



**Seventh IISS-Centre for International  
Strategic Studies (CISS) (Pakistan)  
Workshop on 'South Asian Strategic  
Stability: Deterrence, Nuclear Weapons  
and Arms Control'**

Thursday, 6 February 2020, 0950-1050 hrs  
IISS, London

**Keynote Address and Discussion Session with  
Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai, Advisor,  
National Command Authority; and former  
Director-General, Strategic Plans Division, Pakistan**  
*Chair: Desmond Bowen, Associate Fellow, IISS*

**[Watch the full video here](#)**

## *Keynote Address as delivered*

Ladies and gentlemen. Good morning to all of you. I am indeed very grateful to the IISS, London and CISS, Islamabad for honouring me once again to deliver the keynote address at the annual joint workshop of the two prestigious think tanks. The focus in these workshops remains on the by now elusive 'Strategic Stability in South Asia'. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of some of the best brains in the business, South Asia has remained on a slippery slope over the years lurching dangerously towards strategic instability rather than strategic stability. When I use word 'strategic' in my address, I do not imply nuclear stability alone, but refer to the much larger and wholesome concept of strategic stability encompassing in its fold, the many elements of national power and strategy.

At the outset, I would like to begin by stating what today is an South Asian reality; the reality is that it is Pakistan that must shoulder the responsibility of maintaining the vital strategic balance in the conventional and nuclear equation with India as the critical determinant of the state of strategic stability in South Asia. If Pakistan were to allow imbalances to be introduced in the strategic equation, South

Asia would list towards serious strategic instability. This in turn would lead to catastrophic consequences in view of India's historically persistent and insatiable drive for regional domination especially given India's current irrational, unstable and belligerent internal and external policies. By default, over the decades therefore, it has been a Pakistani responsibility not to allow the South Asian strategic stability to be disturbed to its disadvantage despite India's repeated efforts to make it unstable. And, here I would like to show with evidence that Pakistan has fulfilled its responsibility with appropriate strategic responses at every swing of the instability-stability pendulum in South Asia.

Amongst many others, I will briefly recount India's seven major destabilising strategic steps in the last fifty years, which on the average amount to one major destabilising step every seven years, and the corresponding Pakistani response in each case to redress the instability:

Case 1: In the seventies, immediately after the 1971 War, India conducted its first nuclear test in May 1974 altering the tenuous strategic balance in South Asia to its advantage. While India played the farce of calling it a peaceful nuclear explosion, Pakistan responded by embarking on a nuclear weapons programme of its own, as the only strategic way of redressing the induced strategic instability. Pakistan succeeded in its efforts and the rest is history.

Case 2: In the eighties, in 1986-87, without provocation, India massed its army and air force complete with weapons and ammunition on Pakistan's borders under the garb of Exercise Brasstacks, in an operational posture threatening mainland Pakistan's north-to-south lines of communications in the desert sectors. In response, Pakistan not only counter-mobilised its conventional forces strongly on the international borders, but further, dropped hints of a nuclear capability coming into play, for the first time

introducing the rudimentary concept of nuclear deterrence in South Asia. as a balancing factor in a relatively asymmetrical operational environment. India blinked and strategic stability was restored.

Case 3: In the nineties India upped the ante and introduced in its strategic inventory ballistic missiles *Prithvi* and *Agni* as short and medium range nuclear delivery systems covering the length and breadth of Pakistan. The resultant instability compelled Pakistan to respond through the development of the *Ghaznavi*, *Shaheen* and the *Ghauri* ballistic missiles ensuring that the vast geographical dimensions of the Indian peninsula came within the Pakistani strategic range. The Indian attempt to introduce strategic instability was adequately checked.

Case 4: More importantly, also in the nineties, India came out in to the open and transited from a so-called peaceful nuclear state to an overt nuclear weapon state by conducting five nuclear tests in May 1998. These were followed immediately by immature political threats at responsible levels to drive home the point of the strategic balance having swung in India's favour. Pakistan's response is now part of the history of the South Asian strategic paradigm. Pakistan confidently responded by conducting six nuclear tests within two weeks of the Indian tests and restored the strategic balance.

Case 5: In the first decade of this century, the Indian military, having lost the advantage of relative asymmetry in conventional forces because of Pakistan's nuclear equaliser, and also having failed to coerce Pakistan in 2001-02 despite the ten months full scale military deployment of Operation Parakaram, conceived and operationalised the provocative Cold Start Doctrine, between 2005 and 2010, as a possible solution to regain the strategic advantage in a limited war scenario. It formally admitted in 2014 to the existence of the Cold Start Doctrine after a ten years state of denial. This in an environment of a

nuclear overhang in South Asia in an attempt to find space for limited conventional war against an established nuclear power. In the face of this destabilising development, Pakistan took corresponding operational, doctrinal and force developmental measures both in the conventional as well as nuclear fields, including the establishment of a Full Spectrum Deterrence regime, in order to ensure that strategic stability in South Asia remained on an even keel. As a consequence, the Cold Start Doctrine stayed neutralised, nuclear deterrence holds, and informed strategists consider large-scale wars on the international borders as a thing of the past.

