**Pakistan's Road To a Minimum Nuclear Deterrent**

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[Farah Zhara](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#authorbios)

Pakistan's nuclear weapons program has a symbiotic relationship with Indian nuclear weapons policy. Pakistan has always claimed that it developed its nuclear weapon capability in response to security threats from India. More specifically, Islamabad traces the genesis of its program to India's first nuclear test in 1974. Between 1974 and 1998, when India resumed nuclear testing, Pakistan's two-fold strategy was to develop a credible nuclear deterrent against India and to fight international pressure against its own program.

Smarting from years of punitive sanctions, particularly those imposed by the United States, in 1995 Pakistan assured the world that it was pursuing a policy of non-weaponized nuclear deterrence—the same doctrine India had maintained since its 1974 test. However, India's nuclear tests of May 11 and 13, 1998, forced Pakistan's option of a "minimum nuclear deterrent" into the open. Pakistan said it was left with no choice but to respond to the Indian tests so as to restore the "regional strategic balance," doing so with its own series of nuclear tests on May 28 and 30.

In the year since India and Pakistan challenged the nuclear *status quo*, the symbiotic relationship between the two countries' nuclear weapons programs more or less continued, but it has now become enmeshed with the determination of both states to develop a minimum nuclear deterrent in a security environment severely shaken by their latest conflict over Kashmir. With the release of India's draft nuclear doctrine on August 17 (see [factfile](https://www.armscontrol.org/ffja99.asp)), the concept of nuclear deterrence in South Asia has been stripped of its minimalist pretences. India's apparent intention to pursue an ambitious and open-ended nuclear weapons program, under the pretext of a "minimum" nuclear deterrent, may now force Pakistan's hand.

Islamabad's assumption that India would not define its doctrine so soon had allowed it to continue its internal debates, issuing only ambiguous and non-committal statements about its intentions. But Pakistan's imperative to create its own minimum deterrent, and establish the command and control system to manage it, will compel Islamabad to answer some fundamental questions. Should it pursue a first-strike or second-strike capability? Whose finger will be on the nuclear button? Can the country afford to engage India in an arms race—either nuclear or conventional?

Pakistan again finds itself in a highly fluid situation whereby its own nuclear weapons policies keep evolving on an *ad hoc*, reactive basis in response to Indian actions. India and Pakistan's symbiotic nuclear relationship, which has now escalated to the dangerous level of weaponization, will continue to shape the region's security environment and to influence the international arms control agenda. Several factors, especially the continuing instabilityalong the so-called "line of control" (LOC), is a vivid reminder that South Asia remains the most dangerous nuclear flash point in the world.

The Move Toward Conflict

After the May 1998 tests, Pakistani Foreign Minister Shamshad Ahmed assured the world that "In South Asia, nuclear deterrence may...usher in a new era of durable peace between Pakistan and India."[<1>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes1-5) However, several geographical, military and operational factors suggest that there is indeed a risk of a South Asian conflict escalating to the nuclear level. First, because India and Pakistan are neighboring countries, their capitals, major population centers and military-industrial infrastructures can be reached by the other side's missile forces in only four or five minutes, allowing little time to assess an attack warning and make a decision to launch a retaliatory strike. Secondly, their history of direct military confrontation over Kashmir and constant artillery shelling across the LOC feeds apprehension that the situation at any time might spin out of control, accidentally if not by design. Thirdly, neither country has reliable sophisticated early warning or command, control and communications (C3) systems in place.

In the aftermath of the latest conflict over Kashmir that erupted this spring, it was reported that the crises brought the two countries "much closer to full-scale war than was publicly acknowledged…and raised very real fears that one or both countries would resort to using variants of the nuclear devices tested last year."[<2>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes1-5) Only two days after the release of the Indian draft nuclear doctrine, the Pakistani foreign minister downplayed the idea of a durable peace in South Asia during a press briefing and asked instead, "If India operationalizes its nuclear weapons, Pakistan will be obliged to follow suit and...what would be the consequences?"

