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Pakistan’s Nuclear First-Use Doctrine: Obsessions and Obstacles

ZAFAR KHAN

Abstract: A close look at the literature on Pakistan’s nuclear weapons doctrine reveals the ambiguity in Pakistan’s nuclear-use options. Pakistani officials and commentators leave open the possibility that Pakistan would use its nuclear weapon first, but it is not clear when, where, or how it would. Others conclude that Islamabad would use its nuclear weapon only as a last resort, but that condition too remains vague. This article examines the puzzle of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons use, demonstrating that ambiguity plays a central role in Pakistan’s nuclear weapons policy, much as nuclear ambiguity exists in each nuclear weapons state’s policy. This article departs from previous research and commentary on Pakistan’s nuclear doctrine by introducing the thesis that Pakistan’s nuclear ambiguity is real, but far from internationally unique. Pakistan, like the USA at the onset of the nuclear era, relies on nuclear weapons for survival. The development of Pakistan’s forces, including tactical nuclear weapons, suggests an emphasis on counterforce targeting. The role of domestic political processes, the civil–military dilemma and its impact on strategic policy in Pakistan, have received considerable attention, but still require untangling. Progress towards no first use probably requires changes to the conventional balance in South Asia, and stronger democratic, civilian rule in Pakistan, free of direct intervention from the army. Finally, global dynamics shaping the salience of nuclear weapons globally cannot be disregarded in any assessment of South Asian and Pakistani dynamics.

The nuclear weapons-use doctrine is adopted to thwart the security threat in order to achieve the political and military objectives. It is viewed that security threat, organizational interests and military biases, national, and global strategic culture are the rudimentary conceptual factors which determine a state’s doctrine of nuclear weapons use. Ambiguity is one of the important ingredients which exists in each nuclear weapons state’s policy structure, written or not, formal or implicit. The level of ambiguity may vary from one nuclear weapons state to another which in turn may be determined by the changed and/or changing strategic environment of that particular region in which a nuclear weapons state located. It extends to fundamental questions of nuclear weapons use, embracing doctrines of nuclear weapons first use (FU) and no first use (NFU).

Ambiguity plays a central role in some nuclear weapons states policy. Some elements of ambiguity may be found in state’s nuclear weapons-use doctrine. Therefore, it may become difficult to determine when, where, and how nuclear weapons states would use nuclear weapons when it is absolutely necessary in order to keep the credibility of nuclear deterrence intact.
Since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, nuclear weapons have not been used for deliberate destruction, though both the Soviet Union and the USA approached the verge of use during the worst of the Cold War. Their risk-taking recalls Lawrence Freedman’s epigram about nuclear weapons: ‘I exist; therefore I deter.’ This formulation depicts the related understanding of nuclear weapons as weapons primarily for political purposes. For Pakistan, this means deterring India from war with Pakistan or compelling rapid de-escalation should war occur. The deterring effects of nuclear weapons are centrally associated with the fear and lethality of the use of these weapons, creating fear of unacceptable risk or unacceptable damage to any adversary.

Although Pakistan has not officially declared its nuclear weapons doctrine, declaratory statements indicate that Pakistan preserves the FU option to deter both conventional and nuclear attacks. Viping Narang terms this Pakistani nuclear behaviour as asymmetric nuclear posture, and at the same time Pakistan could seek the assistance of international community particularly of the USA to help prevent and/or de-escalate the military tension between India and Pakistan before it reaches the nuclear rung. Narang calls this a catalytic nuclear posture. These are close theoretical perspectives with regard to Pakistan’s nuclear posture, but more academic research is required to understand the puzzle when it comes to Pakistani nuclear weapons use.

The FU option is deeply inherited in Pakistani deterrence assumption since the onset of its nuclear weapons programme in the 1970s. This can be assumed from the then Pakistan’s Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s argument that his country needed nuclear weapons to deter both India’s conventional and nuclear attacks. This can also be depicted in the 1990s when it was found that Pakistan attained a nuclear delivery system (F-16 aircraft) which was kept ready if India had carried out air strikes on Kashmir. In the aftermath of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons tests in 1998, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif declared that: ‘These weapons are to deter aggressions, whether nuclear or conventional.’ His statement was widely understood to imply that Islamabad might use its nuclear weapons first to deter potentially all forms of military attack. Islamabad’s FU option was further affirmed when Pakistan’s then Foreign Secretary, Shamshad Ahmed, rejected India’s offer of a no FU agreement, which he described as unacceptable.

Pakistani security planners view FU as an important factor for the country’s minimum credible deterrence. Islamabad viewed that the FU option is cost-effective and consistent with minimum deterrence. At the same time, it was also thought that FU would enhance the credibility of Pakistan’s deterrent forces. Nevertheless, a closer look at the existing literature on Pakistan’s nuclear weapons doctrine reveals the ambiguity in Pakistan’s nuclear weapons-use option. Pakistani officials and commentators leave open the possibility that Pakistan would use its nuclear weapon first, but it is not clear when, where, or how it would. Others conclude that Islamabad would use its nuclear weapon only as a last resort, but that condition too remains vague.

This article examines the puzzle of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons use, demonstrating that ambiguity plays a central role in Pakistan’s nuclear weapons policy, much as
nuclear ambiguity exists in each nuclear weapons state’s policy. The article departs from previous research and commentary on Pakistan’s nuclear FU doctrine by introducing the thesis that Pakistan’s nuclear ambiguity is real, but far from internationally unique.

Although the substance of previous research and commentary on Pakistan’s nuclear use is not challenged here, the title and subtitles are changed. What is unknown is unknown about a state’s nuclear policy unless it is known, but what is known can intellectually be analysed in order to conceptually craft a convincing theoretical construction on the particular puzzle. When, how, and where a nuclear weapons state will use nuclear weapons are seemingly simple questions, but extremely difficult to answer. For example, the USA still keeps open the nuclear FU option, and the American Nuclear Posture Review of 2010 suggests that there are extremis circumstances when American leaders might consider using nuclear weapons first. This ambiguity leaves it unclear when, how, and where the USA would use its nuclear weapons. This puzzle lies with every nuclear weapons state and it confronts the Pakistani doctrinal posture too, which is the focus of this article. Paradoxically, this leads to different scholarly interpretations with varying theoretical and methodological constructs.

This article analyses Pakistan’s nuclear strategy and apparent doctrinal option of FU. It examines why Pakistan maintains a FU option and why it claims simultaneously its policy of using nuclear weapons only as a last resort. Keeping the usability of its deterrent forces, it examines how Islamabad postures for targeting options, that is, whether Islamabad would opt for countervalue or counterforce targeting followed by a critique of these two targeting options. The article also explores the obstacles inhibiting Pakistan from rescinding its FU option, despite the benefits of NFU doctrine.

