

DRAFT PAPER

**“CREATING A CONSTITUENCY FOR UNILATERAL NUCLEAR
RESTRAINT IN PAKISTAN: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES”**

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Introduction

The last few years have revealed an increasing trend of ‘vertical proliferation’ in the South Asian region. Recent revelations about quantitative and qualitative developments in the nuclear and missile inventories of India and Pakistan indicate a higher likelihood of an impending nuclear arms competition in the region. If the disintegration of the Soviet Union set any precedent, it suggests that an arms race would be to the detriment of Pakistan’s national security. First, nuclear weapons do not prevent proxy wars and therefore may not improve the quality of a state’s security; second a large number of nuclear weapons cannot help a state prevent its disintegration from within; and third a nuclear arms competition amongst the two protagonists is to the detriment of the state which, like Pakistan, has a lesser ability to absorb undue pressures on its fragile economy. Yet Pakistan is increasing both its fissile material stockpile and its dependency on nuclear weapons and public discussion about unilateral arms control or nuclear restraint is negligible.

The single most important challenge¹ that obstructs the debate on unilateral nuclear restraint is the ‘balance of terror’ mindset that informs Pakistani understanding of nuclear deterrence² and guides its strategic rationale. Pakistan focuses narrowly on ‘strategic competition’ as a viable basis for deterrence and security. On one hand, this understanding attributes an exaggerated value to the balance of nuclear weapons for ensuring security; on the other it gets a state trapped into an elusive sense of dependency over bilateral processes sometimes involving choices pertaining crucial matters of national interest. As a result, the calls for nonproliferation and arms control are only made in bilateral terms inviting the cooperation of one’s adversary.

It could therefore be argued that as long as the discourse on security is determined by the self-defeating ideas like ‘strategic balance’ and nonproliferation measures are held hostage to bilateral or multilateral efforts, there is little likelihood for any state to halt or slow down vertical proliferation. Under these circumstances it is hard to expect Pakistan to revisit its nuclear choices unless there is a significant change in the mindset of Pakistan’s nuclear policy making elite. This could only happen if the conventional wisdom about nuclear weapons and deterrence are indigenously challenged and a new understanding about nuclear deterrence is developed.

This paper aims to look at the prospects of such a debate in Pakistan. It reviews Pakistan’s security scenario and the existing trends of nuclear weapons and missiles related

* The author is extremely grateful to Dr. Zia Mian, George Perkovich, Toby Dalton, Anne Harrington, Salma Malik and Michael Krepon for reviewing this draft and providing useful feedback. The author is responsible for incorporating some of the suggestions while leaving others.

¹ It is not meant to suggest that the challenge mentioned in this paper is the only one. There are other challenges that are out of this paper’s scope. For instance, Pakistan’s willingness to use nuclear weapons to extract material and political gains from the US itself poses a challenge to the notion of devaluing nuclear weapons in Pakistan.

² Rajesh M. Basrur, “Two Decades of Minimum Deterrence in South Asia: A Comparative Framework,” in Bhumitra Chakma (ed), *The Politics of Nuclear Weapons in South Asia* (England: Ashgate Publishers, 2011), P.23.

developments. It then analyzes the perceived versus actual utility of expanding nuclear weapons arsenal for Pakistan's nuclear deterrence purposes. It then posits nuclear restraint as an alternative option for Pakistan. At the end it evaluates the potential of creating a support constituency for nuclear restraint in Pakistan.

Revisiting the Status Quo

Pakistan has increasingly become a 'security state.'³ Over the past fifteen years the internal security situation in Pakistan has moved from bad to worse. Business Monitor international rated Pakistan's overall security risk at 35 out of 100 (on a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 is worst and 100 best).⁴ The threat of terrorism is rated 26 and that of domestic security as 30.⁵ This only tells the nature of existing threats where chances of inter-state large scale wars are gradually receding whereas the potential for intra-state conflicts is constantly increasing.

Today Pakistan's Army is fighting a war on its own territory at multiple fronts. It is struggling to defeat a nationalist movement in Baluchistan; eliminating the insurgents in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) under Operation Zarb-e-Azab; and fighting violent gangs in its biggest metropolitan port city of Karachi. While the reasons behind these threats are largely indigenous, many in Pakistan argue that external actors accentuate them. Despite the fact that both India and Pakistan have long used indirect means to undermine each other's interests. The trends over the last decade clearly indicate growing tendencies toward proxy wars in South Asia.⁶

Meanwhile, Pakistan's socio-political condition paints a bleak picture. Pakistan is ranked 146 out of the 187 countries listed by United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index 2014.⁷ The same report noted that 45.6 % of Pakistan's population lives below the poverty line according to its Multidimensional Poverty Indices.⁸ The level of security

³Khaled Ahmed, "Our National Security Prison," *The Express Tribune* (May 27, 2012) available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/384642/our-national-security-prison/>; Also see, T.V.Paul, *The Warrior State: Pakistan in the Contemporary World*(New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Pakistan: The Garrison State* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁴"Pakistan Defence and Security Report," Business Monitor international Q1 2014 (Printed 2013), P.35 available at www.businessmonitor.com.

