South Asian Nuclear Doctrines: Deterrence Equilibrium and Strategic Stability

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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized a bi-monthly seminar on the topic titled “South Asian Nuclear Doctrines: Deterrence Equilibrium and Strategic Stability” held on April 17, 2017 at the Islamabad Club. In the inaugural session, the President/Executive Director of SVI, Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, presented his welcome remarks. He welcomed and thanked the honorable Chief Guest, Lt. Gen. (R) Syed Muhammad Owais (Secretary, Ministry of Defense Production, Rawalpindi), distinguished chairs and speakers and worthy participants for affording valuable time out of their busy schedule and gracing the occasion with their presence. Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema well presented a detailed overview on the title of the seminar that primarily focused on South Asia, India and Pakistan being the two principal states of this region. He said today’s monthly seminar is largely important because it focuses on issues related to South Asian peace, security and regional stability. Currently, no issue is more significant than doctrines, technological advances and deterrence equilibrium in South Asia. He expressed contentment over SVI’s achievements in short span of four years. He hoped that debate would help in analyzing the topical South Asian strategic issues and suggesting decisive recommendations. He then requested Mr. Ross Masood Husain, Chairman SVI, to formally welcome all the guests and offer few remarks about the function. Mr. Ross appreciated the tremendous amount of work SVI did in four years. He presented tribute to Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema for handling the heavy work; he said it was Dr. Cheema’s passion that enabled us to take this institute to greater heights. He also thanked Lt. Gen. (R) Syed Muhammad Owais for the constant encouragement given throughout the period and always paying time to SVI despite his heavy commitments being the Ministerial Secretary. He gave a cordial welcome to all the distinguished guests who gathered to hear worthy speakers.

The Chief Guest for the occasion, Lt. Gen. (R) Syed Muhammad Owais said it is matter of great pleasure and privilege to speak at this august forum. He thanked Dr. Cheema for inviting
him to participate in SVI’s deliberations on a subject that is most relevant in the current international strategic environment and has a direct impact on Pakistan’s national security calculus. He congratulated Dr. Cheema, Mr. Ross and the SVI team for completing its four years. He said he has been observing with interest the rising trajectory of the Strategic Vision Institute and the stature that it has acquired in a very short span of few years. He appreciated SVI’s dynamic journey that created impact in the intellectual domain of Pakistan and international forums as well. He expressed his views on the significance of think-tanks and said that government officials have no time in their routine office work to conduct objective and dispassionate research on important national policy issues. This important task can only be done at the think tanks where deliberate effort can go into the research work and he highly appreciated the work of SVI in this regard. While deliberating on the title of seminar, he reiterated that Pakistani nuclear weapons have been developed as a response to Indian nuclear weapons and will continue to remain as such, Pakistan’s nuclear deterrence is India specific and is not in any arms race with any country of the world. Pakistan’s intentions are clearly manifested in its nuclear doctrine of minimum credible deterrence. He further added, Pakistan is a peace loving country and is ready to cooperate with international community on all matters. We want criteria based approach and maintain our principle position of responsible behaviour. We have developed sound nuclear safety and security plans which have been acknowledged throughout the world and the IAEA have recognised them as model action plans. Pakistan has also developed centre of excellence for training on nuclear safety and security and has offered its services to the entire world. He shared that Pakistan’s expertise in nuclear fuel cycle is well known as it has been safely running nuclear power plants for over 40 years. Pakistan has applied last year for membership of NSG that will help sharing of its experience with the world and also benefit from the development in other countries. Pakistan has all the credentials to seek NSG membership and he was hopeful that it will be considered on balanced and universal criteria.

