

A New Equation of Pakistan's Nuclear Weaponisation

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A New Equation of Pakistan's Nuclear Weaponisation

INTRODUCTION

In 1998, immediately following India's 'Shakti' nuclear tests, Pakistan chose to announce its overt nuclear weaponisation by conducting tests in the Chagai Hills of Baluchistan. Having gained nuclear bomb capability nearly a decade ago with China's active help, all Pakistan needed to do this time was to use weapon components which had already been tested in the Lop Nor test site in the Gobi desert of Xinjiang, China. Subsequently, posing as an 'innocent victim' of India purported propensity to "launch military offensive to overrun Pakistan", it declared the policy of 'first use' of its strategic nuclear arsenal. Pakistan proposes to carry out nuclear strikes against India when its ambiguously (un)defined threshold of nuclear use is considered, by the Pakistan Army, of course, to have been breached by India's 'superior' conventional military forces¹.

Numbering 130, Pakistan's current nuclear arsenal is reported to be larger than that of India numbering 118. Further, strategic analysts aver that Pakistan is intent on increasing that number to 200 or 250. In a parallel development, in 2011, Pakistan declared its intent to acquire 'Tactical Nuclear Weapons' (TNWs), the purpose being to destroy India's offensive forces even before these can breach its nuclear threshold. Some years down the line, as induction of TNWs in Pakistan's nuclear arsenal takes shape, the pitch of its proxy aggression as well as instigation of misguided elements in Kashmir and elsewhere in India is also seen to be rising. Indeed, these developments are but the escalatory steps of the strategy that Pakistan contrives to tear Kashmir away from India before striking a lethal blow at the very roots of Indian nationhood.

This situation calls for India's strategic community to find ways to break free of a dangerous nuclear imposition by which the ever inimical state of Pakistan seeks to immobilise India while inflicting a 'thousand cuts' on it and bleeding it to disintegration. The debate on India's options in dealing with Pakistan, including the application of its nuclear doctrine, enunciated in 2003, should, therefore, receive a fresh impetus. Accordingly, the discussion in this

paper is focussed on the implications of Pakistan's inclusion of the TNWs in its nuclear arsenal upon India's security and integrity.

It is intended to discuss the following issues this paper:

- India's *objectives*, as dictated by its political ideology, in protecting its national security against inimical assaults from external adversaries.
- The effect of *Pakistan's possession of TNWs* on the strategies that India might adopt to secure its objectives.
- The hypotheses and paradigms of '*nuclear-strike-counter-strike*' in the Indo-Pakistan context.
- A revisit of India's nuclear weapon policies, and the advisability or otherwise of *India developing its own TNWs*.

ROOTS OF INDO-PAKISTAN STRATEGIC DIVERGENCE

India's Political Ideology

Just as it is with every state, India's political class defers to the exercise of sovereign dispensation in the achievement of the nation's socio-economic progress. But in the application of that ideology, unlike those in most other strategically positioned states, it repudiates a substantive role for its military institution. Picking up the notion that prevailed among the last native Hindu rulers of a politically divided *Bharatvarsha* before they were decimated by Western invasions a thousand years earlier, the leaders of post-Independence India too believe that 'war solves nothing' (as if 'peace' does!) and go about translating that notion to keep the military institution in a state of comparative emaciation. Post-Independence prejudice or wisdom, whether for good or bad, is not the issue here: the fact is that in democratic India, such convictions prevail across the entire political establishment.

But even if there are noble intents behind keeping military preparedness below par in favour of democratically aspired progress, the hoary lessons of statecraft forbid overdoing that. Conversely, even if unstated but starkly observed, the Indian state, bears the burden of its military institution most reluctantly, and keeps the utility of that institution confined just to *resist* external aggression – to *retard*, or, if possible, deny a free run to the aggressors – and nothing more. Resultantly, the military institution in India, notwithstanding the high esteem it is accorded by its citizenry, has been but grudgingly maintained at the *minimalist* scale of operational effectiveness, that

scale being decided by such post-aggressive damage suffered at the hands of its instinctively inimical neighbours that even a stoic Indian state is unable to find tolerable. The result is that a passive Indian state emboldens enmity and encourages aggression.

Indeed, just as it reflects on the 'hollowed' condition of India's military institution, this political ideology of passive national security also manifests in the country's recessed, even apologetic, nuclear posture.

India's Conventional Power and Nuclear Doctrine

India's nuclear doctrine of 2003 repudiates the military use of nuclear weapons, preferring to depend upon 'recessed deterrence' to counter any nuclear blackmail which its two inimical neighbours might thrust on it either singly or in collusion. Thus, consigning nuclear weapons to only political purposes, India's nuclear doctrine subscribes to the policy of 'No First Use' (NFU), leaving the *onus of starting a nuclear war* on its adversaries. Further, to deter the adversary's first use of nuclear weapons, the doctrine declares, "*Nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage*". To that end, the doctrine entails the propagation of 'Credible Minimum Deterrence' (CMD) through the possession of a nuclear weapon inventory that would be adequate to inflict 'unacceptable damage' upon the initiator of a nuclear exchange.

For a militarily reticent nation that India opts to be, the reluctance to wield military power may be understandable, particularly when that stance is considered to be helpful in bringing good observations from the global fraternity. The problem, however, arises when in its strategic naivete, the state is swayed by a simplistic belief that just the passive and reactive modes of a 'minimalist' military response to conventional and sub-conventional aggression would be enough to keep India secure. That absurd belief then goes on to buttress the state's reluctance to invest on maintaining its conventional military power at the requisite level of modernity. Instead, the state finds it expedient to substitute conventional military deterrence with a combination of rightful indignation against aggression, diplomatic rhetoric, light military actions of defensive content, and at the ultimate end, a 'Credible Minimum Deterrence' (CMD) of nuclear-tipped missile stocks.

The contrast and confusion among India's defence decision-makers is palpable; they repudiate the use of nuclear power as well as covert sub-

conventional interventions to rely on strong conventional military power to keep habitual aggressors away. And yet, they deliberately keep the nation's conventional military power short-charged – a short period after the 1962 disaster being an exception. Obviously, neither the enemy nor the world powers are impressed. India's purported 'strategic restraint' against constant provocations has, therefore, left open wide opportunities for the habitual intransigent to engage in less intensity, long drawn and highly divisive sub-conventional warfare that strikes not just at Kashmir but at the very roots of Indian nationhood.

Pakistan's Nuclear Posture

Pakistan's all-powerful strategic oligarchy believes, or pretends to believe, that by bolstering its conventional military capabilities with a strategic nuclear posture and then holding out the threat of a nuclear 'first strike' now and then, it has been able to paralyse India's military muscle. Thus, it grants itself unbridled opportunities to pursue its irrepressible urge to strike at the Indian nationhood through armed aggression. After some backtrack in the aftermath of the 2001-02 showdown (Operation Parakram), Pakistani strategists felt free again to gradually escalate their openly sponsored, aided, abetted and prosecuted sub-conventional aggression of proxy insurgency and crass terrorism against India. Next, as would be seen during the subsequent discussion, by adding TNWs to their nuclear arsenal in 2011, Pakistan's strategists construe to have imposed what they posit as "full spectrum deterrence" upon India. That deterrence, they believe, altogether terminates any option that India has to apply its supposedly superior conventional forces to chastise Pakistan. And that, they smugly aver, leaves India with no option but to suffer at the receiving end of Pakistan's perpetual armed aggression².