⁵Ibid.

⁶MateenHaider, "RAW involved in terrorist activities across Pakistan: foreign secretary,"*Dawn* (May 14, 2015) available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1181908>; Also see "If Pakistan stops aiding terror, South Asia situation will improve: Rajnath Singh,"*The Times of India* (Marh 19, 2015) available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/If-Pakistan-stops-aiding-terror-South-Asia-situation-will-improve-Rajnath-Singh/articleshow/46618532.cms>.

⁷MehtabHaider, "Half of Pakistan population lives in poverty: UN report," *The News* (September 20, 2014) available at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/todays-news-2-273911-half-of-pakistan-population-lives-in-poverty-un-report>.

⁸Ibid.

has also decreased tremendously.⁹ Most Pakistanis feel less secure today because of the omnipresent danger of terrorism than they did two decades ago. Under these circumstances Pakistan has announced a ten percent increase in its annual defense budget for the year 2015 – 2016. It will spend the increased budget money for Operation Zarb-e-Azab, and raise nine new battalions for securing China – Pakistan Economic Corridor routes.¹⁰ Additionally, some of this budget increase will go towards projected targets in the nuclear field, but those are never publically announced and discussed. Owing to the secrecy of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program, it is almost impossible to correctly evaluate how much money is spent on it. It is also worth noting that the money spent on the nuclear program may not necessarily be drawn entirely from the defense budget. It is assumed amongst informed circles in Pakistan that some money for nuclear weapons program might be diverted from other heads.¹¹ Only a conjectural analysis could be made about the likelihood of increasing cost of the nuclear weapons program by looking at the current trends and trajectories as well as the growing ‘nuclear estate’¹² and its financial implications.

Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Program: Current Trends

Pakistan perceives a growing conventional military asymmetry vis-à-vis India as a source of potential threat. Consequently, Pakistan heavily depends on nuclear deterrence to prevent war. This has made the ‘nuclear estate’ in Pakistan deeply concerned about preserving and strengthening its nuclear deterrent vis-à-vis India. Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program India-centric and India-reactive.¹³ As a result nuclear weapons have gained primacy in Pakistan’s national security policy. Pakistan monitors Indian military developments carefully and makes an effort to maintain a rough nuclear balance with India. This has resulted in generating anxiety and

⁹ShahbazRana, “World Bank report: In Pakistan, violence rises with food insecurity,”*The Express Tribune* (October 11, 2014) available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/773737/world-bank-report-in-pakistan-violence-rises-with-food-insecurity/>.

¹⁰ShahbazRana, “Budget 2016 preview: For every rupee paid in taxes, 26 paisas will go to defence,” *The Express Tribune* (May 22, 2015) available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/890384/budget-2016-preview-for-every-rupee-paid-in-taxes-26-paisas-will-go-to-defence/>.

¹¹“US extremely concerned over ‘Pakistan diverting aid money for expanding nuke programme’,” (March 01, 2012) available at <https://cricket.yahoo.com/news/us-extremely-concerned-over-pakistan-diverting-aid-money-080352516.html>.

¹²Nuclear estate refers to the institutions that are involved in “nuclear policy and praxis” in states possessing nuclear weapons. These institutions according to William Walker and Nicholas J. Wheeler “take on the guise of an estate within the state.” For a detailed analysis of the role of nuclear estates within weak states see William Walker & Nicholas J. Wheeler, “The Problem of Weak Nuclear States,”*The Nonproliferation Review*, 20:3 (2013) 411-431 available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10736700.2013.849906>.

¹³BhumitraChakma, *Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Routledge, 2009); It is also important to note here that more recently some analysts have alluded to the possibility of a broadening of Pakistan’s threat perception. They argue that Pakistan has increasingly become concerned about American threat and that its increase in fissile material stockpile might be a result of its threat perception vis-à-vis United States. See for example, Pervez Hoodbhoy, “Pakistan’s rush for more bombs – Why?,” *The Express Tribune* (January 20, 2012) at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/328922/pakistans-rush-for-more-bombs--why/>; Bruce Riedel, “South Asia’s Looming Arms Race,” *The Wall Street Journal* (April 07, 2011) at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703712504576245690427793516.html>.

a reassessment of Pakistan's nuclear needs. As a result Pakistan appears to be moving away from a simplistic notion of deterrence (like it held in 1998) to a complex idea of operationalizing deterrence that is highly demanding both in terms of capabilities and posture.¹⁴