Mr. Owais highlighted that the Indo-US long term strategic partnership is creating serious national security challenges for Pakistan. Its discriminatory and preferential treatments to India
by offering a nuclear deal have greatly enhanced Indian capacity to develop more nuclear weapons and disturb the fragile strategic stability. He opined, strategic cooperation along with other cooperation with many other states is systematically enhancing nuclear and conventional asymmetry in the region in favour of India. Over a period of time this ascendancy has given India a false sense of security and confidence to plan use of force against Pakistan. Indian military is seriously thinking of introducing offensive doctrines like Cold Start/Proactive Operations and reviewing to move from its declaratory NFU policy to pre-emptive and counterforce strike, which, which he viewed as a dangerous development, lowering the threshold in the region and increasing the alertness level in the already murky South Asian region. Pakistan is continuously raising this issue at all levels and need to re-emphasis that war in nuclearised South Asia is no more an option and any escalation; at what so ever level may not be controllable and may tip over to a nuclear war. The best remedy therefore is to have no war at all. He showed confidence that introduction of Nuclear weapons have created stable deterrence and desired strategic stability between India and Pakistan. This state of equilibrium will continue to play a role of war avoidance rather than war fighting. He concluded his remarks by saying that Pakistan’s position is very clear i.e. it wants peace and stability in the region and would defend its national interests in the region, no matter even if they are in contrast with Indian strategic objectives.

After the Inaugural session, the speakers for the next session were invited on to the stage to the discussion forward. The Session was chaired by Dr. Zulfqar Khan (Head of Department, Strategic Studies, NDU). The five imminent speakers for this session were Dr. Zafar Khan (Asst. Prof., Department of Strategic Studies, NDU), Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema (President/ED, SVI), Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal (Associate Professor, School of Politics and IR, QAU), Dr. Rizwana Karim Abbasi (Associate Professor, IR, NDU) and Amb. (R) Zamir Akram (Former Permanent Representative to CD/ United Nations, Geneva).
Dr. Zafar Khan spoke about “India-Pakistan Nuclear Weapons and Ballistic Missiles Development.” He recalled that the missile race development between India and Pakistan began in the 1980s and since then both sides have developed various types of ballistic missiles. It is interesting to note that comparatively India is advancing in missile race much faster than Pakistan. As India rises economically and increases its strategic partnership particularly with the United States, India is expected to spend much more on its missile development program including that of Ballistic Missile Development (BMD) system. Indeed, it becomes the world’s largest arms importer and increases its defense budget 8 times in comparison to Pakistan. This further widens the conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan that in turn makes the later rely on its nuclear deterrence much more than the former. For example, conventional asymmetry is gradually building up between the U.S. and Russia that would make the Russians rely on nuclear weapons use to offset the advanced conventional force capability of the U.S. Presumably, the more the conventional difference increases between the two nuclear weapons states, the higher the reliance on nuclear weapons by the party weaker in the conventional force domain.

Dr. Khan presented an overview about India’s missile program. He briefed, India has developed almost every type of missile systems ranging from short range ballistic missile such as the Prithvi series from 150km to 600km, the intermediate range of ballistic missiles in Agni series from 1250km to the latest 8000km, making India the sixth nuclear weapon state to have developed the Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). India is also developing Agni VI (ICBM) ranging up to 12000km. In addition to these ballistic missiles development, India has already developed tactical nuclear weapons Prahaar before even Pakistan developed its own battle field weapon capability. It has developed cruise missiles called Nirbhay (1000km) and Brahmos (300km). More significantly, since India has developed nuclear submarine, it desperately needed Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) K-15 of 700km, but it has been working on K-4 with range of 3500km. There are different unconfirmed reports that India has carried out K-4 (3500km) successfully in March 2017. One of the reasons of this lingering
ambiguity could be an increasing international pressure on India not to develop long range of ballistic missiles that covers both Europe and parts of Australia. Nevertheless, the increases in ranges in the K-class of SLBM makes India turn successfully its coastal nuclear submarine into blue water nuclear submarine where India could strike from afar avoiding its nuclear submarine vulnerabilities. It is reported that since India’s indigenous INS Arihant nuclear submarine is noisy that could be pre-empted, India plans to develop stealthier nuclear submarine in years to come. INS Arihant is its first platform which provides India the base to move forward.

