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RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE AND SOUTH ASIA: WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF MOSCOW'S NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL FOR INDIA AND PAKISTAN?

INTRODUCTION

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, accompanied by the Kremlin's nuclear blackmail, has brought the fear of deployment of atomic weapons to Europe and has increased the risk of a nuclear conflict between Moscow and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states. These developments have challenged, to some extent, the effectiveness of deterrence under the global nuclear order (Fehl, Vieluf, Hach, 2022; Harries, 2022; Joshi, 2022; Nye, 2022; Sukin, 2022; Umland, Essen, 2022), whereby countries avoid starting a nuclear war to protect their own security (Egeland, 2021). The first six months of the war in Ukraine saw Moscow issuing over 30 statements featuring nuclear rhetoric (Arndt, Horovitz, 2022) accompanied by the actions on the ground, including military exercises and a referendum in Belarus that observers dubbed "unmistakably" linked with Russia's war (*U.S. Envoy to Belarus Says...*, 2022), with Belarus voting to abandon its nonnuclear status and allow Moscow to store its nuclear weapons on Belarusian soil. These diverse acts are integral to Russia's nuclear blackmail. This paper defines such blackmail as a combination of nuclear rhetoric and coercive behaviour, designed to threaten international audiences with the potential use of nuclear weapons, thereby deterring NATO and its allies from deeper involvement in Ukraine.

While the global nuclear order has already seen, similar to the above, "rogue acts by great powers and proven its resilience" (Bollfrass, Herzog, 2022), Russia's invasion of Ukraine "will certainly shape government and public views on nuclear issues" (Bollfrass, Herzog, 2022). Accordingly, this paper does not seek to settle the debate on whether and to what extent the war has eroded the effectiveness of deterrence within the global nuclear order. Instead, it examines the implications of Russia's nuclear brinkmanship for perceptions of nuclear tensions between India and Pakistan, as well as South Asia's enduring reputation as a nuclear flashpoint, particularly since the out-

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break of the war in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Resonating with this aim, this paper employs constructivism, a theory of International Relations (IR) that emphasises the role of ideas, identities, and norms in shaping states' behaviours and world politics (Wendt, 1999). This lens is particularly valid for addressing the key question in this paper about the implications of Russia's nuclear blackmail for South Asia for the following reasons. This IR theory facilitates the analysis of how Moscow's brinkmanship may alter regional norms and behaviours regarding deterrence and escalation in South Asia and beyond. Further, constructivists' assumption that interactions with others shape states' identities helps investigate the implications of Russia's nuclear blackmail for India's and Pakistan's identities and behaviours as conflicted nuclear powers.

Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan have been engaged in a protracted conflict since their inception in 1947 and remain outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (United Nations, 1970), a key international agreement that entered into force in 1970. The NPT has been ratified by 191 states, including the five recognised nuclear-weapon states: the US, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom. However, India, Pakistan, Israel, and South Sudan have not joined the NPT, and North Korea, which initially acceded to the treaty, withdrew in 2003. Without the normative framework involving the two states in South Asia, "the possibility of a nuclear war... is small but real" (Thakur, Shetty, Sidhu, 2022). Additionally, the trajectory of the rocky India-Pakistan relationship, coupled with Pakistan's characterisation as a "terror state" with "radical Islamic movements in its midst" (Jaffrelot, 2016: 1), and the absence of a no-first-use pledge in Pakistan's nuclear doctrine – whose logic is simply, "you don't nuke me, and I won't nuke you" (Dalton, 2019) – has earned South Asia its reputation as a nuclear flashpoint. This paper sheds light on the implications of Russia's nuclear signalling for perceptions of the region, as well as India's and Pakistan's behaviours, including their responses to Moscow's nuclear blackmail, which can influence these perceptions.

