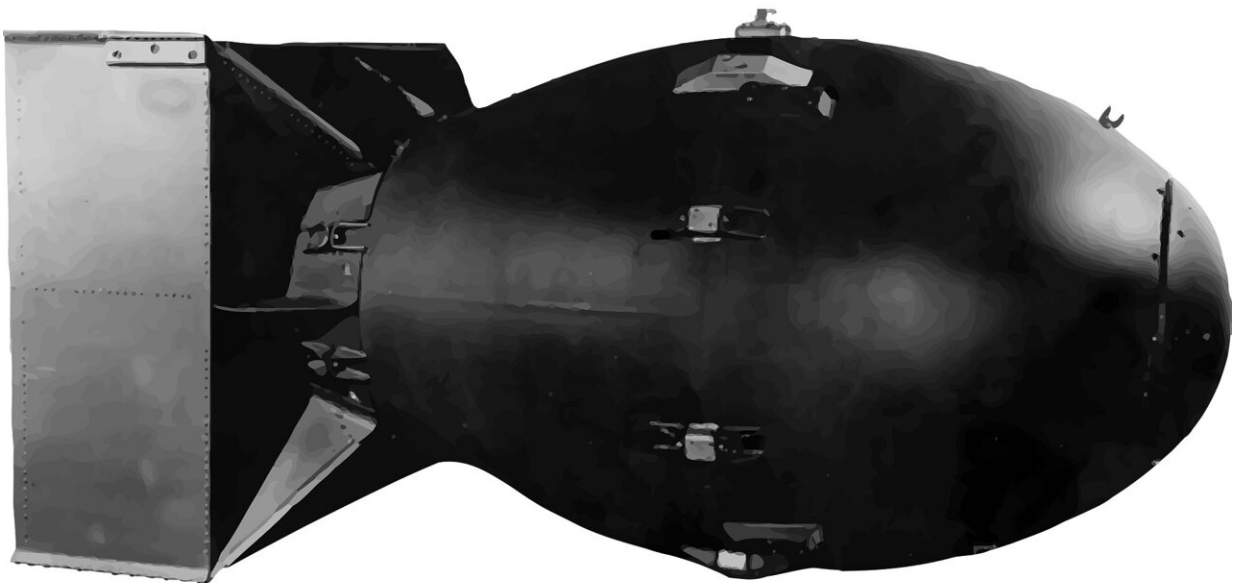


# Study explores how India and Pakistan communicate their nuclear strategies

February 23 2022

---



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A new study published by the Centre for Science and Security Studies (CSSS) at King's College London offers insight into the phenomenon of miscommunication in deterrence. By looking at Indian and Pakistani deterrence through a lens of language and communication, the report explores how New Delhi and Islamabad seek to portray their nuclear postures, and how they are understood by different actors—both in Southern Asia as well as by the international community.

It notes how governments, strategic analysts, and the public have numerous separate, parallel conversations about risk perception and trust building in Southern Asia. All of these contribute to potential misunderstanding.

Since 1998, the possibility of [nuclear conflict](#) between India and Pakistan has remained an acute and persistent concern to the international community. Of particular significance is the potential for nuclear escalation due to miscommunication and miscalculation. However, despite its importance, the role of language and communication in decision-making is often overlooked.

To better understand the causes of these differences, King's College London brought together academics and policy specialists from both countries to discuss and explore these issues. Consequently, regarding doctrine this report identifies several areas that contribute to misunderstanding, including:

- Both India and Pakistan draw on Cold War nuclear lexicon in their nuclear doctrines, although key concepts have evolved to reflect regional circumstances. As such, important nuances mean that neither doctrine can be fully explained solely through theoretical frameworks.
- Therefore, attention should be paid to both strategic cultures and the context in which key terms have evolved and are intended to be used. One such example is Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD) which, despite underpinning both sets of national capabilities, remains poorly defined and open to various interpretations.
- Analysis here shows that CMD is primarily driven by the need for credibility and survivability, although numerous strategic programs appear excessive to CMD's minimalist claims and heritage.

- Although the need for crisis-stability to prevent unintentional nuclear escalation has been long recognized, escalation pathways and thresholds also remain unclear. Moreover, the emotional and political intricacies of the region increase the complexities of de-escalation.
- As more advanced technologies such as missile defense or hypersonics are introduced into the region, articulating deterrence will become increasingly complex as well. This is exacerbated by the fact that, unlike other deterrence relationships, India and Pakistan have a shared border and differ significantly in their strategic depths.
- This will increasingly blur distinctions between strategic and tactical systems and suggests a new nuclear lexicon will emerge to reflect the geographic setting, while also needing to accommodate India's desire to provide a credible deterrence against China.

Although there is a wide acceptance that many areas of misunderstanding remain, roundtable discussions show that there are still different opinions on where those misunderstandings lie. Moreover, participants in the study also agreed that the continued focus on possible confidence building measures (CBMs) is contributing to a sense of "CBM fatigue" within policy communities, suggesting an important need for new ideas and innovative approaches.

In addition to expert communities, the report highlights the lack of good information for national populations. Zenobia Homan, Principal Investigator of this study says: "Engaging with the public is vital to ensuring effective civil society participation, with poor communication and discussion lessening government accountability."

Karl Dewey , Co-Investigator and Researcher at CSSS, adds that ineffective communication can even encourage the use of "loose

rhetoric" and all of these factors combined have the potential to create inadvertent "commitment traps." The investigators agree that never has the need for clear and effective communication been so important.

**More information:** The PDF of the full report may be viewed here: [Communicating Deterrence Drivers of Misperception in India and Pakistan](#)

Provided by King's College London

Citation: Study explores how India and Pakistan communicate their nuclear strategies (2022, February 23) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-02-explores-india-pakistan-nuclear-strategies.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.