Case 6: In February last year [2019], as if to maintain the dubious track record of its consistent attempts to induce strategic instability, this time linked to seeking political and electoral advantage for the BJP, India embarrassed itself by undertaking an unsuccessful air strike at Balakot, in mainland Pakistan, crossing the red line of the international boundary. In the process, there was much chest thumping in the Indian strategic circles about having called Pakistan's nuclear bluff, which in my judgment was a very poor conclusion. I will have more to say on that later. However, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) responded the next day through a carefully calibrated response in two ways. First, it struck with precision the unmanned flanks of three ground targets in the Rajouri Sector, so as not to cause casualties and spared the senior hierarchy of the Indian military present at one of the targets. Second, the PAF humiliated the Indian Air Force (IAF), by shooting down two IAF fighters and capturing one pilot, not to mention the IAF's fratricide in shooting down one of its own helicopters resulting in seven deaths. The two actions drove home the point strongly that Pakistan would forever continue to disallow strategic instability to become a norm. Strategic stability was restored and no new normal was allowed to prevail.

Case 7: A point that runs as a scarlet thread through the last five decades as a

constant, is the fact of large scale budgetary allocations aimed at massive induction of equipment and technology and expansion in India's three conventional armed services, its nuclear forces on land, air and sea, as also a dangerous reach in space. It would be accurate to conclude that these allocations and inductions keep South Asia in a perpetual state of strategic instability. However, because Pakistan consciously will not indulge in a conventional arms race except to seek qualitative upgrades, it is compelled to seek security and strategic stability, by investing in appropriate nuclear weapons through quality, quantity, doctrines and the concept of Full Spectrum Deterrence. Pakistan's response of strengthening its Full Spectrum Deterrence in an operational environment of relative conventional asymmetry is therefore apt and ensures that South Asia will remain strategically stable.

A very important ingredient in the need for retention of strategic stability in South Asia, is that Pakistan has ensured seamless integration between nuclear strategy and conventional military strategy, in order to achieve the desired outcomes in the realms of peacetime deterrence, pre-war deterrence, as also in intra-war deterrence, if the adversary, having drawn the wrong conclusions, challenges the very foundations of the deterrence theory. This is especially relevant today post-Pulwama and Balakot, because there are people in important places in India's strategic circles who have drawn dangerously wrong conclusions about what they are referring to as Pakistan's nuclear bluff.

I would like to caution that it would be a serious professional folly on their part to consider that a single air strike, that too conducted most unprofessionally, would render Pakistan's robust nuclear deterrence a bluff. Pakistan's nuclear capability operationalised under the well-articulated policy of Full Spectrum Deterrence comprises of a large variety of strategic,

operational and tactical nuclear weapons, on land, air and sea, which are designed to comprehensively deter large-scale aggression against mainland Pakistan.

As amply demonstrated during the February stand-off, Pakistan's nuclear weapons continue to serve the purpose for which they were developed, on a daily and hourly basis, by compelling India's political and military leaders to craft a politico-military strategy, taking into consideration Pakistan's real time nuclear capability. While developing operational plans the Indian planners make deliberate effort to skirt around the Pakistani nuclear capability and nuclear thresholds. Official India, I hope, does not take Pakistan's nuclear capability as a bluff. It is precisely the presence of these nuclear weapons that deters, and in this specific case, deterred India from expanding operations beyond a single unsuccessful air strike. It is the Full Spectrum Deterrence capability of Pakistan that brings the international community rushing into South Asia to prevent a wider conflagration. That India chose not to proceed further in February is a testimony to not only the humiliation it suffered at the hands of the Pakistan Air Force, but also the cold calculation that nuclear weapons could come into play sooner rather than later. That, ladies and gentlemen, is nuclear deterrence at work and not nuclear bluff.

If India's strategic planners consider Pakistan's Full Spectrum Deterrence as a bluff, whether as a professional assessment or succumb to the irrational pressures of their political masters, and proceed to undertake further military misadventures, as is being threatened at regular intervals by the highest levels of political and military leadership, South Asia, I am afraid is heading into a catastrophic uncharted territory. While hoping that the Indian strategic planners will retain their professional equilibrium and will not be swayed by irresponsible and unprofessional rhetoric of politics, I would like

to state in very clear terms, that nuclear Pakistan's resolve to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir, must never be tested. That might be the minimum lesson to take home from the Balakot-Rajouri skirmish.

Here, I would like to elaborate on a few more aspects of the February 2019 skirmish on the Kashmir Line of Control, as these are pertinent to the larger strategic stability paradigm that we are discussing today. It has been established by independent international analysts that nuclear India's conduct of an air strike against mainland nuclear Pakistan at Balakot, driven perhaps by delusions of Israeli-style air power tactics against Syria, Lebanon and Gaza, but disconnected from the realities of the dominant air operational environment in which Israel operates, was poorly planned and executed by the Indian Air Force. It was playing with fire at the lower end of the nuclear spectrum and Armageddon at the upper end.