Because of the region's fragile geopolitical and security dynamics, it is essential to identify whether and how India and Pakistan have reacted to the nuclear element in the war in Ukraine and what lessons these states can learn for their own identity, norms, and related behaviours as nuclear powers. This paper proceeds by first explaining how this study draws from constructivism. Second, it examines the linkages between Putin's nuclear blackmail and the nuclear tensions between India and Pakistan. Third, it presents New Delhi's and Islamabad's reactions to this blackmail. Then, it concludes by drawing lessons that India and Pakistan can learn for their stature as nuclear powers from the nuclear crisis triggered by Russia's aggression in Ukraine. While this article addresses a contemporary issue, it mainly relies on primary sources, including media and governmental websites. Limited academic literature is used to explain constructivism and South Asia's geopolitics, including the India-Pakistan relationship.

BORROWING FROM CONSTRUCTIVISM

Following the arguments that Russia's nuclear blackmail affects the global perception (Bollfrass, Herzog, 2022) and discourse (Thakur, Shetty, Sidhu, 2022) of nuclear weapons, this paper borrows from constructivism. To align with this post-positivist

theoretical approach, it emphasizes the importance of social contexts and meanings. The theme of this paper resonates with a famous observation of Alexander Wendt, a key contributor to constructivism in IR. Wendt (1995: 73) argues, “500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons.” In this observation, as Ian Hurd (2008: 298) claims, are found traces of key features of constructivism “including its critique of materialism [and] its emphasis on the social construction of interests.” Specifically, Wendt (1995) highlights that how the nuclear armed states are viewed, as “enemies” or “friends,” is more important than the size of their nuclear arsenal. Therefore, for constructivists material facts are important, but secondary to the intersubjective understandings and shared meanings that imbue these facts with significance and guide their interpretation.

Wendt’s famous observation on nuclear weapons is particularly valid in the context of South Asia. Manpreet Sethi (2024) recalls Bill Clinton, then President of the United States, labelling the region a “nuclear flashpoint” after India and Pakistan conducted their nuclear tests in May 1998. The region earned this unwanted label despite the estimated number of nuclear warheads possessed by India and Pakistan being below five each, compared to Russia and the United States, with 20,000 and 10,500 warheads respectively (Table 1) in 1998. This statement reflected Washington’s perception of the region as “the most dangerous place in the world” (Sethi, 2024) driven by concerns over the potential for nuclear escalation stemming from the Kashmir dispute. While India’s and Pakistan’s nuclear arsenals continued to lag significantly behind those of other nuclear powers (Table 1), Clinton’s statement was widely reported in the media and is frequently cited in academic literature and policy analyses discussing South Asia’s security dynamics.

Table 1

Estimated Nuclear Arsenals in 1998 and 2024

Country	Estimated Warheads (1998)	Estimated Warheads (2024)
United States	~10,500	5,244
Russia	~20,000	5,889
China	~250	500
France	~450	290
United Kingdom	~185	225
India	<5	164
Pakistan	<5	170
Israel	~80–100	90
North Korea	0–1	30–40

Sources: SIPRI (1999), *SIPRI Yearbook 1999: Armaments, Disarmament, and International Security*, Oxford University Press; SIPRI (2024), *SIPRI Yearbook 2024: Armaments, Disarmament, and International Security*, Oxford University Press.

Indeed, South Asia has been labelled as a world’s nuclear flashpoint not because of the size of the nuclear arsenals of its two regional nuclear powers, India and Pakistan, but because it is viewed through the prism of its geostrategic environment, including territorial disputes, political volatility, instability, and acts of terror committed across the India-Pakistan border (Thakur, Shetty, Sidhu, 2022).

Additionally, the constructivists' notion that international norms shape states' identities and behaviours (Finnemore, Sikkink, 1998) suggests that India and Pakistan's decision to remain outside the NPT – a normative framework designed to moderate states' nuclear behaviours – has reinforced this infamous label. At the same time, India's adoption of the no-first-use principle in its nuclear doctrine meant to enforce its image as a responsible nuclear power (Sundaram, Ramana, 2018), especially in stark contrast to Pakistan's nuclear posture. By rejecting no-first-use, Pakistan has reinforced its posture as a state whose nuclear strategy is primarily driven by survival imperatives in the face of perceived threats from India (Khan, 2012). Nevertheless, this sharp contrast between India and Pakistan to a certain degree seems superficial. Jayita Sarkar (2022: 204) suggests the opacity around India's no-first-use policy mirroring attitudes in New Delhi about the policy's limited military utility (Bajpai, 1999) and calls for its abandonment (Sundaram, Ramana, 2018).

