Pak nukes: Frenzy in western media (Pakistan Observer)

Shams uz Zaman, Mr.
Pak nukes: Frenzy in western media
Shams uz Zaman

Pakistani nuclear programme is again in the eye of a storm in the western media. The latest stir came from an essay published in the Foreign Policy magazine and on Pulitzer Centre website by Tom Hundley. The overall theme of the article examining the prospects of nuclear arms race in South Asia after introduction of Battlefield nuclear weapons remains splendid, but Hundley misleadingly projects India as a victim of Pakistani irresponsible and aggressive behaviour, while completely ignoring Indian militarization frenzy and blatant human rights violations in disputed region of Kashmir. This usual approach by some scholars dealing India and Pakistan differently on the nuclear non-proliferation issue is becoming counterproductive for the nuclear non-proliferation efforts.

Tom Hundley’s essay also reflects of paranoiac syndrome widely prevalent among some Western scholars regarding Pakistani nuclear programme. While it criticizes China for cooperating with Pakistan on nuclear energy issue, it just make a passing comment on the Indo-US nuclear deal which remains at the heart of the new nuclear apartheid controversy. The report highlights the threat of fissile material being stolen in tens of kilos from Pakistan, which actually remains in highly classified and secure facilities, but on the other hand completely blacks out known incidents of radiological material theft in India. Hundley also presumes Indian nuclear doctrine containing an unconditional “No First Use” clause, which indicates that the author failed to assimilate the “catch of conditions” in the doctrine.

Indian ‘no first use’ clause is not applicable against states which are either allies of nuclear weapon states (NWS) or launches a biological/chemical attack against India or Indian forces anywhere in the world. In this globalized world where every state trades with other, the explanation of the ‘ally of NWS’ has been left out to the imagination of the Indian policy makers. Hundley regards Indian nuclear capability serving as a sign of Indian power and prestige rather than projecting nuclear war fighting capability but doesn’t use the same logic against Pakistani low yield nuclear weapons, terming them as war fighting mechanism rather than for deterrence purpose against wide spectrum of threats.

Timing of such rhetoric towards Pakistani nuclear programme in the western media has repeatedly coincided with the pressure from Washington to expand the sphere of ongoing war on terror thus intriguing an introspection for some kind of connection. Most analysts would find it difficult to establish a direct link between diplomatic salvos fired from Washington against Pakistan for do more mantra in war on terror, followed by a spate of terrorist incidents against Pakistani strategic installations thus causing apprehensions in the media regarding safety and security of Pakistani nuclear weapons. This pattern however, provides sufficient evidence for general masses to believe in the shady reports regarding US intentions to denuclearize Pakistan.
These reports do contain some facts besides fiction and hold a strong probability of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy in future. A conservative and a hardliner regime in Washington may view of the Pakistani nuclear capability a direct threat thus indulging in some sort of nuclear brinkmanship in future.

Such cynical reports with or without collusion of US policy making institutions would further sour Pak-US relations, which already are in a volatile state besides giving meanings to the rhetoric of militants and insurgents portraying themselves as symbol of resistance against the US imperial designs. Consequently, Pakistan military would also face an extremely paradoxical situation in acting as a vanguard state in the US led global campaign against terrorism while at the same time remaining sceptical of the US designs towards its nuclear capability. Thus, such reports would not only undermine the nuclear non-proliferation regime but could also affect the perceptions of some other states at feeling vulnerable from the NWS thus scraping the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and move in the direction of weapons capability. The sooner these scholars realize this the better it would serve the purpose of NPT.

—The writer is an MPhil scholar at NDU and writes regularly for newspapers.

http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=174620