It is clear that the strategic and military consequences of an irresponsible political decision for achieving domestic political and electoral advantages supported by poor professional military advice were not thought through or war gamed to their logical conclusion. If they had been, which they ought to have been, not only in the 12 days between Pulwama and Balakot, but indeed as a peacetime contingency planning for years earlier, nuclear India should have concluded that in an active military conflict situation, especially a limited one with nuclear armed Pakistan, while it may be easy to climb the first rung on the escalatory ladder, the second rung would always belong to Pakistan, and that India's choice to move to the third rung would invariably be dangerously problematic in anticipation of the fourth rung response by Pakistan.

Also, that the escalatory rung climbing could not be so neatly choreographed



but could quickly get out of hand and morph into a major war which perhaps nobody wanted but whose outcomes would be disastrous for the region and the globe. This was muddled strategic thinking at its worst. In the process, it challenged the very foundation of strategic stability in South Asia, which is premised on the time-tested concept of restraint and responsibility. The strength of this foundation was put to test by India, but it had to beat a hasty retreat in the face of a determined Pakistani response; status quo ante was restored and no new normal was established.

As opposed to India's strategic recklessness, it was Pakistan's measured response at the politico-military level deliberately avoiding blood and dead bodies and following up with mature statesmanship that saved the day for South Asia and by extension for the world. It is not difficult to imagine the political and military pressures on Pakistan, if India, as it intended to, had actually killed 300-400 Pakistanis during its ill-conceived air strike at Balakot, or thereafter, as reports suggested, continued on a war widening trajectory on the third night and carried out missile strikes which the Indian Prime Minister termed colloquially as '*Qatal Ki Raat*', meaning literally the night of the murder.

There are few parallels of a country possessing nuclear weapons conducting itself with greater irresponsibility than India did against another nuclear-armed country. In an oblique way, one would like to thank the Indian *Spice* Missile targeting programmers and the IAF pilots for their timely incompetence, that ensured that none of the intended targets at Balakot got hit as indeed the loss of nerve by the Indian leadership to carry on further.

Keeping in view Pakistan's declared policy of 'Quid pro Quo Plus' against a limited Indian attack, it was surprising that India itself ended up with surprise on the quality of Pakistan's measured and successful response. As

professional planners, the Indians also should have understood that from there on, the rush to a nuclear crisis was but a few steps away and that there would be no choice for India, but to step back and look for face saving options involving international players, highlighting yet again the centrality of the core issue of Kashmir in South Asia, precisely what India has sought to avoid for decades. Paradoxically, the entire episode has succeeded in bringing the Kashmir dispute as a nuclear flashpoint front and centre on the international stage ever since. This focus has been compounded further by India's inhumane lockdown in Occupied Kashmir since August 2019 and the political revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A.

Continuing further I would like to focus specifically on a few aspects of India's nuclear conduct during the crisis, which not only has direct bearing on the strategic stability-instability paradigm, but also provides a guide to India's strategic conduct in a future crisis.

First, Mr Modi said that he would not preserve India's nuclear weapons for the fireworks night of the Hindu festival of Diwali, implying in the most casual of manners their first use against Pakistan. This statement alone turned India's much trumpeted policy of No First Use (NFU) on its head; not that Pakistan has ever viewed with any degree of credibility India's NFU policy. Mr Modi's pronouncement was not off-the-cuff. He knew exactly what he was saying in a single-minded focus to stir up an anti-Pakistan, anti-Muslim, nationalistic narrative to win elections. As a consequence, however, India's formal nuclear strategy was upended single handedly within no time. The NFU policy was further put under strain by the later day pronouncements of India's Defence Minister Mr Rajnath Singh.

Second, added to the misadventure was the operational reality that India not only deployed in the Arabian Sea, its conventional Naval flotilla including an

aircraft carrier, conventional submarine that got detected but spared by the Pakistan Navy, but more importantly, the nuclear submarine *Arihant* presumably to deter Pakistan from contemplating the use of nuclear weapons.

*Arihant*, which had earlier claimed running deterrence patrols in a fanfare ceremony presided over by the Prime Minister, was certainly carrying cannisterised ready-to-go nuclear missiles. Since there were no credible reports of India's first-strike weapons based on land and air being readied, one wonders whether India contemplated the use of nuclear weapons from a second-strike platform even before its first-strike options.

Third, with reference to the concept of institutionalised command and control of nuclear weapons, which institutional forum authorised the deployment of a second-strike platform carrying nuclear weapons? Was there a debate in a secret meeting of India's National Command Authority, because none was announced formally, as it was in Pakistan? Or was this too decided in a cavalier fashion between the Prime Minister and his Naval Chief? Or worse still, was the Indian Navy also given a free hand, as Prime Minister Modi claimed to have given to his other military commanders. With what sense of political responsibility would a Prime Minister of a nuclear state, single-handedly delegate authority to deploy nuclear platforms and nuclear weapons to military commanders?

