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The Evolution of Pakistan's Nuclear Policy: From Security Dilemma to Strategic Stability

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan's nuclear policy has evolved significantly since its inception, driven by regional security dynamics and geopolitical challenges. The 1998 nuclear tests marked Pakistan's formal entry into the nuclear club, a response to India's tests and perceived existential threats. Rooted in a security dilemma stemming from the Indo-Pak rivalry, Pakistan's nuclear program transitioned from a focus on minimum deterrence to full-spectrum deterrence under General Musharraf, aiming to balance India's conventional and nuclear superiority. Historical milestones, such as the 1974 Indian nuclear test, accelerated Pakistan's pursuit of nuclear capabilities, with clandestine collaborations and technological advancements playing pivotal roles. Internationally, Pakistan's nuclear policy has been shaped by treaties like the NPT, though it remains outside the framework, citing regional asymmetries. Domestic factors, including civil-military relations and political discourse, further influence its nuclear posture. Despite concerns over proliferation, Pakistan has emphasized nuclear security through robust command structures and safeguards. Strategic stability in South Asia remains elusive, with ongoing arms races and mistrust complicating efforts for crisis stability. The document underscores Pakistan's nuclear trajectory as a blend of defensive pragmatism and strategic necessity, highlighting its role in regional deterrence while acknowledging unresolved challenges.

Keywords: *Pakistan, Nuclear Policy, Security Dilemma, Strategic Stability, Deterrence, India-Pakistan Rivalry, Nuclear Proliferation, Full-Spectrum Deterrence, Cold War Legacy, Regional Security*

Introduction

In 1998, the status as a nuclear power of Pakistan was confirmed with the holding of seven nuclear tests on 28 May at Chagai test zone in the territory of Balochistan province (Futter and Futter2021). Utilization of nuclear armaments is supremely significant in South Asia, given the particular scenario that has emerged in this zone. The nuclearization of South Asia started to accelerate in 1998 when nuclear tests were carried out by both India and Pakistan. Such a scenario has set a conundrum for strategists both in South Asia and across the world who are under obligation to find accurately stable collective processes, and to construct stable strategic settings globally, in which the possibilities of purported use of nuclear weapons are scarce. Nuclear policy is primarily used to bring stability in a particular region, but it also pledges deterrence. Consequently an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth pursues.

Often nuclear policy is construed in the light of security compulsion and focus has been to bring stability to the region. One of the best templates of examining security at the strategic levels is to interject and appraise the reciprocity and process of relations between two state machines globally. For example, during the cold war era, the sole objective of former Soviet Union and the US was to avoid a nuclear war and not to diminish their nuclear arsenal. Bilateral Security was formulated through a doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD) that develops from targeting to counter targeting with the advent of new technology (Behravesh, 2025). As a consequence, both states raked up their nuclear arsenal. Native weapons and sophisticated technology has been developed that could defeat and nullify the ballistic missile defence system of adversary (H. Cassidy, 1989). The edifice of a New World Order is purported to have been made, but the New World Order in conformity with the new concepts of global apartheid.

Historical Context of Nuclear Policy

In Pakistan, the most radical changes in nuclear doctrine occurred during the Musharraf years. The primary reason for changing nuclear doctrine was based on the geopolitical and strategic changes post-2001 because of the 9/11 attacks. Previously during the Cold War times, Pakistan perceived a conventional threat from its neighboring countries, but after 1989 there was a policy change in the larger South Asian region. As the Indian part became visible in the world as a growing economy and potential super power consequently both countries (Pakistan and India) engaged into a dangerous nuclear race. There was an apprehension that Pakistan may opt to lose nuclear weapons because its much inclined to changes in order to gain financial benefits. This was the reason that first policy of minimum deterrence decided in the early 90s by the Nawaz Sharif Government and then revitalized in the Musharraf years through its NCC, which was replaced into full spectrum deterrence. Pakistan has developed its nuclear capabilities substantially to embrace the new concept of full spectrum deterrence with the installation of strategic ballistic missile. These changes in nuclear strategy were made by keeping to maintain a regional strategic balance and stability (H. Cassidy, 1989). In this context, during 1998 when Pakistan tested five nuclear explosions, it had stated that it was the only way to keep strategic balance and deter any armed conflict within the region. So, the evolved nuclear capabilities attributed both minimum and full spectrum deterrence policies.

