

## **Comment**

### **Doctrine and Deterrence: Pakistan and India**

A state's nuclear/conventional posture can best be understood by studying its statements on its doctrine and policy.

The notion of a doctrine refers to a set of principles, which, within the context of the state, can signify the basis of policies and strategies for the implementation of those policies. Within the security issue area, therefore, doctrine is linked to strategy – not just in the narrow sense of war or preparation for war and the waging of war, but in the wider context of controlling and utilising the resources of a state.<sup>1</sup> In other words, what is often referred to as Grand Strategy is, the integration of the policies and armaments of the state.<sup>2</sup>

Within the nuclear context, doctrine acquires an even greater significance because in the case of nuclear deterrence there is almost no empirical evidence to back so many critical propositions. This means that doctrines and beliefs become central in creating a reality. So, a nuclear programme has many dimensions and any state that pursues a nuclear programme must examine all its dynamics. For instance, a nuclear weapons programme requires a focus on doctrine, establishment of a stable deterrence, costs and the linkage to the global arms control and disarmament

agenda. But first of all, a state needs to identify its security threat parameters – within the overall regional and global security frameworks that prevail – in order to evolve a viable nuclear doctrine.

After the overt nuclearisation of South Asia in May 1998, both Pakistan and India have been giving out certain notions of their nuclear doctrines. The nature of the two doctrines, as well as the manner in which they have been enunciated, reflect the difference in purpose of the two states' going overtly nuclear in 1998. This has hampered the long-term maintenance of a stable nuclear deterrence because India has sought to link its nuclear deterrence with defence – a war-fighting capability despite the nuclear factor.

Also, for India, its nuclear capability was status-driven as opposed to Pakistan's security-driven acquisition of nuclear capability.<sup>3</sup> Because Pakistan's nuclear capability is strictly within the context of its security, it has not sought to flog this capability in terms of political projection – thereby showing up the absurdity of the notion of its capability being an “Islamic bomb”. The Indian rationalisation of its nuclear capability fits far more neatly into the Hindutva projection of power by the BJP government.<sup>4</sup>

The difference in the purpose and intent of India and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities is reflected in the declared/quasi-declared

doctrines of the two countries. India put out an expansive draft doctrine in August 1999 which reflected India's desire to push for great power status. This draft has, with minor alterations, effectively become India's nuclear doctrine.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps most significant has been the latest strategic message sent through the statement of the Indian Defence Minister Parrikar, on November 11, 2016, when he gave out that India did not have a "no first use" (NFU) nuclear doctrine. This was merely stating what India had already done when it modified its initial "no first use" claim in 2003. On August 22, 2006, in a speech at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington, the then Indian Air Chief declared that India would have to "forget geographical boundaries to protect its interests outside its boundaries."<sup>6</sup> This development was in line with the post-9/11 US pre-emptive doctrine and the US Nuclear Posture Review whereby the US began to rationalise the military viability of nuclear weapons, even against certain non-nuclear states that may possess other weapons of mass destruction.

Yet Parrikar's statement is significant because of the timing. It is an assertion of the First Use Doctrine specifically meant for Pakistan. The firing along the Line of Control (LoC) and the Working Boundary (WB), the deliberate intrusion by an Indian submarine into Pakistani waters, the spy drones – all these actions together show a new Indian military strategy in the making within the framework of a nuclear First Use strategic doctrine – all

to overcome the checkmating of Cold Start by Pakistan's Nasr missile.

India's Modi and his BJP government continue their aggressive designs against Pakistan. Beginning with sporadic attacks along the LoC and WB, the Modi government moved on to converting these into more regular attacks with an increase in occurrence followed now by a qualitative increase in intensity. Some would say these continue to be mere pinpricks to divert Pakistan's attention away from Indian brutality against Kashmiris in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). However, while there may be some truth in this assumption, it is becoming increasingly clear in recent weeks that the Indian military is not simply conducting an Operation Diversion but is in fact conducting a large scale exploratory exercise designed to test out a new military doctrine since the Cold Start Doctrine went into cold storage after Pakistan developed the Nasr missile.

