

Pakistan & Tactical Nuclear Weapons

What is the issue?

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- Pakistan today has the world's fastest growing nuclear stockpile, according to a report published in 2015.

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- A majority of nuclear warheads produced by Pakistan in the last decade are thought to be low-yield tactical nuclear weapons (TNW).

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How Pakistan's dynamics of Tactical Nuclear Weapons changed?

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- Though the Indian Army had long refrained from formally accepting "**Cold Start**" as a professed strategy of the armed forces, the recent statement of India's army chief acknowledged the existence of Cold Start.

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- The main objective of the Cold Start Doctrine is to launch a retaliatory conventional strike against Pakistan inflicting significant harm on the Pakistan Army before any international community could intercede, but not in way Pakistan would be provoked to make a nuclear attack but to bring it to bargain.

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- Pakistan as a result has shifted its own doctrine from **strategic deterrence** to what it calls **full spectrum deterrence**.

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- In essence, this means Pakistan's willingness to adopt a nuclear first use policy in a tactical environment.

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- In this scenario, the burden of the Pakistani posture would be on **first-strike capabilities** in a limited theater setting using tactical battlefield weapons.

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What are the shortcomings of TNW's?

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- TNW have the ability to end a conflict or at least de-escalate the engagement.

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- However, just because TNWs were an effective deterrent during the Cold War in a European setting does not mean that this can replicated in South Asia.

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- The use of TNWs against an enemy force on its own soil would also have tremendous repercussions for Pakistan.

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- It may result in killing large chunks of its own population in the event of sudden crisis.

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- The entire strategic game plan would fail if India decides to respond by using its own strategic weapons against Pakistan's main cities.

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- The expected destruction of enemy forces as a result of the use of TNWs may not be sufficient to either end the conflict or deescalate it.

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- Pakistan claims to have made significant improvement in its nuclear security environment, but there are no independent reports which can sufficiently verify these claims.

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- **The gradual radicalization of the Pakistani army** over the past three decades poses a grave danger to Pakistan's nuclear security in terms of insider threats. The gravest threat to Pakistan's nuclear weapons is posed by this **insider-jihadi collaboration**.

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What should be done?

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- Pakistan takes immense pride in its nuclear capability, which is indeed formidable.
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- But it is time Pakistan conveyed its nuclear maturity by talking more about its nuclear security provisions.
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- Such debates would create awareness amongst the Pakistani masses about their **individual responsibility** toward their country's nuclear arsenal.
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- It would also deter attempts by non-state actors to involve the local population in any sabotage attempts against nuclear facilities.
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- Pakistan needs to appreciate that a robust and impregnable security system is essential not only for its own nuclear stability, but also for global peace and security.
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Source: The Diplomat

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