These changes were also driven back into Sino-India agreement 2005 in which Indian and Chinese governments increased their defense cooperation. As China is a rising power so by keeping mind all above factor, several alternative strategies have been employed by Pakistan, both verbal and material. Pakistan proposed a nuclear restraint regime to India consisting of several measures. This was rebuffed. Pakistan subsequently conducted five nuclear tests on May 28 and 30, 1998 matching the tests conducted by India earlier in the month. The tests were authorized in response to credible intelligence that India was planning a preemptive attack to destroy Pakistan's nuclear capability (Ali & Sidhu, 2024). This has been stated in the official press statements following the tests, but not before when negotiations were taking place with the United States in order to avert the tests. Military modernization was accelerated following the tests, in a variety of fields including armored forces, artillery and air defense as well as continued improvements in air power. An intensive effort was made to allay concerns about the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear assets. New nuclear command and control arrangements were put into effect, as were all necessary physical security measures to safeguard the nuclear weapons.

- **Pre-Independence Nuclear Aspirations**

Founded on August 1947, modern day Pakistan is a byproduct of a tumultuous partition plan of South Asia by the British Raj transformed into mutually hostile India and Pakistan with Kashmir as its common bone of contention. The original idea of subsequent idyllic relationship between the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan after they emerged as two sovereign states from the ruins of the British empire always remained a chimera. The riveting animus between them was set early on and has come down to the present as more or less perennial setting in. Thoroughgoing discord and distrusts vis-à-vis each other's designs pushed both India and Pakistan, the dominant states born out of the dismantling of the imperial dominion, into an arduous process of conflict, militarism and rancor since their respective what they call Independence. India till 1974 was officially non-Nuclear weapons State as per the prescription of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968 (Ahmed et al., 2022).

The nuclear disequilibrium between two countries after the Indian nuclear explosions in 1974 accentuated Islamabad to start an indigenous nuclear program. However, it was open secret for experts as well as rival India that Pakistan had its secretive nuclear program in the making since early 1970s. The inexorable reality that is usually glossed over pertains to the fact that Pakistan resolved to move towards atomic weapons the day Delhi had successfully detonated the nuclear device (H. Cassidy, 1989). The nuclear realities of Pakistan's involving are accompanied from the perspective of a security dilemma those inextricably linked with the geostrategic environment that went into the making of it in the critical years of the Cold War. The trajectory of Pakistan's nuclear trajectory from security dilemma to strategic stability is seen as a complex interplay of ideational and material factors. The idée fixe of nuclear weapons realization subsumed in security dilemma went hand in hand with the imperatives of a difficult ensuring its survival became the bedrock of Pakistan's national nuclear strategy (Khan et al.2024). But it is also maintained that ideational and material evolution led Pakistan also to come out of the fetish and gave way to cogently confined and plausible nuclear doctrine based on strategic stability. That imposing arsenal denominated as the minimum credible deterrence, the concept came to be firmly institutionalized and enunciated by Pakistan in late 1990s, made it the most sensible and responsible possessor of nuclear weapons. The necessary corollary of Pakistan's matured nuclear doctrine with minimum credible deterrence as its lynchpin element and the deterrent of the first choice comprising all the domains is warranted to enhance regional security and stability is more vigorously eloquent in the operationalisation of deterrence in doctrinal usage and in multitude CDAs as well as missile technology.

- **Post-Independence Security Concerns**

After independence, neither India nor Pakistan considered the prospect of going nuclear; in fact, the latter initially expressed deep and genuine scepticism about the nuclear weapons capabilities in South Asia. This public stance, notwithstanding, at Kundah Creek near Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu, India carried out its first peaceful nuclear test – Smiling Buddha – allegedly described as peaceful at that time by Mrs. Indira Gandhi at 8:05 hours on May 18, 1974 (Sood, 2022). This was a surprise both for Entente Cordiale, as this device was detonated without previous knowledge being made available from western intelligence sources and also the public-the Pakistani populace who were completely taken aback by the test. The nuclear weapon program pursued by New Delhi, which rendered it the 6th nuclear state of the world, was primarily driven by security paranoia vis-à-vis China but with possible ramifications for Pakistan and other states in the region. Given past military alterations, India's nuclear tests in 1974 propelled its monolithically inclined arch-enemy towards the ominous task of producing suitable nuclear capabilities to complement the convergence of ever-voracious Indian regional ambitions. Pakistan's hastily pursued nuclear weapon project, unveiled on 28th of May, 1998, was essentially the outcome of the shaky security calculus discerned by country's military-political apparatuses – a function not only of the insatiable imperatives forwarded by India but also due to an expanding security architecture superimposed by India as a consequence of which Pakistan's threat perception particularly in the realms of war and conflict had considerably increased. For it, the bane of nuclearization, ab initio and ex post facto alike was India's voluminously documented obsession with regional power and hegemonic geo-strategy in the lure of realizing the enshrined mission of Bharat-Terk-e-Hindostan. This one-pointed obsession of dominion was overtly translated into becoming a reality vis-à-vis a chain of compendious doctrines, strategies, doctrines, policies, arms-racing, national security obligations and ego-trips manifesting themselves as the "godfather" syndrome vis-à-vis smaller states to seek their benign subordination (Huque, 2010).

