

This E-Bulletin focuses on major developments in Pakistan on a weekly basis and brings them to the notice of strategic analysts and policy makers in India.

EDITOR'S NOTE

For the first time General Bajwa, the Army Chief of Pakistan briefed the Parliament though this is a tradition that started during the PPP regime. Bajwa urged the Parliament to provide policy direction. It is known that the Army has not allowed the civilian government to give policy direction in foreign policy matters, especially towards India and Afghanistan. This was a rhetoric meant for public consumption. This week the National Command Authority (NCA) met to take a stock of nuclear weapon. Importantly, the government said it was examining a proposal to replace the US dollar with the Chinese yuan for trade between China and Pakistan. In 2013, the State Bank of Pakistan had invited bids for buying Yuan by local banks under a bilateral currency-swap arrangement of 2011. However, in the near future it is the US dollar that will dominate the currency market in Pakistan.

COMMENTARY

Nuclear pyromania! Pakistan's nuclear weapons and the uncertainty

*Nazir Ahmad Mir**

Reiterating Pakistan's oft-used tactics to use terrorism as a tactic under a nuclear umbrella, Pakistan's National Security Advisor Nassir Janjua in a seminar organised by the Centre for Global and Strategic Studies (CGSS) in Islamabad, said that '(I)he stability of South Asian region hangs in a delicate balance, and the possibility of nuclear war cannot be ruled out'. The statement did not come on its own. It has a background: there is a growing

perception in Pakistan that 'India-US' alliance is directed at 'destabilising' Pakistan. Mr. Janjua further explained how 'India is being given priority over Pakistan in Afghanistan, something that will shape the political and strategic dynamics of the war-torn country'. This was perceived as against Pakistan's strategic interest in Afghanistan. He viewed that by criticising Pakistan and rebutting its effort from time to time, the US has been 'ignore(ing) our enormous sacrifices in the fight against terrorism'. Pakistan NSA's statements imply that the country is feeling vulnerable and highly insecure because of the growing India-US relations in general, and India's developmental engagement in Afghanistan in particular.

What came as no surprise was the way Mr. Janjua invoked the threat to use nuclear weapons by raising the probability of a nuclear war if the situation continues. Pakistan politicians, religious leaders and now security officials have always insisted that Pakistan would use nuclear weapons as a weapon of war. After the May 1998 nuclear tests, Pakistan is convinced that it has achieved strategic parity with India and a conventional war between the two is impossible. There are media reports that Pakistan is stockpiling tactical nuclear weapon and miniaturizing it to deploy in a war. Despite that, Pakistan's constant threat that it would use nuclear weapons undermines its standing as 'responsible nuclear power'. In the past, Pakistan was involved in nuclear proliferation through A.Q. Khan's network with official patronage. Thus Pakistan's non-proliferation credentials are often questioned by the international community and safety of the nuclear weapon remains a major area of concern.

Pakistan also brags that its nukes are of superior quality compared to that of India. For instance, in October

2016 when the government in New Delhi was pondering over to take action against Pakistan in the aftermath of September 18 Uri attack, one senior journalist of Pakistan, while trying to downplay the hue and cry raised by some sections in Indian media, wrote that 'Pakistan is not only a nuclear power but also its nuclear weapons are stronger than India in many ways. Pakistan has the technology to target any city in India.' Likewise, other commentators and leaders keep invoking nuclear weapons to remind India and the world at large that if they are pressurised through military means, they have their 'hand on the nuclear button'. In spite of the presence of nuclear weapon, India continues to remain a major threat in Pakistan's perception.

While discussing a report, prepared by Dr. Mansoor Ahmed at the Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs on "India's Nuclear Exceptionalism Fissile Materials, Fuel Cycles, and Safeguards" two commentators wrote in the *Express Tribune* on 11 May 2017 that India 'has already declared construction of various types of nuclear reactors'. The commentator argued that the study by Dr. Mansoor Ahmed explodes the myth that 'Pakistan has the world's fastest growing nuclear weapons programme'. Rather, it is India which has paced up the construction of nuclear facilities to stockpile the weapons-grade material for use in military modernisation programmes. This is 'because of the US and the waiver it received in the form of civil nuclear deal' of 2005. And America is trying hard to make India enter the exclusive Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to further widen the strategic disparity between India and Pakistan. Therefore, what Pakistan needs to do is to maintain a balance with India to prevent its rise in the region.

'With great power comes great responsibility' is a well-agreed fact. In modern world nuclear weapons remain a symbol of 'power' and 'prestige'. It does not, however, mean that mere possession of nukes make a country 'powerful' and 'responsible'. Pakistan is an interesting case: despite being a nuclear power for about twenty years, it remains highly insecure of India. Rather, it has tried to foment low intensity conflict under the nuclear umbrella and has exhibited abrasive behavior when it decided to launch the Kargil war in 1999. While it continues to adopt a first use policy, the growing radicalism and jihadi-military nexus has often raised questions about the safety of its nuclear weapon.

