

# **The Evolution of Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine**

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### Preamble

A doctrine is the foundation on which organizational and force structures are built. It provides the guidelines for force configuration and the nature, type and number of weapons and delivery systems that would be needed to implement the doctrine. Nuclear weapons are unique since the development of these weapons and even their first employment in war preceded any nuclear doctrine. An alternative view has been articulated by Lawrence Freedman who has argued that strategy for the employment of nuclear weapons existed in the form of the Strategic Bombing Doctrine being followed during the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> Nuclear weapons are generally believed to be weapons of deterrence rather than weapons of war. Interestingly, however, the first use of nuclear weapons was not for the purpose of deterrence but for war termination. Basically, the dropping of nuclear bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was seen as an extension of the strategic bombing campaign. In the immediate post-war period there was a feeling of revulsion towards considering these terrible weapons as useful military instruments and no serious effort was made to incorporate nuclear weapons in the overall military strategy. Whatever, weapons were available were under the control of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) and in the absence of any political guidelines it was left to the discretion of the SAC to formulate a targeting list.<sup>2</sup>

Some serious developments in the international arena such as the Berlin Crisis (1948), the first Soviet nuclear test (August 1949), victory of the Chinese Communists (October 1949), the Korean War (1950-1953) forced a rethink. The Eisenhower Administration's New Look Policy was aimed at avoiding an economic meltdown as a result of the heavy expenditures involved in building up and maintaining large conventional forces to meet the Soviet threat to Europe and other areas of vital US interests. It was decided to exploit the advantage the US enjoyed in nuclear weapons as long as it lasted as the nuclear weapons were seen as a more cost effective option compared to the conventional forces.<sup>3</sup> However, it was not until early 1954 when Secretary of State John Foster Dulles announced the Massive Retaliation Doctrine.<sup>4</sup> As the nuclear powers moved along the nuclear learning curve and the Academic debate on the issue gathered momentum the nuclear doctrines also evolved and became more sophisticated and nuanced than the massive retaliation. The doctrines however, remained dynamic continuously adjusting to the developments in technology as well as the changing nature of the relations between the two superpowers.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategists," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, eds. Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 736.

<sup>2</sup> Colin McInnes, "Nuclear Strategy," in *Warfare in the Twentieth Century- Theory and Practice*, eds. Colin McInnes and G.D. Sheffield (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 146.

<sup>3</sup> Freedman, "The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategists," 740.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> McInnes, "Nuclear Strategy."

In selecting the type of doctrine whether conventional or nuclear the freedom of choice does not lie entirely with the concerned states as they are constrained by their geography, the size of their populations, economic resources including strategic raw materials and the industrial potential. Pakistan for instance, is constrained by its geographical shape, size, location and orientation to adopt a forward defensive posture vis-a-vis India as it does not have the luxury to trade space to gain time especially due to the fact that some of its politically significant cities and strategic communication arteries lie very close to its border with India. Again in terms of adopting a nuclear posture and nuclear use doctrine Pakistan is mindful of India's advantages in the size of conventional forces. As a natural corollary of the desire to deny India the opportunity to exploit this advantage it makes perfect sense for Pakistan to refuse to adopt a 'no first use' nuclear posture.

### **Peculiarities of South Asian Nuclear Environment**

South Asian deterrence situation does not lend itself to an easy comparison with the traditional deterrence model that developed between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact led by the United States and the Soviet Union respectively during the Cold War years. It may be pertinent here to highlight some key characteristics of the South Asian environment which have provided the backdrop to and influenced the doctrinal development of both India and Pakistan. Some of these features are:

- Unlike the US - Soviet rivalry during the Cold War years, India and Pakistan share common borders, have fought three major wars and some minor border skirmishes and have unresolved territorial disputes.
- Both India and Pakistan share common borders with China, another nuclear armed state. This triangular security environment would become more complicated if Iran acquires nuclear weapons.
- There is a considerable disparity in terms of area, size of population, resource base and the size of conventional as well as nuclear forces.
- Indian and Pakistani nuclear forces are still evolving, and would remain vulnerable to a pre-emptive strike either with conventional or nuclear which would enhance uncertainty during a crisis situation and may lead to temptation for such a strike at least in the short term future. It would be immaterial as to whether such a strike would be efficacious or not.
- India has a fairly advanced space program though it is nowhere near the real time capabilities like the US. Pakistan has also re-energized its own space effort especially with the expertise gained through a successful missile program. Pakistan can, therefore, be expected to acquire a limited space surveillance capability in the near to medium term. Despite these efforts, both countries lack real time surveillance, early warning and target acquisition capabilities at present. In the near term this lack of real time ISR will impact not only on their employment options but could have an adverse impact on crisis stability.
- The command, control, communications and intelligence infrastructure will remain susceptible to the threat of a decapitating strike given the fact that the two capitals as well as other major cities and key bases and installations are within reach of either side's land based missiles and aircraft. This vulnerability can be very destabilizing especially during periods of heightened tensions and may give rise to pre-emptive tendencies.

