



# Entanglement and the Risk of Nuclear Escalation: The Case of India & Pakistan

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- **How many of you think India and Pakistan will get into a military conflict in next decade?**
  - **How many of you think it could escalate into a nuclear exchange?**
  - **Where you stand depends on where you sit.....**

# Existential Risks with NWs – Common to all NW possessors

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- **Possibility of Nuclear Use**
  - **Deliberate nuclear exchange**
    - **Least likely**
  - **Inadvertent nuclear use**
    - **Stumbling into nuclear war**
  - **Unauthorised nuclear use**
    - **More likely with delegated C2 - TNWs**
  - **Mistaken nuclear use**
    - **Fog of war**



# India - Pak Complex Nuclear Env't

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- **Two geographically contiguous nuc powers with terr disputes & history of wars**
- **Growing nuclear arsenals & capabilities based on different nuclear doctrines**
- **Pak use of terrorism as state instrument**
- **Risk of NSAs causing crises or escalation during crises**
- **Robust China – Pak proliferation**



# **Aim of this Talk**

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- **How real is the risk of escalation?**
  - **Nature of Pak nuclear strategy**
- **How does India manage the risks?**
  - **Conduct of conv ops in nuclear shadow**
  - **India's nuclear doctrine**
- **Potential developments that could undermine/strengthen strategic stability**
  - **Technological advancements**
  - **Political dimensions**

# PAKISTAN'S Nuclear Strategy





# Role of Pak Nuclear Weapons

- **Strategic Equalizer**
- **Shield against Indian military response to acts of terrorism**
- **Nuclear deterrence – most prosaic function**





# Pak Nuclear Strategy

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- **Deter conventional conflict with Indian mil while itself continuing terrorism**
- **Deliberate projection of uncertain behaviour**
  - **Brinksmanship thru uncertainty & projected irrationality**
- **Play up the nuclear shadow**
  - **Deter India from conv ops**
  - **Play on Western fears**



Don't dare to touch me...  
I have Nuclear power...

SURGICAL OPERATION

56 INCH

NUCLEAR POWER

TERRORISM

PAK

1971

We are not Myanmar, we are a nuclear nation. Pak warns India

# Pak Nuclear Strategy

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- “Escalate to de-escalate”– use of TNWs
  - Low yield, short range, battlefield wpns
- Fit in perfectly with Pak nuc strategy
  - Lowered threshold of nuc use to deny space for conv ops
  - No illusions about mil effectiveness of TNW
  - Not seeking to redress battlefield balance *through use of TNW*
  - Seeking to deter conv ops *through threat of use of TNW & prospect of escalation of conflict*



# India's Dilemma

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- **How to respond to terrorism?**
  - **Traditional defensive strategy**
  - **Politico-diplomatic strategy**
    - **Needs international cooperation**
  - **Offensive action through conv ops**
    - **Need to make NWs redundant to conv ops thru calibrated use of force**
      - **Surgical strikes**
      - **Precision use of airpower**

# How does India handle risk of nuclear escalation? - Doctrine of No First Use

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## Helpful for crisis stability

- Relieves ‘use or lose’ pressures
- Raises likelihood of no use of NWs

## Helpful in arms race stability

- Reduced arsenal requirements
  - No need for first strike wpns for counterforce
  - No need for elaborate & delegated C2
  - No need for nuc superiority

# Potential Risk Escalating Devps

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## Technological

- **Deployment of TNWs by Pak with delegated C2/ NWs on ships**
- **Pursuit of BMD by India**
- **Move towards counterforce cap in region**
  - **Induction of MIRVs**
  - **Growing accuracy of ballistic & dual use cruise missiles**
  - **R&D on hypersonics**
- **Growing space based capabilities**
- **Cyber challenges to C2**

# Potential Risk Escalating Devps

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## Political

- **Pak continued use of terrorism**
- **Shadow of China's growing mil capabilities on India**
- **China-Pak collusion**
- **Lack of trust inducing experiences**
  - **Lahore MoU, Kargil ('99), Parliament('01), Mumbai ('08), Pathankot ('16)**

# Potential Risk Lowering Devps

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## Technological

- **Increased confidence in survivability of second strike forces**
  - **Operationalisation of SSBNs**
  - **Hardened shelters - Tunnels**
  - **C2 redundancies**



# Potential Risk Lowering Devps

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## Political

- **Equal sense of existential dangers**
  - **Shared interest in minimising instability, not Pak belief that it can ‘manage instability’**
- **Understanding basic nature of NWs & nuclear deterrence**
  - **Distinct from conv weapons**
  - **Suitable for deterrence not war-fighting**
  - **Pre-emptive nuc attack can still not win war**
- **India-China nuclear arms control**



# India – China Nuclear Relations

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- **General sense of nuclear stability**
  - **‘Similar’ nuclear doctrines**
  - **Focus of both on eco growth & devp**
  - **High bilateral economic trade**
  - **Many levels of political engagement**
  - **Mutual vulnerability to ‘unacceptable damage’**

# **India – China Worrisome Trends**

- **Growing nuc & other mil capabilities**
  - **Cyber, Space, EW, accurate conv missiles**
- **Lack of clarity on intentions**
- **Low interest in settling terr issues**
  - **Nettlesome behaviour on Arunachal Pradesh**
  - **Incursions across LAC**
- **Relationship with Pakistan**

# Some possible NRRMs

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- **Permanent commn channels on nuclear issues**
- **Formalizing low alert status of NWs**
- **Exchange of info on nuc safety & security practices**
- **Joint study on effects of nuc explosions on modern cities**
- **NAC to eliminate destabilizing classes of nuclear missiles – SRBMs/MIRVed**
- **Trilateral ABM type of treaty?**