



Compellence in policy: A case study of 2001/02 Twin Peak Crisis

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Introduction

During nearly seven decades of protracted and intractable enmity, the two South Asian nuclear rivals have employed various strategies, from war to coercive diplomacy, to achieve their political and strategic objectives. In the first quarter after their independence India and Pakistan engaged in three wars aimed at altering the *status quo* to their desired political advantage. From introduction of nuclear weapons by India on the subcontinent in 1974 till overt nuclearization in 1998 and even after that, several crises emerged and both states employed various strategies to avert a major war but took necessary measures to compel the “other” to change its behavior.

An illustration of this is the 1987 crisis that was sparked by huge Indian military exercise called Brasstacks held right at the border of Pakistan, at a time when Pakistan along with international community was involved in countering Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Pakistan responded by mobilizing its own forces, and subsequently began military exercises as well. Slowly the crisis escalated to a point just short of actual war. Eventually India retreated from its provocative stance and Pakistan succeeded in deterring India from attacking Pakistan’s territory.

Overt nuclearization of the subcontinent in 1998, has made escalation to war a risky proposition thus forcing both states to resort to coercive diplomacy and compellence as foreign policy strategies to alter the behavior of the “other”. In the prevailing *status quo* of “no war, no peace”, coercive strategies are being heavily employed by both states during bilateral negotiations and various crises situations to influence the “other”, and international actors. From the winter of 2001 to autumn of 2002, India attempted to coerce and compel Pakistan to end its support for cross-border infiltration into India after an attack on the Indian Parliament by terrorists on 13th December 2001.

In the framework of “compellence” and “coercive diplomacy” this case is useful to examine, so as to understand how effective was Indian strategy to compel

Pakistan to alter its behavior. Moreover, the use and effectiveness of coercive military threat and diplomatic strategies by states represent efforts to attain efficient resolution to bilateral disputes, yet they don't always produce desired results. Understanding how states try to "compel" each other is crucial to understanding causes of war and the comprehending conditions of peace.

Coercive diplomacy and Compellence strategy: Theoretical context

In the arena of international diplomacy states bargain to secure their interests. They employ various strategies to protect and advance them. Practices and strategies based on concepts of compellence and coercive diplomacy are part of state policy from ancient times. Inherent in these approaches is the notion of bargain, and the bargaining power of a state in the shadow of hard power. Military capabilities can inflict unacceptable damage, but this capacity to harm can also be used as a leverage to influence other states. When military capability to inflict harm is employed as a strategy in tandem with projection of power it is part of bargaining and influencing "other" side's policy. As Thomas Schelling stated, "The power to hurt is bargaining power. To exploit it is diplomacy."¹

Literature on the subject describes "deterrence" and "compellence" as two sub-strands of strategic coercion. Both are intended to influence decision-making of an adversary by threatening the use of force and also to convince the opponent to act in a manner it would want not to. Both have different meaning and are used in different phases of a conflict. Deterrence is inherently passive, and primarily aims at intimidating the adversary from initiating a certain act by the threat to use force. Its credibility lies in the demonstration of capability and effective communication of the threat, thus leaving the initiative to the opponent.² Compellence, on the contrary, is active in nature. Its objective is to force an opponent do something or stop doing something that it may not be willing to do in the first place. It is operationalized by commencing power projection or an "irrevocable commitment to action" designed to psychologically make the opponent realize that costs of non-compliance with the demanded action will be very high and punitive action will continue until demands are complied with.³

Moreover, Schelling has described certain conditions for the success of a compellent threat. First, the conveyed threat should be forceful enough to persuade an opponent that non-compliance is not an option. Second, threat must be credible i.e. the opponent must believe that coercer has the will and the capacity to initiate action in case of non-compliance. Third, coercer must give a

timetable to comply with the demands. Fourth, neither side should perceive it as a zero-sum game and must share common interest in avoiding war.⁴

Blackmail and coercive diplomacy are other forms of compellence. Blackmail is used to convince the opponent to *do something* that it would never want to. While, coercive diplomacy is used *to force* an opponent *to stop doing, or undo, something* that it has already commenced. Coercive threat is announced after the opponent has made its first move. The objective is to stall the opponent's move. Coercive diplomacy doesn't solely rely on the application of quick force. Force is only used when threats do not suffice. Eventually force is employed in a calculated, limited and controlled manner to demonstrate the capability and resolve of the compelling power. Threat to employ force is subordinated to a broader politico-diplomatic policy and is coupled with apt communication to the opponent. Coercive diplomacy thus has "a signaling, bargaining, negotiating character that is built into the conceptualization and conduct of military operations."⁵