The above arguments on South Asia's perception as the world's nuclear flashpoint, as well as India's and Pakistan's nuclear postures, illustrate that these perceptions and postures are largely shaped by the interactions between these two states and how they view each other. However, the implications of the war in Ukraine have also been highlighted, with claims that Moscow's nuclear signalling has alleviated South Asia's unique burden of being seen as the sole nuclear ignition point (Thakur, Shetty, Sidhu, 2022; Sethi, 2024). For instance, a key, though indirect, manifestation of Moscow's nuclear blackmail is Vladimir Putin's February 21, 2023 announcement to suspend Russia's participation in the New START Treaty – a bilateral arms control agreement between the US and Russia that limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550 and includes verification measures to ensure compliance (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Consequently, for the first time since the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF) – an agreement to eliminate ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers – came into force on June 1, 1988 (U.S. Department of State, 1987), the two leading nuclear powers are no longer bound by any mutually agreed norms or frameworks regulating their nuclear arsenals.

Following constructivist thought, this article emphasises the importance of identity. Constructivists argue that identities are critical in international relations because they shape how states perceive themselves, their interests, and their behaviours (Katzenstein, 1996; Wendt, 1999; Hopf, 2002). States develop their identities through their history, culture, domestic politics, and interactions with other states. This paper focuses on the latter aspect, specifically examining whether India's and Pakistan's nuclear postures and behaviours are influenced by their interactions with Russia in relation to its nuclear signalling.

WHAT ARE THE LINKAGES BETWEEN RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL AND THE NUCLEAR SITUATION IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN?

Despite South Asia's geographical distance from the war theatre in Ukraine, international relations experts have identified various links, including far-reaching analo-

gies, between Moscow's nuclear brinkmanship and the nuclear frictions in India and Pakistan. These links are listed and explained below.

1. Comparison between Russia-Ukraine and India-Pakistan. One comparison of the two country dyads turns on the standard critique of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 (Knickmeyer, Chang, 2022; Muhammad, 2022), an international agreement that provided security assurances to Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus in exchange for their decision to give up nuclear weapons inherited from the Soviet Union (United Nations, 1994). Akash Shah Muhammad (2022) of Islamabad's Strategic Vision Institute claims that – because of Pakistan's unfortunate geopolitical position and asymmetry vis-à-vis India-Pakistan would, without its nuclear weapons, end up in a situation just like Ukraine's, namely, torn apart by its massive neighbour. However, the two country dyads are situated in contrasting geopolitical and security environments, and these conditions pose challenges to the drawing of further comparisons between them. In this vein, Muhammad Ashraf (2022) from the Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS) in Islamabad has argued,

“Unlike the Russia-Ukraine scenario, this conflict-prone region [South Asia] is underpinned by nuclear deterrence that has helped diminish each adversary's war-waging potential and prevent limited military engagements from escalating into all out conventional war. The conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan has also not been as acute and decisive as the military capability differential between Ukraine and Russia.”

Interestingly, in comparing the two dyads, or more precisely, India to Russia and Pakistan to Ukraine, the Pakistani experts quoted here have not expressed solidarity with Ukraine or condemned Russia for its actions on Ukrainian soil. Regardless of the accuracy of the loose comparisons between the two country dyads, Russia's war against Ukraine could reinforce India's and Pakistan's identities as nuclear powers. Specifically, New Delhi and Islamabad might cite this aggression as justification for their decisions to maintain their nuclear programmes, to avoid Ukraine's fate, rather than abandoning their nuclear ambitions in the 1990s under US pressure.

