

The in 1998, the indo-
pak theater has often



The simmering Indo-Pak rivalry and dangers of an Armageddon were epitomized by the recent war of words between the militaries of both countries. "We will call the nuclear bluff of Pakistan.

If we will have to really confront the Pakistanis, and a task is given to us, we are not going to say we cannot cross the border because they have nuclear weapons. We will have to call their nuclear bluff," said the Indian Army Chief, General Bipin Rawat while delivering the annual Army Day lecture. Expectedly, the spokesman of the Pakistan Army, Major General Asif Ghafoor retorted and said: "Well, it's their choice.

Should they wish to test our resolve they may try and see it for themselves. The only thing stopping them is our credible nuclear deterrence." The Indian version of "fire and fury" and the quick rejoinder by Pakistan, are causes of concern for watchers of the region's security dynamics. There is also why incendiary statements from the makers and executioners of security policies in India and Pakistan, can lead to crisis instability: Pakistan's ambiguous nuclear threshold. Changing threat perceptions and bellicosity are making a strong case for Pakistan to hasten its evolution toward a War-fighting nuclear doctrine. Deterrence through Ambiguity: Undefined Redlines After the overt nuclearization of South Asia in 1998, the Indo-Pak theater has often been referred to as a nuclear flashpoint owing to the continuation of casus belli in shape of the Kashmir conflict.

However, the possession of what Bernard Brodie called the "absolute weapons" has deterred both countries from escalating skirmishes from the tactical and sub-strategic levels to conflicts at the higher end of the

conflictspectrums. A flared-up Line ofControl(LoC) or Working Boundary for that matter, cannot point toward thefailure of strategic deterrence but shows that there is space for carrying outmilitary engagements below the N-threshold. This compels us to highlight theimportance of the highly-touted nuclear threshold. While even a cursory look atIndia's NuclearDoctrinegives a lucid indication of India's assimilation of the No-First-Use Policy, Pakistan has left an element of ambiguity as regards its nuclear doctrine andred lines. As a weaker state that is still beset with the colossal events of1971 and India's role in them, Pakistan has adopted deterrence throughambiguity. Pakistan's former COAS, General Aslam Beg was a firmbeliever in using ambiguity to enhance deterrence.

According to then spearhead of theStrategic Plans Division(SPD). Lt. Gen Khalid Kidwai, Pakistan will use nuclearweapons if four thresholds are reached. Loss of large parts of territory(spatial threshold); destruction of large parts of land or air forces(militarythreshold); economic and political thresholds.

At best, these red lines are not definedand in the event of a conflict, may be lowered depending on the dynamics on theground. It is noteworthy to mention a few aspects of the Cold Start Doctrineand their effect on the escalation ladder. With sharpness asits defining feature, Cold Start calls forreshuffling the old Holding and Strike corps. The former would create shallowbridgeheads into Pakistani territory. It would be followed by Integrated BattleGroups (IBGs) attacking along various axes to further ingress inside Pakistan. Thereafter, in tandem with air support the 3-strike corps would concentrate onfirepower. In order to avoid a nuclear retaliation,

forces will bite and hold territory up to 25 kilometers inside Pakistan. Cold Start has the propensity to reach the spatial and military threshold; hence, despite running the risk of deriding strategic deterrence, the TNWs do provide Pakistan with a cushion at.

lower rungs of the ladder. A War-fighting Doctrine? Despite not enunciating an official nuclear doctrine, Pakistan had one based on Credible Minimum Deterrence and First-Use policy. Both of these constants had suited Pakistan's meager resources and lack of geographical depth. However, as Moltke's military adage says: "Every plan meets that of enemy," Pakistan brought about dynamism in its doctrine, ostensibly to fill the deterrence gap. During a talk at the Carnegie Endowment for International , Lt. Gen Khalid Kidwai, widely-regarded as the country's doyen in nuclear strategy, asserted the importance of Full Spectrum Deterrence in great detail.

He said: "What they (Indians) were finding attractive, and what was probably encouraging them to find the space for conventional war, below this gap, was the absence of a complete spectrum of deterrence, if I may. That is what we have been calling the Full Spectrum Deterrence. Kidwai's lecture came on the heels of the successful test launch of Shaheen III surface to surface ballistic missile, capable of delivering nuclear and conventional warheads at a distance of 2,750 . Kidwai said that the missile could reach the prospective strategic bases in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The utterance from the man who had remained in the thick of things, amplified the fact that Pakistan is treading toward a war-fighting nuclear doctrine. Last January, Pakistan's successful tests of the Submarine Launched Cruise Missile , Babar III and the surface-to-surface MRBM Ababeel missile, were definite steps towards

bolstering the country's second-strike capabilities. The ability to withstand a first strike and then retaliate is not only a linchpin to deterrence but is a cornerstone of a war-fighting strategy.

Pakistan's quest for Full Spectrum Deterrence is commensurate with mounting threats from its eastern neighbor. As long as both countries will not have an assured second-strike capability, verbal references to nuclear clashes will only lead to crisis instability, something that can result in rapturing the even-otherwise tenuous strategic stability in South Asia