Why has Pakistan not used nuclear weapons since Islamabad first tested the bomb in 1998? Despite the outbreak of the Kargil War in 1999, the recurrence of military crises, and repeated threats of nuclear first use by the Pakistani Army, nuclear restraint has reigned. Nuclear restraint in South Asia is both a development to celebrate and a puzzle to explain. Conventional wisdom in both Pakistan and the United States credits the power of mutual nuclear deterrence for the nonuse of nuclear weapons in the past India-Pakistan military crises and the 1999 Kargil War.¹ For instance, according to Naeem Salik, “nuclear deterrence in Kargil was important since the conflict remained very confined to a portion of a LoC and did not even expand horizontally.”² Shireen Mazari, director general of an Islamabad-based think tank, argues that “nuclear deterrence is making an all-out war between India and Pakistan a receding reality.”³ American scholar and former government official Ashley J. Tellis contends that “a reasonably high degree of deterrence stability currently exists within the greater South Asia region … It is not unreasonable to expect that the acknowledged presence of nuclear weapons on all sides would inhibit any interactive sequences that could lead to serious forms of deterrence breakdown in the future.”⁴

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Other Pakistani and American experts have argued that a nuclear taboo has taken hold in Pakistan. In her seminal work, Nina Tannenwald defines the taboo generally as an uncodified powerful prohibitionary norm against nuclear use to the point that “uses of nuclear weapons [...] have been severely delegitimized and are practically unthinkable policy options” because of their “intolerable” nature. Tannenwald further explains that the “taboo operated both by appearing as a constraint on self-interested decision makers—entirely consistent with a rationalist conception of the instrumental operation of a norm as a ‘cost’—and in a more substantive or principled fashion as reflected in beliefs about the growing illegitimacy of nuclear use.”

However, members of the policy community disagree over whether the nuclear taboo exists in Pakistan. A number of scholars argue that the taboo is currently weak or nonexistent. Pakistani scholar Rizwana Abassi writes that the taboo was broken when Pakistan became a nuclear weapon state. Nonetheless, she argues that Pakistan is re-establishing the taboo by mending its export controls procedures after A.Q. Khan’s proliferation of nuclear-related technology and materials to Iran, North Korea and Libya. Scholars at the Naval Postgraduate School Monterey such as Feroz Khan, Anna Miro and Diana Weuger write that “Pakistani society would accept the use of nuclear weapons in extremis, and that therefore a taboo would cease to exist.” Pakistan’s former president Pervez Musharraf mentioned recently, “we do not want to use nuclear capability but if our existence comes under threat, what do we have these nuclear weapons for?”

On the contrary, Mario E. Caranza, professor of political science at Texas A&M University, posits that the nuclear taboo, not nuclear deterrence, explains the nonuse of nuclear weapons in South Asia. He writes that “The nuclear taboo, rather than nuclear deterrence, explains the non-use of nuclear weapons. During both crises [Kargil war and the 2001-02 stand-off], the nuclear taboo entered the decision-making process instrumentally, in the form of perceived reputational ‘costs’.” Canadian scholar T.V. Paul calls the practice of the nonuse of nuclear weapons a “tradition” in Pakistan, though not a full-fledged taboo. Paul argues that the nuclear state is restrained “by self-imposed reputational concerns arising from moral, legal, and other normative considerations.” He believes that “there is no direct evidence of Pakistan’s willingness to break the tradition of non-use” and calls Pakistan’s threats “a strategic bluff.” Paul contends that “tradition” is not as strict as “taboo” and can be “altered if material and political circumstances compel nuclear states to do so.”

Paul’s views are similar to the Indian military’s official position that “we will call the (nuclear) bluff of Pakistan. If we will have to really confront the Pakistanis, and a task is given to us, we are not going to say we cannot cross the border because they have nuclear weapons. We will have to call their nuclear bluff.” Pakistan’s Inter-Services Public relations director general responded to the
statement saying: “well, it is up to them and if they wish to test our resolve they may try and see it for themselves.”

