



**Book Review:**

**India's Evolving Deterrent Force Posturing in South Asia: Temptation for Pre-Emptive Strikes, Power Projection, and Escalation Dominance (By Zulfqar Khan & Zafar Khan).**

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This book examines India's progress in its deterrence force posture that makes up its grand nuclear strategy in South Asia and the challenges it poses to its Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance (*ISR*). It discusses impediments to India's Command, Control, Communication, and Intelligence (*C3I*) and transcends existing literature by providing a detailed conceptual framework on India revamping its deterrent force posture and how this affects its nuclear strategy. It also covers implications for South Asian strategic stability, India's "surgical strikes" and counterforce targeting strategies.

This book is divided into ten chapters and thoroughly explains India's force posture and New Delhi's inclusion of sophisticated nuclear weapons. This includes an investigation into the nuclear revolution and an analysis of whether any other military strategies from the competing states will shape the region in the nuclear age.

The introductory chapter lays out the format of the entire book and explains the following chapter succinctly. The second chapter focuses on South Asian nuclear revolution in the South Asia and India's acquisition of advanced weapons and precision-based delivery systems. It also analyzes the adoption of different military tactics and upgradation of India's deterrence posture. Additionally, it highlights counter measures developed by China and Pakistan in response.

The concept of the nuclear revolution theory is also tested and explored in the book. It contends that despite competing military strategies, the consequences of weapons of mass destruction and mutual assured destruction prevented Pakistan and India from escalation. The third chapter states that the likelihood of a conflict between the two countries is steadily growing by examining contributing factors that increase tensions such as military strategies and the adoption of advanced technologies. This chapter also discusses geopolitical transformations and its effect on South Asian security and states that India's hegemonic nature enables it to develop an offensive Cold Start Doctrine which Pakistan being compelled into adopting a "full-spectrum" nuclear deterrence strategy.

The fourth chapter of the book, examines inequities between Pakistan and India in terms of economics, geopolitics, and military strength. It discusses emerging geostrategic and security

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transformations impacting both South Asia and the Indian Ocean. It contends that India is attempting to develop a powerful naval capability with the help of the US to counter China and concludes by forecasting that the security problems between the two countries will worsen due to trends with Pakistan having to address 21<sup>st</sup> century maritime challenges due to enhanced US-India strategic partnerships.

The fifth chapter explores India's maritime strategies in the Indian Ocean and efforts to strengthen power and dominance. It discusses the potential consequences of recalibration of its no-first-use policy and pursuance of limited war strategies without realizing the escalation of crisis. On the other hand, Pakistan is considered to be strengthening its full spectrum deterrence to prevent India from operationalizing its flawed strategies.

Chapter six states that India's DRDO is developing strategic force projects to increase deterrence capabilities. Its short-range missiles are tailored for counterforce operations, while its intermediate-range missiles are intended for counter value objectives and are primarily developed for Pakistan but can also be used against China. India is developing long-range missiles including ICBMs to give it power projection capabilities and a bargaining chip with adversaries. This potentially increases the arms race in the absence of a minimum deterrence policy and increases the risk of miscalculations and nuclear war. It further states that in order for Pakistan to combat internal issues, it must utilize state-of-the-art, advanced technologies that are suitable for modern warfare. This will help tackle fifth-generation and future warfare challenges.

Chapter seven looks at the effects of India's missile system on its own force posture and on South Asian deterrence stability. It examines military strategies of South Asian nuclear rivals and the potential for a unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests. It discusses India's Cold Start Doctrine and Pakistan's response of the Nasr missile and urges both states to exercise restraint and establish a moratorium on nuclear weapons while also creating a Strategic Restraint Regime (*SRR*).

In the eighth chapter, the Pulwama incident is analyzed and considered an example of limited retaliatory strikes being executed which can lead to the use of nuclear weapons. The chapter also deems the Kashmir issue to be a nuclear flashpoint with the need for the US to play a balancing role to offset tensions. The author suggests that there should be a combination of confidence-building measures in order to foster trust and avoid escalation.

The ninth chapter argues that although nuclear weapons helped in avoiding large scale wars, they have not prevented the outbreak of small-scale conflicts. This chapter suggests that strategic force posturing needs to be monitored wisely in order to avoid such a risk and CBMS and NCMBMS must be introduced.

The final section of the book delves into analyzing Indian modernization trajectory, which involves a shift towards a pre-emptive counterforce strike strategy which will have an impact on its policies and compel Pakistan to devise a counter-strategy to fill any deterrence gaps.

The book is an excellent addition on literature pertaining to the current nuclear posture of India. It engages the reader by explaining different incidents that serve as empirical evidence which supplements the theoretical framework proposed. It examines how regional and extra regional links of both India and Pakistan, the introduction of sophisticated technologies, ballistic missile

defense systems, maritime expansions, and conflicting geo-economic interests impact the region's security dilemma. The authors suggest that mediation by an external third party can avert the risk of an accidental war in South Asia.

Although many studies have discussed the concept of strategic stability in South Asia, this book concentrates on an area overlooked: the influence of India's changing strategic force posture however, force posture has gained a broader definition in today's complex security environment which could have been further emphasized in the book. This book is beneficial for academics, scholars and researchers who are keen to study the dynamics of South Asia and is a valuable addition for policy makers and individuals who are concerned with international affairs and security studies.