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CENTRE FOR PEACE, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES



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IN-HOUSE SESSION REPORT

NUCLEAR ISSUES IN SOUTH ASIA

FULL SPECTRUM DETERRENCE DOCTRINE

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INTRODUCTION

Since the division of the subcontinent, the relations between India and Pakistan have been unstable. The hostility between the two major countries of South Asia has led to the nuclearization of the region. In response to the shifting global and regional dynamics, the two countries have also made key changes in their doctrine. In this backdrop, Centre for Peace, Security and Developmental Studies (CPSD) organized an interactive session on nuclear issues in South Asia. Dr. Rabia Akhtar, Director, Centre for Security, Strategy and Policy Research, University of Lahore was the guest speaker for the session.

AGENDA

The session was aimed to complement the knowledge of evolving global security paradigms and the nuclear force posture in South Asia. The session was planned to enhance understanding of nuclear doctrines of India and Pakistan, vis-à-vis security of South Asian region. It was also focused to understand Pakistan's response strategy to the existential security threats through its deterrence capability.

PROCEEDINGS

At the beginning of the session, Dr. Rabia Akhtar emphasized the significance of deterrence and quoted Bernard Brodie's statement that states cannot afford the failure of deterrence, because its failure will result into chaos and destruction. While talking about nuclear issues of South Asia, she maintained that Pakistan's full spectrum doctrine program is comprised of three elements which include strategic deterrence, operational deterrence, and full coverage of Indian mass on South Asian territories. Strategically Pakistan's deterrence program provides full spectrum choices of targets, Dr. Rabia said. She emphasized the flexibility of Pakistan's deterrence doctrine in the context of evolving security situation driven by India's continuous modernization of weapons. Furthermore, she said that the post-Pulwama situation should be viewed in reference to the four thresholds in Pakistan's nuclear deterrence doctrine, namely space threshold, military threshold, economic threshold, and domestic destabilization threshold. She clarified that, contrary to popular belief, Balakot attack passes none of these thresholds and, hence, Pakistan's deterrence has not yet failed.

Dr. Rabia shared six points on Pakistan's full spectrum doctrine. First, she said that in the recent standoff between India and Pakistan, it was misperceived that Pakistan's deterrence capability did not work and India launched attack on Pakistan's territory. She maintained that validity of deterrence will always remain intact until India captures Pakistani territory which does not get a response from Pakistan. Second, she was of the view that attack from India won't be an existential threat, because from the point of retaliation till the decision of nuclear response, there is a room for limited warfare. Third, she said that there is a perception that conventional imbalance will force Pakistan to resort to a nuclear reaction. She contested this perception and said that Pakistan's response in recent tensions demonstrated it has strike back capability. Fourth, she emphasized on the capability of Pakistan's missile strike in retaliation to any Indian missile strike. Fifth, Dr. Rabia discussed India's moving position from no first use and the placement of strategic assets in the region. She emphasized that both countries should negotiate and review their position in terms of placement of these assets so that possible accidental escalations could be avoided. The talk was followed by a Question and Answer session which highlighted the pertinent

points of the subject. Mr. Umer Khan, Executive Director CPSD concluded the session with a vote of thanks.

CONCLUSION

The session was a successful undertaking and it highlighted the different aspects of the current challenges of the nuclear arms race in South Asia. It also enlightened the participants on the security challenges to Pakistan and possible responses options available before the government.

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