The recent conflict in the Kargil region of Kashmir has also given rise to fears that a new arms race may be in the offing in South Asia, leading to further development of nuclear weapon capabilities and a major re-equipping of conventional forces that could include enhanced weapons systems. Indian strategists' perception of the Indian military's lack of preparedness for the conflict may prompt New Delhi to invest in new, high-tech weapons systems such as laser-guided missiles, military satellites to monitor the LOC and early warning systems. Similarly, Pakistani military expenditures may also rise sharply, though its financial constraints would continue to curb such spending. But Kashmir is only one component of the nuclear dynamics in South Asia that set into motion India's and Pakistan's decisions to go nuclear. There have been a series of disturbing trends in arms control in the region which, while not embroiled in a mad arms race, certainly seems to be following a path beyond the control of either government. Pakistan, being the weaker party, remains closer to the brink.

It had been predicted that Indo-Pakistani border unrest would continue to be the dominant form of conflict in the period 1998-2005.[<3>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes1-5) India and Pakistan would continue to rely on their nuclear weapons programs to prevent provocations from mutating into full-blown challenges directed at one another. This was supplemented by the fact that for the period 1993 to 1997, India ranked as the third largest importer of conventional arms among developing nations with purchases of $5.3 billion, and Pakistan the eighth with $2.5 billion.[<4>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes1-5) After the release of India's draft doctrine, Pakistani strategists are urging the government to go for a "one-rung escalation ladder knitted in tightly with a highly cohesive, state-of-the-art tactical conventional military."[<5>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes1-5) Pakistan had previously made the argument that because the asymmetry between India's and Pakistan's conventional capabilities was increasing, the role of nuclear weapons in Pakistan's security was likely to enhance proportionally.[<6>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes6-10) Indian Army Chief V. P. Malik said, "Having crossed the nuclear threshold does not mean that a conventional war is out...nuclear deterrence only restricts an all out war...As a military strategist, I will say that if militancy grows too big, both…are tempted to use conventional weapons."[<7>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes6-10)

Already, military expenditures for both India and Pakistan are exorbitantly high, with the burden much heavier for Pakistan, which has one-fifth of India's gross domestic product (GDP). India devotes 3.6 percent of its national income toward military spending, while Pakistan allocates nearly 7 percent. In per capita terms, India spends $10; Pakistan spends $26. India's 1998-99 defense budget was approximately $10 billion, an increase of about 7 percent over the previous year and representing more than 15 percent of total central government expenditures. Pakistan's defense expenditure for the same period stood at $3.15 billion (showing no real increase), representing 23 percent of total central government spending.

Minimum Deterrence Into the Morgue

India's draft nuclear doctrine formally deposited the concept of minimum deterrence into the morgue. Though Pakistan made the right noises complaining to the international community that the draft will undermine the "strategic restraint regime" under discussion, Pakistani military officials say "there is nothing new in the draft that we were not already aware of."[<8>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes6-10) Pakistan's own imperative continues to revolve around bringing attention to the damage India is doing to non-proliferation and arms control, and going ahead with whatever it can achieve in the field itself, declaring only what is necessary and keeping the rest veiled.

Even before the fatal blow delivered by the draft, minimum deterrence in South Asia was prey to a serious malady. Strategists had defined it as "the possession of sufficient nuclear weapons to inflict grievous harm on the enemy in retaliation and no more."[<9>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes6-10) However, the concept of "no more" did not fit into the picture comfortably with the inclusion of China in India's security calculus. Therefore, even before the Indian draft came out, Pakistan was faced with a host of unanswered questions: For how long would Pakistan be able to match India's nuclear weapon capabilities? Can Pakistan afford to sit back and relax now that it has declared its nuclear weapon capability? Can it define for itself where it will stop refinement of nuclear weapons and missiles? Does it have a doctrine whereby it can spell out (even to itself) its requirement in concrete terms?