In this article, I argue that the Pakistan Army’s reluctance to use nuclear weapons in the past was neither caused by deterrence nor by a nuclear taboo. Rather, it has been a consequence of the military-utility principle that has served the Pakistan Army’s organizational interests. American scholars Daryl G. Press, Scott D. Sagan and Benjamin Valentino explain that the military-utility principle is based on the “logic of consequences”: a decision is made by considering the objectives and the immediate efficacy of the weapon, strategy or tactic. Thus, the military-utility principle adheres to a relative, rather than absolute, degree of ethics, rationality and justice. In support of the morality argument, Jeffrey Lewis and Scott Sagan write: “Strategists can imagine limited uses of nuclear weapons—a single detonation against a ship at sea or an isolated military target in the desert—that might meet stringent ethical and legal standards, but these are mostly imaginary scenarios, far removed from the real concerns of policy-makers and planners.”

Based on this assertion, evaluating the use of nuclear weapons whether target selection is in cognizance with morality or ethical principles brings us closer to break the nuclear taboo.

But the scenarios that Sagan and Lewis are calling imaginary for U.S. policy-makers and military planners are exactly the real concerns of Pakistani leaders and planners. According to this notion, if the Pakistan Army decides to use low-yield nuclear weapons in a desert in its territory on a counterforce target (i.e. Indian soldiers), it would entail minimum civilian casualties. This could make nuclear use legal because the target is a legitimate military target (i.e. Indian military), supposedly ethical because of the limited number of civilian casualties, and also justified because it is used in self-defense against the threat of invasion. Yet, such a use would violate the nuclear taboo. Would Pakistan use nuclear weapons today in such a scenario?

Likewise, the Pakistani Air Force could launch a preemptive strike with precision guided/nuclear cruise missile attack on Indian Air Force bases in Jaiselmir (across the international border), an isolated counterforce target in the Indian desert, in response to a potential imminent threat of India’s so-called “Cold Start” doctrine—or a decapitating conventional strike against Pakistan’s command and control. In other words, although Pakistan has not yet used nuclear weapons, that is neither because of a taboo nor a tradition, but because it has not yet passed the test of the military utility of a nuclear first-strike. That does not, however, mean that the conditions do not exist. In fact, those conditions
are even being considered today, when Pakistan might determine that a nuclear first-strike has military utility and would be ethically justified.

It is therefore important for academics and policymakers not to become complacent and to remain conscious of the fact that nuclear nonuse in the 1999 Kargil War or other crises may not reflect a condition of stable deterrence that will last forever, as is generally assumed. This article establishes that the nuclear taboo does not exist in either the Pakistan military or public. I further argue that the norm of nuclear nonuse suffers relentless challenges if states have ethical, logical, and legally justifiable reasons to use nuclear weapons in self-defense against a credible threat of imminent preemptive nuclear strikes. I conclude, nevertheless, by recommending that religion can be instrumental to enforce a taboo in Pakistan, provided the organizational interests of the military are aligned with it.

Beyond the isolated incident in Kargil, decision makers in Pakistan and around the world are constantly evaluating the circumstances under which nuclear weapons might be used first as part of normal defense planning. Such planning does not necessarily prove there isn’t a taboo, but does mean that the circumstances under which a country or its adversary might use nuclear weapons first are currently being considered both ethically and strategically.

**The Military Utility Principle**

The nonuse of nuclear weapons by the Pakistan army in the post-1998 era is due to the logic of the military-utility principle upholding restraint, rather than a broader nuclear taboo. The India-Pakistan Kargil War in 1999 perfectly illustrates Pakistan’s nuclear restraint. Many accounts of the Kargil War disagree on whether Pakistan placed its nuclear forces on a higher state of alert, preparing them for possible use. Bruce Riedel, former CIA officer and professor at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, writes “the morning of the Fourth (of July 1999), the CIA wrote in its top-secret Daily Brief that Pakistan was preparing its nuclear weapons for deployment and possible use. The intelligence was very compelling. The mood in the Oval Office was grim.”

Some Pakistani military officials, however, dismiss the nuclear alert as never having happened during Kargil. Pakistan’s former president, General Pervez Musharraf, and former Brigadier General from Pakistan Army, Naeem Salik, write that Kargil was a limited conflict with limited objectives and carried no overtures for nuclear alert. Pakistani former military General Waheed Arshad shared similar
views: "there was no nuclear alert, no movement of strategic forces. It was a bogey created by CIA. Americans knew the civil-military divide in Pakistan, so they told Nawaz [Sharif] and knew he would believe in it."20 The explanation behind this assertion is that Pakistan did not aim to escalate or expand the theater of war because Pakistan launched the offensive in Indian-occupied Kashmir under the garb of mujahideens. It was Pakistan’s own strategic compulsion to keep the conflict limited and localized to portray the “infiltrators” as a local Kashmiri uprising and not part of its regular army until the last moment. This is why Pakistan did not use its Air Force in the conflict.21 Moeed W. Yusuf, associate vice president of the Asia center at the United States Institute of Peace, in his latest book argues that nuclear weapons’ role did not come into the picture during the Kargil War. There have been some missile tests but nothing beyond that.22 General Musharraf, former army chief and the former president of Pakistan, says in his autobiography that Pakistan did not have a deliverable nuclear weapon system at that time and had no aim to escalate the conflict. “I can say with authority that in 1999 our nuclear capability was not yet operational. Merely, exploding a bomb does not mean that you are operationally capable of deploying force in the field and delivering a bomb across the border over a selected target. Any talk of preparing for nuclear strikes is preposterous.”23