Pakistan's aggressive behaviour is further bolstered by the tentative strategy that India's custodians of national defence seem to have adopted. That is so when, adding the poison of Islamist *jihad*, Pakistan has been able to raise the level of aggression to a scale so dangerous as is currently on display in Kashmir, and to a worrying extent, even in the rest of India. In response, all that India is supposedly 'allowed' to do is be confined to defensive measures, which, at best, can only limit the mayhem that Pakistan perpetrates on the Indian soil. Considering that apart from parroting the warnings of 'not

tolerating any more' of the mayhem which Pakistan's *jehadi* military 'assets' perpetuate on the Indian soil in the forms of 'proxy war' in Kashmir and terror operations in the rest of the nation, this belief of Pakistan's is apparently vindicated. No doubt, Pakistan's sense of immunity is nurtured by India exercising what is rather pompously described as 'strategic restraint', which has been in demonstration in the wake of such grave provocations like the Kargil, Parliament, Mumbai, Samba, Pathankot, Uri, and Nagrota attacks – the list is rather long. Notably, even earlier, Pakistan believed that its undeclared nuclear possessions had deterred India from taking offensive action in 1990 against its instigation of the Punjab insurgency.

A Situation of Adverse Deterrence

Pakistani strategists have spelt out, albeit informally and as ambiguously as it suits them, the lower 'red-line' for Pakistan to launch its strategic nuclear weapons. According to those indicative pronouncements, Pakistan would resort to the use of nuclear weapons when it perceives its political, territorial, economic or military integrity to be under the threat of collapse. Making the chest-thumping Pakistan state pay when its aggression becomes intolerable—rather far from the notion of triggering the collapse of that intransigent state—being their goal in any case, Indian strategists took note of those messages with due seriousness. Thus, India's offensive strategy against Pakistan was remodelled, the intended depth of offensives curtailed, and the force structure reconfigured – all to prevent offering an excuse for Pakistan to start a nuclear war.

In that process, the Indian state might have gone overboard in buying the theory that even limited objective military retaliation(s) to curb Pakistan's sub-conventional aggression would trigger a conventional war, and then, as India's conventional military superiority starts telling, Pakistan would be provoked to unleash its oft reiterated nuclear 'first strike'. In that case, with the national endeavour focussed on accelerated economic progress, it might be difficult for the Indian state to reconcile with whatever be its share of the consequent destruction. This predicament of India has encouraged Pakistan's strategists to tighten the confinement of the Indian defence decision-makers' minds to just defensive resistance against Pakistan's proxy war, while freezing, if not sequestering, India's conventional military edge to retaliate. It is, thus, in Pakistan's reckoning, that India, many times bigger and stronger, stands

deterred from punishing Pakistan in any way for attacking India in its own backyard.

Here is a case of a rapacious state using its nuclear weapons to immunise itself from the consequences of its avarice! Thus, with a bit of overstatement, it may not be out of place to say that here is a case of a weaker enemy adopting a superior strategy to perpetrate overt aggression against a superior power, while immunising itself against retaliatory retribution.

APPEARANCE OF THE TNW

Pakistan's TNWs

It was in the backdrop of Pakistan's brash pronouncements of nuclear brinkmanship during the Kargil conflict as well as the 2001-02 standoff (Operation Parakram) that the Indian Army devised its strategy to exploit the 'space' through which limited conventional military retribution could still be meted out against Pakistan's proxy war, without having to breach Pakistan's nuclear threshold. Though anything but 'cold' in its characteristics, the sobriquet of 'Cold Start' has got stuck to this inspiring strategy. The strategy called for the conduct of quick conventional offensives by a number of distinct 'battle groups' across a wide front and limited depth, so to inflict extensive military and political damage to the habitual offender, while remaining short of providing passable excuses for Pakistan to use nuclear weapons, ostensibly to save itself from disintegration.

In response, Pakistani strategists have been intent on devising means to constrict the said 'space' which, as both the protagonists understand, remains open for India to unleash its conventional forces in the so-called 'Cold Start' mode. Half a decade of efforts later, the addition of TNWs in Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is the fruition of that intent. It is stated that the TNWs would be used to destroy even the shallow penetrations into Pakistan's territory that India's forces might gain across a wide front. In the reckoning of Pakistan's strategists, introduction of TNWs should, thus, close what little options India has to retaliate. India would then have no option left but to resign to being "bled by a thousand cuts", as the rhetoric goes. Pakistani strategists have, thus, devised what they term as 'full spectrum deterrence' to tie India's hands while enjoying 'full spectrum immunity' from retaliation as they go on inflicting those 'cuts' on hapless Indians.

TNWs in the European Theatre

Even if there may be no befitting inference, it may be of interest here to touch upon the advent of TNWs in the post-World War II Europe theatre.

By the 1960s, Soviet Russia had caught up, more or less, with the fission, fusion, thermo-nuclear and neutron bomb arsenal in America's possession. Thus, followed the espousal of various theories of 'first use' and 'follow up' nuclear exchange between the two adversarial parties, 'flexible' or 'proportionate' response to 'first attack', the 'escalatory ladder', the madness of 'mutual assured destruction', and, finally, the nuances of astute 'nuclear signalling', all aimed at saving the civilised world from that madness. At the end, it dawned upon the leaders of both blocs that the state of nuclear deterrence and counter-deterrence had brought them to a permanent stage of stalemate which could be broken only at the prospect of complete mutual devastation. Thus, as the conventionally superior Warsaw Pact Armies hovered over the East-West divide across the then East Germany-Czechoslovakia frontier, the assurance of nuclear 'first use' that had been available to the opposing North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Armies to thwart the Communist forces was somewhat neutralised. The favourable asymmetry was, thus, compromised, leaving the Western Alliance vulnerable to the Eastern bloc's overwhelming superiority in conventional military power. The latter's massive military formations could be maintained only in the autocratic regimes; democratic nations, answerable to the people and their immediate needs, could not match that array of conventional forces³.

It was at that juncture, when the lunacy of 'assured destruction' had been discarded as unacceptable, unthinkable and abhorrent by both the contestants, that America deployed its TNWs. These weapons were meant to be used under the 'Air-Land Battle' strategy to counter a possible onslaught of successive echelons of massive Warsaw Pact forces which, for the NATO Armies to tackle, would have needed an impractically large conventional order of battle. TNWs were, therefore, introduced to use fewer and smaller yield nuclear warheads to substitute for large conventional formations, and so stop the Communist invasion without having to escalate to a strategic nuclear 'first strike'.

TNWs have been defined in many ways – according to size and weight, mobility, yield, range and usage, but, finally, it all boils down to the actual usage of these against designated targets and ranges of 'counter-force'

engagement. Accordingly, TNWs have also been classified under 'battlefield' and 'theatre' weapons. The damage effect and range of 'battlefield weapons' is dictated by targets such as manoeuvring or defending forces in field fortifications, force assembly areas, defiles, bridgeheads, communication hubs, logistic echelons, etc., while those of 'theatre weapons' are geared to engage Command, Control, Communications, Intelligence (C3I) nodes, force concentrations, administrative areas, logistic installations, rail, shipping, military-industrial infrastructure, and so on. Accordingly, battlefield TNWs are likely to be designed for sub-kiloton (below 0.01 to 0.99 kiloton of TNT equivalent) and low-kiloton (1 to 18-40 kiloton of TNT equivalent) yields, to inflict instantaneous 'severe damage' within killing zones of a few hundred and up to some thousand metres radii respectively. However, more than its larger 'killing zone' as compared to conventional bombs, abhorrence of nuclear weapons arises due to the manner in which the target on 'ground zero' is instantaneously 'vapourised', the peripheral areas are subjected to 'total destruction' within a few seconds, and the long-term radiation damage to life and materials that follows. Arguably, there have been claims of turning 'air burst' TNWs harmless in terms of radioactive damage but these claims are to be taken with a pinch of salt.

