

From the Pulwama to Indian Revocation of Article 370 in Indian Held Kashmir: Policy implications on the Geopolitics of South Asia

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Abstract: *Ever since India and Pakistan entered into a conflict that commenced with Pulwama attacks, the following incidents have grabbed the geopolitical situation of South Asia into odds. The region has indulged in a security dilemma so much with the possibility of a nuclear war break out between the two nuclear neighbors. The Kashmir issue is a conventional issue between India and Pakistan since independence, but due to jingoistic opinions, news analysis, and perceptive political figures, the issue is overshadowed. At present, the Kashmir issue has been treated in the same fashion instead of understanding the issue from a systematic perspective. The policymakers, military establishment and regional and International media are debating with possible repercussions of a devastating nuclear breakout in the region. This article entails different scenarios that are through a series of domestic pressures that followed the Pulwama incident, showing a spilling effect in the South Asian region. The article contemplates recommendations for Pakistani policymakers for multi-level diplomacy, activating diasporas at the international level and consistent media coverage over the Kashmir issue.*

Key Words: Security Dilemma, Security Paradox, Indian Held Kashmir, Bhartia Janata Party, US Commission on International Religious Freedom

Introduction

In an anarchic system, the inter-state relations are either executed on the basis of competition or cooperation. The concept of security dilemma is originated from the school of realism which states that in an anarchic world, the states compete for their interests in order to achieve compatibility of goals. This further intensifies the risks of war between the states, to some extent and help in maintaining the defensive behavior. The proponents of security dilemma argue that when there is no supervisory body, the level of threat becomes more obvious which leads to a spiral effect. The spiral model, as referred by [Jervis \[1978\]](#) occur when such initiatives taken by states reinforce the state security and decrease the security of other states. This further increases the insecurity in others that further spirals into defensive and offensive action-reaction processes, such as small escalations, conventional wars and at some instances, nuclear war [\[Jervis. 1978\]](#). The security dilemma is also explained in terms of behavior and its outcome in international relations, historically originated during the cold war era through a competitive relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Both states kept on arming against each other and with the formation of alliances and policies, they got all the means to lead the regions towards the state of security dilemma.

Given this backdrop, South Asia has witnessed three major wars between India and Pakistan besides skirmishes and escalations that have become a permanent feature of the two nuclear neighbours. Historical enmity between two states always cast dark shadow on regional environment from the perspectives of peace, security and economic cooperation. Both states have entangled through exchange of fire across the Line of Control through number of times. Their bilateral disputes have been the most pressing issues in the world that also grab the attention of International media as the intensity rises. However, the Pulwama attacks where a deadly bombing attack took place in Pulwama district on February 14, 2019 in Indian Held Kashmir (IHK), where 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CPRF) personnel got killed. This incident raised tensions between the historical rivals India and Pakistan like never before and led to a series of tensions and made news headlines in the mainstream media. Subsequently, India's unilateral move to change the status quo in Kashmir on August 5th 2019 further ignited for an unprecedented strong response from Pakistan. The international media also covered the

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situation of Kashmiri people that Hindu nationalists of India have wanted to limit the freedom of IHK which is a mountainous terrain of Muslim majority has turned into a flashpoint between two nuclear powers of the region. (Gettleman et al., 2019).

After the Pulwama attacks, Pakistan has called off India's hegemonic designs in the region. India continued its belligerence over Pakistan and sent its airplanes in Balakot which was particularly met with a staunch response from Pakistan with a clear message that Pakistan Air Force had the capacity of self defence to counter any challenge by the "non-military target" across the ceasefire line in Kashmir without entering Indian airspace. This speaks volumes of Pakistan's strength to strike back with a mature posture. Any misadventure from the India will end up in a dreadful reaction and no doubt with a nuclear escalation. Later, with returning the Indian Pilot Abhinand, Pakistan also showed its strategic insight to prevent the region from becoming the victim of security dilemma which has been disturbing the regional peace due to Indian Prime Minister Narindra Modi's policies. But there appears no guarantee that India will bring significant change to its behavior as long as Modi Government is there such as revoking the article 370 and putting the lives at risk and undermining fundamental rights of Muslim majority in IHK. The Indian government kept on upsetting the strategic restraint demonstrated by Pakistan earlier has put more risk to the peace of the region.