Alexander George in his remarkable work, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, has articulated that purpose of coercive diplomacy "is to back one's demand to an adversary with a threat of punishment for noncompliance that he will consider credible and potent enough to persuade him to comply with the demand."⁶ Moreover, coercive diplomacy involves four crucial variables: the demand, the means used for creating a sense of urgency, the threatened punishment for noncompliance and the possible use of incentives. Differences in these variables yield five basic approaches to coercive diplomacy: the ultimatum, the tacit ultimatum, the "try-and-see" approach, the "gradual turning of the screw," and the carrot and stick approach.

2001-02 Crisis

Round one: December 2001/January 2002

On 13th December 2001, a group of terrorists attacked Indian parliament, when most of the legislators were in the building. Security forces repulsed the attack and political leadership remained unharmed. But the attack led to huge public outcry and Vajpayee government came under pressure to take action. In haste, Indian government claimed that terrorists intended to assassinate top political leadership of India and implied that terrorists belonged to a group "Jaish-e-Mohammad", based in Pakistan. Moreover, India also accused Pakistan of

sponsoring and harboring terrorist groups and asserted that there would be aggressive response to the attack.

The following day, Prime Minister Vajpayee categorically warned, "Our fight is now reaching the last stage, and would have to take place."⁷ Same day, the then Indian minister for external affairs, Jaswant Singh, held a meeting with Pakistani High Commissioner in New Delhi, Ashraf Jehanger Qazi. Minister Singh accused Lashkar-i-Taiba of being responsible for the attack and made following demands: Pakistan must end activities of entities like Lashkar-i-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohamad, close their offices, freeze their financial assets and arrest their leaders.⁸ But later on these demands were expanded as follows:

- The hand-over of 20 criminals and terrorists residing in Pakistan, six of whom were Pakistani citizens and the rest being holders of Indian passports.
- The stoppage of cross-border infiltration of terrorists into Indian territory.
- The closure of facilities, training camps, arms supply routes, funding channels, and all direct and indirect assistance to terrorists operating from Pakistani soil.
- A 'categorical and unambiguous renunciation' of terrorism in all its manifestations.

Next day, Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf condemned the attack in strongest terms and cast doubts on the evidence linking Pakistan based militants groups to the attack and warned India against any misadventure.⁹ Responding to President Musharraf, PM Vajpayee again warned of "dire consequences if [Pakistan] does not immediately stop sending terrorists to India for destabilizing the country's democracy"¹⁰

Meanwhile, India also attempted to put international pressure on Pakistan through the United States thus applying second-order coercion. India assumed that because of Pakistan's involvement in the US led war on terror the US would pressurize Pakistan to cooperate with India rather than resorting to any retaliation.

To reinforce its strong words Indian government also signaled its resolve by taking concrete actions. On 16th December, Cabinet Committee on Security (CSS),

the key decision-making forum on national security, met and ordered to launch 'Operation Parakaram' i.e. huge mobilization of armed forces along the border with Pakistan.¹¹ It was believed to be the largest mobilization of the Indian military since 1971 war. It involved movement of more than 600,000 troops, issuing of live ammunitions, moving of three strike corps into war-fighting positions along the Line of Control (LoC) and the international border. Indian air force squadrons were also alerted and sent to forward airbases and Eastern fleet of Indian navy was moved into Arabian Sea and was ordered to be ready for a blockade of key Pakistani ports, if needed. The then Indian defence minister, George Fernandes, provocatively mentioned that Prithvi missiles were also in place.¹²

It was estimated by Indian policy makers that it would take Indian ground forces nearly three weeks to be fully ready for carrying out operations across the border. If force was employed then operations would consist of multiple thrusts across the LoC to attack training camps of terrorist groups, occupying critical nodes and threatening Pakistani forces.¹³ If inevitable, the huge mobilized forces could also be brought to pressurize in other sectors if conflict escalated to an all-out war. In short, India threatened Pakistan with a conventional war based on its conventional force superiority if Pakistan didn't comply with Indian demands.¹⁴