Apart from higher destruction over a larger killing area as compared to similar weight and volume of conventional weapons, the estimated immediate or primary damage potential of TNWs against deployed military formations is somewhat limited. Thus, a one kiloton weapon might wipe out an Army sub-unit while a 15 kiloton may do that to a full line unit. The overall effects of radioactive fallouts and secondary damage to personnel and hardware would thereafter depend upon weather, terrain, wind, population density and protective measures available to the targeted forces. The point to note is that the ruling factors and variables being many, the figures quoted can only be guess estimates. What is beyond doubt is the intense destruction by nuclear weapons.

By the late 1960s, as the Soviets too caught up with their TNWs, strategists in either camp subsequently realised that the use of TNWs at the extreme height of a conventional war, would, in all probability, start from ones and twos to more and more, till a stage would be reached when escalation to a strategic nuclear strike-counter-strike exchange could not be prevented. That horrendous prospect caused the already prevalent

stalemate over strategic nuclear weapon to spill over to the use of TNWs. All nuclear weapons thus, became unusable in war, though these could be retained to find some sadistic joy in taking the enemy along into mutual oblivion. A stage, thus, came when, nixing the TNWs, the 'West' and the 'East' both reinvented the wisdom to stick to conventional deterrence. The scope for massed warfare being rather limited, they now took to satiate their ideological divergence by resorting to sub-conventional, irregular and surrogate warfare, to be engaged on third party lands⁴.

In other words, once the deterrence of strategic nuclear weapons got stalemated, the opposing forces configured TNWs into their conventional military operations. Then, in turn, TNWs too lost their conventional utility, till the end of the Cold War put a stop to that ghastly exercise. Arguably, therefore, *possession of TNWs by both the opposing adversaries puts a valid question mark on the usefulness of these as weapons of war, just as it had been in the case of strategic nuclear weapons.* This lesson could be a term of reference in the Indian context.

Salient Lessons

There are salient lessons to be learnt from the eternal cycles of inflation and deflation of the East-West confrontation that goes on even at present in some form or the other. Without going into the case studies, some of the lessons may be recounted as follows:

- Political leaders do not go to war unless they are certain of strengthening their domestic position. But autocratic rulers, bereft of fair advice, are known to have gone wrong in their assessment of victory. This lesson is exemplified by Pakistan's ventures in 1948-49, 1965, the Western Sector in 1971 and the Kargil conflict. By this token, should India stand firm, *Pakistan's sub-conventional war against India is ultimately bound to fail.*
- Ruling oligarchies avoid venturing into any act, including warfare, that could spell their fall from power and pelf. To that extent, their love for the nation has to be recessed in preference to their personal aggrandisement. This lesson points to the likelihood that notwithstanding its grandiloquence, *Pakistan's ruling clique would not like to invite massive nuclear retaliation, and be reduced from opulence to penury and death.*
- For an adversary to initiate a nuclear war, it must be such that the war concludes on its terms, i.e. victory. In such an eventuality, the spectre

of mutual devastation has to be foretold to the people. People do not approve of this, even if they are assured of having to face lesser punishment, of course. *No matter how fanatic they might be, the people of Pakistan would not like to be offered for mass vapourisation.*

- When there is no escalation control mechanism in place, no party is likely to initiate a nuclear war just in order to de-escalate a conventional war that is being fought in a defined battle space.
- A nation with an NFU policy will, of necessity, be required to field a Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system to protect its strategic assets and vital centres. But these have glaring limitations. Conversely, it also provokes the opponent to raise its capability. *The idea that BMD complements nuclear security is, therefore, only partially true.*
- Employed at the operational level of war, TNWs could be used with the strategic purpose of nuclear signalling, to indicate the imminence of escalation, and thereby the necessity of war termination. Such signals have to be conveyed, and understood in their true sense – when distrust reigns, that is not an easy goal to accomplish.

Inferences drawn from the above lessons suggest that triggering a strategic nuclear exchange could turn unthinkable among Pakistan's ruling feudal elite. Pakistan's adoption of TNWs could be a result of that realisation. Therefore, should India offer a counter to this new affliction among the Pakistani strategists, their joy of brandishing TNWs could vanish. Taking a cue from the East-West confrontation, thus, *India's development of counter-TNWs may be desirable.*

Efficacy of Pakistan's TNWs

To evaluate the efficacy of Pakistan's TNWs, the first step would be to examine the technical and tactical efficacy of Pakistan's present TNW capability, as well as of what it could acquire in the coming days. Presently, the Hatf IX (Nasr) Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL) system and ground emplaced Nuclear Demolition Munitions (NDMs) form the inventory of Pakistan's TNWs, though at later stages, induction of more alternate delivery means may be envisaged.

In the context of Pakistan's TNWs, it is reported to be a sub-kiloton warhead set inside a 300 millimetre cylindrical shell weighing around 25 to 35

kg..The shell is launched to a strike range of 60 km from a four or twin-tube multi-barrel rocket launcher mounted on a 8x8 'transport-lay-launch' vehicle of fair mobility. Assuming that 15 kiloton equivalent nuclear shells would have an immediate killing zone of 550 metres radius, and considering the usual distribution pattern as well as the overlap of the killing zones for four launchers, it could be construed that a good part of an Army unit could be wiped out at the first instance by one salvo of the Nasr MBRL system. Since offensive formations are designed to manage with that degree of destruction, Pakistan would have to use many MBRLs and many salvos of TNWs to stop India's offensive thrusts in their tracks. Therefore, unless it is just a warning shot as part of nuclear signalling, Pakistan's use of one or two TNWs may not make sense.

Reports suggest that the Hatf IX (Nasr) system is being improved to get past India's nascent ballistic missile defences. It is also stated that the system is integrated into Pakistan's centralised defence command-and-control network, for these to be controlled by apex level decision-makers—the Strategic Planning Division (SPD) and National Command Authority (NCA) located at the National Command Centre (NCC), and served by the Strategic Command and Control Support System (SCCSS). Besides, the Pakistan Army Engineers may trigger tactical nuclear demolition devices while the Pakistan Air Force may modify aircraft to drop tactical nuclear bombs. In the coming years, it is expected that Pakistan would be able to mate low-kiloton nuclear warheads with its inventory of longer range ballistic as well as cruise missiles, including the 350 km range air launched 'Ra'ad Hatf VIII' system. The Nasr is then unlikely to be its sole recourse to the use of TNWs.

But whatever be the weapons and the modes of delivery, Pakistan would require a larger number of TNW strikes to blunt any Indian conventional offensive. Even then, for Pakistan's rulers, that would be a contentious decision to make, considering the secondary destruction to life and materials, triggering of international outrage and India's formally pronounced 'massive retaliation to inflict unacceptable damage'.

The 'Surgical Strike': A Strategic Invigoration

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan's script of India's strategic disconcert is revealing. In Kashmir as well as the rest of India, Pakistan and its terrorist minions would perpetuate, with full impunity, a terrible war against the very core of Indian nationhood; and conversely, India would be prevented from

using its advantage of conventional military power to deter or defeat that brazen act of aggression. In other words, should Pakistan's strategy succeed, the Indian government, in preserving Kashmir's integrity, would be allowed no option but to resign to long-lasting and bloody preventive and defensive actions at the sub-conventional level. Since such passive response to the hard power of aggression offers little chance of putting an end to it, Pakistani strategists, with the initiative in their hands, seem to be smug in their belief that Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh would eventually fall into Pakistan's lap.

But a more damaging disconcert comes from the suicidal inferences drawn by some of India's myopic policy-influencers who, psyched into considering conventional power as of little use after the advent of Pakistan's TNWs, are reluctant to invest in military modernisation. In their line of thinking, strategic nuclear weapons and various grades of missiles, on one end, and various modestly armed sub-conventional forces, on the other, might be enough to keep India secure, while leaving them to invest on their electoral base. Truly, as many of the past policies indicate, the spell of such strategic naiveté in the Indian state apparatus may not be an exception. Considering that through all wars, insurgencies and catastrophes, conventional military power has provided the fulcrum of the nation's post-independent sovereign strength, that kind of conscious degradation of the military institution defies wisdom. Apparently, many among the custodians of India's defence seem to have lost the battle of the 'mind' thus.