- Both India and Pakistan are striving hard to develop an assured 'second strike' capability. In the short term, deterrence instability will be the likely norm in the region.
- India's well known efforts to acquire Anti- ballistic missile systems, and the strong Pakistani perception that India's fissile material production capacity will get a boost as a consequence of the implementation of the US-India nuclear cooperation agreement, are likely to disturb the evolving strategic balance and could lead to an undesirable nuclear/missile arms race.
- Contiguity of the two countries and short flight times of ballistic missiles are likely to result in hair trigger postures, and may lead to the adoption of Launch-on-Warning strategies once the respective strategic forces are operationally deployed. Due to technical deficiencies in the surveillance and early warning systems this increases the chance of launching of weapons in response to inaccurate or misinterpreted information. The need for the adoption of confidence building and restraint measures therefore. Assumes great significance.
- South Asians have peculiar value systems, emotive tendencies and a proclivity for risk taking. Such tendencies coupled with politically weak governments, can create an explosive mix resulting in uncertainties of responses during crises, highlighting the need for mutually agreed and institutional risk reduction mechanisms. Absence of institutional crisis management mechanisms is likely to result in impulsive decision-making.
- There is a general lack of awareness of the devastating effects of a nuclear conflict amongst the masses on both sides. This ignorance of the gravity of the situation will generate undesirable public pressure on decision makers during crises.
- In Pakistan the military is fully integrated into nuclear command and control, and decision making mechanisms, while in India the armed forces are still kept out of the loop. This may create problems when they are asked to take over the operational responsibility in a crisis situation.
- The non-state actors have also emerged as a factor with a considerable potential to upset the strategic stability given the tendency to hold the governments or governmental institutions culpable for the acts of individuals beyond their control.
- The two sides have not adopted a common strategic lexicon and the leadership in both states have the tendency of making loose statements that may have serious repercussions because it could be easily misperceived by the other side. This kind of miscommunication could be detrimental to peace and stability in an environment already fraught with acute trust deficit.<sup>6</sup>

### **Development of Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine**

Though Pakistan had the advantage of hindsight and a whole body of literature available especially on the development of US and NATO nuclear doctrines its doctrinal development lagged far behind its nuclear weapons development. Thinking on issues related to nuclear doctrine, command and control and safety and security etc was virtually non-existent until after the nuclear tests in May 1998. Given the covert nature of the nuclear program and Pakistan's official stance of denying efforts to produce nuclear weapons, the lack of public discourse on the nuclear issues is understandable. However, absence of any internal debate either within the military or in the civilian bureaucracy is

<sup>6</sup> Naeem Salik, *Genesis of South Asian Nuclear Deterrence* (London: Oxford University Press, 2010): 235-37.

totally inexplicable. Even academic publications or analyses on the subject were missing in the covert period of Pakistani nuclear program.

Pakistan moved very quickly after demonstrating its nuclear capability to formulate its nuclear doctrine and put in place an effective command and control system in a very short span of time. Contrary to the popular belief that Pakistan does not have a nuclear doctrine, in fact it had its doctrine ready well before the Indians had pronounced their draft nuclear doctrine in August 1999.<sup>7</sup> For a variety of reasons, Pakistan has chosen not to publicly pronounce its doctrine. One possible explanation is that Pakistan believes that ambiguity adds to the value of deterrence. Pakistan is the weaker power both conventionally as well as in terms of nuclear assets, so it is in its interest to maintain this ambiguity. One could argue that given Pakistan's geo-strategic environment, ambiguity is desirable. However, it could have declared the broad contours of its nuclear policy that in any case have been stated by Pakistani leaders from time to time. After all India's nuclear doctrine issued by its Cabinet Committee for Security in January 2003 consists of only one page and describes only broad contours of India's policy.<sup>8</sup> Nobody is expected to declare the targeting policy or identify the targets intended to be engaged or when and how the nuclear weapons would be employed in actual operational environment. Maintaining secrecy about these factors would still preserve the ambiguity. That is, however, a political decision which Pakistan may take when circumstances become more conducive.

