

BOOK REVIEW

***Nuclear Pakistan: Strategic Dimensions.* Zulfqar Khan, ed. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 275.**

Pakistan is passing through turbulent times. The declining economy and political instability, coupled with the security challenges of extremism, terrorism and sectarianism are threatening peace and prosperity in the country. Similarly, on an external front, the growing security and stability challenges posed by its neighbouring states and other external actors are threatening Pakistan's territorial integrity and its vital national security interests. To address these external challenges and to safeguard its legitimate national security concerns, Pakistan is maintaining a minimum credible deterrence posture. However, Pakistan's powerful nuclear neighbour, India, has embarked upon an offensive deterrence posture to become a dominant power in South Asia. The international community is also adding to this strategic imbalance by signing advance nuclear deals, strategic partnerships, and by providing exemptions to India in international nuclear export-control regimes. In this scenario, Pakistan is left alone against the discriminatory approach of the international community. Pakistan is against a nuclear arms race in the region and wants to play a responsible role. However, external pressures and coercive policies might compel Pakistan to embark upon a more robust offensive deterrence to survive. Here, the question arises: as a responsible nuclear weapons state, how can Pakistan achieve its national security objectives of maintaining a strategic balance with India?

Nuclear Pakistan: Strategic Dimensions, edited by Zulfqar Khan, theoretically and empirically identifies future policy options for Pakistan's nuclear deterrence posture vis-à-vis India. The book presents these strategic dimensions in seven chapters, contributed by reputed national and international experts in the field of nuclear issues, including Zulfqar Khan, Zafar Iqbal Cheema, Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Shaheen Akhtar, James Revill and Malcolm Dando, A. Z. Hilali, and Muhammad Khurshid Khan. A comprehensive review of the study proves that possessing and maintaining nuclear weapons has played and will continue to play a significant role for a conventionally weak country like Pakistan against a powerful adversary like India. The study further argues the risk of a limited war escalating into a nuclear exchange; a growing conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan; accelerated Indian efforts to expand its nuclear weapons' complex; and presence of deep-rooted disputes which have increased distrust and strategic instability between Indian and Pakistan. Addressing this stability-instability paradox, therefore, the study mainly argues that in order to maintain the relevance of nuclear weapons for Pakistan, there is a

need to revisit and redefine the existing minimum deterrence posture into a more robust, offensive deterrence posture. The study has explored these policy options by examining the historical, political, technical, and theoretical contours of Pakistan's existing nuclear policy. The main theme of this study needs to be analysed against the supporting arguments presented by the experts.

To support the aforementioned theme, experts base their arguments on historical relations, deep-rooted mistrust, wars, military stand-offs, and unsettled disputes between India and Pakistan. The argument goes that being a weak state, Pakistan initially explored many options, ranging from forming alliances to military preparations, but it was left with no choice except to go nuclear in order to ensure its security and survival. At this juncture, the study supports the famous theory of "more may be better" by Kenneth Waltz, which propounds that the spread of nuclear weapons will promote peace, and play a stabilising role between weak and powerful adversaries. The Cold War model is cited as an example of deterrence stability between the two superpowers. Based on these assumptions, a detailed analysis of Pakistan's nuclear weapons' development, the components of its nuclear deterrence, and the command and control structure is presented by experts. In so far as unsettled disputes are concerned, the study argues that since the Kashmir dispute has been nuclearised, it would have an adverse impact on strategic stability in South Asia. Although the international community is in favour of a stable deterrence, the Kashmir dispute cannot be resolved without confidence building measures between India and Pakistan. Concerning a broader role of the international community, the study demands their proactive role in the resumption of a composite dialogue process; in devising an arms control mechanism between India and Pakistan; in providing help to resolve the Kashmir dispute, water issue and Siachen; and in furthering efforts to promote deterrence stability in this region. The study asserts that nuclear weapons in India-Pakistan relations will play a defining role. These weapons will continue to protect Pakistan's territorial integrity, and will also provide a buffer against the growing conventional asymmetry with India. However, stable and secure deterrence and trust building measures are sought in these sections to address the growing hostilities between India and Pakistan.