The Indian Army's 'surgical strike' across the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir in September 2016 has opened another chapter of the debate over India's officially promulgated nuclear doctrine. Ever since India developed its nuclear weapons as a political tool to deter nuclear arm-twisting by China, an assertive nuclear power, and Pakistan, India's ever-obsessive enemy, it was the first instance of India overtly crossing the LoC. The salience of this action is not in its occurrence—such cross-border mini-actions are undertaken now and then without any significant gains apart from keeping the military institution primed. The salience of this instance comes from its multi-point scale, retaliatory purpose and popular effect. One, it was a chain of orchestrated raids across a wide frontage but shallow depth across the LoC, so shallow that even an inveterate falsifier like the Pakistan state could in no way view it as anywhere near its ambiguous nuclear threshold. Two, it was declared, unapologetically, as an action not targeted at the Pakistani

state but to destroy terrorist camps, which, by Pakistan's own admission, had uncontrollable *jehadi* fighters. Three, it belied the political trepidation of the Indian state against crossing the LoC in the face of Pakistan's nuclear rhetoric, into what was asserted this time as Indian territory. And, four, it rescued, notionally and temporarily, of course, the Indian state from its pusillanimous image in the eyes of its own citizens – they loved and lapped up the military action and adopted the terminology of 'surgical strike' like a national slogan. The net effect was that it has been proved, if indeed there was any need to prove a well tested logic of warfare, that beyond a point, Pakistan's nuclear bluff must fail to work.

Pakistan's reaction to the surgical strike was revealing. For years now, Pakistan had shed the bombast about its purported 'Allah willed' military power and 'tenfold abilities' of its 'Muslim' soldiery when pitched against the 'infidel Hindu' (*sic*). Instead, it had switched over to 'spook' India – and the global watchers – through irrational pronouncements over its nuclear brinkmanship in all its ambiguity. In the instance of the 'surgical strike', however, when the situation came to the crunch, the Pakistan state, recovering from dismay and confused reactions, chose to remain innocent about the operation, and yet, impelled by its wont, attempted, and continues to attempt, to seek retribution for the 'loss of public face'.

By undertaking the surgical strike, therefore, a new facet of passable military retaliation against Pakistan's sub-conventional aggression has been revealed to India's usually nonplussed defence policy-makers, and even to the pacifists among the military leaders. Articulated with strategic wisdom, this could be the first step towards imposition of a credible 'sub-conventional deterrence', something that has so far been missing from India's strategic repertoire.

PARADIGMS OF THE INDO-PAKISTAN NUCLEAR POSTURE

Pakistan's Narrative

Pakistan state's narrative is rooted at its extraordinary make-belief that attends to its innate paranoia, that India must be intent on decimating its sovereignty. Having conjured up this notion, that state proceeds to devote all its strength to undermine the Indian nationhood in any way that it possibly can. Impelled to satiate that irrepressible urge, it also must find means to insure

itself from India's retaliation in response to its hostility. That agenda, as the Pakistan state concedes after its repeatedly failed conventional aggressions, cannot be furthered in the face of India's military power. It, therefore, seeks to skirt around that hurdle by achieving superior nuclear weapon capability in terms of inventories of strategic as well as tactical nuclear weapons. Pakistan's policy of 'first use', should a stage comes when its vital interests are considered to be under threat from India's conventional military forces, is one key feature of that agenda. Unilateral and ambiguous delineation of that stage, mixed with rhetorical brinkmanship now and then, completes the Pakistan state's nuclear narrative.

Notably, considering the inherent suspicion and hatred of India that envelops the Pakistani strategists' vision, the said stage might not take much to be reached but for the bulwark of India's policy of *massive retaliation* and the unequivocal *credibility* of that policy. The appearance of TNWs in Pakistan's inventory is aimed at freeing Pakistan from that stalemate. The limited destruction that TNWs might inflict, as many strategic analysts consider, cannot justify India's massive retaliation. The resultant dilution of the *unequivocal credibility* of India's policy must be a dangerous situation for the belligerents as well as the regional community.

Hard Realities

To dispassionately examine Pakistan's TNW posture, Indian strategists would do well to be free from hopeful assumptions and consider the following hard realities:

- Pakistan has, or would soon have, prepared itself for the use of TNWs in tactical battle areas in terms of formalising the battle procedure, deployment, targeting, hierarchy of command and control, communications, protection of own troops, etc.
- In tactical terms, the Pakistan Army would give itself the prerogative to decide the stage when it would find itself compelled to hit India's offensive forces with TNWs. That stage might be a specified depth of penetration into Pakistan's own or Pakistan held territories. Pakistan would try to brandish that prerogative to arrest the Indian decision-maker's mind.
- Further, Pakistan's mitigating assurances of using TNWs in its own territory cannot bring any comfort. When national interests are

construed to be at stake, such assurances are liable to be set aside. Therefore, TNWs may be used on either side of the Line of Control (LoC) or the International Border (IB), as influenced by the Pakistan Army's 'forward line of troops' and disposition of Indian forces at the instance of use.

- It would be futile to confine Pakistan's TNW capability just by the range, calibre and numbers of the Hatf IX Nasr systems. Given their intent, and as discussed under the previous heading, Pakistani strategists would, as a foregone possibility, find many alternates to configure the use of longer range, higher payload delivery systems – the range of missiles and aircraft in its inventory – by underranging and undertipping these with TNW warheads.
- Similarly, talking points over Pakistan's 'competence' in nuclear weapon miniaturisation need not raise complacency. By its well honed dubious methods, Pakistan would certainly find that competence, by hook or crook.
- Concerns over leaving TNWs in the hands of 'trigger-sensitive' field commanders are unfounded. The highly professional Pakistan Army would definitely keep the nuclear control at the NCA level through its SCCSS, even if the trigger is to be pulled by local commanders.
- There is the talk of TNWs not being effective in mountainous terrain and unusable in the plains due to various factors like ground, wind, existence of value-assets, population, etc. These may be viewed as just 'feel good' notions. Indeed, users of TNWs would see to the effectiveness of these to the extent of their yield wherever battles are to be fought, and as much as the usual 'fog' and 'friction' of war would usually permit.
- There is also the talk of 'limited' casualties that a TNW could inflict upon the Indian forces. Actually, however, a TNW strike would be one part of overall conventional fire plans. In such fire plans, the TNWs could be used against troop concentrations and base echelons, while conventional fire power tackles manoeuvre forces, and vice versa. Immediate casualties of the combine, therefore, would be considerable. Besides, the TNWs would prop enough secondary effects to disrupt the command and control set-up and cause physical and psychological damage across the larger radii of the primary, secondary and tertiary killing zones. Thus, even if calculations state that a 15 kiloton nuclear

weapon would account for just a part of a military unit, the fact is that it would render the better part of a formation as unfit for continued battle.

- Further, unless the launch is an intended part of nuclear ‘signalling’, the smaller destruction zone of a TNW would necessitate many more than one TNW to be launched at the first instance itself. Damage from multiple TNW strikes would, therefore, not be limited to just a ‘few tanks and some personnel’, as is hoped, but would be more widespread and disabling – materially as well as psychologically.

The appearance of TNWs into the nuclear-conventional equation, therefore, needs to be deliberated upon in the light of the above listed hard realities.

