrative believes it to be their 'Atoot Aang' meaning *Inseparable* and for Pakistan, it is considered as 'Sheh-Rag' which means *lifeline*. The Kashmir issue is yet to be resolved and Kashmiris to date wait for their right to self-determination.

The author defines WAR as a '*Waste of Available Resources*'. Pakistan and India have managed to fight 3 wars within the 77 years of Pakistan's independence in 1947. The wars of 1965, 1972, and the Kargil War of 1999 have proved the author's point that it has only fueled hatred among both states instead of moving towards conflict management and cooperation. Having said that, the Kargil War primarily shows that nuclear powers do go to war and can have devastating implications on the level of state, regionally, and internationally. The international community should play a significant role in this matter by leading both nations toward resolving their disputes. The second most prominent issue is the matter of Siachen which is a territorial dispute and India claims it as an indicator of maximizing its material power and expanding its frontiers by exploiting the adversary's vulnerabilities. The author in his book mentions that India and Pakistan concentrate more on viewing each other through the lens of Realism rather than posing efforts toward conflict management and cooperation.

Moreover, the book talks about the post-9/11 relations between Pakistan and India where the latter blamed the former for the attack on its Parliament that was concurrently a few days after the famous 9/11 attack on twin towers in New York City. Additionally, the 2008 attacks in Mumbai only fueled the tensions even though the bilateral relations were on the road towards progress during the Musharraf and Manmohan era. As an expert in Strategic Studies, the author believes in Sun Tzu's precept of a way forward and states that both nations should reanalyze their bilateral ties by voluntary concession and accommodating regional stability (South Asia).

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The recent event of Balakot2019 is a staunch example of how India on its end assessed the risk and response of Pakistan the former's Airforce encountered failure in its meaningless airstrikes. Pakistan promises retaliation in its full form and bitterly against any violation or intrusion of its airspace. Under this account, Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi proposes that Pakistan should move forward with Ready Deterrence (nuclear warheads ready for launch in a short time) instead of Recessed Deterrence (potentially less provocative and more time to launch nuclear warheads).

The author is of the view that the Offensive Realist state India does not focus on moving towards improvement in relations, rather, the country wants to emerge as a hegemon in the South Asian region. Pakistan, on the other hand, feels a security dilemma that will create a very dangerous environment that would be difficult to manage or even resolve. The South Asian states must consider their deterrent value as an epitome instead of the cost and balance analysis of adversaries with a touch of zero-tolerance policy towards violence by any state.

Lastly, this book is a recommended and excellent writeup that has provided critical as well as thorough observational analysis of how Pakistan and India can focus more on progress and cooperation while maintaining strategic stability. The author proposes a few ways forward that include initial resolve and acceptance of mutual issues, cooperation during times of conflict, and accepting the ground realities that disputes can only be resolved through the mechanism of negotiation and dialogue. This would add more towards the betterment of the citizens of both countries rather than having to live in fear that a new Indo-Pakistan war would break out leading to detrimental consequences as both countries are nuclear-powered states, and a cherry on top, territorial neighbors which would fuel strategic instability.