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## **The Efficacy of Pakistan's**

Full Spectrum Deterrence

# The Efficacy of Pakistan's Full Spectrum Deterrence

Amber Afreen Abid<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

As a hedge against India's proactive war strategies, Pakistan's National Command Authority fine-tuned its nuclear doctrine and has formulated a more comprehensive response, known as full spectrum deterrence. This paper examines the contours of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine to assess its effectiveness in maintaining strategic stability. A comprehensive analysis of primary and secondary sources, including official statements, policy documents, and scholarly works, evaluates how Pakistan's nuclear doctrine has effectively deterred potential threats and preserved regional stability. The ambit of the paper also includes the comparison of "full spectrum deterrence" with "integrated deterrence" to exhibit the dynamic nature and importance of a nuclear doctrine in the evolving threat environment. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine and provide insights into its effectiveness in building strategic stability in South Asia.

**Keywords:** Nuclear Doctrine, Policy, Posture, Strategic Stability, Full Spectrum Deterrence, Credible Minimum Deterrence.

## Introduction

Pakistan's nuclear doctrine is sensitive to regional strategic developments, like all other nuclear powers. South Asia has witnessed significant shifts that have affected the nuclear deterrence dynamics between Pakistan and India. In an action-reaction cycle, both countries have undertaken changes in their military capabilities and force postures. The modernization and vertical proliferation in Indian nuclear weapons program and developments in nuclear doctrine have com-

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pelled Pakistan to take necessary measures to maintain deterrence stability. India's strategic behavior, characterized by its resistance to dispute resolution, and its propensity to seek space for war under nuclear threshold has led to adoption of full spectrum deterrence (FSD) by Pakistan. The evolving doctrines and ongoing weapon modernization efforts exacerbates the regional environment, making it more complex and challenging, and increasing Pakistan's security dilemma.

The National Command Authority (NCA) of Pakistan fine-tuned its nuclear doctrine to comprehensively address India's aggressive designs.<sup>2</sup> This rationalized approach, known as FSD, is often perceived as a departure from Pakistan's credible minimum deterrence (CMD) posture. In comparison, it aims to bolster the credibility of deterrence stability with India by addressing the vulnerabilities that India sought to exploit through its conventional capabilities. Pakistan's adoption of FSD is meant to build and maintain deterrence stability against India.

Soon after responding to India's resumption of nuclear testing in May 1998, Pakistan formulated a nuclear doctrine but decided not to declare it and maintain calculated ambiguity about the conditions in which it will use nuclear weapons.<sup>3</sup> Instead of releasing a doctrinal paper, Pakistan preferred releasing statements by NCA, its selected officials occasionally gave interviews, and sometimes officials gave statements to elaborate the broader contours of the country's nuclear doctrine. India continues to shape the threat spectrum and likewise Pakistan responds in kind and occasionally signals its resolve to deter India.

This paper maps the vicissitudes in Indian nuclear and related military doctrines and Pakistan's responses, such as the introduction of short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs). Interestingly, Pakistan's minimal responses attract some criticism while ignoring the Indian developments that force Pakistan to take these defensive measures.<sup>4</sup> While examining the concerns about Pakistan's development

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2. Zafar Khan, *Pakistan's Nuclear Policy: A Minimum Credible Deterrence* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 138.

3. Peter R. Lavoy, 'Islamabad's Nuclear Posture: Its Premises and Implementation,' in Henry D. Sokolski ed., *Pakistan's Nuclear Future: Worries Beyond War*, January 2008, 135, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep12046.8.pdf>.

4. "Prithvi-I." Missile Threat: CSIS Missile Defense Project, 2 August 2021, <https://missilethreat.org/>

of SRBMs, this paper investigates the doctrine, identifies the impact of FSD on South Asian strategic stability, compares FSD with integrated deterrence, and explores the efficacy of Pakistan's nuclear posture.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Various theories and approaches explain the dynamics of international relations. Realism, also known as *realpolitik* or political realism, is one of the prominent ones. It provides an analytical framework for understanding state interactions and posits that the pursuit and distribution of power primarily drive these relations.<sup>5</sup> This study examines the South Asian strategic environment through the same prism – how offensive and defensive realism provide insights into state behavior.

India's regional aspirations can be studied through the offensive realist approach, as it keeps seeking ways to establish its hegemony. If major powers can aim to diminish the influence of local powers in specific regions as part of their pursuit of global status,<sup>6</sup> offensive realism provides a comprehensive framework to understand the Indian approach. The empirical evidence supports Indian aggressive military strategies to subdue the neighborhood and advance its foreign policy objectives, irrespective of its conventional superiority over others, such as Pakistan.

Defensive realism explains the adoption of proactive military strategies by weaker states to mitigate security threats.<sup>7</sup> States within an anarchic system are motivated to adopt defensive measures to preserve a balance of power,<sup>8</sup> and aim to maintain the existing distribution of power to enhance their security. Hence, a security dilemma arises from a state's actions to augment its security, inadvertently creating a perceived threat to other states.

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reat.csis.org/missile/prithvi/.

5. Jack Donnelly, "Theories of International Relations," *Realism* (PALGRAVE MACMILLAN: New York, 2005), 40.

6. John J. Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 83.

7. Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.

8. Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 25, no.1 (2000):5–41, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2626772>.

Security dilemma is a situation within an anarchic system where an increase in the security of one state decreases the security of the other.<sup>9</sup> India's proactive and provocative strategies, such as Cold Start Doctrine (CSD), are seen by Pakistan as a potential threat to its national security, prompting it to respond with appropriate measures. In this regard, Pakistan fine-tuned its nuclear posture as FSD, and developed short-range ballistic missiles which directly responded to the perceived danger posed by India's offensive military strategy, particularly the CSD. By taking these measures, Pakistan aims to safeguard its national security in the face of increasing threats.

### **Defining a Nuclear Doctrine**

In the nuclear discourse, the lexicon holds immense importance. Deterrence occurs on a psychological level to discourage the occurrence of nuclear war. Therefore, the terminology used to communicate the message to the adversary becomes even more critical. Henceforth, before intersecting the contours of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine, it is essential to consider the merits of the used jargon.

A doctrine typically refers to a collection of principles developed with a specific purpose, serving as guiding principles to accomplish particular objectives. In the military context, a doctrine outlines how a state should utilize its forces at any given time. According to the United States Department of Defense, a doctrine is defined as the "fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives."<sup>10</sup> The Department further emphasizes that while doctrines hold authoritative status, their application necessitates careful judgment in peace and war. This suggests that doctrines can be flexible and adaptable, and their understanding can vary depending on the specific circumstances. In the case of Pakistan, it is not startling that it chose not to declare a nuclear doctrine openly. Instead, Pakistan has communicated its stance to the adversary through official statements and positions being taken on arms control and disarmament affairs at the national and international levels.<sup>11</sup>

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9. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978):167–214, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009958>.

10. US Department of Defense, DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, Joint Publication 1-02, 8 November 2010 (as amended through 15 February 2016), [https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp1\\_02.pdf](https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp1_02.pdf).

11. Zahir Kazmi, "SRBMs, Deterrence and Regional Stability South Asia: A Case Study of

Based on the definition, it can be inferred that a nuclear doctrine should include specific values and instructions that function as guiding principles for the use or non-use of nuclear weapons and related means. A range of beliefs on strategic research and development, weapon selection, military forces, operational plans, and arms control can be included within the ambit of nuclear doctrines.<sup>12</sup> Doctrine acts as a guideline for the force configuration and the nature, type, and number of nuclear weapons and their delivery means being used for its implementation.<sup>13</sup> It also represents a philosophy based on which actions are taken. For example, the Chinese government avoids using the terms “nuclear doctrine” or “nuclear strategy” to articulate the fundamental principles of its nuclear weapons program, and prefers the term “nuclear strategic guidelines.”<sup>14</sup> This choice does not imply any lack of understanding regarding these terminologies.

Hence, it can be inferred that nuclear-armed states develop their nuclear doctrines to optimize decisions about the production and use of nuclear weapons in line with their perceived threats from nuclear adversaries. Pakistan’s nuclear doctrine is primarily based on the threats it perceives from India. Therefore, Pakistan’s nuclear choices, including signing specific multilateral treaties and developing new weapons in its nuclear arsenal, are strongly influenced by its threat perception. Pakistan’s nuclear doctrine also underscores its utmost significance in maintaining a robust nuclear deterrent capability to safeguard its territorial defense and security.

Since the advent of nuclear weapons in South Asia, both countries have successfully avoided any full-scale military confrontation that could potentially escalate to higher levels of conflict. This reality is further supported by a conversation between the then US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, Peter Lavoy, and the Director General of Pakistan’s Strategic Plans Division, Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai, during

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NASR and Prahaar,” *Regional Studies* 30, no. 4 (2012).

12. Vijay K. Nair, *Nuclear India* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1992), 18.

13. Naeem Salik, “The Evolution of Pakistan’s Nuclear Doctrine,” in *Nuclear Learning in South Asia: The Next Decade* (2014), 71.

14. Lora Saalman, (ed.), *China-India Nuclear Crossroads* (Beijing: Carnegie-Tsinghua, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), 26, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/09/25/china-india-nuclear-crossroads-pub-49302>.



the Carnegie Non-Proliferation Conference 2015 in Washington. In their discussion, Lieutenant General Kidwai emphasized that despite the significant conventional disparities between Pakistan and India, the presence of nuclear deterrent capabilities in both countries prevents them from resorting to war as a means of pursuing national policy objectives.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, he reiterated that the strategic balance in South Asia heavily relies on the principle of mutually assured destruction (MAD), which acts as a deterrent and prevents the two nuclear adversaries from engaging in a nuclear exchange.

### **Evolution of Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine**

The overt nuclearization of South Asia by India in 1974 and its retesting of nuclear weapons in May 1998 compelled Pakistan to develop and test nuclear weapons. While India developed nuclear weapons for prestige, Pakistan only responded to address its security dilemma.