The aftermath of India's transformation was evident in its acquisition of advanced subsonic maritime strike fighter aircraft for the navy's 'Hawks' wing. Pakistan recognized India's preparations to potentially block the Nasir Strait and repeatedly warned relevant authorities, but these concerns went largely ignored. The rapid pace of India's military acquisitions and increased maritime cooperation with select states led to the purchase of effective missile systems for the navy, clearly indicating a strategy that positioned Pakistan as a primary adversary and destabilized the Arabian Sea's naval balance. Pakistan then sought to develop a sea-based deterrent, aligned with its doctrine of credible minimum deterrence, which became partially realized with the hypothetical testing of a nuclear-capable missile under conditions similar to Chagai-I. Although India's fears lacked direct confirmation, Pakistan's admission in May 1998 served geopolitical purposes, aiming for stability in a volatile region. Islamabad's deliberate low profile was an attempt to avoid angering international powers over this sensitive issue (An, 2021). The Foreign Office emphasized the importance of maintaining ambiguity, securing data, and fostering stability during post-nuclear discussions with key nations. Pakistan's continued commitment to a moratorium during the 1990s and adherence to the principles of the 1999 draft restraint agreements and 'no first-use' policies aimed to prevent nuclear conflict, ensuring that in any conflict, the ultimate weapons of both nations would remain unused.

The Development of Nuclear Capabilities

The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) was founded in 1956 and is now solely responsible for managing the country's civil and military nuclear development programs (H. Cassidy, 1989). Early assistance came from the United States under the "Atoms for Peace" program, in which developing countries could purchase nuclear research reactors for use in medical and agricultural research. The United States and Pakistan also signed a nuclear cooperation agreement in 1955 that sent Pakistani scientists to be trained at universities and nuclear research facilities. This latter example of assistance, in which trained Pakistani scientists could contribute little directly to add to an existing program, was eventually halted in the early 1960s.

Work on developing a more advanced uranium enrichment program also began in the 1970s. At the Kahuta Research Laboratories, two centrifuge plants were built under the supervision of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, a German-trained metallurgist. According to today's estimates, Pakistan has 40-50 kilograms of HEU, enough for four to six rudimentary nuclear weapons (Fiedler, 2012). Underlying India's insistence on maintaining a nuclear-weapons option are potential nuclear threats from China and anxieties about intervention in South Asia,

coupled with India's aspirations to be a regional superpower. India's view of itself as a leading regional power is in large part a function of population and geography.

Strategic Stability in South Asia It is difficult to assess which description of the region is more accurate, but there seemed to be an inner logic to India's assertions that it was in a region without an Arab-Israeli style conflict. Rather, the security competition seemed to be more driven by India, which sought military parity with China and demonstrated nuclear weapons capability with China. Modified beyond local context, the phrase "deep hatred" in which Indian society and military think of China can describe the security mindset of the country. Of all the potential regional security dilemmas in the world, it is hard to picture a pair worse than India and Pakistan in terms of objective thresholds for a conventional war to escalate into nuclear exchange.