Pakistan’s Nuclear-Use Doctrine: Ambiguity Between the First Use and Last Resort

It is interesting to analyse what Pakistani security planners, analysts, and scholars think of nuclear weapons use as part of its policy options and what the strategic implications of these policy options are. As part of the nuclear learning for smaller nuclear weapons states, it is equally important to observe the Cold War debate on the first-use (FU) and no-first-use (NFU) nuclear options which indicates that the proponents of an NFU failed to convince the established nuclear weapons states in general and minor nuclear weapons states in particular to rescind the FU to offset conventional vulnerabilities. So long as established nuclear weapons states, particularly Russia and the USA, retain the FU option as a sole military and political instrument, smaller nuclear weapons states may further get influenced by the programmes and policies set forth by the major nuclear weapons states. The doctrinal role of nuclear weapons for deterrence demonstrates the credibility of nuclear deterrence. Both the long-established and more recent nuclear weapons states adopt either the FU or NFU nuclear option to enhance the credibility of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the doctrinal adoption of FU or NFU is to deter rather than wage and win a nuclear war. The development
of nuclear strategy and the doctrinal roles for nuclear weapons during the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the USA impart strong lessons for nuclear newcomers.

In order to sustain a credible minimum deterrent, Pakistan is drawn to FU options. As one Pakistani analyst stated, ‘A quest to ensure a credible deterrent is also a major factor in Pakistan’s refusal to sign a “no-first strike” pact with India.’ According to Rodney Jones, ‘A first-strike doctrine would be chosen not because it could disarm India (this would not be technically plausible), but because it would signify that Pakistani escalation, as a last resort, would be sudden and all out, with catastrophic consequences.’ Almost all nuclear weapons states allow themselves nuclear FU options, except China who has declared officially since 1964 that it will not use its nuclear weapons first. Looking closely at the American nuclear posture reviews (NPRs) since 11 September, one can see elements of American interest of retaining nuclear FU against its adversaries for deterring purposes, though the USA slightly reduced its reliance on nuclear weapons in the 2010 NPR, compared with the 2001 version. Although the USA seems to have reduced its reliance on nuclear forces since the Cold War, and relies on conventional forces to meet the most of the emerging threats, the USA appears to remain unwilling to officially declare an NFU commitment in its next NPR. Other nuclear weapons states do not seem to be convinced by American arms control and disarmament endeavours that might diminish the salience of nuclear forces in the American posture or lead to an explicit NFU commitment. They are waiting to be convinced before following.

Why does Pakistan retain its FU option and why do Pakistani security planners consider this effective, credible, and acceptable when it comes to deterring? The article opens with an assessment of FU options and their politics. It then examines one segment of Pakistan’s declaratory policy, that is, the option of nuclear last resort. It then observes whether or not the ambiguity with regard to two streams of nuclear-use options exists.

The First-Use Option

Pakistan maintains a nuclear first-use (FU) option in order to offset India’s superior conventional forces. As Feroz Hassan Khan stated, ‘Pakistan follows the example of the United States and NATO which follow the FU option. Pakistan cannot rescind the FU option because of its weakness in the conventional forces.’ While the characterization of American doctrine may not be uncontroversial, his assessment supports the general belief that Islamabad may not forswear the FU option because of conventional weaknesses vis-à-vis India. Even India has differing views whether or not it would retain a no-first-use option. Pakistan rejects it, however. In this context, three renowned Pakistani officials Abdul Sattar, Agha Shahi, and Zulfiqar Ali Khan who served Pakistan’s establishment at the higher level stated that, ‘India’s declaration that it would not be the first to launch a nuclear strike is a cost free exercise in sanctimonious propaganda.’ Sattar recently stated that, ‘leadership on both sides of the border need to be rational in their decisions how to use nuclear weapons. These weapons are not for war-fighting rather than for deterring purposes’. Ideally, the root of this argument takes one beyond any use of nuclear weapons. That is, the rationality of nuclear leadership on both sides of the border depicts that nuclear
weapons should never be used in war. The FU option entails uncertainty and ambiguity. It is not certain when, where, and how nuclear weapons would be used.

Pakistani leaders seem convinced that the ambiguity and a doctrinal flexibility of the Cold War era suits Pakistan in its efforts to deter India. Given the conventional differences and geographical disparities, FU options serve Pakistan much as they served American efforts to protect European allies against Soviet’s conventional forces. In a similar vein, Pakistan deliberately retains the ambiguity of its FU options. Pakistani security planners appear to agree that ambiguity also has deterring effects. In the words of an Indian nuclear strategist, ‘in the strategic literature of the fifties, sixties, and seventies of deterrence has been derived mostly from factors of certainty in punishing retaliation. It has been overlooked that factors of uncertainty can also function as a deterrent’ However, deterrent uncertainty and ambiguity could also harm the credibility of nuclear forces at some stage.

To overcome this issue, states could be certain where, how, and when it considers using nuclear weapons. It enhances the credibility and ensures the will to deter. Vijai Nair stated that deterrence requires ‘both the ability and the will to respond promptly’. Nair speaks of both capability and credibility of nuclear deterrence that should be free from ambiguity and uncertainty of deterrence in terms of using nuclear weapons in the event of a crisis. On credibility of nuclear deterrence, Nair stated that, ‘credibility is a function of an unambiguous communication of: a demonstrated capability backed up by a visible production capacity; a competent strategic infrastructure system; and a demonstrated political will to achieve any and all measures to defend the nation’. This stance was confirmed by a Pakistani strategic analyst that, ‘Pakistan needs to unveil its nuclear ambiguity as its nuclear weapons program gets matured. It needs to review its nuclear posture and announce clearly its redlines when to use nuclear weapons to increase its nuclear deterrence capability.’ In a similar vein, a Pakistani security analyst Maria Sultan stated, ‘Pakistan is to make it clear when, how, where, and why it should use its nuclear weapons.’ Can a weaker conventional side be more unambiguous in its nuclear force use? Are redlines essential to be declared? Is it a common practice by all nuclear weapons states to declare redlines? Like other nuclear weapons states, it is not exactly clear when, where, and how Pakistan would use nuclear forces. Some Pakistanis consider that Pakistan should retain the FU option. Others view that nuclear weapons are for deterring purposes. Therefore, they should not be used for war-fighting purposes. Still others consider that nuclear weapons could be used in an ‘extremis condition’. That is, there should be an option of last resort.

**The Option of Last Resort**

Since ambiguity plays a central part of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme, there seems to be a conceptual dichotomy when it comes to its nuclear weapons use. The posture of the use of nuclear weapons first, but as a last resort is confusing and contentious. This raises many questions: What factors will drive Pakistan to use nuclear weapons? Will Pakistan use nuclear weapons first in the event of war, or will it use nuclear weapons as a last resort after exhausting its conventional forces and/or when deterrence fails?
Perhaps,

this perception of the value of ambiguity is debatable given that one needs to communicate the threat as unambiguous as possible in a deterrence situation. Also, fudgy redlines can keep moving further back when it comes to the crunch and in Pakistan’s situation, perhaps a clearly enunciated one-rung escalation ladder – given the prevailing asymmetries – may be more useful. 

