

BRAHMOS INCIDENT: INADVERTENT ESCALATION AND CRISIS STABILITY IN PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The BrahMos missile incident of 2022 and its implications for crisis stability in South Asia are the core of this paper. Departing from the common explanation of misfiring due to technical malfunction, this paper explores the possibility that the firing of the dual-capable BrahMos cruise missile in Pakistani territory may be a part of deliberate strategic signalling or an attempt to evaluate Pakistan's preparedness and deterrence response. This paper evaluates this incident under the broader India-Pakistan security dilemma, arguing that even unintended military actions such as this incident between two nuclear-armed states can pose serious risks of misperception, inadvertent escalation, and crisis instability. This paper examines how technological advancements in missile delivery systems, defence programs, and evolving military doctrines have increased the strategic competition in South Asia. The paper dives into scenario-based analysis, keeping under analysis the normalization of the use of limited force under nuclear threshold. It also explores the possibility of deterrence failure due to ideological extremism, weak or almost no communication mechanisms, and historical mistrust between India and Pakistan. The paper argues that testing of operational thresholds may lead to a gradual undermining of deterrence stability and increase the risks of inadvertent crisis escalation. There is a need to institutionalize effective risk reduction measures and reinforce strategic stability frameworks.

KEYWORDS: BrahMos firing (2022), Crisis Stability in South Asia, Pakistan-India Relations, Deterrence, Escalation Risks.

INTRODUCTION

An Indian BrahMos class, dual-capable cruise missile crashed on the Pakistani territory near Mian Channu, Khanewal district at 18:43:43 PST. This became a reason for major concern when that high-speed flying object took a turn in the northwest direction and crossed the India-Pakistan border at 18:46:45 PST. The security paradox of Indo-Pak relations with security dilemma always in play, made the situation even more threatening for global peace and security of the world when the "[BrahMos] missile traveled at Mach 3 - three times the speed of sound - at an altitude of 12,000m (40,000ft) and flew 124km (77 miles) in Pakistani airspace before crashing" (BBC, 2022) at Mian Channu. The alleged

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accidental firing of the Indian BrahMos missile on 9 March 2022 highlighted the vulnerability of crisis stability between Pakistan and India, raising concerns over future escalation in case of such an accident even when the situation does not evolve into a crisis (Krepon & Thompson, 2013). The BrahMos is an Indian nuclear-capable supersonic cruise missile; although it carried no warheads, it was reported that it penetrated 124 km inside Pakistan's territory near Mian Channu (DAWN, 2022).

While India failed to inform Pakistan regarding the misfiring of its projectile, this raised questions regarding the Indian missile safety protocols and was tagged as a flagrant violation of Pakistan's airspace. Following the delayed Indian official response termed it a technical malfunction (Pandit, 2022), Pakistan called for a joint probe, showed tactical readiness and demonstrated strategic restraint. However, this incident fueled speculation about the intentions to test Pakistan's air defence systems. This incident highlighted the need to have a risk reduction mechanism, improve the official channels of communication and confidence-building measures between Pakistan and India. Furthermore, the May 2025 Indo-Pak crisis highlighted how fragile nuclear deterrence is in South Asia; it was a demonstration of how even a limited conventional crisis between nuclear states has the potential of rapid escalation. The risk of miscalculation could have led to the failure of nuclear deterrence (Clary, 2025). This incident, together with the BrahMos missile firing in 2022, shows that without sustainable confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan, deterrence can be easily undermined (McClafferty, 2026). The May 2025 crisis tested the limits of conventional-level exchanges between the two nuclear neighbors, demonstrating how such exchanges can spiral. The BrahMos incident of 2022 is proof that technical malfunction and poor communication are risky. Therefore, it is evident that the absence of sustainable CBMs and crisis communication makes deterrence stability in the region vulnerable.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT IN DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Technological advancement has become one of the major factors that can disturb the existing balance of power in South Asia. The conventional arms race between India and Pakistan has tightened the rope of the balance of power that had kept a major conflict at bay. Although several times, both countries came to blows, the rational deterrence and the presence of a balance of terror (Sagan & Waltz, 1995) averted any major conflicts post-1998, including the Kargil Crisis (Riedel, 2002), 2001 Standoff (Ganguly & Hagerty, 2006), 2008 Standoff, Uri and Pathankot 2015, Pulwama-Balakot Crisis (Indian Army, DGM, 2016; ISPR, 2016), and May 2025 crisis (Clary, 2025). The stability of the strategic balance favors Pakistan. However, a disturbance in the balance of power status quo does not suit India's designs of becoming a regional hegemon. This intended disruption in the existing balance of power arises because instability in the status quo always serves the designs of the nation-states that are geographically, militarily, and economically more advanced than those states which lacked advancement in these areas.

