

INTRODUCTION

PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR PLANS: WHAT'S WORRISOME, WHAT'S AVERTABLE?

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With any attempt to assess security threats, there is a natural tendency to focus first on the worst. Consider the most recent appraisals of Pakistan's nuclear program. Normally, the risk of war between Pakistan and India and possible nuclear escalation would be bad enough. Now, however, most American security experts are riveted on the frightening possibility of Pakistani nuclear weapons capabilities falling into the hands of terrorists intent on attacking the United States.¹

Presented with the horrific implications of such an attack, the American public and media increasingly have come to view nearly all Pakistani security issues through this lens. Public airing of these fears, in turn, appear now to be influencing terrorist operations in Pakistan.²

Unfortunately, a nuclear terrorist act is only one—and hardly the most probable—of several frightening security threats Pakistan now faces or poses. We know that traditional acts of terrorism and conventional military crises in South West Asia have nearly escalated into wars and, more recently, even threatened Indian and Pakistani nuclear use.

Certainly, the war jitters that attended the recent terrorist attacks against Mumbai highlighted the nexus between conventional terrorism and war. For several weeks, the key worry in Washington was that India and Pakistan might not be able to avoid war.³ Similar

concerns were raised during the Kargil crisis in 1999 and the Indo-Pakistani conventional military tensions that arose in 2001 and 2002—crises that most analysts (including those who contributed to this volume) believe could have escalated into nuclear conflicts.

This book is meant to take as long a look at these threats as possible. Its companion volume, *Worries Beyond War*, published last year, focused on the challenges of Pakistani nuclear terrorism.⁴ These analyses offer a window into what is possible and why Pakistani nuclear terrorism is best seen as a lesser-included threat to war, and terrorism more generally.

Could the United States do more with Pakistan to secure Pakistan's nuclear weapons holdings against possible seizure? It is unclear. News reports indicate that the United States has already spent \$100 million toward this end. What this money has bought, however, has only been intimated. We know that permissive action link (PAL) technology that could severely complicate unauthorized use of existing Pakistani weapons (and would require Pakistan to reveal critical weapons design specifics to the United States that might conceivably allow the United States to remotely "kill" Pakistani weapons) was not shared. Security surveillance cameras and related training, on the other hand, probably were.⁵

Meanwhile, the Pakistani military—eager to ward off possible preemptive attacks against its nuclear weapons assets—remains deeply suspicious of the United States or any other foreign power trying to learn more about the number, location, and physical security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons holdings.⁶ Conducting secret, bilateral workshops to discuss nuclear force vulnerabilities and how best to manage different terrorist and insider threat scenarios has

been proposed. It seems unlikely, however, that the Pakistanis would be willing to share much.⁷ Destroying or retrieving Pakistani nuclear assets is another option that might prevent terrorists seizing them in a crisis. But the United States would have extreme difficulty succeeding at either mission even assuming the Pakistani government invited U.S. troops into their territory.⁸

What else might help? If policymakers view the lack of specific intelligence on Pakistani nuclear terrorist plots against the United States as cold comfort and believe that such strikes are imminent – then, the answer is not much.⁹ If, on the other hand, they believe conventional acts of terrorism and war are far more likely than acts of nuclear terrorism, then there is almost too much to do. In the later case, nuclear terrorism would not be a primary, stand alone peril, but, a lesser-included threat – i.e., a danger that the Pakistani state could be expected to avert assuming it could mitigate the more probable threats of conventional terrorism and war.

What sort of Pakistan would that be? A country that was significantly more prosperous, educated, and far more secure against internal political strife and from external security threats than it currently is. How might one bring about such a state? The short answer is by doing more to prevent the worst. Nuclear use may not be the likeliest bad thing that might occur in Pakistan, but it is by far the nastiest. Certainly in the near- to mid-term, it is at least as likely as any act of nuclear terrorism. More important, it is more amenable to remediation.

This last point is the focus of this volume's first two chapters. Neil Joeck, now the U.S. National Intelligence Officer for South West Asia, and Feroz

Hassan Khan, Pakistan's former director of Arms Control and Disarmament Affairs, examine just how easily conventional wars between India and Pakistan might be ignited and go nuclear.

The first observation both analysts make is that keeping the peace between India and Pakistan is now a serious issue for U.S. security officials. With 55,000 American troops in Afghanistan, Washington can ill afford increased military tensions and nuclear rivalries between Islamabad and New Delhi that deflect or reduce Pakistan's own anti-terror operations along Afghanistan's southern border.