This perception becomes challenging as the redline thresholds are not clear-cut as a matter of nuclear policy. Most Pakistani security analysts believe that there are certain circumstances which could cause Pakistan to ultimately use the nuclear weapons as a last resort. In this context, retired air commodore, Tariq Ashraf, conceptually demonstrates certain security threat scenarios that could cause Pakistan to use nuclear weapons, which are as follows:

- Penetration of Indian forces beyond a defined line or river;
- Imminent capture of an important Pakistani city like Lahore or Sialkot;
- Destruction of Pakistan’s conventional armed forces or other assets beyond an unacceptable level;
- Attack on Pakistan’s strategic targets, such as dams or nuclear installations like Tarbela, Mangla, Kahuta, Chashma, etc.;
- Imposition of a blockade on Pakistan strangling transportation of vital supplies and adversely affecting the war-waging stamina of the country; and
- India crossing of the Line of Control to a level that it threatens Pakistan’s control over Azad Kashmir.

Ashraf’s formulation seems vague and carries loopholes which cannot be the actual and optimal nuclear policy option of Pakistan in relation to its nuclear weapons use. It is not robustly clear when and at what stage exactly Pakistan would use nuclear weapons. He does not explicitly explain the parameters of ‘certain lines’ and does not mention which ‘river’ in Pakistan. For instance, when it comes to Indian forces crossing the Line of Control, the whole posture gets blurred because Pakistan’s lack of strategic depth. The Line of Control, moreover, is not mutually agreed. Similarly, Pakistani nuclear leadership may not opt for nuclear weapons use by merely facing a sea blockade. In the event of war, Pakistan could seek economic assistance from the Muslim world such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other Middle Eastern countries connected via both land and sea. This could not severely strangle Pakistan’s economy and its capability for war fighting. The assertion in relations to nuclear weapons use needs robustness and revision.

In a similar vein, Lt. General (retired) Khalid Kidwai, former Director General of the Strategic Plans Division (SPD), stated in an interview to an Italian Research group Landau Network (Ramusino and Maurizio Martellini) that Pakistan would use nuclear weapons when: (a) India attacks Pakistan and conquers a large part of its territory; (b) India destroys a large section of its land and air forces; (c) India proceeds to strangle Pakistan’s economy; and (d) India pushes Pakistan into political destabilization or creates large-scale internal subversion. Given
that Pakistan is a conventionally weak nuclear weapon state, some of the scenarios described by Ashraf and Kidwai make sense for Pakistan’s usability of nuclear forces which indicate the ‘extremis condition’. It is interesting to note that Kidwai denies what the Landau Network asserted. Landau Network’s assertion does not exactly depict the complete nuclear-use scenario Pakistan has kept ambiguous. Therefore, the assertion remains controversial and does not show whether or not Pakistan actually uses its nuclear forces as a last resort. Chakma questions one of the segments of the Network’s assertion: ‘what are the operational parameters of such notions such as political destabilisation, large-scale internal subversion, and economic strangulation... these are subjective notions in Pakistan-India context and may mean different things in different time and situations’. Given the Landau Network’s vague interpretation of Kidwai’s interview, it raises more questions than answers. That is, does any crisis in parts of Pakistan such as political instability, economic meltdown, terrorist acts etc., with suspected involvement of India justify Pakistani use of nuclear weapons in response? These crises have become the daily routine in Pakistan. Terrorist acts and various forms of violence have strangled Pakistan’s economic and political conditions severely which, unfortunately, has put the world opinion on suspicion of survival of Pakistan as a state in general and the safety and security of its nuclear weapons in particular. The contemporary layer of social, political, and economic crises in Pakistan contradicts what the Landau Group asserts in its interview with Kidwai. This injects more ambiguity within Pakistan’s use of deterrent forces. In this context, Kidwai most recently reaffirms the denial of what the Italian Research Group stated. Kidwai stated that there could be no redlines for the nuclear weapons use in the changed/changing South Asian strategic environment.

This further enlarges the level of ambiguity much more when it comes to Pakistan’s perception of its use of nuclear weapons. Such ambiguity in Pakistan’s nuclear use either first or last can still further be assumed in the statement of Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry. For example, Tariq Osman Hyder stated that:

Pakistan has not officially announced that it would first use its nuclear weapons. No nuclear weapon state uses aggressive words when it comes to nuclear weapons use. Every nuclear weapon state says that these are the weapons for strategic peace. However, Pakistan could use nuclear weapons in extremis conditions, that is, against any aggression.

Given the ambiguity, Pakistan’s first-use option becomes widely challenging which may need to be reformulated, revisited, and formally modified, that is, Pakistan may have to come out of its nuclear ambiguity and officially declare nuclear policy. This could have some positive outcomes: first, this would not only help streamline the nuclear policy of Pakistan under the banner of minimum deterrence, but also avert an inadvertent nuclear war. Second, Pakistan may successfully avert the ambiguous Landau Network-type controversial assertions. Third, it would open a debate among the policy analysts both within and outside Pakistan for a more transparent picture on Pakistan’s policy options. Last but not least, it could allow Pakistan to uncover the counterargument about the suspicion on Pakistan’s minimum credible deterrence.
The Pakistani security planners consider and believe that Pakistan could use nuclear weapons, as a last resort, if the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan are threatened. This can be seen in the 2002 statement of Pakistani military ruler Pervaiz Musharraf that:

Nuclear weapons are the last resort. I am optimistic and confident that we can defend ourselves with conventional means, even though the Indians are buying up the most modern weapons in a megalomaniac frenzy . . . if Pakistan is threatened with extinction, then the pressure of our countrymen would be so big that this option, too, would be considered.33

Prior to this interview, the country’s then military President made it clear on 28 May 2000 that, ‘Pakistan’s nuclear tests, after Indian (nuclear) blasts, were to protect its security and sovereignty.’ Pakistan would use all other options in the event of war before considering the nuclear-use option. Thus, the assertion between the two different options of nuclear weapons use makes the usability of nuclear forces debatable.

