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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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**Master's Thesis**

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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

**Nuclear latency and the problem of deterrence**

Master's thesis

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Year of the defence: 2020

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 21.5.2020

Tomáš Pažitný

## References

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## **Abstract**

The primary goal of the master's thesis is to uncover the actual impact of latent nuclear deterrence on the decision to avert the conflict. The thesis employs a variety of concepts, including the latent nuclear deterrence, as articulated by Matthew Fuhrmann, to ascertain which one of them plays a vital role in dissuading one country from attacking another one. The influence of respective concepts is examined on the example of two historical case studies, which form the core part of the master's thesis. The first case study presents two crises that occurred in the 1980s between Pakistan as a latent nuclear state and India as the challenging state, eventually dissuaded from the attack. The second case study is devoted to the 1965 crisis between Pakistan as a challenging state and India as a latent nuclear state. This crisis, which eventually led to the war, works as a control case study. The analysis of both cases reveals valuable findings concerning the role of latent nuclear deterrence and nuclear latency in general. Contrary to what would proponents of this weaponless deterrence believe, latent nuclear deterrence was not the central factor when the attack on the latent nuclear state was contemplated. The findings of the master's thesis instead show that different military and non-military factors were at play and explain the challenger's decision to refrain from the attack. This outcome is also supported by the control case study, which reveals that factors other than latent nuclear deterrence were contemplated before deciding to attack.

## **Abstrakt**

Hlavním cílem diplomové práce je objasnit reálný vliv latentního nukleárního odstrašení na rozhodnutí upustit od konfliktu. Diplomová práce využívá celou škálu konceptů včetně latentního nukleárního odstrašení, tak, jak je formulováno Matthew Fuhrmannem, aby zjistila, který z těchto faktorů hraje rozhodující roli v odrazení jedné země od útoku na zemi druhou. Vliv jednotlivých konceptů je zkoumán na příkladu dvou historických případových studií, které tvoří hlavní část diplomové práce. První případová studie představuje dvě krize, které se odehrály v 80. letech mezi Pákistánem jako latentním nukleárním státem a Indií jako vyzyvatelem, který byl nakonec od útoku odrazen. Druhá případová studie se věnuje krizi z roku 1965 mezi Pákistánem jako vyzyvatelem a Indií jako latentním nukleárním státem. Tato krize, která nakonec vyústila ve válku, funguje jako kontrolní případová studie. Analýza obou

těchto případů odhaluje cenné zjištění ohledně role latentního nukleárního odstrašení a nukleární latence obecně. V rozporu s tím, v co věří zastánci tohoto odstrašení beze zbraní, latentní nukleární odstrašení nebylo hlavním faktorem při zvažování útoku na latentní nukleární stát. Závěry diplomové práce ukazují, že spíše jiné vojenské a nevojenské faktory rozhodují a vysvětlují vyzývateľovo rozhodnutí zdržet se útoku. Tento výsledek je též podpořen kontrolními případovými studií, která odhaluje, že faktory jiné, než latentní nukleární odstrašení byly zvažovány před rozhodnutím zaútočit.

## **Keywords**

nuclear latency, deterrence, Pakistan, India, proliferation, crisis, latent nuclear deterrence

## **Klíčová slova**

nukleární latence, odstrašení, Pakistán, Indie, proliferace, krize, latentní nukleární odstrašení

## **Název práce**

Nukleární latence a otázka odstrašení.

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# 1 Introduction

Between the years 1940 and 2012, there have existed 32 countries with the capacity to pursue the path of nuclear weaponization. Only 10 of them crossed the ‘line’ and became nuclear-armed countries. The rest of them either stopped to pursue nuclear capacity or decided to stay nuclear latent. The latter group has been studied rather sporadically, and the topic of nuclear latency has not been central in the security studies’ academic circles. In most cases, nuclear latency was considered as a bargaining tool and studied in that way. The potential impact of latent nuclear capacity on the prevention of the war and deterrence has been studied even more rarely, and up to date, the only notable work on this topic remains the article *The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence* from 2018 by Matthew Fuhrmann.<sup>1</sup> Although Fuhrmann can be credited for filling this gap in the academic literature, his findings raise concerns about some of the methods of the research.

Conducting quantitative research, Fuhrmann explored the links between the likeliness of state waging war and their latent nuclear capacity. Contrary to what had been written on weaponless deterrence and virtual nuclear arsenals, Fuhrmann found nuclear latency as capacity capable of deterring aggression. According to him, the findings of his quantitative research suggested that, historically, the states that had developed latent nuclear capacity are targeted at violent disputes at a lower rate. This assumption led Fuhrmann to combine his conceptualization of nuclear latency with the general understanding of deterrence. Subsequently, he came up with the concept of *latent nuclear deterrence*. In Fuhrmann’s understanding, this form of weaponless deterrence rests on the threat of the defending state to proliferate in the future and thus potentially endanger the challenging state. Most importantly, based on his quantitative findings of the likeliness of latent nuclear states to avoid military disputes, Fuhrmann attributed latent nuclear deterrence with the capacity to avert the conflict.

The master’s thesis attempts to examine this supposed effect of latent nuclear deterrence on dissuading conflicts and either validate or contradict Fuhrmann’s assumption about the deterring effects of nuclear latency. The research goal of the master’s thesis is to assess to what degree can latent nuclear deterrence be accounted for preventing the conflict and whether there exist more factors at play that can be responsible for dissuading the challenging state from attacking the defender with latent nuclear capacity. These factors are in the master’s thesis understood as the alternative explanations to the role of latent nuclear deterrence in averting the

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann, “The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence,” *SSRN Scholarly Paper*, (2017).

conflict. Contrary to Fuhrmann's work, the thesis employs qualitative research and thus offers a new approach for the study of latent nuclear deterrence, which has been so far predominantly examined using quantitative methods. The qualitative research rests upon the examination of two historical case studies representing the crisis scenarios between challenger and latent nuclear defender. The rich theoretical and conceptual framework applied in the context of the two crises ensures that the analysis of the case studies produces relevant and unique outcomes, which could hardly be achieved using quantitative research tools.

The structure of the master's thesis is as follows. The first chapter after the introduction explains the theoretical and conceptual background of the master's thesis. Firstly, it presents the origins of the latent nuclear deterrence and the conceptualization of nuclear latency and its role. Besides, it introduces other concepts that are applied in the analysis, and that can serve as potential alternative explanations for the decision of challenger to dissuade from the attack on the latent nuclear state. The operationalization of the individual concepts is also explained. The two subsequent chapters are devoted to two empirical cases covering the crisis episodes between India and Pakistan in the 1980s, with Pakistan being a latent nuclear state and between India and Pakistan in 1965, with India being a latent nuclear state. The selection of the case studies, to some degree, corresponds with Fuhrmann's article. Concerning the first case, Fuhrmann, in his article, mentions the nuclear latency as a stabilizing factor that dissuaded India from attacking Pakistan throughout the 1980s. The second case represents, according to Fuhrmann, a failure of latent nuclear deterrence. Therefore, the case of India and Pakistan during the 1965 crisis is used as a control case study. In this case, the master's thesis examines whether the outbreak of the war between India and Pakistan in 1965 can be attributed to the failure of latent nuclear deterrence, as Fuhrmann posits, or to some other factors. This crisis scenario being a control case, is also the reason why it is second in order, despite being chronologically older. The structure of the individual case studies is as follows. Firstly, the nuclear development of the latent nuclear state is discussed. Secondly, the actual crisis between the two countries is presented. Finally, the cases are split according to the individual concepts of the framework and the role of each concept in dissuading the challenger from the attack is analyzed. In the control case study, the analysis examines the role of the concepts in the final decision to attack. The final chapter concludes the findings of the analysis of the two case studies and assesses them in the context of Fuhrmann's findings.

## 1.1 Literature review

The master's thesis uses both primary and secondary sources. Concerning the primary sources, the thesis works with a variety of intelligence documents produced by the Central Intelligence Agency. Some of them have just recently been declassified. They represent a valuable source of information, especially for the assessment of both Indian and Pakistani nuclear and conventional capabilities. Their analysis of both countries' weaponry or technical advancement is unique and hard to find in the secondary literature.

Given the number of secondary sources, it is beyond this review to introduce all of them. Hence, just a few of the most significant ones are reviewed. Regarding the topic of nuclear latency and latent nuclear deterrence, the starting point for every scholar should be two works by Matthew Fuhrmann: *Almost Nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency dataset* from 2015<sup>2</sup>, written together with Benjamin Tkach, and *The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence* from 2018. The former is a valuable work for scholars interested in quantitative research since it has firstly introduced the Nuclear Latency dataset. The authors also provide the first empirical application of the dataset to demonstrate the connection between nuclear latency and international conflict and to conclude that having the latent nuclear capacity may provide deterrence benefits. The latter article builds upon the same assumption about the implications of nuclear latency, and it introduces the concept of latent nuclear deterrence. However, the authors admit that nuclear latency cannot prevent conflict in every possible scenario, and they present a set of requirements for latency to succeed. Other essential works used in the theoretical part of the thesis includes *Conventional Deterrence* by John J. Mearsheimer, which introduces the best conceptualization of conventional denial.<sup>3</sup> The topic of conventional deterrence is also discussed in the book *Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation in Europe* by Samuel P. Huntington<sup>4</sup>. In this book, Huntington offers a new approach to the study of deterrence by conventional retaliation.

Even though the secondary sources used for the respective case studies vary, some of the works are more relevant than the others. Among others, it is crucial to mention *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*, an excellent book by George Perkovich on

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach, "Almost nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency dataset," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 32/4 (2015).

<sup>3</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation in Europe," *International Security*, 8/3 (1983/4).

the development of India's nuclear arsenal and its nuclear policy.<sup>5</sup> For the first case study, the books *Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* by Sumit Ganguly and Devin T. Hagerty,<sup>6</sup> and *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia: Crisis Behavior and the Bomb* edited by Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur<sup>7</sup> have been widely used as a source of information about the crises between India and Pakistan in the 1980s. Regarding the second case study, the 1965 conflict between India and Pakistan and the reasons leading to the war are thoroughly analyzed in *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, book by T.V. Paul.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 Theoretical and conceptual underpinnings

In the subsequent sections of the theoretical part of the master's thesis, several concepts, which can serve as possible explanations for the prevention of the conflict, are presented. As it was mentioned in the introduction, the master's thesis can serve as a polemic with Fuhrmann's article *The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence*. Thus, the concept of latent nuclear deterrence is an essential part of the theoretical section. However, the master's thesis's analysis works with additional explanations for the prevention of the conflict, and therefore their presentation is included in the theoretical part.

Each of the concepts/factors is operationalized in the analysis of the individual case studies, and thus following part explains not only the theoretical background of the concepts but also their operationalization in the analysis, which is critical for the final assessment of the conflict prevention explanations.

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<sup>5</sup> George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)

<sup>6</sup> Sumit Ganguly and Devin T. Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005)

<sup>7</sup> Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur (eds.), *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia: Crisis Behavior and the Bomb* (New York: Routledge, 2009)

<sup>8</sup> T.V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

## 2.1 Latent nuclear deterrence

### 2.1.1 Thinking about (nuclear) deterrence

Before assessing the complexities of the relationship between nuclear latency and deterrence, it is crucial to provide a complex view on the very topic of nuclear deterrence and mainly focusing on the question that occupies the minds of scholars for several decades now: how much is enough to deter? The brief recapitulation of the discussion related to this question is helpful for the understanding of the grounds of latent nuclear deterrence.

Generally, deterrence is defined as the use of threat by the deterrer against a challenger that eventually discourages later one from attacking the former one. In Patrick Morgan's words, "[deterrence] is the use of threats of harm to prevent someone from doing something you don't want him to do."<sup>9</sup> Glen Snyder, for instance, regards the deterrence in connection with power – as its complete opposite. According to him, deterrence "appears to be a species of political power" and "[deterrence] as the capacity to induce others to do things or not to do things which they would not otherwise do or refrain from doing, deterrence is simply its negative aspect."<sup>10</sup>

Although the act of deterrence itself can be manifested in many forms and between different subjects, for this chapter, attention is devoted to nuclear deterrence between states. The subsequent paragraphs illustrate the fundamental tenets behind the functioning of nuclear deterrence and distinguish critical aspects that can be helpful for the study of the possible connection between nuclear latency and deterrence.

The advent of nuclear weapons and the manifestation of their destructive force has changed the perception of war. Among the first ones who realized this was a group of American and British strategists who laid down the basic principles and ideas upon which the Western understanding of the concept of nuclear deterrence was later built.<sup>11</sup> These authors, which helped to establish strategic studies as field accessible not only to military strategists but also to civilian scholars, are considered to be the representatives of the 'First Wave' of nuclear strategists.<sup>12</sup> Bernard Brodie, the most prominent member of the 'First Wave,' was able to distinguish the critical problems of the existence of nuclear weapons for international security and diplomacy and tried to work out the theoretical consequences of the deployment of these

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<sup>9</sup> Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc, 1977) 17.

<sup>10</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, "Deterrence and Power," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 4/2 (1960) 163.

<sup>11</sup> Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to Strategic Studies: Military Technology and International Relations* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1987) 143.

<sup>12</sup> According to identification by Collin G. Gray in *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment* (London: Aldwych Press, 1982) 15-17.

weapons.<sup>13</sup> He can be credited for popularizing the term of deterrence in the context of nuclear weapons. His influential book *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* has been a starting point for the students and scholars interested in the topic of nuclear weapons until today.<sup>14</sup> Even though the academic effort of the ‘First Wave’ is impressive considering the scarcity of any empirical evidence on the deployment of nuclear weapons, their work remains solely intellectual, lacking an actual impact on policy and public. The emergence of the Soviet Union as a nuclear power with a growing arsenal prompted the need for a nuclear strategy. The second wave of authors (so-called ‘Golden Age’ authors) produced substantial academic work on nuclear deterrence, its functioning, and the requirements.<sup>15</sup>

Since the ‘Golden Age’ era, the individual components of deterrence and their influence over the success or failure of deterrence have been central to the study of nuclear weapons. Most studies identified three essential elements of successful nuclear deterrence.<sup>16</sup> The first component is the defender’s *capability* to carry out the threat against the challenger. In this context, the capability does not have to refer solely to a preponderance of military force but rather to the defender’s capability of making the challenger believe that the defender has all the means necessary to fulfill the threat. If the defender fails to convince the attacker, so does the deterrence.<sup>17</sup> The second requirement for a successful nuclear deterrence is the *credibility* of the threat. The credibility is treated as a believability to use the force. In other words, if the threat is credible, it is believed by the challenger. Furthermore, in the literature on nuclear weapons, the factor of capability is interlinked with the rationality. Therefore, only credible threats are the believed ones, and one can believe the threat only when it is rational.<sup>18</sup> The credibility itself is composed of two factors: the above-mentioned capability and the willingness to use the military force.<sup>19</sup> The *intentions of the potential aggressor* represent the last requirement. The strength of the challenger’s motivation is a significant aspect. If the resolve to fight is too low, the challenger is easily deterred. Contrastingly, a highly dissatisfied challenger wanting to change the status quo by any means necessary is almost undeterrable. As

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<sup>13</sup> Gregg Herken, “The not-quite-absolute weapon: Deterrence and the legacy of Bernard Brodie,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 9/4 (1986) 15.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946).

<sup>15</sup> Buzan, “An Introduction to Strategic Studies: Military Technology and International Relations,” 144-145.

<sup>16</sup> Michael J. Mazarr, “Understanding Deterrence,” *PE-295-RC* (Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, 2018) 8.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce M. Russett, “The calculus of deterrence,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 7/2 (1963) 97-98.

<sup>18</sup> D. Marc Kilgour and Frank C. Zagare, “Credibility, Uncertainty and Deterrence,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 35/2 (1991) 305-307

<sup>19</sup> Pierre Gallois, *The balance of terror: strategy for the nuclear age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961) 152.

Patrick Morgan notes, many scholars find the challenger's motivation the critical requirement. Moreover, in his words: "challenger motivation is the most crucial factor in deterrence success or failure, primarily if 'motivation' covers both the desire to challenge and a willingness to take risks."<sup>20</sup>

### 2.1.1.1 *How much is enough?*

The question of 'numbers' began to be thoroughly contemplated in the late 1950s under the influence of the research of Albert Wohlstetter and his colleagues from RAND Corporation. In his 1959 article *The Delicate Balance of Terror*, Wohlstetter targets two widespread beliefs about deterrence. Firstly he criticizes the so-called *automatic balance* – assumption that the mere possession of nuclear weapons deters.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, he doubts that the possession of just a few nuclear weapons is enough to survive the adversary's nuclear attack and retaliate.<sup>22</sup> Eventually, Wohlstetter, in his article, notes what is needed to deter successfully. He calls for a robust deterrent comprised of substantial nuclear forces with flexible delivery systems that can survive the first attack and ready to react to potential aggressor's own changing offensive and defensive military capabilities.<sup>23</sup>

For many years, the mainstream strategic studies paid little attention to the alternatives to massive nuclear arsenals needed for a second strike. That was, to a large extent, caused by the U.S.–Soviet arms race and by their massive nuclear arsenals. A noteworthy exception is the work of P.M.S. Blackett, who challenged the need for big nuclear arsenals and who got into an academic dispute with Albert Wohlstetter. Blackett's *Critique of Some Contemporary Defence Thinking* advocated the existence of small nuclear arsenals and calculated with the risk of damage rather than certainty, contrastingly to Wohlstetter.<sup>24</sup> In the 1980s, McGeorge Bundy, under the influence of the French school of deterrence, unfolded the theory of *existential deterrence*.<sup>25</sup> His work, and other works<sup>26</sup> of *existentialists*, stressed the irreducible risk that is associated with nuclear weapons and the possible escalation. They also stressed the uncertainty, which is typical for any nuclear relationship. Therefore, according to *existentialists*, states are

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<sup>20</sup> Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 163-164.

<sup>21</sup> Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," *Foreign Affairs*, 37/2 (1959) 211-212.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-124.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-217.

<sup>24</sup> P. M. S. Blackett, "Critique of Some Contemporary Defence Thinking," *Survival*, 3/3 (1961) 126-128.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Ludvik, *Nuclear Asymmetry and Deterrence: Theory, Policy, History* (New York: Routledge, 2017) 6.

