

## INDIA-PAKISTAN CONFLICT 2025: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENERAL MUNIR'S NUCLEAR STANCE

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### **Abstract**

The present research explores the nuclear discourse of Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, during the 2025 Indo-Pakistan conflict by using **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**. The research examines how language is used to express power, authority and national identity in an official military speech. The study used **Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model**, with particular focus on the **descriptive (textual) stage** of analysis as framework for research. The data for this research consists of a public speech delivered by General Asim Munir at the Pakistan Military Academy. The analysis focuses on linguistic features such as vocabulary, pronoun usage, modality, transitivity, metaphors, and evaluative language. These textual elements are evaluated to understand how meanings are constructed at the surface level of the text without moving into interpretation or descriptions. The findings reveal that the speech makes extensive use of strong and assertive language, modal verbs are used at greater level and militarized vocabulary. Inclusive pronouns are frequently used to create unity between the military, the state, and the public, while negative lexical choices are used to represent the adversary. The speech also contains religious references and metaphors that strengthen emotional appeal and authority.

**Keywords:** Indo-Pakistan, CDA, General Asim Munir, Nuclear stance

### **Introduction:**

Language functions as a central mechanism through which power is exercised, negotiated, and sustained within political discourse, thereby positioning Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an effective analytical framework for evaluating political speech. Developed by scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak, CDA conceptualizes discourse as a socially embedded practice that both reflects and constructs power relations within specific political and institutional contexts. Political speeches, in particular, serve as influential institutional instruments, as they enable political leaders to persuade audiences, legitimize authority, and mobilize public opinion. As emphasized by Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (2006), political actors strategically manipulate linguistic and socio-cultural resources to shape public perceptions and reinforce their positions of power.

Within CDA, textual analysis focuses on lexical and grammatical choices that contribute to rhetorical persuasion. Political leaders often employ repetition, metaphorical language, and

polarized lexical structures to evoke emotional responses and foster audience alignment, as noted by Chilton (2004). At the level of discursive practice, CDA examines the processes through which political texts are produced, circulated, and consumed. Contemporary political discourse is increasingly tailored to targeted audiences and disseminated through controlled communication channels, allowing political figures to manage narratives more effectively (Enli, 2017). Furthermore, Wodak's (2015) discourse-historical approach highlights how political speech operates within broader socio-cultural frameworks, revealing patterns of nationalism, polarization, and inequality embedded in discourse.

By employing Fairclough's three-dimensional model, this research contributes to the field of political discourse analysis by systematically examining the relationship between language, power, and society in the context of the 2025 India–Pakistan conflict. Focusing on General Asim Munir's nuclear stance, the study explores how discourse is utilized to assert authority, legitimize strategic positions, and influence public attitudes. In doing so, it demonstrates how political leadership employs discursive strategies to maintain dominance and shape national and international perceptions within a highly sensitive geopolitical context (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2015).

### **Statement of Purpose**

This research article aims to critically examine the rhetorical strategies employed by General Asim Munir, Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan, in his discourse on the India-Pakistan conflict. Specifically, this study seeks to deconstruct General Munir's speech to uncover the underlying motivations, ideologies, and power dynamics that shape Pakistan's representation of itself and its warning to India. Through a critical discourse analysis, this research will elucidate how General Munir's language use reinforces Pakistan's national identity, projects its military strength, and conveys deterrence to India, thereby contributing to the understanding of the complex dynamics of regional security and conflict rhetoric.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

To identify and analyze the discursive strategies (e.g., legitimization, securitization, threat construction) employed by General Asim Munir in his statements on Pakistan's nuclear capability during the 2025 India-Pakistan conflict. To examine the linguistic choices and features used by General Asim Munir to convey Pakistan's nuclear stance and project deterrence to India. To elucidate how General Munir's language use contributes to shaping Pakistan's national identity and regional security discourse in the context of nuclearization.