2. The broader critique of the Budapest Memorandum and nuclear proliferation in Asia. The harmful consequences of the Budapest Memorandum for Ukraine, particularly the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia's full-scale aggression against the country eight years later, are potential triggers for nuclear proliferation in Asia (Hutt, 2022; Nye, 2022; Pei, 2022). Such nuclear armament, even outside South Asia, would have significant implications for the region's fragile geopolitical landscape, especially if it occurs near its borders. For example, the possibility of Japan hosting US nuclear weapons, as proposed by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, would intensify the dynamics between Tokyo and Beijing, potentially drawing in New Delhi, a key rival of Beijing. This is particularly plausible given recent developments in India-Japan relations, including their active participation in the Quad, often referred to as an “Asian NATO,” which aims to counter China's rise in the Indo-Pacific. Andreas Umland and Hugo von Essen (2022) from the Swedish Institute of International Affairs claim,

“One of the most dangerous and far-reaching repercussions of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the subversion of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – perhaps

the most critical multilateral agreement for the survival of humanity. Since its first attack on Ukraine in 2014, Russia's actions have put the logic of the treaty to prevent the spread of atomic weapons on its head."

Moscow's nuclear brinkmanship has undermined further non-proliferation efforts even more strongly by "sending one clear message: if you have nukes, nobody messes with you... [Nuclear weapons are the] only way a country can credibly protect itself from attack by a nuclear power" (Pei, 2022). Minxin Pei (2022), professor of government at Claremont McKenna College, predicts that this message will drag selected Asian states into a costly and dangerous arms race that will make the entire region less secure:

"India, China's regional rival, will seek to expand its own arsenal, prompting India's nuclear-armed nemesis, Pakistan, to do the same. This would place East Asia's non-nuclear states, such as Japan and South Korea, in a quandary... Finally, Taiwan might decide to acquire nuclear weapons as insurance against a Chinese invasion."

However, this nuclear domino effect seems unlikely to start with the China-India dyad. While the sharp trajectory of the two states' bilateral relationship has been punctuated by numerous crises since China went nuclear in 1964, neither has ever issued a nuclear threat against the other. Moreover, experts have argued that "Indian leaders believe their nuclear deterrence with China is stable, even in the aftermath of Chinese aggression and occupation of disputed territory along the Line of Actual Control" (Scobell, Singh, Stephenson, 2022).

Although nuclear armament is not a new idea in East Asia – Choong (2022) notes that "even before the Russia-Ukraine war, Japan had already raised defence spending 10 years in a row, driven by fears of China's rapid military expansion and North Korea's nuclear program" – the war in Ukraine may trigger further action and debate. For instance, North Korea and Iran could point to the Ukrainian case as a justification for refusing to give up their nuclear weapons (Braut-Hegghammer, 2022). Indeed, Mahima Duggal (2022: 3) from India's Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) expects just such a scenario, arguing, "Kim Jong-un will no doubt take note of how Ukraine, which surrendered its nuclear arsenal post the Soviet Union's collapse, is now subject to assault by a great power-making any attempt at denuclearisation more problematic." The broader critique of the Budapest Memorandum, combined with perspectives from South Asia, suggests that India's and Pakistan's key takeaway from the nuclear crisis in Eastern Europe is the justification and reinforcement of their nuclear status.

3. The impact on nuclear rhetoric and deterrence. The massive reputational, political and economic losses that Russia has incurred because of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and accompanying nuclear rhetoric may discourage India and Pakistan from issuing and/or responding to nuclear signals relative to their willingness to do so before the war in Ukraine. However, some scholars have argued that, despite Russia's profound losses, "[its] nuclear deterrence was successful.... Western policymakers mirrored Russia's red line, categorically excluding the possibility of a direct military confrontation... Echoing Russian rhetoric, they [Western representatives] repeatedly explained their non-intervention stance by citing escalation risks" (Arndt, Horowitz, 2022). Similarly, Rajat Pandit (2022) has emphasised the deterrence potential of nu-

clear weapons in the context of India's rocky triangular dynamics with the two "all-weather" friends China and Pakistan. He claims,

"[The] Russian invasion of Ukraine has hammered home the message for India on robust nuclear deterrence. Note, in this context, the ever-growing China-Pakistan military collusion, fast expanding from land to sea. Nuclear weapons are not meant for war-fighting. But their sheer strategic utility in deterring hostile adversaries is quite evident."