<sup>26</sup> Other notable work on existential deterrence is Mark Trachtenberg's article "The influence of Nuclear Weapons in the Cuban Missile Crisis" published in *International Security* in 1985.

deterred even by the mere possibility of nuclear retaliation, for which it is sufficient to have a small nuclear arsenal.<sup>27</sup>

Closely associated with the school of existential deterrence is the concept of *virtual nuclear arsenals*, which is halfway between the state of existential deterrence and nuclear latency. The term entered the lexicon of nuclear strategy and non-proliferation in the 1990s thanks to Michael J. Mazarr and his article *Virtual Nuclear Arsenals* from 1995.<sup>28</sup> Mazarr and other authors, including Joseph F. Pilat, understand the concept of virtual nuclear arsenals (VNAs) in two ways. Firstly, VNAs can be considered as a severe threat to a non-proliferation regime. Cohen and Pilat fear the increasing number of states formally not in possession of a nuclear weapon but with all the knowledge to build one and with nuclear-material stocks and fuel-cycle status.<sup>29</sup> The second notion of the term VNAs carries more positive meaning and more relevance for the master's thesis. It studies the virtual arsenals as a means of how to gradually pursue disarmament and the nuclear-free world while keeping the knowledge of assembling the bomb and all the other necessary components. Thus, the state would still be able to deter, but unauthorized use and other risks that are associated with the possession of nuclear weapons would be reduced.<sup>30</sup>

The conception of VNAs is closest to the understanding of nuclear latency, which is essential for the latent nuclear deterrence and, consequently, for the whole theoretical background of the master's thesis. Therefore, the next section of the chapter is dedicated to the presentation concept of nuclear latency, which, as Scott D. Sagan points out, remains understudied and insufficiently understood among experts from the field of international and security studies.<sup>31</sup>

### **2.1.2 Nuclear latency**

If one considers the significant implications of nuclear latency for deterrence, non-proliferation, and arms control, the lack of comprehensive literature is surprising. The academic works written on the topic of nuclear latency diverge even in the fundamental understanding and core assumptions about this type of nuclear capacity. Moreover, no established framework exists for

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<sup>27</sup> McGeorge Bundy, "Existential Deterrence and Its Consequences," in Douglas MacLean (ed.), *The Security Gamble: Deterrence Dilemmas in the Nuclear Age* (Totowa: N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984) 3-13.

<sup>28</sup> Michael J. Mazarr, "Virtual Nuclear Arsenals," *Survival*, 37/3 (1995).

<sup>29</sup> Avner Cohen and Joseph F. Pilat, "Assessing Virtual Nuclear Arsenals," *Survival*, 40/1 (1998) 129.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>31</sup> Scott D. Sagan, "Nuclear Latency and Nuclear Proliferation," in William C. Potter and Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova (eds.), *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Volume 2 A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) 80.



distinguishing, which states can be considered nuclear latent and which not. Therefore, the number of latent nuclear states varies quite considerably, depending on the scholarly approach to study the nuclear latency. For instance, while Frank Barnaby, in his book, implies that sixty-nine states are nuclear latent,<sup>32</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach attribute this capacity only to thirty-one states.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it is necessary for a better understanding of the concept to provide the overview and the analysis of the most critical approaches to nuclear latency and the overall academic discussion concerning the topic. However, before doing so, it is valuable to delineate the nuclear production process and the working definition of nuclear latency.

The process consists of three significant steps that must be undertaken in order to build the bomb. In the first place, it is necessary to produce enough fissile material (either enriched uranium or reprocessed plutonium). The second step is weaponizing the material, and in the third step, a weapon is mated to a delivery system.<sup>34</sup>

The narrow definition of nuclear latency, as forward by Ariel E. Levite, describes the concept as “the acquisition of nuclear weapon–relevant technology and fissile materials as an (unintended) consequence of nuclear power and other nonnuclear-weapon activity.”<sup>35</sup> This definition is, to a certain extent, agreed among most of the scholars. The main challenge comes with the assessment of the number of latent nuclear states, the criteria for measuring nuclear latency, and the broader context, including the factors influencing the degree of latency.

The pioneering work on the topic of nuclear latency and latent nuclear states is the 1984 book *The Dynamics of Nuclear Proliferation* by Stephen Meyer. In this book, Meyer, as one of the first ones, examines the underlying determinants of nuclear power proliferation. He compiles the list of ten technical and economic indicators that could, in his opinion, assemble a group of states which can be considered as the countries with latent capabilities to produce a nuclear weapon.<sup>36</sup> Since the publication of the book, many other scholars sought to update its data set with more or less significant changes. In this context, arguably, the most important

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<sup>32</sup> Frank Barnaby, *How to Build a Nuclear Bomb and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction* (New York: Nation Books, 2004) 68.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach, “Almost nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency dataset,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 32/4 (2015).

<sup>34</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann, “The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence,” *SSRN Scholarly Paper*, (2017) 5; Hakan Mehmetcik, “Nuclear Latency: The Turkish Case,” *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 6/2 (2018) 249.

<sup>35</sup> Ariel E. Levite, “Nuclear Hedging and Latency: History, Concepts and Issues,” in Joseph F. Pilat (ed.), *Nuclear Latency and Hedging: Concepts, History and Issues* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2019) 23.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen M. Meyer, *The Dynamics of Nuclear Proliferation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984) 173-186.

contributions are Richard Stoll's work from 1996 and Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke's study from 2007.

Stoll, unlike Meyer, does not include indigenous uranium sources in his analysis. He instead assumes that all states have access to the global market and thus to the nuclear materials which are commonly traded. Pursuing this approach, Stoll omits the crucial factor of direct access to uranium. This modification of Meyer's dataset leads to a sharp increase in latent nuclear states and to the number of forty-eight countries with this capacity.<sup>37</sup> Jo and Gartzke seek, as well, to answer some of the questions concerning proliferation using the outcomes and data collected by the authors on national latent nuclear production.<sup>38</sup> They omit some of the indicators used by Meyer and Stoll and come with a result, which, to some extent, can be seen as misleading. In the Jo and Gartzke's coding, "uranium deposits" include either state with these deposits on its territory or state that has acquired produced uranium for research or a power reactor.<sup>39</sup> Even though, in their work, the authors explicitly state that countries that lack material capabilities will be excluded from the final list, the criterion of possession of nuclear materials as a necessary condition for constructing a bomb is not included in the model.<sup>40</sup> This apparent shortcoming of their work and some of the works of the predecessors is well illustrated in Scott D. Sagan's *Nuclear Latency and Nuclear Proliferation*.<sup>41</sup>

Sagan, in the aforementioned work reviews previous academic pieces on the topic of nuclear capability and nuclear latency, delivers a powerful critique of the formerly employed approaches and concludes with the suggestions for an improved examination of the concept. Sagan, for instance, demonstrates the flaws in Jo and Gartzke's model. He stresses that according to their model, North Korea in 2001 did not have the latent nuclear capacity, even though the reactor at Yongbyon has already been producing separated plutonium, and Pyongyang tested its first nuclear weapon a few years later. Similarly, the case of South Africa constitutes, according to Sagan, another shortcoming. Jo and Gartzke's model does not consider South Africa to be a latent nuclear state, even though the country manufactured several nuclear bombs and had a lot of highly enriched uranium (HEU) even years after dismantling the

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<sup>37</sup> Richard Stoll, "World Proliferation of Latent Nuclear Capacity," *Rice University* (1996), <http://es.rice.edu/projects/Poli378/Nuclear/Proliferation/proliferation.html> (accessed 10.1.2020).

<sup>38</sup> Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke, "Determinants of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51/1 (2007) 167.

<sup>39</sup> Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke, "Code Book and Data Notes," for *Determinants of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51/1 (2007), 7.

<sup>40</sup> Sagan, "Nuclear Latency and Nuclear Proliferation," 88.

<sup>41</sup> "Nuclear Latency and Nuclear Proliferation" by Scott D. Sagan is a chapter in William C. Potter and Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova (eds.), *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Volume 2 A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

weapons in the 1990s. According to Sagan, the work of Jo and Gartzke and other academic papers on this topic suffer from the introduction of weak proxy measures and the lack of attention devoted to the acquisition of fissile materials. These flaws, according to him, results in misleading conclusions.<sup>42</sup>

Probably the most comprehensive work on nuclear latency and latent nuclear states is *Almost nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency dataset* by Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach published in 2015. The authors acknowledge the critique and recommendations articulated by Scott D. Sagan and introduce a new approach to the study of latent nuclear capacity. Fuhrmann and Tkach mainly focus on the development of enrichment and reprocessing (ENR) facilities in the respective countries as the determinant of their latent nuclear capability. The product of their research is Nuclear Latency (N.L.) dataset, which focuses on the ENR facilities and covers the relevant data between the years 1939 and 2012.<sup>43</sup> The N.L. dataset presents thirty-one states that are or were at some point in the history considered nonnuclear weapon states that actively employ ENR technology. Put differently, they are regarded as the latent nuclear powers.<sup>44</sup>

The master's thesis operates with the understanding of nuclear latency as forwarded by Fuhrmann and Tkach and as operationalized in their N.L. dataset. Both their analysis of the concept of nuclear latency and their argumentation concerning the measure of the latency is the most compelling study comparing to the other works on the topic.

### **2.1.3 Requirements for latent nuclear deterrence**

The academic literature on the deterrent effects of nuclear latency remains quite scarce, even though recently, the topic of latent nuclear deterrence has enjoyed more attention. The most original work on the relationship between nuclear latency and deterrence remains the article *The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence* by Matthew Fuhrmann.<sup>45</sup> For other valuable thoughts about virtual deterrence, also Rupal N. Mehta and Rachel Elizabeth Whitlark's *The Benefits and Burdens of Nuclear Latency* can be considered.<sup>46</sup> Beyond these titles, academic literature does not provide many sources on deterring effects of latency. Therefore, the understanding of

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<sup>42</sup> Sagan, "Nuclear Latency and Nuclear Proliferation," 90.

<sup>43</sup> Fuhrmann and Tkach, "Almost nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency dataset," 446.

<sup>44</sup> Fuhrmann, "The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence," 5-6.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann, "The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence," *SSRN Scholarly Paper*, (2017).

<sup>46</sup> Rupal N. Mehta and Rachel Elizabeth Whitlark, "The Benefits and Burdens of Nuclear Latency," *International Studies Quarterly*, 61/1 (2017).

latent nuclear deterrence rests mainly on the article by Fuhrmann. Moreover, since the master's thesis operates with some of the findings of Fuhrmann's article, it is meaningful to use his conceptualization of latent nuclear deterrence. Based on the logic of deterrence and its basic tenets, Fuhrmann defines successful latent nuclear deterrence as a situation in which deterrer's threat of acquiring a nuclear weapon and consequent potential nuclear retaliation dissuade challenger from the attack.<sup>47</sup> He also derives the four fundamental requirements for such latent nuclear deterrence.

The first requirement posits that the challenger must be concerned with the nuclearization of the defender. This concern stems from two consequences of nuclear proliferation. Firstly, the proliferation significantly constrains the range of foreign policy actions that the challenger can employ.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, the spread of nuclear weapons might endanger other countries, since the nuclear states are more emboldened to take risky foreign policy steps.<sup>49</sup> The second requirement is concerned with the deterrer's capacity to proliferate and the credibility of resolve to weaponize. The challenger must believe the defender has all the necessary needs for going nuclear, and at the same time, the costs of assembling the weapon do not exceed the benefits. The third requirement for latent nuclear deterrence to work assumes that the defender does not want to acquire the bomb in the shortest time possible. If the contrary is true, then the deterring effect of nuclear latency will not hold since the challenger presumes that the defender would get the bomb regardless of the challenger's decision.<sup>50</sup> The last requirement needed to be fulfilled stresses that the challenger cannot be too resolved to fight the defender. Even though the consequences of deterrer's nuclear weaponization are significant for the challenger, sometimes the benefits of fighting exceed them. That is true, especially for the hostile dyads in which the challenging state has revisionist aims.<sup>51</sup>

The master's thesis operates with the four requirements above, as articulated by Matthew Fuhrmann. For the latent nuclear deterrence to work, all of them must be fulfilled.

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<sup>47</sup> Fuhrmann, "The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence," 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>49</sup> Mehta and Whitlark, "The Benefits and Burdens of Nuclear Latency," 519.

<sup>50</sup> Fuhrmann, "The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence," 17-18.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

## 2.2 Strategies of nuclear proliferation

The first of the alternative factors that might explain the decision not to attack is concerned with the strategy that the state employs while seeking to acquire a bomb.

While the topic of nuclear proliferation is extensively covered in academia, especially the question of *why* states want to acquire a nuclear weapon, little has been written on *how* states pursue the bomb. The only notable exception is the article *Strategies of Nuclear proliferation: How States Pursue the Bomb* by Vipin Narang.<sup>52</sup> In his article, Narang distinguishes four strategies that the state might pursue. The first strategy is *hedging*, and it comes in three different varieties. Firstly, he identifies technical hedging. Technical hedgers do not indicate any intention to weaponize their material and have only nonweapons-grade fissile material production. The second variation is insurance hedging. Contrastingly to technical hedging, insurance hedgers set more pieces of nuclear weapons together to reduce the time needed for assembling the weapon. Similarly, they also threaten to go nuclear under specific circumstances. However, there is still no thinking about any organizational aspects of managing the nuclear weapon. The last type of hedging is the so-called hard hedging. In this variation of hedging, the state does everything to meet the threshold of a nuclear state; however, it still does not weaponize. Hard hedgers can have all theoretical knowledge about nuclear explosives and can produce weapons-grade fissile material. This hedging strategy is the closest to a genuine active proliferation.<sup>53</sup>

The first of the proactive proliferation strategies is *hiding*. States that opt for this strategy decide to pursue a nuclear weapon actively, but they want to do it in secrecy. Hiding can be a profitable strategy. If a state can keep the process in secret, it presents the already built weapon to the world and avoids the coercion from its rivals in the proliferation period. On the contrary, when hidings fail, grave consequences usually follow since hiding is perceived as the most illegitimate of the proliferation strategies.<sup>54</sup> The strategy of *sheltered pursuit* is another of proliferation options. By following this strategy, the proliferator takes advantage of its relationship with a major power and develops nuclear weapons under its protection from external threats. The chances of acquiring a weapon while pursuing this strategy are high. However, the proliferator should be careful about its actions, because if the patron state

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<sup>52</sup> Vipin Narang, "Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation: How States Pursue the Bomb," *International Security*, 41/3 (2017).

<sup>53</sup> Narang, "Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation: How States Pursue the Bomb," 117-119.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-122.

abandons him, the whole proliferation process is severely endangered.<sup>55</sup> The last of the proliferation strategies is *sprinting*. By employing this strategy, the proliferator wants to acquire the nuclear weapon as soon as possible. It is not concerned about external forces that would threaten the proliferation process. The proliferator is open about its intent, as well as about weaponizing the material and developing the delivery systems.<sup>56</sup> As it was mentioned in the preceding part of the thesis, according to the Fuhrmann's interpretation of latent nuclear deterrence sprinting proliferation strategy is considered a violation of one of the deterrence requirements.

While nuclear latency explains the capacity and the capabilities which, according to Fuhrmann, may have deterrence gains, it cannot be studied separately from the state's strategy of the proliferation. The latent nuclear capacity itself does not allow us to make a coherent picture of the intentions of the state. Thus, it is necessary to examine the strategy of proliferation employed by the defender and assess to what extent it might affect the challenger's decision not to attack.

### **2.3 Regional conventional capabilities**

Another one of the alternative explanations for the prevention of the conflict is the respective regional conventional capabilities of the challenger and the deterrer. The military capability as the decisive factor of modern warfare or the deterrent preventing the conflict has been studied extensively in the strategic studies scholarship. In the literature, several ideas on the determinants of the capability exist. In this section, the master's thesis reviews the most significant ones and assesses their value for the thesis's analysis.

The first class of the assumptions is concerned with the numerical preponderance. It merely states that countries with vast armies and extensive investments into the military should prevail in the battle against the inferior states. In the case of the master's thesis, it can be inferred that if the deterrer has a large army, it should automatically deter the challenger. In other words, the size of the army should contribute to the prevention of the conflict. The proponents of the numerical preponderance mostly work with the threshold effects via "rules of thumb."<sup>57</sup> They

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 122-123.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 120-121.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Biddle, *Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 15.

apply the rule of 3:1 for the local balance of forces. This ratio is necessary for the successful breakthrough campaign attacks which seek to pierce through defender's defenses.<sup>58</sup>

The second class of ideas on capability determinants is concerned with the technology and the relative technological advancement of one side over another. In the case of the master's thesis, the analysis examines the technical capabilities of both the challenger and the deterrer and assesses the relative balance of technological power. The technological advancements in conventional capabilities are examined in three parts. Firstly, the type and the technological advancement of weaponry is assessed. Secondly, the mobility and speed of the respective forces are discussed. Special attention is devoted to the ability of the attacker to penetrate the defender's defenses. Lastly, the analysis considers the information technology of the opposing sides. It examines the advancement in the so-called "C4ISR" (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) of each of the military forces and assesses its importance for the prevention of the conflict. The information technology has three distinct functions that enhance the capacity of the military. It can work as an enabler for mobility, weaponry, and operational planning.<sup>59</sup>

To sum up, concerning the conventional regional preponderance, the analysis of the respective conflict case studies focuses both on the numerical and technological preponderance of conventional forces. In the case of technology, attention is devoted to the type and advancement of the weaponry and the ability of the challenger to utilize its capacities to overcome the defender's line.

## **2.4 Conventional deterrence**

The analysis of the mere capabilities alone is not sufficient for the assessment of the causes of the prevention of the conflict. Therefore, it is beneficial for the thesis's conceptual framework to present the different schools of thought on conventional deterrence to grasp the essence of the concept and to operate with it in several historical case studies effectively.

As it was already mentioned, most of the scholarship on deterrence after the Second World War focused on the complexities of nuclear deterrence. The scholarly attention leaned towards the study of conventional deterrence in the 1980s as a reaction to a changing international environment. The increasing conventional capabilities of the Soviet Union and the

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<sup>58</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Assessing the Conventional Balance: The 3:1 Rule and Its Critics," *International Security*, 13/4 (1989), 54-55.

