

# **BOOK REVIEWS**

## **Nuclear Pakistan: Seeking Security and Stability**

Edited by Naeem Salik (CISS, 2018, 270 pages)

**Reviewed by Ahyousha Khan** <sup>□</sup>

*“Nuclear Pakistan: Seeking Security and Stability”* illustrates the journey of Pakistan’s nuclear program, starting from its inception under the Atom for Peace project of the Eisenhower Administration to the current situation where Pakistan is labeled as a country with fastest growing nuclear arsenal in the world. It explains how biasness of the International community can stop a state from achieving its inalienable right to use nuclear technology for peaceful and security purposes.

In the world, where war of narratives is strong against Pakistan’s nuclear program, counter narrative was the need of the hour. This particular book challenges western false narratives against Pakistan’s nuclear program with reasoning and logic. Moreover, it also provides the detailed account of issues nuclear Pakistan is facing and presents the rationale behind specific actions.

The book is well structured, which starts from troublesome times when Pakistan was striving to master the nuclear fuel cycle. However, the path was not easy, and technological apartheid was challenged by constant dedication, determination and motivation of Pakistan’s scientific community. Moreover, the consistent support from the Pakistani political leadership also helped the nuclear program to reach the point where it stands today, though, collective international effort to withhold essential modern technology from Pakistan was a major issue faced by our scientific community when the nuclear program was in the nascent stages.

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The book also highlights that after the Indian nuclear test of 1974, Pakistan embarked upon the decision to make nuclear weapons, which brought immense international pressure on respective political governments. The subsequent international pressure and sanctions, which created hurdles in Pakistan's attempt to acquire nuclear fuel cycle, has been discussed appropriately in the book. The book also explains how the effects of these sanctions were mitigated and how the public debate on Pakistan's prospective nuclear doctrine, and command and control systems was shaped subsequently. However, according to the book, with overt nuclearization in 1998, Pakistan suddenly faced the challenge of formulating a nuclear doctrine.

This book identifies that nuclear doctrines, whether conventional or nuclear, are not made in a vacuum; rather there are many contributing factors such as constraints of geography, the size of the population, economic potential including the availability of strategic raw materials and advanced industrial units, which effects the formulation of doctrines. It argues that Pakistan's nuclear posture/doctrine was also made under above mentioned imperatives. Due to lack of strategic depth vis-à-vis India, forward defensive posture was adopted by Pakistan to secure its politically sensitive cities and strategic communication networks.

Another theme discussed in this book is that at the very outset Pakistan nuclear doctrine was premised on the policy of minimum deterrence to deter all kind of conventional and nuclear attack. However, due to the fear of a disabling first strike, Pakistan prefixed the word credible to the minimum deterrence unlike its regional counterpart India, which meant that the size of its strategic forces would be something more than minimal.

According to authors, Nuclear Pakistan is now a reality which has adopted rational approach towards the size of its strategic forces based on its security environment and its resource scarcity. Moreover, for

Pakistan its nuclear weapons are solely for deterrence, but considering India's wish to keep the size of its minimum deterrent flexible, equivalent flexibility was also desired by Pakistan. Thus, a recent change in Pakistan's nuclear posture is because of the changes in technological and doctrinal posture of its rival. It's not just Pakistan which has set the benchmark by inducing some changes to its nuclear posture; generally, doctrines are subjected to changes in the regional security environment and states change them according to need of the time. Salik identifies two reasons behind changes in Pakistan's nuclear posture; first, development of Proactive Operations Doctrine (Cold Start Doctrine) and second, engagement of large sector of Pakistan's military on western borders to counter terrorism that resulted in thinning of Pakistani forces along eastern border with India. Author is of the view that Pakistan's doctrinal thinking has come a long way and it has become more sophisticated and nuanced. In addition, it has the capability to shift and change according to the changes in the regional security environment.

After 9/11 and the AQ Khan Incident, safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear facilities and sites became one of the most debated topics at the international political forums. However, the author explains in this book the systematic mechanisms Pakistan has developed over a span of time to regulate and supervise its nuclear facilities and nuclear program. The initiatives include formulation of National Command Authority (NCA), an integrated intelligence system, a rigorous regulatory regime, a comprehensive export control regime and active international cooperation

Moreover, this book illustrates how Pakistan, which is a small country with limited resources, has entered into the complex nuclear business and was able to build nuclear weapons without violating any of its international obligations. Moreover, Pakistan's nuclear command and control structure remains centralized, which ensures that only the top most authority should decide about the employment of nuclear weapons

during a military crisis. Thus, the claims that, after development of SRBM, Pakistan's command and control system would be decentralized are nothing but a false claim.

In the nuclear arena, treaty of Nuclear Non-Proliferation holds a significant position. But, Pakistan is not a signatory to the treaty on the basis that it is discriminatory in nature. If non-proliferation policy of Pakistan is analyzed properly, it becomes clear that it is mostly region centric. Pakistan's stance on nuclear non-proliferation changed after Indian nuclear test of 1974, when efforts to acquire nuclear capability were initiated to maintain nuclear deterrence vis-à-vis India. Later on in 1998, after overt nuclearization, the gulf between Pakistan and non-proliferation regime further widened. More recently, the waiver given to India by the NSG, further lowered down the credibility of the non-proliferation regime in the eyes of Pakistan.

Nuclear Pakistan has never shied away from making its nuclear program safe and secure. The proof of this claim is given in the book with the example that Pakistan became member of IAEA in 1957 and from than the momentum of cooperation between both the entities has been successfully sustained by Pakistan not only at political level but also at technical level. Moreover, this book tells its audience that, as a responsible nuclear state, Pakistan has put all its nuclear power plants under IAEA safeguards since their inception.

This book not only unfolds the current dynamics of nuclear Pakistan but also explores the future prospects on South Asian nuclear competition. It embarks upon the idea that in future Pakistan's nuclear arsenals will definitely grow in the short term, and though this growth will remain un-bridled but it will certainly be far less intensive than suggested in some recent western studies.

Pakistan's nuclear program has been stereotyped since its inception by the western analysts. The recent myth, that Pakistan has fastest

growing nuclear arsenals in the world, has been effectively challenged in this book. Pakistan has never officially declared its fissile material stockpiles or weapons inventory and therefore, no authentic information is available in the public domain about the size and capacity of Pakistan's nuclear fissile material production plant.

*“Nuclear Pakistan: Seeking Security and Stability”* provides not only an insight into Pakistan's perspective on current nuclear debates going on in the international community, it also validates the importance of nuclear weapons for Pakistan's security. It is true that this book not only challenges the existing parochial bias against Pakistan's nuclear program but also dwells upon the ongoing developing situations and past experiences in Pakistan's quest for nuclear weapons. However, it is pertinent to mention here that nuclear Pakistan should also explore the emerging new technological trends as they are one of the significant factors which could change the deterrence equation in future.