**Summary: Contesting Nuclear Responsibility in South Asia**

This article reconceptualizes **nuclear responsibility** through a comparative study of **India and Pakistan**, arguing that responsibility is not a universal standard, but a **contested and performative discourse** shaped by history, perception, and asymmetry in global nuclear governance.

Using a four-part framework—**cause, accountability, obligation, and identity**—the author demonstrates how India and Pakistan both claim to be "responsible nuclear states," but perform and interpret that claim in **radically different ways**. India’s narrative emphasizes **restraint**, **no-first-use**, **minimum deterrence**, and **civilian control**, earning it de facto recognition despite NPT non-membership. Pakistan, by contrast, builds its legitimacy around **credible deterrence**, **full-spectrum doctrine**, and **institutional discipline**, rooted in its sense of existential insecurity and exclusion from global nuclear regimes.

Key insights include:

* **Responsibility is relational**: India's restraint is praised internationally, while Pakistan’s ambiguity is often read as recklessness—even when behaviors are similar.
* **Recognition is unequal**: India has secured status and access (e.g., U.S. civil nuclear deal), while Pakistan remains excluded despite technical reforms.
* **Doctrine shapes identity**: India frames its doctrine to align with liberal norms; Pakistan frames deterrence as survival necessity.
* **Accountability is asymmetrical**: Pakistan is still judged by A.Q. Khan’s legacy; India’s shifts in posture attract less scrutiny.

The article concludes that **nuclear responsibility is not a fixed metric** but a **normative terrain of competition**, shaped by unequal power and recognition. A more inclusive framework is needed—one that listens to diverse performances of responsibility, even when they do not conform to Western strategic culture.