However, while addressing the UN General Assembly on 21 September 2017, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that Pakistan was a responsible nuclear power and its 'strategic assets' 'are tightly and effectively controlled, as has been widely acknowledged by experts.' Be that as it may, the manner in which Pakistan resorts to the threat of using nuclear weapon against India it raises serious question about Pakistan's behaviors as a responsible nuclear power.

Though a significant section in Pakistan's strategic community believe that such nuclear threat would draw world's attention to Kashmir and India-Pakistan conflict, but as has been observed, such threats have raised question about Pakistan's credential as a responsible nuclear power. The latest rebuttal was from President Trump who on 18 December 2017 asked Pakistan to show its 'responsible stewardship' on nuclear weapons. 'The United States will also encourage Pakistan to continue demonstrating that it is a responsible steward of its nuclear assets,' said the new policy released by the White House. Expressing its growing concerns, the White House asked Pakistan that 'The prospect for an Indo-Pakistani military conflict that could lead to a nuclear exchange remains a key concern requiring consistent diplomatic attention.' All these talks have clearly ruffled Pakistan officials' feathers.

The National Command Authority (NCA), met after a two years gap on Thursday, 21 December to discuss the 'strategic environment' that is affected by 'growing India-US' bonhomie. The press release of the ISPR after the meeting said that the meeting 'took stock of the regional security environment'. While arguing that Pakistan would maintain its 'full spectrum deterrence', the press release read that 'The NCA reiterated Pakistan's policy of developing and maintaining Full Spectrum Deterrence, in line with the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence and avoidance of arms race.' It again thus tried to assure the US that Pakistan is a reliable and 'responsible nuclear power'.

What is being observed in Pakistan's nuclear policy is an element of ambiguity. Not only its 'first strike' doctrine remains a matter of concern but its frequent threat to use nuclear weapon against India creates a policy challenge. The possibility of nuclear weapon falling into the hand of a jihadi or worst a jihadi-minded general cannot be ruled out completely. A country where

nuclear button is in Army's control with civilians having no say, and an Army that has pathological hatred of India, there is a possibility that nuclear threat would be an instrument of power balance in South Asia.

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THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

POLITICS

Imran challenges Nawaz for majority vote

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan has challenged disqualified premier and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President, Nawaz Sharif for getting majority of votes in the forthcoming General Elections, 2018. Addressing a political rally in Okara's football ground on Sunday, Khan said that PML-N president claimed to run a campaign against the judiciary but a 'jackal' could not lead any movement. He rhetorically questioned if Nawaz ever led a campaign against former dictator Pervez Musharraf after he was jailed during his tenure. He asserted that his party would strengthen the institutions after assuming federal power.

<https://nation.com.pk/18-Dec-2017/imran-challenges-nawaz-for-majority-vote>

You make policy, we follow it, Gen. Bajwa tells the parliament

In his first appearance before a parliamentary forum, Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Tuesday urged parliament to take lead role in policy making and not leave a vacuum. On invitation of the Senate chairman, Gen Bajwa came to the 'committee of the whole house' for an in-camera briefing along with the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), the Inter-Services Intelligence chief, and the DG of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The briefing was followed by a question-and-answer session. "You are the policymakers. You should come up with policy guidelines. We will follow you," Gen Bajwa was quoted as telling the senators. Sources privy to the marathon huddle told *The Express Tribune* that army chief was of the view that the country suffered on the foreign policy front when it did not have a full-time foreign

minister for more than four years under the incumbent government.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1587001/1-army-chief-arrives-parliament-brief-lawmakers-security-situation/>

America urges Pakistan to prove responsible stewardship of nukes

The Trump administration's first foreign policy — announced on Monday — urges Pakistan to demonstrate that it's a "responsible steward" of its nuclear assets and warns that the fear of a nuclear conflict with India remains a key concern in Washington. The new policy also insists that Pakistan take action against militants on its soil and intensify its counterterrorism efforts if it wants to continue its partnership with the United States. "The United States will also encourage Pakistan to continue demonstrating that it is a responsible steward of its nuclear assets," says an official copy of the new policy released by the White House. "The prospect for an Indo-Pakistani military conflict that could lead to a nuclear exchange remains a key concern requiring consistent diplomatic attention," it warns.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377461/america-urges-pakistan-to-prove-responsible-stewardship-of-nukes>

Pakistan to retain full spectrum deterrence policy

The National Command Authority (NCA) on Thursday emphasised that Pakistan was a responsible nuclear state and would continue with its policy of Full Spectrum Deterrence (FSD) to meet growing challenges to its security and for maintaining strategic stability in the region. "NCA reiterated Pakistan's policy of developing and maintaining Full Spectrum Deterrence, in line with the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence and avoidance of arms race," the Inter-Services Public Relations said after a meeting of the apex decision-making body of the country's nuclear programme. The NCA meeting, which was its 23rd session, took place after a break of nearly two years. The forum had last met in February 2016.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1378106/pakistan-to-retain-full-spectrum-deterrence-policy>