The weaker states always find themselves in a never-ending competition with the conventionally bigger and more powerful states for survival. Pakistan developed nuclear weapons to counter the conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan, as historically "India has possessed a more sophisticated and advanced conventional force than Pakistan"

(Dalton & Krepon, 2015). However, since 1998, Pakistan has progressively introduced paradigm shifts in its conventional warfighting posture rather than resorting immediately to the nuclear option. Even its deployment of tactical nuclear weapons reflects a calibrated approach aligned with strategic restraint, despite the absence of a formal No First Use (NFU) commitment (Khan, 2012). This means that Pakistan's nuclear weapons as a counterweight to strategic balance in the region. Table 1 presents a closer look at the development of India and Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, nuclear fissile material, and building up effective and efficient delivery systems from 2007 to 2017. This development never ceased, and both countries never stopped competing.³

Pakistan						India				
Nuclear arsenal	SIPRI (2007)	FAS (2007)	BAS (2007)	ACA (2017)	NTI (2017)	SIPRI (2007)	FAS (2007)	BAS (2007)	AC (2017)	NTI (2017)
Nuclear weapons	130-140	120-130	130-140	140	130-140	120-130	110-120	120-130	130-140	110-120
Fissile material (tons)	3.1 ± 0.4 (HEU)	3.1 (HEU)	3.1 (HEU) & 0.19 (Pu)	0.4 \$ 0.19 (Pu)	3.1 ± 0.4 (HEU) & 0.2 Pu	3.2 ± 1.1 (Pu)	120 0.6 (Pu)	130 0.6 (Pu)	9 ± 0.2 (Pu)	0.59 ± 0.18 (Pu) & 3.2 ± 0.9 (HEU)

Table 1

Source: The estimates for nuclear warheads and fissile material tons are derived from multiple sources as indicated in the column headers. SIPRI 2007 data from Kile, Fedchenko, and Kristensen (2007); FAS 2007 and BAS 2007 data from Kristensen and Norris (2007a, 2007b); ACA 2017 data from Arms Control Association (2017); NTI 2017 data from Rathore and Mayank (2017).

The involvement of missiles and emerging technology has increased the complexity of the regional security environment, which has increased concerns about an arms race in delivery means and capabilities. As opposed to continuous advancements, the CBMs between India and Pakistan have not evolved. There is a need to focus on regional confidence-building measures regarding arms control. Regional mechanisms such as arms limitation agreements, restraint, and transparency protocols, if established, would mitigate the risk of

³ This selected timeframe captures the development of key missile systems, doctrinal shifts, and technological advancements that shaped the contemporary deterrence environment before the 2022 BrahMos incident. Rather than serving as a continuously updated quantitative inventory, the table is intended to provide a historical and comparative framework for understanding long-term trends in the regional strategic balance.

miscalculation and could lead to deterrence stability. This will ensure safety protocols at one end, and on the other end, it will smooth the way for Pakistan's responsible nuclear stewardship of weapons and advance its inclusion in the mainstream nuclear community (Dalton & Krepon, 2015). The BrahMos incident can be analyzed by exploring possibilities, scenarios and outcomes if inadvertent miscalculation results in the failure of nuclear deterrence.

POSSIBILITIES, SCENARIOS, AND OUTCOMES IN THE FAILURE OF DETERRENCE BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND INDIA: ANALYZING THE BRAHMOS MISADVENTURE

P1: INTENDED STRIKE FOLLOWING THE ANTI-PAKISTAN SENTIMENTS

If India intended to test the waters, assess its trajectory of possible responses, evaluate Pakistan's Q-9/P HIMADS High to Medium Air Defence System (Dawn, 2021), and gauge its readiness, it might have obtained the required results. One analyst noted that "Incidents such as these indicate that the Hindu extremist government currently ruling India and its unprofessional military cannot be trusted with such lethal missile technology" (Bilal, 2022). There has been a historical development of anti-Muslim sentiments during the Modi government vis-à-vis anti-Pakistan narrative, rhetoric, and policies. The same anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistani mindset may have had its bearing on the BrahMos misadventure, crashing into Pakistan's territory. The past few years have witnessed how the Modi-led BJP government victimized the Muslims and how it managed to stir up the Hindu sentiments to enrage them against the Muslims of India. As Bhatti and Sundar (2020- argue, "[U]sing the riots which took place in Delhi in the last two weeks of February 2020, in which Muslims were the primary target, and the Covid-19 lockdown from March 2020 onwards, the Narendra Modi-led BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) government has managed to criminalize protest.

