
Nuclear Brinkmanship: Lessons for South Asia

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The standoff in summer/autumn 2017 between North Korea and the US on the nuclear tests and missile test firing over Japan brought to the fore the concerns on the practice of nuclear brinkmanship, once a feature of the Cold War. The term “brinkmanship” is defined in the dictionary as “the art or practice of pursuing a dangerous policy to the limits of safety before stopping, especially in politics”¹ and “in any game of brinkmanship, it is possible that one side will collapse suddenly”² or “the art or practice of pushing a dangerous situation or confrontation to the limit of safety, especially to force a desired outcome”³ or “the technique or practice of manoeuvring a dangerous situation to the limits of tolerance or safety in order to secure the greatest advantage, especially by creating diplomatic crises”⁴. John Foster Dulles, former US Secretary of State used the term in a 1956 interview: Dulles had described the “necessary art” of securing American interests during the Cold War as one of getting “to the verge without getting into the war”. The greater danger was a paralysing fear of war that would simply embolden America’s enemies: “If you try to run away from it, if you are scared to go to the brink, you are lost.” The Democratic Presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson turned this around to emphasise the danger of Dulles’s approach, talking of brinkmanship as the “art of bringing us to the edge of the nuclear abyss.”⁵

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Barry Nalebuff, writing in 1986, on *Brinkmanship and Nuclear Deterrence: The Neutrality of Escalation* quoted Schelling when he first emphasised that nuclear deterrence is based on a ‘threat that leaves something to chance.’ It is this possibility of probabilistic escalation that allows the static models of deterrence to be translated into a dynamic story. In a conventional war between the superpowers, as long as each side holds firm, there is a risk of escalation. The risk is both from accidents and from the unintended consequences of fighting a conventional war. This risk continues until the conflict is resolved: either one side backs down or the probability of unintentional nuclear war turns into a reality. This nuclear game of ‘chicken’ is called brinkmanship.”⁶ Brinkmanship is the deliberate creation of a recognisable risk, a risk that one does not completely control. It is the tactic of deliberately letting the situation get somewhat out of hand, just because its being out of hand may be intolerable to the other party and force his accommodation. It means intimidating an adversary and exposing him to a shared risk, or deterring him by showing that if he makes a contrary move, he may disturb us so that we slip over the brink whether we want to or not, carrying him with us.⁷ “In conclusion, nuclear deterrence is based on creating a dangerous game that nobody should want to play. The mathematical model helps illustrate why much of the debate over changing the technology of escalation may be misdirected. The rules of brinkmanship care only about the ends and not the means.”⁸

A similar view was also expressed by Vsevolod Gunitskiy who wrote, “In international politics, brinkmanship refers to the calculated escalation of threats against adversaries to achieve foreign policy aims. The term was introduced by US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who advocated such a policy against the Soviet Union, defining it as ‘the ability to get to the verge [the brink] without getting into the war.’” It

is a challenge in the form of a credible threat, whether real or perceived, designed to compel an adversary to back down or to deter it from pursuing an undesirable course of action. It also may involve a deliberately created crisis to generate political or military leverage over an opponent. Brinkmanship is an important (if sometimes implicit) component of bargaining models of war, and has parallels to hostile bargaining models in economic theory, such as in the widely cited “ultimatum game”. Soviet and US nuclear policy during the early decades of the Cold War, culminating in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, displayed elements of brinkmanship. Crises that never erupt into full-scale conflicts are often cited as instances of brinkmanship, although it is often difficult to separate the influence of actor choices (e.g., deliberate threat escalation) from other factors like the relative capability of the states involved.⁹

**Cultivating
irrationality at
the highest level
of government
benefits
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bargaining
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The term is also defined in the US government study material, “Brinkmanship is a style of negotiation in which one or both parties in a conflict allow the situation to come right up to the edge of disaster before attempting to find a solution. The term refers to pushing a dangerous situation to the ‘brink’ of disaster. Although brinkmanship is often associated with foreign policy or military strategy, it is also used in other high-stakes situations, such as union negotiations or corporate deals. Using brinkmanship to negotiate may seem like a risky or incredibly dangerous thing, but it is intended to force the other party to back down and give in to your demands. It’s sort of the diplomatic version of playing chicken; whoever backs down first is ultimately the loser”¹⁰.