Few issues that have dominated Pakistan's strategic calculations in the past few years include the Indo-US Nuclear Deal, India's growing Sea-based capabilities, India's infamous 'Cold Start' doctrine, and India's Ballistic Missile Defense Program. Pakistan is responding to these developments by investing and making significant headway in improving its nuclear and missile inventories quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Pakistan has diversified its missile inventory by adding two types of cruise missiles (Babur and Ra'ad), short range tactical missiles (NASR) and more recently Shaheen III to its existing fleet of long-range ballistic missiles Ghauri, Shaheen I and Shaheen II. Pakistan is reportedly developing a sea-based second-strike capability.¹⁵ It has also blocked FMCT negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament and is consistently increasing its fissile material stockpiles.¹⁶ This in Pakistan's view would help it neutralize the growing likelihood of quantitative superiority of India's nuclear arsenal in the wake of Indo-US Nuclear Deal.¹⁷ Pakistan may also consume it to meet the increasing requirements of fissile material for feeding and sustaining its cruise missiles (for assured penetrability against the Indian Ballistic Missile Defense System that is yet to be put in place), its short-range ballistic missiles meant to deter India's Cold Start doctrine and its sea-based deterrent that is still going through its developmental stages. At the doctrinal level Pakistan has moved from a "minimum credible deterrence" to a "Full Spectrum Deterrence" now called "Full Spectrum Minimum Credible Deterrence" – an oxymoron in itself.¹⁸ This departure from Pakistan's previous position might require changes in Pakistan's nuclear posture. For instance, deterring Cold Start by means of short range ballistic missiles would require their deployment in

¹⁴ See SadiaTasleem, "Conceptualizing the Relationship Between Nuclear Learning and Doctrinal Thinking: Understanding the Pakistani Perspective and Assessing Deterrence Stability," in FerozHasanKhan ed., *Nuclear Learning in South Asia: The Next Decade* (June 2014) available at http://www.nps.edu/Academics/Centers/CCC/Research/NuclearLearning/7%20Nuclear%20Learning_Tasleem.pdf.

¹⁵ For details of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and missiles related developments see "Chapter Six: Asia," *The Military Balance*, 114:1(2014) pp. 220 – 221.

¹⁶ "Fourth plutonium production reactor in Pakistan appears operational," *IPFM Blog* (January 19, 2015) available at http://fissilematerials.org/blog/2015/01/fourth_plutonium_product.html.

¹⁷ "The South Asian Nuclear Balance: An Interview With Pakistani Ambassador to the CD Zamir Akram," *Arms Control Association*, available at https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2011_12/Interview_With_Pakistani_Ambassador_to_the_CD_Zamir_Akram.

¹⁸ ISPR Press Release issued on (December 14, 2010) available at https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&id=1608#pr_link1608; ISPR Statement issued at the test firing of Hatf IX on (November 05, 2013) available at https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2013/11/5; Also see ISPR statement on September 26, 2014 at https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2014/9/26; ISPR Press Releases issued on November 13, 2014 and November 17, 2014 used the term Full Spectrum Minimum Credible Deterrence. See ISPR Press Release, November 13, 2014 available at https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2014/11/13; Also see ISPR Press Release, November 17, 2014 available at https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2014/11/17.

large numbers.¹⁹ Likewise, SRBMs as well as sea-based deterrence would also require higher levels of operational readiness and delegative command and control.

Such possibilities have spurred international concerns regarding the likely challenges to the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and their delivery means.²⁰ The militant tendencies reported amongst the officer cadre of armed forces have also provoked many questions.²¹ Concerns have also been raised over command and control issues during crisis. Pakistan often dismisses these concerns by arguing that its Personnel Reliability Program is foolproof and its nuclear weapons are as safe or unsafe as those of any other nuclear weapon state.²² Pakistani officials hold that such concerns will not determine Pakistan's nuclear choices. Pakistani policy makers feel convinced that their (perceived) strategic compulsions necessitate the aforementioned changes in Pakistan's existing capabilities.²³ Alongside that they also claim that Pakistan's nuclear weapons program consumes only a fraction of Pakistan's total budget.²⁴

Interestingly, Pakistan officially keeps reiterating its willingness to pursue credible minimum deterrence. However, it looks at minimum deterrence largely as a dynamic as opposed to a static concept.²⁵ This makes minimum deterrence a bilateral phenomenon where the requirements for credible deterrence could only be determined by one's perceptions of its adversary's capabilities. As a result an arms buildup appears inevitable in a situation where a bigger adversary with more resources and larger aims makes a relatively higher investment in its military advancement. Pakistan also finds itself in a similar trap. Pakistani officials have time and again noted that they do not want an arms race in this region however they will take all necessary measures to ensure Pakistan's national security – which in this case implies maintaining a nuclear balance vis-à-vis India (since it is considered essential for the said objective). Consequently, the likelihood of an arms competition appears inevitable.²⁶

¹⁹A.H. Nayyar and Zia Mian, "The Limited Military Utility of Pakistan's Battlefield Use of Nuclear Weapons in Response to Large Scale Indian Conventional Attack," *Pakistan Security Research Unit*, 61 (11 November 2010) P.7 available at <http://www.princeton.edu/sgs/faculty-staff/zia-mian/Limited-Military-Utility-of-Pakistans.pdf>.

²⁰Julian Borger, "WikiLeaks cables highlight Pakistani nuclear terror threat," *The Guardian* (December 01, 2010) available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/01/wikileaks-cables-pakistan-nuclear-threat>.