But such denials in Pakistan are difficult to believe. For starters, Bruce Riedel’s response to Musharraf’s assertion is “if that is the case, as General of the Army, what in the world were you doing!? If you had a ‘hollow deterrent’ then you were truly crazy to have embarked upon this [attack on Kargil].”24 At least two officers I interviewed speculate that there was likely some movement of strategic forces, yet a full scale alert was not reached.25 Had there been any nuclear alert in Kargil, it would have been known to many within the military. Additionally, a former senior Pakistani Air Force officer I spoke with adds evidence that Pakistan had nuclear forces in the field during Kargil but they may not have been on alert. He described his experience at the end of the Kargil conflict, flying with heavy weapons attached to his F-16 aircraft. The aircraft would usually go off the runway because of the heavy bomb mated to it. The officer said that Pakistan had no computer simulation equipment back then, so it was hard to know how to regress the area immediately after dropping the bomb or how the weapon would react if dropped. Moreover, these flights were done at night to avoid detection and the risk was so great, he was always unsure if he would return home.26

The Indian military’s massive artillery fire (by deploying bofor guns) caused severe damage to Pakistan’s supply lines to infiltrators stuck in the mountains across the Line of Control. This operational response was not in the calculations of the Pakistan Army. Facing defeat, the Army sought assistance from the Pakistan Air Force (PAF, which did not play any role earlier in the conflict) for contingency planning. In my assessment, PAF tried some night missions of mating
warheads with F-16s that proved extremely dangerous to fly. The weapon was too heavy and big to balance the aircraft on the runway to take-off. Hence, it was not militarily feasible to opt for nuclear escalation. While, Musharraf at this point realized that there was no option but to retreat, U.S. intelligence sources got information about the movement of strategic forces. This movement was only by the PAF and did not likely involve missile deployment because, at that time, Pakistan’s missile capability was not operational.

Taboo versus Doctrine and Determinism

What are the factors going into Islamabad’s calculations about whether and when they might use nuclear weapons first today? Is such a decision “taboo”? The following section assesses the nuclear taboo in Pakistan—both its existence today and what could make it stronger—through five factors including the influence of civil-military relations as well as public opinion on the military’s doctrinal thinking and force posture.

Nuclear Nationalism

On May 28, 1998, Pakistan’s decision to detonate nuclear explosions, in response to India’s nuclear tests of May 11 that year, was celebrated by the nation. It was a moment of shared national pride that became an emblem of security, success and national unity at witnessing celebrations, in national songs, at seminars and public gatherings, and in prayer. Pakistan’s nuclear tests remain one of the few decisions in the country’s history that brought all opposition parties, different factions, and pressure groups within the country together on the same page.

The state further promotes this nuclear nationalism to encourage popular support. Every year on March 23rd, the public gathers in Islamabad to watch a national parade displaying strategic weapons and fighter aircrafts in an air show. March 23rd is called Pakistan Day, a national holiday in Pakistan in commemoration of the Lahore Resolution of March 23, 1940, when Muslims of the subcontinent unanimously agreed to create a separate homeland for themselves. March 23rd is as significant to Pakistan as the May 28th nuclear tests in its history. These demonstrations build on Pakistani animosity toward India which is evident in public discourse, the media and even in textbooks as early as grades 9 and 10 with substantial anti-India content.

