

Nuclear Strategy and Regional Stability in Southern Asia

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Introduction

In the first week of November 2015, the Chicago based *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reported that Pakistan currently had a nuclear weapons stockpile of 110 to 130 warheads, which could realistically grow to 220 to 250 warheads by 2025, making it the world's fifth largest nuclear weapons state. The report projected such estimates taking into account 'Pakistan's performance over the past 20 years and its current and anticipated weapons deployments.'¹ This comes at a time when Pakistan's policymakers have been constantly signalling about the role of tactical nuclear weapons in a conventional war against India. This renewed the debate on the necessary changes in the Indian nuclear doctrine to counter this threat. Infact, after the official announcement of an eight-point Nuclear Doctrine by India in 2003, there have been numerous calls for important changes in the doctrine. Such calls for a change in the nuclear posture projected by the doctrine often get louder in a deteriorating security environment. Remarkably, successive Indian governments have resisted any changes to the nuclear doctrine announced in 2003 which maintains a strict No-First Use (NFU) and attainment of universal nuclear disarmament as a 'national security objective'.

One of the reasons for this status quo is that India's nuclear doctrine is not Pakistan-centric. Though Pakistan is a factor in India's nuclear strategy, it is China, the strongest nuclear power in southern Asia that is a key factor in any strategic calculation by India. Interestingly,

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