**Critiquing the Debate: First Use and Last Resort**

In Pakistan, the debate in terms of nuclear weapon use seems deliberately blurred to keep Indian leaders guessing how Pakistan would use its nuclear forces. The consistency of Pakistan’s first-use (FU) option and its renunciation of a no first use (NFU) make it clear that the military relies on nuclear weapons for deterrence. Pakistan’s current preservation and upgradation of nuclear forces become fundamental to the assertion that Pakistan retains its nuclear-use options open. On the other hand, the option of last resort in the given statements of Pakistani leadership and security analysts tend to provide a conceptual analysis that Pakistan may not use nuclear weapons early during a military crisis. This provides the clues on Pakistan’s possible departure from an absolute FU to ‘no-early FU’ which could later incline to an NFU.34 To use nuclear weapons as a last resort means that Pakistan would first try all its conventional capabilities, including the exploitation of the immediate role of international community, particularly of the USA, in de-escalating the crisis. If all these options fail and Pakistan’s security condition reaches the extremis condition and its existence as a state is threatened, then it could think of using nuclear forces. To contextualize this possible scenario, one Pakistan analyst stated that:

Since going nuclear would be an option of last resort, only an imminent scenario of object defeat could force Pakistan to that stage. In this sort of critical situation, Pakistan’s leadership would have exhausted all other options of averting defeat and would have their backs to wall. Also, Pakistan’s nuclear threshold would have been over-stepped by India.35

The role of foreign audiences also must be considered. The international community can be expected to work against the failure of deterrence in South Asia, unleashing a nuclear war. The international community probably would act quickly to suppress any military crisis in which nuclear weapons use seems increasingly possible. However, the danger of inadvertent and unwanted nuclear weapon use exists as long as the nuclear weapons remain in a state’s military discourse.36
Although Pakistan has nuclear forces for deterrence purposes and the possibility of possible FU, it is still debatable whether Pakistan would pursue FU or NFU strategies in the face of future military crisis. Neither Pakistan nor India explicitly used nuclear weapons in any previous military crisis. In past military crises and military exercises, Pakistan used conventional forces and kept its nuclear weapons non-deployed. In the Kargil episode in 1999 and the military standoff of 2001–2003, both sides readied conventional forces and resisted any application of nuclear weapons. We have only weak clues of their nuclear readiness during these confrontations. Pakistan used conventional means, waited for the mediating role of the international community, and especially of the USA, and attempted to use a hotline to avert escalation to a nuclear level. Although the political and military uses of nuclear weapons may have deterring capability, it is not clear whether or not nuclear weapons averted escalation in these crises.

In these scenarios, the role of nuclear weapons, in either FU or NFU doctrines, probably did not amount to much greater significance. Other forces are more unambiguous and tried first. Nuclear weapons or signalling was not used to terminate wars or confrontations. Threats of FU of has not terminated an already-waged war, or been raised as an option in the South Asian region. Many may claim the deterring effects of FU options to avert the war in the first place, however. Nuclear weapon states with formal FU options may not attack first because of the fear of a retaliatory attack with an unacceptable damage especially when an adversary has already achieved a greater strategic depth and the second-strike capability.

In either case, it really does not matter which policy option is codified as the formal doctrine. In the South Asian crises since 1998, both India and Pakistan were deterred reciprocally at the end of the day which, in turn, suggests prevailing rationality despite the tough tone of their relationship. Conceptually, rationality appears to cool down aggressive temperaments and promote stability. A state in possession of second-strike capability and strategic depth deters the other and a conventionally weak state with option of FU, although ambiguous, convinces the opponent not to take excessive risks. Since wiping out a survivable second-strike capability is difficult, a nuclear weapons state in possession of second-strike forces and strategic depth can either renounce FU or limit nuclear options in a military crisis, consistent with Thomas Schelling’s argument that limitation of options can be beneficial for deterrence and stability. But Pakistan needs to posture the use of nuclear weapons, whether or not it would use nuclear forces in the event of a crisis, setting possibilities for counterforce or countervalue targeting, the essential segments of a doctrine of FU.

The First-Use Option: Countervalue or Counterforce Targeting

The utility of Pakistani nuclear weapons is not clearly defined due to the ambiguity of its minimum deterrent. It is not clear whether it would use nuclear forces on population centres or military infrastructure. Nuclear strategy commonly described two basic kinds of planning for nuclear targeting: countervalue targeting includes the
use of nuclear weapons against people and property, and counterforce targeting against an adversary’s military facilities and supporting infrastructure.\textsuperscript{40}

It is uncertain whether Pakistan would opt for countervalue or counterforce targeting in the event of war. However, there are certain factors that might drive Pakistan towards countervalue attacks against its adversary. India has an advantage of greater geographical depth than Pakistan, and most of its weapons are dispersed which, therefore, makes it difficult for Pakistan to opt for counterforce targets. And geographical proximity enables Pakistan nuclear warheads – whether delivered by aircraft or missile – to reach major Indian cities and industrial centres. Thus countervalue targeting becomes a natural option for Pakistan.\textsuperscript{41}

It is relevant to note that Pakistan’s reported development of tactical or battlefield nuclear weapons is considered a reaction to the India’s military Cold Start Doctrine (CSD). For Pakistan, a Cold Start attack might lead to a response with tactical nuclear weapons, if Cold Start forces were launched in limited war. That said, it is uncertain whether the arrival of and dependence on tactical nuclear weapons and a war-fighting doctrine CSD could mark strategic stability in the South Asian region. This reminds one of the American policies of massive retaliation and assured destruction in the first half of the Cold War, which targeted both the cities and major installations of its adversaries.\textsuperscript{42} Pakistan, just like the USA at the onset of the nuclear era, relies much on nuclear weapons when it comes to its survival. Even though the USA planned for counterforce targeting, its declaratory nuclear doctrine exclusively focused on countervalue targeting to deter the former Soviet Union’s conventional attacks, both on the USA, and its allies in the western Europe.

Although Pakistan maintains first-use (FU) options, like the USA did against the Soviet superior conventional forces during the Cold War, it has not declared American Cold War-type nuclear options, such as assured destruction, massive retaliation, etc. These require nuclear bigger forces, beyond its current economic and technological capabilities. It is not clear whether Pakistan would shift from its countervalue targeting as both the nuclear and conventional forces of India grow. Even if there is a policy option of counterforce targeting, India and Pakistan could damage larger cities because most of the air and military bases of India and Pakistan are closer to cities. The academic distinction between the two targeting options becomes uncertain in a real war-fighting scenario. Any use of nuclear weapons either for countervalue or counterforce purposes would most possibly target cities. Pakistan’s nuclear policy remains largely unwritten, closed, and ambiguous. It may be that in light of India’s development of a limited war-fighting Cold Start capabilities and nuclear ambiguity on both sides of the border, and that Pakistan’s tactical nuclear capabilities, that both countervalue and counterforce targeting challenge South Asian strategic stability.\textsuperscript{43}

Critiquing Countervalue Versus Counterforce Targeting

Both India and Pakistan could be self-deterred when each considers seriously using their nuclear weapons for countervalue targeting, due to the environmental repercussions on each side of the border. Their cities are just a few minutes flight apart. The
cost of using these weapons for countervalue outweighs the benefits each side might expect against each other, however deterring these nuclear options may be. Countervalue targeting options also are questionable for Pakistan considering the Muslim population in India. Roughly 220 million Muslims live in India, more than the entire population of Pakistan, currently estimated at 180 million. Chakma questions ‘how Pakistan would carry out countervalue attacks on India given that they (Indian cities) are inhabited by a large Muslim population?’ In a similar vein, democratic and secular India may also be deterred from using nuclear weapons on Pakistani cities because of the implication for its own Muslim population. The Muslim population of both the nuclear adversaries could effectively veto countervalue targeting.45

