

India-Pakistan Crises and the Evolving Dyadic Deterrence Model

*Dr Adil Sultan Muhammad**

Abstract

In 2019, India and Pakistan were once again embroiled in a military crisis that demonstrated the willingness of both sides to engage in a sub-conventional conflict while avoiding a major war. India attempted an aerial surgical strike across the Line of Control (LoC) into mainland Pakistan and claimed to have called its nuclear bluff. Pakistan, on the other hand, refused to indulge in nuclear brinkmanship despite the *nuclearism* behaviour from the other side, and responded with a proportionate surgical strike demonstrating its capacity to inflict sufficient pain to the adversary. The crisis eventually dissipated validating the significance of nuclear deterrence in maintaining strategic stability in South Asia, besides restoring the credibility of Pakistan's conventional deterrence against an adversary that enjoys sufficient numerical advantage. In view of the lessons learnt from the Balakot crisis, where conventional and nuclear deterrence were both at play, it may be useful to analyse different deterrence models that have helped maintain strategic stability during the various crises since the nuclearisation of the region, including the most recent 2019 one, and whether these models will remain relevant in a future India-Pakistan crisis, especially when one side is continuously introducing innovative war-fighting concepts and new technologies to complicate the regional deterrence matrix.

Keywords: Nuclear Deterrence, Deterrence Types, Surgical Strikes, Emerging Technologies, Nuclear Dyad, India-Pakistan Crises.

* The author is Director at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Pakistan; and Visiting Research Fellow, King's College London, UK. He is the author of *Universalizing Nuclear Non-proliferation Norms: A Regional Framework for South Asian Nuclear Weapon States*. He can be contacted at: adilsultan66@gmail.com.