He highlighted that India has a plan to develop up to five more nuclear submarines. Therefore, building more nuclear submarine would require India to acquire more fissile materials which in turn means more warheads and submarine launched ballistic missiles. With Triad development, the next move India would make is to multiply its warheads for its developed nuclear submarines. Each of India’s nuclear submarines would then be MIRVed where India would achieve the capability of striking multiple targets with its MIRVed SLBMs. Moreover, India also develops Ballistic Missile Defence system (BMD). India is working on the development of two-tiered missile defence shield. One, it works on the Prithvi Air Defence (PAD). This shield will be capable of addressing the high altitude threats. Two, it works on the Ashwin Advanced Air Defence capable of addressing the low-altitude threats. After successful development and deployment of these two types of defence systems, India could plan for an “enhanced air defence capability” covering wider part of Indian territory, its population centers and strategic assets.

r. Khan further elaborated on Pakistan’s response to counter the rising security dilemma in South Asia. He counted; first, for example, against the Indian military Cold Start Doctrine (CSD), Pakistan develops NASR, the battlefield weapons to deter further advancement of the CSD against Pakistan. This makes Indian nuclear leadership think for many times before taking risks and deploying its CSD against Pakistan given the risk of miscalculation that the CSD could escalate the limited war into a major war; something both India and Pakistan may not want. Second, Pakistan also develops Babur-III nuclear capable Submarine Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM) 450km against the increasing capabilities of Indian nuclear submarine development program. Although this is very interesting and a significant strategic development, this paves the way for Pakistan to develop an assured second strike capability in the form of nuclear submarine
with different ranges of Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). This will both enhance Pakistan’s nuclear deterrence and largely offset the predominance of India’s nuclear submarine program in the region. Third, but in addition to this, Pakistan also successfully conducted a test on MIRV technology named as Ababeel with 2,200km that aims to eventually defeat the Indian BMD system. Nevertheless, Pakistan may have other options turning its ballistic missiles into MIRV technology when and if needed. He said these selective countermeasures to Indian fast missile development program indicate that Pakistan has successfully achieved capability that is credible enough to deter and defeat the adversary’s deterrent forces at the minimal level.

He wrapped up his speech with remarks that selective countermeasures can be part of the minimum deterrence Pakistan currently pursues. These approaches could include selective and credible responses to deter what is absolutely needed. A smart nuclear strategy based on selective approaches would avoid weapon to weapon arms race. It would discourage the leadership to go for a parity level, but to sustain the balance so that the prospect of deterrence is not eroded in South Asia. The formulation of such a smart strategy should allow Pakistan to participate in international and regional conferences with regard to international non-proliferation regime, agree to the elements of non-proliferation that best serve Pakistan’s national interest, consistently propose India to agree on the principles of strategic restraint regime to avoid more nuclear tests, put a restraint on deterrent force modernization, and resolve the growing conventional asymmetry in South Asia. He added, the strategy based on selective approaches enables Pakistan to be defensive, non-desirous of waging war in South Asia, and keep the deterrence credible enough to deter the adversary successfully.

The second speaker for the day Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema expressed his views on “Nuclear Doctrines of India and Pakistan Prospective Changes and Operational Dimensions”. In reference to recent assessment by renowned Indian strategist Vipin Narang on India’s nuclear posture, Dr. Cheema said that it is neither new nor
surprising. It is premised on a number of previous statements and formulations by Indian political leaders and officials. India’s former National Security Advisor, Shivshankar Menon’s articulation in his 2016 book that ‘India might find it useful to strike first against an adversary poised to launch or that declared it would use its weapons’, which was an unequivocal references to Pakistan. Dr. Cheema also pointed out the statement of Former Indian Defense Minister Ajit Doval on reviewing the Indian doctrines. He recalled that India’s nuclear history is replete with such contradictory assertions and is a disregard of the basics norms of nuclear deterrence. India’s first officially articulated Draft Nuclear Doctrine (DND) in 1999 is a bunch of hyper contradictions. Article 2.3 of the Indian DND stated that “India shall pursue a doctrine of credible minimum nuclear deterrence,” but article 2.6 laid down a list of requirements, which describe that deterrence required India to maintain; “Sufficient, survivable and operationally prepared nuclear forces, with robust command and control system, and effective intelligence and early warning capabilities.” It is too obviously a self-contradiction that the doctrine of credible minimum deterrence requires to maintain ‘sufficient’ nuclear forces.