Public surveys show that the Pakistani public supports developing more nuclear weapons and has great confidence in its military for security. Gallup Pakistan polls (2015) suggest 59 percent of the population “strongly support” building more nuclear weapons, with 28 percent indicating they support it “to some extent,” compared to just 2 percent opposing and 4 percent having no opinion on the
subject. The latest (2017) survey of Gallup Pakistan reveals that 53 percent of the public believes that India will use nuclear weapons on Pakistan if a war breaks out between the two countries, whereas only 40 percent believe India will not use nuclear weapons. Another poll also shows that 67 percent of Pakistanis believe war with India is the biggest threat in the next 10 years. A May 2011 Gallup survey conveys that 78 percent of Pakistanis have confidence in the military as an institution and as a savior of the country. These polls indicate that the Pakistani public perceives the “threat” from India as real and would stand with the military’s decision for any possible nuclear use. Given the current political atmosphere in the country, it appears that any elected government would stand by the military leadership for any eventuality to defend the nation-state. Pakistan’s former defense minister Khawaja Asif mentioned: “We should pray that such an option never arises, but if we need to use them (nuclear weapons) for our survival we will.” There are no firewalls within the national security apparatus that can prevent the military from breaking the “taboo” of nuclear use if it decides to do so.

Weak Political Oversight
The civilian oversight on nuclear decision making in Pakistan is tenuous. The overarching influence of the military with no checks and balances on itself makes it omnipotent and devoid of accountability. Under such circumstances, any institution develops inward-looking policies designed to benefit organizational interests. The Pakistani military is caught up in its security syndrome and finds the solution in either supporting lashkars to aid in fights across the border or in nuclear armament to deter full conventional aggression from India. In this regard, civilian policies would seek alternate options and denounce war as an option between these two rungs of sub-convention or nuclear-use.

In Pakistan, the political leadership in the country has limitations on talking about nuclear policy. Since General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq’s dictatorial regime (1977-1988), Pakistan’s nuclear program gradually consolidated and prospered under the wings of military institution. Over the years, the military as an institution considered itself responsible and trustworthy to develop and strategize nuclear policy. Throughout the 1990s, the strategic organizations were working on the nuclear program in consultation with military. However, after the 1999 military coup by General Musharraf, the entire nuclear program and command control structure came under one umbrella organization called Strategic Plans Division (SPD)—the nuclear enclave of National Command

Since 1999, the civilian government’s input on nuclear issues is subject to military approval.
Authority (NCA). Since then, civilian government’s policy input on nuclear issues is subject to the military’s approval, or else it could jeopardize the stability of the elected government.

For instance, in a 2008 interview to Hindustan Times, Pakistan’s then-president Asif Ali Zardari supported Pakistan adopting a “No first strike” policy. He said “I can assure you that Pakistan will not be the first country ever to use (nuclear weapons). I hope that things never come to a stage where we have to even think about using nuclear weapons (against India). Personally, I have always been against the very concept of nuclear weapons.”

The president’s statement was a shock to the Pakistani military establishment. Pakistani leading defense analyst Lt. Gen. Kamal Matinuddin was quoted in an Indian newspaper saying that President Zardari’s remarks were “off the cuff.” He added that perhaps the president was “not fully informed or completely aware of Pakistan’s stated nuclear doctrine.”

Facing a civil-military divide, President Asif Ali Zardari willfully ceded the chairmanship of National Command Authority (NCA) to the prime minister.

The incident engendered enough caution for successive governments to maintain a silence taboo in order to complete their five-year term.

Taboo over Civilian Expertise on Nuclear Policy

Beyond this lack of political oversight, there is a different kind of nuclear “taboo” in Pakistan: one against nongovernmental inputs on nuclear doctrine and policies. The organizational culture of secrecy of the Pakistan military over many years has injected fear and security paranoia into Pakistani decision making. Thus, the military considers itself the custodian of national security affairs. Former chief minister of Punjab and eminent scholar of civil-military relations in Pakistan, Hassan Askari Rizvi, writes: “the military is the most formidable player in Pakistan. The long years of direct and indirect rule have given enough experience and confidence to the military to overshadow core political institutions and processes even when it stays in barracks.”

To the military, national security is their domain of influence that is not shared with other institutions or factions of the society. According to former Lt. General Waheed Arshad: “this taboo in discussing the nuclear capabilities in terms of policy and strategy and deployment and employment concepts coupled with security issues led it to be discussed in closed forums such as SPD & Strategic Forces, but not as an open academic and military subject throughout the Armed Forces. The same goes for its treatment in the academia.”