Another explanation which supplements the first one is as follows. The doctrine was, in fact, ready and had received the concurrence of the military leadership and while the political leadership was also briefed about it in the early part of 1999, the formal government approval was awaited when the whole process was interrupted by the Kargil interlude. Close on the heels of the Kargil Crisis came the pronouncement of the Draft Indian Nuclear Doctrine in August 1999. Despite public urgings by many security analysts in Pakistan it was decided to hold back the announcement lest it be seen as a tit for tat reaction to the Indian announcement. Then the military takeover in October 1999 introduced new dynamics and though the doctrine and the command and control structure were formally approved it was decided to announce the details about the Command and Control Structure only. In 2001, after the 9/11 incident the international environment was not conducive to announce a nuclear doctrine. In 2004, the disclosure of the AQ Khan network brought Pakistan under tremendous pressure that has now turned into a concerted campaign in the Western media. To date, doubts about safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear assets refuses to die down. The continuing war in neighbouring Afghanistan and the deteriorating internal security environments over the past few years have provided no respite. But for this series of adverse happenings Pakistani leadership might have decided in favour of a formal announcement of its nuclear doctrine and lift the veil of ambiguity.

On one issue, though, Pakistan does not believe in keeping any ambiguity. It has stated in clear terms that its nuclear deterrence is India-centric and is driven predominantly by its security concerns. Other

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<sup>7</sup> Author's personal recollection of the post-May 1998 developments.

<sup>8</sup> Jawed Naqvi, "Vajpayee takes over nuclear command," *The Dawn*, January 5, 2003. Also see, C. Raja Mohan, "Nuclear Command Authority Comes into Being," *The Hindu*, January 5, 2003.

advantages such as enhanced political prestige that accrue from the possession of nuclear weapons are peripheral and of secondary importance. Pakistan initiated its nuclear program in order to avoid a possible nuclear blackmail by India. The most critical factor leading to the decision to develop a nuclear weapons capability was the traumatic loss of the Eastern wing of the country as a consequence of the 1971 war with India. Pakistan had entered into the US led alliance systems such as SEATO and CENTO in the mid 1950s, had signed a bilateral defence agreement with US in 1959.<sup>9</sup> Pakistan, however, had deluded itself into believing that its allies would come to its assistance when its security and survival is under serious threat. During the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, China did exert indirect pressure on India, however. In the 1971 war the anticipated assistance from China or United States never materialized. In the aftermath of 1971 tragedy, Pakistan's security managers realized that they can no more rely on any outside assistance and have to stand up on their own feet to defend their sovereignty. They also concluded that in view of the growing disparity in the conventional military capabilities of India and Pakistan it will be well nigh impossible for Pakistan to preserve the integrity and security of the remainder of Pakistan with conventional means.<sup>10</sup>

Any lingering doubts about the efficacy of nuclear deterrence as equalizer were blown away by India's first nuclear weapon test in May 1974.<sup>11</sup> Pakistan has, therefore, sought to achieve the twin objectives of deterring the threat of use or actual use of nuclear weapons by India while at the same time using its nuclear capability as an equalizer against India's conventional military advantage thereby preventing it from initiating any kind of aggression against Pakistan. In this backdrop it is nothing but logical for Pakistan to have refused to espouse a 'no first use' nuclear doctrine because doing that would have negated the purpose of deterring a conventional attack by India. However, it would also be fallacious to believe that Pakistan would start contemplating the use of its nuclear weapons the moment the hostilities commence. Pakistan has enough confidence in its conventional military strength and would therefore not be compelled to decide on an 'early use' of nuclear weapons. But in case the current conventional military balance is disturbed and further tilted in India's favour Pakistan's reliance on its nuclear capability would increase and its nuclear threshold would be lowered which would be a dangerous development.

Another critical factor is Pakistan's economic vulnerability and it could only get embroiled into a costly and debilitating arms race with India at the peril of its economy. It therefore, decided to eschew a nuclear or missile race with India leading to the adoption of a 'minimum deterrence' doctrine. The calculations for Pakistan which clearly has India in its sights are relatively simple compared to India which has been talking of the Chinese nuclear threat as well as nuclear armed navies of the major powers patrolling the Indian Ocean as part of its security calculus. But the problem for Pakistan is that despite India's pronouncement of a 'Credible Minimum Nuclear

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<sup>9</sup> Kail C. Ellis, "Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Alternating Approaches," in *Dilemmas of National Security and Cooperation in India and Pakistan*, ed. Hafeez Malik (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1993), 131-3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-42.