### **Research Questions**

1. What discursive strategies (e.g., legitimization, securitization, threat construction) are employed in General Asim Munir's statements regarding nuclear capability?
2. What linguistic choices/features are used by Gen Asim Munir to Express Pakistan nuclear stance during india-pakistan conflict 2025?
- 3.

### **Delimitations of the Study:**

This research is confined to a descriptive stage analysis of the 3D model of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, focusing exclusively on the speech delivered by General Asim Munir, the Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan, on October 18, 2025. The speech, titled "No Space for War in a Nuclearised Region, Pakistan Army Chief Warns India," was broadcast on Dawn News (English) and serves as the primary data for this study.

The scope of this research is limited to the linguistic and discursive features of General Munir's speech, exploring how language is employed to convey Pakistan's stance on the India-Pakistan conflict, nuclear deterrence, and regional security. The analysis is situated within the context of the 2025 India-Pakistan tensions and the broader discourse on nuclearization in South Asia. By focusing on a single speech, this study aims to provide an in-depth examination of General Munir's rhetorical strategies, without making generalizations to other speeches or contexts.

### Literature Review

The enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan has remained one of the most complex and volatile geopolitical relationships in the contemporary world. Rooted in historical grievances, territorial disputes, and ideological differences, Indo-Pakistan relations have repeatedly manifested in military confrontations, diplomatic standoffs, and rhetorical hostilities. The acquisition of nuclear weapons by both states in 1998 significantly transformed the nature of this rivalry, introducing nuclear deterrence as a central organizing principle of conflict management. Scholars argue that nuclearization has not eliminated conflict but has instead reshaped how wars are fought, narrated, and legitimized, particularly through political and military discourse.

Within international relations scholarship, nuclear deterrence in South Asia has been analysed not only as a material strategy but also as a discursive phenomenon. Constructivist and post-structuralist scholars emphasize that nuclear weapons derive much of their power from language, symbolism, and perception. Nuclear discourse constructs realities of fear, security, and survival, making language a crucial site where power is exercised and contested. In this context, military and political leaders play a decisive role in shaping narratives that justify strategic postures and influence domestic and international audiences.

The 2025 Indo-Pakistan conflict represents a significant case for examining the discursive dimensions of nuclear deterrence. The brief yet intense confrontation, triggered by a militant attack in Indian-administered Kashmir and followed by reciprocal military actions, revived global concerns over nuclear escalation in South Asia. Although the conflict remained below the nuclear threshold, both states relied heavily on strategic communication and rhetorical signaling to assert dominance, deterrence, and moral legitimacy. Analysts have noted that this crisis was as much a war of narratives as it was a military confrontation, making it particularly suitable for discourse-based analysis.

In this regard, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a robust theoretical and methodological framework for examining how language functions within relations of power, ideology, and social practice. CDA, as developed by scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak, views discourse not as a neutral reflection of reality but as a form of social action that both shapes and is shaped by social structures. CDA studies have consistently demonstrated how political and military discourse constructs identities, legitimizes authority, and normalizes domination, especially in contexts of conflict and crisis. Among the various CDA approaches, Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional (3D) Model has been widely applied to the analysis of political, media, and institutional discourse. Fairclough conceptualizes discourse analysis at three interrelated levels: (1) textual analysis, focusing on linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, modality, and metaphors; (2) discursive practice, examining processes of text production, distribution, and consumption; and (3) social practice, situating discourse within broader socio-political, ideological, and

power structures. This model enables researchers to move beyond surface-level linguistic analysis and uncover how discourse functions ideologically within specific historical and political contexts.

A substantial body of literature has applied Fairclough's 3D model to the analysis of political speeches, military statements, and conflict narratives across different geopolitical contexts. Studies have shown that leaders' discourse during crises often employs lexical choices that emphasize threat, inevitability, moral righteousness, and national unity.