- **Early Nuclear Research and Development**

Pakistan's Nuclear Program began as early as 1956 when Dr. I.H. Usmani, the then Chairman of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), made his first appearance at the International Conference in Geneva on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy. The main agenda of the conference was to help the non-nuclear weapons states in acquiring peaceful uses of atomic energy including nuclear power plants. Under Atoms for Peace, Pakistan signed bi-lateral and multilateral agreements and after that, the US would train Pakistanis in nuclear engineering and some components of various levels; but the US refrained to do so citing Pakistan's political situation in the 1970s (Azad and Shahid2021). US intelligence concluded that the Pakistani Nuclear Program began in 1974 and at this time the US and the Shah, who were the only nuclear suppliers to Pakistan, both should cut off their assistance, which would have successfully placated India and started to push Pakistan into the US orbit. But the Shah, looking after its regional power status, refused to do so. Therefore, to take a decision, CoCom set up two sets of guidelines in that period to evaluate and report the allegations of the US on proliferation or the violation of the pledges of signatories of ET and NPT. These guidelines were reasonable safeguards on NSG supplies, investigation of suspicion of weapons-related activities, and suspension of further supplies to a country found guilty of any form of violation (Burr, 2021).

The work on the enrichment began in early stages within PAEC, where personal questions were subsidized for the project selected within remote locations of the country. At that time, such questions were thought to be nonsense as ZAB was not in power, and not even a significant politician of the country. Soon after ZAB came into power, Mr. Bhutto shifted those projects from remote locations to PAEC headquarters and asked for the designs of the enrichment plants. The PAEC engineers devised a story that would need 20 years after the Head of State/Prime Minister directives to actually start the centrifuges to enrich the uranium. The plan then was to delay the work on the actual plants, accumulate US, CANDU, and French enrichment equipment which they could switch on at short notice. Meanwhile, they assumed, the threat of war with India would subside, the US concern would disappear, and no one would be any wiser because otherwise the enrichment plants had only been used with inactive or non-sensitive isotopes. While the enriched strategic weapon-grade uranium had been used in the research reactor R-1. At the same time, they transferred the sensitive material of KRL control because nothing would suggest weaponization (Clary, 2022).

- **The 1974 Nuclear Program Acceleration**

During the tenure of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, after the separation of East Pakistan, Pakistan accelerated its nuclear program by entering into a clandestine agreement with China and setting up an enrichment facility. After coming to power, Prime Minister Zia-ul Haq expanded the Kahuta plant's facilities to produce weapons-grade uranium and authorized the construction of a weapons design laboratory in the early 1980s. It is generally believed that Pakistan tested a nuclear device in collaboration with China shortly after India conducted a similar test. The direct consequence of the Pakistani tests was that Pakistan emerged as the world's first Islamic nuclear-weapons state. Pakistan originally justified its nuclear pursuit in response to a nuclear-armed India, but some analysts suggest that Pakistan's nuclear determination against India has at times transcended the security rationale and entered a period of competitive matesearching the submarine (Azad & Sadiq, 2022).

Riding a popular wave of nationalism following Pakistan's defeat in the war with India and the subsequent independence of Bangladesh, Bhutto identified the 'Pakistani nation' as a martial people with a historical affinity for weapon technology. In May, Bhutto orchestrated the dismissal of the Foreign Minister and signed a secret agreement with China drafted jointly by the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and the Khan Research Laboratories headed by Abdul Qadeer Khan. In 1974, India conducted a 'peaceful nuclear explosion,' and Bhutto announced in response that 'Pakistani scientists had created the uranium enrichment capability.' The program was subsequently described as a 'multifaceted, robust, relentless undertaking that aimed for the army to assemble a deliverable nuclear weapon.' After 1974, Pakistan's constructing of the enrichment plant in Kahuta produced weapons grade uranium but without the permission of the IAEA. Along with expanded centrifuge facilities, Pakistan also focused on building a weapons design laboratory to produce an arms-specific blueprint.

Nuclear Policy Frameworks

In the first place, security-enhancing policies will be analyzed, notably conventional weapons policies; second, security-diminishing policies will be examined, with particular emphasis on the development of nuclear weapons capability, and Islamabad's nuclear policies. Islamabad's security dilemmas derive from both the internal and the external environment. Pakistan's domestic disarray has made the country militarily vulnerable. In fact, Pakistan's vulnerability is asymmetrically constructed: it is claimed 1971's defeat was a break-up of the country; economic fragility was the wherewithal for creating security dilemmas. Externally, Pakistan's conflict with India poses the most immediate security challenge. For years, India's regional hegemonic policies have been perceived by Islamabad as threatening. In the non-military realm, Pakistan's security concerns encompass food, energy, compliance with environmental norms, economic growth, poverty alleviation, and health; there is a basketful of unrelated interests for any developing state. Pakistan's economic frailties are conducive to security dilemmas. Furthermore, there are ideological and religious overtones. Though the Prime Minister's initiatives should be welcome, the Kargil episode has demonstrated the difficulties of changing the status quo. Overall, it is held that the prospect for defusing Pakistan's security dilemma looks bleak.