<sup>59</sup> Biddle, "Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle," 62-63.

debates about the renewal of NATO's Flexible Response Strategy prompted both the military strategists and the civilian academics to study the effects of conventional deterrence and its practical use.<sup>60</sup>

For the purpose of the master's thesis, the concept of conventional deterrence is examined from two different points of view. Glenn H. Snyder's classification of deterrence on deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment is useful for the study of conventional strategy as well. In his influential article *Deterrence and Power*, he classifies deterrence as follows: "...deterrence by denial is accomplished by having military forces which can block the enemy's military forces from making territorial gains. Deterrence by punishment grants him the gain but deters by posing the prospect of war costs greater than the value of the gain."<sup>61</sup>

#### **2.4.1 Conventional denial**

Most of the research on conventional deterrence has been devoted to the study of deterrence by denial. The literature identifies three possible explanations of its functioning. The first two are closely linked to the previous part of the master's thesis. The first explanation posits that the balance of forces is the decisive factor. It suggests that the outnumbered side will not be able to deter.<sup>62</sup> The second assumption takes into consideration the type of weaponry. Proponents of this theory believe that the weapons can clearly be distinguished as offensive and defensive and that the effectiveness of the deterrence will be the product of the balance between them. For instance, George Quester, in his book *Offense and Defense in the International System*, states: "Likelihoods of war are thus clearly influenced by how effective the offensive weapon seems to be, as compared with the defensive, and by how much the rival nation invest in them."<sup>63</sup> The last explanation of the conventional denial was developed by John J. Mearsheimer in his book *Conventional Deterrence*. In this work, the author criticizes previous understandings of the concept and presents his conception that regards the deterrence as a function of a specific military strategy employed by the attacker. Mearsheimer distinguishes three strategies (blitzkrieg, attrition strategy, and limited aims strategy) that are available to the attacker. Furthermore, he establishes the connection between them and the probability of the success of deterrence.<sup>64</sup> Mearsheimer argues that conventional deterrence by denial is likely to fail when

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<sup>60</sup> Richard K. Betts, "Conventional Deterrence: Predictive Uncertainty and Policy Confidence," *World Politics*, 37/2 (1985) 153.

<sup>61</sup> Snyder, "Deterrence and Power," 163.

<sup>62</sup> This assumption is developed in various works on conventional warfare and strategy: Trevor N. Dupoy, *Numbers, Predictions and the War* (New York: Bobbs-Merill, 1979).

<sup>63</sup> George Quester, *Offense and Defense in the International System* (New York: John Wiley and Co., 1977) 7.

<sup>64</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) 203.



the attacker employs the blitzkrieg strategy, and contrastingly, it is likely to hold in the cases where the attacking side opts for a war of attrition strategy. The limited aims strategy is explained by Mearsheimer as follows: “the limited aims strategy [...] is directly concerned with seizing a specific piece of territory.”<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Mearsheimer stresses the moment of surprise, which is crucial for the attacker’s success.<sup>66</sup> The outcome of the deterrence, when employing the limited aims strategy, depends on whether the strategy is employed in a regional conflict with superpowers’ interest. If yes, then the conflict may turn in a protracted war, and deterrence is likely to hold. On the contrary, when an attacker employs a limited aims strategy, and the war does not threaten to turn into a protracted conflict, deterrence is likely to fail.<sup>67</sup>

Mearsheimer’s conception of *conventional denial* remains arguably the most comprehensive one, and it is utilized in the analysis of case studies. Thus, to determine the degree of influence of the *conventional denial* on the prevention of conflict, the military strategy for the attack of respective challenging states is scrutinized.

#### **2.4.2 Conventional punishment**

The literature on conventional punishment is less covered in terms of volumes and academic research. The most remarkable piece of literature written on the topic remains the article *Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation in Europe* by Samuel P. Huntington.<sup>68</sup> At the time of the writing, Huntington was influenced by the changing nature of the international environment of the early 1980s and by the decreasing role of nuclear deterrence in the European strategy of NATO. In his article, he elaborates on how to respond to the Soviet invasion of Western Europe by conventional means. Huntington argues that the retaliation should be directed not at the strategic level but rather at the tactical and that the NATO should focus its counterattack against the closest Soviet satellites: the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia.<sup>69</sup> He elaborates on the nature of the threat of the retaliation as follows: “...it must (a) be directed against a target that is highly valued by the potential aggressor and (b) have a high degree of probability it will be implemented. It is reasonable to assume that the Soviet elite values, next to the security of the Soviet Union itself, the security of its satellite regimes in Eastern Europe.”<sup>70</sup> By descending from the strategic level into the tactical level,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 203-208.

<sup>68</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation in Europe,” *International Security*, 8/3 (1983/4).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 40.

Huntington differentiated himself from other authors writing on conventional retaliation, who mostly favored full-scale war as the most effective threat against any conventional attack.<sup>71</sup>

The master's thesis employs Huntington's conceptualization of the *threat of conventional retaliation* as a framework tool for individual cases. Drawing upon the understanding of nuclear deterrence, deterrence by conventional retaliation must fulfill a few requirements to be effective. Firstly, the deterrer must know what the challenger deems to be valuable. Secondly, the deterrer must be capable of endangering the valuable targets of the challenger potentially. Lastly, the deterrer's threat must seem credible. Thus, the master's thesis in the analysis of case studies focuses on the deterrer's planning of the potential retaliation on the targets that are valuable for the challenger. Also, it assesses to what degree the challenger was convinced about the defender's capability and resolve to undergo this retaliation.

## 2.5 Non-military factors

Apart from the military factors, two of the non-military factors must be examined to get a complex picture of all the possible explanations of the prevention of the conflict.

The *level of consensus in the decision-making apparatus* is one of the non-military factors that can be responsible for the non-intervention. The factor is concerned with the leadership of the challenger and its opinions on the potential conflict with the deterrer. Even in the most authoritarian states, the decision to go to war is discussed with the rest of the governing political leadership and heads of the military. It might happen that the decision to go into war is not well accepted by some of the influential participants in the decision-making apparatus, and the process of preparation for war is then halted. T. Clifton Morgan and Sally Howard Campbell elaborated on the topic of decision-making and war in their article *Domestic Structure, Decisional Constraints, and War*. Even though their article primarily focuses on the war decision-making in democracies, the authors assume that the conclusions about the importance of the consensus in the decision-making process are as well applicable to the authoritarian states. Morgan and Campbell claim that: "Leaders of a one-party dictatorship, for example, will be answerable to, and constrained by, the upper echelon of the party..."<sup>72</sup> or that: "many who appear to have dictatorial powers can be removed by, for example, the other

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<sup>71</sup> Michael S. Gerson elaborates on this type of conventional retaliation in his article "Conventional Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age," *Parameters*, 39/3 (2009).

<sup>72</sup> T. Clifton Morgan and Sally Howard Campbell, "Domestic Structure, Decisional Constraints, and War: So Why Kant Democracies Fight?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 35/2 (1991), 192.

members of the junta or the ruling body of the party they lead.”<sup>73</sup> In respect to the *level of consensus* factor, the analysis of the individual case studies focuses on the decision-making process of the challenging side during the conflict scenarios. Furthermore, it evaluates the rate of approval for the attack in the military and political decision-making tier.

The last non-military factor used in the thesis is *alliance politics*. The challenger also considers the reactions of its allies and the allies of the opponent when contemplating the attack and preparing for the conflict. Therefore, it is essential to assess the evidence of the allies’ responses towards the challenger’s decision for military action vis-à-vis the importance of their relationship for the challenger, and the potential responses to the attack of the defender’s allies.

### **3 India-Pakistan in the 1980s**

The two crises from the 1980s between India as a challenging state and Pakistan as a latent nuclear deterrer offer valuable empirical evidence for the study of the influence of nuclear latency on the prevention of the conflict. As it was already mentioned, Matthew Fuhrmann assumes that the deterring potential of nuclear latency was the main reason behind the decision not to escalate the conflicts into the war. In this chapter, the thesis will discuss the relevancy of the nuclear latency for the deterrence and offer other relevant explanations of the prevention of the conflict.

Firstly, the chapter presents the historical evolution of the Pakistani nuclear program until the year 1987, with particular attention devoted to the development in the 1980s. Afterward, it introduces two crises that sparked throughout the 1980s (in 1984 and 1986/7) and concludes with the analysis of the possible explanations for the decision not to attack.

#### **3.1 Pakistani nuclear weapons program**

The actual beginning of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program can be traced to the year 1972 and the decision of Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to pursue nuclear weapons technology. However, to fully grasp the essence of the Pakistani military and particularly nuclear strategy, the brief history of the Pakistani civilian nuclear program must be explored.

Since the partition of Britain’s Indian empire, Pakistan has been a country continually searching for internal and external security. The mass migration that followed the partition, the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 190-191.

different opinions on many aspects of political and economic life, and primarily the dispute over Kashmir were the leading causes of the commencing hostility between Pakistan and India. The essence of secured Pakistan was in its political and military alliance with the United States. The U.S. realized the strategic position of Pakistan and the role it has in the strategy of encircling the Soviet Union. Throughout the 1950s, Pakistan received considerable arms support from the U.S. to build up its conventional forces. Although there is no evidence that any ambitions regarding the nuclear weapons program existed, the peaceful use of nuclear energy was one of the topics on the agenda of Pakistani leadership in the late 1950s.<sup>74</sup>

Influenced by Dwight Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program, the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) was created in 1957. In the early stage of nuclear development, the main goal of the PAEC was to establish the scientific and material basis for the study and development of atomic energy. The lack of trained physicists and engineers was supposed to be solved by the cooperation with the U.S. and several European countries. For instance, many Pakistani students, who traveled to the U.S. and Europe to study nuclear engineering, later returned and offered their services and knowledge to the country. In the 1960s, the thinking about nuclear energy slowly started to change. The relations with India were gradually deteriorating, and Pakistan had to deal with internal dissatisfaction over the government.<sup>75</sup>

In 1965, Pakistan tried once again to challenge India over the territory of Kashmir. However, Islamabad failed to make any territorial concessions, and the consequences of the conflict had a profound impact on the nuclear weapons program. Since the U.S. terminated the military aid for both Pakistan and India as a punishment for the war, the conventional disparity between the countries has increased. This imbalance of power urged Pakistan to explore other possibilities of ensuring security.<sup>76</sup> Since the late 1960s, certain officials in the government and the military have started to advocate the need to establish the nuclear weapons program as a viable counterforce against potential Indian attack. Among the most vocal advocates was Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Three principal drivers preceded the final decision to start the nuclear weapons program. Firstly, Pakistan suffered a humiliating defeat in the 1971 Indo-

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<sup>74</sup> Samina Ahmed, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: Turning Points and Nuclear Choices," *International Security*, 23/4 (1999) 180-181.

<sup>75</sup> Ferroz Hassan Khan, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012) 28.

<sup>76</sup> Ahmed, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: Turning Points and Nuclear Choices," 182.

Pakistani War. Secondly, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto assumed the office of the President later the same year, and lastly, India conducted its first nuclear explosion in 1974.<sup>77</sup>

Bhutto's first action as a president regarding nuclear development was tasking the PAEC with an exploration of all the options on how to utilize nuclear energy. The moment when the thinking about nuclear weapons evolved from "exploring capabilities" to "decision to proliferate" came after the Indian nuclear explosion. Nuclear weapons began to be strictly linked to the troubled relations with India and perceived as a product of an Indian-generated security environment.<sup>78</sup> In an initial phase of development of nuclear weapons capability, Pakistan sought to acquire the nuclear material through both the plutonium and enrichment ways. In 1974, Pakistan reached an agreement with France for the delivery of nuclear reprocessing plant extracting plutonium. However, after the growing non-proliferation pressure from the U.S. Administration, France eventually withdrew the deal, and Pakistan had to pursue the uranium enrichment path to the nuclear weapons.

The man behind the success of the enrichment path was the Pakistani nuclear physicist Abdul Qadeer Khan. He helped to orchestrate clandestine actions in order to acquire hardware and technology necessary for the construction of centrifuges. Khan established a secret network of nuclear suppliers in the West and helped to smuggle all the components for the uranium enrichment process. In 1976, he founded and established Kahuta Research Laboratories (KRL), in which the HEU for Pakistani nuclear weapons program was produced.<sup>79</sup> When President Bhutto had been ousted from power and imprisoned by general Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq in 1977, the issue of nuclear weapons became synonymous with Pakistani national prestige and sovereignty. Zia subordinated any decision concerning the nuclear weapons program into the competence of the military and retained its power in Pakistan by promoting the path towards nuclear weapons capability as a countermeasure to the Indian threat.<sup>80</sup>

Two major political events that had happened in 1979 distinctively improved the position of Pakistan as a geostrategically relevant country and facilitated its nuclear proliferation efforts. Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made Pakistan too valuable for the U.S. to be sacrificed to the non-proliferation goal that was pursued in the

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<sup>77</sup> Ferroz Hassan Khan, "Nuclear proliferation Motivations: Lessons from Pakistan," *Nonproliferation Review*, 13/3 (2006) 504.

<sup>78</sup> Abbas, "Pakistan's Nuclear Bomb: A Story of Defiance, Deterrence and Deviance," 54

<sup>79</sup> Zahid Hussain, "Deliberate Nuclear Ambiguity," in Samina Ahmed and David Cortright (eds), *Pakistan and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998) 34.

<sup>80</sup> Ahmed, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: Turning Points and Nuclear Choices," 185-186.

1970s.<sup>81</sup> Zia exploited the new position of his country and, in 1981, reached an agreement with U.S. President Ronald Reagan concerning the new terms of engagement between the two countries. In exchange for 3.2 billion dollars and security assurances to Pakistan, Islamabad pledged to use nuclear technology for peaceful use only.<sup>82</sup>

Even though Pakistani officials publicly adhered to the peaceful use of nuclear technology throughout the 1980s, the nuclear weapons program significantly accelerated. Zia carefully pursued the path of nuclear ambiguity, neither admitting the presence of nuclear weapons infrastructure nor denying it. However, as it is evident owing to the U.S. declassified documents from 1982, Pakistan was intensively cooperating with China on obtaining necessary nuclear materials and bomb designs. The declassified report states that: "...Paks have not slowed their efforts to get the bomb," and "there is new evidence of significant PRC assistance on at least the weapons-design side."<sup>83</sup> The U.S. intelligence also knew that the PAEC was orchestrating the digging of a tunnel in Baluchistan to prepare for an underground nuclear test.<sup>84</sup> The engineers from PAEC conducted the first cold nuclear test<sup>85</sup> in 1983. One year before the first crisis that is examined in the master's thesis. Parallely with PAEC, also the nuclear technicians in the Kahuta facility worked on nuclear weapons technology. In 1982, President Zia ordered A.Q. Khan and KRL to work on the development of the nuclear device in addition to the ongoing enrichment of uranium. By the year 1984, also, the Kahuta facility conducted its cold test of a nuclear device, which was, however, only deliverable by a C-130 cargo aircraft with no assurance of its accuracy.<sup>86</sup> Concerning the uranium enrichment in the crisis year 1984, there were around 2000 gas centrifuges in operation in the KRL facility, and allegedly Pakistan was able to produce low-enriched non-weapons grade uranium at the Kahuta plant.<sup>87</sup>

In two years, the situation of the Pakistani nuclear weapons capability dramatically changed. A series of reports and press releases derived to similar conclusions: Pakistan either already had the material to build a nuclear weapon in 1986, or it was on the very verge of this capability. According to the "Special National Intelligence Estimate" produced by the CIA, by the Fall of 1986, Pakistan had already produced weapons-grade uranium. Islamabad enriched

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>82</sup> Khan, "Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb," 214

<sup>83</sup> "State/INR Request for Update of Pak SNIE," Central Intelligence Agency (available online at <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/347024/doc-11-6-4-82.pdf>) 1.

<sup>84</sup> Abbas, "Pakistan's Nuclear Bomb: A Story of Defiance, Deterrence and Deviance," 81.

<sup>85</sup> The test in which the device is triggered without the use of fissile material.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 82-83

<sup>87</sup> David Albright, *Plutonium and Highly Enriched Uranium 1996: World Inventories, Capabilities and Policies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 273.

the uranium to 93.5%, despite the warning from the U.S. Administration that any enrichment above 5% would cause the termination of the military aid. Moreover, according to the report, Pakistan conducted two more of the cold tests in September 1986.<sup>88</sup>

## **3.2 The crises of the 1980s**

The following subchapter examines the significant crises of the 1980s between Pakistan and India. As was already explained in the introduction, both crises offer valuable information regarding the decision-making process in the situations in which the opponent's nuclear ambiguity and latent nuclear capacity is the significant variable. The subchapter aims to firstly introduce the internal and external context of the two crises and their development. Secondly, it analyzes the individual factors based on the available information for respective crises and evaluates, which factor can best explain the reason for the prevention of the conflict.

The first case presents the 1984 crisis in which the government of Indira Gandhi was seriously considering the pre-emptive strike on nuclear facilities of Pakistan. This tense situation eventually brought the countries on the brink of war. Although the crisis took place in 1984, the master thesis presents and analyzes the situation also in preceding years, to trace the development of strained relations. The second case is concerned with the escalated situation during the Indian military exercise Brasstacks between the years 1986 and 1987.