<sup>11</sup> *World Armaments and Disarmament: SIPRI Yearbook 1974*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 16.

Deterrent' the possible size of its deterrence would be 'maximum deterrence' as far as Pakistan is concerned.

Adding to Pakistan's discomfort are India's well known intentions to acquire and deploy Ballistic Missile Defence Systems, the likely boost to India's fissile material production capacity as a consequence of the US-India nuclear cooperation agreement and its fast breeder program. India has also pronounced an aggressive conventional war doctrine called the 'Cold Start Doctrine'.<sup>12</sup> Many Pakistani analysts view India's efforts to acquire a nuclear triad as an attempt to gain overwhelming advantage in nuclear forces in addition to the numerical edge it enjoys in terms of conventional forces balance. They are, therefore, not very comfortable with a Pakistani minimum deterrence if it is maintained at static levels and they reiterate the dynamic nature of the minimum deterrence which is capable of adjusting its size in line with the changes in the strategic environment. This aspect comes out vividly in a joint article published by three senior retired Pakistani officials, former Foreign Minister Agha Shahi, ex Foreign Secretary and future Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar and former Air Chief Zulfiqar Ali Khan. These veteran officials, though they were not privy to the actual policy formulation post 1998, recognized that Pakistan should not fritter away its limited resources on building up an unnecessarily large arsenal by entering into a futile arms competition with India which it cannot hope to win arguing that:

Deterrence was the sole aim and a small arsenal was considered adequate. At no time did Pakistan contemplate use of nuclear weapons for war fighting or seek to develop capability for a pre-emptive attack. Apart from the obvious constraint of resources, it was not so unrealistic as to entertain such thoughts. India is too large and too well armed to be vulnerable to a disabling strike. Besides, any such attempt would provoke retaliation with disastrous consequences.<sup>13</sup>

This line of argument clearly indicates a rational and realistic approach to deterrence, discarding any notions of a futile arms race with India or the temptation to build up an arsenal in excess of Pakistan's legitimate security needs. However, these analysts have refrained from suggesting any numbers to quantify the size of Pakistan's nuclear forces. In fact, they believe that 'minimum deterrence' is not an abstract number, which remains constant for all times to come, but rather a dynamic concept capable of changing with the changing circumstances. They believe that the efficacy of Pakistan's deterrent can only be maintained by keeping the size of the force flexible, explaining that:

Minimum deterrence has been and should continue to be the guiding principle of Pakistan's nuclear pursuit. Of course minimum cannot be defined in static numbers. In the absence of mutual restraints, the size of Pakistan's arsenal and its deployment

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<sup>12</sup> Walter C. Ladwig, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars," *International Security* 32, no. 3 (Winter 2007/2008), 158-90.

<sup>13</sup> Agha Shahi, Zulfiqar Khan and Abdul Sattar, "Securing Nuclear Peace," *The News International*, October 5, 1999. P.R. Chari et al., 190-92.

pattern have to be adjusted to ward off dangers of pre-emption and interception. Only then can deterrence remain efficacious.<sup>14</sup>

Later, speaking at a seminar at Islamabad in November 1999, Abdul Sattar, who was then serving as Foreign Minister in the Government of General Pervez Musharraf, elaborated that Pakistan was compelled to go nuclear to deter aggression and prevent war, and to safeguard its peace and security. Its decision was in no way motivated by any pretensions to great power status or desire for regional domination. He emphasized Pakistan's determination not to get embroiled in a nuclear arms race with India, repeating his earlier statement that:

Minimum nuclear deterrence will remain the guiding principle of our nuclear strategy. The minimum cannot be quantified in static numbers. The Indian build up would necessitate review and reassessment..... But we shall not engage in any nuclear competition or arms race.<sup>15</sup>

A few months later, at an international seminar on the subject of Command and Control of Nuclear Weapons held at Islamabad in February 2000, Agha Shahi, a former Foreign Minister and a senior retired diplomat, invoked the traditional 'action-reaction syndrome' that has dominated Indo-Pakistan relations for more than half a century, arguing that since India wants to keep the size of its minimum deterrent flexible and subject to change with changing circumstances, Pakistan will inevitably have to keep its deterrent dynamic in the same way.<sup>16</sup>

Later speaking at the National Defence College in May 2000, Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar stated that:

For the past decade or so, nuclear capability has been the bedrock of our defence and security policy...its sole purpose is to deter and prevent war. Unlike some other countries, Pakistan neither aspires to great power status or permanent membership of the Security Council nor nourishes any design for regional dominance...We support a global, non-discriminatory international regime of nuclear and missile restraints, voted for the CTBT, will participate in negotiations for FMCT, and are prepared to strengthen our existing stringent controls against export of strategic weapons technology. Our policy of Minimum Credible Deterrence will obviate any strategic arms race...the idea of no-first-use of nuclear weapons needs to be expanded into a no-first-use of force, lest the former should be interpreted to sanction first use of conventional weapons.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> "Pakistan Responds to India's Nuclear Doctrine," *Disarmament Diplomacy*, 41 (November 1999), <http://www.acronym.org.uk/41pakis.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>17</sup> Abdul Sattar, "Foreign Policy After the Cold War," address at the National Defence College, Islamabad, May 24, 2000.



As mentioned earlier though Pakistan has not formally announced a nuclear doctrine, the above statements by Abdul Sattar clearly allude to the salient aspects of Pakistan's nuclear policy which can be summarized as follows:

- Pakistan's policy will be based on a minimum credible deterrence.
- It will avoid getting embroiled in a strategic arms race with India.
- It will continue to support international arms control regimes, which are non-discriminatory in nature.
- Pakistan's nuclear policy will be conducted with 'restraint' and 'responsibility'.
- It will participate in the FMCT negotiations.
- It will refrain from further nuclear testing. However, this commitment is subject to change in case India decides to resume testing.
- Pakistan will strengthen existing controls on the export of nuclear technology through administrative and legal mechanisms.

On other occasions, responsible officials and those at highest levels of leadership have also alluded to some key points of Pakistan's nuclear policy. Former President Musharraf also used the term 'Minimum Defensive Deterrence', which apparently is meant to convey the same meaning as 'Credible Minimum Deterrence', but with an emphasis on the defensive nature of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence.

Pakistani officials have repeatedly stated that Pakistan's nuclear policy is built around the twin principles of '*restraint*' and '*responsibility*', and driven by its security concerns in contrast to India's pretensions to a global power status. Inam-ul-Haq, Former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, further magnified this contrast in the goals and ambitions of the two countries when he declared that: 'Instead of a triad of nuclear forces Pakistan seeks a triad of peace, security and progress.'<sup>18</sup> He went on to suggest a Strategic Restraint Regime involving measures for nuclear and missile restraints, as well as conventional balance. He expressed Pakistan's readiness to enter into reciprocal arrangements with India to agree on:

- Non-deployment of ballistic missiles.
- No operational weaponization of nuclear capable missiles.
- Formalization of the existing understanding on pre-notification of missile flight tests.
- Declaration of a moratorium on the development, acquisition or deployment of ABM systems.

In Inam-ul-Haq's view the three pillars of South Asian peace, security and progress, namely, 'a high level dialogue to resolve Jammu and Kashmir, mechanism to promote trade and economic cooperation, and a 'strategic restraint regime' would complement, sustain, support and reinforce each other.<sup>19</sup> The underlying message in Inam-ul-Haq's statements clearly points to the fact that Pakistan wants to avoid a situation where the strategic forces of both India and Pakistan are operationally deployed and are in a high state of readiness and also takes the destabilizing potential of any

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<sup>18</sup> Inam ul Haq, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan (statement in the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, January 25, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

acquisition and deployment of ABM systems very seriously. It is also clear that Pakistan aims to achieve this objective through reciprocal restraints accepted by the two countries through an institutionalized restraint regime.

### **A Brief Comparison of Indian and Pakistani Doctrines**

India's Cabinet Committee for Security issued a brief one page document on 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2003 which outlined broad contours of India's Nuclear Command and Control and as well salient features of India's Nuclear Doctrine. The brief document reiterated some of the key points already included in the Draft Nuclear Doctrine announced in August 1999. However, it is silent on the status of the Draft Nuclear Doctrine and in case it has been superseded by the new document have those articles of the Draft Doctrine which do not figure in the new document also been abandoned. It may be pertinent here to list the main elements of India's Nuclear Doctrine and then compare these with the publicly stated salient aspects of Pakistan's Doctrine. The January 2003 Indian document enunciates<sup>20</sup>:-

- Building and maintaining a credible minimum deterrent.
- A posture of 'No First Use': nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere.
- Nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be *massive* and designed to inflict unacceptable damage.
- Nuclear retaliatory attacks can only be authorized by the civilian political leadership through the Nuclear Command Authority.
- Non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.
- However, in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons.
- A continuance of strict controls on export of nuclear and missile related materials and technologies, participation in the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty negotiations and continued observance of the moratorium on nuclear tests.
- Continued commitment to the goal of a nuclear weapons-free world, through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