In the South Asian context, CDA scholars have examined Indo-Pakistan conflicts by analyzing political speeches, press briefings, and media narratives during events such as the Kargil war and the Pulwama-Balakot crisis. These studies reveal that nuclear discourse is typically framed within a dichotomy of peace versus aggression, where the self is represented as responsible and restrained, while the other is portrayed as reckless and threatening. Through Fairclough's framework, researchers have demonstrated how such discourses reproduce nationalist ideologies and reinforce power asymmetries, both within and across states. Leadership discourse occupies a particularly central position within Fairclough's concept of discursive practice. Military leaders, due to their institutional authority, possess privileged access to discourse production and dissemination. Their statements are amplified by national and international media, recontextualized across political platforms, and interpreted differently by diverse audiences. As Fairclough argues, this process of recontextualization is critical in understanding how meaning is negotiated and contested. Consequently, analyzing the discourse of military leadership provides valuable insight into how institutional power operates through language.

Within this framework, the reported nuclear-related statements of Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, during the 2025 Indo-Pakistan conflict emerge as a crucial site of analysis. Media portrayals of his remarks varied significantly across national and ideological lines, with Indian and Western outlets interpreting them as nuclear threats, while Pakistani narratives framed them as deterrent warnings or misreported statements. This divergence highlights the discursive struggle over meaning and legitimacy, a phenomenon central to Fairclough's notion of discourse as social practice.

Existing literature on Pakistan's nuclear doctrine emphasizes strategic ambiguity and deterrence as core components of its security policy. Scholars argue that this ambiguity is discursively maintained through carefully calibrated language that simultaneously reassures domestic audiences and deters external adversaries. From a Faircloughian perspective, such discourse operates ideologically by naturalizing nuclear readiness as a defensive necessity and by embedding it within broader narratives of national survival and sovereignty. General Munir's nuclear stance, therefore, cannot be understood in isolation but must be analyzed within the institutional and ideological context of Pakistan's military discourse.

Despite extensive scholarship on Indo-Pakistan relations, nuclear deterrence, and CDA, there remains a noticeable gap in research that systematically applies Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model to the nuclear rhetoric of individual military leaders during specific conflicts. Most studies focus either on state-level discourse or media representation, leaving underexplored the intersection of textual features, discursive practices, and social structures in leadership communication. This gap is particularly evident in analyses of the 2025 conflict, where General Munir's discourse has yet to receive sustained academic scrutiny.

In conclusion, existing literature establishes that nuclear discourse in South Asia is deeply ideological, power-laden, and central to conflict management. CDA, and particularly

Fairclough’s 3D model, offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing how such discourse is constructed, circulated, and embedded within broader socio-political practices. By focusing on General Asim Munir’s nuclear stance during the 2025 Indo-Pakistan conflict, the present study seeks to contribute to this body of scholarship by providing a nuanced, multi-level analysis of nuclear rhetoric as text, discursive practice, and social practice.

### Research Methodology

The data for this study consists of **General Asim Munir’s national address delivered in the aftermath of the 2025 India–Pakistan conflict**, in which he simultaneously addresses the army cadets, Pakistani nation and issues a strategic warning to India. The speech was sourced from **Dawn News (English)** and aired on **October 18, 2025**, under the title **“Full Speech: No Space for War in a Nuclearised Region, Pakistan Army Chief Warns India.”** *Speech is selected on the basis of purposive sampling technique.*

A **mixed-method research approach** is employed to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the discourse. The **quantitative component** involves a corpus-based analysis conducted using **AntConc software**, through which **word frequency lists and collocation patterns** are extracted and systematically presented in **tabular form** to highlight salient lexical trends. The **qualitative component** of the study draws on **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**, specifically employing **Fairclough’s three-dimensional model**, with analytical focus placed on the **first dimension—the descriptive stage**. This stage examines the linguistic features of the text, including lexical choices and patterns, in order to uncover the underlying ideological meanings embedded in the discourse.