Deterrence was the sole aim, and a small arsenal was considered adequate. At no time did Pakistan contemplate the use of nuclear weapons for warfighting or seek to develop the capability for a pre-emptive attack. Apart from the obvious constraint of resources, it was not so unrealistic as to entertain such thoughts. India is too large and too well-armed to be vulnerable to a disabling strike. Besides, any such attempt would provoke retaliation with disastrous consequences.<sup>16</sup>

Pakistan possesses a limited range of ballistic and cruise missile systems to deliver nuclear weapons. Pakistan's nuclear doctrine has undergone noteworthy modifications and additions throughout the years. Experts note that in the evolution of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine, some aspects have remained constant, while some others have changed – its central tenet is Pakistan's consistent emphasis on maintaining credible minimum deterrence for regional stability.

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15. "A Conversation with Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 23, 2015, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/03/23/conversation-with-gen.-khalid-kidwai-pub-58885>.

16. Agha Shahi et al., "Securing Nuclear Peace," *The News International*, October 5, 1999.

## **Contours of Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine**

### ▪ ***Ambiguity***

Ambiguity stands out as a prominent characteristic of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine. Pakistan's deliberate choice is to refrain from officially disclosing its nuclear doctrine and avoid transparency on the intended use of nuclear weapons in military field. The perceived advantage of such an ambiguity is to deter the adversary and let it keep guessing about Pakistan's nuclear-use threshold.

One possible rationale for the absence of a public declaration of the nuclear doctrine is to leverage ambiguity, often used by major powers like the US. That is probably why Pakistani leadership does not explicitly declare the nuclear doctrine. This helps in deterring India from exploiting the gaps in Pakistan's strategic plans. During a conference in 2015, Lieutenant General Kidwai reiterated the policy of ambiguity because allowing transparency about the number of nuclear weapons does not suit smaller powers, as it allows an adversary to manipulate any lines it draws in deterrence measures.<sup>17</sup> Despite such ambiguity, Pakistan's nuclear signaling enables it to comprehend the key elements of the nuclear doctrine that have remained constant.

### ▪ ***No-First Use Policy***

Except for China, no nuclear power gives a clear and unconditional No-First Use (NFU) pledge. While India maintains a self-congratulatory claim about its NFU pledge, it has indicated otherwise on several occasions. For instance, in August 2019, Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh made a statement that nullified their proclaimed NFU pledge, "The government firmly stands by its 'No First Use' policy, but what happens in the future will depend on the circumstances."<sup>18</sup> A similar statement was given earlier in November 2016 by Manohar Parrikar, who later became the Defense Minister, "I wonder why we say that we do not use nuclear weapons first."<sup>19</sup> Having been made by the apex decision-making circles in India, such statements cannot be ignored.

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17. "A Conversation with Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai."

18. "Rajnath Singh Hints at 'No First Use' Policy Change amid Tension with Pak," NDTV, August 16, 2019, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/rajnath-singh-says-india-has-been-firm-on-nuclear-no-first-use-policy-what-happens-in-future-depends-2085915>.

19. Manjeet Negi, "Manohar Parrikar Makes Bizarre Nuclear Statement, His Ministry Says Personal Opinion," *India Today*, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/manohar-parrikar-nuke-statement-defence-minister-surgical-strike-351393-2016-11-10>.



For good measure, Pakistan neither confirms nor denies having a first-use or NFU doctrine, as it may not want to limit its options and bound itself in a response dilemma and keep India uncertain about how Pakistan would respond to New Delhi's efforts to find space for war under a nuclear overhang.

The 1971 India-Pakistan war has left a profound impact on Pakistan's strategic mindset. Pakistan seems to see nuclear weapons as the bed-rock of its defense and a reliable means to deter India from engaging in aggression. Not declaring NFU option increases its leverages. An enunciated first-use or NFU policy would provide India with an open license to kill Pakistanis, as emphasized by Pakistan's Ambassador to the UN, who clarified this stance in May 2002.<sup>20</sup>

Pakistan's decision not to declare NFU is often mistaken as lowering its nuclear threshold. However, this apparent irrationality and offensive signaling is to deter threats from India. Any specific circumstances under which nuclear capabilities would be employed in response to an Indian attack would dilute the efficacy of deterrence.

▪ ***Moratorium on Nuclear Testing***

Pakistan has consistently offered a bilateral testing moratorium to India, maintained a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, and is an Observer in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). India has only maintained a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing and has lately been signaling a resumption of testing after a short hiatus since 1998. In comparison, it is evident that Pakistan maintains a responsible doctrinal position on nuclear weapons testing, but it will be a unilateral declaration, contingent upon India's behavior. Pakistan was not the first one to test nuclear weapons in South Asia, and its doctrine indicates that it would not be the first to resume testing.<sup>21</sup>

▪ ***Dynamic Nature of Doctrine***

Nuclear doctrines cannot be static and must cater to continuous political, technological, and other imperatives. The prime example is

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20. Masood Haider, "Islamabad Refuses to Accept 'No First Strike' Doctrine," *Dawn*, May 31, 2002, <http://www.dawn.com/news/38860/islamabad-refuses-to-accept-no-first-strike-doctrine>.

21. Sadia Tasleem, "Pakistan's Nuclear Use Doctrine," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/pakistan-s-nuclear-use-doctrine-pub-63913>.

the US, whose doctrine continually changed from Massive Retaliation (1954) to Integrated Deterrence (2022). Hence, any expectations from Pakistan's nuclear doctrine to remain static would be unfair.<sup>22</sup> Like the other eight nuclear-armed states, Pakistan's nuclear doctrine is dynamic and operates within the principle of maintaining credible minimum deterrence, whose requirements are not fixed and are explicitly tailored to deter its eastern neighbor.