Subsequent to these unprecedented events, South Asia has entered into a strange dilemma of trust deficit between the states having serious implications on regional politics and economy. The strained and upset relations between Pakistan and India are a result of anarchistic system which is the reason of their security complications. This anarchical environment of world system has forced both states into power politics [McLeod, 2008].

More importantly, the Indian democracy, which is used to appease Kashmiris, equally failed because it was forcefully imposed and the masses of Kashmir remained irrelevant to the system that was introduced by Indian government under Article 370 [Mantoo, 2018].

Research Questions

- Q: 1. What factors lead to the highest level of security dilemma between Pakistan and India?
- Q: 2. Is security dilemma engage more than two states such as China-India relations, and Pakistan-India relations and cause geo political complexities?
- Q: 3. What policy options lie with Pakistan to fight for Kashmir after revocation of Article 370?

Methodology

The theoretical framework is based on qualitative method describing the current situation supported with historical grounds and offering logical explanation to the research questions. The significance of this work heightens towards formulating a link between the security dilemma with domestic factors which further make recommendations to the Pakistani policy makers who have been able to internationalize the Kashmir issue and need to expose the Indian agenda of bilateralism through consistent efforts.

The scope of this study is based on the chain of events that occurred in the region and is contributive towards understanding it from the perspective of domestic factors indirectly causing security dilemma, largely missing in the scientific field. The study on one side will help Pakistani policy makers to put a constant pressure on world leaders to understand the real motive of Bhartia Janatia Party as well as narrating the case with facts will offer a foundation for researchers to understand the complex phenomena of security dilemma. This will also indirectly help in understanding the behavior of local political parties in the backdrop of brutal policies of Modi government. The study will prove that domestic politics does destabilize the regional peace such as it happened in South Asia.

Analysis

Factors Responsible for Security Dilemma between India and Pakistan

When the security dilemma is explained in terms of its impact it has to be examined how it transforms into a security paradox, particularly in the context of India and Pakistan. The term security paradox is "a situation in which two or more actors, seeking only to improve their own security, provoke through their words or actions further increase mutual tension, resulting in less security all round" [Booth & Wheeler, 2008: 9]. Therefore, words and expressions by the political leaders and false impressions created in speeches further lead to a point where the desire of more security actually decreases the security. While examining the Pulwama Attacks, this indicates that the concept could be applied to explore factors that were into play during the Pulwama Attacks that have continued till now. In the immediate reaction to

each other, both sides in a very short time, reached upto the possibility of a full-fledged conventional war, after the Indian airstrikes in Balakot (Pakistan) followed by an unexpected chain of events.

Pakistan has followed a defensive policy in response to Indian belligerence. Not only Pakistan downed an Indian F-16, but gave an unconditional release of the Indian pilot to prevent the region from further escalation. Contrary to this, Prime Minister Modi pursued a warmongering policy and kept on making loud announcements for retaliatory strikes. Pakistan has always worked in a defensive manner, the cross-border Indian strikes on Balakot has exposed India's war tricks as Pakistan categorically announced its commitment and capacity to deal with a precise retaliation on Indian Air Force. The recent standoff spanning over the longest spell of tension between India and Pakistan, certain domestic factors are examined to investigate India's hegemonic pretence and aggressive behavior that has led the region into a fear of nuclear conflict and a leading cause to drive the region into security dilemma.