Counter-city targeting appears to be a self-deterring option for both India and Pakistan. Pakistan needs to address the countervalue/counterforce targets dilemma in its nuclear policy. This seems to drive the concept of neo-culturalism into the limelight of Pakistan’s nuclear leadership when one puts concerns on Pakistan’s nuclear policy of countervalue targeting. As developed in the 1990s, neo-culturalists see domestic constraints on military organization at the time of formulating or modifying the military doctrine; they see normative issues in the limelight of military echelons which influence the military decision in the event of nuclear weapons use.46

It is not clear whether the values of neo-culturalism – which influence state decisions not to use nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons though moral norms – play a major role at the top echelons of Pakistan’s nuclear leadership. However, such norms seem most likely to be accepted when they coincide with realism, especially when the security or sovereignty of a state is not gravely threatened. Realism may undermine neo-cultural explanations when a state’s existence is threatened.

To sum up, it is not clear whether Pakistan would use its nuclear weapons for its survival against countervalue or counterforce targeting since Pakistan’s official nuclear policy is not made public. However, the current expansion and upgrading of Pakistan’s deterrent forces, including tactical nuclear weapons, suggest an emphasis on counterforce targeting.47 Even a counterforce targeting approach may engulf the cities and millions of people could get killed. Counterforce targeting would then appear as if countervalue targeting is carried out. If Pakistan increases its capability in tactical or battlefield nuclear weapons, then it becomes logical that these weapons could be used for counterforce targets – a departure from countervalue to counterforce targeting. Until Pakistan is unambiguous on this stance by making public its nuclear policy, the obstacles for renouncing its first-use (FU) option would remain part of its ambiguous minimum credible deterrence and nuclear doctrinal option of FU.

Obstacles for Pakistan’s Renunciation of First Use

Pakistani officials have indicated that the country follows a first-use (FU) doctrine. At the same time, they have stated that Islamabad would use nuclear weapons as a last resort, which means that Pakistan would use all other options before really thinking of
nuclear weapons use, and that would be the ‘extremis condition’. It is ambiguous and requires elaboration. However, given Pakistan’s conventional weakness and changes in the South Asian strategic environment, many nuclear analysts think that Pakistan may not rescind the FU option. This section assesses the following obstacles for Pakistan’s renunciation of nuclear FU.

Fear of Pre-emption

It is a cliché that Pakistan lacks strategic depth to fully protect its forces from pre-emptive strikes. What it obviously would retain is the first-use (FU) option of its nuclear policy, that is, *use it or lose it*. Pakistani observers note that India could pre-empt the country’s deterrent forces before Pakistan uses them, or develops a second-strike capability. However, a pre-emptive strategy, attacking both the strategic and non-strategic forces of a nuclear weapons state, raises great risks against a mature and survivable nuclear weapons programme. Even the USA did not seriously debate pre-emption against Soviet conventional forces during the years of America’s nuclear monopoly in the late 1940s. Israeli preventive strikes on nuclear facilities, on Iraq at Osirak in 1981 and Syria at Al-Kibar in 2007, give credence to the fear of renouncing nuclear FU. To be sure, neither Iraq nor Syria reacted against Israel’s preventive strikes; neither could.

Pakistani security planners accept the conceptually deterring effects of nuclear weapons vis-à-vis India. They generally agree that India was deterred in various military crises and border confrontations from waging a total war because of the existence of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal. In this interpretation, India does not cross the Line of Control in Kashmir nor intrude into Pakistan over the national border in the event of a crisis because of Pakistani nuclear forces and the FU option. Deprived of that possibility, Sattar et al. state, ‘an NFU posture could invite aggression’ that would possibly prompt pre-emption. The reliance on nuclear weapons for deterring purposes strengthens the notion that the renunciation of the FU option could weaken Pakistani deterrence credibility and a conventionally weak Pakistan becomes more vulnerable to pre-emptive strikes.

Conventional Weakness

Pakistan conventional forces, although of war-fighting quality, lag behind India’s in number and modernity. Considering this relative conventional weakness, retired Air Commodore Tariq Ashraf argues that:

Being on a weaker military footing as compared to India, Pakistan’s nuclear employment doctrine should assert that since she would be fighting for her survival as an independent nation-state in any future war, it could not renounce the policy of first use as India has done in her draft nuclear doctrine. Pakistan while announcing and emphasising the deterrent basis of its nuclear employment doctrine *must reserve the right of first use of nuclear weapons* and this assertion should be made as a part of her nuclear employment doctrine. [emphasis added]
In a similar context, Qadar Baksh Baloch stated:

Owing to Pakistan’s lack of strategic depth, imbalances in conventional forces, and location of its main population centres in proximity to its Eastern borders, NFU nuclear posture could invite aggression and leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to India in any long drawn out conventional war.\(^52\)

Since it would take a big economy and technological assistance to any crash conventional forces improvement, Pakistan could keep upgrading and expanding its nuclear weapons programme. It also consumes a lot of money out of Pakistan’s national budget. Zafar Iqbal Cheema stated that: ‘If Pakistan does not confront conventional disparity vis-à-vis India, it would possibly have an NFU option.’\(^53\) During the Cold War if the USA were to renounce first use (FU), then it would have had to build bigger conventional capabilities against the Soviet Union. John Mearsheimer argued that this was a flawed option and ‘would not guarantee that the balance would shift in NATO’s favour’.\(^54\) In the age of tightening budget and careful spending, Pakistan is unlikely to choose improvement of its conventional capabilities in exchange for its nuclear forces.\(^55\) Slower technological advancement and financial constraints keep Pakistan’s conventional forces weaker than India’s, whose economic growth, democratic stability, and arms imports from major powers challenge Pakistan. Even if Pakistan improves its conventional capabilities vis-à-vis India at the cost of renouncing its FU option, it cannot match Indian advances in nuclear and conventional capabilities. The situation resembles that described by Mearsheimer regarding NATO during the Cold War, creating additional pressure on Pakistan to offset Indian conventional forces by pursuing FU options.

Therefore, conventional weakness becomes a major obstacle for Pakistan in renouncing its declaratory nuclear FU option. Renouncing the FU option means a thorough transformation in military doctrinal and nuclear policy options.\(^56\) This complete transformation amounts to both time and awakening of economic budget. This also means that Pakistan would seek transformation of its security posture which could include the de-emphasizing nuclear weapons: de-mating of nuclear warheads from delivery systems, storage away from bases, refraining to use nuclear weapons at the forward-edged positions, improving its conventional forces, and making endeavours for de-nuclearization of South Asia such as signing of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty or Comprehensive Nuclear test Ban Treaty.