Nuances of India’s Nuclear Doctrine

India’s draft nuclear doctrine was formally adopted in 2003. Most appropriately, this doctrine offers the assurance of ‘NFU’. Further, it warns the initiator of the nuclear weapon attack(s) that India’s “*nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be ‘massive’ and designed to inflict ‘unacceptable’ damage*”. However, after Pakistan introduced TNWs into its conventional warfare arsenal, questions have been raised and suggestions made regarding the purport and sanctity of these three terms. These questions tend to dilute the Indian decision-makers’ doctrinal resolve. Well intended or a part of the inimical ‘mind game’, such questions cannot, therefore, be left unaddressed if the right dividends of India’s nuclear weaponisation are to accrue. Indian strategists cannot but ensure that their declared doctrine is taken seriously and scotch the expression of self-doubts regarding its key provisions.

Actually, the three key operative terms – ‘NFU’, ‘massive’ (retaliation) and ‘unacceptable’(damage)—as used in the doctrinal text, need not have any preconceived and fixated definitions, neither may India, while being subjected to nuclear doom, be expected to be bound by such definitions. Truly, a doctrine serves the end of preparation and planning – but it does not, and cannot, override strategically or tactically sensible courses of action-reaction to be adopted in the battlefield. Therefore, academic hair-splitting debates over the text and terminologies of the doctrine should not dictate the courses to be adopted by India to save itself from nuclear destruction.

In the nuclear mind game, it is sometimes desirable to buttress ambiguities in order to seek meanings to unresolved issues. Truly, therefore, the courses

of India's actions and reactions would be appropriated by the 'signalling' that Pakistan communicates, and as India interprets those 'signals' at the time of the decision. One meaning to the questions and suggestions over India's nuclear doctrine could, therefore, be in the nuanced *understanding* of these three terms—NFU, 'massive' and 'unacceptable' – and viewing these as *situational variables*, while subscribing to the definitional sanctity of these.

Situational Variables: 'Massive Retaliation' and 'Unacceptable Damage'

Irrespective of Pakistan's level and scale of nuclear attack – that is, even if Pakistan's 'first use' attack is of miniscule proportions, a TNW strike, for example—the professed doctrinal interpretation of India's *massive retaliation* points to the 'annihilation' of the state of Pakistan. Conversely, it is also insinuated that the Indian decision-makers might not be as demonic as to take such a step of extreme inhumanity – curiously, no such sublime idealism is ascribed to Pakistan's decision-makers. Whether genuine or a contrived psy-war to confuse the Indian leadership's resolve, this dichotomy could infect serious misunderstandings in the 'signalling' of the opponent's nuclear postures – here too, India is supposed to bear the onus⁵.

Possibly, appreciation of the extent and scope of India's 'massive' retaliation to inflict damage that would be 'unacceptable' to Pakistan should be linked to variable factors – either term does not have fixed measures, in any case. In practice, therefore, infliction of damage to variously graded clusters of national assets – one, more or most of the industrial, logistic and communication hubs, rail, sea or air infrastructure, military bases and population centres – could fit the variable parameters of 'massive' retaliation to inflict 'unacceptable' damage. Further, even if counter-force strike is preferred, collateral counter-value destruction might still become unavoidable. Therefore, in today's world, even wiping out, say a cantonment, or even a large military formation could be unacceptable to all parties. Accordingly, to project varying packages of 'massive retaliation', the extent of targeting may be decided in a manner as to create more than one step on the escalatory nuclear posture.

Situational Variables of NFU

As discussed at the very beginning, the policy of NFU is in tune with India's political ideology. Even otherwise, for India's own good, in a hostile neighbourhood infested with nuclear weapons, it is the right policy which

need not be diluted or questioned. However, there are certain conditions to be met for the policy of NFU to make a mark. In this context, the matters to be considered are, firstly, the appropriate interpretation of the term, and, secondly, the underpinning capabilities that are needed to uphold this policy of NFU.

Truly, NFU is a pledge, not a ban from the hoary principle of 'right to defend'. Depending on the situation prevailing, the term 'NFU' may have more than one connotation. The dumbest one of these would be to wait for a nuclear strike to occur before retaliating with whatever weaponry is left usable. Next, Indian decision-makers cannot even be sure if the movement and deployment of delivery systems are meant for conventional or nuclear use, or if the warheads or bombs carried by these are nuclear, non-nuclear or mixed. In the India-Pakistan context, the matrices of the short flight path, limited early warning and targeting capability, and roving launch sites leave virtually no time for the options of 'Launch on Warning' (LOW) or 'Launch on Attack' (LOA) to be exercised within the ambit of NFU. Consideration of a 'preemptive attack' as a facet of NFU – a rather liberal concession, of course—on the other hand, is unthinkable. It would be difficult to know for certain the Pakistani strategists' intent of initiating a nuclear attack upon India nor could there be the certainty of being able to destroy all or most of Pakistan's nuclear assets in the preemptive mode. With even the best 'Ballistic Missile and Air Defence' (BMAD) unable to guarantee adequate protection, all of the above mentioned connotations would lead to a nuclear exchange and heavy destruction that India wishes to repudiate in the first place. In sum, it appears to be most sensible to let the classical connotation of NFU remain valid and settle with the one described above as the 'dumbest' one!

The policy of NFU also needs four major props to sustain it. One, the policy must be founded upon telling superiority in conventional military power. It then becomes possible to achieve the politico-military objectives of war by prosecuting through conventional military operations, even in the face of a nuclear strike should the 'first use' party turn undeterred by massive retaliation. Two, the policy entails survival through the enemy's first, and possibly, second, nuclear strikes while retaining the retaliatory CMD. Three, the sanctity of the NFU policy is contingent upon efficient BMAD, surveillance, target acquisition, interception and strike-back

capabilities. Four, the NFU policy is best backed up when there is full range of Information Warfare (IW) capabilities in all their diverse facets to disrupt the enemy's war-waging structure. Needless to state, in all the four said aspects, there is much to build before India's policy of NFU can reach its full maturity.

Strategic Nuclear Weapons

India considers strategic nuclear weapons not as weapons of war but just for deterrence against the bullying of the stronger and the blackmail of the intransigent. But should its nuclear deterrence fail to impress, there would be a heavy price to pay. India's credible retaliatory capability, therefore, needs to be built up in terms of both nuclear and IW – Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Information, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (C4I2SR), deception, cyber and space capabilities—to deter the enemy's usage of strategic nuclear weapons to smother India's sovereign interests.

The underlying principle in the matter of India's nuclear posture must be: firstly, there need be no dilution of the doctrinal text or its intended definitions; and, secondly, the implications of doctrinal terms would be for the decision-makers of the time to adopt. It would, thus, be for Indian decision-makers to retain the flexibility to decide as to what would constitute 'massive retaliation to inflict unacceptable damage' at a point in time. In that, they could opt for one or more steps of 'flexible', 'proportionate' or 'annihilatory' responses, and choose the appropriate connotation of NFU as the situation might demand. Academic hair-splitting over the nuclear doctrine may, thus, be rested and Indian strategists left to do what they have to under conditions of war.

In the above perspective, it is possible to see through the haze of factual ambiguities and logical contradictions that are invariably to be built into any nation's nuclear strategy. The indication in that respect is that India's posture in the domain of strategic nuclear deterrence might be working. Pakistan is less exuberant of the utility of its nuclear card to trump India's deep conventional offensive, and that realisation has pushed Pakistan into introducing the TNWs to cover up for the limitations of its conventional military capability.

TNW: The Indian Dilemma

India formalised its nuclear doctrine at the strategic level at a time when Pakistan's TNWs had not been in the picture. That equation has changed with the induction of TNWs in Pakistan's nuclear inventory. Propagation of the use of TNWs further curtails India's conventional options, howsoever limited the objectives these might have been, to punish Pakistan for incessant hostile behaviour. Pakistan's nuclear red-line having further lowered as compared to the Cold Start scenario, thus, the new problem with India's strategic nuclear deterrence is that it would encourage Pakistan to feel more safe from India's conventional offensives and so perpetrate warfare at the sub-conventional level – in the form of proxy war, terrorism and societal subversion. India's recent unshackling from strategic inertia to undertake limited offensive action in the form of the 'surgical strike', and Pakistan's deflated, if pragmatic reaction to that event point to certain new inferences in this regard. However, strikes of such shallow depth might not chastise Pakistan's irrepressible aggression. The next course in this context should, therefore, be to preserve India's option to inflict conventional military retribution of sufficient extent and depth in Pakistan's or Pakistan controlled territory that would deter the Pakistan state from continuing its sub-conventional offensive in Kashmir, and yet save it from falling to a stage when it must use the TNWs to rescue itself from the adverse consequences of its wrong doings.

