Potential Armed Conflict between Pakistan and India
A Realis Perspective

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ABSTRACT
Dating back into history as both nations India and Pakistan got independence from British rule in mid twentieth century, the relation between two countries has been not so good that both nuclear armed states been engaged in tussles in terms of war and by blaming each other for act of terrorism and there has always been political, diplomatically and militarily contentions between two nuclear powers. The contentions between two countries has always been presenting on international arena as base points, one is act of terrorism and other the conflict on Kashmir disputed region for both countries claiming their own authority on that region. As in recent this year in 2025 the escalation heightened between two states, as the base point of escalation was Pahlgam attack and India blamed Pakistan for this act. This study as adopted the framework of realistic perspective as offensive realism which was given by John miershiemer and other framework which is about the security dilemma framework to analyze the contentions between two nuclear states also to determine what kind of forces which are contributing for this conflict.

As for the sake of good relations between two states there were multiple talks which were conducted for settlement of misunderstanding between two states and these efforts proved to be mediator for these two states. As theory of realism refer the ideas of upgrading power for security and provide the anarchical pattern for states and states make decision on rational choice and this theory also guide leaders for framing the behavior of states.

This study is conducted by following multiple models and content analysis. As we have included the analysis tool which content analysis of several policies and there were also the integration of knowledgeable people for better understanding as expert suggestions and there also strategic planning how troops can be deployed including other key areas like economy, budget and military strength. Major contribution and steps has been taken after the pandemic of corona virus which involved as economic hindrance in 2019 and other areas of tensions has also been heightened as terrorism, cross border tensions and support for backdoor diplomacy.

This research as conducted on both nuclear states as both are much better in this field and both state has the plus point in terms of strategic geographical location through which both state stable the deterrence by including other means like military and doctrines. As historically since Pakistan got independence and from the time when Pakistan framed its national security strategy, Pakistan

followed the policy of conventional strikes and on the other side India has adopted the policy of first strike, so even a little signal lead to major conflict.

This research includes that, there is emergence of strategic studies in the region of south Asia and for this realist domain and theory of knowledge has been ever best to apply for coercive states. So there need to be robust system and there should be applied new models for settlement of these crisis. Realism theory is best for understanding of conflict like this in recent escalation.

INTRODUCTION:

The conflict between India and Pakistan is deeply rooted in history. As the both states got independence in mid twentieth century and with independence there were root causes regarding unfair territory and other means like act of terrorism which later became the reason of escalation between these two states. As the conflict is often characterized by misunderstanding, act of terrorism, and with main central point of conflict as on Kashmir territory. These two nuclear states fought three wars first in 1965, second in 1971 and third in 1999 and other attacks like 2001 parliament attack. And now coming towards the recent attack which is characterized by the attack of Pahlgam and India blamed Pakistan for this act and this led to further escalation.

This research is conducted under the theories of realism and this study will also determine the chance of escalation with the help of realism perspective, the study also follow the theory of offensive realism which is given by the scholar named **john meersheimer**. According to the theory of offensive realism as states prioritize the military build ups and create deterrence for survival because the theory pose the point of view that security could only be achieved with help of power maximization.

As the multiple things are happening in both regions at current scenarios and also since independence like, India to nullify article 370 in Kashmir, Pakistan to work more on tactical missiles and nuclear weapons and India framework of cold start doctrine, these all are the driving factors behind the escalation.

This study also examines that how other international states and mediator like USA and china are still unable to create diplomatic relations between these two hostile states. In recent point of view as India much support and interest in QUAD and other actors like United States of America and soviet tensions and their interest driven goals are failed to put these two states at one point. And there is shift in international arena as this era is characterized by cyber warfare so stakes will be higher than ever.

This research advised that how these condition could push two nuclear states at on more conflict. This study consist of qualitative study and will analyze the tensions between these two states.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Beside the long term talks, diplomacy and treaties between two states it is rarely to find that the ease of moments between two states and these two states has been remained under severe conditions and under serious security dilemma. In contemporary situation as in 2019 palwama attack and now in 2025 pahlgam attack which proved to be escalation catalyst between two states and challenged the peace in this region. As both state according to realist perspective are working on nuclear projects so even a single step towards escalation would led towards full-scale war.