The dawning of this century witnessed rapid changes in non-for and security policies, affecting both regional and global political climates. States utilize force postures and strategies to convey intentions to deter aggression. Any action, diplomatic or military, requires convincing adversaries of the willingness to endure escalation costs. The impact of the September 11th bombings in the United States remains significant, as does the AQ Khan affair, which continues to affect regional and international security. These events prompt new discussions on Pakistan's nuclear doctrine and policy transformations, particularly regarding its strategic relationship with the United States. Following Security Council Resolution 1172 of 1998, Pakistan made unexpected moves to limit nuclear tests, control fissile material production, maintain

a non-deployment stance on missiles, and consider signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and possibly the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state (Hovanisjan, 2024). After September 11th, Pakistan faced a severe security dilemma, risking military intervention and destabilization of the Musharraf regime. Consequently, it aligned with the United States in the War on Terror, gaining military and economic support in return.

The NFU debate has been public since 2010 when the Standing Committee on Defence warned that India's adoption of a similar pledge could have severe consequences. Concerns about NFU have lessened due to its global adoption by reputable states, including nuclear and conventional powers. Analysts have discussed the doctrinal aspects of NFU, especially its significance during the NPT Review Conference. Strong arguments exist in favor of NFU as a policy, suggesting it can prevent conflicts and enhance crisis stability, with a promise of NFU not reflecting passive strategies. Despite the risks of escalation, NFU does not hinder a country's capability for credible conventional defense, and some argue it could even bolster security. India's position remains that its security environment does not allow for NFU, largely due to Pakistani policies influenced by rhetoric and military strength, raising international concerns about Pakistan's commitment to NFU during crises. Recently, however, strategic stability seems to be impacting Pakistan's military perspectives on NFU, marking a shift from the previous opaque debate. Scholars have suggested that India and Pakistan exchange insights on command and control of strategic nuclear weapons. Reports indicate that both nations, despite their large arsenals and mutual suspicion, are not prepared to implement necessary measures for nuclear weapon use (H. Cassidy, 1989)

Impact of International Treaties

Can strategic stability be purchased in the Pakistani market? The argument suggests that military power and political instruments supporting strategic stability are beyond the means of most states, except for Russia, China, and the United States. Opponents of missile defense restrictions claim these limit opportunities for other nations to acquire military technologies that were costly for the US and USSR during the Cold War. Powerful nations can ensure security through more sustainable means. In post-Cold War South Asia, since 1998, both India and Pakistan have conducted nuclear tests, igniting an arms race. This situation followed a failed effort by the US, UK, and USSR to influence power distribution in the region. The article posits that for a state with limited resources seeking strategic stability, having regional rivals with comparable power is disadvantageous. India's nuclear capabilities pose a significant threat to Pakistan, which is economically weaker. China currently supports Pakistan's nuclear ambitions and provides conventional arms. With strategic cooperation, there is a possibility for future Sino-Pakistani partnerships to influence regional power dynamics, potentially excluding covert operations. (H. Cassidy, 1989)

The acquisition of a weapon capability by India first, and then by Pakistan after a few years, has also drawn attention to challenging the very basis of the global non-proliferation regime manifested in the NPT (Baldus et al., 2021). Despite the efforts of the nuclear technology suppliers and the great power pressure on both countries, India by the late 1980s was helping Pakistan build a relatively unsafeguarded fuel cycle for military production (H. Cassidy, 1989). Since that time, the developed countries have been able to bring their weight to bear on the international monetary organizations which, in turn, exert pressure on countries within their clientele not to purchase enrichment or reprocessing equipment nor to facilitate any other activities expressly for the purpose of developing nuclear weapons. Japan, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, in particular, were instrumental in such efforts. But as in the field of export controls on the India subcontinent, export recriminations have had a limited effect and Pakistan has managed to achieve its main objective: it has extracted significant assistance for its military program through the threat, if not always the carrying out, of nuclear tests.