### **3.2.1 The 1984 Crisis**

The 1970s was, to some extent, a peaceful decade regarding the relationship between India and Pakistan. After the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, which resulted in a humiliating defeat for Pakistan, the relations between New Delhi and Islamabad have stabilized. Pakistan emerged from the conflict disoriented and diminished. It lost half of its population due to the secession of East Pakistan. This province gained independence as a Bangladesh and maintained good relations with Pakistan's rival – India. Moreover, the Pakistani economy suffered greatly, and the geopolitical role of the country diminished. Furthermore, the military was affected by the defeat both in terms of its strength and morale. The local balance of forces shifted even more in favor of India, and Pakistan found itself in an uneasy position without any prospect for

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<sup>88</sup>Leonard S. Spector, *Nuclear ambitions: The Spread of Nuclear Weapons, 1989-1990* (Oxford: Westview Pres., 1990) 94-95

changing the status quo.<sup>89</sup> Contrastingly, India emerged from the war as an undisputed winner and yet its approach to the post-war settlement was surprisingly restrained. In 1972, the negotiations between New Delhi and Islamabad resulted in the Simla agreement. Apart from the establishment of a new “line of control” in Kashmir and the negotiated return of Pakistani prisoners of war, the agreement eased the relationship between both countries and established the decade-lasting stalemate.<sup>90</sup>

The situation in South Asia considerably changed in the early 1980s. The gradual deterioration of the Indo-Pakistani relations was predominantly caused by two factors. Firstly, it was the alleged meddling of both Pakistan and India into each other’s internal ethnic disputes. The second factor was the increased Pakistani resolve to the rapid development of a nuclear weapons capability, which was apparent during the military rule of President Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq. Meddling in the internal affairs was particularly demonstrated by the Pakistani support of the Sikh insurgency in the border state of Punjab. The insurgency was a result of the failed negotiations between the Sikh political leaders and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi over the proposal for the more autonomous state of Punjab. The uprising of Sikhs was eventually suppressed by the Indian army-launched Operation Bluestar in June 1984. This assault on the Sikh’s sanctuary and base of operations suspended the immediate threat for some time, but it eventually produced grave consequences for the cohesion of India.<sup>91</sup> Cross-border meddling from the Indian side was also a significant concern for Pakistan. Throughout the 1980s, New Delhi supported the autonomous aspirations of the people Pakistani province Sindh. The nationalism of the Sindh population culminated in 1983 when the insurgents started to carry out attacks against Pakistani officials and infrastructure. The Pakistani government, in response, deployed two army divisions and suppressed the rebellion.<sup>92</sup>

The second factor that caused the deterioration of Indo-Pakistani relations was far more severe and with greater importance for the later events of the 1984 crisis. As it was presented in the previous subchapter, the Pakistani nuclear weapons program has accelerated considerably since General Zia came into power in 1977. This new Pakistani nuclear policy was anxiously observed by the Indian government. Indira Gandhi, who assumed the office of Prime Minister in January 1980, did not conceal that she prefers the Indian nuclear options open, and she did

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<sup>89</sup> J. N. Dixit, *India-Pakistan in War & Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 217-218

<sup>90</sup> Sumit Ganguly and Devin T. Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005) 49.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>92</sup> Owen Bennet Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) 120.



not resort solely to the peaceful use of nuclear energy like her predecessor. In 1981, Gandhi raised concerns about Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons capability and stated that the nuclear weaponization of Pakistan is a severe danger for India and that it will cause the reassessment of India's nuclear strategy.<sup>93</sup>

Around the same time, Gandhi also started to contemplate the pre-emptive strikes against nuclear facilities in Pakistan. In 1982, the U.S. intelligence officials leaked the reports concerning the Indian military plans from June 1981 for pre-emptive strikes against Pakistani uranium enrichment plant in Kahuta and reprocessing plant in Rawalpindi. According to the Indian scholar W.P.S. Sidhu, who conducted several interviews with the Indian military and political officials, the plans were part of the study for a new air force strategy against Pakistan, and they were compiled following the Indian purchase of redoubtable Jaguar strike aircraft in 1980.<sup>94</sup> According to *The Washington Post*, in March 1982, this military plan was proposed to Indira Gandhi as a pre-emptive attack on Pakistani nuclear facilities and seriously contemplated. Gandhi eventually rejected the plan, although she did not foreclose the possibility of an attack in the future.<sup>95</sup> In September 1981, the CIA compiled the U.S. Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) on possible Indian reactions to nuclear development in Pakistan. The SNIE states that Gandhi did not yet decide to take direct action and that she pursues the wait-and-see strategy. However, the estimate stressed that in the longer term, India might be tempted to eliminate the Pakistani nuclear facility in Kahuta by a pre-emptive strike.<sup>96</sup> The estimate also noted that Indian concerns arose from the U.S. announcement of the planned distribution of F-16 fighters to Pakistan earlier in 1981. This announcement came shortly after Israel used F-16s to destroy the Osiraq reactor in Iraq. Considering this event, the U.S.-Pakistani deal was a considerable threat to India and its nuclear facilities.<sup>97</sup>

In December 1982, amid the fears of pre-emptive strikes, the two countries formed a Joint Commission as a platform for discussion and cooperation, and in 1983 the situation between the countries began to ease. According to the memorandum prepared by the South Asia

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<sup>93</sup> Ayesha Ray, *The Soldier and the State in India: Nuclear weapons, Counterinsurgency and the Transformation of Indian Civil-Military Relations* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2013) 75.

<sup>94</sup> George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 240.

<sup>95</sup> Milton R. Bejnjamin, "India Said to Eye Raid on Pakistani A-plants," *The Washington Post*, December 20, 1982 (available online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1982/12/20/india-said-to-eye-raid-on-pakistani-a-plants/7e30dde5-e97c-45dc-82bb-521dee37a6ac/>).

<sup>96</sup> "India's reactions to nuclear development in Pakistan," The U.S. Special National Intelligence Estimate, Central Intelligence Agency, September 8, 1981 (available online at [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0005403744.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005403744.pdf)).

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Division of CIA in September 1983, the Indo-Pakistani relations somewhat improved, and the countries tried to discuss some of the conflicting nonpolitical issues. Nevertheless, the memorandum also stressed that the countries still perceived each other as the primary enemy and that the improved relationship could be easily disrupted. It also noted the vast armies which are deployed along their shared border.<sup>98</sup>

The following year the situation between India and Pakistan dramatically changed, and preventive war pressures came to the climax. Although the investigated crisis occurred in a couple of days in October 1984, the information about India considering the pre-emptive strikes against Pakistani nuclear facilities arose already months earlier. In July 1984, President Zia told the journalists from the *Wall Street Journal* that India contemplated the pre-emptive strike on Pakistani nuclear facilities following the example of Israel's attack on the Osiraq reactor.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, in September 1984, senior correspondent for *ABC News* John Scalli presented the concern of the U.S. intelligence community over a possible Indian attack. According to the leaked CIA briefing to the Senate Committee, the Indian army was preparing to strike against Pakistan's main nuclear plant.<sup>100</sup> Around the same time, President Zia was warning Washington that Pakistan is concerned about India planning for the strike. He was assured by the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Deane Hinton, that the U.S. would warn its ally if they would intercept information about imminent Indian attack. The gravest phase of the crisis began in October 1984, when Hinton elaborated on Pakistan's concern during the public appearance and assured Islamabad that the U.S. would be responsive to the Indian attack. Analogously, Indira Gandhi sought assurance from the Soviet Union as a countermeasure to the possible U.S. involvement.<sup>101</sup> The peak of the crisis came when the U.S. intelligence failed to detect two squadrons of Jaguar fighters on the Indian airbase in Ambala, where they had been usually stationed. When Pakistan learned about this, it strengthened the air defenses of its nuclear facilities and put air patrols on high alert. India reacted analogously and prepared itself for military action.<sup>102</sup> On October 11, Indira Gandhi commented indirectly on the situation in the

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<sup>98</sup> "India-Pakistan: current relations and security concerns," Intelligence Report, Central Intelligence Agency, September 14, 1983 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85M00364R002404760065-1.pdf>) 2-3.

<sup>99</sup> P. R. Chari, "Nuclear Crisis, Escalation Control and Deterrence in South Asia," *Working paper, Version 1.0, Stimson Center*, 2003 (available online at [https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/escalation\\_chari\\_1\\_1.pdf](https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/escalation_chari_1_1.pdf)) 13.

<sup>100</sup> "Possible Attack by India on Nuclear Plant in Pakistan," Radio TV Reports, Inc. (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88-01070R000201370009-8.pdf>) 1.

<sup>101</sup> Kanti P. Najpai (ed.), *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995) 74.

<sup>102</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 258.

sense that Pakistani nuclear weapons development qualitatively changed the security environment in South Asia and that the continuous U.S. aid to Pakistan disrupted the balance of power and endangered India. Five days later, Gandhi sealed the Indo-Pakistani border.<sup>103</sup> The Pakistani Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan reacted to Gandhi's announcements and warned India that any aggression would be met with retaliation.<sup>104</sup> The situation remained escalated until the end of October 1984, when Indira Gandhi was murdered by her Sikh bodyguards revenging the massacre during the Operation Bluestar. Rajiv Gandhi succeeded her mother in the office of Prime Minister and managed to allay the tense situation in 1985.<sup>105</sup>

### 3.2.2 The Brasstacks crisis

The new Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi took office in troubled times. The most pressing issues to deal with were the Sikh insurgency, consequent anti-Sikh riots, and the normalization of relations with Pakistan. The later issue has been negotiated since Rajiv Gandhi assumed the office and eventually resulted in the agreement in December 1985. Prime Minister Gandhi and Pakistani President Zia pledged that they would not attack each other's nuclear installations and thus avoid the accusations of plotting pre-emptive strikes. They also agreed to begin the work on confidence-building measures and to solve border disputes in the Kashmir region.<sup>106</sup> One of the most crucial of Gandhi's steps upon taking office was the modernization of the military. Gandhi, together with the Chief of Staff of Indian army General Krishnaswami Sundarji developed the modernization plan, which sought to introduce greater mobility and maneuverability of the Indian army, upgraded army's command, control, and communications capability and intelligence reconnaissance. Sundarji primarily focused on the possible interplay between conventional and nuclear weapons in the next potential conflict.<sup>107</sup>

There were two motives for the decision to conduct the Brasstacks military exercise of the Indian army in 1986. Firstly, Prime Minister Gandhi, together with the hawkish general Sundarji, wanted to test the abilities of the Indian army to conduct a large-scale attack. Sundarji was interested in demonstrating his military innovations, especially the improved mobility of

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 258-259.

<sup>104</sup> Don Oberdorfer, "Pakistan Concerned about Attack on Atomic Plants," *The Washington Post*, October 12, 1984 (available online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/10/12/pakistan-concerned-about-attack-on-atomic-plants/a63b98e0-f7cb-4629-8ade-14088c4d1af2/>)

<sup>105</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 260.

<sup>106</sup> Steven R. Weisman, "Gandhi-Zia Talks Said to Bear Fruit," *The New York Times*, December 18, 1985 (available online at <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/12/18/world/gandhi-zia-talks-said-to-bear-fruit.html>)

<sup>107</sup> Ganguly and Hagerty, "Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons," 70-71

mechanized infantry formations in the desert flatlands along the border with Pakistan and the new communications system. The second reason was politically motivated. One of the intended goals of the exercise was to send a political message to the Pakistani leadership regarding the robustness and preparedness of the Indian army. Also, the location of the exercise, which was situated in the state of Punjab close to the border with Pakistan, was meant to send the message to the belligerent Sikh insurgents.<sup>108</sup> The scenario of the exercise operated with the situation wherein the insurgencies in Kashmir and the Indian part of Punjab erupt simultaneously, and this development consequently encourages Pakistan to intervene in the bordering regions of India. The exercise itself aimed to demonstrate effective Indian defense and counteroffensive.<sup>109</sup>

The Brasstacks exercise was composed of four phases and began in July 1986. The first three phases were intended to be conceptual, communications, and mapping exercises and supposed to be conducted until the end of 1986. In the last phase, which was scheduled at the beginning of 1987, nine divisions of the Indian army were expected to conduct a military exercise in the desert region of Rajasthan along the border with Pakistan.<sup>110</sup> In November 1986, the first concerns over the Brasstacks exercise arose. Some of the Pakistani politicians began to accuse India that the exercise is only the concealment for the war preparations. At the same time, Pakistan was conducting two military exercises on its side of the border as well.<sup>111</sup> The situation started to deteriorate in December 1986, when Islamabad informed New Delhi that it is expanding its exercises in response to the unclear motives of India during the Brasstacks exercise. By mid-January 1987, the Indian side began to be severely anxious about Pakistani moves. Uncertainty arose when the Indian army could not track the precise location of the key Pakistani armored and infantry formations. At the same time, the Indian intelligence service started to suspect that Pakistan was considering to foment the Sikh insurgency in coordination with the invasion of India.<sup>112</sup> Both Prime Minister Gandhi and General Sundarji reacted to the unclear Pakistani motives and the concentration of Pakistani troops along the border by publicly accusing Pakistan army of dangerous moves and escalation of the situation.<sup>113</sup> At this point, Gandhi also approved to bolster the Indian military deployments in the border region and

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<sup>108</sup> Iram Khalid, "Brasstacks Crisis 1986-7," *South Asian Studies*, 27/1 (2012) 40-41.

<sup>109</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 278.

<sup>110</sup> Ganguly and Hagerty, "Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons," 73.

<sup>111</sup> Varun Sahni, "A dangerous exercise: Brasstacks as non-nuclear near war," in Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur (eds.), *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia: Crisis Behavior and the Bomb* (New York: Routledge, 2009) 17.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>113</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 280.

ordered to put every force involved on the high alert. On January 20, the massive airlift of troops began. Pakistani leadership perceived these moves as a further escalation and put its entire nuclear installations on high alert. Eventually, both countries found themselves at the onset of a spiral of hostility.<sup>114</sup> On January 22, at the most critical meeting of the selected Indian political and military officials, the possibility of an attack on Pakistan was discussed. The proposed plan envisaged a coordinated attack on one of the Pakistani military formations taking part in the exercise and on the nuclear facilities in order to prevent Pakistani nuclear response. Eventually, the meeting concluded that India would not carry any attack on Pakistan.<sup>115</sup>

Nevertheless, the situation remained tense until Pakistan made a conciliatory gesture and invited Indian Ambassador to Pakistan to the Foreign Office. At the end of January, de-escalatory talks started, and in February, they resulted in the withdrawal of troops from the border and, consequently, in the slow improvement of relations.<sup>116</sup>

### **3.3 Analysis: the complexity behind the decision not to attack**

The following subchapter provides the analysis of the possible factors that might serve as an explanation of the prevention of the conflict regarding the two crises from the 1980s. The crisis of 1984 and the Brasstacks crisis occurred in slightly different conditions, and the escalation towards them happened under different pretexts, however, to uncover the complexities that eventually prevent the outbreak of war, the crises should not be analyzed as completely separated events. Therefore, to examine and assess the influence of individual factors, the analysis covers the period starting from 1981, when India firstly contemplated the pre-emptive strike against Pakistan, and it ends with the Indian decision not to attack Pakistan during the Brasstacks exercise in 1987.

The first factor to be addressed is the defender's capacity for the *latent nuclear deterrence* and the challenger's concern over nuclear latency and subsequent defender's weaponization in case of a conflict. Although the state of Pakistani nuclear weapons program was already presented in the previous subchapter, the assessment of the possible deterring factor of nuclear latency requires the examination of four specific conditions interplaying with latent nuclear capacity. Nevertheless, firstly, it is crucial to assess whether Pakistan can be even considered as a state with nuclear latency according to the thesis's working definition, as

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<sup>114</sup> Ganguly and Hagerty, "Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons," 75.

<sup>115</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 280.

<sup>116</sup> Khalid, "Brasstacks Crisis 1986-7," 49-50.

forwarded by Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach. As was already noted in the theoretical part of the thesis, the main criterion for the assessment of nuclear latency is the diffusion of ENR capabilities. At the beginning of the 1980s, Pakistan's main nuclear facility at Kahuta was in operation for a few years, and the production of HEU was speeding up. In 1980, the leaks from the U.S. intelligence reports indicated that Pakistan could perfect the bomb already by the summer of 1981.<sup>117</sup> As was shown in the previous chapter, the nuclear weapons program dramatically speeded up during the 1980s, and at the beginning of 1987, Pakistan was only months away from assembling the bomb. Taking into consideration the nuclear weapons development in the 1980s together with the uranium enrichment at the ENR plant in Kahuta, Pakistan, in the observed period, can be undeniably considered as a latent nuclear state.

Concerning the four requirements of successful *latent nuclear deterrence*, since the beginning of the 1980s, Pakistan has undoubtedly fulfilled them. Regarding the first requirement, there is substantial evidence that shows that the Pakistani nuclear weapons program was a great concern to India. For instance, already in August 1981, the U.S. intelligence working group on nuclear proliferation warned that: "...her [Indira Gandhi's] view is that Pakistan's acquisition of US F-16 aircraft and its development of nuclear weapons pose a great security threat to India."<sup>118</sup> The issue of nuclear (in)security coincided with the military modernizations of both India and Pakistan and with the opinions of an influential strategic thinker of the 1980s, K. Subramanyam. He set the security debate around the belief that India's rise is inevitable and that Pakistan is a root cause of the problem in the region, which was even worsened by the Pakistani advent of nuclear weapons.<sup>119</sup> The second requirement is as well indisputably fulfilled. As is presented earlier by vast empirical evidence, in the early 1980s, Pakistan had all the material for assembling the bomb and had no intention to stop its uranium enrichment, and in 1987 it was already on the verge of weaponization. The third requirement assumes the deterrer should not employ the sprinting strategy of proliferation, i.e., the state does not want to acquire the bomb in the shortest time possible. According to this strategy, Pakistan would have to openly enrich uranium for expressly weapon purposes and as well build delivery vehicles and create organizational routines of nuclear weapons management.<sup>120</sup> There is hardly any evidence to support this assumption. Since the decision to pursue the path of weaponization,

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<sup>117</sup> Jack Anderson, "Pakistan Near Entry into Atomic Club," *The Washington Post* (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00965R000100170111-3.pdf>).

<sup>118</sup> "Warning Report-Nuclear Proliferation," Intelligence Memorandum, Central Intelligence Agency, August 20, 1981 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83B01027R000300050034-6.pdf>) 4.

<sup>119</sup> Khan, "Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb," 215-216.

<sup>120</sup> Narang, "Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation: How States Pursue the Bomb," 120.

Pakistani leadership has been careful about its intentions and adhered to the strategy of nuclear ambiguity.<sup>121</sup> The last requirement needed to be fulfilled presumes that the challenger's resolve to attack the defender is not high enough that it cannot be deterred regardless of the consequences. During the 1980s, India was concerned about its internal security and possible external intrusions into the territory rather than having the desire for revisionist action against Pakistan. Domestic preoccupation over the insurgencies in Punjab and Kashmir required most of the attention of Indira Gandhi.<sup>122</sup> Although the potential external intrusions in the form of a Pakistani airstrike against Indian nuclear plants were a big concern, there is no empirical evidence supporting the assumption about undeterrable India.