### ▪ **Force Posture**

Since the nuclear doctrine of Pakistan is dynamic in nature, its nuclear force posture is structured and developed accordingly.<sup>23</sup> Islamabad is developing a modest triad of nuclear forces that would ensure that a reasonable number of nuclear weapons are maintained by land, air, and sea-based deterrent forces. As the threat spectrum evolves in land, air, and sea domains, so would its triad. However, a comparison indicates that India has a clear advantage in access to cutting-edge technologies that pervade all spectra (See Table-1). Therefore, to maintain a stable deterrence, Pakistan must close the gaps in its force posture with India despite economic and other challenges.

PAKISTAN	Range (km)	INDIA	Range (km)
<b>Aircrafts</b>			
Mirage III/V		Mirage 2000 H	1850
		Jaguar IS	1600
		Rafale	2000
<b>Land based Missiles</b>			
Abdali (Hatf-2)	180-200	Prithvi II	350
Ghaznavi (Hatf-3)	290	Agni I	700-1200
Shaheen 1 (Hatf-4)	650	Agni P	1000-2000
Shaheen 1A (Hatf-4)	900	Agni II	2000-2500
Ghauri (Hatf-5)	1300	Agni III	3200-5000
Shaheen 2 (Hatf-6)	1500	Agni IV	4000
Shaheen 3 (Hatf-6)	2750	Agni V	7000+
Nasr (Hatf-9)	70	Prahaar	150
Ababeel	2200		
<b>Ground &amp; Air launched Cruise Missiles</b>			
Babur (Hatf-7)	350	Nirbhay	1000
Babur 2/1B	700	BrahMos	300-500

22. Naeem Salik, *Learning to Live with the Bomb* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2017), 103.

23. Zahir Kazmi, "SRBMs, Deterrence and Regional Stability South Asia."

Ra'ad (Hatf-8)	350		
Ra'ad 2	600		
<b>Sea-based Missiles</b>			
Babur 3	450	Dhanush	400
		K-15 Sagarika	700
		K-4	3500
		K-5	5000+

**Table-1: Nuclear-Based Missile Inventory of India and Pakistan<sup>24</sup>**

■ ***Maintaining the Minimum***

The above given comparison of nuclear delivery systems indicates that Pakistan has maintained minimality and delicate balance across all levels of the threat spectrum spanning strategic, operational, and tactical domains.<sup>25</sup> Pakistan has made a proportionate response against its adversary without indulging in an arms race.

Regarding fissile material stockpiles needed for nuclear warheads, there is a difference in versions presented by Western India-leaning sources and the Pakistani narrative. Sizes of stockpiles are best-kept secrets, and only estimates are available about states with no mutual arms control treaties. The US and Russia have conflicting interpretations of their bilateral New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START).

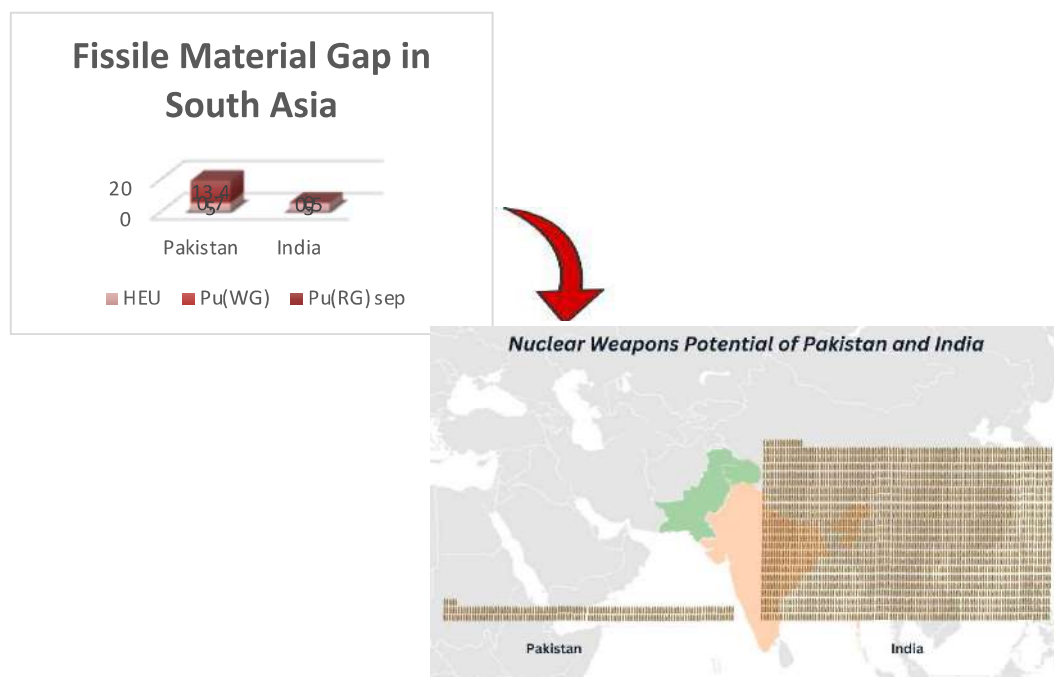
The politically motivated assessments show that India has a smaller stockpile than Pakistan. For instance, according to the International Panel on Fissile Materials (IPFM), India has an estimated stockpile of  $4.5 \pm 2$  tons of highly enriched uranium (HEU), while Pakistan has an