The economist and Nobel Prize winner Thomas Schelling defined brinkmanship and related issues, in his pioneering works. He wrote, “If ‘brinkmanship’ means anything, it means manipulating the shared risk of war. It means exploiting the danger that somebody may inadvertently

The Cuban blockade was an act of brinkmanship since the US, instead of succumbing to the pressure from the USSR, decided to see how the Soviets would react to the US stopping their vessels from entering Cuba.

go over the brink, dragging the other with him. There has to be some uncertainty or anticipated irrationality or it won't work. Without uncertainty, deterrent threats of war would take the form of trip-wires. ...". Imminent possible war would be continually threatened, but the threats would work. They would work unless one side were pushed too far; but if the pushing side knows how far that is, it will not push that far.¹¹

Slantchev, teaching students, states, "The power to hurt is a kind of bargaining power, not easy to use but used often"

and refers to Schelling's *Arms and Influence*, which discusses the art of coercion in diplomacy. Influential in the field of game theory and decision-making, Schelling believes that to coerce an opponent, the coercer needs to make the threats credible and acting irrationally helps the opponent believe the threats. This craziness helps the opponent believe that the coercer may follow through on a rash decision. Cultivating irrationality at the highest level of government benefits a state's bargaining power. As Schelling states, "International relations often have the character of a competition in risk taking, characterised not so much by tests of force as by tests of nerve... The perils that countries face are... more like Russian roulette."¹² Further Schelling says: "Another paradox of deterrence is that it does not always help to be, or be believed to be, fully rational, cool-headed, and in control of oneself or one's country . . . Sometimes, we can get a little credit for not having everything quite under control, for being a little impulsive or unreliable"¹³.

The often discussed and debated examples of brinkmanship are Berlin and Cuba; the general theme is common amongst the analysts or experts.

The *Britannica* writes, “Brinkmanship was a term that was constantly used during the Cold War with the United States and the Soviet Union. The Berlin Blockade of 1961 was a prominent example where the Soviet Union sought to expel the three Allied powers from Berlin, but failed as the Allies did not blink”¹⁴.

Another reference is, “The policy of brinkmanship came to the fore in 1962 when the Soviet Union placed nuclear missiles in Cuba. This nearly brought the Soviet Union and the United States to a

nuclear war. The United States responded by putting a naval blockade around Cuba and the Soviets removed the missiles from Cuba. The policy of brinkmanship scared many people during the Cold War because these two powerhouse nations came close to a nuclear war several times. Brinkmanship was used throughout the Cold War as a foreign policy.”¹⁵

Schelling writing on brinkmanship during the Cuba crisis in his chapter on “Manipulation of Risk,” stated, “The crisis was caused by the placement of Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba, an island that was within the ‘Sphere of Influence’ and launching distance of the US.” This was arguably an act of brinkmanship from the USSR, intimidating the US with weapons within the region. The US responded to the presence of the weapons by blockading Cuba. The Cuban blockade was an act of brinkmanship since the US, instead of succumbing to the pressure from the USSR, decided to see how the Soviets would react to the US stopping their vessels from entering Cuba. It can be argued that brinkmanship, in this case, went too far. Had the US attacked Cuba through an airstrike to eliminate the weapons, the USSR may have responded in Berlin where the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) would have been pulled into

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The power to bargain must be credible. When a threat or demand is made, there must be reason to believe that the adversary will agree to the demands raised and there must be credibility in the power to back the threat issued.

a war. Successful brinkmanship, however, is when you push your enemy to the brink of war, but not over it, getting him to back down under the pressure. Considering this, the brinkmanship during the Cuban missile crisis was successful, as war was avoided. The crisis, however, was a peculiar case of brinkmanship since the two opposing powers had near equal power during the crisis. Thus, in order to avoid war, both powers backed down and compromised, the Soviets removing their weapons from Cuba and the Americans secretly agreeing to

remove the missiles from Turkey¹⁶. There are benefits of brinkmanship, and while brinkmanship is often criticised for being a very dangerous gamble, it is hard to deny that it is effective. As long as both sides believe that the threats being used are real, then one will eventually have to give in or face the consequences¹⁷.

