

## Pakistan and India Enter New Missile Race

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*August 18, 2025*

*— Categories: Defence & Security*

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Pakistan and India are once again locked in an escalating military competition, with both countries announcing major investments in advanced missile systems following one of the most violent border clashes in recent years. Defense analysts warn that the developments could reshape the balance of power in South Asia, intensifying security concerns across the region.

The renewed arms race was triggered by a four-day conflict in May that saw some of the fiercest fighting between the nuclear-armed rivals in years. The clashes followed a deadly terrorist attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam region in April, which claimed 26 lives. India accused Pakistan of backing the attack, a charge Islamabad denied. The crisis escalated rapidly, with India launching strikes inside Pakistan on May 7. Pakistan retaliated in kind, leading both nations to deploy advanced missiles.

India reportedly used its BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, co-developed with Russia, while Pakistan relied on Chinese-made PL-15 systems. Both governments claimed success in inflicting damage, though independent verification remains difficult.

Earlier this month, India revealed plans to procure 110 additional BrahMos missiles as part of a new \$8.7 billion defense package. Alongside this, New Delhi is upgrading its indigenous Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW), designed for both Russian Sukhoi Su-30MKI and French Rafale fighter aircraft. The updated system, with a range of 200 kilometers, will allow India to strike strategic targets without entering enemy airspace.

Pakistan responded by unveiling a new integrated rocket force, timed with its Independence Day celebrations. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the initiative in a televised address, emphasizing the country's need to counterbalance India's expanding capabilities. The new unit, according to government officials, will be equipped with cutting-edge missile systems modeled on China's rocket force.

Military observers see this as the beginning of a long-term missile race. Abdul Basit, a senior associate fellow at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, noted that Pakistan's air force exceeded expectations during the recent clashes, forcing India to ground several aircraft and rely on missile strikes. India recognizes that its missile forces were far more effective in the clashes. So, it is BrahMos they are investing more in," Basit said.

For Islamabad, the key lesson was the importance of missile deterrence. Indian defense analysts have suggested that Pakistan's rocket force may soon focus on developing