If Pakistan sticks to what it calls the "basic tenets" of its nuclear policy, then the message in India's draft doctrine has not carried through to Islamabad. The three tenets of Pakistan's proclaimed nuclear policy are: 1) nuclear threats warrant nuclear responses; 2) its nuclear force will act as a force multiplier to balance the asymmetry in conventional forces; and 3) there should be a regional solution to non-proliferation issues.[<10>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes6-10) India's new doctrine seeks to make clear that it is not a country-specific doctrine and that Indian nuclear policy will not be tied down to any South Asian arms control fetters. Pakistan's official reaction pretends to be oblivious to this message in the draft.

What then will be the basic components of Pakistan's minimum deterrent? It will likely involve bomb design work, miniaturization and fitting warheads onto ballistic missiles. It will also mean the production of fissile material at a hectic pace before Pakistan accedes to any fissile material cutoff agreement, such as that now being negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva. However, the focus of Pakistan's attention will be on delivery systems.

Given Pakistan's considerable inferiority in aircraft—about 50 front-line aircraft opposed to India's approximately 250-300—it will need to rely on missiles of greater range and accuracy for striking targets deep inside India. Presently, Pakistan does have enough aircraft to conduct a nuclear mission successfully; its 34 F-16 A/B and 15 Mirage IIIEP aircraft could form the nucleus of an atomic strike force, with a dozen squadrons of Chinese and French-made aircraft providing fighter cover.[<11>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes11-14) Indian air superiority would keep Pakistan under the constant fear of a pre-emptive surgical strike against its strategic assets, including its aircraft, which would limit the number of Pakistan's delivery vehicles for nuclear retaliation.

Land-based missiles would be the backbone of Pakistan's nuclear force, with an emphasis on the development of solid-fuelled mobile missiles until a second-strike capability can be ensured. Pakistan requires better missile guidance, navigation and targeting systems. Additional attention may be given later to air- and submarine-launched missiles (its new *Agosta*-class submarines are nuclear capable). Nevertheless, India will retain a decisive edge in both air and naval capabilities with its larger stock of fighter aircraft and investments in a "blue water" navy.

Nuclear 'First Use'

India's declarations on "no first use" and "no use against non-nuclear-weapon states" has been matched by Pakistan's offer of talks on a comprehensive non-aggression pact. Pending such an agreement, Pakistan does not rule out pre-emption. It is generally assumed that a nuclear first strike is a principal part of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine. After the release of India's draft doctrine, Pakistan condemned India's offer of a no-first-use pledge as a "farce." During his August 19 press conference, Pakistani Foreign Minister Ahmed said, "India itself places no credibility in 'no first use.' If it did, it should have accepted China's assurance of 'no first use'…that would have obviated the need for India's nuclear weapons acquisition, much less for operational deployment of nuclear weapons."

According to Brigader Syed Mujtaba, defense attache at the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, "Pakistan cannot afford to downsize its troops because it has to also keep a conventional force against India."[<12>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes11-14) If Pakistan is not planning to resort to a nuclear war with India at the first serious provocation, it may well have to reinforce its conventional capabilities. However, in the current post-conflict environment, Pakistan may encounter some reluctance on the part of some arms exporters to provide strategic assets such as attack aircraft, as exemplified by France's decision to delay its Mirage deal with Islamabad.

In formulating its minimum deterrent doctrine, not only must Pakistan determine whether to develop a first-strike force or pursue a retaliatory capability, it must also decide how far it will allow itself to be challenged before it unleashes a nuclear first strike. Two factors suggest Islamabad will maintain its first-strike posture. First, the asymmetry between Indian and Pakistani conventional forces makes a first-strike capability an equalizer for Islamabad. That is why Pakistan has repeatedly rejected India's proposal for an agreement on no-first-use. Second, the development of a first-strike capability is less cumbersome for Pakistan. Investment in retaliatory forces requires intense planning and enormous resources, which Pakistan cannot afford.