24. "Pakistan Successfully Test-Fires Hatf-IV Ballistic Missile," *Dawn*, April 25, 2012, <https://www.dawn.com/news/713299/pakistan-successfully-test-fires-hatf-iv-ballistic-missile>; "Press Release No PR-94/2011-ISPR," *Inter Services Public Relations*, April 19, 2011, <https://www.ispr.gov.pk/press-release-detail.php?id=1721>; "Press Release No PR98/2012-ISPR," *Inter Services Public Relations*, April 25, 2012, [www.ispr.gov.pk](http://www.ispr.gov.pk); "Pakistan Test-Fires Its Most Advanced Nuclear-Capable Ballistic Missile," *RT*, December 11, 2015, [www.rt.com](http://www.rt.com); "Press Release No PR16/2016-ISPR," *Inter Services Public Relations*, January 19, 2016, [www.ispr.gov.pk](http://www.ispr.gov.pk); "Improved Version of Babur Cruise Missile Tested Successfully," *Dawn*, December 15, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1302422>; "Pakistan Test Fires Nuclear Capable Submarine Launched Cruise Missile," January 10, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1307531>; "Missiles of India," *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 14, 2018, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/india/>; "If India Wants, Agni Missiles Can Now Strike Targets Beyond 7,000 kms," *ANI*, December 17, 2022, <https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/if-india-wants-agni-missiles-can-now-strike-targets-beyond-7000-kms20221217161534/>.

25. "A Conversation with Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai."

estimated stockpile of  $4.9 \pm 1.7$  tons of HEU for nuclear weapon program. However, the issue of plutonium production creeps in. India's stockpile of weapon-grade plutonium is estimated to be  $0.7 \pm 0.15$  tons. The reactor-grade plutonium is estimated to be around  $8.5 \pm 4.9$  tons. In contrast, Pakistan has 0.5 tons of weapon-grade plutonium, and does not possess reactor-grade plutonium (See Figure-1).<sup>26</sup> The reactor-grade plutonium could be converted into warheads anytime.

Conversely, some Pakistani assessments highlight what biased assessments ignore. As per Mansoor Ahmed, the weapon potential through fissile material could be estimated as 20 kilograms of HEU, 8 kilograms for RG Pu, and 4 kilograms for WG Pu for one nuclear warhead.<sup>27</sup> This shows that India can produce 1487-2137 nuclear warheads. Hence, the Indian capabilities are far beyond the “minimum deterrence” prerequisite.



**Figure 1: Fissile Material Gap Between Pakistan and India**

This evaluation shows that the Indian capabilities are far exceeding Pakistan's capabilities, and the latter has not indulged in any arms

26. "Pakistan," 'International Panel on Fissile Materials,' April 29, 2023, <https://fissilematerials.org/countries/pakistan.html>.

27. Mansoor Ahmed, "India's Nuclear Exceptionalism: Fissile Materials, Fuel Cycles, and Safeguards," *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*, May 2017, <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/India%27s%20Nuclear%20Exceptionalism.pdf>.

race. Pakistan's FSD posture is within the precincts of Credible Minimum Deterrence and its policy is entirely based on the number of its weapons that are credible enough to deter India, not the number of weapons that India possesses.

▪ ***Command and Control Structure***

Pakistan's nuclear command and control structure is designed to ensure its nuclear assets' effective management, security, and safety. The country has taken significant measures to establish a robust and reliable system that ensures centralized control, strict accountability, and secure custody of its nuclear weapons.

One of the key elements of Pakistan's nuclear command and control structure is the NCA led by the Prime Minister. The NCA is a centralized authority responsible for formulating policies, exercising command and control, and overseeing all nuclear-related matters. It comprises the country's highest political and military leadership, including the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, among others.

The centralized decision-making, institutional checks and balances, physical security measures, and international cooperation demonstrate Pakistan's commitment to maintaining a robust and effective nuclear command and control system.

**Full Spectrum Deterrence**

Nuclear deterrence remains a crucial aspect of the military strategies employed by both nuclear adversaries in South Asia. The challenges to deterrence stability are often overlooked in pursuit of narrow self-interest. India's CSD, also called Proactive Military Operations, is an example which aims at conducting limited strikes against Pakistan. The nuclearization of the region has contributed to strategic stability at a higher level but has created a potential gap for instability at lower levels. This occurs when a nuclear-armed state feels compelled to exploit the conventional asymmetry below the perceived nuclear threshold of its adversary.