Since there is strong evidence that the four requirements for the latent nuclear deterrence have been met by Pakistan, it can be examined whether the Pakistani nuclear latency was the central factor that prevented the war with India in the 1980s, as Matthew Fuhrmann suggests in his article. As it was already mentioned several times, in the early 1980s, the Pakistani nuclear weapons program constituted a problem for India's security. However, the main concern resided in the fact that the possible ways how to curb Pakistan were narrowing, as its nuclear weapons program advanced. As the 1981 U.S. SNIE shows, Indian officials knew there was no immediate threat of nuclear attack from Pakistan, and there was no concern over future nuclear retaliation since New Delhi was confident about its ability to destroy all of Pakistan's nuclear facilities.<sup>123</sup> According to the Indian estimates, the attack would cause that: "[...] the plant would probably rule out production of highly enriched uranium for seven years."<sup>124</sup> Even though, as C. Christine Fair notes, the officials of Pakistan Army believed the latent nuclear capacities were crucial for deterring India in the 1980s, the empirical evidence does not support this assumption in the case of the 1984 crisis.<sup>125</sup> The Brasstacks crisis represents the second near-military confrontation of the 1980s and alleged positive effects of latent nuclear deterrence on the prevention of the conflict. Contrastingly to the 1984 crisis, the assessment of the role of latent nuclear capability during the Brasstacks crisis is more complex. It is undeniable that the nuclear dimension was present, and the uncertainty about the advancement of the Pakistani nuclear weapons program caused much anxiety in New Delhi. Moreover, it is unquestionable

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<sup>121</sup> Abbas, "Pakistan's Nuclear Bomb: A Story of Defiance, Deterrence and Deviance," 79.

<sup>122</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 236-237

<sup>123</sup> "India's reactions to nuclear development in Pakistan," The U.S. Special National Intelligence Estimate, Central Intelligence Agency, September 8, 1981 (available online at [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0005403744.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005403744.pdf)) 3-5.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>125</sup> C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan's Army Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) 183.

that the Brasstacks crisis precipitated the development of Pakistani nuclear weapons capability.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, the direct influence of Pakistan's latent nuclear capability on the prevention of war is negligible. As General Sundarji himself confirmed later in 1987, the Brasstacks crisis was purely conventional in the sense that neither India planned to use nuclear weapons, nor it was expected that Pakistan would use them pre-emptively or in retaliation.<sup>127</sup> At the time of the Brasstacks exercise, India believed that Pakistan had no nuclear weapons capability, and the prospect of nuclear retaliation in the future was not a concern to New Delhi.<sup>128</sup> Pakistan responded to the Indian military maneuvers along the border only by moving its troops to match the Indian force and to demonstrate its capability. Contrary to what might be expected by advocates of latent nuclear deterrence, Islamabad has not made any threats of speeding up its nuclear weaponization and did not threaten with future nuclear retaliation during either of the analyzed crises of the 1980s.

The first of the alternative explanations to address is the defender's *strategy of nuclear proliferation*. As was discussed in the preceding paragraphs, the sprinting strategy of proliferation is not an accurate description of nuclear development in the 1980s Pakistan. Following the classification developed by Vipin Narang, one of the other three strategies might be applicable. In the period that had started by the decision to pursue an active proliferation at the beginning of the 1970s and ended in the late 1980s, Pakistan pursued two distinct strategies of nuclear proliferation. In the first period that coincides with the tenure of President Bhutto, Pakistan has employed the strategy of hiding. As was presented in the previous subchapter, in the 1970s, Pakistan had to deal with the strict U.S. non-proliferation strategy and ultimately resort to the indigenous uranium enrichment program. The situation changed with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the consequent U.S. support of Pakistan as a strategically significant country. This geopolitical change led to easing of the U.S. non-proliferation policy against Pakistan.<sup>129</sup> Thus, at the beginning of the 1980s, Pakistan started to pursue the strategy of sheltered pursuit. The U.S. protection against external threats during the 1980s was opportunistically used by Pakistan to redouble its efforts to acquire a nuclear weapon.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> John H. Gill, "Brasstacks: prudently pessimistic," in Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur (eds.), *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia: Crisis Behavior and the Bomb* (New York: Routledge, 2009) 46

<sup>127</sup> Waheguru Pal Singh Sindhu, "India's Nuclear Use Doctrine," in Peter R. Lavoy, Scott D. Sagan and James J. Wirtz (eds), *Planning the Unthinkable* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) 136

<sup>128</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001) 191; David T. Hagerty (ed.), *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998) 110-11

<sup>129</sup> Ahmed, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: Turning Points and Nuclear Choices," 186.

<sup>130</sup> Narang, "Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation: How States Pursue the Bomb," 122-123.



The analysis of the *regional conventional capabilities* of both sides of the 1980s crises is another factor that helps to understand the complexities behind the decision not to attack. India has enjoyed a growing conventional preponderance over Pakistan since 1965. One of the critical defining moments for the Indian military came after the victory in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war. India's successful campaign in the region of East Pakistan and the subsequent creation of the state of Bangladesh caused that on the eastern border of India, there was a relatively friendly neighbor for the first time in its history. Thus, India could concentrate its bulk of the armed forces on the western border, where the attack could be most likely expected.<sup>131</sup> When Indira Gandhi assumed the office of Prime Minister in 1980, she ordered significant modernization of India's conventional capabilities. Already since the late 1970s, New Delhi has been buying specific high technology items from the West. In 1979, the Indian government made a purchase of 85 Jaguar and 8 Sea Harrier fighter jets from the United Kingdom (U.K.).<sup>132</sup> Indira Gandhi wished to continue with the initiated military purchases and with the increased defense spending. Between fiscal years 1981-1982 and 1986-1987, defense spending grew by 142 percent.<sup>133</sup> For instance, in 1980, the defense expenditure amounted to 5.4% of the annual Gross National Product (GNP), and in 1987, it was 6.5% of GNP. In comparison, Pakistan's military expenditure in 1981 amounted to 3.2% of GNP and 3.9% in 1987.<sup>134</sup>

One of the first significant investments during Gandhi's tenure was the acquisition of 40 Mirage 2000 fighter jets, which at that time represented the state-of-the-art weaponry. Together with the Jaguar fighters and the Soviet MiG-23 and 27 jets, they were a bedrock of the deep penetration air force against Pakistan.<sup>135</sup> The deployment of the Indian air assets reflected the security situation in the mid-1980s. Twenty-five out of a total of 37 squadrons were stationed in the Western and South-Western Air Commands along the border with Pakistan. Compared to Pakistan Air Force (PAF), the Indian counterpart remained larger and better equipped in terms of aircraft and air defense missile systems throughout the 1980s.

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<sup>131</sup> Onkar Marwah, "India's military intervention in East Pakistan, 1971-1972," *Modern Asia Studies*, 13/4 (1979) 576.

<sup>132</sup> "India: Cautious Commitment to Arms Diversification," Intelligence Assessment, Central Intelligence Agency, March 1983 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP84S00556R000100090002-5.pdf>) 2.

<sup>133</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 231.

<sup>134</sup> Arms Control & Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1983-1993* (available online at <http://datacentre2.chass.utoronto.ca/military/cb6516.all.pdf>) 46, 56.

<sup>135</sup> "India: Cautious Commitment to Arms Diversification," Intelligence Assessment, Central Intelligence Agency, March 1983 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP84S00556R000100090002-5.pdf>) 2-3.

Moreover, the purchase of the new aircraft gave India more flexibility and a variety of missions to execute.<sup>136</sup> Pakistan has also taken the path of military modernization. PAF has been a strategic recipient of the increased defense spending at the beginning of the 1980s. Between 1981 and 1987, the U.S. delivered 40 F-16 fighters to Pakistan, moreover Pakistan also bought Chinese A-5 ground attack aircraft in the early 1980s.<sup>137</sup> Even though these purchases undoubtedly strengthened Pakistani aircraft capabilities, the majority of equipment of PAF was composed of aging MiG-19s, which compared unfavorably to Indian MiG-21 and newly equipped Jaguar and MiG-23 fighters.<sup>138</sup>

In terms of numbers, also the numerical preponderance of India was apparent. Pakistan had only fourteen squadrons out of 18 located opposite India.<sup>139</sup> India's pursued modernization plan also significantly affected the condition and capabilities of ground forces. In the mid-1980s, India has enjoyed both numerical and technological superiority of its ground forces over Pakistan. Even though in terms of numerical strength, the situation along the border was equal, the Indian Army reserved many units deeper in the territory, or they were not mobilized. Fourteen out of 32 divisions of India are deployed directly opposite Pakistan. The purchases of the early 1980s strengthened the Indian technological preponderance. Between 1980 and 1982, Indian has purchased around 800 Soviet tanks T-72M1, 400 infantry combat vehicles BMP-1, 200 howitzers, and 65 multiple rocket launchers.<sup>140</sup> Another Indian advantage over Pakistan was the strategic depth of Indian territory. In the case of a large-scale war, India, unlike Pakistan, could retreat deeper into its territory without losing large portions of its territory.<sup>141</sup> Contrastingly, the Pakistan Army comprised of 450 000 well-trained men, yet the equipment of the ground forces and the available weapon systems were mostly outdated and inferior to those of India.<sup>142</sup> The only noteworthy exception was one hundred M-48A5 tanks delivered to

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<sup>136</sup> "Indian Airpower: Modernization and Regional Supremacy," Intelligence Assessment, Central Intelligence Agency, November 1984 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00314R000300120004-3.pdf>) 4,7.

<sup>137</sup> Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *The Armed Forces of Pakistan* (Crow's Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002) 111-112

<sup>138</sup> "Pakistan: Prospects for the Zia Government," Intelligence Assessment, Central Intelligence Agency, February 1981 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP06T00412R000200070001-1.pdf>)15

<sup>139</sup> "The Indo-Pakistani Military Balance," Intelligence Memorandum, Central Intelligence Agency, April 19, 1985 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T01058R000406180001-7.pdf>) 2.

<sup>140</sup> "Indian Army Modernization Efforts: Progress and Problems," Intelligence Assessment, Central Intelligence Agency, October 1985 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP06T00412R000504820001-1.pdf>) 1-10.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Pakistan in the early 1980s.<sup>143</sup> As was already noted, the distribution of forces along the border was roughly equal, with 14 divisions of Pakistan deployed against India. However, the rest of the Pakistani Army comprised only four divisions, which was a fraction of force compared to the 18 non-deployed divisions of India.<sup>144</sup> Even though the navy of both India and Pakistan did not play an essential part during either of the crises of the 1980s, it is crucial to delineate its capabilities. As with the air force and ground units, also the Indian Navy had its primary goal in containing Pakistan. In the mid-1980s, the Indian Navy had 62 warships and 85 aircraft, which were assigned to three territorial commands. Roughly about 65% of these capabilities ranked to the Western Command in Bombay. This distribution of the force reflected the Indian perception of threat from Pakistan.<sup>145</sup> In the mid-1980s, the Pakistani Navy could not be considered a match for its Indian counterpart. In terms of numbers, Pakistan had around 23 warships compared to 62 of India. Qualitatively, the Pakistani Navy could not threaten India either. For instance, most of the Pakistani missile boats lacked the anti-ship missiles equipment that India already had in use.<sup>146</sup> To sum up, as it is shown by the thorough analysis of the conventional capabilities, it can be assumed that neither the quantity nor quality of Pakistani infantry and weaponry can explain the Indian decision to abstain from the attack in both of the crises.

To ascertain the possible influence of the conventional deterrence on abstaining from attack, the military strategy of India during the crises must be examined. Following Mearsheimer's operationalization of the concept of *conventional denial*, three military strategies for the attack could have been employed by India. The crucial issue of the assessment is to determine which of the three military strategies was favored by India. For instance, Sumit Ganguly and David T. Hagerty posit that India was contemplating a blitzkrieg strategy against Pakistan during the 1984 crisis. According to them, this strategy would be successful, given the conventional preponderance of India.<sup>147</sup> The potential success of the blitzkrieg is undeniable. According to the intelligence assessment from 1985, "Indian combined arms operations would

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<sup>143</sup> "Talking Points: Pakistan-India: Military Balance," The Talking Points Notes (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83M00914R002100170011-3.pdf>) 1.

<sup>144</sup> "The Indo-Pakistani Military Balance," Intelligence Memorandum, Central Intelligence Agency, April 19, 1985 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T01058R000406180001-7.pdf>) 2.

<sup>145</sup> "India's Navy: Consolidating Its Regional Predominance," Intelligence Assessment, Central Intelligence Agency, October 1982 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83S00854R000200020002-1.pdf>) 1-4.

<sup>146</sup> "The Pakistani Navy: No Match for India's," Intelligence Assessment, Central Intelligence Agency, December 6, 1985 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T01058R000507150001-8.pdf>) 1-4.

<sup>147</sup> Ganguly and Hagerty, "Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons," 60.

likely to succeed in soundly defeating Pakistan's ground forces within two weeks after the opening of hostilities."<sup>148</sup> According to another intelligence source, the two weeks was a crucial period, since that was the estimated time for Pakistan to gain international support for the cease-fire.<sup>149</sup> It is, therefore, likely that if India decided to pursue a blitzkrieg strategy, it would succeed. However, there is not enough empirical evidence to support the proposition that India was contemplating the blitzkrieg strategy during the 1984 crisis and the Brasstacks crisis. The strategy that was most likely contemplated in the highest circle of the Indian decision-making apparatus was the limited aims strategy. In the case of the Indian attack on Pakistan, it would mean gaining control of the Kahuta nuclear facility either by seizing or by destroying it. Already in June 1981, high-level Indian strategists were focusing on the development of contingency plans calling for a surprise attack against Pakistani nuclear facilities. According to the U.S. SNIE, the ability of India to carry out the attack was not in question, and Indira Gandhi contemplated this option.<sup>150</sup> The same situation happened during the crisis in October 1984, when the pre-emptive attack against the Kahuta facility was once more discussed.<sup>151</sup> The military strategy of India during the Brasstacks crisis in 1987 can be as well considered as a limited aims strategy. The prevalent amount of empirical evidence suggests that General Sundarji, who was practically in charge of the situation during exercise, designed Brasstacks as an opportunity to provoke Pakistan and subsequently conduct a pre-emptive strike on Pakistani Army Reserve South and Kahuta nuclear facility and thus remove the potential of a future nuclear attack on India.<sup>152</sup>

In both of the major crises of the 1980s, India favored the limited aims strategy when contemplating the attack against Pakistan, yet it decided to refrain from the plans. According to Mearsheimer, with limited aims strategy, deterrence only holds when there is a chance of involvement of superpowers and a chance of protracted conflict. In the presented cases, the direct military involvement of the U.S. and Soviet Union was highly unlikely, and thus the

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<sup>148</sup> "The Indo-Pakistani Military Balance," Intelligence Memorandum, Central Intelligence Agency, April 19, 1985 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T01058R000406180001-7.pdf>) 1.

<sup>149</sup> "Indian Army Modernization Efforts: Progress and Problems," Intelligence Assessment, Central Intelligence Agency, October 1985 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP06T00412R000504820001-1.pdf>) 1.

<sup>150</sup> "India's reactions to nuclear development in Pakistan," The U.S. Special National Intelligence Estimate, Central Intelligence Agency, September 8, 1981 (available online at [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0005403744.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005403744.pdf)) 4.

<sup>151</sup> Chari, "Nuclear Crisis, Escalation Control and Deterrence in South Asia," 13-14.

<sup>152</sup> Sahni, "A dangerous exercise: Brasstacks as non-nuclear near war," 25., Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 280.

deterrence should have failed. As was shown, the conventional denial can hardly be considered as the reason behind the decision not to attack.

The other type of conventional deterrence, *conventional punishment*, seems like a more suitable explanation for the prevention of the conflict. As Huntington postulated, the deterrence by conventional punishment rests on the assumption that challenger will be deterred from attacking if the potential defender's retaliation would target and seriously endanger something that challenger highly values. At the same time, deterrer must know what challenger deems valuable and must have the capacity to carry out the attack. During both the 1984 crisis and the Brasstacks crisis, India feared the potential Pakistani attack against its nuclear facilities as a response to the Indian pre-emptive strike. In 1981, Indira Gandhi already expressed concerns that: "[...] India's oil and nuclear installations will become vulnerable to Pakistani air attack."<sup>153</sup> India's fear of the Pakistani pre-emptive or retaliatory attack against the Indian BARC in Trombay was linked to Pakistan's acquisition of F-16 fighters.<sup>154</sup> In the early 1980s, Pakistan had both the knowledge of what India deemed valuable and the capacity to conduct a retaliatory attack and inflict severe damage to India. As former Chief of the Pakistani air force, M. Anwar Shamim revealed, Pakistan was convinced that India would not attack Kahuta, simply from the fear of a retaliatory attack against their nuclear site at Trombay.<sup>155</sup> The possible consequences of an Indian attack on Pakistani nuclear sites were illustrated by Munir Ahmad Khan at the meeting with AEC chairman Raja Ramanna. Ahmad Khan stressed that Pakistani retaliation would be massive and directed at the Trombay facility and that destruction of the facility would release a massive amount of nuclear radiation. The fear of the radioactive contamination caused by an attack on Trombay facilities was also expressed by high-ranking Indian officials when contemplating the pre-emptive attack on Pakistan in 1982 and 1984.<sup>156</sup> During the 1984 crisis, the fear of a retaliatory attack was furthermore strengthened by losing the element of surprise. K. Subramanyam, the chairman of India's Joint Intelligence Committee and close advisor to Indira Gandhi, noted that the increased Pakistani air defense around Kahuta

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<sup>153</sup> "Warning Report-Nuclear Proliferation," Intelligence Memorandum, Central Intelligence Agency, August 20, 1981 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83B01027R000300050034-6.pdf>) 4.

<sup>154</sup> "India's reactions to nuclear development in Pakistan," The U.S. Special National Intelligence Estimate, Central Intelligence Agency, September 8, 1981 (available online at [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0005403744.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005403744.pdf)) 4.

<sup>155</sup> M. Anwar Shamim, *Cutting Edge PAF: A Former Air Chief's Reminiscences of a Developing Air Force* (Vanguard Books, 2010) 55.

<sup>156</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 241.

during the crisis indicated that Pakistan is aware of the potential Indian pre-emptive attack and would respond similarly.<sup>157</sup>

During the Brasstacks crisis, India was once again exposed to the possible Pakistani counterattack. As an advisor to the Indian Ministry of Defense recalled, the possibility of an attack on Pakistan was frequently discussed in the close circle. In the end, among the highest decision-makers prevailed the view that by launching a pre-emptive attack, India would lose more than it would gain.<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, it is not clear whether the fear of conventional punishment was the central factor for the prevention of the crisis during the Brasstacks exercise. Contrastingly, as was presented, conventional retaliation can be considered as an influential factor behind the decision not to attack during the 1984 crisis.