Furthermore, it is likely that Pakistan's nuclear doctrine will necessitate the targeting of major population centers rather than strategic and military facilities. The underlying reason is that Pakistan will not have the quality and quantity of nuclear weapons to attack "hard" targets such as command and control facilities, and instead will simply opt for inflicting "grievous harm" against population centers, knowing that such an attack will certainly result in a catastrophic retaliatory response. However, one factor that might restrain Pakistan from targeting major cities in India is the large number of Muslims living in urban areas.

Decision-Making in Pakistan

With Pakistan's army playing the central role in strategic planning, the overall supervision and coordination is vested in the Strategic Planning Directorate (SPD), previously Combat Development Directorate (CDD), of the General Headquarters (GHQ). It is generally believed that the Defense Committee of the Cabinet (DCC), chaired by the prime minister, would take the ultimate decision for use of nuclear weapons in case of war. However, reports that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was not fully apprized of the Kargil operation by the military, created new uncertainties as to who would take that decision during a crisis. Indeed, some U.S. analysts "see the civilian finger on the nuclear trigger as only one among two or even three others."[<13>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes11-14) If these uncertainties continue, they might render "hot line" consultations between the prime ministers of the two countries irrelevant in a highly volatile situation. The existing evidence suggests that while the chances of a deliberate, planned nuclear attack may be low, the risk of an accidental or unauthorized nuclear strike cannot be ruled out.

In Pakistan the role of the armed forces is in transition. The resignation of Army Chief Jehangir Karamat in October 1998 marked a turning point in civilian-military relations, at least symbolically, if not in substantive terms. Although Prime Minister Sharif, with his two-thirds majority in the lower house of parliament, seems to be asserting greater control over the military, the army's Kargil operation put Sharif's authority to a severe test. As the international community pressured Islamabad to withdraw the Pakistani-backed Islamic forces, the Pakistani army, proud of its "successes" at Kargil, was not amenable to such a dictate. Sharif's last-minute dash to Washington on July 4 to meet President Clinton finally overcame the army's reluctance to withdraw the fighters. Notwithstanding this temporary setback to Pakistan's army, a "hybrid" between civilian and military rule may continue to define the decision-making arrangements in Pakistan with regard to nuclear weapons procurement as well as nuclear weapons policy and doctrine, including command and control.[<14>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes11-14)

Further complicating the command and control of the incipient nuclear forces in South Asia is India's draft nuclear doctrine that emphasizes the "survivability" of India's nuclear deterrent force, which will necessitate the dispersal of nuclear weapons. Such a deployment, however, will make the command and control system more decentralized and accident prone as commanders at the operational level must operate, under the tremendous pressures and uncertainties of battle, to prevent a decapitating attack against their nuclear forces. This invites a greater risk of inaccurate decisions and thus an unwanted launch.

The already questionable state of Pakistan's "negative control" of its nuclear weapons (its ability to prevent an unwanted launch) is further seriously weakened by Pakistan's (and India's) lack of adequate early warning technology. In August 1998, when the United States fired cruise missiles at Osama Bin Laden's training camp in Afghanistan, the missiles overflew Pakistan but went undetected by the military. The United States had dispatched a senior military officer to Islamabad so that he could confirm the missiles were American and targeted on Afghanistan and not Indian missiles targeted against Pakistan.

In the near term, some of the uncertainties surrounding India's and Pakistan's emerging deterrent forces could be addressed by transparency measures and other confidence-building initiatives (declarations of force size, deployment strategy, launch authority and employment doctrine, for example), but prospects for this remain dim. Assistance in this regard from countries like the United States cannot be accepted readily as it would involve disclosure of what might be sensitive information—the same reason that bilateral efforts with India have remained inadequate. Both India and Pakistan proclaim the necessity for transparency and the exchange of information, yet remain wedded to the deliberate ambiguity and exaggerated claims of their nuclear weapons programs that served them so well before their demonstrations of nuclear prowess.