Nor is it a mere coincidence that India's aggressive stance against Pakistan has become more overt and intense after the Trump electoral victory and during the visit of the Israeli Prime Minister to New Delhi, which followed a visit by the British PM who chose to visit India and Bangladesh while omitting Pakistan. The diplomatic pats on the back from the UK and Israel for Modi at a time when his government is on a killing spree in IOK and is firing along the LoC and WB seem to have given the BJP government the

diplomatic support it needed. With Trump now the President-elect, the Modi government is certainly emboldened as his statements against Pakistan and how he would rely on India to deal with Pakistan are well known – notwithstanding his conversation with PM Sharif.

So, India's new strategy is to keep giving Pakistan nosebleeds along the LoC and WB, gradually upping the ante through the use of naval power before a final push through a rapid land attack – confronting Pakistan on multiple fronts in rapid succession. Cold Start was focused on a rapid land move but the new strategy encompasses a multiple level rapid attack after a gradual build up – thereby having a built-in element of surprise.

Pakistan has chosen not to publicly enunciate a comprehensive nuclear doctrine because it does not see a political/status utility for the nuclear capability – rather, it envisages the nuclear capability as having a purely defensive, security-related purpose. Pakistan has chosen to keep its options open on the NFU, like NATO, but it has declared its intent of using nuclear weapons as a weapon of last resort. It also continues to feel that a certain level of ambiguity provides for a more effective deterrence – given the prevailing asymmetries. This perception of the value of ambiguity is debateable given that one needs to communicate the threat as unambiguously as possible in a deterrence situation. Also, fudgy red lines can keep moving further back when

it comes to the crunch and in Pakistan's situation, perhaps clearly enunciated escalation rungs, especially because of the asymmetries, may be more useful.

While Pakistan may not have enunciated a comprehensive doctrine, it has made clear the major principles underlying its doctrine – which in turn give shape to its nuclear strategy and arsenal development.

### **Principles**

I. The first principle is a commitment to deterrence against aggression and in defence of the country's sovereignty – and the maintenance of it at a **credible minimum** level. This juxtaposition of “credible minimum” is very crucial because it defines the level of minimum at any given time in terms of what is seen as credible. So in light of the developments like the Indo-US nuclear deal and the Indian Missile Defence programme, the minimum has altered. In fact, according to Pakistani officials, it was the need to sustain a credible deterrence that led Pakistan to test overtly in response to the Indian nuclear tests. Pakistan firmly believed that India's tests of May 1998 and Pakistan's response finally ended the “existential deterrence” which had existed for almost twenty years in South Asia.

While Pakistan has consistently reiterated its commitment to a minimum level of nuclear deterrence, it has linked the stability of this to ensuring that Pakistan does not find itself in a

position of strategic vulnerability in areas such as fissile materials, ballistic missiles and conventional forces – Hence its positioning on a future Fissile Material Treaty as well its development of the Hatf IX missile and cruise missile developments.

In the context of conventional forces, India's nuclear doctrine made it clear that India's nuclear build up would be bolstered by a build-up of India's conventional warfare capabilities. And, because the bulk of India's conventional forces are deployed against Pakistan, the latter's deterrence comes under direct threat if this capability accentuates the asymmetry of forces. This increasing conventional imbalance does make Pakistan's reliance on its nuclear capabilities more acute.

Pakistan had clearly declared that although it was not prepared to get into an arms race with India, it would be "compelled to take steps necessary to preserve the credibility of its deterrence" if India continued "to move up the nuclear ladder".<sup>7</sup>

Pakistan first tested its cruise missile in 2005 in response to Indian Missile Defence plans. This first principle of deterrence against aggression continues and the Nasr fits into this posture by sustaining the credibility of the deterrence in the earlier gap of the Limited War aggression context.