A quick look at the salient features of the two doctrines makes it abundantly clear that while there are many commonalities in these, there are major differences in some important aspects. For instance, both talk about 'Credible Minimum Deterrence', non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states, participation in FMCT negotiations, subscribing to non-discriminatory arms control and disarmament agreements, unilateral moratoriums on nuclear testing and strengthening of nuclear export controls. In terms of differences the Indian Doctrine emphasizes 'A No First Use' policy although it has been greatly watered down by asserting the right to retaliate with nuclear weapons against any use of chemical or biological weapons against India or its forces anywhere. However, Pakistan doesn't subscribe to the No First Use idea and has kept its options open. Again by introducing the clause about massive retaliation against a Nuclear First Strike against Indian territory or Indian Forces anywhere the geographical scope of India's retaliatory strikes has also been

<sup>20</sup> Naqvi, "Vajpayee takes over nuclear command"; Mohan, "Nuclear Command Authority Comes into Being."

expanded. The word ‘punitive’ retaliation against any nuclear strikes against India in the Draft Nuclear Doctrine has been replaced in the new document by ‘massive’ retaliation. It is difficult to ascertain the reason behind this change since massive retaliation in a mutual deterrence situation does not make much sense unless it is being used as a bluster in conjunction with the qualifier – attack against Indian forces anywhere, to prevent Pakistan from contemplating any nuclear use even against the Indian which have intruded into its territory.

### **Objectives Sought to be Achieved by Pakistan Through Its Nuclear Doctrine**

Mindful of its relative disadvantage vis-a-vis India in terms of conventional forces Pakistan has sought to achieve the twin objectives of not only deterring any nuclear threat from India but also to deny India the opportunity to exploit its conventional advantage. In fact, many Indian security analysts think that by undertaking the Shakti series of tests in May 1998 and providing an opportunity to Pakistan to test and demonstrate its own nuclear capability, India has itself nullified its superiority in conventional forces. This conclusion has, therefore, led to the debate in India on the possibility of fighting a ‘limited conventional war’ under the nuclear umbrella.<sup>21</sup> The failure to actualize this concept during the 2001-2002 military stand-off led to further debate within the Indian military which in turn led to the enunciation of the ‘Cold Start Doctrine’.<sup>22</sup> However, the implementation of this doctrine is also fraught with serious risks and provides no escape from the omnipresent danger of nuclear escalation.

Another advantage which Pakistan can derive from using its nuclear weapons to deter aggression at all levels will be that it would not be forced to stretch its already strained economic resources to catch up with India’s conventional force levels as long as it can maintain a manageable ratio of forces. Manifestation of this economic dividend is already visible since Pakistan’s defence expenditure in terms of percentage of GDP has declined over the years from over 5% to around 3.5% during the last decade.

By keeping its nuclear use options open and refusing to subscribe to the Indian offer of a ‘no first use’ Pakistan has sought to curtail India’s conventional force options and countered India’s no nuclear first use offer by proposing a no use of force agreement.<sup>23</sup> Many respected analysts have also discounted the value of any ‘no first use declaration’. Bharat Karnad, a former member of India’s National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) that formulated India’s Draft Nuclear Doctrine, has characterised the ‘no first use doctrine’ as merely a hoax, commenting that, *‘it is one of those restrictions which countries are willing to abide by except in war.’* Karnad went on to corroborate his views with quotes from Herman Kahn who had stated that, *‘No first use just stops where war begins’* and from another highly regarded strategic expert Michael Quinlan who calls it, *‘political posturing*

<sup>21</sup> V.P. Malik, (presentation at Strategic Stability in South Asia, Center for Contemporary Conflict, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, June 29-July 1, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Ladwig, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars.”

<sup>23</sup> Sattar, “Foreign Policy After the Cold War,”.

*that cannot alter strategic reality*'.<sup>24</sup> In the light of the foregoing arguments, besides the conventional military balance, would it be fair or even realistic to expect Pakistan to espouse a 'no first use doctrine' especially when India never gave any credence to a similar declaration by China.