²¹Syed Raza Hassan and Katharine Houreld, "In attack by al Qaeda, lines blur between Pakistan's military, militants," *Reuters* (October 1, 2014) available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/01/us-pakistan-militants-attacks-insight-idUSKCN0HP2MM20141001>.

²²"Pakistan: Nuke Security fool-proof," *CNN* (January 26, 2008) available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/01/26/musharraf.nuclear/index.html?eref=yahoo>.

²³"Sartaj sees arms race in S. Asia after India – US agreements," *Dawn News* (January 30, 2015) available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1160322/sartaj-sees-arms-race-in-s-asia-after-india-us-agreements>. On posture it is often argued in Pakistan that NASR may not need large scale deployment and its mere existence might be enough for deterring India's punitive strike. This argument however appears self-contradictory.

²⁴ Lt. Gen_(Retd). Khalid Kidwai, CEIP Nuclear Policy Conference 2015 transcript available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/03-230315carnegieKIDWAI.pdf>.

²⁵ AbdulSattar address at the National Defence College, Islamabad (24 May 2000).

²⁶ "Sartaj sees arms race in S. Asia after India – US agreements," *Dawn News* (January 30, 2015) available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1160322/sartaj-sees-arms-race-in-s-asia-after-india-us-agreements>.

Under such circumstances, is the nuclear estate making policy choices out of willingness or does it feel compelled to pursue the path it has opted for? Pakistani policy makers if probed on such questions not only appreciate the challenges Pakistan faces today but also maintain reluctance toward a nuclear competition. However they feel convinced that they are compelled under the existing strategic dynamics to tread the path they are pursuing no matter how unwillingly. They point to a list of proposals for bilateral arms control and even disarmament that Pakistan has offered to India before and after conducting nuclear tests.²⁷ While India dismisses Pakistan's offers as mere point-scoring attempts that lack sincerity and genuine desire to understand each other's different set of requirements. Pakistan often expresses its disappointment and concern over India's unwillingness to cooperate.²⁸

The preceding discussion clearly suggests that an arms competition is not a preferred choice even within the elite decision-making group that is responsible for taking Pakistan down this road. While, Pakistani decision-makers lament the absence of a better alternative they are self-trapped into a belief that one does not exist and therefore they do not even make an effort to either look for or create one. This pushes Pakistan into a perpetual dilemma of pursuing a path it considers unsuitable and unsustainable for itself. Therefore an effort to explore alternative options must be a priority.

Search for an Alternative

The search for alternative options only begins with raising hard and often uncomfortable questions. So in the case of Pakistan too, there is a need to ask questions that have not been raised as yet and may help open new ways of thinking. For instance, what have nuclear weapons done for Pakistan? How many are enough for a weaker state to communicate to its adversary that victory shall be denied in case of aggression? What a larger arsenal of nuclear weapons can and may do for Pakistan? And what nuclear weapons cannot do for Pakistan? Or to put it simply what is the actual as oppose to perceived military utility of nuclear weapons and what are their limitations?

From Pakistan's official viewpoint nuclear weapons have helped Pakistan deter a large-scale war vis-à-vis India at several occasions including the Compound Crisis of 1990, limited war in Kargil in 1999, Operation Parakaram in December 2001 (resulting in a 10 month-long

²⁷ These proposals include; a joint Indo-Pakistan declaration renouncing the acquisition or manufacture of nuclear weapons, in 1978; South Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, in 1978; mutual inspections by India and Pakistan of each other's nuclear facilities, in 1979; simultaneous adherence to the NPT by India and Pakistan, in 1979; simultaneous acceptance of full-scope IAEA safeguards, in 1979; a bilateral or regional nuclear test-ban treaty, in 1987; a South Asia Zero-Missile Zone, in 1994; Strategic Restraint Regime etc. Excerpt from A.H.Nayyar, "A Pakistani Perspective on Nuclear Disarmament and Nonproliferation," *FES Briefing Paper 9* (August 2008) available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/global/05652.pdf>.

²⁸ Iftikhar A. Khan, "Pakistan warns India against hegemonic mindset," *Dawn* (January 14, 2010) available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/514149/pakistan-warns-india-against-hegemonic-mindset>.

