

**Book Review
By
Kulsoom Belal**

Tughral Yamin, *The Evolution of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia* (Islamabad: The Army Press, 2014), 272

Dr. Tughral Yamin's *The Evolution of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia* is his first book. The book is based on the work done by him for his doctoral dissertation but has been updated to address the current developments and issues. His recently published second book is *Cyberspace CBMs between Pakistan and India*. Yamin specializes on the issues of strategic stability and regional peace, confidence building measures and conflict resolution. The author has served in the Pakistan Army and retired as a brigadier. Currently he holds the position of Associate Dean at Center for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST).

In *The Evolution of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia*, the author argues that the dynamics of strategic stability inherent in the possession of nuclear weapons is as much applicable in the South Asian environment as it was during the Cold War period. Although the Cold War has become an over-analyzed subject the writer uses this as a context to discuss the significance of nuclear weapons in bringing stability between India and Pakistan.

The author has premised his arguments on the theoretical work done by Bernard Brodie, Henry Kissinger, Herman Kahn, Robert Jervis etc. on the concepts of strategic stability and nuclear deterrence. The author has also looked in detail at the doctrinal and strategic development during the Cold War and showed how the concept of deterrence has been transformed by the states over the years to enhance the credibility for countering threats. He has critically analyzed the security dilemma between India and Pakistan emanating from the Kashmir dispute and the increasing military imbalance. Additionally, the book also presents a history of the evolution of arms control treaties both in the Cold War period and for South Asia. Thus, covering a wide range of topics to make a well rounded analysis on strategic stability *The Evolution of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia* is a useful addition to the scholarly work done on South Asia.

The pivot of the author's argument is that the 'fear' of inflicting unacceptable damage on one another deters the adversaries from escalating the conflict. In the nuclear era, the concept of deterrence has risen to a "new and inviolate level" as any nuclear use would result in a similar retaliation that would lead to total annihilation of both parties, which in other words would be an act of suicide. Thus, nuclear weapon states keep the level of crisis low to avert the danger of nuclear use by either state. Precisely this is the algebra of strategic stability between nuclear weapons states. The writer elaborates his argument and emphasizes that just as nuclear weapons maintained crisis stability in the past between the Cold War rivals, similarly, these weapons have and will continue to maintain strategic stability in South Asia's 'enduring rivalry'.

The writer has referred to various crises between the US and the USSR and between India and Pakistan, and has showed that in all cases neither state wanted to escalate crisis to a level that would increase the probability of nuclear weapon use by either state. For example, he has compared the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 between the US and the USSR with 2001-02 military stand-off between Pakistan and India as incidents that came closest to nuclear use. However, in both these situations, while the states signaled the probability of nuclear use, they also used backchannel diplomacy to back down. The upshot of all these crises was that they always remained far from escalating to the next level. By relating these crises in detail, the writer explains that the rationality in deterrence theory transcends all states whether they are Cold War rivals or South Asian adversaries.

The importance of *The Evolution of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia* is that it puts forth an objective and well argued analysis of South Asian deterrence stability. The writer also argues that Pakistan, despite being a weaker and smaller state than India, with the possession of nuclear weapons is able to maintain balance of power against its adversary. This, in turn, has brought peace and stability between the two countries and in the region.

The book presents a comprehensive analysis on the dynamics of strategic stability in South Asia and details the current state of strategic stability in the region. It gives the strategic assets of both India and Pakistan to show how the widening military asymmetry is tilted in India's favor, making Pakistan increasingly vulnerable. The author says that the development of India's offensive preemptive doctrine like Cold Start and Ballistic Missile Defense Shield with its improving conventional and

nuclear force capability can drastically disturb Pakistan's security calculus. This could result in arms race in the region, and therefore, can undermine strategic stability between the two neighbours.

The book dedicates a chapter to the strategic culture of South Asia. Although it discusses strategic culture of India only briefly, it analyzes Pakistan's strategic culture in greater detail. Predominantly, it discusses the role of the military in decision making but negates the popular misperception that military alone sits at the helm of affairs in the country. For example, the writer recounts that the decision to start Pakistan's nuclear weapons program was entirely taken by Z A Bhutto.

The other important aspect discussed by the writer about country's strategic culture is the influence of United States in the decision making by Pakistani leaders. The writer has described it as 'larger than life'. He recollects that Pakistani leaders preferred alliance with West to buttress the country's security against its traditional enemy, India. However, over the years, each period of engagement with the US has left Pakistan more disillusioned. This has led to resentment among the public against the US. However, the writer adds that the US also wants to keep engagement with Pakistan because of its geo-strategic importance, for instance, during the Afghan Wars, and also because Pakistan is a nuclear weapon state. These factors add further complication in the relations between the two.

The book also has minor limitations. For example, it does not take into account the arguments of nuclear pessimists of South Asia. The writer does throw a gauntlet to the nuclear pessimists by saying that they "fail to suggest a viable alternative" as since 1971, no full scale war has occurred between India and Pakistan because both countries have nuclear weapons. He only briefly discusses the command and control structure (C²) and safety of nuclear weapons in Pakistan. The concerns of nuclear pessimists regarding the C² and safety and security of nuclear weapons should have been more substantially addressed as available literature on this subject is scarce. Second, whereas the book is divided into two parts; the first part discusses the Cold War scenario of strategic stability and the second draws its parallel in South Asian context. All theories are presented in one chapter instead of discussing them under their relevant head and contextualizing them with the discussion in the particular chapter.

Notwithstanding the occasional lapses in proofreading, the book makes a lasting impact on the readers with its probing and detailed arguments. I would recommend this book to the students of international relations and strategic studies and all others who may be interested in subjects related to national security, strategic stability and nuclear deterrence.

*Kulsoom Belal is a
CISS Internee*