Evaluating Brinkmanship

From the preceding examination and commentaries on brinkmanship, some features and subjects emerge for evaluation. Firstly, brinkmanship is a dangerous policy taken to the limits of safety or tolerance. The challenge is to set the safety limits in an ambiguous state without knowledge of the adversary's decision-making but based on its anticipated reaction. Therefore, it must have safety limits: the problem is the ability to realistically calculate the safety line. Brinkmanship is a deliberate choice by a state or leadership to adopt a dangerous policy and create a threat. A threat is an expression of intention to inflict evil, injury, or damage¹⁸ or a declaration of an intention or determination to inflict punishment, injury, etc., in retaliation for, or conditionally upon, some action or course; and,

menace is an indication or warning of probable trouble¹⁹ or a statement of an intention to inflict pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action on someone in retribution for something done or not done²⁰. The idea that an aim or objective is to be achieved and a course adopted will result in escalation from peace to crisis; this escalation is an indirect route to the creation of a threat. Threats in the contemporary era is further refined with the introduction of cyber warfare. “A threat could be anything that leads to interruption, meddling or destruction of any valuable service or item existing in the firm’s repertoire... Whether of ‘human’ or ‘nonhuman’ origin, the analysis must scrutinise each element that may bring about conceivable security risk.”²¹

Second, the chosen goal must be strategic for the state to stake the consequences if escalation goes wrong; the national interest for which a strategy of brinkmanship is adopted, should be vital to the survival of the state or its political leadership. When non-strategic or local subjects become the drivers of brinkmanship, there is a great possibility of loss of credibility either due to lack of interest or repetition fatigue of the international community. The policy must rest on the principle of deterrence where policy gains outweigh the anticipated losses.

Third, there must be capability to execute the choice or the threat. Here, the capability must be demonstrable or must have existed in the past. Nuclear weapons capability is realistic once deployed with tested means of delivery. The capability must of necessity be credible to execute the threat to cause the stated punishment or damage, overpowering the denial ability of the adversary.

Fourth, there is a certain amount of “uncertainty” even with the protagonist practising brinkmanship and irrationality to ensure the certainty of ambiguity with uncertainty. Schelling, writing on irrationality, says, “Furthermore, theory that is based on the assumption that the participants coolly and ‘rationally’ calculate their advantages according to a consistent value system, forces us to think more thoroughly about the

The 1971 Indo-Pak War was not a classic case of brinkmanship in the initial stages of the crisis.

meaning of ‘irrationality.’ Decision-makers are not simply distributed along a one-dimensional scale that stretches from complete rationality at one end to complete irrationality at the other. Rationality is a collection of attributes, and departures from complete rationality may be in many different directions. Irrationality can imply a disorderly and inconsistent value system,

faulty calculation, an inability to receive messages or to communicate efficiently; it can imply random or haphazard influences in the reaching of decisions or the transmission of them, or in the receipt or conveyance of information; and it sometimes merely reflects the collective nature of a decision among individuals who do not have identical value systems and whose organisational arrangements and communication systems do not cause them to act like a single entity.”²²

Fifth, there must be a plan or contingency to pull back at the appropriate time in case the strategy does not follow the intended path. Correlli Barnett in his book titled *The Swordbearers: Studies in Supreme Command in the First World War* famously stated that no plan survives contact with the enemy. This is originally attributed to Field Marshal Helmuth Von Moltke the Elder., implying that military actions will never follow a planned path. In reference to brinkmanship, this is most relevant and should be a critical input in order to plan the limits of safety. The challenge is further compounded by the belief that escalation may provide the victory sought if gains fall short of the required levels, sacrificing pragmatism to pull back and resolve the crisis. Hence, *realpolitik* demands that the leadership jettison the ego or rigid beliefs whilst executing a strategy of brinkmanship.