He recalled that in January 2003, India’s Cabinet Committee on security reviewed the draft doctrine and to make it partly operational, the committee summarized a version, which significantly departed from the august 1999 DND. The “No First Use” posture has been modified significantly. Article VI of the operational nuclear doctrine renders the “No First Use” (NFU) declaration valid by stating: “However, in the event of a major attack against India, and Indian forces anywhere, with biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with Nuclear weapons.” So it is no more a “no first use” Nuclear declaration. He added, the conventional wisdom from the nuclear military history since 1945 suggested that South Asia has passed through the discomforting tribulations of preemptive doctrines and strategies. It’s worth refreshing that there is not a single example of an undertaken preemptive strike, whether failed or successful, against an adversary possessing nuclear weapons by any nuclear or non-nuclear weapon power because preemption is fraught with reciprocal annihilation and thereby rationally unaccepted. Throughout the 1980s, with General K. Sundarji in army command, India had attempted to invoke the conventional military doctrine of preemption to launch air attacks on Pakistan’s nuclear facilities in a conflict-scenario. In 1982, U.S. intelligence sources detected that India had developed contingency plans to launch preemptive strikes against Pakistani nuclear installations, particularly Kahuta. Presumably the U.S. shares the information with
Pakistan. Pakistan threatened to retaliate with all available means, including air strikes with Pakistani F-16s against Bombay nuclear facilities and air bases. The government of PM Indira Gandhi eventually gave up plans to attack Pakistan’s Kahuta nuclear facility: a decapitating strike that was recommended by senior Indian military leaders.

Dr. Cheema opined, the possibility of successful preemptive strikes against nuclear weapons are also ruled out because the dispersed and well concealed/ camouflaged nuclear warheads and mobile delivery vehicle cannot be attacked and destroyed with assured certainty. The survivability of even few nuclear weapons for retaliatory purpose could wreak havoc if used in a counter-city mode or attack on nuclear installations. Late Indian analyst P.R. Chari believed that “the beguiling myth to launch a preemptive stack to destroy or seriously degrade the adversary’s nuclear assets has finally been laid to rest in south Asia. In the event of limited conventional conflict, which may escalate into a full conventional war, the prospects of intra-conflict or wartime preemptive air strikes cannot be ruled out with certainty. Large scale conventional warfare between India and Pakistan would include air and ballistic missile counter attacks. Attacks by these inherently dual-use systems could take the form of preemptive attacks to degrade or destroy the adversary’s nuclear capability. Article 2.7 of the draft Indian doctrine lends support to the possibility of preemptive measures when it says: “Highly effective conventional capabilities shall be maintained to raise the threshold of outbreak both of conventional military conflicts as well as that of threat or use of nuclear weapons.”

Discussing India’s nuclear doctrine and its operational dimension he shared his views that pre-emptive strikes are dangerous undertakings which would lead to uncontrolled escalation from limited conflict to conventional war and to a nuclear exchange that would be a catastrophic for the whole region. The South Asian scenario is especially not conducive for such pre-emptive military strikes due to border contiguity, geographical proximity and more recently rapid response retaliatory war options. The historically established strategic percept about assured failure of completely taking out all the weapons of a nuclear armed adversary and the retaliatory “unacceptable damage” from a counter strike is not based upon a postulation only but a broad consensus of the nuclear strategists and professionals across the world.
Discussing its operational difficulties he quoted Robert Jarvis’ views that to undertake preemptive attack against the other side’s command and control, communication and intelligence facilities might appear to be the only option to succeed, but that would also increase the chance that the adversary would launch an unrestrained counterattack. In the South Asian scenario Rodney Jones opined that leadership nodes may be the most attractive targets. However the C4 networks and leadership posts are invariably located within populated areas and cannot be separately identify as counterforce targets. These are also the most protected centers. Further he discussed India’s nuclear doctrine and its strategic objectives which include following points.

1. Development of global strategic power.

2. Power equilibrium and security vis-à-vis China.

3. Regional supremacy in South Asia and Indian Ocean against regional and extra regional great powers.

4. Deterrence Equilibrium and Escalation Dominance against Pakistan.

5. Prestige and international status equated with the possession of nuclear weapons (great power ambitions, behavior, UNSC seat, NSG etc).