The US and its allies' targeting of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and their development

continues unabated. The latest attack is on Pakistan's development of the Nasr missile in the Hatf short range ballistic missile (SRBM) series. The Hatf II (Abdali) with a range of 180 kms and the Hatf III (Ghaznavi) with a range of 290 kms are already part of Pakistan's missile arsenal. What has disturbed these habitual critics is the development of the Hatf IX (Nasr) with a range of 60 kms – and seen primarily by critics as a battlefield weapon.<sup>8</sup>

So, what is Pakistan's rationale for developing the Nasr 60 km solid fuelled missile? For a long time Pakistan had one-rung escalation ladder with an unambiguous nuclear doctrine including clearly enunciated red lines in order to sustain a credible nuclear deterrence. While this required updating the nuclear arsenal in terms of improving the CEPs (Circular Error Probable), intermediate and medium ranges and conversion to solid fuel, till the Indo-US nuclear deal, there was no need to go in for developing even shorter range missiles. But the situation altered qualitatively in a manner which made the one-rung escalation ladder to strategic nuclear weapon use irrational and non-credible. Hence for reasons stated below, the testing of the Nasr was a necessary and well-timed move. In April 2011, the surface-to-surface (SSBM) Nasr was first tested and there have been subsequent tests also – all successful.

One: It needs to be remembered that the Hatf IX Nasr is so far a technology-demonstrative missile – that is, we are signaling our

acquisition of tactical missile capability and miniaturisation technology. This will allow our already developed cruise missiles – the Hatf VIII (Ra'ad) which is air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) and the Hatf VII (Babur) which is a ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) – to be miniaturised for sea-launched submarine capability in order to move on to second-strike capability. This would help stabilise the nuclear deterrence and its credibility.

Two: The dynamics of maintaining a credible minimum nuclear deterrence altered with the Indo-US nuclear deal and its fallout, especially India's enhanced weapons grade fissile stockpiles.

Three: India's development of a Missile Defence capability also directly impacted Pakistan's nuclear deterrence.

Four: India's Cold Start Doctrine, which envisage the use of rapid deployment of armed brigades and divisions in surprise and rapid attacks, directly undermined Pakistan's ability to rationalise a one-rung escalation ladder as it now lacked credibility. After all, a short but limited conventional military attack on Pakistan in 72 hours could hardly rationalise a strategic nuclear attack in response by Pakistan. The Nasr is Pakistan's counter to India's Limited War doctrine. That the Nasr has not yet been inducted allows both countries to bring the issue of doctrines to the

table of a strategic dialogue, along with other issues.

Five: The Nasr is wrongly being perceived primarily as a battlefield weapon only by those analysts who clearly are not familiar with the geography of Pakistan! It can be deployed along the Eastern border against counter-force targets on Indian not Pakistani soil. So, the claim that Pakistan has adopted a war-fighting doctrine is as absurd as the critics' assumption that the Nasr is for battlefield use on Pakistan's own territory! They have failed to understand its deterrence value precisely to deter such "rapid deployment" conventional attacks. All that the development of Nasr has done is to give Pakistan the capability to bolster its deterrence in view of India's nuclear and missile defence developments to sustain its credibility and eventually move it to a more stabilising second strike capability. But then Western critics have never been interested in rational arguments to begin with!

II. This brings up the second principle of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine – that of a strategic restraint regime. Pakistan in the early days of overt nuclearisation saw this as being premised on reciprocal agreements with India on nuclear, missile and conventional restraint, comprising the following:

One: not to deploy ballistic missiles

Two: not to operationally weaponise nuclear capable missile systems

Three: formalise the understanding to provide prior and adequate notification of flight-tests of missiles.

Four: to declare a moratorium on the development, acquisition or deployment of Anti Ballistic Missile systems, since these can destabilise 'minimum credible deterrence'.

*However, except for point three which has been operationalised, the others seem difficult to implement now and would require backtracking on both sides.*

In principle a new formulation of the components of a strategic restraint regime could be put forward to include conventional force reductions and number crunching in terms of missile deployments and developments. Here the Nasr, which has yet to be deployed, could also be put on the negotiating table.

III. Survivability and credibility of the deterrence is also part of the Pakistani nuclear doctrine, which is why it would not be rational for Pakistan to quantify its "minimum" level of nuclear deterrence. As has been officially stressed time and again, rather than quantifying in "static numbers", the minimum will depend on the other side's build-up. To ensure the survivability and credibility of the deterrence, Pakistan will always have to maintain and upgrade its capability.