More worrisome is their second shared assessment: India and Pakistan have developed military doctrines that *increase* the prospects of nuclear use. Although India has pledged not to use nuclear weapons first, it has increased its readiness to launch shallow "Cold Start" conventional military strikes against Pakistan calibrated to deter Pakistani military or terrorist incursions. Meanwhile, Pakistani military planners insist that Pakistan will use nuclear weapons immediately if India attacks Pakistan's nuclear forces, conventional forces, and territory, or if it strangles Pakistan's economy.

Unfortunately, each of these countries' plans to deter war are too prone to fail. Precisely how does India intend to attack Pakistani territory either in a shallow or temporary fashion without tripping Pakistan's nuclear trip wires? U.S. interventions, following terrorist acts that the Indian public has accused Pakistan's intelligence service of having backed, kept India from attacking Pakistan, but will such U.S. interventions work in the future? Indian military planners claim that they want to be able to punish Pakistan for any future perceived provocations well before any U.S. intervention has a chance to succeed.

Given India's interest in escalating its schedule of conventional military retribution, will Pakistan decide to intensify its own nuclear deployment efforts to persuade New Delhi that it is serious about its nuclear first use doctrine? How can Islamabad adjust its forward deployed nuclear forces to be credibly on the ready without also increasing the odds of unauthorized use or military miscalculation?

Then, there is the larger problem of nuclear rivalry. India claims the size and quality of its nuclear forces are driven by what China has; Pakistan, in turn, claims that the size and quality of its nuclear forces are driven by what India has. As one enlarges its forces, so must the other.

In an attempt to disrupt an action-reaction nuclear arms race while still ambling ahead, New Delhi recently persuaded the United States and other leading nuclear supplier states to allow India to expand its civilian nuclear and space launch sectors with imported foreign technologies and nuclear fuel. India's hope here is not to ramp up its domestic rocket and reactor production directly so much as to upgrade these programs and free up and supplement its own domestic missile technology and nuclear fuel production efforts with peaceful foreign assistance.¹⁰

Although subtle, this approach has failed to calm tensions with Pakistan. Instead, Islamabad has used U.S. and foreign nuclear and space cooperation with India as an argument for enlarging its own nuclear arsenal. Thus, in 2007, Pakistan's National Command Authority warned that if the U.S.-India nuclear deal altered the nuclear balance, the command would have to reevaluate Pakistan's commitment to minimum deterrence and review its nuclear force requirements. Reports then leaked out that Islamabad had begun construction of a new plutonium production reactor

and a new reprocessing plant. Shortly thereafter, Pakistan announced plans to expand its own civilian nuclear power sector roughly 20-fold by the year 2030 to 8.8 gigawatts generating capacity. The idea here is to expand Pakistan's ability to make nuclear electricity that would also afford it a larger nuclear weapons-making mobilization base it could use if India ramps up its own nuclear weapons-making efforts.¹¹

This brings us to this volume's third chapter by Peter Tynan and John Stephenson of Dalberg Global Development Advisors. Just how economically sensible is expanding Pakistan's civilian nuclear sector over the next 2 decades? The short answer is not very. As Tynan and Stephenson explain in their analysis, "Even under Pakistan's most ambitious growth plans, nuclear energy will continue to contribute a marginal amount [3 to 6 percent] of electricity to meet the country's economic goals."¹² More important, building the number of large reactors that this level of expansion would require would be extremely difficult to achieve. Expansion of alternative energy sources, decentralized micro hydro, increased energy efficiency, coal, and natural gas, they conclude, would be far less risky.

In fact, they conclude that Pakistan could save considerable money over the next 2 decades and achieve its energy goals sooner by *not* building more nuclear power plants. The political salience of this point is magnified when paired with earlier analyses that Tynan and Stephenson did of India's planned nuclear power expansion. In India's case, Dalberg's conclusions were much the same: India could not meet its energy goals even under its most ambitious nuclear expansion plans, and there were a number of cheaper, quicker alternatives that make near- and mid-term investment in nuclear expansion a bad buy.¹³ Bottom line: In both the Pakistani and Indian cases, expanding

nuclear power only makes sense if one is willing to lose money or is eager to make many more bombs.

Judging from the state of its current finances, Pakistan can ill afford to do either. This much is clear from the economic analyses of Shavid Javed Burki and S. Akbar Zaidi presented in Chapters Four and Five. Pakistan, Burki writes, faces a “grim economic situation”: “There is likely to be a sharp reduction in the rate of economic growth, an unprecedented increase in rate of inflation, a significant increase in the incidence of poverty, a widening in the already large regional income gap, and increases to unsustainable levels of the fiscal and balance of payments gaps.”¹⁴

Moving the nation away from foreign charity funding toward an economic growth agenda will not be easy. Certainly, all unnecessary public spending, excessive military support, and consumer subsidies (e.g., for energy) must be cut. Pakistan, moreover, must assume a significant portion of the backend financing of its own planned growth. Investments in education and the agricultural sector must be increased substantially. Taxes will have to be increased without increasing the poverty rate or the already significant economic disparities between Pakistan’s key regions.