Dr. Cheema shared that Pakistan maintains a posture of minimum credible deterrence. It suggests an integrated interface between conventional military and nuclear forces and compensates for conventional military asymmetry with nuclear deterrent capability, especially during crises and conflict situation.

While highlighting the objectives of Pakistan’s strategic posture/doctrine he shared following points

1. First, to maintain a nuclear deterrent regime vis-a-vis India and promote strategic stability in the volatile South Asian deterrence, though this stability has been precarious at times, with India and Pakistan narrowly retreating from the brink of war in the dangerously escalating conflict scenarios, e.g., Kargil conflict in 1999, 2002-2003 military confrontation.
2. Second, to deter all out conventional war between India and Pakistan and to contain any international or inadvertent escalation from cross border firing.

3. Third, as during conflict scenarios in 1999, 2002-2003, to ensure the maintenance of crises stability and block it from degenerating into violent military hostilities and accidental spill-over.

He stated that after the stalemate created by the 2001-2002 military confrontation; Indian military strategists have projected the policy of Limited War, and Cold Start Doctrine that are now obstructed by the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons. India now proclaims proactive strategy. He concluded by saying that a successful disarming, decapitating or preemptive first strike against an adversary possessing “credible” nuclear weapons capability is considered as an impossibility as a rational decision. The minimum understanding of rational actor/decision is the awareness about the cost of such a decision: unacceptable damage through adversary’s second strike capability.

The next speaker Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal presented insightful views on “Contemporary Deterrence Equilibrium in South Asia and Future Prospects”. He commenced his speech with three important questions: 1) Does deterrence equilibrium exist in South Asia? 2) What are challenges ahead? and 3) How it could be sustained? Addressing the first question he said, because of deterrence stability there is no likelihood of escalated war. He placed his arguments on preemptive nuclear strikes, decapitation strike and counter strike in South Asia in reference to the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference held on March 2017. He opined that India lacks the decapitating capability, whereas regarding “No First Use policy”, he said that it is merely a rhetoric because a conventional superiority is luxury for India and it is confident in this aspect. Since 2014 there are various war mongering statements by adversarial state thus these statements or personal views are not surprising. While discussing challenges to deterrence equilibrium he highlighted some external and internal dynamics. He
stated that the arms race is an inevitable challenge to deterrence equilibrium along with vertical proliferation in both states whether it is at tactical level or strategic level. War mongering state of minds of ruling elite is also a crucial challenge to deterrence equilibrium. Finally the element of non-state actors cannot be ruled out.

Dr. Jaspal added that India’s strategic partnership with the U.S. has negative impact on strategic stability of South Asian region. The current development of Indo-Israel $2 billion missile deal would also undermine the strategic stability of this region by enhancing India’s capability. It is pertinent to discuss that India is largest arms importer and engaged in several nuclear deals worldwide and the U.S. is its biggest supporter.

Analyzing India’s doctrinal shift, Dr. Jaspal said, operationally it is not possible for India to completely disarm (decapitation strike) a nuclear weapon state because India cannot completely destroy Pakistan’s nuclear forces and it would have to face counterattacks in response. Deterrence stability can be seen on mutual cost wherein the cost of failure of deterrence stability would be high. India’s growing military buildup, defence budget, development of BMDs, MIRVS and submarine launched ballistic missiles reflect India’s aggressive nuclear posture. It is pertinent to discuss that even though the ruling elite is war mongering but simultaneously the role of international community cannot be ruled out. At the same time it is standing diplomatically among the international community and international intervention in future cannot be ignored as happened in the Kargil case. Ironically, Pakistan has never accepted India’s “No First Use” earlier and still considers it rhetorical. Seeing in response to India’s Cold Start Doctrine the development of Pakistan’s tactical nuclear weapons “NASR” and other technological development, his concluding remarks mentioned that one can be optimistic regarding deterrence stability in South Asia with caution. He opined that neither in Pakistan nor in India the element of rationality is missing.

