

Reducing the Risk of Nuclear War in South Asia

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Pakistan's Nuclear Future: Reigning in the Risk

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INTRODUCTION

The new international environment has altered the concept of national security. Threats to international peace and security now emanate not from strategic confrontation between the major powers but from regional conflicts and tensions and the spread of violent extremism by non-state actors, threatening nation-states from within and transcending state boundaries and international security. In recent years, the levels of security enjoyed by various states have become increasingly asymmetric - some enjoy absolute security, others none at all. This environment of security imbalance has forced weaker states to adopt a repertoire of strategies for survival and national security that includes alliances and strategic partnerships, supporting low-intensity conflicts, and engaging in limited wars and nuclear deterrence.

South Asia has witnessed increased regional tensions, a rise in religious extremism, a growing arms race, crisis stand-offs and even armed conflict in recent years. Nuclear tests did not bring an era of genuine stability between India and Pakistan, though military crises in the region did not escalate into full-fledged wars, underscoring the need of greater imagination to reign in the

¹ The author is a former Director of Arms Control and Disarmament Affairs in the Strategic Plans Division (SPD) secretariats of Pakistan's National Command Authority (NCA). This essay draws on his experience of participating in the "Peace, Security, and Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)" dialogue between India and Pakistan and Strategic Dialogue between Pakistan the United States. Views expressed in this paper are solely the author's personal views and do not represent either the Pakistan government or the U.S. Department of Defense. The author is grateful to Lieutenant Commander Kelly Federal, United States Navy, MA National Security Affairs, from the Naval Postgraduate School for contributing in substance, editing, and assisting in this paper. The author also thanks Naeem Salik, former Director in SPD and visiting Scholar at SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C., for inputs and comments; and Ms. Rabia Akhtar, PhD candidate Quaid-e Azam University, Islamabad, for sending published research material from Islamabad.

risks due to the fragility of relations between two nuclear neighbors in an increasingly complex set of circumstances.

Pakistan's premier and immediate threat now is from within. Its western borderlands are rapidly converting into a battleground where ungoverned tribal space in proximity to the porous and disputed border is forming into insurgency both to its east into Pakistan as well as to its west into Afghanistan. The Al Qaeda threat has now metastasized into a spreading insurgency in the tribal borderlands, which is taking a heavy toll on both Pakistan and Western forces in Afghanistan. The newly elected government in Pakistan has hit the ground running; mired in domestic politics, as of yet, it has been unable to focus on the Al Qaeda and Taliban threat that is rapidly expanding its influence and targeting strategy. The most tragic aspect of this conundrum is the success of Al Qaeda in creating cracks of misunderstanding between Pakistan and the Western allies on the one hand, and on the other, exacerbating tensions and mistrust between Pakistan's traditional adversaries, India and Afghanistan.² Today Pakistan's security nightmare of perceived India-Afghanistan collusion in squeezing Pakistan is heightened, as much a narrative in Indian and Afghan security establishments about the malfeasance of Pakistani Intelligence in perpetuating Afghan imbroglio. Worse, the outcome of this is confusion and a blame game which are both a made-to-order advantage for Al Qaeda and Taliban. Any terrorist act that pits Kabul, New Delhi, and Islamabad into tensions and crises also throws Washington off balance; the regional crises dividend allows Al Qaeda and its sympathizers the space and time to recoup, reorganize and reequip and continue to survive.

The only silver lining in the above mentioned grim and unhealthy regional security picture is the gradually and slowly improved relation between India and Pakistan over the past four years. Though relations are tense and still fragile, there is a glimmer of hope that there is one relatively healthy piece of this overall crises-ridden region. The dialogue process between India and

² On 7 July 2008, a suicide car targeted the Indian Embassy in Kabul killing many including the Indian Defense Attaché. This terrorist incident has triggered angry responses from both Delhi and Kabul who, not surprisingly, are pointing fingers at the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence. Relations are tense within the region. At the time of this writing, on September 12, in yet another terrorist incident in New Delhi, five blasts killed over twenty and injured dozens.

Pakistan has been somewhat resilient in the face of significant setbacks and changing domestic, political and international landscapes within each.