Anti-terror charges have been filed against student leaders, and Islamophobia has once again become the dominant narrative" (Bhatti & Sundar, n,d). The BrahMos strike, nevertheless, can be regarded as a link in a chain of anti-Muslim sentiments to stir up the existing strategic balance in South Asia. Modi's hatred against the Muslims of India reached its peak when Narendra Modi was elected India's Prime Minister (Shamshad & Arshad, 2020) with inhumane murders and the butchering of Muslims during the Gujarat riots. He launched different, multi-pronged strategies to target Muslims living in India. His anti-Muslim sentiments, extremist approach, intolerance against the Muslims, and bias towards the Hindutva are no secret. "After the Gujarat riots, international human rights organizations, media channels, and newspapers condemned Modi's religious-based act of violence" (Shamshad & Arshad, 2020). According to the same authors, he "instructed his administration to practice the ideology of his parent body, RSS, to haunt the Muslims until they leave India (Shamshad & Arshad, 2020). Given his overt hatred against Muslims, the BrahMos attack on Pakistan cannot and should not be ignored under the guise of India's claimed "technical error" and later 'human error' Pakistan, however, on the other hand, despite being criticized constantly over safety and security concerns from the international community, reacted maturely by not retaliating or perceiving it as an overt attack on Pakistan.

The reason behind the misfiring of BrahMos can be the rogue and extremist elements in the India that wanted to strike Pakistan with a BrahMos cruise missile, expecting a severe and retaliatory response from Pakistan that would give India a moral upper hand and a justification to intensify the conflict and exert pressure from the international community to de-link Pakistan's nuclear development from India's arsenal growth. However, contrary to what some Indian media and institutions claimed, Pakistan took due time to assess the situation before making it public and did not resort to war hysteria and jingoism towards India (Fakhar, 2022). Surprisingly, the international response regarding the safety and the security of the Indian nuclear program and its delivery system did not raise any concern, which is alarming and demands serious attention by the international community because of the increasing frequency of incidents. "The indifferent attitude of the international community towards India's weak nuclear safety mechanism and other nuclear matters demands urgent attention. For instance, multiple episodes of uranium theft have taken place in India" (Iqbal, 2022).

S1: ATTACK ON PAKISTAN TO CRIPPLE ITS DETERRENT CAPABILITY

India's accidental BrahMos missile launch raised fears that Pakistan might misinterpret it as an offensive strike and retaliate with tactical nuclear weapons, risking catastrophic escalation. Though India denied conspiracy claims, the incident underscored how miscalculation could have gravely undermined deterrence stability in South Asia. The BrahMos misfire highlighted how rational deterrence could fail amid rising extremism in India and instability in Pakistan, creating conditions ripe for miscalculation. Under Modi's BJP, Hindu nationalism has reshaped India's civil-military outlook, raising suspicions that rogue elements might exploit such incidents to trigger conflict.

O1: ABSENCE OF RATIONAL DETERRENCE LEADS TO STRATEGIC IMBALANCE

The BrahMos incident revealed how India's extremist Hindutva-driven command structures, combined with Pakistan's instability, could turn miscalculation into nuclear conflict, placing both regional and global security at grave risk. There can be a risk of failure of deterrence theory under the leadership of Narendra Modi because of the historical development in anti-Muslim rhetoric, the spike in incidents that could instigate Pakistan to react with force, and his risk-prone and gain-maximizing personality traits. All these variables can compel the hand of the leadership in Pakistan, whose history, socio-political, geographic, and economic constraints have crafted its society and its leadership in developing personality traits like risk-averse and loss-minimizing types. This can be one of the reasons Pakistan did not retaliate or launch its countermeasures and justify its 'first use' nuclear doctrine. Another reason that sheds light on the maturity of Pakistan's leadership, its armed forces, and strategic community prohibited any reactionary retaliation that could have triggered a heated nuclear conflict. However, PAF claimed that they had been monitoring the BrahMos trajectory from the time it became airborne (Baig, 2022). The Hindutva and the anti-Muslim sentiments can also be traced in Indian governmental policies, which have risen at an alarming rate. If these sentiments are prevalent in Indian society, then there are high chances that these extremist sentiments, indoctrinated by the

Modi government itself, will sweep into the Indian army and, more importantly, into the C2 structures, who are responsible for the safety and security of the Indian nuclear arsenal.