However, this does not mean that Pakistan would be completely deprived of retaliatory nuclear capabilities if attacked in a first strike. Unless Pakistan is attacked by nuclear weapons, Pakistan would still retain its FU option. The advanced technology of the contemporary conventional forces, possibly India’s, makes conventional strikes as destructive as some possible uses of nuclear weapons on the battlefield.\(^57\) If a nuclear reactor is destroyed with conventional bombs, causing the release of radiation and possibly a nuclear explosion, does it equal FU of a nuclear weapon?\(^58\)

A global no-first-use (NFU) regime, based on law or norms, also runs against realist assumptions about state power and survival. According to Rong Yu and Peng Guangqian, ‘NFU policy may conform to the rule of morality, but it does not necessarily conform to the law of survival. This is perhaps the most serious
paradox facing an NFU policy.\textsuperscript{59} As long as the South Asian conventional balance remains asymmetrical, this will remain a stumbling block to the renunciation of FU.\textsuperscript{60} The more India increases and modernizes its conventional forces, the more it provokes Pakistan to strengthen its deterrent, to upgrade and expand its nuclear technology proportionally, and rely more on nuclear deterrence. Usman Iqbal Jadoon stated: ‘For its existence and survivability, Pakistan would use its nuclear forces for deterrence purposes. Therefore, it is logical for Pakistan to keep the FU option given its weakness in conventional forces vis-à-vis its adversary.’\textsuperscript{61}

The solution here, perhaps, is not transformation of Pakistan’s deterrent forces. Rather it is the creation of an arms control regime in South Asia to restrain the two nuclear weapons states from further conventional and nuclear weapons development. Like the Soviet Union and the USA during the peak of the Cold War, India and Pakistan possess the potential to promote an arms control regime to enhance strategic stability in South Asia. To reach that level of common understanding, Islamabad would need to come out of its civil–military dilemma.

\textit{The Civil–Military Dilemma}

The long-embedded civil–military dilemma in Pakistan creates yet another obstacle for any shift in Pakistani nuclear policy. The Pakistani army has ruled the country for more than 30 years and become part of Pakistan’s nuclear development discourse since its inception. The Pakistani army has learnt how, when, and where to govern, given the weak political environment where civilian regimes are no longer trusted and the army is thought to be stronger and more disciplined. It is largely considered that the army exploits the weakening condition of civilian government and claims to be the ‘saviour of Pakistan’ that is just about to be acceptable to most Pakistanis. The army is the strongest institution within Pakistan, the major stakeholder in decision-making affecting nuclear affairs. However, Pakistan’s army helped to make the civilian leadership weak and unable to run the country’s affairs. It is the Pakistani military which is presumed to be the most reliable and less corrupted institution of Pakistan.

The result is the civilian–military dilemma, dating back to the creation of the state. The military justifies its intervention in the state’s affairs because civilian regimes fail to provide a stable government. The civilian leadership criticizes, if not challenges openly, the military for weakening the political structure of the country. Direct military intervention is one of the forces behind the failure of democracy in Pakistan. Moreover, no civilian leader has seriously challenged the military in Pakistani politics.\textsuperscript{62} Some of the reasons civilian governments could not directly challenge the military rule is because they themselves are the product of a transitional period after a direct military rule and the fear being ousted. As Rizvi stated,\textsuperscript{62}

\begin{quote}
The (military) elite is prepared to support a government as long as it ensures stability and effectively performs its duties towards the citizenry and the state, and does not threaten military interest . . . the military option increases if the government’s political and economic performance falters, if it faces a
crisis of legitimacy aggravated by popular unrest in the major urban centres, or if political competition turns nasty.\textsuperscript{63}

Moreover, the Pakistani civilian government also keeps the option of nuclear first use (FU) open. This can be seen on at least two occasions where the civilian leadership addressed the issue explicitly. Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar stated on 18 June 2001 that Pakistan had a ‘no first use of force’ policy.\textsuperscript{64} And President Asif Ali Zardari said in November 2008 that ‘we will most certainly not use first’.\textsuperscript{65}

Similarly, the Pakistan Army has a proclivity to maintain a FU option. This is evidenced when the civilian leadership’s plea for no first use (NFU) was rejected as flawed by the Army. This reflects the basic civil–military dichotomy in Pakistan. Although the civilian leadership is included in the national command authority, the armed forces have a greater say in terms of actual command and control of conventional and nuclear forces. The SPD, which was established in 2000, and its directorates such as the Directorate of Arms Control and Disarmament, is run by retired officers.\textsuperscript{66} Even the army chief is sometimes (incorrectly) recognized as the Director General of the SPD and its related directorates, which comprise more than 20,000 personnel for safety and security of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{67}

If anything were to happen to change FU or shift to NFU, there would have to be mutual coordination and consensus between the Pakistani armed force and civilian leadership. This could be possible once there is a political stability for a powerful civilian government which Pakistan has lacked since its creation in 1947. However, two things are important in this context. First, Pakistan needs a stronger civilian leadership, free from direct influence of the armed forces, and an independent judiciary. Second, the civilian government of the day needs to be assured to survive politically and possibly even win re-election, if it is to have the necessary confidence.

A civilian leadership which cannot survive for a few years, for whatever reason, may not bring a change in the Pakistani security policies.\textsuperscript{68} If a civilian government with a strong leadership governs long enough, then probabilities rise for genuine democracy in Pakistan. This will affect the security policies. Realistically speaking, ‘Pakistan has a political system but with poor governance.’\textsuperscript{69} Historically, the civilian governments have either been dismissed or not completed their fixed political tenure before the start of another election.\textsuperscript{70} The Pakistan People’s Party government completed its tenure in 2013, the first time in the history of democratic rule in Pakistan, although it remained weak and unpopular. The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz government under the leadership of Nawaz Sharief seems to be successfully confronting the current political challenges from the opposition Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf. However, no Pakistani civilian government has been elected twice consecutively, establishing stronger roots, while the army has ruled for at least a decade, paradoxically, derailing the civilian leadership. If Pakistani democracy prevails without direct intervention of the army, it could have a significantly greater impact on the security policies. The beauty of a genuine democracy is when it has a strong opposition that makes sure that the state’s affairs are in order and therein every part of institutions functions well.
India’s Changed Strategic Policy Options