It is very improbable that a nuclear war between Pakistan and India would spontaneously occur. History of the region and strategic nuclear weapons theories surmise that a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan would result from an uninhibited escalation of a conventional war vice a spontaneous unleashing of nuclear arsenals. However, the region seems to be the singular place on the planet most likely to endure nuclear warfare due to the seemingly undiminished national, religious, and ethnic animosities between the two countries. Furthermore, lack of transparency in nuclear programs leaves room to doubt the security surrounding each country's nuclear arsenal and the safeguards preventing accidental launches. Therefore, discussions aimed at mitigating a catastrophic nuclear war in South Asia should focus mostly on the unilateral and bilateral anti-escalation measures Pakistan and India can take regarding existing issues. Additionally, each country's perception of their security is interwoven with the political, diplomatic, and strategic movements of the external powers that wield significant influence in the region. Coherent and consistent behavior which discourages conventional and nuclear escalation, although sometimes imperceptibly, is needed from the United States, China, and Russia. Without this, both Pakistan and India will unlikely feel confident to reduce the aggressive posturing of their conventional forces over existing cross-border issues, leaving the escalation from conventional warfare to nuclear warfare a very real possibility.

This paper will focus on the India-Pakistan nuclear rivalry, leaving Afghanistan-Pakistan issues and Pakistan internal threat dimensions as exogenous. The paper will argue from the basic premise that nuclear war between India and Pakistan will most likely result from an escalating conventional war that must be prevented at all costs. Though remote, nuclear exchange from accidents and inadvertent release cannot be ruled out in crises. The stakes for a structured peace and security that reduces the risk of war that could turn nuclear are extremely high and linked to international security.

The paper is organized into five sections. The first section will give a brief overview of crises and nuclear management in South Asia. The second section will analyze the likely causes of

nuclear exchange and possible scenarios. The third section will analyze unilateral and bilateral steps Pakistan and India can take with or without reciprocity. The fourth section will examine the roles and influences of external powers in reducing risk and encouraging a peace and security structure in the region. Finally, the paper will summarize the key arguments and recommendations.

SECTION 1: AN OVERVIEW OF CRISES AND NUCLEAR MANAGEMENT

During the Cold War, two sets of questions about security in the nuclear age were raised by some serious studies pertaining to the management of nuclear capabilities. The first set pertained to the performance of the command system in peace and war and the second analyzed the dangers of inadvertence during a conventional war breaking out in Europe.³ Since the demise of the Cold War and the recession of strategic threats, the relevance of these dangers seem no longer important at the global level. Concerns about stability are now more applicable to individual regions where nuclear capability has emerged, especially in South Asia where a bipolar regional rivalry has changed the security dynamics and violent non-state actors have created a potential of triggering a war between two distrusting nuclear neighbors. It is essential to understand the differences between the Cold War era US-Soviet nuclear tensions and the nuclear race underway in South Asia, as the latter is fraught with a long history of unsettled disputes, intense cognitive biases, and proximity.

During the gestation period of covert development of their nuclear weapons, India and Pakistan underwent a series of military crises. The occupation of Siachin glacier (1984) and Brass-tacks (1986-87) broke the uneasy spell of peace and tranquility between the two neighbors since the Simla peace accord in 1972. During this period, both countries faced domestic political and separatist challenges, with each side accusing the other of abetting insurgencies.⁴ By 1989-90, the third military crises began with the Kashmir uprising and prompted U.S. presidential intervention for the first time. The 1990 crisis was the first of its kind where the nuclear factor played a role. Controversy still exists with conflicting claims of whether Pakistan conveyed veiled threats and engaged in nuclear signaling during the crisis.⁵ These crises in the 1980s have

³ See for example Ashton B. Carter, John D. Steinbruner, and Charles A. Zraket eds. *Managing Nuclear Operations* (Washington DC 1987: The Brookings Institute); Desmond Ball, "Can a Nuclear War Be Won?" *Adelphi Papers* 169, (London UK: The International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS] 1981); and Barry R Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation: Conventional War and Nuclear Risks* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁴ India was involved in Sikh, Tamil, and Naxalite insurgencies and also experienced emergency rule in the mid-seventies. Pakistan underwent political turmoil leading to martial law in 1977 and insurgencies in Baluchistan and Sindh.