Many Indian and Western security analysts as well as some Pakistani scholars have also ascribed another objective to Pakistan's nuclear doctrine and believe that Pakistan has used its nuclear capability as cover under which it could conduct sub-conventional war against India in Kashmir. They argue that planners of the Kargil conflict had calculated that India's options to respond to this action would be constrained by Pakistan's newly acquired nuclear capability. This line of thinking gained support from senior US government officials such as Bruce Riedel who explained in an article written for the Center for Advanced Study of India at University of Pennsylvania, that Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was confronted with information gathered by the American intelligence agencies that Pakistani military was preparing its nuclear weapons behind his back.<sup>25</sup> This author with his personal knowledge of the situation at the time considers this claim as outlandish and incredible and the same has been rubbished by highly placed officials in the Pakistani nuclear establishment.<sup>26</sup>

There are many cogent reasons for debunking these claims. Firstly, Kargil happened too soon after the nuclear tests in May 1998 and the leadership both military and civilian on both sides had yet to absorb the implications of overt nuclearization of India and Pakistan. Secondly, the nuclear forces had not been operationalized on either side by that time. This argument can be corroborated by the fact that India conducted the test of its *Agni-2* medium range missile after almost a decade's hiatus in April 1999 and Pakistan responded within days with the second test firing of its *Ghauri* MRBM followed by the first flight test of its solid fueled *Shaheen* missile.<sup>27</sup> All this was happening while operation in Kargil was already underway and clearly shows that key nuclear delivery systems were still being tested and were nowhere near induction in the strategic forces. Thirdly, a very small proportion of the respective armies were engaged in operations in Kargil, while a part of Indian Air Force took part in the operations Pakistan Air Force did not participate in the operations. The strike forces had not been mobilized on either side and there was no reason for anyone to press the panic button and start moving nuclear forces assuming they were operationally ready. Finally, it is also very doubtful as to whether the nuclear factor had weighed in the calculus of the planners of the operation since the senior military leadership was briefed on the nuclear doctrine and the proposed command and control structure in February 1999.<sup>28</sup> It is obvious that the planning for Kargil had preceded this briefing and had they taken into account the nuclear factor they would also have anticipated the very strong and adverse reaction of the international community.

<sup>24</sup> Bharat Karnad, "A Thermonuclear Deterrent," in *India's Nuclear Deterrent*, ed. Amitabh Mattoo (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1999), 113-26.

<sup>25</sup> Bruce Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House," Center for Advanced Study of India Working Paper (May 2002), 12-13, <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/rib02/>.

<sup>26</sup> In an interview with the author in 2002 after the publication of the Riedel story, Lt General (ret) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, DG SPD, rubbished the idea of any nuclear moves as ridiculous.

<sup>27</sup> Nasim Zehra, "Pakistan has no choice but to bolster its security," *Gulf News*, April 16, 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Author's recollection of the events.

### **Likely Targeting Policy and Delivery Systems**

Since Pakistan relies heavily on ambiguity in its nuclear posture to keep the other side guessing it would be too much to expect from Pakistan to give any clues to its targeting philosophy. However, given the likely size of its arsenal, limitations of the target acquisition and surveillance capabilities and given the historical precedence of the policies of major nuclear powers at similar stages of development it can be assumed that the targeting policy would be predominantly ‘counter value’ or ‘counter city’. However, a mix of some ‘counter force’ targets should also be expected for achieving maximum effect as well as to complicate the calculations of the other side.<sup>29</sup> Pakistan has made great strides in terms of development of its missile systems and possesses ballistic missiles with ranges from 100 kilometers to over 2000 kilometers. It has also successfully developed ground launched as well as air launched cruise missiles. It has thus achieved the reach and flexibility in the choice of launch platforms required to engage targets anywhere in India. Pakistan also has aircraft capable of undertaking nuclear delivery missions but ground based missiles are likely to be the primary carriers of nuclear warheads.

Ultimately, every nuclear power would strive to have a triad of nuclear delivery systems in order to achieve an assured second strike capability. But that is not a simple matter of wishing to do something and would be dependent on success in mastering a number of sophisticated technologies such as development of nuclear powered submarines which require miniaturization of nuclear power plants – a no mean task and the development of Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) with requisite range and payload capability. Though India has succeeded in building an indigenous nuclear powered submarine named ‘*Arihant*’ after an effort spanning over a decade, it will take some years before the submarine currently undergoing sea trials would become operational. India has also started testing the SLBMs for deployment on *Arihant* but these are still at an early stage of development. Similar Pakistani efforts are also likely to be protracted and costly. As and when these efforts bear fruit these would enhance the credibility of Indian and Pakistani deterrent capabilities by providing them assured second strike capabilities on the one hand while on the other they would pose a serious challenge to the assertive and centralized command and control system currently being practiced by the two countries.