Modi, the War Prime Minister: Indian Elections and BJP's Nationalistic Agenda

In order to understand India's, move towards the removal of special status of IJK, it is seen that India has once again moved back to the outdated concepts of post-colonialism and nationalism. The Indian Government under Modi while pursuing an aggressive policy in his first term conducted various human rights violations that led to the revocation of Article 370 in the beginning of his second term. To prevent Kashmiris from raising their voice against the brutal step, Modi Government arrested the political leaders, closed down the educational institutions out of fear of Kashmiri youth who have been instrumental in moving the independence movement ahead. Moreover, all information outlets including internet, television and mobile services were closed. This is in reverse with the so-called democratic principles which the Indian Government claims or at least, is known for, diplomatically [\[Tharoor, 2019\]](#).

Analysts had predicted PM Modi's behavior while campaigning for the second term in the backdrop of various internal and external challenges. First, was coping with the pressure from the United Nations for the investigation of human rights violations in Kashmir during his last two years. Second, Prime Minister Imran Khan after swearing in as the PM called for peace talks with India in his first public speech. In addition, domestically, one of the main challenges for Modi was to get a sweeping win in favor of BJP by using the anti-Pakistan enmity mantra [\[Naureen, 2018\]](#). Taking this argument further, the foremost challenge for Modi was his elections campaign in which he certainly made a headway for winning the second term by using the Nationalistic posture. This jingoism had gone to a wider extent as analysts commented over his manifesto that counted more for the social and cultural issues such as, BJP's long-cherished goal to strip off the autonomy of Indian-held Kashmir. Modi fulfilled the promise by revoking Article 370 on August 5th 2019. This move had pleased the Hindu majority who wanted as their traditional and religious right and subsided his economic vision [\[https://www.foegnpolicy.com\]](https://www.foegnpolicy.com). Later on, Modi Government passed a law for weeding out the Muslim minorities from Assam would end up into a huge human catastrophe. Many international agencies have objected to this obvious move against Muslims. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom had also warned over this obvious move that UNCIR Chair, Tony Perkins and Commissioner Anurima Bhargava released the statement that the "proposed policies that suggest that Muslims - and Muslims alone - will face a higher burden for verification, along with worrisome rhetoric, create a negative and potentially dangerous climate for the Muslim community in northeastern India" [\[https://www.uscirf.gov\]](https://www.uscirf.gov). The eye wash lashed out by Modi Government has now exposed before the world for following the sole agenda is to rule the minorities and promote a perceptive side of Indian instead of so called boosting Indian economy, as his number one priority.

Another challenge for Modi was to justify his slow economy that has gripped India because of Modi's reversals on boosting Indian economy that he had claimed earlier. After the Pulwama attacks proved to be an ice breaker for Modi and BJP, the political analysts termed his victory in this backdrop. Milan Vaishnav, the Director of the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace explained it in terms of "The Pakistan crisis has provided him with a golden narrative. The thing about a national security crisis is that it plays up decisiveness, leadership and nationalism" [\[Pandya, 2019\]](#). Modi executed these personal traits intelligently. The BJP leaders invoked a sense of nationalism and national security over economy in their speeches. The Pulwama attack was a manifestation of jingoism that Modi wanted to use to gain public opinion during election campaign and super cede his failures in economy. "The slowdown in economic growth could still have emerged as a possible flashpoint during the elections. But the February suicide attack on Indian paramilitary forces in Pulwama and the government's subsequent response - which included ordering air strikes on a terrorist camp in Pakistan - helped marshal vast amounts of support for Modi," [\[Marwaha, 2019\]](#).