As militaries are trained to fight, therefore, they are unlikely to incorporate the “taboo” subject. Pakistan’s former chief of general staff Lt. General Waheed Arshad mentioned to the author: “[in my very considered view], the term ‘Nuclear Taboo’ is contrary and contradictory to the concept of nuclear capability.
Once a country is a declared/non declared nuclear power, there is no way it can and should treat the concept/polices/strategies and related concepts and discussions on these as ‘Taboo.’ This aptly demonstrates that when institutions like the military are the nuclear decision makers, considerations of the nuclear taboo or ethics are unlikely to be part of their calculus. This reinforces the need for civilian oversight of nuclear decision making, potentially including academic advisers to counterbalance military offensive war planning.

The stringent control on nuclear policy and debate deprives academics, journalists and other members of the civil society to give policy input on nuclear issues. The reason lies in the overall political atmosphere of Pakistan where civil-military relations have been tense for decades. Within such a divide, any constructive criticism is considered as a security breach and liable to be penalized under treason. Any scholarly article written against state policy is unlikely to get published in Pakistani think tanks' journals. If journalists openly criticize the military's policies, it often leads to their ostracism, depriving them of vital information essential to their job. For example, Pakistan’s leading English-language newspaper, Dawn, published an article on the civil-military split regarding the ban of militant organizations, which generated severe criticism. The newspaper's assistant editor, Cyril Almeida, quoted former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif saying that Pakistan would be isolated if the military does not take a stand against militants. The article also inferred Pakistan's state involvement in the 2008 Mumbai crisis. Consequently, Almeda has been charged with “treason” and non-bailable warrants have been issued against him by the High Court.

Apart from journalists, civilian academics in Pakistan have a marginal role in candidly discussing nuclear policy and debates. There are few think tanks in Islamabad working on strategic issues. The research outcome of such think tanks is basic and rudimentary on nuclear and nonproliferation issues. The articles published in these journals often focus on regional and international issues, and rarely offer inward criticism or policy recommendations for domestic or regional challenges. The nuclear policy articles are confined to a handful of scholars. The lead authors are mostly former military officers who had served in Strategic Plans Division (SPD) with access to information on nuclear policy. Civilian academics and young scholars with opinions that differ from the establishment have little space to shape the narrative for the strategic elite.

Public and Civil Defense Campaigns

The evolution of a nuclear taboo would be a difficult process in new nuclear weapon states like Pakistan where the public is less exposed to the knowledge of nuclear hazards and radioactive fallouts. This debate is very limited within Pakistan’s strategic community. Pakistani scholars Pervez Hoodbhoy and Zia Mian
write “most people lack even basic information about nuclear dangers.” There are also virtually no civil defense campaigns or anti-nuclear mass movements in the country. Civil defense campaigns would typically share detailed consequences of nuclear attacks and accidents through open public discussions between concerned government agencies, civil society and masses. In Pakistan, currently such debates are nonexistent. The absence of a civil defense campaign cannot pressure decision makers to refrain from nuclear use in a future conflict or crisis.

Reserves the Nuclear First-Use Policy

The nuclear taboo, according to Nina Tannenwald, can be reinforced from a policy of No-First-Use or ensuring no preemptive or preventive war doctrines. In the case of Pakistan, its nuclear doctrine is unpublished and can be broadly construed from official statements. One of the main pillars of Pakistan’s nuclear doctrine that remains unchanged is its right to use nuclear weapons first as a measure of last resort. The term “last resort” is vague, subjective, and limited to the time-and-space equation of a particular operation or campaign. Pakistani decision makers have rhetorically maintained the distinction between “first use” and “first strike.” “First use” comes from the compulsion after conventional degradation, whereas “first strike” would mean using nuclear weapons without exhausting other options. Through personal interaction with military officers and participation in war games, I have found that Pakistan’s nuclear policy is largely about first use and not first strike.

However, uncertainty has also surrounded Pakistan’s introduction of a new term of “full spectrum” deterrence. The doctrine clearly elucidates Pakistan’s evolving counterforce targeting options with the inclusion of MIRVs (or multiple independently-launched reentry vehicles) and submarine-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) ensuring survivability and second-strike options. Additionally, Pakistan’s former permanent representative to the United Nations (2002-2008), Munir Akram, recommends key developments to Pakistan’s force posture. He argues that Pakistan should mate warheads with missiles in hardened silos for preemptive strikes and enhance “integration and inter-operability with Chinese land, air and naval forces to enhance conventional and strategic deterrence, quickly and cheaply.” Akram’s recommendations on Pakistan’s future force posture cannot be ignored given his close association with the establishment.