Sixth, the strategy must have calculated steps of escalation: the final aim may not be defined initially, and the ability to move gradually or deliberately may form the basis of attaining the strategy. A strategy

must not unfold at once – it must retain the surprise and secrecy required to keep the adversary guessing and conjecturing or estimating. Deniability or disavowal must be factored in to change the course or modify demands as the crisis unfolds, especially on to dangerous levels.

Seventh, the ability to compromise on the choice: when a course is chosen and the plan fails to follow the path, there must be an alternative or the ability to pull back or change direction. The strategy must not

end in a roadblock or dead end, with no choices: but should follow the dictum “he who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day” and cater accordingly. It is statesmanship to choose a strategy with multiple options and not get into a corner with no escape route.

Eighth, the power to bargain must be credible: when a threat or demand is made, there must be reason to believe that the adversary will agree to the demands raised and there must be credibility in the power to back the threat issued. The issue is also linked to the capability to execute the threat.

Last, the outcome sought must be the best one. The adversary will seek a similar outcome, so the acumen lies in devising outcomes that border on the dangerous and test the limits of safety.

The Case of South Asia

South Asia has witnessed four conflicts in the past 70 years and crises many times when India-Pakistan relations have deteriorated, and tensions have been defused after being close to the brink. Pakistan, since its creation, has followed a dangerous policy to keep the subcontinent in turmoil and conflict. In 1947, the invasion of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)

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by the Pakistan Army and tribal raiders²³ was the first action of brinkmanship to destabilise the situation in the recently divided India. A dangerous policy was adopted by Pakistan to change the rules of the choice to states on whether to join India or Pakistan, and the actions met the essentials of brinkmanship. Pakistan presumed that India would blink and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) would be integrated with Pakistan, but India did not blink and blunted the offensive. The Kutch aggression of April 1965²⁴ was again an endeavour to push the situation to the brink to change the established international border demarcated in 1947, in the Pakistan occupied areas, which were part of India, and once again, India did not blink but escalated the situation. In both cases, international intervention was accepted to call for a ceasefire and Pakistan avoided being a “chicken”. The action by Pakistan of sending infiltrators into J&K in August 1965²⁵ to seize the state through an irregular force trained and backed by the Pakistan Army was again a dangerous policy, which failed to achieve the desired results: the crisis escalated when India responded by taking military action to close the infiltration routes. The failure to capture J&K and the closure of the routes created a situation wherein Pakistan further escalated and launched an offensive into India which resulted in the 1965 Indo-Pak War²⁶, but the brinkmanship strategy of Pakistan failed and both nations suffered from the war, but Pakistan being the smaller nation, bore the greater burden.

The war ended with the efforts of the UN and Soviet Union, and under the subsequent Tashkent Agreement of January 1966,²⁷ mediated by the Soviet Union, the captured areas were returned, and status quo was maintained. The inability of Pakistan to achieve its war aims also saw a change in the political set-up with the President, Field Marshal

Ayub Khan having to relinquish power. The brinkmanship strategy initiated in August 1965 did not produce any good outcome for Pakistan but helped India restore its pride after the humiliation against China in 1962. The 1971 Indo-Pak War was not a classic case of brinkmanship in the initial stages of the crisis.²⁸ The genesis was the result of a policy of brinkmanship resorted to by Mr Z A Bhutto²⁹ to gain power without the requisite majority in the national Parliament and deny it to the majority leader. The internal violence unleashed

In the past, only on one occasion was Pakistan faced with a strategic choice to threaten, or pose a dangerous option, i.e. when its integrity was under attack internally in East Pakistan, but it chose to attack India, instead of combatting the internal rebellion, and eventually lost the war.