Implications for Arms Control

Following their May 1998 nuclear tests, both India and Pakistan declared unilateral testing moratoriums and hinted that they might adhere, in some manner, to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), with Pakistan saying its accession would depend on Indian actions.[<15>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes15,16) However, on July 11, 1998, Sharif announced a major reversal of government policy when he delinked Pakistan's nuclear policy from India's, saying Islamabad's decision to sign the CTBT would be made independently of Indian actions. In September 1998, both Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee announced during the opening session of the 53rd UN General Assembly that their governments were prepared to sign the CTBT within the next year. Sharif made clear Pakistan's adherence would take place "only in conditions free from coercion or pressure," an apparent reference to the sanctions imposed on Pakistan, particularly those by the United States, following the May nuclear tests. Sharif's move toward delinkage seemed to continue through the prime ministers' summit meeting in Lahore, Pakistan, in February 1999, only the second visit by an Indian prime minister to Pakistan and an important step in establishing a stable nuclear balance in South Asia.

However, Pakistan's delinkage proved to be an ephemeral phenomenon. India's April 11, 1999 test of its 2,500-kilometer-range *Agni*-2 missile, which Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes described as capable of carrying a "special weapons payload," initiated a new round of tit-for-tat missile tests. On April 14, Pakistan tested its *Ghauri*-2 missile, which Islamabad claims has a range of 2,300 kilometers (with a reduced payload), saying the test was necessary to maintain the strategic balance. The following day Pakistan also tested its short-range *Shaheen*-1 missile, believed capable of delivering a 1,000-kilogram payload to a range of 750 kilometers. The Pakistani missiles were sitting on their launching pads ready to be fired, but Islamabad had been waiting for India to conduct its missile tests first.[<16>](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#notes15,16) Anticipating India's test of the *Agni*-2, which reportedly had been delayed for both technical and political reasons, Pakistan delayed its own tests so New Delhi would bear the brunt of international opprobrium for initiating a new round of tests. But when the Vajpayee government collapsed only days later on April 17, Pakistani leaders became more nervous and started dropping hints about re-linkage.

Pakistan's interest in moving independently toward joining the CTBT was further diminished in May when the U.S. Congress, in response to the fighting in Kashmir, slowed the process of easing the economic sanctions that had been imposed on Islamabad following its 1998 tests. After Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) withdrew his amendment on easing sanctions, Pakistan's Foreign Office termed the move "an unfortunate development which creates roadblocks in the implementation of the signing agenda of the CTBT."

Pakistan's—and India's—delay in moving toward accession to the CTBT has also been served by the delay in bringing the treaty into force. Only 21 of the 44 states whose ratification is necessary to bring the test ban into force have ratified the accord, and three of those 44 states—India, Pakistan and North Korea—have not yet signed the treaty. Moreover, the United States, the principal proponent of the CTBT, has not ratified the treaty, and the battle continues between the Clinton administration and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms (R-NC) on a range of foreign policy issues, with the test ban remaining hostage.

As long as President Clinton's efforts to secure the Senate's advice and consent to ratification of the CTBT remain stalled, India and Pakistan will not be in a hurry to make good on their commitments to accede to the test ban regime. Additionally, Pakistan would like to wait until a new Indian government is formed after the September-October 1999 national elections. Islamabad has also made clear that if India were to resume nuclear testing, Pakistan would review its position on the CTBT, and in case it had "adhered to" the treaty, it would invoke the supreme interest clause as provided by Article IX of the treaty.

The perceived disparity between the fissile material stockpiles of India and Pakistan will also contribute to Pakistan's tendency toward linkage. India and Pakistan have produced sufficient quantities of plutonium and enriched uranium to manufacture anywhere between 70 to 200 and 20 to 50 nuclear devices, respectively. The United States has pointed out to Pakistan that freezing existing stockpiles could work toward Islamabad's advantage. Pakistan, however, continues to invoke the concepts of "sufficiency" and "unequal stockpiles" to ward off U.S. pressure for a moratorium on the production of fissile material for weapons purposes before substantive negotiations on a cutoff regime begin in the CD. This rationale by Pakistan will allow it—as well as India—to maintain or accelerate production of fissile material before the finalization of the treaty. Both India and Pakistan may also resort to procedural tactics to lengthen the negotiating process of the treaty at the CD, an ideal environment for linkages among national security agendas.