Pakistan Army’s Organizational Interests and Islam

Pakistan’s nuclear nationalism, the lack of political, civil society or popular oversight on its nuclear program, and the current developments of Islamabad’s nuclear
Five factors point toward the lack of a nuclear taboo in Pakistan today.

Can a nuclear taboo be strengthened (or built) in Pakistan in light of its Islamic values? Iranian Supreme leader Ali Khamenei issued an oral fatwa back in the mid-1990s, though its first public announcement was made in October 2003 and officially pronounced in Vienna on August 2005. The fatwa on the “prohibition of weapons of mass destruction” declared the use of nuclear weapons Haram. 51 “We believe that besides nuclear weapons, other types of weapons of mass destruction such as chemical and biological weapons also pose a serious threat to humanity…. We consider the use of such weapons as HARAAM and believe that it is everyone’s duty to make efforts to secure humanity against this great disaster.” 52

The terms HARAM means “forbidden” by the Quran, an act that is not permissible by a (believer) Muslim. Although as the leader of the Shia state of Iran, Khamenei’s fatwa has little bearing on the majority Sunni Pakistan, the two religious sects share the Quranic principles of proportionality, deterrence and the right of self-defense. Both states’ Islamic values inform the basic code of conduct of a nuclear weapon state. In the past, the Pakistani military used religion as a significant instrument of statecraft to fulfill organizational interests. According to Georgetown University professor C. Christine Fair and Atlantic Council fellow Shuja Nawaz, faith played a unifying role in the Pakistani military to help overcome the ethnic, sectarian and communal differences within the society. From time to time, the concept of jihad was used to employ military lashkars in the wars of 1965, 1971 and the 1990 Kashmir struggle. Lashkars were local militias supported by the Pakistan military to be better equipped for the treacherous terrains in the north of Pakistan against India. Toward the end of the Soviet-Afghan War, similar groups were employed in Jammu and Kashmir to strengthen the 1990
Kashmir uprising. These lashkars are now named as ‘mujahedeens’ and fought in Kashmir by supporting the indigenous separatist movement.53

More recently on January 17, 2018, 1849 Islamic scholars of different sects and subsects approved a fatwa declaring suicide bombing and terrorism HARAM in light of the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah. The decree said: “We unanimously reject extremist ideology and extremism in all its forms and manifestations. Wherever exists, this is an evil ideology, therefore, shall be dealt with as a religious obligation through all means available, i.e. ideological, kinetic and non-kinetic.”54 Critically, this fatwa helped gain the support of locals throughout Pakistan in the Pakistan Army’s counterinsurgency campaign. After the army suffered many casualties at the hands of militants, it became essential for operational success to generate a counter-narrative in the form of the fatwa.

In the nuclear arena, if the military deems it possible, Pakistan could relegate its first-use option by conforming to the laws of the Quran and Sunnah.55 Given Pakistan’s sensitivities surrounding India-centric threat perceptions and deterrence strategy, Pakistani authorities could even mention that its nuclear posture adheres to the laws of Islamic principles, without explicitly saying that it has denounced its first-use option. The Quranic verses clearly elucidate principles of equality and proportionality in response: “And We [God] ordained for them therein a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds is legal retribution. But whoever gives [up his right as] charity, it is an expiation for him.”56 This verse explicitly explains that Islam teaches limits to aggression, while maintaining the principle of proportionality and justice to deter aggressors. Whereas the Bible says: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”57 The quote from the Bible basically interprets the “law of retaliation”—a principle that if a person injures another person, s/he is subject to a penalty of similar degree. Here, Jesus in the Gospel of Mathew suggests an alternate of the “eye for an eye principle” and says: do not resist to evil and if one slaps on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. The Quran, likewise, gives clear instructions for self-defense and says: “fight in the way of God those who fight against you, but do not transgress. God does not love the transgressor.”58

The practices of the Last Prophet of Muslims, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exhibits the rule of prudence and distinction against indiscriminate killing and countervalue targets. Before engaging in battle, the Prophet Muhammad instructed his soldiers: “Do not kill any child, any woman, or any elder or sick person,”59 “do not practice treachery or mutilation,” “do not uproot or burn palms or cut down fruitful trees,” and “do not kill a sheep or a cow or a camel, except for food.”60 All these measures enforce concepts similar to a nuclear taboo per Islamic values. Unlike the Iranian fatwa, however, a Pakistani fatwa
would have to come from the willingness of the military which exercises significant political influence on religious matters in the country.