Fourth, one wonders further whatever happened to the Cold Start Doctrine, which seemed to have taken a back seat just when the operational situation suggested mobilisation. Looking at the Indian Army's deployment pattern throughout the crisis, it appears India itself did not place much faith in the Cold Start Doctrine, as a credible response option.

It seems obvious that India's strategic thinking stood considerably confused in a moment of crisis at the altar of a political party's electoral strategy; it conceded professional space to the whims of a heavyweight Prime Minister. And that ought to be a cause of serious concern for Pakistan, when faced with a nuclear adversary, whose strategic thinking and actions get muddled up in a crisis. This was not only irresponsible conduct but also institutional failure in India, raising serious questions about the future state of strategic stability in South Asia.

It is not difficult to conclude from the foregoing Indian strategic conduct in a real time crisis, as a case study as it were, that the Indian political leadership, under the extremists of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), led in an unfortunate gung-ho style by the Chairman of India's National Command Authority, falls in the category of reckless nuclear custodians. And, that the Indian military is either too meek, or equally reckless, to offer sound professional advice. Mr Modi's infamous claim to have ordered the IAF to take advantage of the cloud cover to beat Pakistani radars, shows the IAF as a professional force in poor light. The scenario is a chilling reflection on the functionality, or more appropriately, the dysfunctionality of the Indian Command and Control system and the efficacy of its National Command Authority.

For years, the international community worried about the wrongly premised narrative of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the hands of religious and extremist fanatics, despite the fact that the militants remained confined to the fringes, and despite the fact that throughout the years of the militancy, the state of Pakistan continued to be ruled successively by moderate governments, at the Centre and in the Provinces. These were supported by a professionally designed command and control structure, managed by professionals who ensured the highest levels of nuclear security and

responsible nuclear conduct.

One finds it intriguing on the contrary that today in India, and for the last six years, while extremists and religious fanatics of the RSS and BJP are the real time state and the government, at the Centre, and in a large number of provinces, and in firm control of India's nuclear weapons, with a track record of strategic recklessness and irresponsibility, in words and in deed, and one does not hear a word of concern from the same international community, which had sleepless nights about an imagined extremist takeover in Pakistan.

Finally, before I end, I would like to express my thoughts on the current state of strategic stability in South Asia, and also how I see things unfolding in the future in the region.

Elections were held in Pakistan in 2008 and a duly elected civilian government came into being. The Government completed its 5 years term, Pakistan held the next election in 2013, and there was much celebration about the transfer of power from one civilian government to another civilian government through a democratic process. The nascent roots of democracy and democratic tradition it seemed were finally taking shape. This important milestone was reinforced in Pakistan in 2018 when yet another transition took place through the ballot box, and it is clear that democracy and transition of political power through elections is becoming an established norm, and one looks forward to 2023 for a similar democratic exercise.

It is important to recall that throughout this critical period of a decade and a half, Pakistan simultaneously fought a raging militancy, terrorism and extremism through the sheer determination and sacrifices of the armed forces and the people of Pakistan and won. On both accounts, that is,

establishing a democratic tradition and fighting and defeating militancy, terrorism and extremism, Pakistan has come out with resounding success and has a good story to tell. Having put these demons behind it, Pakistan is now looking forward to getting its economic act together while consolidating the two successes. Making allowance for the inevitable rough and tumble of democracy and politics, Pakistan today is stable internally, and seeks its rightful place in the comity of nations as a responsible international player.

Unfortunately for South Asia, when we contrast the history of India during the same period, we find that it is a story of complete reversal, of the trajectory from which Pakistan has just emerged. In tourist terminology while Pakistan can say, “been there, done that,” India has placed itself most enthusiastically in a position where it can only say, “going there and doing that.” While Pakistan has moved away from the extremism and religious bigotry where fringe elements were trying to take it, and the state fought and defeated it, the Indian state has embraced extremism and religious bigotry head-on as state policy. And, when the state turns rogue, one can only hope that elements of the civil society and other saner institutions will resist, contain and reverse the obviously suicidal course.

The cautious optimism generated in India in the elections of 2014 which brought Mr Modi’s BJP and RSS into power, revolved around economic growth as a take-off from Mr Modi’s performance in Gujarat. While for some years it appeared that India might achieve the perceived economic miracle, however after the elections of 2019, the economic expectations have taken a nosedive. And, what has emerged centre stage in its place is the state policy of Hindutva encompassing in its many parts religious extremism, bigotry, ultra-nationalism, anti-Pakistan, anti-Kashmiri, anti-Muslim, anti-minorities, and what have you. In short, the complete anti-thesis of a modern progressive secular state that the Indian Constitution had envisaged.

I can identify four major drivers of Hindustan's domestic Hindutva policies and by extension its policy towards Pakistan.

One, Hindutva philosophy has morphed into a movement to erase the negative psychological complexes and sense of humiliation of the Hindu nation, of a thousand years of Muslim rule. The Hindutva movement led by the BJP therefore seeks to marginalise and delegitimise the Muslims of India.