The first of the non-military factors to be addressed is the *level of consensus in the decision-making apparatus*. The different situation in the decision-making apparatus during the tenure of Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi was perceptibly reflected in the respective crisis. Indira Gandhi was in firm charge of the decision-making process during the early 1980s when on several occasions, the pre-emptive strike against Pakistan was contemplated. The opposition to an attack, as such, was not evident, and the government agencies worked together with the military officials on the development of the pre-emptive strike plans, which were ultimately submitted for approval to Indira Gandhi.<sup>159</sup> Contrastingly, the unified position of the highest-ranking officials was not a fact during the Brasstacks crisis. The inexperience of then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, together with the recklessness of General Sundarji and Minister of State for Defence Arun Singh, exacerbated the already poorly executed communication and coordination during the Brasstacks crisis. The military oversight during the exercise was ceded entirely to Sundarji and political communication to Arun Singh, Gandhi's close friend.<sup>160</sup> As then Minister for External Affairs Kuntwar Natwar Singh recalled in his autobiography, Prime Minister Gandhi did not know about Sundarji's strategy of escalation and about the intention to provoke Pakistan to the military action during the exercise.<sup>161</sup> Eventually, as direct participants noted, on the critical meeting where pre-emptive strike against Pakistan was contemplated, the decision not to attack, forwarded by Gandhi, prevailed against the argumentation of Sundarji

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<sup>157</sup> Khan, "Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb," 220.

<sup>158</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 280.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>160</sup> Gill, "Brasstacks: prudently pessimistic," 38.

<sup>161</sup> K. Natwar Singh, *One life is not enough* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2014) 230.

about the survivability of the Indian forces and the feasibility of the swift force against Pakistan.<sup>162</sup>

The *alliance politics* during the two 1980s crises had only limited impact on the Indian decision not to attack. The only actor that might be considered as a decisive force that would prevent the war by its intervention would be the U.S., as an ally of Pakistan. Even though the remarks of the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Deane Hinton about the protection of Pakistan in case of Indian attack, further exacerbated the situation during the 1984 crisis and might have frightened India, New Delhi analogously sought support from the Soviet Union, which caused concern in Washington.<sup>163</sup> Regarding the potential Indo-Pakistani conflict, the U.S. formulated its policy carefully, without favoring neither of the sides.<sup>164</sup> At the time of the crisis, the U.S. priority in South Asia was Afghanistan, and even though Pakistan was a strategic ally in the region, Indian officials knew the U.S. diplomatic intervention would not happen earlier than two weeks after the outbreak of potential conflict, which was the time needed for the achievement of India's objectives.<sup>165</sup> During the Brasstacks crisis, the only external actor that comes into play as alliance politics factor was the U.S. As the evidence suggests, the U.S., however, limited itself only to reassuring both India and Pakistan in order to ease the strained situation.<sup>166</sup> Thus, the assumption that the U.S., as an intervening force, would discourage India from attacking is dubious.

The analysis of the two crises from the 1980s offers valuable findings concerning the importance of nuclear latency and other factors for the challenging state when contemplating the attack. As was demonstrated, the latent nuclear deterrence did not prove as the most critical factor behind the Indian decision not to attack Pakistan. It seems what deterred India from attacking Pakistan in the early 1980s was the threat of the conventional retaliation against its nuclear facility in Trombay. Even though Pakistani nuclear weapons presented a threat to India, Indira Gandhi knew that in order to get rid of this threat, India would risk sacrificing its nuclear weapons program. In the case of the Brasstacks crisis, the threat of conventional retaliation was not the central issue to the Indian decision-makers. It seems that the more influential factor that averted the Indian attack was the lack of consensus in the decision-making apparatus. The

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<sup>162</sup> Khalid, "Brasstacks Crisis 1986-7," 51-52, 60; Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 280.

<sup>163</sup> "U.S. Policy Towards India and Pakistan," National Security Decision Directive 147, October 11, 1984 (available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90B01370R001501920022-0.pdf>) 1.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>165</sup> Ganguly and Hagerty, "Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons," 59.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

disagreement over the further escalation of the crisis between Sundarji and Singh on the one side and Gandhi on the other side and the poorly managed coordination and communication contributed to the final decision to refrain from the attack.

## **4 Pakistan-India in 1965**

The second case study of the master's thesis is dedicated to the crisis and subsequent conflict between Pakistan as the challenger and India as the defending state. Matthew Fuhrmann believes the crisis between these countries, which eventually led to the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war, is one of the few failures of latent nuclear deterrence. Fuhrmann posits that this failure can be attributed to the Pakistani high resolve to start the war and revenge for the 1948 Kashmir war and to the Indian sprinting strategy of acquiring the nuclear weapon. However, the master's thesis does not only follow this explanation, and it examines other possible reasons for the outbreak of the war.

In the first part of the chapter, the development of the Indian nuclear weapons program until the year 1965 is explained. The second part examines the prelude to the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war and briefly discusses its development. Lastly, the third part analyzes the causes of the war, assesses what are the explanations for the Pakistani decision to attack, and evaluates the latent nuclear deterrence explanation.

### **4.1 Indian nuclear weapons program**

The origins of the Indian nuclear program are inherently connected to the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, who ruled the country until his death in 1964. Nehru's quest to master nuclear technology had begun even before India gained independence in 1947. He contemplated, together with the later chairman of Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) Homi Bhabha, the many opportunities that the indigenous nuclear program could offer. In 1946, the Atomic Energy Research Committee, which sought to promote education in nuclear physics and engineering, was established. In 1948, Prime Minister Nehru introduced the Atomic Energy Act, which established AEC and provided the legal framework for the development of the indigenous nuclear program.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 18-19.



In the early stage of Indian nuclear development, nuclear energy was primarily considered to secure India from the perspective of energy security. In the first phase of nuclear development, the Prime Minister was the sole authority in formulating the nuclear policy of India. Nehru was both the head of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Department of Atomic Energy. Therefore, his nuclear preferences were mostly unchallenged in the Indian apparatus. He promoted a twofold nuclear policy: advocating nuclear disarmament and arms control at the global level and opposing the nuclear weapons program at the domestic level.<sup>168</sup> However, considering the peaceful use of nuclear energy, Nehru disapproved any action that would deprive India of its benefits. In this regard, the U.S. was concerned about India's path towards nuclear independence. The first collision with the U.S interests came in 1951 when Nehru signed the nuclear cooperation agreement with France, and a year later, he introduced a four-year plan to develop a nuclear capability.<sup>169</sup> The friction between India and the U.S. peaked with the announcement of the U.S. military aid to Pakistan in 1954. The same year India's plans for nuclear development began to be implemented. New Delhi started to construct the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) in Trombay, which began to serve as a primary research facility for the nuclear program. In 1955, in the wake of the Atoms for Peace program, Canada agreed to provide India with a nuclear reactor, later commonly known as CIRUS.<sup>170</sup>

Owing to the erudite and moralistic Prime Minister Nehru, the Indian nuclear program was rarely questioned by the international community. Nehru always committed his country to the peaceful use of nuclear energy only. Nevertheless, on several different occasions, both Nehru and Bhabha stressed the fact that India would be able to make atomic weapons at some point in their nuclear development. For instance, in 1961, they remarked that the nuclear program would have the dual-use potential within two years. Moreover, the nuclear ambiguity of the early 1960s was emphasized by the revised 1962 Atomic Energy Act, which sidelined the traditional focus on the peaceful use of atomic energy and paved the way for encompassing the issue of national security in the debate of nuclear development.<sup>171</sup> The revised act had been approved just a month before the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) invaded India along the Himalayan border and started a month-long war, which ended with the Chinese unilateral declaration of cease-fire and achievement of its war objectives. In the aftermath of the war,

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<sup>168</sup> Ziba Moshaver, *Nuclear Weapons Proliferation in the Indian Subcontinent* (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1991) 29.

<sup>169</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 21-22.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

India reassessed its defense spending and revalued the importance of the respective branches of the military, including the potential future importance of the dual-use nuclear technology.<sup>172</sup>

Regarding the decision to opt for nuclear weapons capability, 1964 can be considered as a turning point. The two main events that caused the significant turn in India's nuclear policy was the death of Prime Minister Nehru and the Chinese nuclear test conducted in October 1964. Nevertheless, already at the beginning of 1964, Bhabha praised the deterring effects of nuclear weapons. In his report, he linked the issue of nuclear weapons, national security, and protection against militarily superior countries. He made an example of China as a powerful neighboring country that can be deterred either by collective security or by recourse to nuclear weapons.<sup>173</sup> At the beginning of 1964, India commissioned its indigenously designed plutonium reprocessing power plant in Trombay. Later that year, the first spent fuel from the CIRUS reactor entered the plant and provided the first vital materials for manufacturing the bomb.<sup>174</sup> At the end of May 1964, India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had died, and Lal Bahadur Shastri assumed his position as head of government as well as a position of minister for atomic energy. For Shastri, nuclear policy and foreign affairs were not priorities, and the newly appointed Prime Minister lacked substantial knowledge in these areas. Bhabha took advantage of this new situation and positioned himself in charge of every crucial decision considering nuclear development. In the late summer 1964, when India was informed by the U.S. intelligence that China is preparing its first nuclear detonation, Bhabha started both public and behind-the-scenes efforts to convince Prime Minister Shastri about the importance of nuclear development and potential weaponization. On several occasions, Bhabha publicly declared that India has know-how how to build a nuclear weapon, and if it decides to do so, it can do it in 18 months. The 1964 Chinese nuclear detonation intensified the debate regarding the possible nuclear weapons program. Prime Minister Shastri struggled to position himself in the debate and lost the chance to formulate the new Indian nuclear policy. Instead, Bhabha took the initiative to justify the use of nuclear weapons for a deterring purpose and urged to begin the work on so-called 'peaceful nuclear explosives' (PNE).<sup>175</sup> Around the same time, the CIA's analysis of Indian nuclear weapons capability estimated that India would be able to produce a nuclear device in one to three years if it decides to do so. The analysis also reported that the plutonium separation plant in Trombay is producing weapons-grade plutonium in volumes that

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<sup>172</sup> Sumit Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II: The Prospects and Sources of New Delhi's Nuclear Weapons Program," *International Security*, 23/4 (1999) 151-152.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>174</sup> Bharat Karnad, *India's Nuclear Policy* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008) 47.

<sup>175</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 64-65

exceed the need for the civilian program.<sup>176</sup> The pressure that has been put on Prime Minister Shastri since the Chinese nuclear explosion by Bhabha and opposition politicians prompted Shastri to make a momentous speech for India's nuclear policy. Shastri, while reaffirming the commitment of India to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, declared that India would start preparations of PNE, and thus, he inadvertently opened the doors for India's nuclear bomb.<sup>177</sup>

In 1965, when the second Indo-Pakistani war started, India's nuclear weapons program was at the outset. At the beginning of the year, Shastri gave formal approval to Bhabha, to begin with the development of nuclear explosives. When assessing the nuclear capacity of India in the critical year 1965, the primary source of information was the estimates produced by the U.S. intelligence services.<sup>178</sup> The production of the weapons-grade plutonium was, according to the intelligence reports, already a reality in the 1964 and according to the CIA's Intelligence Information Cable from October 1964: "The Government of India has all of the elements necessary to produce a nuclear weapon and it has the capability to assemble a bomb quickly."<sup>179</sup> The secret report compiled by Henry Rowen, a senior official in the International Security Affairs bureau of the U.S. Department of Defense, emphasized the resolve of India to start the nuclear weapons program in response to the Chinese nuclear detonation.<sup>180</sup> The U.S. SNIE from October 1965 presents the most complex and accurate information about India's nuclear program in 1965. The SNIE states: "India has the capability to develop nuclear weapons. It probably already has sufficient plutonium for a first device, and it could explode it about a year after a decision to develop one."<sup>181</sup> The SNIE also mentions vast reserves of uranium ore and well-functioning plutonium separation plant. Nevertheless, the estimate emphasizes that in order to develop the nuclear device in a year, the work on weapons design and technology would have to be very advanced, and the testing site would have to be established soon.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-68

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-83.

<sup>178</sup> Bharat Karnad, "India's Nuclear Policy," 48-49.

<sup>179</sup> "Indian Government Policy on Development of Nuclear Weapon," Intelligence Information Cable, Central Intelligence Agency, October 24, 1964 (available online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB187/IN05.pdf>) 1.

<sup>180</sup> H. S. Rowen, "The Indian Nuclear Problem," Draft, December 24, 1964 (available online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB187/IN07.pdf>) 1.

<sup>181</sup> "India's Nuclear Weapons Policy," The U.S. Special National Intelligence Estimate, Central Intelligence Agency, October 21, 1965 (available online at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB187/IN09.pdf>) 1.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

## 4.2 Indo-Pakistani War of 1965

In order to fully understand the context of the prelude to the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, the nature of the relationship between India and Pakistan in the early 1960s must be assessed. In general, the relationship between India and Pakistan at the beginning of the 1960s could be considered as normalized. Throughout the 1950s, both countries had been trying to work on their mutual relationship and establish specific confidence-building measures. In 1959, the attempt for rapprochement was manifested in the Pakistani proposal for Joint Defence Agreement between India and Pakistan. Pakistani President Ayub Khan was aware of the deteriorating relationship between China and India, and he was afraid that the possible Chinese invasion of India would cause spillover of the conflict to Pakistan and generated a fundamental change of the security environment in South Asia. Indian Prime Minister Nehru categorically rejected Ayub's proposal and questioned the utility of such an alliance. Nehru still believed that the positive relations with China could be sustained and considered Pakistan as the bigger of the external threats.<sup>183</sup> The only tangible outcome of the improved relations of the early 1960s was the Indus Water Treaty brokered by World Bank and signed in 1960. This agreement regarding the water distribution of the Indus System of Rivers has been the closest the two countries had gotten to each other since the partition of British India.<sup>184</sup>

Eventually, the political and territorial disputes between India and China escalated in 1962 in a month-long war. Pakistan, at this time, had already abandoned the strategy of careful rapprochement with India and allied with China. Since the proposal for the Joint Defense Agreement was rejected, President Ayub Khan realized that the best strategy to contain Indian menace is to ally with Peking and counterweight India's preponderant strength.<sup>185</sup> As was already mentioned in the previous subchapter, the Indian defeat in 1962 war prompted leaders in New Delhi to make significant changes regarding the defense strategy and the overall civil-military relations. The war revealed India's failures at both strategic and tactical levels. Furthermore, Indian political and military leaders in the wake of the 1962 war began to fixate on the persisting possibility of Chinese intrusion and another border conflict.<sup>186</sup> At the same time, Pakistan continued with a friendly approach to China. Pakistani Foreign Minister Bhutto embarked on a bid to establish a long-term relationship with China and, at the same time, to

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<sup>183</sup> Dixit, "India-Pakistan in War & Peace," 127-128.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>185</sup> "Sino-Pakistan Cooperation in the Kashmir War," Intelligence Memorandum, Central Intelligence Agency, October 14, 1965 (available online at [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0000632167.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000632167.pdf)) 2.

<sup>186</sup> Sumit Ganguly, "Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 13/4 (1990) 82-83

prevent India from having the upper hand over the Kashmir territorial dispute. In 1964, Bhutto negotiated the Sino-Pakistan border agreement, which ceded a portion of Pakistani claim of territory in the Kashmir area to China. That maneuver effectively put China on Pakistan's side in the event of another Indian attempt to militarily exert its power over Kashmir.<sup>187</sup>

At the beginning of 1965, both India and Pakistan found themselves in somewhat uneasy positions. Indian leadership had much to be concerned about. Prime Minister Nehru had died recently, and his successor Lal Bahadur Shastri lacked the qualities of his predecessor, especially regarding the international standing and experience. At the beginning of his tenure, Shastri contended with the disturbances that had erupted in the Kashmir region. Also, he was confronted with the language riots in South India, yet, the biggest issue of the post-1962 war India was the rearmament and overall modernization of the army in the deteriorating security environment of South Asia.<sup>188</sup> The situation for Pakistan was also far from ideal. President Ayub Khan had been facing growing discontent with his rule, and he had to cope with the rising influence of his Foreign Minister Bhutto. Additionally, the Kashmir issue was slowly losing its importance for the Pakistani public. Facing the rapid Indian modernization of the military, Ayub Khan concluded that there is a brief 'window of opportunity' to challenge India and, at the same time, revive the Kashmir question in order to gain much needed political points.<sup>189</sup>

Since January 1965, the first skirmishes between Pakistan and India have taken place in the marshy land of Rann of Kutch along the border between the two countries. This area had a little strategic or economic value for both countries. However, the poorly demarcated border was a reason for sporadic intrusions since the British partition of India, and at the beginning of 1965, Pakistan decided to test there the resolve of the new Indian Prime Minister.<sup>190</sup> New Delhi did not pay much attention to the Pakistani military forces straying into the Indian territory since Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and his government were far more concerned with the disturbances of the local population in Kashmir.<sup>191</sup> The situation in the Rann of Kutch gradually escalated through April 1965. Pakistan's newfound confidence, resulting from the lack of Indian resolve to defend the area, prompted Islamabad to occupy the area tens of kilometers behind its claim line. During the attack, around 3000 thousand Pakistani soldiers

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<sup>187</sup> Dixit, "India-Pakistan in War & Peace," 131-132.

<sup>188</sup> Ganguly, "Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965," 83.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>190</sup> Scott Gates and Kaushik Roy, *Limited War in South Asia: From Decolonization to Recent Times* (New York: Routledge, 2018) 69

<sup>191</sup> Rudra Chaudhuri, "Just another border incident: The Rann of Kutch and the 1965 India-Pakistan War," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 42/5 (2019) 662.

were supported by newly acquired Patton tanks.<sup>192</sup> Indian reaction to the incursion was muted, which was caused to a large extent by the above-mentioned low material and strategic value. However, the ‘hawks’ in the Pakistani political and military leadership interpreted the apathetic Indian reactions as proof of disunity and chaos that had prevailed in India.<sup>193</sup>

Eventually, in May 1965, the conflict in the Rann of Kutch was settled by a third-party mediation with the intervention of the U.K. In the same month, around 3000 soldiers began their training for the military infiltration of Kashmir code-named Operation Gibraltar. In July, the operation had been discussed among the highest Pakistani officials, and eventually, President Ayub Khan authorized to conduct in the following month. The decision to undertake the severe military gambit in Kashmir was primarily encouraged by the Pakistani success in the Rann of Kutch and the persisting feeling of the closing’ window of opportunity’.<sup>194</sup> The 1965 war itself began on August 5, when Pakistani forces, disguised as local tribesmen, infiltrated the Indian-held part of the Kashmir region. The task of the invading forces was to foment the ongoing disturbances and spark the uprising of the Muslim population in Kashmir. On August 25, the Indian army responded to the attack and captured back the lost territory. Much to the surprise of the Pakistani leadership, local forces in Kashmir refused to cooperate with the infiltrators and instead supported the Indian army.<sup>195</sup> This major failure of Operation Gibraltar prompted Ayub Khan to authorize a massive invasion of regular Pakistani forces supported with armored vehicles. The Indian army responded accordingly, and the Kashmir region witnessed some of the largest tank battles since World War II. Both India and Pakistan also used airpower to support their ground forces for the first time in their history of mutual hostility.<sup>196</sup> The conflict, which was initially intended to be a limited war turned into a large-scale conflict beyond the capacity of Pakistan, which, during the conflict, had lost the U.S. military support. Eventually, on September 20, 1965, India accepted the cease-fire call demanded by the United Nations, and two days later, so did Pakistan.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Ganguly, “Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965,” 87.