After ordering military mobilization India escalated diplomatic signaling. On 21st December after a CCS meeting, PM Vajpayee decided to recall Indian High Commissioner from Islamabad (the first time since 1971) and also to suspended bus and train services between the two countries (effective from 1st January 2002).¹⁵ Moreover, India also hinted at revoking Pakistan's most favored nation status and changing its stance on Indus Waters Treaty.¹⁶

By late December and early January, Pakistan gradually announced certain steps to address Indian concerns. President Musharraf and military leadership decided to clamp down on militant organizations on 24th December. Shortly after the decision, offices of militant organization were closed, their financial assets were frozen and their few leaders were detained.¹⁷ Finally after constant exchanges and pressure from the United States and other western leaders, President Musharraf gave a statement on 12th January that Pakistan would ban Lashkar-i-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad.¹⁸ During his policy address to the nation, President Musharraf vowed not to permit terrorism on Pakistan's territory. More significantly, President Musharraf announced no organization will be allowed to undertake terrorism in the garb of the Kashmiri cause and "we will take strict

action against any Pakistani who is involved in terrorism inside the country or abroad".¹⁹ In next two months, Pakistan had detained over 2000 people belonging to these militant organizations.²⁰ Heightened tensions receded after policy speech of President Musharraf which resulted from US reassurances to Pakistan and partial concessions by Pakistan.

Round two: May 2002–July 2002

On 14th May, terrorists attacked a military barrack in Jammu and Kashmir. Gunfight which continued for several hours resulted in deaths of nearly 50 civilians and many were wounded. This attack again sparked outrage among the Indian public and political leadership.²¹ Soon, heavy exchange of fire also started across the LoC and continued for several days.²² On 18th May, Indian CCS met and decided to implement series of threats against Pakistan. First, it demanded that Pakistan should recall its High Commissioner from New Delhi within a week.²³ Second, it ordered Indian navy to again move its major surface combatant ships from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea, thus directly threatening a possible blockade of Karachi.²⁴

Under pressure from India and the international community, President Musharraf on 27th May announced that concrete action would be taken, but Indian response was rather lukewarm.²⁵ This prompted the United States to again initiate diplomatic missions aimed at de-escalating tensions. The then US deputy secretary of State, Richard Armitage first visited Pakistan, on 6th June, and India, the following day. During his meeting in New Delhi, he assured Indian government that President Musharraf would initiate concrete action to reduce both cross border infiltration and end activities of terrorists groups on Pakistani territory. Three days later India announced series of measures that included ordering part of its forces to stand down, reinstating over-flights and recalling warships to their ports. There were also public announcement about sending back Indian envoy to Islamabad. However, majority of Indian army remained deployed along LoC and international border throughout the summer and fall, despite receding tension. Finally, in mid-October Operation Parakaram was called off when Defence Minister George Fernandes declared victory in the Parliament after successful holding of election in Indian held Kashmir.²⁶

Sending and orchestrating coercive signals: Forcing Pakistan into action

Once India accused Pakistan of being behind the attack on Indian parliament, which in the words of the then Indian Home Minister, L.K. Advani, was “an attempt to wipe out entire political leadership of India”,²⁷ India was left with no options but to respond effectively. But options available to India were limited. Nonetheless, India gave Pakistan a “tacit ultimatum”. It placed specific set of demands on Islamabad, but no time-frame was set for compliance. Moreover, these demands were not coherent, as first Indian PM Atal Behari Vajpayee claimed ‘Jaish-e-Mohammad’ was responsible for the attack, then later on India blamed ‘Lashkar-i-Taiba’ for the attack. India blamed these organizations without having concrete evidence of their involvement, as it didn’t want to forgo the opportunity of putting pressure on Pakistan.

To increase pressure on Pakistan and to ensure compliance India gradually increased its demands. On 29th December, the then national security advisor, Brajesh Mishra, indicated to a G-8 meeting that India would be ready for talks, if Pakistan took ‘credible, firm and substantive, and visible actions’ against terrorists operating from ‘territory it controls today’.²⁸ Two days later, Indian government put forward a new demand, and called on Pakistan to extradite 20 criminals living in Pakistan. On 2nd January PM Atal Behari Vajpayee articulated the minimum set of actions expected from Pakistan would be “strict curbs on sources of financing and denial of safe haven for training, arming and operation of terrorists”.²⁹ Few days later, Mr. Advani demanded that Pakistan must halt cross border infiltration and in March he again repeated the demands. They numbered five: “not arming the terrorists, putting an end to terrorist training camps, ending infiltration, not sheltering anyone who had committed terrorist or criminal activities in India, and handing over criminals and terrorists wanted by India.”³⁰

