

Current Affairs

Pakistan - India Nuclear Stand off

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1 Introduction:

A boiling point in 2025

Pakistan-India conflict, long characterized by periodic hostilities and enriched rivalry, has entered a perilous chapter in 2025, marked by high-tech warfare, aggressive posturing and renewed fears of nuclear conflict. With heavy artillery exchanges, drone warfare and airstrikes on both sides of the line of control (LoC), the situation has escalated dangerously. As both nations possess nuclear arsenals, the world watches anxiously, wondering whether will hold or crumble under mounting pressure.

2 Historical Backdrop:

From Partition to proliferation.

The root of Indo-Pakistani hostility lies in the partition of 1947, which led to Kashmir dispute and successive wars in 1947-48, 1965 and 1971. These confrontations bred a security dilemma, deepening mistrust

and encouraging both states to pursue nuclear weapons. As Cohen observed,

'The security of one is the insecurity of the other'

3- Kashmir :

The Faultline of conflict

The Kashmir dispute remains the core of the rivalry. The 2019 revocation of Article 370.

by India stripped Jammu and Kashmir of its special status, prompting sharp criticism from Pakistan. Since then, ceasefire violations and militant activity have continued with Kashmir acting as a perennial trigger for conflict escalation. As noted in recent reports, civilian casualties and military mobilization have become regular features along the LoC.

Year 4-1998 Nuclear Test:

3

The Dawn of deterrence

In May 1998, India conducted five nuclear tests under **Pokhran-II**. Just two weeks later, Pakistan responded with **Chagai I and II**, detonating six nuclear devices. This

Overt nuclearization turned a regional rivalry into a global nuclear flashpoint. Both nations justified their actions on the basis of deterrence and strategic balance. Yet, nuclear possession did not reduce tensions, it complicated them. As stated in **Carnegie endowment report (2021)**

South Asia's nuclear dyad is unique in its volatility and frequency of crisis?

5. Divergent doctrines:

Cold start vs full spectrum deterrence

India's post-2001 doctrine evolved into the **cold start doctrine (CSD)** - a strategy for launching rapid, limited conventional strikes into Pakistani

territory. In response Pakistan adopted full spectrum deterrence, which includes tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) like Nasr missile. This asymmetry has increased crisis instability while India follows a No first use (NFU) Policy, Pakistan reserves the right to first use, especially if faced with a major conventional threat. The strategic gap ~~pre~~ creates a doctrine-dogma deadlock, raising the risk of miscalculation.

• Pakistan's tactical nukes dangerously blur the line between conventional and nuclear warfare?

- C. Christine Fair

American political
scientist.

6. Escalatory episodes:

From Kargil to Pulwama and Beyond.

1. Kargil war (1999): Fought under the nuclear shadow. India avoided crossing the LoC, fearing escalation.

2. Twin Peaks crisis (2001-02): Mobilization of nearly 1 million troops. War was averted through US mediation and nuclear brinkmanship.

4- Mumbai attack (2008): Despite public outrage, India refrained from retaliation, showcasing the effectiveness, but also constraint of deterrence.

4- Pulwama - Balakot (2019): Marked the first Indian airstrike inside mainland Pakistan. The downing of fighter jets by both sides heightened fears of escalation.

"Deterrence worked, but by the narrowest of margins"

- Michael Krepon

7- The 2025 escalation: Drones, airstrikes and civilian toll.

On May 6-7, 2025, India launched drone strikes and air raids on civilians of Azad Kashmir, killing 30+ civilians, including women and children. Pakistan retaliated by downing 5 aircrafts and 29 drones. The use of Israeli Harop drones and precision guided munitions marks a shift towards automated warfare, increasing the risk of accidental escalation and misinterpretation.

0
e Modern drone warfare removes the human filter from battlefield decisions, making miscalculations more likely'

- Global Crisis Watch
2025.

8 Strategic Stability or First-strike Instability?

Recent studies shows a shift in India's doctrine towards counterforce capabilities, including BrahMos missiles, Agni-V with MIRVs and high precision cruise missiles, raising the specter of preemptive ^{first} strikes. Pakistan's submarine-based Babur III adds complexity, but its reliability is questionable, increasing chances of inadvertent launch or command breakdown.

e The credibility of deterrence relies not just on capacity, but on clarity and communication'

- Vipin Narang.

- Civilian Impact: Fear, displacement and Psychological Trauma

The 2025 crisis has had a devastating impact on civilian populations. In Pakistan's Punjab, schools have been closed; in Indian-administered Kashmir, life is paralyzed. Civilians live under the constant threat of artillery and drone strikes. Over 31 civilian deaths were recorded in one night - highlighting the human cost of strategic warfare.

10. Global mediation and International diplomacy

Global actors including the UN, USA and China have urged restraint. The U.S role in 2001 and 2019 was pivotal in preventing war. However, international pressure alone cannot replace institutionalized dialogue and bilateral crisis management mechanisms.

'It is not arms, but diplomacy that prevents war in a nuclear world'

- Strobe Talbot.

11- Solutions: De-escalation through dialogue and deterrence management.

Revive composite dialogue



focus on Kashmir, water sharing and cross-border terrorism. Resume secretary-level talks.

Strategic Restraint regime



Agree on non-deployment of TNW's, missile limits and no first-use clarification

CBMs and crisis Hotlines



Strengthen DGMO communication pre-notification of military exercises and hotlines.

Track-II and Academic Diplomacy



Engage retired military, strategic experts and academic circles to build trust beyond formal state structures.

Regional cooperation



Use SAARC or SCO platforms to address shared security and climate threats.

9/12 Critical Analysis: Deterrence fatigue and the mirage of stability. ⁶

The ²⁰²⁵ escalation proves that: deterrence without diplomacy breeds disaster. While nuclear weapons have prevented all out war, they have not ensured peace. The introduction of drones, tactical nukes and AI is undermining traditional deterrence logic. As the threshold between conventional and nuclear war narrows, reliance on old strategies become suicidal.

Moreover, civilian population have become silent victims and global power remain selective in intervention, prioritizing strategic alliances over humanitarian needs.

"What we are seeing is not the failure of deterrence, but its evolution into something more volatile and less controllable"

- SIRRI Analysis (2025).

13- Conclusion: fragile peace or looming catastrophe?

The 2025 India - Pakistan standoff is not just a regional crisis, it's a test case for 21st century nuclear diplomacy. The path ahead must be paved with dialogue, restraint and humanitarian sensitivity. The world must not wait for mushroom cloud to realize the cost of inaction.

"Nuclear peace is not permanent peace, it is merely borrowed time"
- Henry Kissinger.