Finally, Pakistani security planners observe the security policies of India, how it evolves, strategizes, and affects the strategic environment of the region. The government believes that Pakistan is maintaining minimum credible deterrence through nuclear weapons if its adversary expands and modernizes its conventional and nuclear forces. Officials tend to assume that any arms deal India makes with major powers has direct implications for the nuclear policy of Pakistan, strengthening the case for Pakistan to keep its policy options flexible. For example, the American–Indian nuclear deal, India’s arms relations with Israel, Russia, and more recently with Australia put more military and political pressure on Pakistan to necessarily bring modifications in its deterrent force structure. Apparently, these measures are taken in accordance with the changed strategic architecture of South Asia. This was confirmed by many respondents to the author of this study. This will have direct implications on Pakistan’s policy options. That is, retaining first-use (FU) options to offset the increasing development and deployment of an adversary’s forces. Although India rejects the concerns of Pakistan, noting that all nuclear deals with the USA or Australia are for peaceful purposes meeting its energy requirements, Pakistan is not convinced and views that this increases India’s deterrent force capabilities. This provokes Pakistan to enhance the credibility of its deterrent forces. The USA supports the Indian membership to Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) following its nuclear weapons deal with India. Besides, the USA also supports India’s membership of Missile Technology Control Regime, the Australian Group, and the Wassenaar Arrangement. All these developments, which disturb the strategic balance in South Asian, are a cause of concern for Pakistan’s security planners. The diplomat Zamir Akram told the Conference on Disarmament that,

Membership of the NSG will enable our neighbour to further expand its nuclear co-operation agreements and enhance its nuclear weapons and delivery capability. As a consequence, Pakistan will be forced to take measures to ensure the credibility of its deterrence,

while Rizvi stated: ‘Pakistan is worried that India will be an integral part of the system regulating nuclear technology. If that happens, getting any equipment even such as civilian reactors for power generation will be completely impossible.’

Such developments in terms of India’s growing interest in nuclear deals and arms negotiations with major powers affect Pakistan’s strategic thinking. These developments would not only increase the arms build-ups in the South Asian region, but also provide excuses for Pakistani security planners to keep the country’s nuclear options open. If India gets supported in its conventional and nuclear capabilities, Pakistan will seek support from China to maintain its deterrent. This increases the dangers of an arms race and encourages Cold War-type war-fighting policies. Such developments increase the chances of escalation to a nuclear level. To avert these dangers, we need to conceptualize the political and strategic benefits of a true and verified no first use (NFU) in South Asia. Can Pakistan rescind its FU option?
Ideally, it would be better for Pakistan to opt for NFU, which could discourage India’s war-fighting strategies, promote crisis stability, create incentives for arms control, work for advanced conventional forces, and avert the external pressure. Against this backdrop, a Pakistani security analyst stated:

To avert the first use option in South Asia, there is need for a political solution. We should, but we cannot because of the trust deficit between the nuclear rivals of South Asia. India prepares for a limited war option in the presence of nuclear weapons and they can if they find a concrete link of terrorism acts from Pakistan.79

Zulfqar Khan stated,

the political weakness, lack of resources, diplomatic backwardness have got impact on the strategic and security posture of Pakistan and, therefore, Pakistan relies largely on its FU of nuclear option in order to keep the strategic balance and sustain a credible deterrence in the South Asian region.80

Islamabad, then would be expected to retain the FU option in the foreseeable future, to offset the widening gap of conventional forces with India.81

Conclusion

Islamabad maintains the first-use (FU) option to thwart Indian conventional and nuclear strikes. The article highlights that the FU option is deeply embedded in Pakistan’s deterrence assumptions, from the beginning of its nuclear weapons programme. Pakistani decision-makers appear convinced that FU is a cost-effective strategy and consistent with minimum deterrence. At the same time, Pakistani officials view that the FU option enhances the credibility of Pakistan’s policy of minimum credible deterrence.

However, there exists ambiguity surrounding Pakistani nuclear options. Ambiguity has a central and deliberate place in Pakistan’s nuclear policy architecture, shaping Pakistan’s nuclear strategy for over a decade and half since the 1998 test detonations. Ambiguity is reinforced by the lack of clarity when, where, and how Pakistan would use its deterrent forces. The parameters mentioned in the existing literature are confusing and debatable. Strategies of nuclear use are not elaborated within the Pakistani strategic community and security establishment.

Perhaps nuclear use could be decided in accordance with the changing South Asian strategic environment. However, in fact, nuclear weapons use is accepted by all declared nuclear weapons states in the extremis condition. This raises more questions: Could nuclear weapons be used in the early or later stages of war as this type of nuclear strategy was thought over during the Cold War period between the Soviet Union and the USA, but neither of the adversaries used them? Could this deter an adversary from waging a war at the first place? Could these deadly weapons be never used as the long nuclear stability of the Cold War period depicts? How could the non-use of nuclear weapons affect the credibility of deterrence? Is the
existence of nuclear weapons enough to deter and/or enhance the deterrence credibility? These are some of the rudimentary questions that need further research.

An analysis of various options of nuclear use – FU, no first use (NFU), last resort, no-early FU, and the absolute FU – indicates the staging of various categories for nuclear employment. This approach is similar to the approach of the USA and NATO vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

Despite the ambiguity, the article shows that Pakistan will retain the FU option in the foreseeable future. Pakistan could opt for an NFU option, but this is contingent on various domestic, regional, and international dynamics. There is a need for conventional parity between India and Pakistan. As long as conventional asymmetry exists, Pakistan would sustain the FU option to offset the growing conventional gap between the two South Asian nuclear adversaries. But this has become more complex since the US–India nuclear deal and NSG special waiver to India with regard to nuclear assistance. This in turn has strategic implications on South Asia. Pakistan demands an equal treatment to regain the strategic balance in the region. In addition to this strategic development, Pakistan may seek the potential for conventional force development and modernity along with keeping the minimum credible deterrence, but given the weak economic condition Islamabad may not quickly fill the growing conventional disparity in South Asia which in turn leaves Islamabad to rely on nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes and retain the FU option to overcome this growing conventional complexity. The nature and role of domestic political processes, the civil–military dilemma, and its impact on strategic policy in Pakistan have received considerable attention, but still require untangling. Finally, global dynamics shaping the salience of nuclear weapons everywhere cannot be disregarded in any assessment of South Asian and Pakistani dynamics.

NOTES

11. Qadar Bakhsh Baloch, ‘Beyond Nuclear Deterrence: The Transformation of Indo-Pak Equation’, *Defence Journal* (2008), p. 30. Also, see ‘Assessing Pakistan’s Nuclear First Use Option’, *Defence Journal* (September 2004), pp. 12–15. The anonymous analyst stated that, Pakistan suffers from some very serious strategic imbalances relative to India which could lead to Pakistan reaching her nuclear threshold in a time frame much earlier (first use) than India; firstly, her limited territorial and geographical depth and secondly, her tremendous conventional inferiority.


17. Interview with Feroz Hassan Khan, former Director of Arms Control and Disarmament in Pakistan’s Strategic Plans Division (SPD), September 2012.


19. Author’s interview with Abdul Sattar, former Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, September 2012.


23. Author’s interview with the Pakistani strategic analyst who wanted to remain anonymous, September 2012.

24. Author’s interview with Maria Sultan, Director General, South Asian Strategic Studies Institute (SASSI), Islamabad, September 2012.