Two, by doing so, Hindutva seeks the restoration of the perceived glory of Hindu India going back to the Vedas, Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka of 300 BC, and hence, the claims that one hears of Hindustan in the past having invented or discovered any numbers of cutting edge technologies much before the modern era.

Three, the relentless pursuit of becoming a regional and global power, oblivious of its many vulnerabilities and weaknesses, drives Hindustan's quest for regional domination, particularly its relationship with Pakistan.

Four, a self-delusional one-way competition with China under the guise of standing up as a western bulwark with strategic over-reach, now up to the Pacific.

In a nutshell, the gloves are off, the mask is off, and the veneer of secularism is dead. India in 2020 is now well and truly Hindustan, of the Hindus, by the Hindus and for the Hindus. This has been validated by the landslide victory of the BJP and RSS, and of the Hindutva philosophy twice in 5 years. The transformation from India to Hindustan, over a period of 72 years, now carries the duly stamped ownership of the vast multitudes of the Hindu population, which voted for the BJP/RSS heavily. Most national institutions

in Hindustan also seem to be in the process of succumbing to the national trend and have fallen in line.

As a conclusion, I would like to determine what these developments portend for strategic stability in South Asia. Much of what is happening inside India might be considered by many, in strict international terms, as India's internal affair and something that is for the people of India to decide as to the national direction they wish to take. However, India's conduct in Occupied Kashmir cannot be considered its internal affair from any perspective whatsoever: Pakistani, Kashmiri, or from the perspective of international law including the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. None of these entities recognise India's right to bulldoze unilateral constitutional changes, in internationally recognised disputed territory.

It is clear that India's suppressive military and political actions in Kashmir have a direct bearing on strategic stability. The consequences invariably have the potential to spill over into Azad Jammu and Kashmir, through direct and indirect actions by India. It is only a matter of time before Occupied Kashmir boils over. When that happens, India is likely to apply even more suppressive military measures inside Occupied Kashmir, and for desperate diversionary strategies on the Line of Control and perhaps against mainland Pakistan itself.

The highest levels of India's political and military leadership have now transited in their rhetoric, from dropping hints to outright threats of invading Azad Jammu and Kashmir and defeating the Pakistani armed forces in 7-10 days. Yes, the Prime Minister of India and his services chiefs have actually said that, forgetting in their desperation that they are talking about a robust nuclear-armed Pakistan, with strong and balanced conventional forces that only a year ago humiliated the Indian military.



As military professionals, we lookout for threat capabilities and intentions. In South Asia today, India's capabilities and intentions both are visible in the clearest of terms. Pakistan therefore plans its responses on what India is capable of as well as what its intentions are. There is no ambiguity here. From here on, we are in dangerously uncharted territory and strategic stability is giving way to strategic instability, and that in the presence of strong conventional and nuclear forces on both sides does not portend well for South Asia and the world.

In my opinion, however much Pakistan may wish and call for sanity to prevail, it will invariably get sucked into a conflict not of its making, a conflict that would have been thrust upon it. And, as I showed in the beginning with examples from South Asia's history, Pakistan will never hesitate in ensuring that strategic stability is not disturbed to its disadvantage.

With the emerging scenario quite visible on the horizon, one would expect the international community in all its wisdom to foresee the unfolding of a catastrophic sequence of events and prevent it from happening through stronger and timely intervention and diplomacy than we have seen so far.

At the very least, one would expect that today's proceedings at this very important forum of the IISS-CISS enclave, would send out a strong message to the world community, about the dangers lurking in South Asia and the threats to strategic stability, to not only the region, but to the world at large, with all of its dreadful and unthinkable consequences.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

## Discussion Session

**Desmond Bowen, Associate Fellow IISS:** General Kidwai, let me just ask you a little bit more about escalation and escalation management. Is it possible to manage escalation, or just how risky is it? You talked about second, third and fourth rungs - I think it is always the worry that some of the rungs might be missing, and the situation might result in moving from rung one to rung four, rather too rapidly. And, in that context, you know, a phrase that you did not use, but a phrase that is very much in the minds of those who deal with nuclear deterrence, is last resort, the idea that nuclear weapons would only be used in the last resort. I wonder whether you could make a comment on those things.

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** Escalation and escalation management, that is probably the crux of what you are asking. I would say that this is something that can be managed, it is not impossible. There are examples from history where nuclear powers have managed, the primary example is from the USA and ex-USSR, or now the USA and Russia, and other nuclear countries, they have managed escalation. Unfortunately, the current mood in the Indian politics, in the Indian polity, in the Indian military, and for that matter, in the Indian diplomacy, which are all outcomes of a single focus on no dialogue with Pakistan. With that kind of a cut-off in the talking arena, I am afraid it is very difficult to predict any kind of escalation management, because when two sides do not have indirect channels, track-two channels, track-one channels, and there is a complete cut-off between the two sides, as was quite evident in the last, as I said as a case study, as it were in February 2019, we have to have a management system. Earlier on, what we have been referring to for the last two decades, this strategic restraint regime, was precisely designed to develop this kind of confidence-building measure (CBM). It is a massive confidence-building