<sup>193</sup> Gates and Roy, “Limited War in South Asia: From Decolonization to Recent Times,” 71; Ganguly, “Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965,” 89.

<sup>194</sup> Chaudhuri, “Just another border incident: The Rann of Kutch and the 1965 India-Pakistan War,” 670; Perkovich, “India’s Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation,” 107.

<sup>195</sup> Gates and Roy, “Limited War in South Asia: From Decolonization to Recent Times,” 72-73.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>197</sup> Perkovich, “India’s Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation,” 109.

### 4.3 Analysis: the complexity behind the decision to attack

The following section of the chapter illuminates the interplay of several factors that were crucial for Pakistan's decision to attack India in 1965. As it was already mentioned, Matthew Fuhrmann considers the case of the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war as one of the few failures of latent nuclear deterrence. As Fuhrmann elaborated in his article, the failure was caused as one of the requirements of latent nuclear deterrence has not been met. Specifically, it was Pakistan's high resolve to wage war with India. Thus, according to Fuhrmann, Pakistan could not be deterred and therefore opt for military action against India.<sup>198</sup> In the following analysis, the master's thesis try to ascertain whether the requirements for latent nuclear deterrence were not met, as Fuhrmann suggests, and whether the Pakistani decision to attack can be attributed to the failure of latent nuclear deterrence or other relevant factors at play.

The first of the factors to be addressed is the above mentioned *latent nuclear deterrence*. Before the thesis proceeds to the analysis of the four requirements of the successful deterrence, the state of the Indian nuclear latency in the year 1965 must be recapitulated. Drawing upon the nuclear latency definition as forwarded by Fuhrmann and Tkach, India had to have working ENR facilities in their possession and therefore produced at least a minimum amount of enriched material. As was presented in the previous subchapter, the Indian nuclear weapons program was virtually at the very beginning in 1965. Nevertheless, in 1964, the CIRUS reactor from the BARC in Trombay already produced the first weapons-grade plutonium. In 1965, it was assessed that India has almost enough weapons-grade plutonium for one nuclear bomb. Therefore, according to Fuhrmann and Tkach's definition, India in 1965 can be almost certainly considered as a latent nuclear state both in terms of nuclear weapons material and ENR facilities.

The examination of four requirements of latent nuclear deterrence in the case of India in 1965 is a critical task. Pakistani concern about the nuclearization of India represents the first requirement. At the beginning of the 1960s, the perception that Indian nuclear motivation is dubious and that India's nuclear program might pose a threat to Pakistan prevailed in the Pakistani government circles.<sup>199</sup> In the Fall of 1964, during the critical months of the Indian decision to pursue the path of nuclear weaponization, Pakistan noticed hawkish remarks of Homi Bhabha, who advocated more assertive nuclear policy, and Pakistani officials expressed

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<sup>198</sup> Fuhrmann, "The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence," 18, 34, 35

<sup>199</sup> Bhumitra Chakma, "Road to Chagai: Pakistan's Nuclear Programme, Its Sources and Motivations," *Modern Asia Studies*, 36/4 (2002) 879.

concern. The leading Pakistani newspaper, *Dawn*, commented on it in the sense that India is most certainly not wasting money on research on the manufacture of a nuclear bomb without actually assembling one.<sup>200</sup> It can be assumed that since the early 1960s, the Indian nuclear program and potential weaponization has posed a threat to Pakistan. The second requirement of successful latent nuclear deterrence, which is concerned with India's capacity to proliferate, is most certainly met. As was illustrated in the previous subchapter, according to the U.S. SNIE from 1965, India was able to assemble a weapon in one year if it decided to do so and had vast resources of necessary nuclear material.<sup>201</sup> The third requirement posits that India could not pursue a sprinting strategy of proliferation in 1965. Applying Narang's analytical framework, the evidence for the existence of a sprinting proliferation strategy in India is hard to find. During the 1960s, India was not explicit about its intentions to proliferate, and until 1964, the nuclear program was entirely devoted to the peaceful use only. The decision to begin the work on PNE was a turning point in India's nuclear proliferation strategy, yet it could not be still classified as sprinting. Among other reasons, one of them was the lack of consensus in the Indian decision-making apparatus about the importance of having nuclear weapons and even about the need for research on PNE.<sup>202</sup> According to Fuhrmann, the last of the requirements was not met in 1965. Fuhrmann considers Pakistan to be too resolved to fight and, therefore, impossible to be deterred by the latent nuclear capacity of India. Nevertheless, the assumption about the high resolve of Pakistan has not solid grounding. The empirical evidence suggests that decision to attack was a more likely result of careful deliberation about the pros and cons of such assault on India. As it is reminded throughout the rest of the analysis, Pakistani officials decided to attack India after a series of events that, in their view, gave Pakistan an upper hand over India and thus provide the opportunity. India's defeat in the war with China in 1962, the riots against Indian rule in Kashmir in 1963, and the overall Pakistani perception that India and its army are in the weak position prompted the Pakistani officials to contemplate the attack. The calculation also took into consideration the death of Prime Minister Nehru and the consequent uncertainties within the Indian political and bureaucratic system.<sup>203</sup> There is no evidence to presume that Pakistan was undeterrable before the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war. Therefore, the potential role of latent nuclear deterrence should be included in the analysis.

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<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 880.

<sup>201</sup> "India's Nuclear Weapons Policy," The U.S. Special National Intelligence Estimate, Central Intelligence Agency, October 21, 1965 (available online at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB187/IN09.pdf>) 1.

<sup>202</sup> Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation," 84-85.

<sup>203</sup> Dixit, "India-Pakistan in War & Peace," 134-135.



As it was mentioned, since 1964, Pakistan has begun to be concerned with the Indian nuclear program. Nevertheless, the assumption that the potential nuclear weaponization of India was considered by Pakistani leadership in the case of the 1965 war cannot be supported by the available empirical evidence. The most pressing concern for Pakistan regarding the Indian military was the modernization plan that started in 1964, not the immediate threat of nuclear weaponization. The modernization plan, which is briefly presented in the subsequent paragraphs, would cause total Indian military regional dominance within five years period.<sup>204</sup> As the U.S. SNIE from October 1965 shows, even after the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, future nuclear weaponization was not guaranteed, and influential opposition towards nuclear weapons existed. Prime Minister Shastri, as one of the opponents, stressed the sufficient military preponderance, which is provided by conventional weapons.<sup>205</sup> The estimate also highlights that the major influence on Indian decision regarding nuclear weapons program would be the pace and scope of Chinese nuclear weapons development.<sup>206</sup> Thus, it is evident that the role of latent nuclear deterrence for the Pakistani decision was negligible. Matthew Fuhrmann attributes this to the Pakistani high resolve for war and, therefore, failure to meet the requirements for successful latent nuclear deterrence. Contrastingly, the master's thesis operates with the hypothesis that there existed other more critical factors that Pakistan considered before the attack.

The *strategy of nuclear proliferation* is the first of the alternative factors to be addressed in the analysis. It was already determined that the sprinting strategy is not a suitable description of the nuclear proliferation of India in the mid-1960s. India, throughout its history, pursued several nuclear proliferation strategies, which changed according to the domestic and foreign situation. The first significant shift in strategy came in 1964 after the detonation of the Chinese bomb and the death of Nehru. Homi Bhabha, together with the opposition parties, managed to enforce a more active approach to nuclear development since India failed to receive a nuclear guarantee from both the U.S. and Soviet Union following the Chinese nuclear test.<sup>207</sup> Before 1964, India perceived nuclear power only from the perspective of energy and peaceful use. The shift caused the shift of India from the so-called technical hedging strategy to the hard-hedging strategy.<sup>208</sup> Since 1964 India has started to conduct significant theoretical work and practical

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<sup>204</sup> Ganguly, "Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965," 78.

<sup>205</sup> "India's Nuclear Weapons Policy," The U.S. SNIE, Central Intelligence Agency, October 21, 1965 (available at [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0000594950.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000594950.pdf)) 3-4.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>207</sup> Andrew B. Kennedy, "India's Nuclear Odyssey: Implicit Umbrellas, Diplomatic Disappointments, and the Bomb," *International Security*, 36/2 (2011) 9-11.

<sup>208</sup> Narang, "Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation: How States Pursue the Bomb," 138.

work on a nuclear weapons program, including the work on PNE. Nevertheless, the already mentioned lack of consensus in the state apparatus about the future of nuclear weaponization and the potential role of nuclear weapons stopped India from pursuing active proliferation.

The balance of *regional conventional capabilities* between India and Pakistan in the mid-1960s is a complex topic to assess. In the wake of the Indian defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian war, New Delhi has undertaken significant defense modernization efforts. Indian defense budget grew from 1.9% of GNP in 1962 to 3.7% in 1965.<sup>209</sup> The five-year modernization plan, which ought to start in 1965, would lead to the acquisition of 45-squadron air force, expansion of the army to the 25 divisions of around 825 000 soldiers, and the establishment of an indigenous arms-building capability. According to the observers, the buildup would give India the 6:1 numerical superiority by the end of the 1960s. In 1965 India held 3:1 numerical superiority along the border with Pakistan and 5:1 overall superiority of all forces.<sup>210</sup> Considering the air force, although India had to concentrate some of its forces near the border with China, it still had quantitative superiority over Pakistan. It had around 700 aircraft compared to the 200 of Pakistan. Nevertheless, Pakistan had a qualitatively superior aircraft. India had to be reliant on Canberra light bombers from the U.K., Hawker Hunter jets from the early 1950s, and the Indian version of Gnat fighters. New Delhi's only supersonic fighters were new MiG-21s acquired in 1964, and the rest of the aircraft was somewhat obsolescent. In contrast to this, the Pakistani air force was composed of modern U.S. fighters. As part of the U.S. military assistance, it acquired 12 of F-104A Starfighter and 186 of F-86 Sabre aircraft. The Sabre fighters were equipped with the state-of-the-art air-to-air missiles Sidewinder, the first such missiles in South Asia.<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, PAF enormously benefited from Pakistan being a member of the Western-led alliances such as SEATO and CENTO. Membership in these organizations provided PAF with U.S. training, engineering, and other technical support.<sup>212</sup> The balance of ground forces was, from the quantitative perspective, again in favor of India. India had two divisions right in the Kashmir territory, eight divisions along the Western border with Pakistan, and another ten divisions along the border with China. In contrast, Pakistan had only seven divisions positioned along the Eastern border with India, and one division was stationed in the province of East Pakistan.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ganguly, "Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965," 78.

<sup>210</sup> T.V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 107.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 107, 115.

<sup>212</sup> Cheema, "The Armed Forces of Pakistan," 110

<sup>213</sup> Ganguly, "Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965," 78.

Nevertheless, when it came to the diversification of armor and the battle condition of equipment, Pakistan had a qualitative edge. As part of the U.S. military modernization plan, Pakistan received around 200 M48 Patton tanks and 100 M113 armored personnel carriers in the early 1960s. Together with the 340 M-47 Patton tanks, it formed one armored division representing the main Pakistani offensive ground force.<sup>214</sup> Indian armored offensive force was comprised of two armored divisions formed mainly by old M4 Sherman tanks, which were considered mechanically unreliable and British M4 Centurions, which were delivered in the late 1950s.<sup>215</sup> The Patton tanks gave Pakistan an unquestionable advantage owing to their more excellent maneuverability and greater firepower.<sup>216</sup> Moreover, regarding the numbers of the tanks, Pakistan also had a quantitative edge over India with 756 tanks compared to India's 602.<sup>217</sup> Even though the navy of both India and Pakistan played a minimal role in the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, it should not be omitted from the assessment of the regional conventional capabilities. As with every branch of the military, the Indian Navy had a quantitative preponderance over the Pakistani side. In 1965 India had around 22 warships, including one aircraft carrier and around 16 000 men in the navy. Pakistan, on the other hand, had only around nine warships. The only qualitative advantage of Pakistan over India was the acquisition of the *Ghazi* submarine in 1964.<sup>218</sup>

The first variation of conventional deterrence to assess is the *conventional denial* and the associated military strategy of the attacking state. To ascertain which of the three possible strategies of waging the war Pakistan had been contemplating and, in the end, employed, it is crucial to analyze the Pakistani military plans and objectives against India in 1965. Applying Mearsheimer's conceptualization of conventional denial, the evidence suggests that Pakistan favored the limited aims strategy in 1965 over the blitzkrieg and the war of attrition strategy. Pakistan had several reasons for employing this strategy. Firstly, since the late 1950s, Islamabad acquired new and high-quality weapons from the U.S., increasing military mobility and firepower. This military modernization was reflected in the army's new tactical approach on the battlefield. Pakistan's new "offensive-defense" doctrine was based on the conviction that with the newly acquired weapons, it can engage in a short, sharp war and achieve limited military and political aims.<sup>219</sup> The new doctrine was first employed during the skirmishes in the

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<sup>214</sup> David R. Higgins, *M48 Patton vs Centurion: Indo-Pakistani War 1965* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2016) 36.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>216</sup> Ganguly, "Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965," 78.

<sup>217</sup> Gates and Roy, "Limited War in South Asia: From Decolonization to Recent Times," 68

<sup>218</sup> Vijay Sakhuja, "Pakistan's Naval strategy: Past and future," *Strategic Analysis*, 26/4 (2002) 496.

<sup>219</sup> Amjad Ali Khan Chaudhry, *September '65: Before and After* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 2015) 21-22.

Rann of Kutch in April 1965. The outcome of the Rann of Kutch incident gave Pakistani leadership confidence that this strategy might also work in the Kashmir area where the terrain conditions are similarly favorable for the Pakistani limited aims strategy.<sup>220</sup> Secondly, the decision to employ limited aims strategy was a product of new Pakistani military planning and the perceived weakness of the new Indian Prime Minister. The attack of guerilla troops in Kashmir had an objective to dislocate and disorganize the Indian army and gather the volunteers in Kashmir for waging a swift and limited war to gain significant portions of the Indian part of Kashmir. Pakistan relied on the moment of surprise and intended to achieve limited political and military objectives before the war threatened to turn into a prolonged conflict. It was also anticipated that the inexperienced Indian Prime Minister would lack the confidence to quickly intervene and stop Pakistan, as he failed during the Rann of Kutch incident.<sup>221</sup> Since, in the Pakistani view, the war did not threaten to turn into a protracted war with the intervention of superpowers, the conventional deterrence by denial could not hold.

In the case of the 1965 war, the assessment of the Pakistani concern over the threat of *conventional punishment* is closely related to Pakistan's and India's military strategy. Indian strategy towards Pakistan in the mid-1960s was based on the principle of conventional punishment. Since the 1950s, New Delhi expected the limited Pakistani attack in the Kashmir area, and it formulated its deterrent strategy based on the belief that the Indian response against major Pakistani cities close to the border with India would deter Islamabad from such an attack.<sup>222</sup> The warnings about the possible Indian retaliation following Pakistani aggression were made regularly. For instance, during the Rann of Kutch incident, Prime Minister Shastri declared that the continuation of aggressive Pakistani activities would be punished. This threat was later expanded by the Indian Minister of Defense, who confirmed India's defense preparedness and the resolve to deploy the troops, which can inflict substantial damage on Pakistan.<sup>223</sup> Applying Huntington's conceptualization of conventional deterrence by punishment, three requirements must be fulfilled. In the case of the 1965 war, two requirements were undoubtedly met. India knew what Pakistan deems valuable, and it could mount the counterattack. Concerning the credibility requirement, India warned Pakistan several times by its resolve to respond to aggression. However, it is questionable to what degree these threats were perceived as credible by Pakistan. In Pakistan's view, the Indian deterrent credibility was

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>221</sup> Paul, "Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers," 111-113; Ganguly, "Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965," 87.

<sup>222</sup> Paul, "Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers," 108.

<sup>223</sup> Ganguly, "Deterrence failure revisited: The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965," 79-80.

hampered by three factors. Firstly, by the Indian lack of resolve for decisive action during the Rann of Kutch incident. Secondly, Pakistan leaders believed in the qualitative superiority of its weaponry in the limited war. Lastly, even the Indian military officials were not confident about Indian military capabilities in the short run.<sup>224</sup> As it is evident, the threat of conventional punishment was, for several reasons, not seen as credible, and therefore Pakistan could hardly be deterred by the Indian retaliation.

The decision-making apparatus of Pakistan in the mid-1960s was composed of a small group of civilian and military officials with a high degree of influence over President Ayub Khan. Before the 1965 war, the critical shifts in the internal power had occurred that later facilitated the Pakistani resort to military action. One of the most significant shifts was the appointment of the political hawk, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, to the office of Foreign Minister in 1963. As a head of foreign policy, he pursued a strategy of rapprochement with China and a hardline position on the Kashmir issue and India's claim.<sup>225</sup> Bhutto, who was a strong supporter of the military action in 1965, urged President Ayub Khan to pursue a policy of confrontation and to order an attack the soonest possible while India is still recovering from the 1962 defeat. In the end, it was primarily Foreign Minister Bhutto and General Akhtar Malik, who designed the provocation in the Rann of Kutch from April 1964 and subsequent guerrilla intrusions in Kashmir.<sup>226</sup> Bhutto's forceful and gradual strategy of convincing ultimately persuaded the President and the whole inner circle within the decision-making apparatus about the wisdom and utility of taking military action against India, according to Bhutto and Malik's plan. At the time of the attack, there were no influential voices against the action, and the inner circle of the decision-making apparatus was in consensus.