India believed that a war between two nuclear-armed neighbors was plausible despite the presence of nuclear deterrence, as articulated by George Fernandez, former Indian Defense Minister, who said "nu-



clear weapons did not make war obsolete; simply imposed another dimension on the way warfare could be conducted.”<sup>28</sup> This political inclination to employ military force as a tool of warfare is further evident in the statement made by former Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, that “Whatever weapon is available, we will use it to defend ourselves... and if because of that weapon the attacker is defeated... if he is killed, we should not be held responsible.”<sup>29</sup>

Likewise, the statement made by former Chief of the Indian army, General Deepak Kapoor, mirrored the predisposition of Indian leadership toward the CSD. He contended that the existence of a limited war scenario under the guise of a nuclear umbrella could not be dismissed, as it remained a prevailing reality in the region.<sup>30</sup>

Pakistan decided to develop an appropriate countermeasure in response to the imminent threats from India’s assertive military doctrine. The objective was to safeguard its territorial integrity and promote stability in the regional strategic landscape. Pakistan regarded the CSD as intrinsically hazardous, and its military leadership reportedly expressed concerns that CSD could lead to a “sudden spiral escalation.”<sup>31</sup>

It has been observed that India might be publicly showcasing capabilities that are not fully developed yet. If correct, the approach will only intensify India’s own security challenges besides increasing regional security dilemma by prompting other states to take countermeasures. The Indian Cold Start Doctrine is of serious concern for Pakistan and the latter seems determined to formulate an appropriate response. Pakistani leadership’s perception about India’s offensive CSD has been aptly described:

[As India adopts the Cold Start Doctrine] war is being brought down to a tactical level... pre-programmed, pre-determined, shooting from the hip

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28. George Fernandez, “Seminar on the Challenges of Limited War: Parameters and Options,” (New Delhi: Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, 2000).

29. Statement by Prime Minister Vajpayee on 2 January 2002, quoted in “Disarmament Diplomacy,” Issue No. 62, (January-February 2002).

30. “Possibility of Limited War in South Asia: Indian Army Chief,” *The News*, November 24, 2009, <https://www.dawn.com/news/854425/fo-accuses-india-of-preparing-for-limited-war>.

31. Zafar Khan, *Pakistan’s Nuclear Policy: A Minimum Credible Deterrence* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 78.



posture within forty-eight to ninety-six hours with independent integral battle groups of about armored brigade size. That is tactical level.<sup>32</sup>

Indian CSD is a distinct phenomenon requiring thorough examination and is the foremost catalyst for Pakistan's adoption of FSD. Pakistan's responses in light of this doctrine are significant ramifications. In this context, the emergence of the so-called tactical nuclear weapons in South Asia is the most notable implication for regional strategic stability.

Critics argue that the shift towards FSD represents a departure from credible minimum deterrence, leading to a lowering of Pakistan's nuclear threshold.<sup>33</sup> However, a closer examination of the evolving strategic landscape in South Asia reveals that India's offensive military strategies, which sought to conduct punitive strikes against Pakistan within what it perceived as Pakistan's nuclear threshold, compelled Pakistan to address this vulnerability. Interestingly, India has an FSD policy and even claims to engage Pakistan in hybrid-grey warfare, which misses the eye of many experts for political reasons.

Adopting FSD was a response to India's intentions aiming to enhance Pakistan's defense capabilities across various threat spectrums. This perspective aligns with the mindset of Pakistan's strategic thinkers, who believe in additional defensive layers to counter various challenges.

The strategic policymakers of Pakistan assert that the adoption of FSD is not in conflict with their original stance of CMD but rather aligns with it.<sup>34</sup> The NCA has consistently sought to clarify this position, emphasizing that FSD is not distinct from CMD. In an important NCA meeting held in February 2016, Pakistan's strategic leadership asserted that: "[The country would] resolve to maintain FSD, in line with the policy of CMD."<sup>35</sup>

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32. "Conversation with Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai."

33. Nitin Prasad, *Contemporary Pakistan: Political System, Military and Changing Scenario* (New Delhi: Alpha Editions, 2016), 45.

34. Zulfar Khan, "Pakistan's Evolving Strategic Outlook: Strategy and Nuclear Deterrence," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 28, no. 1 (2016): 103-121.

35. "Press Release," *Inter-Services Public Relations* (February 2016), [https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press\\_release&id=2067](https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&id=2067).

Despite the criticism surrounding Pakistan's perceived shift from its previous position, noteworthy aspects of its doctrine align with the principles of CMD, as reflected in the statement:

We refuse to enter a nuclear arms race and instead seek stability in the region. Pakistan, unlike India, does not have any pretensions to regional or global power status. We are committed to a policy of responsibility and restraint by maintaining a credible minimum deterrent.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise, in the initial stages following nuclearization, Agha Shahi, former Foreign Secretary, Abdul Sattar, former Foreign Minister, and Zulfiqar Ali Khan, former Air Chief of Pakistan, co-authored an article advocating for a minimalist approach. They asserted that while it may be challenging to quantify minimalism in specific numbers, the principle of minimum deterrence should be the cornerstone of Pakistan's nuclear program. However, they also recommended that due to the lack of mutually agreed restraint in South Asia, Pakistan must be able to adjust the size of its arsenal and strategies of deployment according to changing circumstances in the region.<sup>37</sup> Pakistan's adoption of FSD is primarily influenced by the concept of CMD aligns with this reasoning – it allows to address the evolving threats posed by India's CSD.