P2: EXPLORATORY STRIKE TO MEASURE THE CREDIBILITY OF PAKISTAN'S DETERRENT AND MISSILE DEFENSE

The second possibility of crashing BrahMos, in Pakistan's territory, when Ukraine was the center of attention for the whole world, can be an effort to measure the credibility of Pakistan's deterrent and its missile defense systems. However, Pakistan's reaction and non-retaliation would have left Indian defense managers in a state of uncertainty. The reaction that Pakistan showed is critical to the study of the BrahMos misadventure. The deterrent capability is still intact, as Pakistan chose not to retaliate with its Babur cruise missile system (a ground-launched cruise missile with nuclear-capable variants and left a blank space for the Indians to contemplate the possibilities of the potential outcomes of the non-engagement policy of Pakistan in a drastic event like crashing a supersonic nuclear-capable missile in Pakistan's territory. Especially the type and the nature of the missile that crashed in Pakistan are significant to justify this possibility. Taking into consideration the advancement in technology, weaponry, and craftsmanship in collaboration of Russia, it is unlikely that it underwent and surpassed all the safety and security protocols associated with the maintenance of nuclear weapons and its delivery systems. India would get a valid and moral justification to retaliate with massive force if Pakistan had chosen an active-retaliation policy to stir the strategic balance in the region, viz-a-viz the balance of terror by attacking the airfields and the strategic installations in Pakistan.

S2: NORMALISATION OF INCIDENTS LIKE BRAHMOS AND SURGICAL STRIKES ON PAKISTAN'S TERRITORIES

The ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict and its implications for the South Asian region alarmed India and provided it with opportunities at the same time to take steps to pilot its BrahMos missile in a real-time situation and measure the Pakistani response. It was a significant step in pursuing the Cold Start doctrine in case of escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and involved the global key players. India's shift from CSD to Dynamic Response Strategy reflects a shift towards multidomain, flexible escalation management (Haider, 2025). This can be compared to Russia's strategy in Ukraine, where global players like NATO, the US, and China have been shaping the escalation threshold and deterrence dynamics (Kofman & Lee, 2022). Both cases are proof that doctrinal shifts are influenced by adversary responses, nuclear overhang, and involvement of extra-regional powers. Knowing Pakistan's response, its deterrent capability, and the time it could take to neutralize or retaliate could be significant in an escalated Russia-Ukraine conflict. "Besides, the prolonged war in Ukraine may have raised the fear of nuclear strikes somewhere or the other. The role of media is also vital in critical security-related matters, including continuous media coverage to identify the risks and probability of nuclear threats emanating from Russia to Ukraine" (Iqbal, 2022). BrahMos misadventure also indicated a series of possible events that can disturb the balance of power and may lead to a conventional, asymmetric, or total war. However, because of a balance of terror, the possibility of conventional or total war has diminished, which has fueled the other types of

unconventional and asymmetric warfare to counter or cripple Pakistan, from its strategic weapons to reduce Pakistan's deterrent capability.

The international situation provided India with an opportunity to build a narrative that would help justify its offensive against Pakistan. The attempt to initiate a disturbance in the existing balance of power under the guise of 'technical malfunction' or 'human error' is an attempt to entrap Pakistan into a security dilemma where retaliation will be the only option for Pakistan. It is like taking options off the table and coercing a country's policy according to the benefits of one's own national interest. This coercive model controls another country's foreign policy without using the military, economic, or both powers. India has created a new normal reflecting a strategic posture that aims to absorb risks of inadvertent escalation under the nuclear shadow. This has been the case during the BrahMos misfire in 2022 and during the May 2025 crisis. In the first case, India dismissed a technical malfunction and in the other, it normalized limited conventional exchange under nuclear signaling. Both cases are a testimony that India has been testing the credibility of deterrence and undermining strategic stability. India has been seeking to 'normalise' limited 'surgical' strikes against Pakistan. This can be observed by the increasingly aggressive posture of India and its excessive military modernization, especially for the past two decades" (Fakhar, 2022). These benign-looking incidents and misadventures have a greater impact on the psyche of the country's population and its leadership. The induction of normalcy behind incidents like BrahMos made these events look harmless for fear of starting a nuclear conflict and Mutual Assured Destruction.