Following this consideration, the intermediate purpose would be to find appropriate responses to Pakistan's use, or threat of use of TNWs to prevent the fruition of India's conventional military strategy. Unless such responses are found, possession of TNWs would permit the perpetrator to continue to attack India's integrity and sovereignty with impunity. In formulating an appropriate response policy in the Indian context, however, the East-West Cold War 'templates' of the nuclear paradox, the only reference point one has, may be of little help.

It would be sensible for Indian strategists to take the threat of Pakistan's TNWs with extreme seriousness — the purpose being not to allow Pakistan to go berserk but to adopt determined counter-measures and so keep the chronic trouble-maker in check. Therefore, it would be in order to consider certain hypothetical models so as to focus on plausible situations when Pakistan's TNW could be used, and the corresponding Indian reactions, both active and passive. These models are as discussed in the following paragraphs.

Situation Extreme A: Pakistan Irrational, India Restrained

Stage 1: This stage opens when India launches a conventional offensive into Pakistan or Pakistan held territory either on own initiative or under grave provocation. India announces it as a 'limited objective retaliatory response'. Pakistan does not give credence to that pronouncement and views it as an aggression to decimate its sovereignty. It threatens to use nuclear weapons. The Indian offensive continues.

Stage 2: Pakistan's nuclear posturing and messaging is followed by India's counter-messaging and posturing. Undeterred, Pakistan announces deployment of TNWs. While international pressure to back-off builds up, as per the past trend, latent sympathy and bias is towards the 'underdog' Pakistan's version. India continues with its offensive operations nonetheless.

Stage 3: Pakistan launches one or more TNWs either as a warning as much to India as to the world powers, or for effect against the Indian forces. There is moderate destruction.

Stage 4: The global powers intervene to prevent India from responding by "massive retaliation to inflict unacceptable damage"⁶. Concurrently, the disconcerted global powers join together for the immediate 'neutralisation' of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. India agrees not to retaliate but presses on with its conventional offensives to secure its desired end state. Pakistan is forced to fight a conventional war in which it is likely to come second best.

Result: Pakistan ceases to be a nuclear threat. India gains the moral ground. But for a long time into the future, India loses the credibility of its stated policy of *massive retaliation* and the ability to withstand international pressure. Domestic reaction to India's lack of 'will' is adverse, but it is assuaged by the gains achieved through conventional war.

Verdict: Overall, it is India's gain⁷.

Situation Extreme B: Pakistan and India both Irrational

Take-up after Stage 3, Situation A:

Stage 4: Ignoring international pressure and de-escalatory suggestions, India sticks to its policy and responds by 'massive retaliation to inflict unacceptable damage'. Pakistan launches its strategic first strike. India's second strike and Pakistan's strategic second strike follow. Both still have a few nuclear weapons left in reserve.

Stage 5: International principals intervene by force to stop the carnage. The nuclear assets of both nations are neutralised by IW and then physically taken over by force.

Result: Pakistan ceases to be a state and has to come under an interim administration of the world body. India is crippled.

Verdict: Both nations are devastated.

Situation C: Pakistan Irrational, India Reactive, Pakistan Rational

Take-up after Stage 3, Situation A:

Stage 4: Prepared for that eventuality, India treats the warning shots as bluff and continues with its conventional operations. Pakistan then launches more TNWs, this time for more effect.

Stage 5: Continuing with conventional operations and accepting casualties from TNW strikes, India launches ‘massive’ – but not ‘annihilatory’ – retaliation’, in both counter-force and counter-value modes. There are nuclear strikes against the defence industry, logistic and communication hubs, rail, sea or air infrastructure, military bases and by default, some population centres, to a severity that might usually qualify as ‘unacceptable damage’.

Stage 6: The international community is disconcerted at Pakistan’s initiation of a nuclear exchange, and outraged at what they view as India’s ‘unjustified overreaction’. Both nations suffer international condemnation. Due to self-restraint and the international reaction, Pakistan refrains from launching a strategic nuclear strike and there are no more nuclear exchanges. India continues to seek the objective of its conventional offensive of wreaking retribution upon the ever-intransigent Pakistan, till the global powers issue an ultimatum to enforce a ceasefire.

Result: Pakistan suffers in a conventional as well as nuclear exchange. Pakistan is helped to recover and progress through generous aid and assistance. India is ostracised and singled out for crippling sanctions, to suffer their adverse consequences for many years, if not decades. India’s economy goes into a tail-spin. The global powers join up to make the region nuclear weapon free.

Verdict: Pakistan’s supposed restraint or otherwise would be determined by its powerful factions which dominate decision-making, viz, either the hate-

radical-extremist faction or the mature-astute-state functionaries. Pakistan's record in this aspect has so far been mixed. In any case, Pakistan is devastated but is helped to rise, while India, saved from devastation, stands 'sanctioned' in a crippling way. Overall, Pakistan stands to gain by exercising restraint.

Situation D: Pakistan's TNW Strike is Reciprocated (If India too has TNWs)

Take-up after Stage 3, Situation A:

Stage 4: Pakistan's warning TNW strike is reciprocated by India's warning launch of TNWs. Pakistan strikes with more TNWs which is reciprocated by India. Conventional operations continue. Global principals administer stern warnings to both sides to desist.

Stage 5: Both sides relent from escalating to strategic nuclear strikes. In case both, in their foolishness, choose to persist and escalate, then the 'Situation Extreme B' would arise. In all probability, international intervention would put a stop to the madness well before that stage.

Result: Pakistan's reliance on TNWs, to altogether close the conventional options open to India, is belied.

Verdict: Apparently, India's reflect reaction through TNWs would derail Pakistan's nuclear posturing. Pakistan's fundamental purpose of neutralising India's conventional power from punishing Pakistan's perpetual sub-conventional war would, thus, be defeated. In this case, India's possession of TNWs is justified as it reinforces the avoidance of a nuclear weapons exchange.

Situation E: Rhetoric Apart, Both Sides Desist from Actually Using TNWs (If India too has TNWs)

Take-up after Stage 2, Situation A:

Stage 3: Conventional operations continue till a ceasefire is called under the aegis of a world body.

Result: Behind the chest thumping and bravado, Pakistan is chastised – even if only for the time being.

Verdict: Peace is likely to prevail for some years. India and Pakistan would be wise to use this opportunity to reconcile. India lives with Pakistan's chronic hostility, as it has done so far.

From 'Mad' Logic to Sublime Realisation

Pakistan is expected to take India's stated policy of '*massive retaliation to inflict unacceptable damage*' very seriously. In the light of India's past show of resolve in attacking across the International Boundary in 1965, liberating Bangladesh in 1971, going nuclear, refusing to submit to unacceptable nuclear treaties, recovering Kargil, etc., there is no reason for Pakistan not to do so. Accordingly, the point is that having launched its first TNWs, why would Pakistan wait to suffer the inevitable 'massive retaliation' to be inflicted, in the distant hope of getting away lightly, without having to suffer 'unacceptable damage'?

A logical option for Pakistan would be to launch its 'first strike', or may be even 'full strike' simultaneously with its first firing of TNWs, in the hope that a devastated Indian system would be left in no position to respond with effect. In other words, it would make more sense for Pakistan to trigger all or most of its larger inventory of nuclear weapons to cripple India to an extent that India is either in no position to carry out its first strike, or if it still does, the force of a retaliatory strike is much weakened.