Therefore, the failure of Putin's nuclear coercion could influence India's and Pakistan's nuclear behaviours, providing them with a negative example of how not to use nuclear weapons as political tools. Moscow-style nuclear signalling, if adopted by any of South Asia's nuclear powers could revive the region's label as the world's nuclear flashpoint. However, the two states may interpret this lesson differently. For instance, Andrew Scobell, Vikram J. Singh, and Alex Stephenson (2022) from the United States Institute of Peace argue that "Indian leaders will expect Putin's use of a nuclear weapon to increase the likelihood of Pakistani nuclear use." Moreover, any changes in Pakistan's nuclear behaviour, irrespective of the consequences of Russia's nuclear coercion, could prompt New Delhi to reconsider its own military doctrine including no-first-use principle.

HOW DO NEW DELHI AND ISLAMABAD SEE PUTIN'S NUCLEAR BRINKMANSHIP?

While refusing to officially condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the governments in New Delhi and Islamabad have disregarded, or distanced themselves from, Moscow's nuclear signals. India's Ministry of Defence only made direct reference to these signals seven months into the war. On October 26, the ministry (Ministry of Defence, 2022) informed about a phone conversation between Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh and his counterpart in Moscow, defence minister Sergei Shoigu. According to the Indian ministry's press release,

"Defence Minister Shoigu briefed the Raksha Mantri on the evolving situation in Ukraine, including his concerns about possible provocations through use of [a] 'dirty bomb'.... Shri Rajnath Singh ... pointed out that the nuclear option should not be resorted to by any side as the prospect of the usage of nuclear or radiological weapons goes against the basic tenets of humanity."

Following this conversation, India's foreign minister S. Jaishankar told the UN Security Council that "the trajectory of the Ukraine conflict is a matter of profound concern for the entire international community ... The future outlook appears even more disturbing. The nuclear issue is of particular anxiety" (*India says Ukraine conflict trajectory, outlook very concerning*, 2022).

In contrast to New Delhi, Islamabad has not issued any direct statements about Moscow's nuclear signals yet, paradoxically, has become involved in the war's nuclear dynamics through Russian misinformation. On November 1, Russian state-owned news agency RIA Novosti reported Russian senator Igor Morozov's claim that Ukrain-

ian experts had travelled to Pakistan to meet with a delegation and discuss nuclear weapons technology (Dangwal, 2022). Unsurprisingly, given the bilateral dynamics between India and Pakistan, this misinformation was willingly published by Indian media. However, these and other media ultimately coincided in concluding that no evidence of such Pakistani-Ukrainian cooperation exists (Dangwal, 2022). Moreover, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry (2022a) reacted promptly to Morozov's remarks, expressing its surprise at "such an unfounded and baseless statement" and noting, "It is without any rationale, and is entirely inconsistent with the spirit of Pakistan-Russia relations. We are seeking clarification on this from Moscow."

The governments of the two South Asian states – both seen as potential inciters of a nuclear confrontation, albeit to different degrees given Pakistan's characterisation as a "terror state" and lack of a no-first-use pledge in its military doctrine – did not acknowledge most of Russia's nuclear signals. In late October 2022, New Delhi became more active in emphasizing its standing to prevent the escalation in Eastern Europe from reaching the nuclear threshold. This more engaged role vis-à-vis Moscow is closely tied to India's identity as a peaceful and responsible global power and stems from: (i) international pressure, primarily from the West, on India to act as a peacemaker and potentially prevent Russia from exercising its nuclear option in the war (Kinninmont, 2022); (ii) India's ambition to establish an international identity as a global power with the moral authority to lead and influence (Nitza-Makowska, 2023); and (iii) its deep-rooted aversion to the use of nuclear weapons as instruments of war, symbolised by its no-first-use pledge – a principle rare among nuclear-armed powers, espoused solely by India and China.