O2: TREATED AS A THREAT OF A PREEMPTIVE STRIKE AGAINST PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC AND NUCLEAR FORCES

The threat of preemptive nuclear strike and nuclear retaliation, in the case of India and Pakistan, serves a significant role that has averted any major crisis in the South Asian region. Pakistan's conventional capabilities since 1998 have been a testament to its ability to show strategic restraint and adhere to an offensive-defense of its existential deterrence. The presence of nuclear weapons has deterred India's aggression. For Pakistan, weighing the conventional forces with the scale of strategic force, along with the Quid-Pro-Quo Plus strategy, has been used to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Quid-Pro-Quo plus indicates how escalation of a crisis would be choreographed. This was witnessed during the May 2025 crisis.

The BrahMos misadventure may also be perceived as an exploratory strike/operation to gauge and measure the Pakistan response if, in the future, India launches an offensive using BrahMos-class cruise missiles with a nuclear warhead attached to Pakistan's strategic sites. It can be considered a mock test, an exploratory, and a preparatory strike against Pakistan's strategic installations. However, if this unusable power, nuclear strike, loses its deterrent capability by letting India's strategic thinkers believe or perceive that Pakistan would not be able to intercept, counter, or retaliate against the Indian aggression, and India can launch its offensive with impunity under any false pretext can lead to war between India and Pakistan. According to the realist school of thought, power transition, in the case of India and Pakistan, either because of the Indo-US strategic partnership or due to the perception

that Pakistan has lost its deterrent capability, can lead to war. "Changing the balance of power in South Asia is, in fact, an act of bringing transition.

This analysis suggests that any power transition in South Asia shall disturb the balance of power in the region and may lead to war" (Bukhari & Hussain, 2015). Though the incident didn't take the shape of a full-blown crisis, there was a chance that sometimes something unexpected could happen if the only deterrent that this world knows were to fail or was not taken seriously by risk-prone and gain-maximizing leaders like Modi, who is blatantly and notoriously toying with the national security of Pakistan, which has always been on the defensive side. The BrahMos missile crashing into Pakistan's territory was not only the reason for major concerns, but also was enough to bust the myth that both countries would manage a crisis promptly. "India's and Pakistan's reactions to the incident reveal that crisis stability between South Asia's two nuclear rivals may be much less stable than previously believed" (Korda & Matt, 2022). The world's events, the economic failures and high spikes in the inflation rates, and escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict set a stage that could lead to the most serious and heinous global conflict or conflicts that this world has ever seen. This paper, however, is limited to the South Asian region, focusing on India's failure to warn Pakistan if there was an incident. BrahMos is from the cruise missile class that was developed according to India's military doctrines. Historically, "Cruise missiles were introduced in India with the test firing of BrahMos on August 12, 2001, and Babur by Pakistan on August 11, 2005" (Belal, 2015).

S3: DEVELOPING AND DEPLOYING BMDS WILL IMPACT REGIONAL STRATEGIC EQUILIBRIUM, INCREASING PAKISTAN'S OFFENSIVE MISSILES

India claims to build a Ballistic Missile Defence Shield and demonstrates its robust deployment power on the major shields in minimal time, also raising concerns for Pakistan. "Since 2007, Indian scientists have confidently claimed that they would be able to build up a deployable Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) to defend India's major cities" (DAWN, 2007). BMDS provides security and makes the security managers in India sleep well, but its deployment raises challenges for Pakistan and disturbs South Asia's security dilemma. "The deployment of BMD may provide a sense of security to the Indians, but it also contains ingredients that could magnify South Asia's security dilemma puzzle" (Jaspal, 2014). Under the light of rational deterrence, the development of BMDS practically challenges Pakistan's deterrence strategy and nuclear posture as it increases the likelihood of Indian aggression under the nuclear threshold. "Practically, however, the introduction of BMD into India's arsenal could negatively affect Pakistan's deterrence strategy" (Jaspal, 2014).