military standoff between India and Pakistan) and the Mumbai Crisis in 2008.²⁹ In each one of these crises however, the exact role of nuclear weapons is hard to decipher. Most discussions and conclusions about these crises undertake a retrospective analysis with preconceived biases depicting an absence of war as a consequence of the presence of nuclear weapons. No framework has so far been developed and used to determine the causality between capability and observed behaviors. The existing discourse therefore reflects many inconsistencies. Consider the example of Operation Parakram and the ensuing military standoff as a case in point. While, both policy makers and scholars hail the success of nuclear deterrence during the military standoff (2001-02) several questions that may challenge this long held assumption are often ignored. For instance, why did India decide to mobilize its military forces in the first place? If it intended to take a military action against Pakistan, that itself should be considered at least a serious blow to Pakistan's assumption. It is often said that Pakistan had managed to send its military units to the defensive positions much before the arrival of the Indian army and this as a result discouraged Indian army from making advances.³⁰ If this was the case, it was conventional military force as oppose to nuclear weapons that helped deter an Indian attack. However, if the Indian side mobilized its forces only to coerce Pakistan as oppose to fight a war, the notion of nuclear deterrence immediately becomes irrelevant. There were other occasions that are considered high times of crisis during the military standoff. And it is believed that India was seriously contemplating taking punitive measures inside Pakistani territory but it was discouraged by the fear of a proportionate response by Pakistani forces.³¹ Again the presence of nuclear weapons didn't prevent the likelihood of war. This analysis is only meant to further encourage research on some of these areas where the role of nuclear weapons at best remains abstract.

A more nuanced collaborative study of Indo-Pak crises attributes the prevention of crisis escalation to multiple variables with a sharp focus on the involvement of the US.³² But even if the assumptions about success of nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan are accepted, this entails a further question. How did deterrence work between India and Pakistan? This question has also at best been addressed only vaguely in Pakistan leading to broad generalizations as opposed to addressing the specifics. Christine Fair however lucidly writes, "It is not an objective assessment of Pakistan's capabilities that deters India but rather ambiguity about what Pakistan can or would do in a crisis."³³ This may sound counterintuitive; but a larger, diversified arsenal particularly integrating battlefield nuclear weapons in operational military doctrine might actually undermine deterrence. Pakistan does not aim to win a nuclear war. It

²⁹These claims about success of nuclear deterrence in preventing war are repeatedly made by policy makers as well as scholars at seminars, conferences and even university classrooms.

³⁰Brig. Gurmeet Kanwal, "Lost Opportunities in Operation Parakram," *Indian in the Defence Review* (December 13, 2011) available at <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/lost-opportunities-in-operation-parakram/>.

³¹ "When India almost went to war with Pakistan," *Hindustan Times* available at <http://blogs.hindustantimes.com/inside-story/2011/11/02/when-india-went-to-war-with-pakistan-twice/>.

³² P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Stephen Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process: American Engagement in South Asia*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2007).

³³C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: Pakistan Army's Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press 2014), P. 203.

aims to deter war and if deterrence fails deny victory to India. These objectives are relatively limited and even a small nuclear arsenal may suffice to meet such objectives.

So, what would more nuclear weapons do for Pakistan? At most they could increase Pakistan's bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the US (deeply concerned about Pakistan's growing arsenal) to extract something favorable as a quid pro quo. At worst however, more weapons could push Pakistan towards international pressure, isolation, increased responsibilities relating management, command and control and protection of a larger arsenal from what Pakistan fears as the possibility of an attempt (by its growing adversaries) to sabotage Pakistan's strategic weapons. More weapons would also have financial implications for a state with a fragile economy. Even a rudimentary conjectural analysis could clearly help decipher that more weapons do not just require fissile material and production cost, they also consume resources for storage, maintenance and mobilization in times of crisis or war.³⁴ SPD already has a huge security division.³⁵ More weapons may require an increase in the security division personnel. Their recruitment, training and Personnel Reliability Program all incur costs. Likewise, requirements for staff dealing with management of all new weapons also increases and so does the need for investment in operational planning. Besides, these expenditures there are other indirect costs of the nuclear program that are substantially increasing with growth of the nuclear estate.

At the same time nuclear weapons have serious limitations. They cannot help a state preserve its territorial integrity in the wake of an internal crisis. Their presence does not discourage proxy wars, it rather creates a conducive environment for such activities. In a state like Pakistan a military dominated by a growing nuclear estate may also become a challenge for democratic processes.

What does this imply? It implies that more nuclear weapons may not improve the quality of security in Pakistan. Smaller arsenals have proved as good or bad for deterrence as large arsenals could be. On the contrary, arms buildup would add up to the existing challenges at administrative, operational, financial, diplomatic, institutional and political levels. Besides, more weapons may decrease as oppose to increasing security. Investment in a nuclear competition therefore might incur the cost of redundancy.

Parallel realities emerging from policy-makers' reluctance toward an arms competition on the one hand and their perception of strategic compulsions pushing Pakistan into arms buildups on the other apparently present an irreconcilable challenge. From Pakistan's official viewpoint, the only way to break this deadlock is by pursuing bilateral arms control measures.

³⁴On contrary officials at SPD often argue conveniently that since Pakistan has already built the infrastructure required for making nuclear weapons, the question of financial implication of Pakistan's nuclear program is an overrated ruse.

³⁵ "Pakistan says 25,000 Guards watching Nukes," *NTI Global Security Newswire* (June 25, 2013) available at <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/pakistan-says-25000-nuke-oversight-duty/>.

This approach however has not materialized so far and does not appear to work at least in the near future given the strategic realities of today's South Asia. Multilateral international approaches would also work only if all the stakeholders are convinced that their national security interests shall not be compromised. But can Pakistan think of pursuing unilateral nuclear restraint? What does that mean? Why and why not? What kind of challenges might come in the way?