The 24th anniversary of the nuclear tests of 1998, observed by India and Pakistan this year, offered both states the opportunity to demonstrate their identity with respect to their own nuclear potential and each other. In relation to the Pokhran test explosions conducted by India in May 1998, Narendra Modi (2022) tweeted, "We remember with pride the exemplary leadership of Atal Ji [then prime minister of India] who showed outstanding political courage and statesmanship." His counterpart in Islamabad, Shehbaz Sharif (2022), offered a similar message about Pakistan's Chagai-I tests: "Today in 1998, [then] PM Nawaz Sharif rejected pressures & inducements in a bold show of leadership & made Pakistan nuclear power of the world. Now we are resolved to turn it into an economic power." While both prime ministers expressed gratitude to their predecessors and praised their respective countries' nuclear might, interestingly, Shehbaz Sharif used the occasion to shift attention to Pakistan's ambition to be perceived not only as a nuclear but also as an economic power. Following the prime minister's message, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022b) expressed the Islamic Republic's commitment to promoting an "environment of peace and stability in South Asia," characterising the country as "a partner in international efforts to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime based on the principles of non-discrimination and equal security for all states."

India and Pakistan present themselves as proud nuclear states and emphasise the positive aspect of their nuclear capability. While neither arch-rival has issued a nuclear signal since the outset of the war in Ukraine, this short period has not seen a serious conflict escalation comparable to the one that occurred in 2019. In February of that

year, one day after New Delhi “targeted a militant camp” in its territory, Pakistan shot down a pair of Indian jets, raising fears among experts (Kugelman, 2019) and local and international media (Shams 2019) of a nuclear confrontation. This fear was well underpinned by India’s and Pakistan’s official narratives emphasising their states’ nuclear might. For instance, then Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan warned, “The weapons you have and the weapons we have, can we afford miscalculation? Shouldn’t we think that if this escalates, what will it lead to?” (Waqar, 2019). In turn, Narendra Modi made headlines in Indian media by saying that “India has stopped the policy of getting scared of Pakistan’s threats,” remarking “Every other day they [Pakistan] used to say ‘we have nuclear button, we have nuclear button.’ What do we have then? Have we kept it for Diwali?” (*Our nuclear weapons are not for Diwali: PM Modi on Pak’s nuclear button threat*, 2019).

CONCLUSION: WHAT CAN INDIA AND PAKISTAN LEARN FROM RUSSIA’S NUCLEAR BRINKMANSHIP?

Although Russia’s nuclear blackmail appears to have succeeded as a deterrent in that it has kept the military forces of Western states off Ukrainian and Russian soil, it has also proved a political and reputational failure, demonstrating how not to use nuclear weapons as a political tool. Therefore, while South Asia has already seen numerous situations to some extent corresponding to the nuclear threat underpinning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, India and Pakistan can still learn from Putin’s nuclear signalling.

This signalling has stripped South Asia of its status as the world’s main nuclear flashpoint, which is especially important for Islamabad. Because of its ‘terror state’ characterisation and lack of a no-first-use pledge, Pakistan has long been considered more likely than India to begin a nuclear confrontation. To maintain the new relative favourability of perceptions of the nuclear tensions between them, the two states should avoid escalating their bilateral relations and employing nuclear rhetoric against each other.

Putin’s nuclear signalling has brought Russia massive reputational and economic losses. Neither of the two South Asian states, especially Pakistan, which is mired in a severe economic crisis, could bear such costs. Indeed, if Islamabad were to engage in nuclear signalling against New Delhi, India could expect numerous states to impose sanctions on Pakistan similar to those imposed on Russia. In turn, Islamabad would expect similar measures to be taken against New Delhi should the latter issue any nuclear signals.