Pakistan's security dilemma with India shapes its nuclear policy, which is primarily defensive. India's missile defense initiatives concern Pakistani strategists, as they may undermine Pakistan's ability to use its nuclear arsenal effectively in a conflict. In response to India's growing strategic capabilities, Pakistan enhances its nuclear arsenal, escalating tensions and prompting both nations to invest in weapons they ideally prefer not to deploy, ultimately leading to instability. Pakistan views its nuclear weapons as essential for maintaining a minimum credible deterrent against India's advanced systems. The legitimacy of Pakistan's nuclear acquisition rests on its need for self-defense in the face of perceived threats (Sood, 2022). As the political and strategic dynamics between the two countries evolve, stability relies on their nuclear capabilities. Since the turn of the 21st century, Pakistan's nuclear policy has transformed, adapting to various challenges to bolster strategic stability in South Asia. Since 1999, Pakistan has declared, tested, and deployed nuclear weapons while engaging in initiatives like the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Although Pakistan calls for restraint and wants all nuclear powers to sign the treaty, it maintains a bilateral stance, waiting for India to act first. After India's tests in 1998, Pakistan decided not to participate in related discussions, deeming the situation "abnormal."

Internal Political Factors

Chakma outlines the Indian policy matrix that affected Pakistan's nuclear weapons decisions. Fiedler traces the paths of India's and Pakistan's nuclear policy divergences. These works inform the assessment of the antecedent factors converging into the 1986 'crisis of norms' in these nations. Aided by a telescopic lens on Pakistan's nuclear policy evolution, a clearer picture of the dynamics in the period of South Asia's overt nuclearization is hoped to be obtained.

NPT norms acquisition was greatly facilitated by the 1986-88 changes in Pakistan's political and security environment, rather than embodied in certain crossroads occurrences. The 'crisis of norms' removed the primary obstacles to substantive bilateral arms control with Moscow. It also eased tensions with other neighbours by underscoring Pakistan's peaceful intentions. The tension generated at the 1986-88 crossroads had largely dissipated over the following years, however. These elements provide a fitting backdrop to investigate the manner in which the role of international pressures was reconsidered, producing the 1993 shift. The textual analysis confirms a swift readjustment of ambition that ran parallel to the abatement of the electoral and proliferation pressures. It suggests that a high-level verification agreement was foreseen as a potential threat, hence the prompt appointment of the Mohtarma Commission. These discussions inform the pros and cons of placing renewed efforts on norm-setting regimes.

- **Civil-Military Relations in Nuclear Policy**

It is time now to examine on what grounds the civilians were calling for further marginalizing the military and the military for interpreting that call as an impermissible incursion into its professional prerogatives. In response to the fears that President Musharraf's so-called "constitutional package" and the National Security Council would permanently install the military as the custodian of the nation's nuclear assets, 135 scholars and opinion makers came together to issue a "Charter of Policy" stressing "that a truly representative parliament alone should decide on national security matters, including the nuclear policy" (S. Khakwani, 2003).

General Musharraf interpreted that as a threat that the United States and India, taking advantage of its convergence of interests with them in the war against the Taliban, might try to seize Pakistan's nuclear armory, believed to comprise about 20 bombs. What had in fact happened was actually more than a mere passive consideration on a vital national issue by the National Command Authority without any prior regular discussion in elected forums. The most serious conflict between the military and the civilians post-October 199, and the most challenging in Pakistan's history, was also seen by some fearfully and others hopefully as a window of opportunity to irreversibly shift the civil-military balance of power in Pakistan.

This time an inexperienced third-time-elected government led by the PML-Q, with the pro-active consensus dialogue process as its newfound strategy, attempted to start broadly deliberating Pakistan's Nuclear Policy to "achieve a national consensus" on it, since "a government of the people, a government by the people, [and] people have to know what the government is doing". The PML-Q leadership believed that given the public mood — fatigue and antipathy toward polarization and confrontation, happiness with the nation's scientific achievement of the 1998 nuclear tests, concern over post-9/11 geopolitics, confidence-deficit in the established leadership of all sectors, desire for external respect, internal stability, and socio-economic development — as well as the desire of transparency about the severely securitized nuclear sector, constituted a unique political moment to engage in the politically hitherto "forbidden" dialogue in Pakistan.

