Nuclear Pakistan: Seeking Security and Stability

Reviewed by Talha Ibrahim*

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ISBN: 978-969-7813-00-1
Publisher: University of Lahore Press
Pages: 270

It is contended that the debates regarding nuclearisation of Pakistan failed to pique the public interest due to the ambiguous policy ostensibly adopted since the outset, to avoid the international inquiry in Pakistan’s nuclear bomb programme. Even the exposition within the bureaucratic fraternity on the critical aspects of the nuclear capacity was limited, let alone the passivity from the academia. With the launch of the book ‘Nuclear Pakistan: Seeking Security and Stability’, a compendium of scholarly essays on the various facets of the topic, the editor Naeem Salik is set to reverse the unfamiliarity in relation to the subject. It can be credited to Dr. Salik’s rich experience dealing with the structural and doctrinal issues of the C2 that this book is composed of chapters based on Pakistan’s pressing concerns in the nuclear realm. It will therefore have a scholastic appeal for the informed readership.

In the first chapter of the book, Dr. Mansoor Ahmed penned a glaring expose of the technological hurdles that were overcome by Pakistan’s nuclear establishment in developing a robust cyclical uranium extraction, processing, and enrichment mechanism. Picking its momentum from the Indian nuclear tests in May 1974, the chapter discusses the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguarded deals that were unilaterally abrogated, reconstituted, and the ethical considerations disregarded by the Western states in dealing with Pakistan. In an edifying manner, it recounts how the palpable mode of defiance resulted in the establishment of secret facilities and processes that helped

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Pakistan consolidate its strategic programme and nuclear technology for the socioeconomic process.

Pakistan’s Prospective Force Posture in 2025 authored by Naeem Salik for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 2016 has been republished in this book to augment the readers’ understanding about a myth perpetuated about Pakistan’s fastest growing nuclear arsenal. Building up on the speculations that are associated with determining fissile material build-up, Salik exemplifies through various capacitive constraints and international assessments to debunk the notion that Pakistan is trying to rank itself among the five largest nuclear powers. This chapter ties up with another research article in which Salik seeks to explain the nuclear posturing of Pakistan in relation to its doctrinal objectives. Envisaging Indian Proactive Operations Doctrine (Cold Start Doctrine) as a ploy to cripple Pakistan’s defences and the heavy deployment of Pakistan’s military on the Western borders, Salik rationalised the lowering of nuclear threshold through the induction of Nasr (Hatf-IX) while observing that the operationalization of nuclear arsenal does not tie up with the original declaratory posture of Minimum Credible Deterrence, and is more in line with the flexible response model.

Concerns about nuclear security vis-à-vis Pakistan have ignited lots of controversies in the past. Proliferation linkages of A.Q Khan and the precarious internal security condition of the country added fuel to this debate. In ‘Safety and Security Challenges and Response’, the shift in security orientation, resulting in the National Command Authority (NCA) Security Division evolution into a protective structure being commanded by a two star general and the Personnel Reliability Program (PRP) to detect and prevent the insider attacks have been laid out for the informed readers to counteract the scholarship that alludes to Pakistan’s nuclear programme at the mercy of rogue insiders.

Ahmer Bilal Soofi has written on the legislative edifice of Pakistan’s nuclear regime. His chapter touches the procedural aspects, and the agencies mandated within the legal covers extensively enacted to conform to the IAEA. He also mentions the various Export Control Regimes, in addition to the actions
undertaken concerning the UNSC Resolution 1540.

While various hypotheticals regarding Pakistan Command and Control (C2) have been generated, the concern about the pre-delegation of ballistic missiles – miniaturised as a battlefield weapon or launched via submarines – generated a lot of critique. Adil Sultan contextualised the assertive/delegative framework in the case of India and Pakistan, and theorised that India’s change in No First Use policy may result in the change of Pakistan’s centralised posture. Dr. Sultan’s lucid postulations are grounded in the nuclear management structure which is laid out at the end of his written segment.

Written by Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi and Saima Sial, the chapter ‘Pakistan and the IAEA’ is related to the safeguards compliance, and cooperation extended by Pakistan to the international body since the last five decades. Ambassador Naqvi contends that while India became a signatory of it due to a reciprocal arrangement of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) Indo-US waiver, Pakistan’s assent to the Additional Protocol sans quid pro quo can be beneficial for the enhancement of Pakistan’s nuclear credentials.

Sannia Abdullah starts with the principle of universality that is lopsided in her opinion, given the non-proliferation regime skewed disposition towards the ‘legitimate’ nuclear weapon states. Her chapter is telling from the standpoint of narratives adopted by both India and Pakistan in arguing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). While India opted for the mantra of international discrimination, Pakistan raised a hue and cry on India being bestowed more favours vis-à-vis Pakistan by the non-proliferation regime. The repudiation of Pakistan’s bid for a South Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone by India and other non-proliferation initiatives have been divided in the policy trends post 1954. This pedantic work will have a clear appeal for the students examining non-proliferation regime from Pakistan’s perspective.

In the final chapter on ‘Contemporary Nuclear Debates’, Zafar Nawaz Jaspal reviewed the current nuclear literature and identified three strands related to force modernisation, dismal proliferation appeal, and nuclear terrorism that
directly concern the strategic calculus of South Asia. In his assessment of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, Dr. Jaspal keenly noted that the increased interdependence in the 21st century in turn weakened the multilateral non-proliferation arrangements meant to strangulate the mushrooming of nuclear arsenal. NSG waiver to India to augment the 2005 Indo-US nuclear deal, and its effect on the credibility of non-proliferation regime has been used as a case study in this scenario.

This book will surely add value to the published literature on Nuclear Pakistan. It can be considered as a good primer that can help unravel the standpoint of deterrence optimists that make up the nuclear lobby of Pakistan.