Several principles show the significance of credible minimum deterrence in Pakistan's nuclear doctrine, including the centralized command and control of the nuclear arsenal, posture of non-deployment of nuclear weapons, unilaterally declared moratorium on nuclear testing, dispersal, and concealment tactics of its nuclear forces, and stated policies and approach towards arms control and nuclear disarmament. All these aspects reflect Pakistan's commitment to CMD.<sup>38</sup>

India conducted the flight-testing of its short-range ballistic missile, Prahaar, only a few months after Pakistan's Nasr test. This suggested that the development of tactical nuclear weapons by both countries had occurred concurrently. While Prahaar had a greater range of

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36. Scott D. Sagan, "The Evolution of Indian and Pakistani Nuclear Doctrine," Belfer Center, May 7, 2008, [https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/uploads/Sagan\\_MTA\\_Talk\\_050708.pdf](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/uploads/Sagan_MTA_Talk_050708.pdf).

37. Agha Shahi, "Securing Nuclear Peace."

38. Zafar Khan, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policy."

up to 150 kilometers compared to Pakistan's Nasr, the two systems shared significant similarities. Like Nasr, Prahaar is capable of being launched within minutes and can also be deployed from a road-mobile launcher.<sup>39</sup>

Experts have established that the development of a tactical nuclear weapon by India is rooted in its implicit but consistently upheld nuclear policy. This policy aims to establish a credible deterrent to address the challenges posed by India's superior conventional military capabilities.

On the one hand, the introduction of Nasr counters India's proactive defense strategies. On the other hand, it addresses the conventional asymmetry between the two states.<sup>40</sup> The development of SRBMs created an additional layer of defense, providing India with redundancy in employing war-fighting strategies.

The introduction of the doctrinal position on FSD can be attributed to Pakistan's development of tactical nuclear weapons. The Nasr's successful testing was a milestone in enhancing Pakistan's deterrence capability across all levels of the threat spectrum.<sup>41</sup> It complemented Pakistan's existing inventory of medium-range and long-range ballistic missiles, thereby strengthening the country's overall nuclear deterrent capability. It is a cost-effective solution to the threat posed by India's more advanced and offensive conventional forces that seek space for war under a nuclear overhang.

The introduction of the Nasr within FSD framework has faced substantial criticism globally. However, an impartial examination of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine indicates that despite developing SRBMs, Pakistan remains committed to adhering to the fundamental principles of its stated nuclear doctrine. Pakistan maintains a defensive posture and does not pursue hegemonic or global ambitions like India.

The Nasr was developed not to engage in warfare but to prevent regional conflicts – it works as a “weapon of deterrence.”<sup>42</sup> This ad-

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39. Tughrul Yamin, 'Tactical Nuclear Weapons – The Pakistani Perspective,' *IPRI Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2015):29, <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2-art-s-15.pdf>.

40. Zahir Kazmi, "SRBMs, Deterrence and Regional Stability in South Asia."

41. "A Conversation with Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai."

42. Maleeha Lodhi, "Pakistan's Nuclear Compulsions," *The News International*, November 6, 2012.

vancement has effectively managed Indian offensive military tactics that could potentially undermine regional stability. Pakistan views these weapons as strategic assets, and at the official level, the notion of using them solely as battlefield weapons is frequently dismissed.<sup>43</sup> Pakistan does not view FSD as a strategy for engaging in warfare, but to deter limited conventional warfare, and diffuse crises rather than escalating them. Pakistan treats the so-called tactical nuclear weapons with the same level of consideration and control as other strategic weapons.

The SRBMs are under NCA's centralized command and control and potential risks including accidental use or unauthorized access are fully measured. Pakistan will not deploy its SRBMs in offensive positions or in a manner that promotes aggression, as per some Western experts,<sup>44</sup> and the operational control of these weapons will not be delegated to the commander in the field.

A careful examination of Pakistan's official stance on SRBMs, as reflected in military leaders' statements and the ISPR press releases, reflects that the development of the Nasr is a direct response to India's reliance on offensive military strategies, such as the CSD, which aims to launch conventional attacks on Pakistan while operating below its perceived nuclear threshold. In this context, the Nasr is regarded as a countermeasure against potential advancements by the Indian armed forces, as expressed below:

[By the development of Nasr] we hope, therefore, that the complete spectrum that we say, the full spectrum, strategic, operational, tactical, all three levels of nuclear weapons have been covered, and therefore we have now deterred – in our thinking – the tactical level operations under the Cold Start Doctrine as well.<sup>45</sup>

Pakistan possesses an array of delivery systems that cover Indian

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43. Mansoor Ahmed, "Pakistan's Tactical Nuclear Weapons and their Impact on Stability," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/pakistan-s-tactical-nuclear-weapons-and-their-impact-on-stability-pub-63911>.

44. Mark Fitzpatrick, *Overcoming Pakistan's Nuclear Dangers* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2014), 81.

45. "Special Message by Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai, Advisor, National Command Authority and Former DG Strategic Plans Division, on 25th Youme-e-Takbeer," Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, May 25, 2023, <https://issi.org.pk/special-message-by-lt-gen-retd-khalid-kidwai-advisor-national-command-authority-and-former-dg-spd-on-25th-youme-e-takbeer/>.

territory but there is no certainty if its 2750 kilometers range Shaheen-III missile fully covers Andaman and Nicobar islands. Hopefully, Pakistan possesses different types of nuclear warheads for counter-value and counter-force targeting.