The minimal progress made so far by India and Pakistan in establishing a nuclear restraint regime in South Asia will also serve to reinforce the symbiotic relationship between India's and Pakistan's nuclear weapons programs. When the Kargil crisis erupted in May, bilateral discussions were at a very preliminary stage, already complicated by India's linkage of its nuclear weapons program to China's and the ongoing process by Indian policy-makers to develop and articulate a nuclear doctrine.

In October 1998 talks at the foreign minister level, Pakistan proposed a framework for what was called a strategic restraint regime. The framework included:

 a non-aggression pact;

 the prevention of a nuclear weapons and ballistic missile race;

 risk reduction mechanisms;

 avoidance of nuclear conflict;

 formalizing moratoria on nuclear testing;

 non-induction of anti-ballistic missile systems and submarine-launched ballistic missiles; and

 nuclear doctrines of minimum deterrent capability.

Pakistan also proposed mutual and balanced reduction of forces in the conventional field. India matched these proposals by offering a framework consisting of:

 no-first-use pledges;

 agreement on preventing nuclear war, including through accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons;

 extension of agreements prohibiting attack against nuclear installations;

 advance notification of ballistic missile tests; and

 verification of data exchange.

As presented, India's draft nuclear doctrine does not allow for the implementation of the strategic restraint regime as it was envisaged. Although the draft does not negate all of the understandings hammered out during the February 1999 Lahore summit (such as the development of confidence-building measures and advance notification of missile tests), the post-Kargil political and military environment will prevent any further development of a strategic restraint regime in the near future.

This latest conflict in Kashmir has only served to widen the chasm between India and Pakistan. Encouraged by diplomatic support on its position on Kargil, India has demanded that the LOC be declared inviolable and that Pakistan stops its assistance to the resistance movement in Kashmir. These conditions are not acceptable to Pakistan. In any case, India's caretaker government will not enter into substantive negotiations with Pakistan over Kashmir or non-proliferation issues until a new government is formed. This could well push the restart of the strategic restraint initiative into 2000. Moreover, India balks at any U.S. involvement in what it considers a bilateral matter between India and Pakistan. The international community now feels that Kashmir is the nuclear flash point and that it has to be addressed one way or the other.

The Road Ahead

Pakistan's nuclear weapons policy, despite any claims to the contrary, will remain inextricably linked to India's. New Delhi will continue to say that its concerns are not Pakistan-specific and that India's broader security concerns, particularly regarding China, would have to be addressed for any arms control or strategic restraint regime to be viable. Pakistan, on the other hand, will keep insisting that its program is India-specific, continuing the conditioning of its weapons programs and policies on Indian actions.

Even if Pakistan were to maintain its current levels of nuclear and missile development, it is not clear that it can sustain this posture in light of the economic problems it is facing. However, in the coming years, if India accelerates its nuclear weapon and missile buildup, Pakistan will willy-nilly be a participant in an arms race. An arms race with India—whether nuclear or conventional—would be expensive and unaffordable for Pakistan. Indeed, the gap between Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapon development programs and deployments may only widen. A strategic restraint regime, though in Pakistan's interest, will be difficult to establish in South Asia's current security environment.

Pakistan now cannot escape from the inevitable responsibility of doing its "homework" on nuclear doctrine development and establishing an effective and reliable command and control system. The exercise of internal discussions and debates will have to be brought to a conclusion. However, Pakistan may not be obliged to share with India, or the rest of the world, its conclusions on its strategic thinking until a higher degree of transparency *vis-à-vis* India becomes a reality.

In the meantime, the emerging trends of extremism in Indian and Pakistani politics need to be watched closely. The ascendancy of extremist forces will only heighten tensions in South Asia and make the nuclear situation even more volatile. As a self-declared nuclear-weapon state, Pakistan will also have to continually reassure the international community that its capability is not a prelude to an "Islamic bomb," a worry shared by many Western countries and Israel should Islamic fundamentalists gain ascendancy in Pakistan.