War of Perception and Propaganda

Of all the factors and determinants related to wars, media's jingoistic role cannot be over ruled. It also came into the academic debate after the Pulwama incident. This service extended by the Indian media turned into a disservice so much so that the slogan of war went louder than the national cause. The propaganda role of media is not new; it has been used and embedded to achieve national interest in interventions. Modi played the anti-Pakistan sentiment and Indian media promoted the narrative that helped him win an unprecedented public support mainly from rural India. It shows that media has been a critical factor in bringing Pakistan and India to the brink of war, more likely, a nuclear war that would be disastrous for future generations. Regarding Indian media, analysts say on the matters of regional security and inter-state relations, Indian media lacks journalistic capabilities of quality reporting and knowledge of editing [Joshi, 2015]. Modi used this national security issue in persuading the Indian electorate as an evidence of how Indian media framed the Pulwama incident and forced the public opinion in his favor. "The war of perception and propaganda has always been a vital instrument of enhancing, projecting and exercising national power. It is one of the most critical dimensions along with the diplomatic, military, economic and cultural components of a nation's power" [Pandya, 2019]. The phenomenon is not new. Joint efforts of media and policymakers have been active globally to portray such military conflicts for decades. For instance, in the context of Canada -Russian conflicts, the security dilemma was counted because of strong media and government relations: a tendency to portray any foreign military activity in the Arctic as hostile and provocative, even when such activity does not infringe on recognized Russian rights. This is also true in India and Pakistan and Post Pulwama media handling.

The Indian media jingoism was at peak to exploit the domestic public opinion. Hashtags such as, #Avenge Pulwama and #surgicalstrike2—the latter referring to the last skirmish between the two countries in 2016— dominated the Indian social media feeds. The Indian electronic media also opted for competitive beating of the war drums even calling antinational to those going for a dialogue or maintaining peace between India and Pakistan. Similarly, the narrative also helped the hawkish government to retaliate in some way — thus helped Modi's election rhetoric and winning the electoral battle against the political voices of the Indian National Congress (INC). The international media also reported over the crazy role of Indian media in forcing the Indian Government to attack Pakistan and criticized over this provocative role in raising the public sentiment. Such tactics may have helped the BJP Government to bend voters to its side before the Indian elections, but this ultimately upsets the regional peace. Media while promoting national interest need to be careful to prevent acrimonies among the peoples of the region.

Revocation of Article 370 and its effects on the Geopolitics of South Asia

Historically, Kashmir has been predominantly serving as a tool of antagonism resulting in armed conflicts between Pakistan and India and it is perceived to be a factor hindering cordiality in future relationship as well between the two neighbours. [Usman et al., 2017]. The geographical significance of Kashmir has also been realized by those who matter, regionally and internationally. [Usman, et al, 2017]. Therefore, the issue of Kashmir does not only affect the security environment between the two states but also shadows the tranquility of the entire region.

Since both the neighboring countries are conscious concerning the geo strategic location of Kashmir which has an overwhelming effect on their respective security issues. [Usman, et al, 2017]. India considers Kashmir's location and its associated border with it to be a natural shield of defense from any supposed invasive aggression from the states such as China and Russia. On the other hand, Pakistan also terms the ideal location of Kashmir to be vital to its security as well and considers Indian control in Kashmir a severe challenge to Pakistan's safety. The location of Kashmir vis a vis security perception is not only a concern for Pakistan and India, in fact the perception stretches to other states of the region such as China and the newly born Central Asian countries [Usman, et al, 2017].

The revocation of article 370 by India in occupied Kashmir does not only undermine the fundamental rights of Kashmiris but it also going to further aggravate already complex relationship between the two countries. It is argued that India took such an irrational decision of revocation of article 370 in Kashmir in the wake of American troops withdrawal from Afghanistan, resumption or resurfacing of Taliban factor which would naturally become a threat to Indian control and authority in Kashmir, in the future [Sharma, 2019]. It is also argued that a power struggle is expected to initiate in South Asia amongst the regional powers which includes Russia, China, Iran ,Pakistan and India after the withdrawal of USA troops from Afghanistan which does not favour, in many ways Indian aspirations for it to develop control or gain strength regionally. This is perceived by India that it will affect its control

in Kashmir significantly and therefore such insecurity compelled them in taking such an unpopular and undemocratic initiative of revoking article 370 in Kashmir.