IV. To pursue arms control and disarmament at the global and regional levels, while maintaining minimum deterrence is also part of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine.

Pakistan's whole approach to AC&D has been dominated by its regional defence and security concerns.<sup>9</sup> Its approach to the discussions in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva is based on these concerns, especially but not solely, in terms of a Fissile Material Treaty.

### **Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)**

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva has been debating the FMCT for some time and the issue has been held up for over a decade primarily because of the US and not Pakistan. Also countries like China want to see equal progress on the three other issues on the CD agenda – nuclear disarmament, negative guarantees and especially PAROS.

The Pakistani position is clear cut: we will sign a Fissile Material Treaty (FMT) which first seeks reductions in existing stockpiles of nuclear material before the cut-off. Since the CD works on consensus, every country has an equal say on any agreement that comes out of it.

The FMCT issue is critical to sustaining our credible minimum nuclear deterrence for the future, which is why Pakistan is seeking an FMT which would include reductions in

existing stockpiles before a cut-off date to create a more balanced situation for Pakistan. Actually the fissile material issue is primarily critical for Pakistan – not the other five nuclear weapons states or India although India itself will not sign an FMCT so easily, since it still has a disadvantage with regard to fissile material stockpiles in comparison with the P 5. *(The way things stand now, FMCT will really only impact Pakistan! In five to seven years Pakistan may accept a FMCT because by then it would have built up a proportional fissile reserve to India's as a result of its plutonium production picking up. But right now, Pakistan can only go for a FMT as an FMCT would be suicidal.)* Plutonium development is very essential for Pakistan as it also allows greater flexibility if weapons production in terms of smaller yields etc. The FMCT is the single most crucial politico-diplomatic issue for Pakistan in terms of sustaining a credible nuclear deterrence.

### **Supplier Cartels**

The most important one is the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in which India got waivers for the supply by NSG members of sensitive and dual use nuclear technology. The US has been trying to get India full membership of the NSG, which will be very damaging for Pakistan as NSG works on consensus and India would veto any effort to get exemptions for Pakistan on sensitive nuclear technology. The latest development has been positive for Pakistan as a number of

NSG member states have shown a shift to a criteria-based approach.

The stability of the nuclear deterrence in South Asia is dependent on developments on both sides of the Pakistan-India border and so far this deterrence stability is being undermined by developments on the Indian side in terms of a constant quest to find a means of rationalising a war-fighting doctrine while also breaking out from the “stalemate” of the nuclear deterrence through the development of a missile defence programme.

For Pakistan, the development of a wider range of missiles including the Nasr, is a means to sustain the credibility of the deterrence which will be bolstered further with assured second strike capability which is now possible for Pakistan with its proven miniaturisation ability shown in the Nasr tests.

### **Future Course**

Given these developments, if Pakistan is determined to sustain a credible and stable nuclear deterrence it will have to push for a strategic dialogue on the nuclear issue with India, including moves towards nuclear risk reduction. At one level, political conflicts, from Kashmir to Siachin to Sir Creek to the growing Water disputes, resolution is needed as that in itself reduces nuclear war risks.

Second, at the technical level, there has to be in place a strategic nuclear dialogue which focuses on numbers' balancing, transparency, technical nuclear cooperation and other CSBMs – that is confidence and security building measures. Amongst other issues identified above, within an overall nuclear strategic balance, both Pakistan and India would need to move towards mutual conventional force reductions, especially of offensive systems on the ground, which in the Indian case are Pakistan-specific because of the terrain in relation to Indian neighbours like China and Bangladesh. The Paris Treaty for Conventional Force Reductions in Europe can be one appropriate model for Pakistan and India to examine – premised on the principle of mutual balanced reductions.