The third speaker Dr. Rizwana Abbasi articulated her views on “The State of Strategic Stability in South Asia”. She stated that the technological transformation
between India and Pakistan since 1998 had an effective impact on the strategic equation in the region by taking the probability of war away. However both states face civilized togetherness to secure total peace that is the major aim of deterrence. Pakistan being the smaller and conventionally on disadvantageous position declares nuclear weapons as cost effective strategy to safeguard its national security and avoid war with India. However the Indian introduction of Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) made regional strategic stability highly destabilizing. For long Pakistan has been informing international community that Indian CSD undermines the strategic stability of South Asian region but the world did not take it ardently. Recently Indian Army Chief acknowledged that CSD is active, resultantly, Pakistan had no other imminent option but to include tactical nukes or low yield nuclear weapons in its inventory.

She reiterated that in the backdrop of Indo-US nuclear deal and subsequent nuclear agreements with Japan, Israel and Australia, the Indian nuclear program has further expedited India’s growing technological pace. Furthermore the Nuclearization of Indian Ocean, inclusion of aircraft carriers in India’s inventory, its quest for high-tech surveillance means and sophisticated technologies has further restrained Pakistan’s security and undermining region’s deterrence equilibrium.

On Pakistan’s technological advancement, Dr. Abbasi said that Pakistan’s strategic shift from land, air to sea-based deterrence in the form of Babur-III and MIRV technology will have stabilizing effect as admitted by many international observers that Pakistan is moving towards stability.

While commenting on the topical debate regarding Indian doctrinal shift, she said, India has probably thought to move towards pre-emptive strike option which would be alarming in regional context. She raised some pertinent questions in this regard: has India developed sufficient surveillance means to spy on Pakistan’s launching positions in order to help them in acquiring assured information before the time of launching a first strike? Would India be able to destroy Pakistan’s complete second strike capability by imposing a counterforce attack? She raised the issue of nuclear signalling and stressed that its Pakistan’s legitimate right to minimize the probability of war. However it is pertinent to ponder whether India would inflict a first strike as suicidal move but here arise more questions: has India not already violated its civilized
posture through such doctrinal announcement from a mature to an irrational state actor at global level? Has India not exploited regional peace by announcing such kind of counterforce strategy in this particular timeframe when we are already having issues in the region and both states are unable to craft a strategy to resume dialogues?

While deliberating upon what should be Pakistan’s response if India moved away from NFU to first-use, Dr. Abbasi opined, Pakistan should stick to its existing centralized nuclear strategy and need not to deploy TNWs or put its nukes on high-alert position. She concluded by suggesting that both South Asian nuclear states need to show highly rational behaviour by preferably going back to negotiating table, starting an arms control mechanism and initiating counter-terrorism apparatus to handle the shared threats. On NSG membership, she appreciated Pakistan’s efforts in protesting and conveying its stance to international community, moreover she recommended that Pakistan needs to lobby its case higher to maximize its influence on the global level.

Preceding this discussion the next speaker Ambassador [R] Zamir Akram took to the rostrum and thanked the President/Executive Director of SVI Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema and highly admired SVI for organizing this seminar to discuss this critical topic that is quite relevant to the contemporary regional scenario. He appreciated all the Excellencies and scholars for the elaboration of each aspect of the topic and for the suggestions. He said that both countries do not own any official ownerships of nuclear doctrine and in any case deterrence is a dynamic phenomenon which constantly changes. From Pakistan’s perspective no one has accepted any kind of assurance of India’s claim of “no first use” but practically it does not exist. There is an ambiguity which prevails in India’s doctrine and ambiguity is a dangerous concept. The purpose of this doctrine is to recreate India’s numerical conventional superiority. After the nuclear explosions in 1998, both countries had accepted Mutual Assured Destruction. There were Confidence Building Measures existed to establish communication links.
He added that a major shift occurred after the Indo-US strategic partnership. India has been developing sophisticated technologies, ballistic missiles defence and moving away to de-mated deterrent postures and multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles. Hence Pakistan needs to respond to threats perceived by India’s evolving doctrine. Pakistan has to focus on full spectrum deterrence at tactical level. He cautioned about the issues of reaction time which is 3-5 minutes. He said in case of any accidental or unintended launch the situation would be horrifying. Similarly the issue of Line of Control is highly terrible due to India’s proxy wars launched through Afghanistan.