measure between two sides, provided the two sides believe, or at least the major side in India, believes in some kind of confidence-building measure. For I would say, three quarters of the time of this two decades that I have talked about, there was an inability on the part of India, to reconcile to the fact that, Pakistan, because of its nuclear capability and because of the dangers inherent in the possession of nuclear capability, had equalised the situation of the conventional asymmetries. But, now since the last five or seven years, since the advent of this particular mood in India, through the two elections that we have seen, I do not see a mechanism being put in place, unless there is a major turnaround in Indian thinking. Short of that, I do not see an escalation measure of serious CBMs coming into place. And, I am afraid that if there is another crisis, we will probably lurch for list, from one crisis to another, until a third party intervenes, like probably it did in the February [2019] crisis and calmed down the situation. It is a very unhappy situation.

**Antoine Levesques, Research Fellow for South Asia, IISS:** You have painted for us, a rather bleak picture of trends, which you have observed in Indian behaviour and thinking, since the February [2019] crisis last year. I wonder if these trends, taken together, put greater onus on Pakistan to respond more forcefully, than it did last year, in the event of the next crisis.

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** I think what you are asking is some kind of prediction of Pakistani behaviour in the future, in light of Pakistan's behaviour in the last crisis. I said very clearly that Pakistan's policy in a limited conflict - I am not talking of outright war, in a limited conflict, or in limited attacks by India, look at the types that we saw last year - Pakistan's stated policy is 'Quid pro Quo Plus', which amplifies very clearly that we will not take it lying down, and we will get right back, plus a bit. So, if that kind of a situation re-emerges in any future conflict, I do not

see any reason why Pakistan would change their policy.

**Tim Wilsey, International Affairs Advisor, Royal Bank of Scotland:** You mentioned that after Balakot, you felt that no new normal had been established. That is absolutely not the view in India, as you know, they now have the view that any further terrorist attacks in Kashmir or anywhere else, the same playbook will be rolled out, which is a possibility of an air strike into, not just Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, but into metropolitan Pakistan itself. Now the reason the Indians were able to mark that air strike, was because they identified, what was clearly a major failing in Pakistan's air defence radar coverage, and so forth, and, of course, that was subsequently confirmed, by the fact, that Pakistani airspace was then closed, for what, two, three, maybe even four months after that. How can you, I mean, a) I assume that loophole has been closed, but b), more importantly how can you communicate the fact that that has been closed, so that India does not identify that loophole again, and does not therefore feel that a new normal has been established.

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** I think that I said very clearly that there are very serious wrong conclusions, that have been drawn in the Indian planning cells, in the Indian government, in the Indian military. They have drawn some very wrong conclusions, and this despite the fact, that whatever they did try at Balakot, there has been a lot of chest thumping, and the media in many ways has led or misled, I think, the strategic planners into making it appear as if India was able to come out very successful, through spinning, I think, very false stories about the whole episode, the sequence of events. When I say that no new normal was established, I mean exactly that, and that is that, if India thinks by drawing these wrong conclusions that every so-called terrorist attack is emanating from Pakistan, and therefore it must retaliate within a few days on Pakistan, irrespective of having

investigated, or finding out whether it was a local phenomena, or whether it actually did emerge from Pakistan, if that is going to be the pattern, then Pakistan's response options will always be what they have been. And, I would like to link it with what Antoine Levesques had asked, if India is not learning the right lessons and unfortunately it seems that they are not learning the right lessons from this particular episode, and political rhetoric is leading military professionalism, that is a bad story. And, if a situation does emerge or re-emerge, once again, and India decides to undertake similar operations as the new normal, then there is the new normal that Pakistan has also established, and the new normal is that we will fight it right back, with a bit of a plus.

**Professor Iftikhar Malik, Professor of History, Bath Spa University:** For the last 73 years we have seen this, I mean the whole politics of conflict and suspicion and warfare. I mean both sides have accusations counter-accusations, but for the interest of one-fourth of humanity, and also for the interest of Pakistani people especially, with this too active, you know, war theatres in the West and in the East, are there not any other possible means and strategies to engage India, on the economic front, through some other mutual friends. We have pursued military strategies on both sides, I am not just blaming one side, but is there not any kind of alternative thinking that we could have a small breakthrough, some window of opening for peaceful negotiations, or at least coexistence. And, I mean this will go on, but eventually we will exhaust ourselves on both sides, and as a Pakistani, I deeply worry about Pakistan, with its limited resources and with lots of problems that we have, and we are definitely in a very testing geopolitical environment. So, question is there any kind of thinking or planning in Pakistan and maybe in India as well, but we could get out of this whole politics of conflict and suspicion, which has sadly featured, in a very horrible way in the last 73 years.