28. This was confirmed to author during his interview at the SPD, September 2012.

30. The former Director General Strategic Plans Division, Lt. General (retired) Khalid Kidwai, recently remarked on this particular aspect at the Workshop on ‘Defence, Deterrence & Stability in South Asia’, 4 December 2014, Islamabad.

31. Author’s interview with Pakistan’s former ambassador Tariq Osman Hyder, Arms Control and Disarmament, Foreign Ministry of Pakistan, September 2012.

32. For useful discussion on thinking for an actual declaration of Pakistani nuclear doctrinal posture, see the video (in Urdu) ‘Thinking Pakistan’ anchored by Dr Moeed Pirzada, Sochta Pakistan (Thinking about Pakistan), 9 December 2011.


34. The terms ‘absolute first use’ and ‘no-early first use’ are borrowed from the key readings with regard to the production of this piece. See, for example, Bundy et al., “Nuclear Weapons and Atlantic Alliance” (note 10) and Gerson, ‘No First Use’ (note 10), pp. 7–47. Also, Khan, Pakistan’s Nuclear Policy (note 2), pp. 88–112.


36. This danger is also viable for the established nuclear weapon states as long as nuclear weapons exist in their military and political discourses. See Mearsheimer, ‘Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe’ (note 10); Gerson, ‘No First Use’ (note 10); and Scott D. Sagan, ‘The Case for No First Use’, Survival, Vol. 51, No. 3 (2009), pp. 175–6.


38. Nuclear weapons are not used first to either terminate an already waged war nor have they been used to begin with one at least in South Asian case. Also, in the many military crises during the Cold War time. However, many may say that the USA used nuclear weapons first to terminate an already waged the Second World War when two atomic bombs were dropped in Japanese cities, that is, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.


45. Abhijit Singh stated that, ... there will be a strong ethical constraint that India would feel while counter-attacking with a high yield strategic weapon, in response to a first Pakistani strike by a low yield TNWs (Tactical Nuclear Weapons) ... it would be hard for India’s political masters to justify the annihilation of a whole Pakistani city by SNW (Strategic Nuclear Weapons). (‘Pakistan: Testing of Tactical Nuclear Weapons’, India Defence Review, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2011), pp. 1–4)


47. A Pakistani expert on security studies stated that there is a growing debate on the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons for counterforce targeting to offset its adversary’s conventional forces followed by its war fighting doctrinal procedure, such as CSD. 2011 Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 28–29 March 2011. On the American posture of counterforce targeting with tactical nuclear weapons, see Desmond Ball, Deja VU: The Return to Counterforce in the Nixon Administration (Santa Monica, CA: Seminar on Arms


49. Author’s interviews with Zafar Iqbal Cheema, Khalid Iqbal, Feroz Hassan Khan, and Rizwana Abbasi, September 2012.

50. Sattar, Khan and Shahi, ‘Securing the Nuclear Peace’ (note 18).


52. Baloch, ‘Beyond Nuclear Deterrence’ (note 11).

53. Interview with Zafar Iqbal Cheema, September 2012.


55. Recently, a Pakistani Chinese-made F-7PG training aircraft crashed killing its crew, the seventh crash in six months, indicating how ageing conventional capabilities need transformation if Pakistan’s security planners are to improve its conventional balance with India. This also indicates how Pakistan cannot afford to spend much on modern conventional forces. See ‘Pakistan Air Collision Kills Four Pilots’, *The Dawn*, 15 May 2012 and ‘Pilot Killed in a PAF Plane Crash’, *The Dawn*, 8 February 2012.

56. The factor of Pakistan’s conventional weakness has been stated by a majority of Pakistani security planners and think-tank institutes during the author’s field work. Author interview with Khalid Rehman Director General of Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and Shaheen Akther, Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, September 2012.


58. It is because of these scenarios and numerous other factors, a number of articles appeared critiquing the applicability of technology and modernity to the then USA and NATO conventional forces as being the technological solution to the former Soviet conventional forces. See, for example, Steven L. Canby, ‘The Conventional Defence of Europe: The Operational Limits of Emerging Technology’, Wilson Centre Working Paper No. 55 (Washington, DC: Wilson Center, 1984); and Daniel Goure and Jeffery R. Cooper, ‘Conventional Deep Strikes: A Critical Look’, *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1984), pp. 215–48.


61. Author’s interview with Usman Iqbal Jadoon, Director Arms Control and Disarmament, Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry, September 2012.


66. For interesting accounts on Pakistan’s strategy and classification of handling these security policies from day-to-day basis, see Mahmud Ali Durrani, ‘Pakistan’s Strategic Thinking and the Role of Nuclear Weapons’, Cooperative Monitoring Centre Occasional Paper 37, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM, July 2004.

67. For interesting piece on Pakistan’s SPD, which was previously named Combat Development Directorate (CCD), see ‘SPD & CCD’, *The Global Security*, August 2011.

68. Hasan Askari Rizvi states, ‘The military stands a better chance of wielding influence on key policy decisions and allocation of resources from the side-lines. This saves the military from hazards of direct assumption of power and gives space to elected civilians.’ Rizvi, ‘On Civil-Military Relations’, *Pakistan Today*, December 2011.
69. Author’s interview with Dr Aman Rashid, Director General Disarmament, Foreign Ministry of Pakistan, September 2012.

70. For details on the Pakistan’s civil–military relations, see Bindanda M. Chengappa, Pakistan: Military Role in Civil Administration (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 1995); Talat Syed Hussein, ‘Pakistan Hedged on Obvious Bet’, The Nation, 29 May 1998; Rizvi, ‘Civil-Military Relations in Contemporary Pakistan’ (note 63); and Stephen P. Cohen, The Pakistan Army (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).


72. A Pakistani scholar at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, stated that,

They [Pakistanis] would like to maintain a posture of credible minimum deterrence and this credible minimum deterrence is actually not very static, which essentially means that if India were to engage in a strategic nuclear modernisation, then the number game can actually change. There are several other elements, but this is the main thrust of the nuclear doctrine [emphasis author’s].


73. Author’s interview with various key respondents such as Khalid Banuri, Adil Sultan, and Zafar Ali of SPD, and Ambassador Tariq Osman Hyder, Dr Aman Rashid, and Osman Jadoon of Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry agreeing somewhat to the preceding points, September 2012.


75. Author’s interview with Mansoor Ahmed who specializes in Nuclear Studies, September 2012.

76. Ibid.

77. In addition to the American–India nuclear deal, India consistently modernizes its conventional forces. ‘India, Russia Sing Deals on Fighter Jets, Nuclear Energy’, The Dawn, 21 December 2010 and ‘India Tests Nuclear Capable Missile’, The Dawn, 22 December 2010.


79. Author’s Interview with Noman Sattar Islamabad, September 2012.

80. Author’s interview with Zulﬁqar Khan, Ministry of Defence, September 2012.