In practice however, that situation is unlikely to occur; howsoever India is devastated, its size and the fire of wounded resolve would not be able to suppress due retribution. Both nations would be devastated, but if it could be viewed as a macabre consolation, India will be crippled while Pakistan would be decapitated. This brings out a similar situation that stupefied the strategists of the Western and Eastern blocs and forced them to sequester their nuclear weaponry from the actual design of warfare. That lesson then led them to work out various nuclear weapon repudiation and non-proliferation treaties, more or less discard the TNWs, and, finally, curtail their nuclear white elephants. Development of a more precise, larger killing zone and more lethal conventional weapons, to compensate for the TNWs, followed.

Arguably, *just as nuclear near-parity at the strategic level led to strategic nuclear weapons being high-shelved with just the deterrence tag, so may be the case with the TNWs* – the caveat being that TNWs have to be backed with strategic nuclear weapons⁸.

Situational Inferences

Hypothetical situations as depicted above point to certain possible inferences. Even if these inferences can be no better than tenuous, these give rise to the following bona fide considerations in the usage of nuclear weapons:

- Unless the national leadership is autocratic and then seized in madness, *strategic nuclear weapons have no military employment*. These are, however, *useful in deterring a mad opponent from triggering a nuclear war*.
- The peg of ‘unacceptable damage’ in the contemporary world could be very, very low. In recessed deterrence, a *race to build up a nuclear weapon stockpile is, therefore, meaningless* beyond a certain point. The arsenal needed to hit that peg dictates the construct of a comparatively modest CMD.
- Use of TNWs needs to be underwritten by strategic nuclear deterrence. Since the latter is considered unusable, that brings the entire exercise back to the starting point. *Inter alia*, therefore, *TNWs too are of no use in deterring war*.
- In fact, the damage caused by the use of TNWs can be also be achieved through conventional means, with the added advantage of controlling warfare through limitations of hardware and logistics.
- All considered, it may be *preferable to possess TNWs rather than not having these*. It would better discourage the enemy from adventuring into the use of TNWs.
- The situational hypotheses discussed above suggest that *nuclear restraint brings many advantages*. It permits the issues to be settled at conventional battlefields without having to buy total destruction. It also nurtures international relationships and interdependencies.

WHITHER INDIA’S TNW?

Deterring Pakistan’s Sub-Conventional War

The situations depicted above are hypothetical. But these only have logical lines which may have many permutations and combinations. Generally, the inferences flowing out of these situations converge at the preference of India developing its own TNWs; *just as India chose to acquire a nuclear arsenal to be freed of nuclear arm-twisting, it could also acquire TNWs to blunt TNW brandishing*. Simply put, India’s option to harness its conventional military power to retaliate against Pakistan’s so far immunised sub-conventional war would be better served by India having its own TNWs, in some form or the other, rather than not having these at all. That could then add another layer of response mechanism and nuclear signalling, backed up by strategic

nuclear weapons, for India to avoid Pakistan's spooking by the TNWs. That would also be in consonance with India's approach to keep pushing Pakistan's nuclear threshold higher. Finally, it would make the use of conventional power more acceptable to the usually passive Indian decision-makers.

Of course, India's acquisition of TNWs could lead to global disconcert and political and economic sanctions that could slow down India's technological and economic progress, particularly in the field of the much needed nuclear power generation. Therefore, the matter of the timing and fallouts are to be addressed with due discretion through political and diplomatic articulations. Here again, there may be scope for defining suitable alternatives to meet the purpose through the tactical configuration of existing nuclear assets.

Configuration of Tactical Use Nuclear Weapons (TUNWs)

What are TNWs after all but low yield and more accurate versions of nuclear bombs meant for counter-force targeting in conjunction with conventional forces. Therefore, configuring sub or low kiloton yield 'Tactical Use Nuclear Weapons' (TUNWs) from India's existing inventory of nuclear weapons, missiles, air platforms and demolition munitions, miniaturised as feasible, could be a low key option for India. To that end, India's cruise and short and medium range ballistic missiles and air platforms could be mounted with low kiloton nuclear devices. Certain dilution in the Circular Error of Probability (CEP) may be acceptable in that case. The effects of these weapons on the target may be further controlled through variable flight trajectories and height of burst. In similar vein, Nuclear Demolition Munitions (NDMs) could also be prepared for triggering at the intended ground zero at an appropriate juncture. Notably, most of the 'Shakti' nuclear tests had been in the sub or low kiloton ranges.

The option of TUNWs might help keep the global disconcert in control.

Dealing with Nuclear Arm-Twisting

Next, as discussed, it is for the Indian strategists to interpret the doctrinal contention of '*massive retaliation to inflict unacceptable damage*' to suit own strategies rather than binding themselves to academic debates. Other provisions of India's nuclear doctrine may also continue to stand thus. But whatever be the situation, *India cannot hope to restrain Pakistan's unending armed assault upon its nationhood unless it counters Pakistan's nuclear bluster, builds up its conventional military power to a superior combat ratio and then puts*

the onus of conventional provocation as well as nuclear escalation on Pakistan. In that context, with the possession of TUNWs, India's political leadership would be more confident in punishing the Pakistani state for its sponsorship of proxy wars in Kashmir and outrageous terrorist assaults elsewhere by undertaking deliberate cross-border strikes, hot-pursuit, deep sanitation attacks and punitive offensives when Pakistan's belligerent acts cross tolerable limits. Presently, as seen since the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the Indian decision-makers are not so sure of adopting such options, while their counterparts in Pakistan seem to be confident of having their way, with immunity.

May be, India's possession of TUNWs and situational adaptations of its nuclear doctrine would bring relief to the sensible sections in Pakistan from being marginalised by their raving anti-Indian factions.

Conventional Power

That brings to the fore the matter of conventional military power. Needless to state, *India's security from external – and to an extent, even internal – enemies of the state has been, and would remain, completely dependent on conventional military power; even the purpose of TNWs is construed to be within the higher extremities of conventional warfare. The Indian political preference for distancing from power group alliances, charting own path to progress, and avoidance of military confrontation – genuine as these must be – accentuates that dependency. It is, therefore, incumbent on the Indian leadership to maintain a highly effective conventional military institution.*

It is true that India possesses sufficient military capability to deter Pakistan from venturing into conventional military aggression as it had done in the past. Indeed, it is that deterrence that makes Pakistani strategists exercise various means of sub-conventional warfare to bring about India's disintegration. However, maintenance of past superiority in conventional military power cannot be confined to a tally count of men and basic material alone – hardware modernisation, organisational upgrade, efficient decision-making system and fruition of the entire range of IW capabilities have to be factored into that assessment. Conversely, due to stagnating, even 'hollowing', since the past quarter of a century, India's military institution has not been allowed to maintain the overwhelming edge that it had possessed earlier. The defocus of the state is best exemplified by the fact that in spite of being an Information Technology (IT) giant, Indian defence planners have

failed to harness the advantages of military IW. The deterrence, therefore, has worn thin – Kargil, the Mumbai attack and the current Kashmir firefight are the manifestations of that strategic debility.

On the other hand, having reoriented itself according to the current tenets of wide-spectrum warfare, Pakistan's military establishment is well up on its way to expand, modernise and upgrade its capabilities. It must, therefore, be incumbent on the Indian state to invest on re-energising its conventional military power and so keep India secure from aggression from either of its perpetual adversaries.

