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## *Report- In-House Meeting*

# **Nuclear and Conventional Force Imbalance: Global and Regional Implications for Conventional Arms Control**

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### Pictures of the Event





## **Nuclear and Conventional Force Imbalance: Global and Regional Implications for Conventional Arms Control**

The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an In-House Discussion on June 1, 2016 with Dr. Christine M. Leah, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Grand Strategy Programme, Yale University. The topic of the discussion focused on *Nuclear and Conventional Force Imbalance: Global and Regional Implications for Conventional Arms Control*.

Dr. Leah has been a Stanton Post-Doctoral Fellow in Nuclear Security at MIT, a visiting faculty at Raja Ratnam School of International Studies, a summer research fellow at RAND and a research intern at IISS in Asia, and at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute IISS London. She has also worked at the French Ministry of Defence and the UNP office of Sir Nicholas Sarkozy. She is the author of “*Australia and the Bomb*” and has published in *Comparative Strategy*, the *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Asian Security*, *The Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *The National Interest* and *Comparative Strategy*, *The Diplomat*, *Business Insider* and *The American Interest*.

Along with the research team at ISSI, the discussion was attended by participants from Strategic Plans Division, Institute for Policy Studies, National Defense University and the Centre for International Strategic Studies.

The Director General ISSI, Ambassador Masood Khan welcomed Dr. Leah.

Dr. Leah in her presentation said that as an academic, she was here to understand the Pakistani strategic thinking about nuclear and conventional issues. She lamented that not many people in her field think of Pakistan as a secure country, and therefore do not visit Pakistan.

Her presentation was primarily based on three arguments:

- First, reducing the role of nuclear weapons or even eliminating them completely. It will probably have negative consequences for any concept of stability in Asia, specifically in South Asia.
- Second, you cannot disconnect nuclear weapons and nuclear strategy from issues of conventional forces imbalance and thus move on for conventional arms control.
- Even if arms control could contribute to disarmament efforts, reaching agreements and making sure they are respected is really hard. Again, especially in Asia, where there is no history of legal agreements on nuclear military capabilities although there have been some CBM initiatives in the past specifically.

She added that the reduction of nuclear weapons in numbers is far from a reality in India and Pakistan. That is not going to happen; and the opposite seems to be happening. She acknowledged optimism in future of nuclear power and expressed her discontent in the NPT. She argued that there were many potential problems, and consequences of nuclear and conventional military expansion in South Asia, and arms control measures need to be given much thought in the region.

Dr. Leah regretted that there is very less literature written on conventional weapons ever since nuclear weapons are introduced. John Mearsheimer's analysis might be persuasive for the pre-nuclear era, but it does not involve short, medium, and long-range ballistic and cruise missiles. His analysis is mostly based on European land context, not an Asian maritime context let alone the South Asian context. So the literature on conventional arms control is very incomplete.

Dr. Leah further elaborated that in a world when the role of nuclear weapons is marginalised, there would be conventional asymmetries, and it is on these conventional asymmetries that any system of deterrence would rely. To think about the role of missiles in conventional deterrence would be difficult. She questioned whether we still need to use the same concepts like second strike capability, and damage limitations? Raising a number of questions, she said that she wanted to explore if a conventional arms race would try to fill the gap left by nuclear weapons? How do we compensate by reducing the role of nuclear weapons? How do we compensate with conventional forces? Is it possible to do so? And, to what extent?

Dr. Leah said that reference to the debate between Kenneth Waltz and Karl Sagan about "more is worse and more is better", would be relevant under the circumstances. Will that idea apply to conventional realm as well? She appreciated China's support for Pakistan in blocking India's entry into the NSG since she believed that Pakistan is heavily discriminated against in and out of the context of the NPT. She referred to the US-India civil nuclear deal as illegal.

She also highlighted the contradiction in US and Russia's demand from Pakistan to reduce its arsenal, while keeping huge numbers of nuclear arsenals for themselves. "It is hypocritical", she said. She inquired how a country like Pakistan can be convinced to reduce its nuclear weapons when it is facing such a big conventional imbalance vis-a-vis India and China (although, China is not Pakistan's enemy).

There are many hypocritical aspects of the NPT. The conventional arms control is not given enough importance. No one can go for nuclear force reduction without addressing conventional force imbalances. It is obvious that a world without nuclear weapons just makes the world safe for powerful states like the US.

Dr. Leah gave example of Europe that gained power till the outbreak of Second World War. A debate, she said, is going on in Europe and America on the matrix and categories to be adopted while adjudging power. Here too, she raised some central questions. Should the focus be on the range or destructiveness for that matter? How do you think about the relationship between land

and naval power? How do you calculate asymmetries given the relationship between different forces?

She suggested that there are many issues within arms control that need to be dealt for durable symmetry and arms control. The US is a unique specimen. Some countries have alliances, while US has extended deterrence. This will prove to be a major sticking point in any of the major dialogues in future if they ever take place between US and China on nuclear arms control. The fundamental issue would be the projection and magnitude of the power required by US to protect its allies.

Dr. Leah said that her main purpose of coming here is to understand the dynamics of the conventional and nuclear arms control in the South Asian region collectively, and separately. There have been a few CBMs like Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR). She inquired if any steps were being taken in South Asia for nuclear and conventional arms control? She also wanted to know if there was any appetite between Pakistan and India for missile testing and assembling, and how China could be incorporated in this? How much of a threat is China to India, for it to say that their nuclear programme is for China and not Pakistan?

Dr Leah's presentation was followed by an interactive session.

The participants at the table asked questions regarding the posture of super powers; conventional and nuclear arms control; and the reason for obvious biases against Pakistan vis-à-vis India. They inquired on the role of international community, especially the role of global powers in order to establish symmetry in the arms control realm, particularly nuclear. They reiterated the point that conventional arms control needs to be taken seriously and dealt with prior to moving towards nuclear disarmament. They also commented on the point that the super powers should play more of an equalising force in order to maintain strategic balance around the world especially the South Asian region. Participants also maintained that the super powers should look out for their own national security interests, but not at the peril of the national security interests of other states, because that would only breed insecurities among states and trigger renewed arms race in the world.

The participants highlighted the difference in India's acts and statements. To this, Dr. Leah concurred that the Indian posture towards Pakistan was overwhelmingly aggressive. It was unanimously agreed that Pakistan's nuclear programme was only for defence purposes and that it did not have any nefarious designs regarding the region. Pakistan is only building up its defences against India as it posed an existential threat to its national security which is an open secret. Pakistan is ready to join any and all conventions on nuclear and conventional arms control and reduction for as long as India agrees and implements them in a genuine manner. Pakistan is not looking for competition or confrontation with anyone, but it will never back off from anyone regarding national security interests.

Wrapping up the session, the Director General ISSI, Ambassador Masood Khan appreciated Dr. Leah for understanding Pakistan's point of view and listening to its side of the story without any predispositions. The Ambassador also asserted that regardless of nuclear weapons, Pakistan is conventionally strong enough to counter Indian aggression anywhere and anytime if need be. He hoped that the ISSI could work with Dr. Leah regarding Pakistan's nuclear programme, the accomplishments that have been achieved in the field, and projecting those accomplishments in front of the international media.