The *alliance politics* is the second of the two non-military factors to analyze. As the evidence suggests, the assessment of the potential support for the attack from allies and the speculation about the reactions of the defender's allies played an important role before the 1965 war. In respect to the Pakistani alliance politics, the most significant change occurred following the Indian defeat in the Sino-Indian war of 1962. As it was mentioned in the previous subchapter, by the late 1950s, Pakistan started to be anxious about the possible Chinese invasion of India and the spillover of the conflict to Pakistan. To avoid this scenario, Pakistan had tried to form a defense pact with India against the possible Chinese cross-border intrusions, but the

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<sup>224</sup> Paul, "Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers," 109.

<sup>225</sup> Salmaan Taseer, *Bhutto: A Political Biography* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1980) 54.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

effort went in vain. Between 1960 and 1965, as part of the Pakistani strategy of containment of India, the strengthening of the relationship with China became one of the foreign policy priorities. It was the strategic calculus from Pakistan that reflected the changing alliance configuration caused by the increasing strains in the U.S.-Pakistan relations and the overall low-key interest of the U.S. in the region. By 1963, the normal neighborly relations evolved in a strategic alliance, when China declared the commitment to defend Pakistan whenever it would be necessary.<sup>227</sup> The rapprochement was further manifested by the border agreement from 1964. The skirmish in the Rann of Kutch in April 1965 and associated Chinese full support of Pakistan provided Islamabad with the presumption that in the case of the next war with India, China would stand behind Pakistan.<sup>228</sup> The right constellation of relations with China and the anticipation of its defensive stance in the case of the war with India, certainly played the role when Pakistan calculated the attack. The positions of other external powers and potential allies in the conflict were not relevant, with the only exception of the Soviet Union. Since the first war in Kashmir, the Soviets were firmly behind India and supported its claim on the Kashmir issue at the U.N. <sup>229</sup> However, since the early 1960s, when India approached the West for economic and military aid war, the Soviet Union has begun to shift to a neutral stance regarding the Kashmir dispute. Parallely, the Soviet-Pakistan relations began to improve, which was apparent during the incident in the Rann of Kutch when Soviets took a neutral stance. Successful Ayub's visit to Moscow in April 1964 further assured Pakistan that in case of the war with India, the Soviet Union would remain neutral, and consequently, India would be isolated from any significant external support.<sup>230</sup>

To sum up the findings of the analysis, the importance of latent nuclear deterrence in the prevention of the conflict is once more questionable. Contrary to Fuhrmann's assumption, the master's thesis presumes that the requirements for the successful latent nuclear deterrence were met. Nevertheless, the Indian nuclear latency did not constitute a concern for Pakistani leadership when contemplating the attack. The empirical evidence suggests that the perceived lack of Indian credibility to deter, the pursued strategy of limited aims and partial qualitative

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<sup>227</sup> Paul, "Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers," 118.

<sup>228</sup> Arthur A. Stahnke, "Diplomatic Triangle: China's Policies Toward India and Pakistan in the 1960s," in Jerome Alan Cohen (ed.), *The Dynamics of China's Foreign Relations* (Harvard: Harvard University Asia Center, 1970) 27-28.

<sup>229</sup> Paul, "Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers," 119.

<sup>230</sup> G.W. Choudhury, *Pakistan's Relations with India 1947-1966* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968) 277-278.

superiority of weaponry, the potential Chinese support and Soviet inaction, and the full consensus in the decision-making apparatus contributed to the decision to attack.

## **5 Conclusion**

The master's thesis presented and discussed a concept of latent nuclear deterrence and assessed its potential impact on the prevention of the conflict. In recent years, some of the scholars began to promote the state of nuclear latency and virtual nuclear arsenals as a possible way to ensure the security of the state and, at the same time to promote the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In their view, the mere possibility that the state will proliferate in the future and possibly retaliate can, under several circumstances, deter any aggression. Matthew Fuhrmann accounts for one of the proponents, and his conceptualization of the latent nuclear deterrence was the central theoretical underpinning for the thesis. According to his quantitative research, nuclear latency and its deterring effects were in several historical crises responsible for the decision of the challenger to refrain from the attack and nuclear latency, in general, considerably increases the probability that the latent nuclear state would not be attacked.

As it was formulated in the introduction, the research aim of the thesis was to uncover the relations between nuclear latency, deterrence and the prevention of the conflict and assess to what degree can be latent nuclear deterrence attributed to deterring the aggression. In order to come to the relevant outcome, the thesis operated, apart from latent nuclear deterrence, with other possible explanations for the prevention of the conflict. All of which have been presented in the theoretical part of the thesis. The selection of the historical cases for the empirical part was partly based on the article by Matthew Fuhrmann. In his article, Fuhrmann mentions that both India and Pakistan were latent nuclear states at some point in their history and that both states somehow engaged against each other while having this capacity. Furthermore, he mentions the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war explicitly as one of the few failures of latent nuclear deterrence. For these reasons, the master's thesis used two historical case studies of crises between India and Pakistan as the empirical part. The first case was the 1980s crises with Pakistan as a latent nuclear state, and the second case was the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war, with India having the latent nuclear capacity. The latter of the cases worked as a control case study since the nuclear latency did not stop the challenging state from attacking the deterrer.

The final part of the thesis, the analysis of the respective historical case studies, offered valuable findings regarding the role of latent nuclear deterrence in preventing the conflict.

Concerning the first case study devoted to the two crises from the 1980s, the assumption forwarded by Fuhrmann and based on the understanding of latent nuclear deterrence was that India would be deterred from attacking Pakistan due to the Pakistani latent nuclear capacity. Indeed, without the in-depth analysis of the crises and all possible explanations, the scholar might be tempted to assume the previously stated. However, the split of the case study of both of the crises, according to the conceptual framework of the thesis, illuminated the actual role and degree of influence of each explanation. The primary role of latent nuclear deterrence in preventing the conflict cannot be supported by the available empirical evidence, and the analysis suggests that the threat of conventional retaliation seems like the best probable explanation of the challenger refraining from the attack.

The second historical case study was included in the analysis since, according to Fuhrmann, this case represents a failure of latent nuclear deterrence. According to him, in this case, not all requirements for successful deterrence were met. Thus, for the purpose of the master's thesis, it could serve as a control case study for a better understanding of the validity and applicability of the outcome of the 1980s case study. The findings of the analysis of the control case contradict Fuhrmann's assumption and further uncover the limitations of the concept of latent nuclear deterrence. Contrary to Fuhrmann's findings, the thesis suggests that the requirements for successful latent nuclear deterrence were met. Furthermore, it shows that the defender's nuclear latent capacity was not a concern to the challenger when the attack was contemplated. What instead impacted the decision-makers was the prospect of successful limited aims campaign, which would result in the Pakistani victory. Additionally, also the favorable constellation of alliances convinced Pakistani leadership of the feasibility of quick and successful war.

To sum up the findings of the master's thesis, the contradiction with the Fuhrmann's assumptions is evident. Contrary to what the advocates of nuclear latency believe, latent nuclear deterrence does not prove as a significant factor in the prevention of the conflict. Both of the cases show that the prospect of an opponent's future nuclearization did not play a role when the challenging state was deciding to attack. Instead, the evidence suggests that conventional deterrence in its various forms was the central factor for the decision-making process.



## Summary

The findings of the master's thesis reveal interesting insights concerning the relevancy of nuclear latency in the context of an impending conflict. The research goal of the thesis was to analyze to what extent can latent nuclear deterrence considered as the main factor in dissuading one state from attacking the other one. The thesis also examined if there are other military or non-military factors that can be accounted for the prevention of conflict. The relevancy of each of the factors was explored using two historical case studies of two different crisis scenarios between India and Pakistan.

The analysis of both of the historical case studies showed that latent nuclear deterrence could not be considered as a relevant factor influencing the decision-makers of the challenging state. The empirical evidence suggested that the latent nuclear capacity of the deterring state and the threat of the possible nuclearization as a response to an attack were not contemplated in either of the cases. Instead, it is apparent that the threat of conventional retaliation against valuable assets of challenging state and the type of the strategy of conventional attack employed by the challenger were the most impacting factors.

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Diploma thesis project

# Nuclear latency and the problem of deterrence



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Study programme: Security Studies  
Year of project submission: 2019

## 1) Introduction to the topic and the research target of the diploma thesis

Between the years 1940 and 2012, there have existed 32 countries with the capacity to pursue a nuclear weapon. Only 10 of them crossed the “line” and became nuclear-armed countries. The rest of them either stopped to pursue nuclear capacity or decided to stay nuclear latent. The latter group should not be by any means overlooked since these countries are now the closest to build the nuclear weapon and may in the future expand the ranks of the “Nuclear Club”.

Briefly defined, nuclear latency refers to the state’s possession of either highly enriched uranium or plutonium. In other words, states that are considered nuclear latent, are capable of building a nuclear weapon in the foreseeable future.<sup>231</sup>

The phenomenon of nuclear latency itself cannot be considered as an extensively examined topic in the realm of international security studies. The scholarly research on this topic is rather limited and quite often imperfect compared to the academic work that has been done on nuclear weapons, proliferation, or other major phenomena connected to the nuclear world. However, the research that has been conducted on nuclear latency stressed its importance and called for more academic work that can be done and that can contribute to the overall understanding of the concept and of its implications for international security.

My diploma thesis will attempt to contribute by examining the links between nuclear latency and the ability to avert the conflict. The potential impact of latent nuclear capacity on the prevention of the war has already been studied, most notably in work by Matthew Fuhrmann presented in the article *The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence* from 2018. However, in my opinion, the way Fuhrmann approaches the problem is not ideal, and the conclusion of his work is not sufficiently convincing. He does pay a little attention to the alternative explanations of preventing the conflict, and the confounding variables that he distinguishes as factors that influence both nuclear latency and conflict are, in my opinion, not appropriately selected. Therefore, I believe that my diploma thesis can serve as an alternative explanation for specific questions that Fuhrmann has raised by his research.

Contrary to his quantitative study of the connection between nuclear latency and the occurrence of war in each state’s history, my qualitative research examines and compares hostile dyads composed of challenger and latent nuclear deterrer. Using a rich theoretical background, the diploma thesis looks for similarities and differences between the historical

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<sup>231</sup> Rachel Elizabeth Whitlark and Rupal N. Mehta, Hedging Our Bets: Why Does Nuclear Latency Matter, *The Washington Quarterly* 42/1 (2019), 1.

cases and evaluates the actual contribution of nuclear latency for the prevention of the conflict. This way, no other possible factors are omitted from the analysis.

## 2) Literature review

The starting point for every scholar interested in nuclear latency and latent nuclear deterrence should be two works by Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach: *Almost Nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency dataset* from 2015 and *The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence* from 2018. The former is very valuable work for scholars interested in quantitative research since it has firstly introduced the Nuclear Latency dataset. The authors also provide the first empirical application of the dataset, to demonstrate the connection between nuclear latency and international conflict and to conclude that having the nuclear latent capacity may provide deterrence benefits. The latter article builds upon the same assumption about the implications of nuclear latency and it introduces the concept of latent nuclear deterrence. However, the authors admit that nuclear latency cannot prevent conflict in every possible scenario and they present a set of requirements for latency to success.

In addition to these academic pieces, few other works concerned about the connection between nuclear latency and conflict are worth mentioning here: chapter by Michael C. Horowitz *Nuclear Power and militarized conflict: Is there a link?* in a book *The Nuclear Renaissance and International Security* by M. Fuhrmann and AN Stulberg or the article *Hedging our bets: Why does Nuclear Latency Matter* by Rachel Elizabeth Whitlark and Rupal N. Mehta. In the former academic piece, Horowitz finds that there is a connection between having a nuclear program for the purpose of acquiring weapons and participation in the militarized conflicts. In the latter article, Whitlark and Mehta point to the observation that drivers for nuclear latency are largely security-based as alliances or enduring rivalries. However, the authors are, at the same time, rather skeptical about the deterrent benefits of the latency and refer to their own research.<sup>232</sup>

The topic of nuclear latency is also central to Tristian A. Volpe whose attention is mainly focused on the use of nuclear latent capacity as a bargaining chip and on the integration of nuclear latency into the coercive strategies. These articles fairly comprehensively present his findings: *Atomic Leverage: Compellence with Nuclear Latency* from 2017 and *Atomic*

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<sup>232</sup> Rachel Elizabeth Whitlark and Rupal N. Mehta, *Hedging our bets: Why does Nuclear Latency Matter*, *The Washington Quarterly* 42/1 (2019), 46.

*Inducements: The Case for 'Buying out' Nuclear Latency* from 2016. In the context of nuclear latency and the conflict, the author mainly focuses on the use of nuclear latency as a tool of compellence. The author notes that nuclear latency can prevent a conflict, but in a different way that Fuhrmann assumes. Volpe denotes that nuclear latency can rather serve as a bargaining chip in negotiations which in the end lead to averting the attack, than as a threat of future nuclear retaliation.

The concept of nuclear deterrence without the actual possession weapons was also a topic of one of the articles of influential scholar Kenneth Waltz. In his work *Thoughts about virtual nuclear arsenals*, Waltz unpacks the logic behind the virtual nuclear capacity and concludes that nuclear latency would provoke clandestine armament rather than deterrent impact. He calls nuclear latent force a “shaky deterrent”.<sup>233</sup>

The theoretical part, as is presented in the next part of the project, is very rich in theoretical and conceptual underpinnings, therefore the wide variety of literature used in the diploma thesis is beyond the description on these pages. From all the authors, I would like to mention the following ones: Scott D. Sagan, Robert Jervis, Vipin Narang, Robert Powell, James Acton, T.V. Paul, Dong-Joon Jo, Erik Gartzke, Ariel E. Levite.

The empirical part is the most demanding in terms of bibliography and it consists of both primary and secondary literature. Each of the historical cases has its own list of references carefully compiled from the most relevant sources available to the academic community.

### **3) Conceptual and theoretical framework**

The theoretical part of the diploma thesis introduces 6 concepts/factors which are employed in each of the 5 conflict dyads of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The variety of concepts represent factors that could help prevent the outbreak of the conflict in respective dyads. The main attention of the paper is focused on two concepts, which even form the title of the thesis: *nuclear latency* and *deterrence*.

Nuclear latency, which was already presented in the introduction part, is the concept that has been employed in various international security-oriented academic articles, yet despite the importance and empirical prevalence, scholars instead largely focused on the optimist-pessimist debate and the consequences of the proliferation.

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<sup>233</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Thoughts about virtual nuclear arsenals*, *The Washington Quarterly* 20/3 (1997), 155.

On the contrary, deterrence has been central to international security studies since World War II and has been especially studied in relation to nuclear weapons and their role as a tool of punishment. However, in the diploma thesis, I employ the logic of deterrence in a different form, as a deterrence without the bombs – so-called *latent nuclear deterrence*. This concept which is crucial for the paper has been studied in the international relations academia quite rarely, therefore the knowledge about the phenomenon is quite limited and even less has been researched about its actual impact on preventing the conflicts between challenger and latent nuclear power. Probably, the most significant exception of the study of the efficacy of latent nuclear deterrence is the quantitative research done by Matthew Fuhrmann and presented in the article: *The Logic of Nuclear Deterrence*. There he laid out 5 requirements which state has to fulfill for successful latent nuclear deterrence. This diploma thesis uses them, likewise, as a tool for assessing the capability of latent nuclear deterrence

Another important concept presented and examined in my work is the *conventional deterrence* in relation to *regional conventional capabilities* of both challenger and latent nuclear deterrer. Diploma thesis does not only focus on mere numerical superiority but it also takes into account the technological superiority of the forces deployed in the region.

These two military factors are followed by several non-military components that can serve as a possible explanation of preventing the conflict. The first factor is *the alliance politics*. It may happen that the allies of the challenger are not willing to support the challenger in the attack on the deterrer. Therefore, their disapproval might prevent the attack or at least partly contribute to the change of plans.

The second non-military factor discussed in the thesis is the *level of consensus in the decision-making apparatus*. Whether the government of the challenger came from the fair democratic election or whether the state is ruled by a dictator, the decision of attacking another country is discussed and decided in a wider circle which can be composed by any power group or individuals within the state (e.g. military, secret services, political party).

The last concept presented and applied in the empirical part is *international legitimacy*. From the constructivist point of view, this is a very important concept that should not be omitted. Since not only the self-interests of the state determine its actions in international politics, we should also take into consideration that international actors sometimes obey the rules just because they sense that it is the way how they are supposed to behave in the international environment. This sense may vary depending on the actor. Some actors tend to be more aware of certain unwritten rules than the others.

#### 4) Empirical data and analytical technique

Since the diploma thesis employs a method of comparative historical case study, the selection of the cases analyzed in the empirical part is crucial for the successful research of the topic. Case selection was partly based on the quantitative research on the relationship between latent nuclear powers and deterrence conducted by Matthew Fuhrmann. As was mentioned in the introductory part, this paper embraces assumptions about nuclear latency that goes against the findings of Fuhrmann's work, therefore the selection was to some extent based upon the cases of conflict dyads that in Fuhrmann's view most strongly supports his hypothesis that *"...developing nuclear latency lowers the likelihood that a state will be targeted in violent military disputes."*<sup>234</sup>

Among the cases which Fuhrmann mentions in his work and which represents conflict dyads between the challenger and latent nuclear deterrer, the diploma thesis examines the following:

- USA vs. China in the early 1960s
- India vs. Pakistan in the 1980s
- USA vs. North Korea in the early 1990s
- USA vs. Iran in the 2010s

Apart from the cases that in Fuhrmann's view support his research, the author distinguishes also failures of latent nuclear deterrence that do not correspond with his assumptions. In his view, the failure is determined when states do not meet 5 requirements for successful latent nuclear deterrence. The diploma thesis examines one of these "failure" examples and analyses if it is possible that there can more explanations than just the aforementioned one.

- Pakistan vs. India in 1965

Another important aspect that also played the role when the selection has been made, was that the cases should cover most of the time period since the end of World War II until the present time. In addition, the availability of the sources was also taken into account.

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<sup>234</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann, *The Logic of Latent Nuclear Deterrence* (2017), available at [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3052231](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3052231), 2.

## 5) Planned thesis outline

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Literature review

### 2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

- 2.2 Case selection

### 3. USA vs. China in the early 1960s

### 4. India vs. Pakistan in the 1980s

### 5. USA vs. North Korea in the early 1990s

### 6. USA vs. Iran in the 2010s

### 7. Pakistan vs. India in 1965

### 8. Conclusion

## Preview of the bibliography

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