None of this can come without political pains. To be specific, they will require political reforms that cannot simply be made top down from Islamabad, but will require a decentralization of powers to the localities. The good news is that some of this change may be pushed by modernizing trends, which both Burki and Zaidi note, are already under way. These include the urbanization of Pakistan, the dramatic growth in electronic communications (e.g., cell phone use has increased 10-fold to roughly 50 percent of the population in the last 5 years, the number of private TV

stations from one to more than 30), and the emerging domination of higher education by women (perhaps by a factor now as high as four-to-one) and their entry into Pakistan's work force.

In addition to these generally positive trends, there is increased investment in Pakistan and remittances from the oil-rich Persian Gulf, increasing trade with India (now Pakistan's seventh largest source of imports), and the prospect of a demographic dividend, which Craig Cohen details in Chapter Six. This demographic dividend, which will afford Pakistan a large labor supply relative to its young and old, Craig predicts, will continue to grow through the year 2050. This, he argues, has the potential to power significant economic growth "because the dependency burden is low," increasing savings and "allowing development of human capital."¹⁵

All of this should help stabilize Pakistan's economy and society. None of these trends, however, can possibly help if the government cannot reduce inflation (pegged at 28 percent in the first quarter of 2009), educate and feed its population, power its businesses and homes, and attend to its growing (and potentially violent) adolescent population. Achieving these objectives, in turn, requires political stability, domestic security, and increased domestic and foreign trade and investment.

It is unclear if this requisite stability will finally be achieved. What is clear, though, is that any successful attempt will only be possible if Pakistan and its friends focus less in the near term on direct forms of democratization and more on ethnic reconciliation and regional accommodation. Maya Chadda details how one might go about this in Chapter Seven. She makes a key recommendation that those assisting Pakistan—principally the United States—distinguish between

violence that is driven by ethnic differences and that which is driven by Islamist terrorist organizations.

Professor Chada argues that the United States should do more to help Pakistan integrate its ethnic groups while letting Pakistan and its military take the lead in fighting Islamic fundamentalism. What this requires, in turn, is an understanding of the key ethnic groups—the Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, Balochis, and others—and establishing metrics for safeguarding these groups' rights. Reforming Pakistan's federal model toward this end will not entail the promotion of direct, liberal democracy, but it will create the key building blocks necessary to create such a system. More important, it will give the key religious and ethnic groups the power and the interest needed to shape Pakistan's economic and social order and to keep them vested in Pakistan's future.

What, then, should the United States do? With regard to Pakistan reformulating its federal model, the United States might help to focus and condition economic assistance and freer access to U.S. markets and encourage Islamabad to foster greater equality among Pakistan's key regions and ethnic and religious groups. One suggestion that this book's authors discussed was giving each of Pakistan's provinces greater power to promote trade directly with India and focusing foreign investment to expand such commerce. The aim here is to moderate Indian-Pakistani relations by bolstering Pakistan's growing middle class. Pakistan, however, must take the first steps: If Islamabad does not want to reformulate its federal model to accommodate its various regions and ethnic and religious groups, Washington is in no position to help.

As for U.S. assistance to the Pakistani military, the key here is to do no harm. It is now fashionable in

Washington to argue that U.S. policies toward India and Pakistan should be de-hyphenated. Yet, one sure fire way to increase Pakistani distrust of the United States and to increase its anxieties regarding India's military ambitions is for the United States to favor India's military modernization. If the United States wants to reduce the number of wars that could escalate into nuclear conflicts, it must make sure U.S. military aid to India and Pakistan does not prompt destabilizing military competitions. Accomplishing this, in turn, will require that the United States and other arms exporters provide these states with something other than mere quantitative equal treatment.