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** History teaches us that peace is not a one-way process. To strike peace, first of all you need peace of the brave, this is precisely the kind of situation which in the past, there have been leadership's and statesmen, who have risen beyond this kind of an impasse situation. In India and Pakistan, you are absolutely right, unfortunately this is the situation of the last 70-plus years, and from the Pakistani point of view any number of initiatives, you can list it. The [Pakistan's] Ministry of Foreign Affairs can give you a whole rundown on the kind of initiatives that Pakistan has been taking from 1947, not just talking of the current state of affairs, in which we have tried to introduce the elements of peace, at the minimum CBMs. But, there is a psyche at work in India, which is totally dismissive of having some kind of an equation, on an equivalent equation with Pakistan, and with that kind of a mindset, I really am at a loss to say as to how many more proposals can Pakistan continue to churn out. Pakistan is not a proposal churning out factory. We [Pakistan] have churned out proposals every second year, third year, the diplomats do their work, and yet, when one side has decided, particularly this particular government has decided - there have been governments in the past where movement has taken place, there are examples of movements having taken place in finding some kind of a reconciliation, any numbers, you can go back in the last 15-to-20 years, there has been movements. But, then suddenly there are lobbies in the Indian hierarchy, in the Indian military, they could not reconcile to a very simple thing in Sir Creek or in Siachen, almost done things which they backed off at the last minute. So, this is the state of affairs, and for peace, or a peace partner, you need a partner, where is the partner? The partner is currently, particularly in a very belligerent mood.

**Viraj Solanki, Research Associate for South Asia, IISS:** What are Pakistan's attitudes, plans and commitments towards taking nuclear weapons to sea? And for what purpose, is this for second-strike capability?

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** This is not new and when this Full Spectrum Deterrence, Credible Minimum Deterrence was conceived to begin with, which was two decades ago, the direction was quite clear. To stabilise while we were developing the first-strike options, on land and air, it was very clear, that they would have to be stabilised by the possession of a reasonable second-strike capability. And, that is the whole purpose, because as you know, we all know the deterrence theories, that the fundamental reason is to provide disincentives to the other side, by showing a weakness or showing a gap. The moment you show a strategic gap, for example, the absence of sea-based or submarine-based weapons, there is at least theoretically an incentive for the other side to take out your first-strike options, and therefore survival of the nuclear capability demands that there be a reliable second-strike capability, just in case that kind of an incentive is available to the adversary, and that is that is the logic.

**David Kemmis-Betty, Associate Director, Strategia Worldwide:** You mentioned the possibility of India invading Pakistan-administered Kashmir. I think the next drama is likely to come from an incident which leads to an escalation, as a result of both sides doctrine of 'Quid Pro Quo (QPQ)', and therefore an escalation. How do we break that escalation? And could Pakistan conceive of the idea of holding the moral high ground, and not retaliating? Taking whatever pain, you know, India had put on Pakistan, but then freezing their retaliation, and mobilising the world's press, the United Nations, and the international community, to embarrass India so much, that actually India is seen as the warring party, and Pakistan is seen as the one holding the moral high ground. Therefore, breaking that escalation of QPQ.

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** I am sorry to me it sounds like a non-starter, for two reasons: one, no reaction from Pakistan would only strengthen and enhance India's perception that it can hit and get away, and

Pakistan would not retaliate. That is at the political-military level within South Asia. Can you imagine if Pakistan had not responded in February [2019], what would have been the degree of arrogance and further wrong conclusions being drawn in India, which they have drawn anyway, despite Pakistan's strong retaliation. So, for military reasons, political reasons, it is, I think a non-starter, that Pakistan will just take the pain and not retaliate. And, experience has shown very clearly on whose side the international community is, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions, and many other initiatives which Pakistan has asked for, from the international community, to intervene. Even in the current situation you can see how much intervention is being done by the international community, the Kashmir lockdown is now entering its sixth or seventh month, and this is a completely inhumane situation, and what has the international community contributed to removing the pain of the Kashmiris, and the issue that Pakistan is raising. So, on both accounts, I think reliance on international community, I think it is a non-starter, and no retaliation by Pakistan, also is a non-starter. So, I am sorry I will not agree on both accounts.

**Saima Aman Sial, Senior Research Officer, CISS:** There is larger narrative that has been going around in the world, which has been portended by many states, that it is Pakistan that is the revisionist state. But, if we look at the three levels of analysis, starting from the global level, where India has global ambitions to make its space in the UNSC and all; and if we look at the regional level, it now is threatening us of taking on, through military means, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir, rather than talking about diplomatic needs; and, if we talk about the state level, we see the secular India reverting back to Hindutva, and you know these sort of ideologies. Why is the world not coming to terms with the fact that there is this dangerous situation that is emerging in our neighbourhood, and then there are incidents like people being killed in Shaheen Bagh point-blank by Hindutva terrorists, with the



police forces standing with the hands tied at the back. How does it portend for the safety and security of a state with nuclear weapons? Why is the world not ready to come to terms with the fact, because I mean there is the situation that is going to come to a boil at some point? You have already talked about the Kashmir lockdown having big months now.