Although the deployment of BMDS does not directly affect Pakistan's security, it has some indirect implications; as such, the successful flight tests of advanced offensive missiles could diminish their impact while cutting short the deterrence credibility of Pakistan. That may fuel the existing arms race between the two countries. The deployment of BMDS encourages Pakistan to invest and develop more missiles with offensive capability to counter the Indian measures to deal with Pakistan's nuclear posture of minimum credible deterrence against aggression. The BrahMos misadventure, however, if treated as an incident in its pure sense, then the development and deployment of BMDS became relevant

with the same issue, as it gave confidence to the Indian security managers to use the pretext of an incident. Like BrahMos crashing into Pakistan's territory, it made them confident enough to counter any retaliation from Pakistan in a worst-case scenario.

O3: SLIGHT MISCALCULATIONS AND ABSENCE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN NEW DELHI AND ISLAMABAD INCREASE THE RISK OF AN ARMS RACE

The eventual consequence, even if the BrahMos incident is taken purely as an incident, would be the increase in the arms race with a fair possibility of conflict between the two countries with nuclear implications. In this scenario, the Russian nuclear signaling toward Ukraine is also a significant factor that has given India a chance to test and measure the Russian collaborative BrahMos capability in a real-time situation. The alleged incident also provided India with some critical data, but this also allowed Pakistan to look at and study the flight details of BrahMos and gave Pakistan a chance to study its schematics on a rather deep technical basis. However, the outcome of BrahMos, if taken as an incident, is not so different from the outcomes mentioned above. The eventual result will be a never-ending arms race with a greater chance of other small-scale conflicts leading to a full-blown war involving key global players. It is not distant to contemplate the eventuality of nuclear winter as the international order is shifting, dictated by national interests and national security. Nuclear conflict is no longer alien as the major players use nuclear signaling more frequently than ever to safeguard their national interests and pursue their foreign policy imperatives.

CONCLUSION

Pakistan's reaction of not reacting to or retaliating against the BrahMos firing provided Pakistan with an upper edge and some necessary information about the Indian offensive missile capacity and technology. The then DG ISPR Maj. Gen. Babar Iftikhar confirmed that it was a supersonic Indian BrahMos missile, claimed to be one of the fastest cruise missiles in the world" (Fakhar, 2022). Pakistan had actively monitored the trajectory of incoming cruise missiles and observed their course from the time of their launch to the time of their crash, also providing Pakistan with data about the flight time, maneuvering, and stealth technology associated with the flight time of the BrahMos-class cruise missile. If we assume that BrahMos was an incident due to technological failure or breakdown, then it has made Pakistan safer than before. Accidents pose a danger, but at the same time, studies show that they can also be used to make things safe. Research has confirmed this tendency by presenting supporters and opponents of a particular technology with identical descriptions of various technological breakdowns (Plous, 1991).

The results of the same study showed, "(a) supporters focused on the fact that the safeguards worked, while opponents focused on the fact that the breakdown occurred in the first place; and (b) after reading about the breakdown, supporters reported feeling that the chances of a catastrophic accident were less than previously assumed, whereas opponents reported feeling that the chances of an accident were greater than previously assumed" (Plous & Scott, n.d). The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) has succeeded only in slowing the pace of the development of missiles but has failed to halt

their spread to additional countries, mainly because of its selective application and duplicity of approach. "Additionally, cruise missile technology, with its ever-growing potential, has largely been ignored as yet, while the tricky issue of space launch vehicle (SLV) technology, with its clear potential for conversion into military uses, has yet to be resolved" (Salik, 2002). Important questions emerge from this analysis how would India have reacted if Pakistan had launched a Babur missile accidentally into Indian territory? Would the Modi administration have taken the same 'technical malfunction' approach? What would have been the American reaction and international reaction regarding the safety and security of Pakistan's strategic weapons?

The aforementioned are some important questions that need immediate attention from the policymakers and the policy practitioners in Pakistan's strategic community. Pakistan had been victimized and blamed by the international community for not taking serious and effective steps and measures to safeguard its nuclear program. The same international community showed grave concerns over the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and expressed concerns that the nuclear weapons might end up in the hands of extremists. The BrahMos misadventure is a direct indication of loopholes in the safety and security of India's nuclear and delivery systems. In a comparative analysis, India would have retaliated and considered it likely to relate it to the terrorist attack on Indian soil – the narrative that India had developed and used to defame Pakistan by categorizing it as a state sponsor of terrorism.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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