### **Nuclear Posture, Force Configuration and Strategy for Conduct of Nuclear Operations**

The doctrine also dictates the posture and size of the arsenal which in turn will determine the kind of nuclear operations that could or would be carried out. Since Pakistan has not adopted a ‘no first use’ policy and has espoused a ‘Credible Minimum Deterrence’ doctrine, these factors will determine the nuclear posture and operational strategy. Rejection of a no first use policy would mean that while Pakistan may not adopt a hair trigger posture it would have to maintain a comparatively higher degree of readiness of its forces. From the logic of conventional force ratios as well Pakistan is more likely to be the first to be forced to contemplate the use of its nuclear assets in a major conventional war with India. Minimum deterrence would mean that the overall size of the arsenal would remain

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<sup>29</sup> This conclusion is purely theoretical and has nothing to do with the actual operational planning or targeting philosophy.

modest though the qualifier 'credible' would mean little more than minimum to achieve a comfort level. However, the technological deficiencies in terms of real time surveillance and target acquisition coupled with a small nuclear force would dictate the adoption of a strategy of deterrence as opposed to a war fighting strategy. In such circumstances it is natural to opt for a counter city policy, however, engagement of some critical counter force targets will have to be part of the targeting list for greater effectiveness, degradation of enemy's response capability and complicating its calculations.

Pakistan like India has refused to declare the size of its minimum deterrence force but that does not mean that it has not quantified the size of force it is striving to achieve and for the purposes of operational planning. As discussed earlier whatever developmental goals Pakistan determined for itself and production targets it assigned to its strategic organizations are bound to be subjected to a constant process of review and adjustments where needed to meet the ever changing security and strategic landscape. In any case 'Minimum Deterrence' is a very abstract concept and there is no clear definition or a yardstick to measure the size of any country's minimum deterrence force since there are many imponderable factors and is liable to be influenced by the developments taking place on the other side of the fence. For instance, Pakistan is convinced that the US-India nuclear cooperation agreement will allow India to substantially increase its fissile material production capacity which will compel Pakistan to review its earlier calculations. Similarly, if India goes ahead with its planned acquisition and deployment of Anti Ballistic Missile systems Pakistan will certainly need to take qualitative as well as quantitative measures to respond to this development. India also has a declaratory policy of minimum nuclear deterrence but unlike Pakistan it has not identified the threat at which this minimum deterrence is aimed at. Even if it is minimum deterrence both China and Pakistan the size of the force would still be relatively modest. The question however, is that will India's global power ambitions be satisfied with a force smaller than China's nuclear forces. Ashley Tellis has argued that if India increases the size of its nuclear force to catch up with China it should not be seen as a negative development rather US should be facilitating such a development.<sup>30</sup> Indian analysts such as Bharat Karnad advocate even more ambitious goal of a force based on 400 thermonuclear warheads and ICBMs capable of reaching the US mainland and able to deter even the United States.<sup>31</sup> The question may arise as to whether such a force structure would still fall in the realm of 'credible minimum deterrence' or would it be far in excess of that. Karnad has, in fact, ridiculed the notion of minimum nuclear deterrence citing Herman Kahn's statement that, '*It is a new kind of Maginot mentality*' in support of his argument.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

During the last decade as Pakistan has visibly made substantive progress in terms of development of institutional mechanisms and structures for the effective management of its nuclear capability and has invested a lot of effort including collaboration with foreign countries and international agencies

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<sup>30</sup> Ashley Tellis made these remarks during a debate with George Perkovich in 2006 at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C. on the issue of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement.

<sup>31</sup> Karnad, "A Thermonuclear Deterrent."

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

in improving the custodial controls and security of its strategic assets. It has also put in place legislative and administrative measures to strengthen its export control mechanisms. In parallel to these developments a lot of institutional learning has taken place in the form of thinking and in-house discussions on doctrinal and operational issues including war gaming of various scenarios and enhanced cooperation between the three services and the National Command Authority.

The military training institutions have during the past decade laid greater emphasis in educating the officers in issues related to nuclear deterrence and nuclear strategy. The fact that the Pakistani nuclear doctrine has not been made public does not mean that it has not evolved over the years. In reality, the doctrinal thinking has matured over the years and the lessons learnt from the experiences of the Kargil conflict and the 2001-2002 military stand-off have been taken into account. A decade plus is not long enough to completely resolve intricate issues which could never be satisfactorily resolved by the Super powers during the four decades of the Cold War. In any case doctrines do not remain static and have to be dynamic to adapt themselves to ever changing security environments as well as technological developments. One thing is for sure, however, that though Pakistan is still on the nuclear learning curve, it has covered a lot of ground since May 1998.