- **Political Parties and Nuclear Discourse**

Various political parties in Indo-Pak subcontinent have had a significant impact on determining the pattern of the nuclear discourse. More than three-fifths of the Indian elite Prime Minister acknowledged in survey that public pressure had been a major reason for initiating nuclear tests. Under mass pressure, the Bharitiya Janata Party (BJP) decided not to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in spite of its inclination to do so. In Pakistan, under public pressure, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto flexed 'nuclear muscle' in an electricity crisis with India in 1990. In terms of militarization and demonstration additionally 9/11 phenomenon forced Pakistan to do 'cold' nuclear tests in 1998. Regional and global forces interactively have shaped Indo-Pak nuclear behaviour. It can be noted that the role political parties have played in both countries in terms of influencing governmental policy on nuclear matters. Andarabi is of the opinion that the position to coalition parties like the BJP on the one hand and the IJI and the IJT in Pakistan on the other, have significantly influenced how these parties perceive their national security concerns. Substantive effort shown by political parties in Pakistan and India to generate the idea that their 'national security' demands having nuclear weapons for policy towards these countries.

In the case of Pakistan, the disputes over Jammu & Kashmir valley have been acute; every time whenever military rulers of India tries to change the special status of this territory, initiatives from the military rulers of Pakistan come into effect for supporting the so-called national liberation movements. Here, the Jadavpoora/Palali and Kargil are two major engagements. Pakistan's nuclear posture in their environment, is also shaped by their perceptual reality, and over time nationalism has come to play a more significant role in shaping its identity as Hindu nation, nationalism is used as both an imperial ideology as well as discourse aimed at creating and preserving homogenized segments. In Pakistan, the establishment of Islam led by Ulemas effectively consolidates the right extremist forces against benign rung of political left and so-called Pro-Soviet forces. In summation, elements of securitization were used at three distinct instances for rationalizing and gaining the population support for countries covert nuclear weapons program (Huque, 2010).

Technological Advancements

After Pakistan's five nuclear tests, it became the seventh official nuclear weapons state, prompting India to react cautiously and increasing concerns over Pakistan's advancements. Diplomatic efforts ensued, aiming for a bilateral nuclear restraint regime. However, five Indo-Pakistani summits since 1947 could not contain the unchecked arms race that began in 1998. The rivalry drew global attention as both nations developed missile and nuclear programs, leading to significant implications regionally and internationally. After India's Pokhran II tests, the launch of Agni-II raised survival fears for Pakistan. To counter India's missile capabilities, Pakistan needed time, resources, and defense technology, which it sourced from China. India's nuclear cooperation with the USA raised alarm in Pakistan, suggesting shifting regional power dynamics and potential NPT accession by India, against its prior stance. Additionally, the BJP's missile defense program threatened regional stability. In response, Pakistan focused on bolstering retaliatory technology and constructing shelters to protect against preemptive strikes, with its development efforts reaching critical stages (Chakma, 2005).

Pakistan's strategic community believes that India's Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) -the new class of nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) program which will be able to launch submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM)- will be the most credible second-strike system (Torres et al., 2012). The ATV concept was funded by the Indian government in late 1998 and given clearance for research by Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee in 2001. The first submarine was designed by the Indians under the project name Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) with 40,000 ton displacement and capable of launching 12 SLBMs. The hull construction for the first symbo-class submarine was started by the Indians in 2007 and it could be commissioned by 2013-14. The second Stennis-class submarine would be commissioned in 2013 and could carry submarine launched cruise missile (SLCMs). In order to overcome India's second-strike capability, Pakistani strategic analysts believe that the best option for Pakistan is to develop the sea leg of the nuclear triad –the SLBM. However, Pakistan does not have the capability to develop a nuclear powered submarine (SNPP) with SLBM. If Pakistan is to check the Indian ATV proposal with its own, sea-launched deterrence, then the submarine would have to launch the nuclear tipped cruise missile (CM) with an easily deniable profile for both the platform of origin and target. The minimum requisite would be a collection of 8 AIP submarines designed for quiet running with about 500 kg warhead range) CM with a solid fuel ramjet to give a range of 1000 km. Cruising at the maximum sustained speed, the CM would have a flight time of around 35 minutes. In comparison with the Pakistani aircraft and land-based missiles that would give the Adakor CM (as it might be known) an entirely different signature.

- **Nuclear Security and Safeguards**

Nuclear security and other security related issues have also been taken care of by Pakistan, both at official as well as at strategic and commercial levels.