Consider missile defenses. Because Pakistan has not yet fully renounced first use of nuclear weapons and India will always have conventional superiority over Islamabad, Pakistan would have cause to feel more insecure than it already does even if the United States or others gave equal levels of missile defense capabilities to both sides. In this case, India could diminish Pakistani nuclear missile threats and feel more confident about launching massive conventional military operations against Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan would have far more to fear than to gain if the United States offers India and Pakistan equal amounts of advanced conventional capabilities since these might conceivably enable New Delhi to execute a humiliating "Cold Start" conventional strike against Pakistan's much smaller military or conceivably knock out Islamabad's limited nuclear forces without using Indian nuclear weapons. How the United States and others go about enhancing each of these states' offensive and defensive military capabilities, in short, matters at least as much as the actual quantity of goods transferred.¹⁶

While the United States should do all it can to discourage India from putting its conventional forces on alert against Pakistan, it also makes sense for Washington to make sure Pakistan's military and intelligence services stay focused against Islamist terrorist organizations operating in Pakistan. Here, it would be helpful to get India to reassure Pakistan that New Delhi is not supporting unrest in Balochistan and other areas in or bordering Pakistan. Yet another confidence-building measure that India should be encouraged to embrace is to invite the Pakistani military to all major Indian military exercises and to get Islamabad to reciprocate as part of a mutual military exchange. Finally, India and Pakistan should begin negotiations that would pull back forces identified to be offensive or threatening to agreed lines. No, low, medium, and high-force zones could then be discussed. Here, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conventional force reduction treaty expertise (including from Turkey) might be usefully tapped.

Making progress on any of these non-nuclear recommendations will help foster progress on the nuclear front. Here, the United States has a role to play in the implementation of the U.S.-India civilian nuclear cooperation agreement finalized in 2006. India may not be bound by the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), but the United States, Russia, China, and France—all NPT nuclear weapons states—are. Under Article I of the NPT, weapons state members cannot help any state acquire nuclear weapons directly or indirectly that did not already have them in 1967.

India no longer has any stockpiled uranium reserves. Shortly before the nuclear cooperative agreement was finalized with the United States, India was running its power reactors at a fraction of their capacity. That is

one of the key reasons why India was so eager to get the United States to allow foreign uranium exports to India under the nuclear cooperative agreement. If India now imports a significant amount of nuclear fuel for its civilian power reactors, makes more nuclear weapons than it did before the deal, and does not increase its domestic production of uranium, it would necessarily be using the civilian imports of nuclear fuel to increase the amount of domestic uranium it could use to make bombs. This would implicate nuclear weapons states that might supply such fuel to India—e.g., Russia, France, China, and the United States—in violating Article I of the NPT. Under U.S. law, the Henry J. Hyde United States-India Peace Atomic Energy Cooperation Act of 2006 requires the U.S. executive to report annually on India’s uranium consumption and supply to make sure that the United States is not implicated in any such a violation. The idea behind the reporting requirement was to implement the U.S.-Indian deal in a manner that would threaten continued U.S. nuclear assistance to India’s civilian program should India use U.S. nuclear fuel imports to help it make more nuclear weapons per year than it was making prior to the deal. Promoting this approach with China, Russia, and France would clearly be useful: It could help restrain India’s nuclear weapons materials production efforts and help the United States and the other NPT nuclear weapons states persuade Pakistan to do the same.

Ultimately, however, nuclear restraint by India and Pakistan is unsustainable without China doing more to restrain its nuclear weapons programs and exports. President Barack Obama obliquely referred to this in his April 5, 2009, arms control address in Prague. After the United States and Russia agree to significant cuts in their nuclear weapons arsenals, he noted, “we

will seek to include all nuclear weapons states in this endeavor."¹⁷ For Pakistan's sake and that of South West Asia and the rest of the world, this endeavor should start as soon as possible.

One way to begin might be to encourage China to announce publicly what it claims privately to have already done—cease making additional fissionable materials for nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom (UK), France, Russia, and the United States already have made public statements to this effect and have made it clear that they have ceased this production as a matter of policy. If China were to follow, additional pressure might be placed on both India and Pakistan to do likewise. Certainly, it would be far preferable to attempt to balance the nuclear weapons efforts of Pakistan and India this way than by relying solely on the calibration of supplies to Pakistan and India of peaceful nuclear reactors, nuclear fuels, missile technology, and conventional military goods.

Of course, none of these steps will be easy. Each will take considerable time and effort. On the other hand, the reform agenda laid out here is far more tractable and concrete than anything flowing from concerns that Pakistani nuclear assets might fall into the wrong hands. Here, the specific options analysts propose are so extreme, they crowd out what's practicable. Rather than distract our policy leaders from taking the steps needed to reduce the threats of nuclear war, we would do well to view our worst terrorist nightmares for what they are: Subordinate threats that will be limited best if the risks of nuclear war are themselves reduced and contained.

ENDNOTES - INTRODUCTION

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16. On these points, see Peter Lavoy, "Islamabad's Nuclear Posture: Its Premises and Implementation," in *Pakistan's Nuclear Future*, pp. 129-66.

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