In these circumstances, the best course of action for the United States is to keep on engaging India and Pakistan in substantive dialogues on non-proliferation and regional security issues, and to encourage and support their efforts to resolve their differences. For India, a sustained high-level dialogue with Pakistan, building on the Lahore summit, offers the best prospect for South Asian peace and development, particularly in the aftermath of the latest Kashmir conflict. But if the Lahore process is to open a new dialogue, India will have to moderate its nuclear draft doctrine instead of trying to engage Pakistan in a costly and unavoidable nuclear arms race.

NOTES

**1.** Ahmed, Shamshad. "The Nuclear Subcontinent," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1999, p. 125.

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**2.** John Lancaster, "Kashmir Crises Was Defused on Brink of War," *The Washington Post*, July 26, 1999, p. A1.

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**3.** Rand Corporation, *Sources of Conflict in the 21st Century: Regional Futures and U.S. Strategy*, edited by Zalmay Khalilzad and Ian O. Lesser, 1998.

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**4.***Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 1990-1997*, Congressional Research Services, p. 53.

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**5.** Dr. Shireen Mazaari, "A doctrine in perspective-II Pakistan's response," The News International, Pakistan, August 26, 1999.

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**6.** Pakistani Ambassador to the United Nations Ahmed Kamal's statement on "A strategic restraint regime for South Asia" at the Ninth Annual International Arms Control Conference at Sandia National Laboratory, April 16-18, 1999. The two reasons he gave for this argument were: 75 percent of India's conventional assets and especially its strike formations are deployed on Pakistan's borders; and India will further gain a decisive edge in the conventional field, with its indigenous defense production and its continued procurement of weapons from a variety of sources, especially from Russia and France.

[[Back to text](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#back3-7)]

**7.** "Army Chief fears rising tension on China borders," *The Asian Age*, New Delhi, February 11, 1999.

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**8.** Interview with Brigadier Feroz H. Khan, director of Arms Control and Disarmament Affairs in the Strategic Planning Directorate, Rawalpindi, August 30, 1999.

[[Back to text](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#back8,9)]

**9.** Lawrence Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1989, p. 207.

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**10.** Statement of Masood Khan, political counselor of the Embassy of Pakistan Embassy, read at the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs symposium, Washington, DC, February 22, 1999.

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**11.** Francois Heisborg, "The prospects for nuclear stability between India and Pakistan," *Survival*, Vol. 40, No.4, Winter 1998-99, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, p. 80.

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**12.** Author interview, August 25, 1999.

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**13.** Jonathan Power, "Indo-Pakistani quarrel's high-risk countdown," *The Washington Times*, July 8, 1999, p. A1.

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**14.** See, for example, Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "Civil Military Relations in Contemporary Pakistan," *Survival*, Vol. 40, No. 2, Summer 1998, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, p.110.

[[Back to text](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#back14)]

**15.** India and Pakistan are among the 44 named states which must ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty before it can enter into force.

[[Back to text](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/pakistans-road-minimum-nuclear-deterrent#back15)]

**16.** Aktar Hasan, "Second round completed: Short-range missile Shaheen tested," *Dawn*, Karachi, April 16, 1999.

Farah Zahra, a former research fellow at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, has taught nuclear non-proliferation in Europe and now works as a defense analyst in Washington, DC.

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[The NPT at 50: Perish or Survive?](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-03/features/npt-50-perish-survive)

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[Time to Renew the Reagan-Gorbachev Principle](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-03/features/time-renew-reagan-gorbachev-principle)

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[Ralph Earle II (1928–2020), Pursuing Arms Control to Strengthen Security](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-03/features/ralph-earle-ii-1928%E2%80%932020-pursuing-arms-control-strengthen-security)

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[Swedish Initiative Aims to Strengthen the NPT](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-03/features/swedish-initiative-aims-strengthen-npt)

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