OBJECTIVES:

➢ To examine the chances of conflict between Pakistan and India with help of realist framework.

➢ To measure the key root causes like doctrines, strategies and policies which assist the conflict.

➢ To investigate, is realism theory best framework to analyze this conflict.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

➢ Which aspects of realist perspective are assumed to be the root cause in contribution of escalation between Pakistan and India in 2025?

➢ How policies and both side strategic doctrines effect the crisis?

➢ What role the mediator are playing (USA, China) in dealing with this escalation and security issue?

LITERATURE VIEW:

The literature view on this security dilemma is much and deeply rooted in multiple theories and in historical point of views. As the literature on this issue is much scattered and every scholar put the different dimensions for the analysis of this issue. According to the conventional studies the issue represent the view point of realist perspectives but in recent years as thinkers followed the forecast of Huntington's, future war will be on clash of culture, identity and religion, so all scholar put this point of view by determine the root cause is on belief, identity and religion.

As many scholars like the point of view of John meersheimer and according to the views of Stephen Walt, they evaluated how states hunger for power to maintain their influence in the region. The famous work of John meersheimer" the tragedy of great power politics" in which he clearly puts the ideas that all states are hang out with power politics and for survival, every state maximize his physical strength in terms of military and nuclear arsenals and weapons based on the Hobbes defined human nature. And this perspective can also be seen in the conflict between India and Pakistan dating back in history and currently in 2025.

In recent years, it has been seen that India refined his strategy of deterrence shifting from defensive to first strike as this was also proposed by **Kanti Bajpai** and by **shashank joshi**, they willingly advised this thing in official paper. If we follow back in 1980s era India in to introduce cold start doctrine and then pre-emptive strike policies are evidence.

Theory of deterrence in the region of Asia is totally far away from the models after the World War II as era starts with proxy wars between US and Soviet Union, in Asia there are no clues of mutually assured devastation. As one of the famous scholar Michael Krepon put the ideas in front that he posed" there should be minimum credible deterrence for countries", and also critiqued the diplomatic and liberal values and put the much pressure on talk crisis. From one side even a defensive step, other state take this step as offensive and that led towards the large scale escalation.

This all research refer the gaps in study as some say that there is the conversion of strategic realism with the new recent trends of intelligence as emergence of drones and cyber warfare to evaluate the conflict of 2025.

THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK:

This research work and article deeply held with realist school of thought, theories like offensive realism and structural realism. Through these theories I as a researcher able to explain this conflict with best relative study and key concepts which are:

❖ Anarchy and survival of states:

This was best explained by the scholar named Kenneth Walt who said that, the nature of international system is characterized by the anarchical nature as there is no supreme power or

single authority which maintain the order. Every state rely on self-help and power maximization. In case Pakistan and India as both states struggle for rational choices to maintain the influence in the region.

❖ Security dilemma among states

As this perspective align with the thoughts of Robert Jarvis and Herz, according to this when there is increase in military build ups in one state, other state perceived it as a security issue and start increase in weapons as in case of India and Pakistan doing so.

❖ Power maximization

Power maximization of states is one of the aspect of offensive realism and best explained by scholar named John meersheimer. According to this states maximize military strength and weapons to stop enemies from attacks. In case of Pakistan and India, Pakistan to work on nuclear weapons and India to work on traditional or conventional warheads is the best example how states deter each other in terms of power maximization.

❖ Balancing and alliances

Balancing is the term used in security studies which posits that states build military and nuclear programs and make alliances with powerful states as US is the super power in current scenario. Pakistan in the poll of US and India to join QUAD and involvement in BRICS presents the concept of bipolar world.

❖ Rational actor model

Theory of realism which also posits that states act rationally in terms of benefits and loss. Other concept which held here is the involvement of non-state actors, through which states gain their goals and benefits by supporting against each other. This really fits in the case of Pakistan and India.

HYPOTHESIS:

➢ The escalation between Pakistan and India in 2025 is obsessed with the uneven context like anarchical structure, based on power and because no central mediator authority.