by the Pakistan Army against the East Pakistan population resulted in an influx of refugees into India, and, later, instead of resolving its internal problems, Pakistan focussed on creating a military situation to divert the attention of the people. In so doing, it went too far and was then unable to stop the situation from going over the brink. The assumption seemed to be, that once again, before the brink was reached, there would be external intervention or mediation to stop the war. The situation spiralled since India had taken measures to prevent a repeat of the past, and Pakistan failed to secure the necessary assistance to avert the failure of its brinkmanship. After the separation of Bangladesh, Pakistan, post the Afghanistan experience, actually changed and sharpened its policy of sub-conventional war which had the potential of leading to war: the 1,000 cuts policy, called OP TUPAC³⁰ was a brinkmanship strategy which till now has not crossed the brink, but the tipping point can be crossed quickly in the case of any wrong action.

The practise of nuclear brinkmanship by Pakistan for the past decade and a half is the reason why South Asia is seen as an unstable region.

Whilst prosecuting a proxy terror war on India, Pakistan has linked the sub-conventional domain to conventional and nuclear escalation – a strategy that is fraught with danger, as no nation in the past has done so.

From the time of the 1999 Kargil conflict, Pakistan has been overtly predisposed to use the nuclear card to threaten India. Gen Pervez Musharraf, followed by many officials and Ministers of the Pakistan government, including Prime Ministers, have on various occasions used the nuclear threat against India. In a 2002 interview to the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, Gen Pervez Musharraf issued a chilling warning to New Delhi that he was prepared to use nuclear weapons in the event of war³¹.

Pakistani officials have threatened to use nuclear weapons should India invade, after India's current Army Chief Gen Rawat admitted to having secret military plans for attacking its neighbour in the event of a crisis. Three officials in Islamabad told the *Financial Times* that Pakistan would take all necessary measures to defend itself should India ever put into action its long-rumoured "Cold Start" plans to attack Pakistani territory following an event such as a major terrorist incident. "If ever our national security is threatened by advancing foreign forces, Pakistan will use all of its weapons — and I mean all of our weapons — to defend our country," one of the officials said³².

Prime Minister Abbasi of Pakistan, speaking at the US Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in September 2017, highlighted the role of nuclear weapons in Pakistan's war-fighting plans. Abbasi said, "We have a very robust and very secure command-and-control system over our strategic nuclear assets, and I think time has proved that it's a process that is very secure. It's a process that has complete civilian oversight through the NCA. As for tactical nuclear weapons, we do not have any fielded tactical nuclear weapons. We have developed short-range nuclear weapons as a counter to the Cold Start doctrine that India has developed.

Again, those are in the same command-and-control authority that controls the other strategic weapons.”³³

Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khwaja Asif was equally provocative and threatened India by articulating, “We will destroy India if it dares to impose war on us. The Pakistan Army is fully prepared to answer any misadventure of India.” He told the TV channel SAMAA that India

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had “orchestrated the Uri attack to divert the attention of the world from the Kashmir issue.” He was replying to a question about India’s intention to carry out surgical strike in Pakistan³⁴.

Pakistani Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhary, stated that Pakistan needed tactical nuclear weapons because of India’s ‘Cold Start’ doctrine³⁵. He acknowledged that Pakistan had “low-yield, tactical nuclear weapons” to “deter” a possible attack from India. But, it was not accidental that the statement coincided with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s visit to the US. It was obviously meant to leverage Pakistan’s bid for nuclear parity with India, since the Nuclear Suppliers Group, with American support, had waived the restrictions on nuclear trade for India. But, unlike India, Pakistan is still seen by the world as an irresponsible nation. And a major concern for the Western countries is the periodic nuclear sabre-rattling by Pakistani Ministers³⁶.

That Pakistan has not mastered the strategy of brinkmanship is evident from the many failures of its strategy in the past 70 years, and that it lost half its territory, was the biggest failure. The failures in 1947 and 1965 comprised the other major debacles in the strategy execution. The nuclear sabre-rattling is likely to backfire due to excessive and inappropriate use.