At the end of the speech he shared his views on the future roadmap and suggested that;

a. Pakistan needs to ensure that there is no gap in deterrence at every level (full spectrum deterrence).

b. It should look for the survivable second strike capability.

c. Dialogues between these two countries are not possible in near future yet the efforts should be made.

d. Russia is India’s traditional partner, and the latter cannot be disengaged with Russia. However, Pakistan should maintain its ties with Russia to counter the threats imposed by ISI/Daesh.

e. Pakistan must engage with U.S. new administration.

f. Finally economic condition of the country should be addressed noticeably.

The session was followed by questions from the audience.

A Student of International Relations from COMSATS University Islamabad asked whether Pakistan has a response or communication system to deal with the false flag of operation that India might have launched. What plan does Pakistan have if India planned a conventional terrorism or exploded a dirty bomb? Dr. Jaspal addressed this
question by saying that non-state actors can be used to sabotage nuclear facilities but government of Pakistan has 30,000 personnel to ensure safety, while the Center of Excellence exists to handle such challenges. On dirty bomb explosion he said, the bomb carries radiological material which does not have much impact other than the psychological impact. Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) addressed such issues in detail, both Pakistan and India have been actively participating in it and a CBM also exists to control such issues. Adding to the discussion

Mr. Zamir Akram said that apart from DGMO there is no mean of communication. The use of TNWs would not be an appropriate reaction to such false flag. Pakistan has the capacity to respond to such incident conventionally but India also knows the dangers of going down the rope. They can fake it and would not actually do it in reality because there would be a Pakistani response, which they are quite aware of.

Ms. Musarrat from COMSATS University asked to highlight the cyber factor in India’s doctrinal shift. Answering this question Dr. Jaspal said that since 1999 many changes took place in India’s nuclear doctrine, now they are focusing on the counter-value, counterforce and decapitation strikes. The cyber falls in decapitation and India can use it against Pakistan’s command and control system. He said that Pakistan’s nuclear establishment is quite sensible and they would not permit anyone to make any damage to its nuclear installations. Elaborating further on the cyber dimension Dr. Rizwana said that the cyber threat is rather an international phenomenon and NSS has generated awareness on the subject. She said Pakistan has initiated work on establishing cyber command whereas presently Pakistan has sufficient capability to safeguard its existing nuclear mechanism.

Mr. Inaam Ullah Khan from QAU, asked what is the possibility to minimize arms race between India and Pakistan? And what are the options for Pakistan to counter balance Indo-US nuclear deal? Dr. Jaspal said that India prefers to exhaust the adversary and it is the same tactic India is using against Pakistan. Pakistan is
not dragged in the arms race as is evident from its defence budget in comparison to India. India is increasing its defence budget, hence enhancing its military capabilities. On the other side Pakistan is also acquiring its nuclear reactors from China. Eventually China and Pakistan are counterbalancing India with joint ventures as well as with indigenous efforts. Pakistan is using its indigenous capability to balance the strategic equilibrium in the region. Arms control mechanism can only prevail between sovereign equal states but India is not ready to accept Pakistan as sovereign equal state and that is why the element of rationality is being compromised from the Indian side. On the second question, he said that Pakistan can balance India with its indigenous capability and with the support of its traditional ally China. Eventually China and Pakistan are counterbalancing India with joint ventures as well as with indigenous efforts. Moreover Pakistan’s focus should be on getting NSG membership, and that would be enough for Pakistan to get new technologies.

Mr. Fareed Ahmed from IIUI asked what are the options for Pakistan in response to India-Israel 2 billion dollar deal and what would be the implications for Pakistan? Dr. Jaspal replied that 2 billion dollar would not make any difference because Pakistan is also introducing new dimensions to its nuclear weapons program (Ababeel and Babur-III). Human resource is also equal. The real fear is that such deals are not for missile nuclear weapons systems and device capabilities. India is importing missile defence system and importing technology to perfect its Agni missile program. This technological enhancement would be alarming for deterrence stability in South Asia. The issue is that PM Modi might be in a pressure to act these technologies in response to war mongering.