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** I think the world has, for one, they have enough problems elsewhere, and right now, perhaps the tipping point in Kashmir for the world may not have reached, because there is a one-sided violence, there is one-sided suppression. Like I said, if Kashmir boils over, and, let us say hypothetically, there is a serious uprising, and there is a danger of Pakistan getting sucked into it and leading eventually to some kind of a nuclear, you know, match off, maybe the international community will come running, like they did probably in February [2019]. But that again will be basically to calm things down. I think it is the interests of the international community coinciding for the last many decades now with India's national interests, and when there is convergence of interests of international players and one side, that is the kind of position that the international community will continue to take. This is the reality of life that we have to understand in the real world, unless it is the people of Kashmir, who, like I said, if they bring a situation to the tipping point, then maybe the international community might be alarmed. As of now, I think they are quite comfortable with the way these six months have passed, and for that matter the 72 years have passed with the status quo.

**Brigadier Ben Barry (Retd), Senior Fellow for Land Warfare, IISS:** Do you see any scope for transparency or confidence-building measures, that could be applied in the current environment? For example, it has sometimes been suggested that older generations of missiles could be retired by both sides.

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** You need a partner. Where is the partner for these CBMs? If we had a partner we could carry on discussions on these kinds of measures, but I am sorry there is a partner missing. So, unilateral actions Pakistan will not take, unless technology demands it is something internally that we can decide – that we do not need a particular missile, you want another missile, or another weapon system, something that is by our own internal assessments. But, if you are talking of missile retirements through confidence-building, you know, engagements, between the other side, you need a partner to do that. And, as we all know, as of now, that partner is missing in action.

**Karl Dewey, Research Associate, Centre for Science and Security Studies, King's College London:** You mentioned three types of missiles or weapon systems – tactical, operational and strategic - I was just wondering if you could clarify what you mean by operational? What does this capability look like? What do the missiles look like? How large are the warheads? What types of targets do you see them being used against? And, where does this fit on the escalation ladder?

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** First of all, it is an operational question, which I would not like to dilate upon it. But generally speaking, we all know the definitions in the military terms, we know the definitions of what is strategic, what is operational, and what is tactical - the three categories, and that is being covered by what we are calling, the Full Spectrum Deterrence, including the three ranges. But, of course, when you say strategic, operational and tactical, these are specific to the South Asian environment. What the US and Russia might think is strategic, is not strategic here, but these are based on ranges that cover a certain relevant piece of targets, that we think. So, the Full Spectrum Deterrence policy that Pakistan has defined for itself is very clear, that we have a vertical strategic,

operational, and tactical weapon systems, and broadly speaking these are defined in terms of operations unfolding, as we understand in military strategy. And, then of course these is a horizontal balancing in Full Spectrum Deterrence, which is based on the land, air and sea systems, so vertically and horizontally, the Full Spectrum Deterrence quite defines the categories of weapons. Beyond that, I think I would be going into operational matters.

**Ali Siddiqui, MSc Student, University of Oxford:** My question is about nuclear posturing. In the Director-General, Inter-Services Public Relations, Pakistan speech on 4 September 2019, he highlighted the conflict and security spectrum, saying that nuclear weapons or nuclear warfare, is one of the options that we can take. Just a month after that, Rajnath Singh, India's Defence Minister said that the NFU policy may need to be revised. Can we assume that bringing the nuclear weapons to the forefront, is the new normal now? Or do you see Prime Minister Khan's diplomatic efforts to be achieving some sort of success?

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** I am not sure whether you are quoting the Director-General, Inter-Services Public Relations, Pakistan, correctly. I do not think he mentioned the bringing forth the use of nuclear weapons. He did mention that nuclear countries were, to the effect, that they should be behaving or conducting them with greater responsibilities, nuclear-armed countries. But, whether he actually, could you quote the exact word that he said?

**Ali Siddiqui, MSc Student, University of Oxford:** Yes, he highlighted five options that we could take, and one of them was nuclear warfare, so he did not rule it out completely.

**Lieutenant General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai:** That is the theory of it. It does

not indicate any kind of a policy. If you have a whole menu of options in a given situation, those menus start from actions on the Line of Control, and they go all the way up to the nuclear option. So, there is no big deal if the Director-General, Inter-Services Public Relations, Pakistan, if you are quoting correctly, in saying that. Mr Rajnath Singh simply followed up what his Prime Minister did, and there had been a debate. Neither of the two statements were off-the-cuff, in my judgment, not Mr Modi and not Mr Rajnath Singh, because this debate has been going on in India for quite some time, in their international diaspora, as well as in the local strategic community, about doing away with the NFU policy. As far as Pakistan is concerned, I said here and I have said it again and again, Pakistan has never believed in the NFU policy to begin with. So, when we do not believe in a policy, it does not make a difference to Pakistan whether it is an NFU or no-NFU. In any case, if you know their nuclear doctrine, there are any number of situations, in which they themselves have identified exceptions in using the nuclear weapons first, in a variety of situations. So, right now even the Indian nuclear doctrine is a bit of a hodgepodge of NFU and First Use. And, if the two senior political leaders hint that they want to do away with it, it is very much within their right and their jurisdiction to do that, it makes no difference to Pakistan.

Thank you.