Before evaluating the nuclear brinkmanship strategy of Pakistan, a reflection on its political or conventional force brinkmanship demonstrates

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that Pakistan has not been strategic in choosing its aims or objectives, and did not consider pulling back at an appropriate time. All these efforts resulted in four wars, without winning or achieving any objective. In 1947, it chose to fight over limited territorial gains and lost. In 1965, it repeated the same choice of limited territory seizure and failed once again. In the 1999 misadventure, the very limited objective was not crucial to expose the nation to war, however, it chose wrongly. In the past, only on

one occasion was Pakistan faced with a strategic choice to threaten, or pose a dangerous option, i.e. when its integrity was under attack internally in East Pakistan, but it chose to attack India, instead of combatting the internal rebellion, and it eventually lost the war. It lacked the capability and escalation control to manage the policy. The mistakes of the past can be attributed to poor political leadership and overdominance of the Army, and the short public memory, with blunders by the Army being forgotten because of political divisiveness, mismanagement and systemic corruption.

The two superpowers and the two military pacts with nuclear weapons never fought a war in spite of ideological beliefs that were opposite in thought and practice, and major differences at many crisis points on the globe. The closest call remains the Cuba crisis, whereas the Berlin blockade was withdrawn due to a compromise on choice and prevention of escalation. One can broadly attribute this to deft political handling and this well-developed institutions to provide sane and pragmatic advice. These attributes seem lacking in Pakistan, as is inferred from the preceding arguments.

The nuclear sabre-rattling in the recent past also reflects that due thought is not being paid to the formulation of the state policy against

India. Whilst prosecuting a proxy terror war on India, Pakistan has linked the sub-conventional domain to conventional and nuclear escalation – a strategy that is fraught with danger, as no nation in the past has done so. The revisionist nature of Pakistan is prepared to flirt with disaster, since the strategy is driven by the military and not the political class, and the public too is not part of the decision-making process. The objective of the proxy war is seizure of J&K and dismemberment of India. This strategic aim may be desirable but Pakistan lacks credible means to achieve the objective due to the size and resilience of the Indian state, hence, is vaulting above its capability. That the aim will not be achieved is a forgone conclusion, however, in persisting with it, there is a risk that the proxy terror war can escalate to the conventional level. Pakistan has consistently stated that it is prepared to use nuclear weapons to stop a conventional war, as is evident from the statements quoted. Since the policies and nuclear strategies of India and Pakistan are different, and based on the declared intentions, the onus of starting a nuclear strike will always lie with Pakistan. In a nuclear environment, the greatest vulnerability of Pakistan is the geographical layout of the country, and the linearity of the urban centres and communication systems. Bharat Karnad states that nuclear strikes along the north-south corridor will destroy the country and make it uninhabitable, and not many strikes are needed to achieve the objective. The second problem is that India's doctrine lays down a very clear response in spite of Pakistan postulating use of tactical nuclear weapons in a graduated escalation; brinkmanship cannot work in different approaches to the use of similar weapons.

Nuclear weapons are meant to ensure national security and peace through deterrence, and not support sub-conventional war.

An important lesson for leaders in South Asia is to understand the limits of brinkmanship, and that it cannot be a solution for all problems or policies. This recommendation is applicable to Pakistan since past

To practise the strategy of brinkmanship, there is a critical need to develop tools to war-game the plan to be executed. Today, advanced tools, are available to war-game situations and the escalation matrix. Once these tools are exploited, the national leadership will be in a position to develop a rational (may be, irrational) and viable strategy.

experience has shown how Pakistan has upped the ante without political direction or strategic compulsion. The Pakistan Army lacks political education or expertise; it usurps power through *coup-d'etats*, but does not learn political skills to conduct international relations. In military strategies, there is a limitation in the conduct of brinkmanship; this shortcoming has resulted in the past strategies going over the brink.

From the above issue emerges the need for the creation of stable, refined and developed institutions to conduct analysis and policy formulation before

adopting these dangerous policies. Even in autocratic states, institutions were, or have been, created to determine policy formulation, e.g. China, the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact nations. Hence, it is vital that Pakistan create political and diplomatic institutions to address the inadequacy.