Thus, Pakistan's FSD is meant to ensure peace and preserve strategic stability with India. To achieve these goals, Pakistan must address the conventional forces asymmetry with India and leave no space even for a conventional war with limited scope. Pakistan has been able to effectively deter aggression as there has been no full-scale war for half a century now. Hence, the strategic capability of Pakistan has proven the credentials of peace.<sup>46</sup>

### **Full Spectrum vs Integrated Deterrence**

Deterrence is meant to create a credible threat against the enemy at all domains and all spectrums of conflict to deter any aggression. States devise a policy, strategy, and posture in accordance with their defense requirements to keep deterrence intact.

Based on a presumed complex environment, the US devised the strategy of integrated deterrence (ID) to advance its priorities. The US National Defense Strategy (NDS) released in October 2022 set out the country's strategic directions for nuclear security,<sup>47</sup> and included the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and Missile Defense Review (MDR). The NPR describes US policy, strategy, postures, and force structures, and posits that the bar for nuclear deployment is very high and will only be considered if a legitimate threat to US vital interests or its allies exists. The NPR caters to mitigating the threat with a balanced approach, flexible stockpiles, and responding effectively to uncertainty while maintaining the efficacy of the deterrent. Thus, the primary aim is to maintain flexibility and adaptability.

Integrated deterrence is the centerpiece of Pentagon's strategy – more of a novel strategic concept involving all the instruments of national power, i.e., military, economy, law enforcement, finance, and intelligence, across all the warfighting domains, at all the spectrum of conflicts, along with its allies. It communicates US capabilities in

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46. General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, "Nuclear Dimensions of Regional Security," IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, June 2, 2023.

47. "National Defence Strategy," US Department of Defense, <https://www.defense.gov/National-Defense-Strategy/>.



detering aggression.

To counter the full spectrum of threats, a state requires a comprehensive deterrence strategy by maintaining a credible and adaptable set of capabilities. Pakistan's FSD is often considered analogous to an integrated deterrence posture. Both terms describe comprehensive deterrence strategies that aim to address a wide range of threats and challenges across the entire spectrum of conflict. Thus, the FSD and ID have several similarities as well as differences, as follows:

### ***Similarities***

1. ***Comprehensive approach:*** Both aim to address a wide range of threats and challenges across the entire spectrum of conflict. They recognize the need to deter potential adversaries through conventional and non-conventional means.
2. ***Multi-domain focus:*** They acknowledge the importance of integrating capabilities across multiple domains and spectrums of conflict.
3. ***Flexibility:*** They emphasize the need for flexibility in response options to deter potential adversaries effectively. This may include a combination of conventional forces, the type of nuclear weapon to be used, and other deterrent measures.
4. ***Risk management:*** Both aim to manage risks and prevent conflict escalation by maintaining a credible deterrence posture. They seek to deter aggression while minimizing the chances of unintended escalation or miscalculation.
5. ***Strategic stability:*** They aim to ensure strategic stability in a regional or global context and seek to maintain a balance of power and deterrence that discourages aggressive actions by potential adversaries.
6. ***Continual assessment:*** They require ongoing evaluation and adaptation to evolving security dynamics and recognize the importance of periodically reassessing deterrence strategies and capabilities to address emerging threats and changing geopolitical circumstances.

### ***Differences***

The FSD and ID may vary in their specific interpretations and implementation by different countries. The terminology can differ on



the basis of a state's strategic culture, threat perceptions, and national security requirements. This sums up that countries adopt certain policies and strategies according to their nature of conflict, capabilities, security environment, technological prowess, or any other threat prevalent in line with their national security.

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan's nuclear doctrine is sensitive to significant regional strategic developments and fine-tuned to respond to India's aggressive designs. It is a source of regional stability and will continue to evolve and maintain its efficacy in the future, given the changing strategic landscape, the advancements in nuclear weapons or their delivery means, or any other proactive designs being developed by the adversary. This doctrine will continue to deter aggression to maintain peace and strategic stability in South Asia. This rationalized approach, based on the full spectrum deterrence strategy, is designed to dissuade a potential adversary, and encompasses countering strategic, operational, or tactical threats. Pakistan's continuous efforts to enhance its command and control structure exhibit that the technology is in safe hands. Completing the nuclear triad demonstrates Pakistan's commitment to maintaining a credible and robust deterrence posture. It sends a clear message to potential adversaries that any aggression or attempt to undermine Pakistan's security will be met with a strong and effective response. Furthermore, the ambiguity surrounding Pakistan's nuclear arsenal contributes to its deterrent effect. By not disclosing the exact details of its nuclear capabilities, Pakistan aims to preserve a certain level of strategic surprise and ambiguity, which can complicate the adversary's decision-making process and deter them from taking any provocative actions. Pakistan could have benefitted from the civil application of this nuclear technology if the aggressive neighbor had not been outrageous. Overall, while the efficacy of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine is subject to regional dynamics and evolving security circumstances, its commitment to credible minimum deterrence by not indulging in an arms race, and efforts to strengthen command and control structures, contribute to maintaining regional deterrence stability.