

## **General**

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) organised a round-table discussion on "Deterrence Stability in South Asia" on 26 May 2011 at the CLAWS campus. The round-table was chaired by Dr Rajesh Rajagopalan, JNU and attended by a select gathering from the strategic community. The discussion was initiated by Dr Jeffrey McCausland, former Dean of Academics, US Army War College.

### **Dr Jeffrey McCausland**

Deterrence historically means the ability to inflict damage upon the adversary. In older times it was restricted to the conventional sphere, and in contemporary times, it addresses the nuclear aspect as well. Deterrence is the power to discourage and put off an adversary to undertake their chosen peculiar path. Deterrence is the product of capability and credibility. Deterrence does not constitute the national security strategy; it remains a very significant component of it. Nuclear weapons, on their part, deter the use of other nuclear weapons—that being their primary value.

Deterrence is carried out through two primary channels; by threat of punishment and by denial. In the twin strategies of responding through massive retaliation or by a flexible response, the US adopted the policy of massive retaliation. Flexible response rests on portraying the assumption that the conflict can be restored on the adversary. The deterrence balance created during the Cold War years led to the stability-instability paradox. The doctrine of nuclear deterrence has to be credible, both to the adversary as well as the nation's own populace. Any nation's nuclear doctrine must review itself based on challenges such as proliferation and terrorism.

The strategy of minimum deterrence is one where there are enough nuclear weapons so that any attack by the adversary would be disastrous for it. There has been an ongoing debate within the US regarding bringing about effective deterrence by virtue of a smaller arsenal. The most recent US Nuclear Posture Review chooses to address complex issues such as nuclear terrorism while maintaining and strengthening regional deterrence. The debate surrounding deterrence becomes even more pronounced in today's age of cyber warfare and terrorist attacks.

A very significant question that arises is which of the two is a greater threat; the attacks on Pakistan; or the attacks emanating out of Pakistan.

## **Discussion**

Deterrence can be defined as a scenario where if either of the sides gets deterred, then stability is achieved. The adversary has the ability to inflict punishment on a nation, which is unacceptable to it. In military terminology, deterrence means that an enemy will

be deterred from using nuclear weapons as long as he can be destroyed as a consequence; "when two nations both resort to nuclear deterrence the consequence could be mutual destruction."

South Asia has often been described as a nuclear flashpoint. The perception of nuclear weapons in India is in terms of it being viewed as a political weapon—which has a connotation vis-à-vis control and usage. In doctrinal terms, Pakistan seems to be following a No No-First Use (NNFU) approach.

In terms of the usage dilemma, would that make for first use? As a nation, can India and its political leadership absorb a first strike by Pakistan? Given the current instability in Pakistan, there is an increasing possibility of jihadi elements permeating large segments of Pakistan's National Command Authority (NCA).

Radiological dispersal devices or 'dirty nukes' are a greater threat to regional stability. India needs to ensure that Pakistan's nuclear weapons do not fall into the wrong hands, for which, if there is an international response group, then New Delhi should become a part of the same. China's role in tackling nuclear instability and conflict in South Asia is extremely important. China's support in the said exercise is very tough to get however; there is no other suitable alternative to deal with Pakistan.

**(Report prepared by Dr. Monika Chansoria, Senior Fellow, CLAWS)**