ECONOMY

CPEC could turn into a nightmare if Pakistan keeps tariffs high

Pakistan's situation regarding its international trade and tariff policies is similar to that of Alice in Wonderland. Should it continue to negotiate new free trade agreements (FTAs) and thus liberalise or should it keep imposing new regulatory duties, consequently tightening its import regime further? At present, it seems to be going in both directions, not knowing which is the right course. Pakistan has played on both sides of the fence in the past and its success in a few cases probably encourages it to stick to that strategy. ... This question is now more important than ever in the past. Through CPEC, Pakistan can become a hub for transit and trade. However, if it continues to keep high tariffs, CPEC could turn into a nightmare. It could further flood our markets with smuggled goods.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1586540/2-cpec-turn-nightmare-pakistan-keeps-tariffs-high/>

Yuan may replace dollar in Pakistan-China trade

Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal said on Monday that the government was examining a proposal to replace the US dollar with the Chinese yuan for trade between China and Pakistan. He was talking to journalists after the formal launch of Long Term Plan (LTP) for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 2017-30 signed by the two sides on Nov 21. Newly-appointed Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing and officials of the provincial governments also attended the launching ceremony. Asked if the Chinese currency could be allowed for use in Pakistan, Mr Iqbal said the Pakistani currency would be used within the country, but China desired that bilateral trade should take place in its currency — known as Renminbi (RMB) or yuan — and “we are examining the use of RMB instead of the US dollar for trade between the two countries”. He said the use of RMB was not against the interest of Pakistan, rather it would benefit the country.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377459/yuan-may-replace-dollar-in-pakistan-china-trade>

Pakistan developing into a major consumer market

Pakistan's strategic location, its big population and workforce, economic outlook, investment policy and special economic zones under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have made the country an ideal destination for foreign direct investment (FDI), a leading businessman remarked. Speaking at an international investment forum organised by Expandeers – a global network of senior business development experts – in Munich, Germany, Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (FCCI) former vice president Engineer Ahmed Hassan highlighted that Pakistan's economy had expanded to \$304.4 billion and its per capita income stood around \$1,470. Hassan, who was representing Faisalabad and the FCCI, said Pakistan had been blessed with vast fertile land due to which agriculture had played a vital role in the national economy.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1588190/2-pakistan-developing-major-consumer-market/>

SECURITY

IS bombers kill nine at Quetta church

A suicide bomb attack on a church claimed by the Islamic State group killed at least nine people and wounded over 50 during a service on Sunday in the heart of Quetta, just over a week before Christmas. The attack was reported around 12noon when the service was under way in the church situated at Zarghoon Road. Three women were among the dead at the Methodist church in the provincial capital, Balochistan Home Secretary Akbar Harifal said. Officials said police, deployed near the gate and on the roof, intercepted and shot dead one attacker outside the church before he could detonate his bomb. But the second managed to reach the church's main door, where he blew himself up. “Police were quick to react and stop the attackers from entering into the main hall,” police chief Moazzam Ansari Jah told AFP.

<https://nation.com.pk/18-Dec-2017/is-bombers-kill-nine-at-quetta-church?show=preview?version=amp>

Police braced for threats to churches

Lahore is facing threats of terrorist attacks on Christmas and New Year's and therefore, an officer at the rank of a superintendent of police will be reviewing security arrangements for A-category churches, a senior police officer told *The Express Tribune* on Tuesday. Meanwhile, SP Security Lahore Police Ammara Athar said they were ensuring foolproof security arrangements at a total of 551 churches and all parks, including 18 major ones, in the city. She said 427 fell into the C-category, 61 in the B-category and 63 in the A-category, according to sensitivity. In the City Division, there were a total of 67 churches of which 46 fell into the C-category, 13 in the B-category and eight in the A-category. In the Civil Lines Division, there were a total 42 churches of which 27 fell into the C-category, seven in the B-category and eight in the A-category.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1587948/1-police-braced-threat-churches/>

Plot to target Balochistan governor thwarted

Balochistan Home Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti claimed the security forces on Wednesday foiled a subversive plot to target Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai and apprehended two suspected suicide attackers from Gulistan, a tehsil of district Qilla Abdullah which lies in the northwest of the province. The security forces also seized suicide jackets, anti-tank mines, rockets, mortar shells and other subversive materials during the raid, the home minister revealed addressing a press conference along with DIG Police Abdur Razzaq Cheema. "The security forces, in a successful raid, foiled a suicide attack on Balochistan Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai in Tehsil Gulistan – his hometown – and rounded up two terrorists besides recovering suicide jackets as well as other explosive materials from them," Bugti told media men at the press conference.

<https://nation.com.pk/21-Dec-2017/plot-to-target-balochistan-governor-thwarted>

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