As previously mentioned, Pakistan's decision-makers' tacit recognition that they are not willing to pursue an arms competition with India itself indicates that an arms competition is not helpful. The analysis above however indicates that it could be ruinous and even fatalistic because of the financial implications on Pakistan's socio-economic fabric, increasing cost of redundancy, threat of sabotage and terrorism, repercussions of international isolation, fear of inadvertent escalation, likelihood of militarism, accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons; without significantly changing the quality of security in Pakistan.

The proposal for unilateral arms control measures is rooted in the assumption that nuclear deterrence does not work in a vacuum. The sociopolitical and economic conditions of a state deeply affect its security dynamics and shape the ability of its adversary to destabilize a state from within. A weaker state therefore needs to carve out its space by reducing dependency on an adversary's good will. Cutting down on building weapons that may not substantively add quality to a state's security should be a priority. The question that follows is; what will Pakistan stand to gain by pursuing unilateral nuclear restraint?

Why Unilateral Nuclear Restraint?

There are some direct and other indirect gains that Pakistan shall make out of a unilateral arms control regime. To begin with, a unilateral arms control regime would help Pakistan cut down the increasing financial costs of its growing nuclear weapons program as well as the expanding nuclear estate. Even if this money is a 'fraction' of the budget, cutting down on it would remind Pakistani decision-makers of their responsibilities that may help them put their priorities in the right direction (i.e. social development). This may also reduce the cost of redundancy and make Pakistan's program cost-efficient.

At the international level, Pakistan's unilateral approach might help reassure international community of Pakistan's genuine needs and its willingness to play a responsible role in the community of nations. This may also help allay international fears and concerns regarding Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and therefore strengthen Pakistan's case for its entry into the mainstream international nuclear and missile technology regimes.

At the domestic political level this may help reduce military control and promote democratic trends within the society. At the very least, arms control may help the existing situation turning from bad to worse.

While, the moral argument rooted in the notion of humanitarian consequences of nuclear war stand as relevant in case of Pakistan as anywhere in the world given the possibility of huge human loss in the wake of a nuclear war or accidental/unauthorized use of these weapons; this might not cause a major revision in Pakistan's nuclear policy for two reasons; Firstly, Pakistani policy makers feel convinced that nuclear weapons have helped prevent wars and therefore the likelihood of human loss in case of a conventional war has been mitigated by the presence of nuclear weapons. Secondly, the value of human life in Pakistan has degraded in real terms over the past few years. It is hard to ascertain if the human factor would be a serious part of military's calculations while making policy choices.

However, other factors mentioned above for example, the futility of more weapons, the cost of redundancy and international isolation might be considered potentially significant factors that may help bring revisions in the approach within the nuclear estate toward policy choices as long as restraint does not degrade the quality of security.

Unilateral Nuclear Restraint: What would it require?

Is a policy of unilateral nuclear restraint even possible for states locked in a nuclear rivalry? Is there a precedent? What kind of steps Pakistan should take to pursue unilateral nuclear restraint?

China presents an excellent example of a state that pursued self-restraint. During the Cold War China faced threats from multiple actors including Super Powers i.e. the US and USSR on one hand and India (a regional neighbor) on the other hand. It however maintained a minimalist posture by maintaining a small arsenal largely dependent on land-based ballistic missiles and adopted passive defence measures for survivability. A China expert in the US Jeffrey Lewis describes the Chinese approach in the following words. He writes, "...the limited posture is substantially the result of deliberate choices by the Chinese leadership that reflect a belief that deterrence is relatively insensitive to changes in the size, configuration and readiness of nuclear forces."³⁶ On another point he writes,

"Beijing's decisions about force configuration and arms control suggest a planning system that treats deterrence as easily maintained, even by very low force levels that are kept off alert. The overall Chinese force configuration, then, reflects a distinctive calculus of risk – in effect trading offensive capability for other virtues, including better control over nuclear forces and economic savings."³⁷

This clearly suggests that a state's view of what constitutes nuclear deterrence can deeply affect its policy choices and nuclear posture in return. This also suggests that success or failure of nuclear deterrence or war prevention may not necessarily be linked with the number of weapons or a balance of forces. Learning the Chinese way of looking at nuclear deterrence may help

³⁶ Jeffrey Lewis, *Minimum Means of Reprisal: China's Search for Security in the Nuclear Age* (United States: MIT Press, 2007), P. 20.

³⁷*Ibid.*, P. 194.

Pakistani policy makers to question their existing assumptions about deterrence as well as their perception of nuclear needs.

Pakistan for instance should consider restricting its SRBMs Hatf IX to the experimental stages as oppose to their production for deployment. Deployment for nuclear warheads – strategic or tactical – would be destabilizing as well as costly. Likewise limiting the number of nuclear warheads as well as entering into negotiations over FMCT could prove productive for Pakistan.