Both Pakistan and India need to realise that nuclear antagonists cannot be locked in a zero-sum game environment. Their survival is linked together now. So nuclear deterrence requires the prevalence of conflict and common interest between the two sides. This can push in either of two directions: First, compel the stronger side to take advantage by taking calculated risks knowing the nuclear-related concerns that prevail. This course is dangerous and potentially fatal. Second, move both actors towards cooperation without the smaller state being overwhelmed by the larger one - and away from risk-ridden policies like limited war and first strike. Finally, it has to be remembered that within the context of South Asia, it is not technology denial that will

address the issue of nuclear stability, but political will.

*Dr. Shireen M Mazari*  
Director General

## **References**

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1. See Introduction, Edward Mead Earle, editor, *Makers of Modern Strategy*. Atheneum: New York, 1970. P. viii
2. Ibid.
3. This distinction has been made consistently by the Pakistani leadership following the May 1998 tests and President Musharraf reiterated the security-driven incentive for Pakistan's nuclear capability – "The rationale underpinning our nuclear pursuits has been purely security-driven." Speech on May 28, 2000, at a function commemorating the 1998 nuclear tests.
4. BJP's election manifesto of 1998 declared the intent of giving "India a role and position in world affairs commensurate with its size and capability." [www.bjp.org/manifesto/chap7.htm](http://www.bjp.org/manifesto/chap7.htm) After the 1998 nuclear tests, prime Minister Vajpayee stated that "India has the sanction of her own past glory and future vision to become strong – in every sense of the word." In an interview with *India Today*, Friday 15 May 1998.
5. According to a Govt of India Press Release entitled *The Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews operationalisation of India's Nuclear Doctrine*, of January 4, 2003, India would not only use nuclear weapons against a nuclear strike against its own territory but would also use nuclear weapons against a nuclear strike on Indian forces "anywhere." Also, it would use nuclear weapons even against a chemical or

- biological attack “against India or Indian forces anywhere” – effectively a First Use principle applicable even against a non-nuclear state.
6. K. Hasan, “India will go beyond geographical borders to protect interests: IAF”, *Dawn*, August 24, 2006.
  7. Foreign Secretary Inam ul Haque, in the CD, Geneva, January 25, 2001
  8. In a rather badly argued and primarily conjectural rather than factual based article, Tom Hundley attacked this development in *Foreign Policy* (September 5, 2012). Entitled “Pakistan’s terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad idea to develop battlefield nukes”, the title itself reveals the subjective bias of the content! This was followed by the nuke gurus of the US think tanks Stimson Centre and Carnegie descending on Islamabad to discuss this development with largely US-sympathetic (and often funded) Pakistani analysts/retired civil and military bureaucrats.
  9. Pakistan tried to move on a number of regional/bilateral fronts in nuclear arms control and disarmament to create strategic stability in South Asia but got no positive response from India. These efforts can be divided into two groups: Pre-1998 tests & post-1998 tests.  
*Pre-1998 tests:*
    - Apart from asking India to simultaneously sign the NPT with Pakistan – which cannot now be done except if there is a provision for the two to sign as nuclear weapon states -there was the NWFZ in South Asia proposal in the UNGA in the wake of the 1974 Indian nuclear tests. India countered this proposal by saying that the initiative for such should come from the states of the region. There was also a proposal for a joint declaration by Pak and

India to renounce acquisition and manufacture of nuclear weapons, mutual inspections of each other's nuclear facilities, and the conclusion of a bilateral or regional test ban treaty.

- Then there were the famous proposals for talks on conventional arms control and disarmament as well as CBMs and nuclear restraint between Pakistan, India, Russia, China and the US (the 5 states' proposal). This was followed by a 5+2 proposal to include UK and France and then there was the 5+2+2 proposal to include Japan and Germany also.

- Pakistan also proposed a Zero-Missile regime for South Asia in 1994.

- Pakistan ratified the International Convention on Nuclear Safety on September 30, 1997.

*Post-1998 tests:*

- Pakistan declared of a unilateral moratorium on testing and offered a regional test ban treaty to India.

- Pakistan proposed a nuclear restraint regime to prevent a missile race as well as nuclear risk reduction and an agreement for the non-induction of ABM and SLBM systems.