The study moves on to argue that the imminence of wide-ranging internal and external challenges- the presence of possible nuclear flash points such as the Kashmir dispute and terrorism; India's growing conventional and nuclear capabilities; and growing risks of surgical strikes and of limited war- are threatening strategic stability and putting immense pressure on Pakistan's minimum deterrence posture. Theoretical and empirical evidence is put forward to identify such a spectrum of threats in many initial essays in the book. Based on

these threat perceptions, the study argues in favour of reviewing and reformulating “minimum credible deterrence” into an “offensive deterrence posture” as the best suitable option for Pakistan to deter any Indian aggression, and to maintain a strategic balance in the region. Pakistan should develop sufficient strategic capability to strike first in the case of a breakdown of deterrence. The development and deployment of tactical nuclear weapons is supported as one such measure to reinforce Pakistan’s defensive offence and conventional doctrine. Tactical nuclear weapons are supported on the grounds that they will communicate to the enemy that Pakistan can do “terrible things to enemy.” In addition to tactical nuclear weapons, it is argued that the inclusion of a counterforce targeting concept, nuclear transparency, and a real understanding of the nature of the problem will strengthen Pakistan’s position, and help avoid and control conflicts and their escalatory nature.

To further support the main argument of the study, the contributors give a detailed analysis of existing and future challenges to Pakistan’s minimum deterrence posture. The minimum deterrence doctrine in itself is considered old enough to cope with the existing and future security dimensions in South Asia. However, the Indian Cold Start doctrine (CSD), Indo-US nuclear deal, Nuclear Suppliers Group’s (NSG) waiver to India, India’s deployment of ballistic missile defence (BMD) system, and many related doctrinal and technological developments in India are cited in favour of developing a more robust Pakistani deterrence posture with a second strike capability. The study argues that the minimum posture should be revisited against organisational flaws, ideational incongruities, escalatory pressures, instability syndrome, and the adversary’s technological advances. The study also takes a critical note of the cooperation of the international community with India, especially the US’s policies, and their role in disturbing strategic stability in this region.

On a positive note, although the main argument of the study is to present robust strategic choices for Pakistan and to maintain stability in its strategic relations with India, Pakistan’s role is also highlighted as that of a responsible nuclear weapons’ state, in terms of strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and biological weapons’ non-proliferation regime. A comprehensive debate is initiated to support Pakistan’s constructive role in preventing the spread of these deadly weapons. National security concerns and discriminatory approaches of the international community, as well as current trends and future choices are also discussed in terms of the possibilities of Pakistan joining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), and other related initiatives. The study argues that discriminatory approaches of the West and recent technological advancements in the fields of nuclear physics and

biotechnology have also raised alarms over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, the study suggests that Pakistan should play a positive role, but it should not compromise its national security objectives.

A wide range of theoretical frameworks and empirical evidences are utilised by different contributors to support their arguments. Findings of well-known national and international experts on related issues are also referred to in order to support the study's salient arguments. Classical literature on pertinent subjects, books, official documents, official speeches, journal articles, research studies, print media and interviews are among the sources which the study draws upon.

This study mainly advocates Pakistan's case in outlining a robust offensive nuclear force posture to protect its future strategic dimensions. The analysis, however, lacks peaceful alternative policy choices for the deadly neighbours. A very limited role of non-military means is highlighted in promoting peace and trust within the region. The potential role of the international community, diplomacy exercises, economic engagement and political engagement in order to promote peace and stability in this region are largely missing from the discourse propounded in this study. Technological advancement in Pakistan's nuclear weapons complex, development of low-yield nuclear weapons capability, and aspiration for an assured second strike capability are costly businesses, especially if one considers the declining economy of Pakistan. Revisiting minimum deterrence capability should focus on maintaining credible strategic stability, instead of emphasising the need to generate a nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. The study also lacks coherence in its arguments, due to the order of imported sections. Some sections are more important than others, and their order of appearance in this study could have improved the whole work's coherence and the flow of arguments it comprises. A separate section on the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear assets could have added another important dimension to this study.

This collection of essays revolves around the current and future strategic dimensions of a nuclear Pakistan. It can help validate the argument of those advanced-level students and mid-career strategic experts who support the stance of maintaining an offensive deterrence posture. Moreover, this study can be of use to students who intend to explore possible future nuclear deterrence choices for Pakistan, and to policy-makers in identifying different perspectives on the future role of nuclear weapons in India-Pakistan nuclear deterrence calculus.

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