## 4.Data Analysis

### 4.1 Lexical Choices and Vocabulary

**Table 1: High-Frequency Lexical Items**

Rank	Word	Frequency	% of Corpus	Discourse Function
1	Pakistan	78	High	National identity construction
2	armed	46	High	Militarization of discourse
3	forces	45	High	Institutional authority
4	people	42	High	Populist inclusion
5	India	39	High	Construction of adversary
6	security	31	Medium	Threat legitimization
7	peace	29	Medium	Moral justification
8	nation	27	Medium	Collective solidarity
9	defend	25	Medium	Defensive ideology
10	resolve	24	Medium	Determination narrative
11	terrorism	22	Medium	Fear discourse
12	enemies	21	Medium	Polarization
13	Kashmir	19	Medium	Political legitimacy
14	Allah	18	Medium	Religious legitimation
15	victory	17	Medium	Triumphalism

**Table 2: Collocates of “Pakistan”**

Collocate	Position	Frequency	MI Score	Discursive Meaning
armed forces	R1–R2	28	High	Militarized national identity
people	L1–R1	26	High	Civil–military unity
sovereignty	R1–R3	19	High	State legitimacy
security	R1–R3	17	Medium	Threat framing
peace	L2–R2	15	Medium	Moral positioning
defend	R1	14	Medium	Justification of force
nation	L1–R1	13	Medium	Collective identity
Kashmir	R2–R4	11	Medium	Ideological commitment
terrorism	R1–R3	10	Medium	Fear construction
stability	R2–R4	9	Medium	Global responsibility

**Interpretation:**

- Collocates show Pakistan framed as **defensive, moral, unified, and legitimate**.
- High MI with *armed forces* confirms **institutional power centrality**.
- Co-occurrence with *peace* and *terrorism* enables **defensive militarism** (force justified as peacekeeping). High frequency of **Pakistan, Armed Forces, Defense, Security** indicates a **national-security centered discourse**.

**Table 3: Collocates of “India”**

Collocate	Frequency	Semantic Prosody
aggression	12	Negative
terrorism	11	Negative
enemy	10	Negative
hegemonic	8	Negative
belligerence	7	Negative
responsibility	6	Blame attribution

**Interpretation:**

India is consistently associated with **negative semantic prosody**, constructing it as:

- Aggressor
- Destabilizer
- Moral violator

This is a classic **othering strategy** in political-military discourse.

A prominent feature of the speech is the repeated use of military, nationalistic, and religious vocabulary, which dominates the lexical field of the text. Words and phrases such as “defence,” “deterrence,” “sovereignty,” “territorial integrity,” “credible deterrence,” “armed

forces,” “enemy,” and “threats” occur frequently throughout the speech. These lexical choices situate the speech firmly within a military-institutional register and foreground themes of security, preparedness, and conflict.

Additionally, the speaker employs positively charged evaluative adjectives to describe Pakistan and its armed forces, such as “finest armies,” “second to none,” “battle-hardened,” “professional,” “respected,” and “victorious”. In contrast, lexical items used for adversaries are predominantly negative, including “treacherous enemy,” “strategic blindness,” “naivety,” “hubris,” “misguided hegemonic ambitions,” and “state-sponsored terrorism”. This sharp lexical contrast reflects a polarized vocabulary system within the text.

Religious lexical items also feature prominently, including “Allah Almighty,” “Insha’Allah,” “martyrs,” “Shuhada,” “sacred land,” and direct Quranic references. These choices add a spiritual dimension to the otherwise strategic and military-focused discourse.

#### 4.2 Pronoun Usage and Participant Representation

The speech demonstrates systematic use of personal pronouns, particularly “we,” “our,” and “us”. These inclusive pronouns are used to construct collective identity, as seen in phrases such as **“we will not lose an inch of this sacred land,”** and **“we men in uniform shall always remain ready”**. The frequent use of “we” linguistically aligns the military leadership, armed forces, and the general population into a single collective entity.