China Factor

In the foregone discussion, the China factor has been confined to the background. That is so even when that factor played the key role in India's nuclear weaponisation. Doubtlessly, India's strategising for nuclear weapons, as discussed in this paper, would have its fallout on the Sino-Indian military equation. In this respect, it may be appropriate to keep the following observations in contention:

- Pakistan's nuclearisation started as an extension of China's regional strategy. It was aimed at saving Pakistan from being 'overrun', so to say, by India's superior conventional forces, and, thus, keep India's chronic nuisance in business. Over the years, however, that posture has generated its own dynamics. Presently, that posture has morphed into a facilitator for Pakistan's sub-conventional aggression to undermine India's integrity. Consequently, therefore, besides strait-jacketing India into a hapless internal security situation, that dynamics has less to do with China's cause.
- With overwhelming superiority in conventional military power, unbridgeable as it indeed is, China has little cause for use of its nuclear weapons against India. Besides, considering the trends of political decision-making, it is not likely to use its nuclear weapons to bail Pakistan out from the latter's misadventure. In any case, Pakistan's burgeoning nuclear arsenal does not need China's backing any more. With Pakistan well propped up with its own nuclear arsenal, apart from 'signalling' for mutual benefit, it may be impractical to think of the collusive use of Sino-Pakistan strategic nuclear assets.
- There, however, may be situations when the use of China's TNWs on

Indian forces becomes plausible, that is, if China's conventional forces are checkmated by Indian defence and then cornered into a position of collapse. Should India devote more attention to its military institution, that indeed could be a reckonable condition. Under such a condition, Pakistan, not repeating what it believes to be a post-1962 'missed opportunity', is likely to join the fray with its conventional forces and TNWs and try to 'liberate' Kashmir. A converse could also be possible; if it comes to it, a serious conventional adversity might entail India's use of TNWs to save the annexation of its northern and eastern provinces. Of course, this matter would experience many seen and unseen nuances over the coming decades, but the probabilities remain alive, if hazy. It would be foolish of India to allow complacency in this regard.

Sino-Indian confrontation would be a long affair. In the overall analysis of Sino-Pak-Indo confrontation, therefore, it remains incumbent upon the Indian state to maintain its conventional power in the best fettle. It may also be inferred that development of its own versions of TNWs would strengthen India's external security more than not doing so.

CONCLUSION: CHARTING A NATIVE PATH

Estrangement between Pakistan and India is moored on fundamental ideological differences. Having been primed ever since the call for 'Muslim Pakistan' was raised in the 1940s, every Pakistani is firm in his/her belief that Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) had been unfairly gobbled up by India, so much so that no Pakistani leader would ever dare to go slow on the issue. Indeed, 'liberating' Kashmir into its fold is an issue of Pakistan's national identity and sovereignty, just as not letting that happen must be a factor for India to preserve its secular, democratic dispensation. There is just no common ground, and so there would be no let up in Pakistan's hostility in the foreseeable future – unless the political entity of Pakistan undergoes drastic changes. Meanwhile, Pakistan's armed aggression, in various forms, would go through endless cycles of highs and lows.

Further, even if Kashmir is the currently visible cause of Pakistan's aggression, there are more of the intrusive perceptions and interpretations that foul India's concept of its nationhood. Rooted in the self-appointed role of religious flag-bearer, the subscription to a negative brand of religious practices and a sense of entitlement to re-establish Muslim rule on India,

are the absurd perceptions and interpretations that are likely to be in force among the powerful religious-cum-social masters of Pakistan's society in the foreseeable future. Pakistan's rich and feudal ruling elite would not buy peril by daring to overlook those popular masters. India has to remain conscious of that situation.

India's strategic nuclear weapons deter Pakistan from first use of nuclear weapons while India's superior conventional power deters the repetition of Pakistan's past conventional aggressions. However, India has no deterrence against Pakistan's sub-conventional aggression; whatever there was in the form of conventional retaliation, is sought to be neutralised by Pakistan's induction of TNWs. That allows Pakistani strategists to brandish "full spectrum deterrence" on India. Resultantly, India's can be rid of Pakistan's relentless animosity only by retaining its conventional power to punish Pakistan's sub-conventional war. The issue of India's strategic nuclear posturing, TUNWs, and, indeed, the mainstay of all safety harness, conventional military power, have to be seen in that light. In that, the cardinal principles to be appreciated are:

- Even if it takes a two or more to fight, one rogue is enough to start it. This adage fits both of India's neighbours who, by innate compulsion, cannot desist from altering the stable status quo, and so are inclined to use politics to impose a military solution, rather than vice versa.
- Even if it takes weeks and months to start a war, it takes decades to prepare for it. This one fits India's placid policies on its defence preparedness.

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Notes

1. Most Pakistani and many Indian analysts speak of India's 'superiority' over Pakistan in terms of conventional military forces. That assertion, howsoever pleasing to Indian ears, needs to be taken with some realism of military logic. Indeed, defence analysts point out that India's edge in the comparative 'combat ratio' has reduced from more than two:one to just over one:one, which is well below what is statistically considered to be the factor of success. Besides, in the extent of war zones, state of military hardware, process of mobilisation, network of strategic communications, military and political solidarity from co-religious and strategic allies, and, above all, the ranks of the suicidal fifth column, the level of India's conventional superiority may turn out to be disturbingly misconceived.
2. Indians in their bones and blood, the inherently diverse people of Pakistan have had to contrive artificial identities to justify their common nationhood. False cultural and religious identity, repudiation of everything of their roots and innate expressions of the anti-Indian agenda are the manifestations of their 'two nation' theory that provides the very basis of Pakistan's existence. Obviously, the day is far when Pakistan's mission of sabotaging India comes to a stop, unless, of course, India surrenders the state of J&K, and then goes about restoring the so-called 'Muslim rule' over the entire 'Hindustan'! In simple terms, there would be no let up of the Pakistani state's hostility in the foreseeable future – India would do well to come to terms with that reality.
3. It was in that context that the slogan "better red than dead" gained popularity in Germany, the United States and then in the rest of the Western alliance. Horrors of a nuclear holocaust, depicted in literature and films, made people reject the East-West ideological animosity.
4. Intercontinental and inter-state confrontation is endemic to geopolitics and the core of human nature. Therefore, when there was no compulsion to fight on their own or their allies lands, the power blocs settled their issues by triggering warfare, of varying shapes and lethality, upon surrogate parties.
5. It is time for the Indian strategists to unequivocally admit and reconcile to the fact that the Churchillian distaste of 'scheming' Indians – the 'native' cultural power that put an end to an empire that never saw the sun set over its realm – continues to pervade the all-powerful Western world. Helped by the 'underdog' pretensions and ruled by subservient dictators who readily offer their strategic situation to buy endorsement, the Pakistani leadership – particularly its Army – is close to the Western heart. Ignoring of arms-use restrictions, blatant falsification, contractual violations, nuclear proliferation, even anti-West activities etc., and all such minor irritants, are, thus, tolerated, even acquiesced to. India, with its show

of political morality and non-alignment with the Western cause, obviously cannot expect to be treated with comparable camaraderie.

6. The role of 'international pressure' is an oft repeated refrain, almost a diktat, that finds ready acceptance among the strategic community. But it is not clear as to why the global powers, in the first place, would not prevent Pakistan from violating the underlying principle of non-use of nuclear weapons in warfare, and wait for India to be hit before waking up to this menace to humanity. It is also not clear as to why the Indian leadership would defer to the international opinion that otherwise would have failed to clamp down on irresponsible nuclear behaviour. Conversely, it is possible that the global powers would not remain so stoic, and that they may have plans to disable Pakistan's nuclear arsenal through preemptive action.
7. An opportunity to recover POK?
8. The matter of nuclear weaponisation and its translation into nuclear posturing are played out in the realm of mental perceptions that are laced with partisan prejudices, on the one hand, and scientifically arrived deductions, on the other. Resultantly, inherent ambiguities and contradictions in the interplay of logic, counter-logic and cross-logic have to be accepted - and dynamically articulated. That, as the big nuclear powers would vouch, is a never ending game.