The Unique Value of Religion in Pakistan

Taboos are created in most societies that ban certain tempting actions. The Pakistan Army’s military-utility principle of nuclear restraint could transform into a nuclear taboo if and only if Pakistani society contributes toward the existence of a norm of nuclear nonuse. Thus, a bottom-up approach stemming from the societal level to the strategic elite could enforce a nuclear nonuse practice. As the Pakistan Army values the strength of religion even in their motto—“Faith, Piety and Struggle in the Path of God”—there is no way that the military or any state institution or citizen could ever defy Islamic principles as enshrined in the country’s constitution. The Pakistani military would need civilian policy input in order to bring its nuclear doctrine and policies into conformance with Islamic principles. Clearly, the military would not bring any institutional policy that limits its organizational interests on its own, but if such changes were introduced by society, the military could not refuse to include them.

Like all states, Pakistan acknowledges that the role of nuclear weapons is political; their operational needs cannot be assessed in numbers, like conventional systems such as tanks, submarines and aircrafts. Both nuclear nationalism and religious sentiments can be cohesively channeled to rationalize the nuclear nonuse norm in conformity to Quranic preaching. Therefore, nuclear policy and doctrinal issues need comprehensive discussions on national security issues involving civilian experts, political entities, civil society and liberal religious scholars. In this regard, Pakistan’s religiously conservative social fabric could provide a unique opportunity to the state and society to strengthen norms of peace and stability.

Notes


Next Decade in South Asia (eds.) Feroz Hassan Khan, Ryan Jacobs and Emily Burke (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 2014), 81.

20. Author’s personal interview with Lieutenant General Waheed Arshad through email on August 24, 2017; Similar views are shared by Brigadier Naeem Salik. See Naeem Salik, The Genesis of South Asian Nuclear Deterrence: A Pakistani Perspective (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008).


24. Author's interview with Lieutenant General Naeem Lodhi on January 16, 2018 in Islamabad; The same views are shared by Air Commodore Kasier Tufail in Colombo, Sri Lanka on January 18, 2018 through verbal interview.

25. Author's interview with former senior air force officer on the condition of anonymity in Islamabad on January 21, 2018.

26. The term “nuclear nationalism” was used by Peter R. Levoy, “Nuclear Arms Control in South Asia” in Arms Control Towards the 21st Century, ed. Jeffrey A. Larsen and Gregory J. Rattray (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 230; Also quoted “India’s Nuclear Doctrine” in Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Weapons, eds. Peter R. Lavoy, Scott D. Sagan and James J. Wirtz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 147; Also see local Pakistan newspaper coverage of May 28 every year since 1998 demonstrating nuclear euphoria over having nuclear weapons.

27. “The absence of any other resources, strongly rely on textbooks in their teaching. Social studies, as a compulsory subject comprising history, geography, and civics, is taught in Pakistan from class (grade) 1 to 8 with a strong focus on the Islamic heritage. In classes 9 and 10, ‘Pakistan studies’ were introduced in 1972, also including the subjects mentioned, but with a strong focus on Pakistan and legitimizing its existence and promoting patriotism.” See Basabi Khan Banerjee and George Stober, “The Portrayal of ‘the Other’ in Pakistani and Indian Textbooks” in J.H. William and W.D. Bokhorst-Heng (eds.) (Re)Constructing Memory: Textbooks, Identity, Nation and State (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2016), 144.


38. Ibid.
41. There are three think tanks associated with ministries working on strategic issues and five advocacy groups of donors that include the military establishment and right-wing parties.
42. For information, see the National Defense University Website at http://www.ndu.edu.pk/issra/issra_pub.php; National Defense University Islamabad publishes six journals in which there are contributions from students, faculty and other scholars. Many articles are written by former and serving military officers. Surprisingly, most of the publications are on Middle Eastern conflicts, climate change, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, India’s military potential, Daesh, domestic instability including political and economic affairs, extremism and radicalization. There is hardly any analysis of doctrine and force postures.
46. Author’s interaction with military personnel at Complex Deterrence TTX in Bangkok from May 6–11, 2018.
55. The Quran and Sunnah are two major sources of Islamic teachings. Within the Sunni and Shia sects, the records vary on the Prophet’s life that make accounts different from each other.
56. Quran Verse 5:45.