The American strategy in the South Asian region with regard to its partnership or collaboration with India is much more China specific i.e. towards the eastern borders of India with China rather than the western border which involves Pakistan. This also is a point of concern for India as it is expected to extend its cooperation in terms of countering China, by USA rather than seeking its support and understanding in dealing with Pakistan regarding the Kashmir issue. Moreover, it is not only the American aspiration of China being countered by India rather it is also an Indian objective, as well, in the wake of strategic race between China and India for supremacy in the region in addition to long withstanding bordering disputes which have caused complexities and challenges in Sino-Indian bilateral engagements. Such a rift between China and India naturally compliments Pakistan's position due to its historical and reliable partnership with China based on mutual trust and cooperation

Conclusion

Altered Indian strategies coupled with the obvious occurrences in the region such as the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and India's preparation for the post troops' withdrawal scenario, has somehow misbalanced the deterrence stability and has embossed the possibility of war. BJP has been successful in winning support of its ideological supporters at home by winning elections in major states of the country that has made it predominantly more assertive and effective in implementing its foreign policy strategies and maneuvers. Pakistan needs to boost up its diplomatic efforts for highlighting the barbaric revocation of Article 370 amongst the regional and international powers alongside translating the outcome of such Indian actions to those concerned for its timely counter. Pakistan should also start preparing and planning for post US troop's withdrawal scenario and its strategy vis a vis India-Kashmir issue.

It is generally perceived that India will be under pressure, after the US withdrawal from this region, Pakistan with the support of China would lead the region and it would be difficult for India to maintain its suppressive position in Kashmir. India's revocation of article 370 and the decision of division of Ladakh from J & K by India involved china too in this scenario because China claiming it to be its own territory.

Pakistan needs to gear up its diplomatic efforts that it has taken up at the last UN General Assembly meeting. It is after a long hiatus; the international media has also coincided with Pakistan's diplomatic mission to write over the matter. *The New York Times* in its editorial mentioned that, "the Security Council should make clear that it opposes Mr. Modi's brutal tightening of India's control on Kashmir. While Mr. Modi may think he can control this volatile conflict on his own, he almost certainly cannot" (Oct 02, 2019). Due to these efforts, China stressed and the UN Security Council had set off its practice for a peacekeeping role since 1965, decided to meet again and discuss the volatile situation surrounding Kashmir on August 15, 2019. Pakistan may face challenges as no one would like to go against Modi and India having a powerful economy. It has been done by the Muslim countries which did not support the Kashmiris' cause. But Pakistan needs to talk up about India's brutalities in IHK and consistently pursue its diplomatic stance with media's support at global level.

Perception management over the years has become an important instrument of national security. Countries often use perception management as a tool to influence other states for the achievement of their desired political, economic or security objectives. Shaping perceptions can help in resolving long-standing disputes and vice versa since it is a way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted. The youth's role in struggles, as can be seen in Kashmir (an ever-changing conflict), are budding up in the hyper-connected, globalized environment ([Macdonald, 2018](#)). The perception of Pakistani youth about Kashmir is firmly committed to the cause on humanitarian, legal, political and moral grounds. The youth of Pakistan remain just as not only the future of Indo-Pak relations, but prospects of peace in South Asia hinge on resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

In such a scenario where the dynamics of core issue between Pakistan and India have changed. It is urgent that active and vibrant youth must have better insight and understanding of Kashmir conflict in the light of dynamics of politics. Young leaders need to arrange programs in schools' colleges and universities for awareness about Kashmir issue. Pakistani expatriate community particularly, the educated youth can play a significant role in sensitizing the international community about the Kashmir issue ([Qureshi, 2017](#)). Youth should play their role to create public awareness on Kashmir in the outside world. They should talk to the masses abroad, intellectuals, youth, politicians and parliamentarians and brief them about the genesis of the Kashmir dispute". ([Qureshi,2017](#))

At the end the entire issue to be illustrated as per the statement of Stephen Cohen [\(Biswas, 2019\)](#) who signaled towards the vulnerability of the region becoming more prone towards conflict in the wake of the Indian revocation of Kashmir's special status. Such a statement attains inevitable seriousness due to the undeniable fact of both the involved neighbouring countries possessing significant numbers of nuclear warheads. Biased Hindu centric ideology pursued by India has exposed the region to a dangerous situation of security dilemma.

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