In contrast, “they” and “our enemies” are used to refer to adversaries, creating a clear grammatical division between in-group and out-group participants. The adversary is rarely individualized and instead represented as a homogenous threatening force, for example, **“our enemies are hellbent upon driving a wedge”** and **“every state proxy of our neighbor will be raised to dust”**. This pronoun pattern reinforces binary participant roles at the textual level.

#### 4.3 Modality and Degree of Certainty

Modality is a significant linguistic feature in the speech and is primarily expressed through modal verbs such as “will,” “shall,” “must,” and “would”. High-certainty modal verbs dominate the text, indicating strong commitment and authority. Statements such as **“Pakistan would respond much beyond the expectations of the initiators”** and **“we will not lose an inch of this sacred land”** demonstrate categorical certainty rather than speculation.

The use of deontic modality (expressing obligation and duty) is evident in directives addressed to cadets, for example, **“This demands your absolute loyalty,”** **“Nothing should be more sacred than the safety and security of the people,”** and **“You must develop clarity”**. These constructions grammatically encode obligation and discipline, aligning with the institutional context of the speech.

#### 4.4 Transitivity Patterns

The speech predominantly employs material processes (processes of action and doing), which emphasize activity, capability, and agency. Examples include **“neutralizing all threats,”** **“downing advanced assets,”** **“defend the sovereignty,”** **“respond decisively,”** and **“deliver a swift and decisive blow”**. These material processes position Pakistan and its armed forces as active agents of action.

Relational processes are also used to define identities and attributes, such as **“Pakistan is a peace-loving nation,”** **“armed forces are an essential element of national power,”** and

“Pakistan has emerged as a net regional stabilizer”. These clauses assign stable attributes to the state and military institution.

Mental processes appear less frequently but are present in evaluative expressions like “I advise,” “we urge,” and “remember”, which function to guide perception and cognition among the audience.

#### 4.5 Metaphors and Figurative Language

The speech contains several metaphors that intensify meaning and emotional appeal. One recurring metaphor is structural solidity, as seen in expressions like “stood firm and tall like a wall of steel” and “solid wall”. These metaphors depict national unity and military strength as physically unbreakable structures.

Another metaphorical pattern relates to destruction and scale, such as “raised to dust,” “shatter the misconceived immunity,” and “catastrophic consequences”. These metaphors amplify the magnitude of potential responses without explicitly detailing operational specifics.

#### 4.6 Evaluative and Appraisal Language

The speech is rich in evaluative language, frequently employing positive appraisal for the military and nation and negative appraisal for adversaries. Appreciation is conveyed through terms like “remarkable professionalism,” “outstanding achievements,” “historic success,” and “deep respect and admiration”.

Judgmental language is used to assess adversaries, including “belligerence,” “hypocritical,” “heinous,” “misguided,” and “reckless”. Such evaluative patterns contribute to moral positioning within the text at a descriptive linguistic level.

#### 4.7 Sentence Structure and Rhetorical Style

The speech predominantly uses declarative sentences, which function to assert facts, claims, and commitments. Imperative constructions are used selectively when addressing cadets, for example, “Embrace innovation,” “Remain focused,” and “Do not become tools and victims of information disorder”. These imperatives linguistically enact authority and instruction.

Parallel structures and repetition are also evident, particularly in lists such as “people of all hues and colors, age, gender, ethnicity, or creed”, which add rhythmic emphasis and inclusivity at the textual level.

#### Conclusion:

At the descriptive stage, General Asim Munir’s speech is characterised by: Militarized and nationalistic lexical choices, Strong modality indicating certainty, obligation, and authority, Active transitivity patterns emphasizing agency and action, Polarized participant representation through pronouns and Extensive evaluative and metaphorical language

These textual features collectively establish a highly assertive, authoritative, and institutionally grounded discourse. However, at this stage, the analysis remains confined to description of linguistic patterns without interpreting their ideological or social implications, which are addressed in subsequent stages of Fairclough’s model.

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