

When combined with Pakistan's lack of strategic depth, New Delhi's nuclear and conventional superiority could encourage Islamabad to adopt a doctrine of nuclear first use as a feasible counter. This could well involve placing nuclear weapons on hair-trigger-alert, a launch-on-warning posture, the development of tactical nuclear weapons and forward deployment of nuclear systems.

In fact, evidence suggests that both Pakistani political and military leaders are well aware of the possibilities which threats to behave recklessly or at least precipitously hold for enhancing deterrence. In 1990, Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan claimed that "(i)n the event of war with India, Pakistan would use nuclear weapons at an early stage."²⁹ Moreover, following last years nuclear tests, Pakistani officials stated that nuclear weapons would be "...meant to deter India from launching a conventional war and that tactical nuclear weapons would have a role in that strategy."³⁰ When combined with a protracted crisis, such views could work to substantially raise the prospects of nuclear employment.³¹

Resources expended on mitigating such instabilities would undoubtedly add to the already considerable economic costs which development of a minimum nuclear deterrent will require. The end result may well be that the gains in security yielded by pursuit of the arsenal may ultimately be eclipsed by the losses in domestic prosperity and even stability which the effort could generate.

Confidence-Building, Arms Control and Disarmament

Continued movement toward a weaponized deterrent also complicates the viability of arms control, disarmament and confidence-building both within the region and beyond it.

In fact, release of the proposed doctrine has generated near-universal criticism. Opposition in both Beijing and Islamabad is especially intense – with the latter suggesting that the doctrine threatens to mark the “death blow to non-weaponized deterrence within the region.” Statements by some Indian officials have tended make matters worse. In this regard, announcements of New Delhi's capacity to build a neutron bomb along with assertions that India plans to develop 300-400 nuclear warheads over the next three years only serve intensify Islamabad's interest in developing a strong counter.

²⁹ According to Arnett, likely forms of Pakistani “first use” would involve missile strikes against Indian tank divisions deployed in the Rajasthan desert or against IAF bases. Such attacks might be perceived as aiding the war effort and not raising the risk of retaliation, since relatively few civilians might be killed. See Arnett, “First Strike Could be Key to Islamabad Strategy”, *The Times* (29 May 1998).

³⁰ See Arnett, “Facts and Fiction: Current Nuclear Weapons Capabilities in South Asia.”

³¹ Interestingly, some Indian commentary views the NSAB proposal as “seriously flawed” on grounds that it surrenders the initiative to Pakistan – an enemy which some believe will not be deterred by Western notions of minimum deterrence or “unacceptable” damage. See Sat Pal, “A Flawed Doctrine”, *The Pioneer* (16 September 1999), p. 9.