Any strategy of brinkmanship must meet the necessity and compulsion of being vital to national interests. The possession of the state of J&K does not qualify to be a national interest of Pakistan. Revision of country boundaries by force is no longer feasible between nuclear-armed states and the earlier this is understood by Pakistan, the better for South Asia. To harp back to revenge for the creation of Bangladesh by the dismemberment of India is no longer a viable strategy. Nuclear weapons are meant to ensure national security and peace through deterrence, and not support sub-conventional war.

To practise the strategy of brinkmanship, there is a critical need to develop tools to war-game the plan to be executed. Today, advanced tools

are available to war-game situations and the escalation matrix. Once these tools are exploited, the national leadership will be in a position to develop a rational (may be, irrational) and viable strategy. However, the challenge in nuclear brinkmanship is that the escalation ladder is short once the brink is crossed, so crossing the brink is the most vital and critical aspect that needs war-gaming.

Pakistan has developed adequate nuclear weapons to inflict a reasonable amount of damage on India, but the counter capability with India is sufficient

to cause damage on an unprecedented scale, therefore, this fact will remain a debatable subject before either determines action that will cross the brink. The two superpowers comprised large geographical areas to absorb and survive nuclear attacks: this bonus is not available to Pakistan, and even with more capability, the vulnerability to counter strikes should make it reflect seriously on the strategy of brinkmanship. One miscalculation can result in Armageddon and the biggest loser will be Pakistan.

One of the most difficult choices whilst formulating a brinkmanship strategy is anticipating the adversary's reaction and the degree of "irrationality" to be displayed. The adversary's (India's) reaction and escalation are indeterminate due to the lack of trust and the past history of deceit by Pakistan. The uncertainty linked to irrationality may lead to wrong decisions; here, it may be prudent to avoid these to avoid a nuclear war. Uncertainty and leaving something to chance are aspects which are suspect in the context of India-Pakistan because of the past experience and basic distrust between the protagonists.

The brinkmanship strategy is a deliberate choice of a dangerous policy to achieve a strategic outcome, and is based on manipulating the shared risk of war, creating a threat to force the adversary to relent, or else, the consequences are far worse than mere loss of face.

In South Asia, nuclear brinkmanship is a strategy fraught with danger and unimaginable consequences. The Pakistan Army is not well versed in levels of statecraft that a nuclear crisis needs.

The nuclear signalling in South Asia is a study in contrast: Pakistan is proactive, preemptive and, on occasions, practises brinkmanship in a reckless, irresponsible and thoughtless manner; and India, on the other hand, does not react or issue any signals in any form. In the past, some Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) scientists did speak out of context or beyond their understanding of strategic subjects. Learning from the Cold War

experience and further refining of signalling in the subsequent period, all nations should desist from playing to the gallery for election purposes and nationalistic tendencies during crises.

The brinkmanship strategy is a deliberate choice of a dangerous policy to achieve a strategic outcome, and is based on manipulating the shared risk of war, creating a threat to force the adversary to relent, or else, the consequences are far worse than mere loss of face. The strategy must be supported by the requisite capability to have bargaining power and escalation control, and contingencies to pull back from the brink in the case of miscalculation. The strategy relies on “irrationality” and uncertainty, which the adversary must believe to be inherent in the decision-makers.

In South Asia, nuclear brinkmanship is a strategy fraught with danger and unimaginable consequences due to the lack of institutional systems to manage the crisis thereafter, and the Pakistan Army, not being well versed in statecraft of the levels that a nuclear crisis needs. No national interest is so vital that a nuclear confrontation is required to resolve differences inherent in Indo-Pak relations. In an environment of distrust, deceit and misgiving, it is prudent to resist nuclear brinkmanship, and to develop a strategy to link nuclear war with sub-conventional warfare

is a grave mistake. Any miscalculation on nuclear brinkmanship will obliterate Pakistan, which is neither desirable nor essential; hence, it is critical that South Asia desist from nuclear brinkmanship to resolve territorial claims.

Notes

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