Meanwhile, India increased the diplomatic pressure by suspending air and road links, recalling the Indian High Commissioner from Islamabad, halving the strength of diplomatic missions and cancelling over-flights of Pakistani commercial airlines. India didn’t deem these measures enough and communicated a sense of urgency by mobilizing its entire military apparatus. The threat of initiating war was deemed essential for putting necessary pressure on Pakistan for altering its behavior. Drawing from Schelling, India believed that its threat of retaliation had to be credible and potent, thus it mobilized its armed forces into war-fighting mode which included movement of strike corps towards Pakistan’s border, naval warships from Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea, alerting

air force and also introduced nuclear threat by putting Prithvi missiles into contingency mode.

While pursuing its strategy of coercive diplomacy, India followed a two-pronged policy i.e. intimidating Pakistan through Operation Parakram and attempting to use the US to coerce Pakistan. This policy of US pressuring Pakistan brought few benefits to India, as US was the first to place Lashkar-i-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad on the State Department's terrorist list and it was also the first to freeze financial assets of these groups.³¹ Afterwards, President Bush also called upon President Musharraf "to take action against the LeT and the JeM, and other terrorist organizations, their leaders and their finances."³² It was in response to the new US policy that Pakistan decided to first freeze financial assets of Lashkar-i-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad and then arrested their top leaders. Therefore, it can be concluded that it was US pressure, rather than coercive threats by India that forced Pakistan to act against these organizations. Even President Musharraf's speech of 12th January came after a stream of international efforts as US, European Union and G-8 countries urged Pakistan to take necessary measures to stop cross border infiltration of terrorists.

United States also engaged in serious shuttle diplomacy that was aimed at pressurizing both India and Pakistan to deescalate tensions. It put its weight behind Indian demands and also urged India for restraint. In early January and in May-early June, India and Pakistan came closest to war, and during both these occasions United States engaged in shuttle diplomacy to get President Musharraf make public concessions to India (especially during missions of Richard Armitage, and these happened few days before each of President Musharraf's speech). Moreover, United States also called on Vajpayee government to exercise restraint in order to make conducive environment for President Musharraf to take action and deliver on his promises.

Though, Pakistan remained defiant, as it responded with its own huge military mobilization and troop build-up, movement of ballistic missiles closer to border, and in late May, test-firing three ballistic missiles in four days. President Musharraf flatly refused to comply with the demand of extraditing twenty persons to India.³³ India was successful in compelling Pakistan to comply with its initial set of demands i.e. action against the Lashkar-i-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. But on the four subsequent demands Pakistan formally complied with only one: the public assurance that its territory won't be used against India. It dismissed rest of Indian demands. Thus in the overall analysis, India didn't

succeed in its exercise of coercive diplomacy except for earning small concessions meant for crisis de-escalation.

Conclusion

The case study focusing on analyzing use of coercive diplomacy to compel Pakistan in the aftermath of terrorist attack on Indian Parliament by India highlights several points. First, it proves India despite being the initiator and aggressor couldn't effectively compel Pakistan to meet all its demands. Secondly, despite orchestrating effective coercive diplomatic campaign and large scale military mobilization, India was only successful in pressurizing Pakistan up to a limited extent. Thirdly, the active role of US during the protracted crisis helped Pakistan in gaining time, but indirectly US involvement became a complicating factor for India as it constrained Indian ability to maneuver independently. Finally, Pakistan knew international community and United States in particular wouldn't let India commence a war, and it was only after gaining enough assurances from United States that Pakistan made limited concession to de-escalate the crisis.

Indian objective was to coerce Pakistan into changing its policy of providing moral, political and diplomatic support to right of self-determination of Kashmiris freedom movement. India chose to do so, believing that because of conventional imbalance between both countries India would easily compel Pakistan. But this crisis highlighted the fact that the existing force ratios and level of conventional imbalance is not overwhelmingly in India's favor. It therefore, couldn't compel Pakistan to accept all its demands. Moreover, Islamabad's stakes in Kashmir are very high and given the national consensus on Kashmir issue, it was impossible for Pakistan to comply with all Indian demands, thus Pakistan chose to defy and only provided minimum concessions to wriggle out of a difficult situation. For resolution of disputes particularly Kashmir, India should be mindful of political and military realities of the subcontinent. It may be added that a durable peace can only be achieved through recognizing these realities.

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