Pakistani military has developed a nuclear infrastructure which is highly secured and being placed in hardened and dispersed sites so that it could protect these from any possible pre-emptive attack.

Moreover, Pakistan developed a National Command Authority to ensure the extensive safety and security of this nuclear arsenal. Warheads, as well as other components of the nuclear arsenal, are systematically demated. The weapons-grade cores are stored separately from the non-weapons-grade components of the weapons.

Pakistani nuclear weapons are stored in low state of readiness. The weapons-usable nuclear material is not

stored in the assembled nuclear bombs but is stored separately from the bombs in a non-chilled state. Therefore it will take considerable time to make these live weapons.

Pakistan has also developed a whole national structure to maintain high standard nuclear security in the country. Police security risk response support network has been developed and strengthened at all major nuclear installations.

Moreover, Pakistan has installed 5 layers of security around each nuclear installation. In order to further deceive any probable attempt of large scale nuclear thievery, Pakistani military had a split of nuclear arsenals and the launching codes reside with National Development Complex which is an R and D branch of Pakistan defense system. This makes it almost impossible for any rogue employee to steal or launch a nuclear weapon.

Strategic Stability and Deterrence

The term strategic stability emerged in response to the Cold War threat of accidental or inadvertent nuclear war. More recently commentators and analysts have considered its applicability to the South Asian region and, in particular, the Indo-Pakistani case. The 1998 nuclear tests by India and Pakistan increased the importance of analyzing and achieving strategic stability in South Asia. This occasioned a focus on the risks of escalation during nuclear crises. The strategic stability paradigm has three key implications for South Asia.

To begin with, neither India nor Pakistan subscribe to the view that a stable, crisis-free nuclear detente is possible between them. In part, this is because of differences in perceived security; Pakistan views its strategic circumstance as more acute than does India. Furthermore, it is now broadly accepted that nuclear weapons, by establishing a mutually hostile strategic relationship, tend to decrease the likelihood of conventional war. Those states that, like Pakistan, face sustained conventionally superior adversaries, arguably experience an increase in security from the establishment of nuclear deterrence (Alagappa, 2008). In sum, perceived decreases in conventional military security can lead to a reduction in crisis instability created by nuclearization.

Pursuing its traditional hedging policy, India fears Pakistani nuclear weapons, influenced by conflicts like Kargil and failures in the Cold Start doctrine. This led Pakistan to consider maintaining a No First Use policy for crisis stability. Critics suggest this encourages conventional attacks or a first strike, while India aims to bind Pakistan to a no-first-use commitment. Pakistani analysts perceive this as an imposition of constraints by a superior power, reinforcing Indian beliefs in post-2010 escalation dominance. Consequently, Pakistan questions the credibility of Indian no-first-use promises, hindering crisis stability between the nations.

Conclusion

Since the initial stages of its nuclear policies, Pakistan has come a long way and has developed a robust and stable nuclear weapon programme. That is why the literature which was built up in response to Pakistan's nuclear decisions should be revisited in the backdrop of Pakistan's positive indicators and forward actions. This however does not mean that Pakistan could not do more in the future in order to achieve the ultimate goal of strategic stability in South Asia. Although its overall proliferation record is poor, the press and think tanks of the developed West recently rated Pakistan very high as a responsible state in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540.

Since its last test in 1998, Pakistan did not introduce any kind of qualitative improvement in its nuclear or missile capacity. That is why the Western community also claimed that an increasing divergence was emerging between the civil and military natures of Pakistan's nuclear programme. On May 28, 1998, the day of the nuclear explosions between India and Pakistan, and by classifying the tests as a response to the Indian tests, then Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf said that it established strategic stability in the region. General Khalid Kidwai now reports that it has been achieved after the safe testing of a whole range of nuclear capable missiles by India and the delivery of nuclear warheads by aircraft. However, considering that the stockpiles of fissile material continue to increase, more than 50 Indian SFCs with more than 130 warheads, substantial qualitative and quantitative improvements, and ISR, BMD and ABM systems still have to be introduced by India in the future, would it be correct to claim that it has been achieved? On the other hand the strategic stability as per the definition given by scholars is far too high a threshold given that it is in their own interests to keep it unreachable for Pakistan. Furthermore, models could serve as a far better source for ensuring that strategic stability in South Asia is stable and fool-proof.

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