Russia’s successful deterrence is likely to prevent the nuclear disarmament scenario from being considered by New Delhi, Islamabad and other nuclear-armed states for the foreseeable future. Indeed, to the contrary, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party is now expected even more than it was before the war in Ukraine to follow up on its promise to build a more muscular nuclear posture for India. Moreover, given India’s no-first-use pledge – despite lingering doubts about its transparency and utility – its nuclear arsenal is unlikely to be perceived as a threat to the same extent

as Pakistan's, let alone Iran's or North Korea's. While New Delhi has previously considered rethinking its military doctrine, particularly its no-first-use pledge, Moscow's nuclear blackmail should push Indian policymakers to maintain this stance, unless bilateral dynamics with Pakistan suggest otherwise. Nonetheless, by adhering to this pledge, New Delhi is likely to achieve both deterrence and political recognition as a responsible nuclear power.

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the implications of Russia's nuclear blackmail for India and Pakistan, two nuclear-armed states that remain outside the UN Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons framework and that have been engaged in a protracted conflict for over seven decades. Indeed, the trajectory of India and Pakistan's rocky bilateral relationship in addition to Pakistan's characterisation as a "terror state" lacking a "no-first-use" pledge in its nuclear doctrine has earned South Asia a reputation as a nuclear flash point. Therefore, considering the region's fragile geopolitical and security situation, it is essential to identify whether and how India and Pakistan have reacted to the nuclear element of the war in Ukraine and what lessons these states can learn for their identities and behaviours as nuclear powers. To investigate that this paper triangulates selected primary and secondary sources on Putin's nuclear signalling and its global implications, as well as New Delhi's and Islamabad's reactions to this performance. Both South Asian states adopted the so-called "neutral" standing vis-à-vis the war in Ukraine and distanced themselves from Putin's nuclear signalling. The post-invasion period has witnessed New Delhi and Islamabad emphasising the deterrent potential of their nuclear arsenals and avoiding nuclear rhetoric against each other.

Keywords: India, Pakistan, Russia, nuclear weapons, war in Ukraine

AGRESJA ROSJI NA UKRAINĘ A AZJA POŁUDNIOWA: JAKIE SĄ IMPLIKACJE NUKLEARNEGO SZANTAŻU MOSKWY DLA INDII I PAKISTANU?

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie implikacji rosyjskiego szantażu nuklearnego dla Indii i Pakistanu – dwóch państw posiadających broń nuklearną, które pozostają poza układem o nierozprzestrzenianiu broni jądowej, oraz są wzajemnie skonfliktowane od ponad siedmiu dekad. Dynamiczna trajektoria relacji indyjsko-pakistańskich, a także charakterystyka Pakistanu jako „państwa terrorystycznego” pozbawionego w swojej doktrynie nuklearnej zobowiązania „nie pierwszego użycia”, zapewniła Azji Południowej reputację nuklearnego punktu zapłonu. Dlatego też, biorąc pod uwagę niestabilną sytuację geopolityczną i bezpieczeństwa w regionie, istotne jest ustalenie, czy i w jaki sposób Indie i Pakistan zareagowały na nuklearny element wojny w Ukrainie oraz jakie wnioski te państwa mogą wyciągnąć dla swoich tożsamości mocarstw

nuklearnych oraz związanych z tymi tożsamościami działań wobec siebie i poza Azją Południową. Aby przeanalizować te problemy, w artykule dokonano triangulacji wybranych źródeł pierwotnych i wtórnych dotyczących sygnalizacji nuklearnej Putina z naciskiem na jej globalne implikacje, oraz reakcji Nowego Delhi i Islamabadu na te działania. Indie i Pakistan przyjęły tzw. „neutralne” stanowisko wobec wojny w Ukrainie oraz zdystansowały się od nuklearnych sygnałów Putina. W okresie od rozpoczęcia inwazji New Delhi i Islamabad podkreślały odstraszający potencjał swoich arsenałów nuklearnych oraz unikały stosowania retoryki nuklearnej przeciwko sobie.

Słowa kluczowe: Indie, Pakistan, Rosja, broń nuklearna, wojna w Ukrainie