➢ There is number of aspect by which escalation is heightened like doctrines and strict policies contributing to further large scale conflict.

➢ Mediators like major, regional and super power unable to pay attention towards this conflict leading towards unsolved issue.

METHODOLOGIES:

This article consist of framework of qualitative study and multiple analysis tools to asses this issue in the context of realist perspective.

• Content and text analysis

For the sake of this study many texts and policy paper has been analyzed to conduct this study concise and relevant which come from the era 2019-2025 especially in the context of current scenario by providing wide range historical views which empower the study. Main study was tilted towards strategies, doctrines and policies.

• Expert views

As for this research interviews of official policymakers have been conducted for the sake of good study as 4 from three domains.

Like from universities professor, policymakers and military officials.

• Assessing strategic forecast

For the sake of collecting information by both side open source tool of intelligence gathering is applied for assessing military build ups and deployment of weapons and other things

- Analysis of recent strikes

Back in 2019 balakot strike and pulwama attack analysis provide base knowledge to evaluate current scenario and issue.

POPULATION SIZE:

For the sake of this study population is selected from this region because we cannot make from Indian perspective as policy makers and Pakistan military officials are selected for this study. For relevance to this study case studies has been analyzed broadly and expert interviews helped us to collect data as including policy papers analysis and case studies included.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES:

For this research, as for required study purposive sampling technique is applied for the purpose of relevant knowledge form the official who has relevant study experience and there is also analysis of case studies which refers towards the theoretical sampling tool.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS:

For the sake of primary data as included experts and policy analysis and interviews has conducted in this study and as for the sake of secondary data multiple websites and tools are included like database and SIPRI website for analysis of weapons and arsenal of both countries.

Furthermore, documents and policy papers of military trends and interviews and with help of surveillance the strategic measures and policies.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

Strategic clues and posture of doctrines:

As in history India followed the conventional policies based on conventional military build ups and as India in late 20th century shifted its policy from cold start doctrine to first use of strikes which base on the realism theory to deter state to not further threat to other state. And on the other side Pakistan also revisited the policies and shifted its minimum credible deterrence to full deterrence which means that to build tactical warheads to make adversary vulnerable for attack.

SIGNAL OUTING THE CONFLICT CAUSES:

Since when both states got independence Kashmir occupation from India side which is unfair put both sides on the edge of war and still this issue is unresolved. Both side blame each other if there is insurgency and act of terrorism in that region. But in contemporary India blamed again for act of terrorism based on cross border escalation in valley of Kashmir, specifically in the region of Pahlgam attack which put the both states again on edge of war. In this escalation as multiple other tools for escalation used like cyber-attacks and nuclear weapons also used.

EXTERNAL BODIES INVOLVEMENT:

The external bodies like USA and China which are unable to play role in this conflict regardless of the power and influence. The competition between china and USA which enable America to play role in some extent but America full involvement is compromised because of regional interests. And other players like china support for economic build ups in Pakistan as initiative on gwadar port and CPEC program which puts that it is game changer for Pakistan under BRI program, but it make vulnerable for full scale war between Pakistan and India. Arab world which also unable to play role in this region.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

❖ It is mandatory for both states to keep control the things like procedures and mechanism of conflict and both side to put escalation points and lines between each other that no side able to cross under circumstances.

❖ Role of external bodies which is compulsory for these two state to make peace in South Asia region because these two states are nuclear states if war begin then mutually assured destruction is confirmed putting implication for other world.

❖ As many scholar analyzed this conflict and they preferred that CBM is compulsory to maintain peace. As confidence building measures enhance cooperation among states and it posits that each side not to cross areas of conflict and it also posits that each side to make treaties and military pacts for trust and to erase concept of hating each other

❖ Each side to not to build weapons and military posture that in future could threaten the state.

CONCLUSION:

This research at the end by analyzing all the aspect of escalation and by theoretical framework ends with the point of view that, between two states history is full of conflicts since the independence as both side indulge in new security dilemma after one another as in 2019 pulwama attack and in 2025 pahlgam attack. So both side goes for escalation and apply the models of rational choice and with theoretical lens of realism in which power is the only way to get security.

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