While Pakistan maintains a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing it is not willing to sign the CTBT unless India does so. This also reflects Pakistan's view of deterrence from a bilateral lens. Pakistan should sign the CTBT without waiting for India to do so. The credibility of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent – focused on counter-value targeting – depends on Pakistan's ability and willingness to use its weapons in case of need as oppose to their accuracy.

Creating a Constituency for Unilateral Nuclear Restraint

In order to understand how this can be achieved it is important to understand who matters? While, theoretically speaking every Pakistani is a stake holder and therefore relevant in this process, in reality things might be different.

Public opinion in nuclear decision making in Pakistan only has a negative relevance. This implies that public opinion is not usually taken into account while making nuclear policy choices however, public opinion is constantly shaped by nuclear decision-makers in favor of their viewpoint. And while the common people may not be enthusiastic about taking up issues like arms control and disarmament, their energies can very effectively be channelized to project consensus over the status quo. They can also be manipulated as a force of resistance to any idea of change.

The actual power lies with the 'nuclear estate' that mainly comprises of Strategic Plans Division (SPD) under National Command Authority's leadership. While theoretically the decision-making on nuclear weapons might appear a complex process that engages input from various political leaders, state institutions as well as think-tanks, in reality SPD's role in nuclear choices is more or less monolithic. While, the think-tanks across Islamabad may provide occasional input to SPD, most of them mainly depend on SPD for their funds. Their ability to challenge the status quo and proposing a radical departure from existing policies appears limited. This in turn makes SPD the center of the nuclear estate and therefore the influential organization over nuclear policy issues.

The single most important challenge to any idea about creating a favorable constituency for unilateral nuclear restraint is to convince the SPD that a large nuclear arsenal may not be useful for Pakistan and that pursuing unilateral nuclear restraint would not hurt Pakistan's national security; it may rather help improve the existing situation. But this would require changing their worldview and the security paradigm they operate in.

However, the nuclear estate in Pakistan is as resistant to change as most military organizations are. Challenging their belief systems is often viewed as a challenge to their existence and their ability to rationalize. It provokes increasing defensiveness against any signs of resistance. For instance, past ten years have seen a rise in SPD's indirect investment in think tanks and academic programs in an attempt to preserve, strengthen and reinforce SPD's view of Pakistan's nuclear requirements and its policy. This might aggravate in the next few years. If the stakeholders in the nuclear estate develop their own personal stakes in the war-making industry over a period of time, it will become too hard to even contemplate a cut down. So, what should be done to convince them to revisit their assumptions and policy choices relating nuclear weapons?

Ideas on change suggest that following conditions can help stir change;

(1) A huge shocking event can stimulate thinking over deeply embedded assumptions and may change people's belief system; (2) a generational shift across an organization can also change the ways of thinking and affect policy choices. Sometimes only the change in leadership is sufficient to cause change however in case of situations where institutional memory and learning largely informs policy-making, the role and capacity of an individual leader is minimal. (3) Finally change could be externally stimulated. This involves interaction between the change-agents at various levels.

In order to change the mindset of the nuclear estate in Pakistan over issues relating deterrence and nuclear policy choices, the first two options are not relevant (for the purpose of this case study) since first involves a shock and second is a time taking process. However the notion of externally stimulated change might prove helpful. But what does this option entail? Who could be the external change stimulators? Three different categories of possible change stimulators are discussed below;

1. A people's movement
2. Epistemic Community³⁸
3. International actors: United States versus 'others'

A people's movement

Can popular awareness challenge the existing discourse on nuclear weapons and deterrence? While, educating public about nuclear issues is very important and this can be done through informal education by using social and electronic media so that people could not be manipulated by sloganeering and loud rhetoric; at the same time however, it is hard to expect the rise of a massive people's movement in Pakistan asking for arms control or a ban on future production of nuclear weapons. While, there is some sense of false pride within the masses over Pakistan's ability to develop atomic weapons, these weapons do not however occupy popular imagination.

³⁸ Here it refers to national group of experts on issues relating nuclear weapons.

Pakistanis as a nation face so many immediate and proximate threats that it is extremely hard for them to think about weapon systems and their problems that are not even visible to them. Many people are consumed by the worries of making a reasonable living.³⁹ Their stakes in life are very different from the developed world. The European model of peace movements for instance is not expected to grow in Pakistan.

Role of the epistemic community

Emanuel Adler in his groundbreaking work discussed the role of national epistemic communities in fomenting cooperation on the issue of international nuclear arms control.⁴⁰ He discussed the influence of American scholars and experts in shaping the understanding of policy makers over crucial issues relating nuclear weapons. Is it possible to expect the epistemic community in Pakistan to play a similar role?

There are several challenges in this regard;

1. The epistemic community largely draws on the works of the Western scholars that are often wedded to the notion of strategic balance and bilateral approaches. Similar ideas are then used for dealing Pakistan's perceived challenges relating nuclear deterrence.
2. There is a serious problem regarding the capacity of the epistemic community to produce original works rooted in Pakistan's local dynamics.
3. Since the work produced by the epistemic community often lacks originality it reinforces as oppose to challenging policy makers view of the necessity for strategic balance.

These issues limit the possibility of the epistemic community effectively playing a role in creating constituency for notions like unilateral nuclear arms control or nuclear restraint that largely remain alien to the contemporary discussions on deterrence stability in Pakistan. While the US government and non-profit organizations have invested in capacity –building programs for the epistemic community however it is too early to assess the impact of the US sponsored programs.

In the short-term it is not hard for the policy makers to dismiss the new voices. It is also worth noting here that Pakistani scholars parroting the American position on Pakistan's nuclear program may not be helpful. Also a very narrow focus on nuclear weapons as the source of Pakistan's troubles is not only simplistic but an unqualified generalization that is hard to prove. Discussion on nuclear restraint would only make sense if it is embedded in informed, balanced

³⁹ This analysis is largely based on author's conversations with at least three leading voices in Pakistan's limited discourse on Arms control and disarmament. They are Dr. Zia Mian, Dr. Pervez Hoodhoy and Dr. A.H.Nayyar. Also Dr. AasimSajjadAkhtar who is working on social issues and violence in Pakistan.

⁴⁰Emanuel Adler, "The Emergence of Cooperation: National Epistemic Communities and the International Evolution of the Idea of Nuclear Arms Control," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Winter, 1992), 101-145 available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706953>.

and thoroughly researched discussion on changing nature of security, threats, and nation building in the contemporary world.

International Actors: United States versus 'others'

The United States has the will and resources to promote nonproliferation in the states of particular concern including Pakistan. However, the question over the role of the US to play a part in shaping or affecting Pakistan's policy choices is delicate and deeply controversial. It needs to be understood carefully.⁴¹ Given the historically comfortable relationship between the US and Pakistan army, the US opening the door for nuclear cooperation with India under the Indo-US Nuclear Deal while denying the same to Pakistan is often considered a sign of betrayal towards Pakistan. The US has since then lost moral legitimacy in Pakistan over nonproliferation and arms control issues. Also, the baggage of suspicion that has accumulated in both the US and Pakistan over each others' sincerity and honesty in the war on terror has reduced acceptance for American advice on matters relating Pakistan's nuclear policy.

At the same time the set of expectations in Pakistan clearly appear self-contradictory. On one hand the total indifference of the US might also hurt the nuclear estate. However, the role of the US in engaging with actors beyond the nuclear estate is also seen with suspicion. Consequently, any dialogue promoted with the American support becomes the immediate casualty of suspicion.

Also keenness on the part of the US to promote discourse on nuclear deterrence, nonproliferation and arms control often appears as an American effort to preserve an international order or status quo that would help the US assert its influence across the globe.

For the US therefore a more constructive role would be;

1. Continue supporting the spread of education amongst the masses.
2. Help Pakistan improve the quality of primary and secondary education.
3. Offer scholarships that are directed at programs promoting critical thinking as oppose to programs specifically focused on weapons of mass destruction.

These steps would enhance people's ability to ask questions. And help promote an indigenous debate rooted in Pakistan-specific issues that are not necessarily rooted in a global discourse on nonproliferation agenda. Such a debate would be hard to dismiss by the decision makers in Pakistan. As far as capacity-building and awareness relating nuclear issues are concerned, the

⁴¹For instance, Pakistan has been depending on the US for managing crisis and deterring Indian aggression. VipinNarang calls it catalytic deterrence. For details see VipinNarang, "What does it take to Deter? Regional Power Nuclear Postures and International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 57:3 (2012) available at <http://carterscott.com/General/Narang%20-%20What%20Does%20It%20Take%20To%20Deter.pdf>; Besides, there were other occasions when the American advice was responded positively by Pakistan however after the Indo-US Nuclear Deal the US is not considered an honest broker anymore.

credibility of the Scandinavian and some Latin American countries as well as China could play a more instrumental role than the US.

Conclusion

Given the challenges Pakistan faces today, unilateral nuclear restraint appears a suitable and practically effective policy for Pakistan. However, the policy makers in Pakistan would only consider pursuing such measures if they feel convinced that these steps will not degrade Pakistan's national security. Such reassurance would require a change in their mindset and view of nuclear deterrence. Only a realization that a small nuclear arsenal is as good for nuclear deterrence (or in case of its failure victory denial to the enemy) as a large arsenal is would convince the policy makers to change their existing behavior. This would require challenging their wide-held assumptions about the role of nuclear weapons and requirements for effective deterrence. Epistemic community in Pakistan can play an important role in this regard. It can help promote an informed discourse about the perceived versus actual utility of nuclear weapons and as a result may help influence the policy makers' view of nuclear needs. Under the existing conditions, however the epistemic community itself is fraught with many challenges and its capacity to challenge the status quo is limited. It needs to improve its potential to produce original works rooted in Pakistan's indigenous dynamics. Only an informed dialogue structured in the broader phraseology of national security may help create a constituency for unilateral nuclear restraint in Pakistan.