Mr. Muhammad Adnan from NUML asked, what would be Indian expected reaction in response to Pakistan’s use of tactical nukes? Addressing this Dr. Jaspal said that according to their doctrine they would be going for massive retaliation although they also have tactical nukes. But Pakistan also has massive retaliation capability and in such scenario both would be leading towards suicidal act. Dr. Cheema said
TNWs are also weapons of deterrence and if Pakistan has to use tactical nukes I would consider it breakdown of deterrence.

Mr. Muhammad Ali, CISS Research Fellow asked, Indian nuclear doctrine of 2003 highlighted the fact that India reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to any WMD use anywhere in the world. He asked what does “anywhere in the world” mean. Dr. Cheema responded by saying that in foreseeable future there is no possibility for India to deploy forces outside the subcontinent because it does not have the capability to do so. The deployment would be against Pakistan and China. Moreover, there is no possibility of China or Pakistan using the chemical or biological weapons. Pakistan signed the International Convention of Chemical Weapons, in 1992 it also signed bilateral convention with India but India violated that convention by not declaring the stockpiles. He expressed surprise that Pakistani establishment did not raise this point with India. He maintained that he doesn’t see the possibility of chemical weapons being used against Indian armed forces.

Mr. Pervaiz Butt, Former Chairman of Energy Commission asked what should be done against non-state actors/India’s spy as Kulbushan Yadev is recent phenomenon. There are many Yadevs in Pakistan and we should launch a war against them. Dr. Jaspal said that India is also blaming Pakistan for similar activities and the need is for both the states to act rationally. Commenting on this issue Dr. Adil Sultan said that Yadev was not a non-state actor instead he is a state actor and it is more criminal. Under UNSC resolution, a state sponsoring terrorism should be held accountable by UNSC. So it is a more serious trend what India is indulging into, launching/sponsoring state actors. He also gave few observations on the doctrinal debate and said that the observation reveals that Indian nuclear doctrine of 1999 came right after Kargil in response to internal pressure; likewise 2003 doctrine was right after 2001-2002 stand-off because of the internal protest in India that despite having conventional superiority and nuclear capability they could not “punish Pakistan”. Similarly the recent debate is influenced by
the same legacy i.e. domestic pressures. The reality is that Indian doctrine has been under intense pressure that it is not credible against Pakistan’s nuclear weapons hence India had to come out with something credible to justify that this is how it is going to use its first use to punish Pakistan. Whether India is going to do it or not, there remain serious doubts about that. He further said that NFU is war-termination strategy, first-strike on other hand could be war-termination strategy but essentially it is nuclear war winning strategy. There is a difference between South Asia and Cold war. U.S. and USSR at that time could indulge in war-winning strategy or war-termination strategy by launching counterforce first strike but it is not possible today in India-Pakistan context.

Representative from Russian Council asked, what is the point in India and Pakistan moving towards arms race and when would both states reach a red line where they would realize that it is enough? Answering this question Dr. Jaspal said that Pakistan has offered India mutual nuclear restraints many times. But India is not willing to facilitate such options. However he opined that India would soon be exhausted by sticking to such a stance.

In the end, Mr. Ross Masood Husain, Chairperson SVI in his vote off thanks congratulated the SVI for organizing a successful seminar. He also applauded the chief guest, speakers, scholars and the audience for the comprehensive elaboration and debate on this particular topic. He said that all speakers left a positive perception. He gave few recommendations at the end of the seminar which are as follows; 1) we need to plug technological gaps in our deterrence capability. 2) We need to develop second strike capability. 3) We must upgrade our political relations particularly with China, Russia and US at all levels. 4) We have to put our own house in order. Mr. Ross concluded the Bi-monthly Seminar by profoundly thanking the guest speakers. He offered his gratitude to the august audience and
mentioned that their presence made this seminar a successful endeavor. He expressed special thanks to all the guests for actively participating and making the discussion interactive. He also appreciated the research and secretarial staff of the SVI for their hard work.
Media Coverage:

Media covered the proceeding of the in-house seminar:


