Normalizing Nuclear Pakistan: Review of Mark Fitzpatrick's Book 'Overcoming Pakistan's Nuclear Dangers'

Rabia Akhtar, Kansas State University

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Rabia Akhtar (http://southasianvoices.org/author/akhtar/)

Ph.D Candidate in Security Studies Department at Kansas State University.

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“Normal is an illusion. What is normal for the spider is chaos for the fly.”

~Morticia Addams

Let me begin by congratulating Mark Fitzpatrick for writing a fairly objective and brave account of the not-so-normal nuclear Pakistan in his latest book Overcoming Pakistan’s Nuclear Dangers (http://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2014-b4d9/march-2013-cd5b/pakistan-nuclear-dangers-d899). I say it is a brave account because it takes courage in today's world of policy and academia to suggest something that is not fashionable and something that the gatekeepers of the normal nuclear world are not ‘used to hearing’ from a non-Pakistani scholar, that is: “Pakistan should be treated as a normal nuclear country” or “Ten years after Khan’s network was shut down, it is fair to ask how long Pakistan must pay the price for that failure” or “The time has come to offer Pakistan a nuclear-cooperation deal akin to India’s.” I can only imagine how much trouble Fitz (if I may say so affectionately) is going to get in to or perhaps is already in, by suggesting something that only Pakistanis have been saying and no one else on this planet earth: give Pakistan a chance.

However, it is not as clean a bill, as I would have liked it to be but still fairly reasonable. According to Fitz’s proposal, there are certain conditions that should be attached to Pakistan’s entry into the ‘normal nuclear zone’, if it is to be considered at all:

1. **Pakistan should exercise ‘restraint in declaratory policies’**: which essentially means that when Pakistan ‘says’ it adheres to ‘minimum deterrence’, it should ‘act’ to prove it. Fitz believes that
given the expansion of its plutonium-production facilities, warhead numbers and delivery systems, and the introduction of battlefield-use nuclear weapons" the doctrine of ‘minimum deterrence does not seem that minimum.

I believe that the assertion here is that if Pakistan eliminates the option of ‘battlefield-use nukes’ then the restraint in declaratory policy will be visible and its behavior will be equivalent to that of a ‘responsible nuclear weapons state’. Will Pakistan agree to this conditionality as a price for ‘normality’? Should Pakistan agree to this conditionality to exhibit restraint in declaratory policy? It depends.

There are two factors that Pakistan should consider before giving up the option of battlefield-use nukes: a) whether retaining the option strengthens the credibility of Pakistan’s deterrence vis-à-vis India or b) does it weaken the credibility of Pakistan’s deterrence vis-à-vis India. Last time I checked, worsening one’s own options and appearing to be a little bit off your rocker ‘strengthened’ deterrence. According to Fitz and various other scholars (based on the Cold War experiences with TNWs), retaining the option of TNWs is inherently destabilizing since it lowers the nuclear threshold, is not cost effective and does not lend much credibility to deterrence. Arguments about Indian Cold Start doctrine being 20 years away to never being operationalized are all fine but in my opinion, Pakistan should hold on to this option a little longer before it decides to shelve it. With the possibility of BJP led government in India for the next five years with its manifesto pledging to ‘revise and update’ Indian nuclear doctrine, adds uncertainty to the direction of Indian nuclear-use doctrine. If it becomes more Pakistan centric in coming years then Pakistan does need to retain the option of battlefield-use nukes to provide it a range of nuclear options starting from bottom up at the escalation ladder. Five years is a good enough time period to assess the viability of such an option and Pakistan should not hasten to discard it yet. Not much can be done as far as it giving the Western world sleepless nights. Pakistan has said time and again that it will continue to have an assertive C2 as opposed to delegative which makes sense for a country like Pakistan explained by its ‘geographic logic’. Pakistan’s SPD is confident as cited by Fitz about maintaining centralized command and control even where short-range nuclear weapons are concerned since “Pakistan’s territory is relatively narrow, the TNWs will only have to be moved a short distance to be readied for battlefield use” therefore “there is no need for pre-delegation of firing authority and therefore no possibility of misuse by a field commander”.

I will apply Albert Camus's logic of believing in a God to Pakistan’s logic of believing in short-range, low-yield nuclear weapons lending credibility to its deterrence. The logic makes sense. Camus said, “I would rather live my life as if there is a god and die to find out there isn’t, than live my life as if there isn’t and die to find out there is.”
2. Pakistan should ‘do more’ to ensure safety and security of its nuclear weapons and facilities: and though Pakistan has taken steps to ensure the nuclear safety and security of its assets and materials in accordance with best international practices, terrorist outfits operating from Pakistan’s territory continue to challenge the state’s writ. Fitz suggests that GOP must assert control over these terrorist groups otherwise they will continue to undermine Pakistan’s efforts to physically ensure that its nukes and facilities are safe. These terrorist outfits have also in the past been able to stage damaging terrorist attacks inside Indian territory bringing the two nuclear countries to the brink of war on several occasions.

George Perkovich in his essay on The Non-Unitary Model And Deterrence Stability in South Asia (http://www.stimson.org/summaries/perkovich-on-the-non-unitary-model-and-deterrence-stability-in-south-asia/) presents a similar argument about ‘disunity in command in Pakistan’ evident from its “on-again off-again crack down on jihadi organizations and the ongoing cross-border infiltrations of militants from Pakistan into Kashmir” raising questions about the alleged acquiescence of GOP in incidents of terrorism inside India by Pakistani origin terrorists and doubts about Pakistan’s sincere will to stop its territory being used by terrorists.

There is some difficult truth in these arguments, which are being made given what is visible. Pakistan is itself bleeding at the hands of these terrorists. They are nobody’s friends. They are killing Pakistani women, children and soldiers every chance they get. According to a latest report (http://tribune.com.pk/story/527016/pakistani-victims-war-on-terror-toll-put-at-49000/), as
many as 5,152 civilians have been killed and 5,678 injured in bomb blasts and suicide attacks in the last
2008” in Pakistan. So Pakistanis are being killed each day at the hands of these terrorists and the
unfortunate thing is that the GOP still wants to conduct a dialogue with these terrorists. Pakistan’s
salvation lies in GOP adopting an absolute zero-tolerance policy against terrorism, condemning it in
all its forms and vowing to establish the writ of the state.

So I agree, while the idea of nuclear terrorism by terrorist outfits within and outside Pakistan
might seem like bit of a stretch given Pakistan’s confidence in its nuclear safety and security
mechanisms, their capability to sabotage Indo-Pak relations engineering a breakdown in
deterrence by pitting the two nuclear neighbors against each other, warrants serious policy
consideration. I believe that tolerating and negotiating with these terrorists is against Pakistan’s
national security interests and that Pakistan’s deteriorating internal security situation has a direct,
negative impact on regional strategic stability.

3. Pakistan should comply with the ‘global non-proliferation regime’ in order to win an
India-like NSG exemption/civilian nuclear deal: and though Fitz appreciates that Pakistan is a
‘member in good standing of the IAEA’, he believes that there is still much left to be desired. Fitz
suggests that Pakistan should seal its moratorium on nuclear testing by signing the CTBT and end
its fissile material production and lift its veto against FMCT talks. Both points are debatable.

On CTBT I am a bit confused. According to Fitz (and some other scholars), “not just the newer,
short-range models, but all of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons, as well as India’s, are inherently less
safe than those of the five NPT-recognized nuclear-weapons states because of the small number of
hot tests conducted by the South Asian states.”

Hmmm, well what would you rather have: (given that the nuclear weapons are not going
anywhere anytime soon from South Asia) a country retaining its nuclear testing options to ensure
that the weapons work when needed and lessen the dangers of nuclear accidents or a country
sealing its options of nuclear testing by signing the CTBT and living with the probability of nuclear
accidents occurring having never tested their nukes (especially when
modernization/miniaturization is taking place)? And this question is purely based on the content of
Fitz’s analysis, which often refers to Paki nukes being unsafe and prone to nuclear accidents due to
untested designs! In my opinion, Pakistan should refrain from tit-for-tat nuclearism with India
and evaluate whether nuclear testing option should be retained independent of what India does or
does not do! If that is an uncomfortable option, then Pakistan should wait and see how U.S. and
China play the CTBT ratification card and then do a cost-benefit analysis of retaining the voluntary
moratorium on nuclear testing or sealing the deal by signing the CTBT. If Pakistan signs the CTBT
before India does or even before the U.S. and China ratify, all it will bring is a pat on the back and
nothing substantial. There is no hurry.
On FMCT, Fitz suggests that “Pakistan should be asked to end fissile-material production, as claims of the nuclear-weapons states acknowledged by the NPT are thought to have done, although in China’s case this has not been confirmed.” According to **Global Fissile Material Report 2013** ([http://fissilematerials.org/library/gfmr13.pdf](http://fissilematerials.org/library/gfmr13.pdf)) “In 2013, the global stockpile of nuclear weapons was estimated at over 17,000 weapons, with the United States and Russia together holding over 16,000 of these weapons and the other seven nuclear weapons states holding a combined total of about 1000 weapons.” And of the global stockpile of HEU as of the end of 2012, “98% of this material is held by the nuclear weapons states, mostly by Russia and the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Current Nuclear Warheads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>~7700, with about 3000 awaiting dismantlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>~8500, with about 4000 awaiting dismantlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>fewer than 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>-250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>fewer than 225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>100-200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>100-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>90-110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>fewer than 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The P-5 ended their fissile material production ‘decades ago’ because they had ‘decades’ to accumulate lifetime of fissile stocks. So naturally it suits them to rush for a FMCT since there is no strategic logic to support their delay and opposition to it. Pakistan given its security considerations is not at that stage yet where it can be comfortable with the levels of its fissile material stockpiles. As analyzed by Fitz, if by 2020, Pakistan feels that its ‘strategic environment is stable’ enough to stop the production of fissile materials then it will do so.

In order to reduce Pakistan’s nuclear dangers, Fitz suggests Pakistan’s “international partners to make mutually reinforcing adjustments.” Emphasis should be on ‘mutual reinforcements’ where Pakistan is not exploited to give up its strategic logic in exchange for a bit of normality. I appreciate Fitz’s change of heart and at certain levels, it is even contagious. I just hope that he is read and understood by the policy makers in the Western world, for the depth of his analysis and the honesty of his narrative about overcoming Pakistan’s nuclear dangers.