⁵ The author's interviews with several Pakistani senior military and civil servants indicate conflicting claims and denials about Pakistan sending their Foreign Minister, Sahibzada Yaqub, to convey a subtle threat, which Yaqub-

since shaped the regional security dynamics, which were directly influenced by three intertwined dimensions. The first dimension was the end of Cold War, which lowered strategic significance of South Asia, thereby allowing the super-powers to disengage from the region. Second, the war in Afghanistan mutated into intra-regional civil war after the Soviet departure. Third, the uprising in Kashmir evolved into a full-fledged insurgency in Indian administered Kashmir. In the center of all these dimensions was Pakistan. It was foremost to face the blowback of the Afghan war, so Pakistan was inescapably involved for decade in Afghanistan and had vital security interests in both Kabul and Kashmir. In the changed geopolitical environment, Pakistan came under nuclear sanction (Pressler law) by the U.S., which did not stop its quest to match India's nuclear and missile developments. Nuclear sanctions, in particular, sped up the ballistic missile race. As India flight-tested missiles, Pakistan, in a desperate search of suppliers to match India, sought a substitute for the F-16 aircraft, whose delivery was stalled due to nuclear sanctions. Pakistan looked east for its missile program and eventually got both liquid and solid fuel technologies transfers to enable a strong base to proceed independently. By the end of the century, India and Pakistan would possess a nuclear capacity sufficient to destroy the subcontinent.

Within a year, Pakistan and India were engaged in a high intensity crisis at Kargil that was unprecedented in terms of its timing, nature, and intensity. The Pakistani opportunistic land occupation to "improve its defenses" was no longer considered business as usual along the Line of Control (LoC). In the summer of 1984, India occupied Siachin glacier, left undemarcated in 1971, which triggered a series of crises along the relatively quieter northerly part of the LoC.⁶ The act triggered instability between nuclear-armed neighbors, unacceptable to the world that was now overly concerned about the nuclear dimension. The crisis deepened as India vertically escalated the conflict using airpower and threatened horizontal escalation. Its diplomatic and information campaign succeeded both internationally and domestically in rallying support behind India. The opposite happened in Pakistan. The victory of having done something after the

Khan denies having been either tasked or having conveyed. Reports of F-16s being prepared to signal deterrence also remain unverified whether it was a post-event rhetorical claim for domestic political purposes or otherwise.

⁶ India felt justified in its land grab of Siachin as it was outside the demarcated LoC. The international community saw this crisis as another between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. It was before the start of the South Asian nuclear era., recognized as 1998 and not 1974.

ignominy of loss of Siachin and other posts was short lived. The Pakistani narrative and justification fell on deaf ears both domestically and abroad. Isolated and under severe sanctions, Pakistan's internal mechanisms collapsed into confusion and its army was forced to withdraw after the Pakistani Prime Minister dashed to Washington for help. The breakdown of civil-military relations and its consequences continue to affect Pakistan nearly a decade later.

The Kargil crisis remains a highly controversial one for a number of reasons. One aspect was the nuclear dimension of the crises. The U.S. intelligence and policy makers believe that the Pakistan military made imminent preparations of possibly mating nuclear warheads with ballistic missiles. The Pakistani officials involved with such preparations deny any such actions or event.⁷ Kargil is celebrated as a diplomatic success for the U.S. in crisis de-escalation; however, this was a shocking blow to Pakistan and a clear manifestation of a U.S. tilt in India's favor, decidedly against Pakistan. With overt nuclear weapons capabilities, the paradigm of stability shifted. But new powers do not learn the shift instantly. Like the old, new nuclear powers take time to move up the learning curve. As Robert Jervis examined in his work, the meaning of nuclear revolution is a slow process.⁸

Although the crisis dented prospects of peace and security, the foundations and potential for a structured peace were laid earlier in 1998-1999. Under severe international sanctions, India and Pakistan were pushed into bilateral negotiations culminating in a summit from which the famous Lahore Declaration that encompassed the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was drawn in February 1999. The Lahore MOU recognized the nature of the changed strategic environment and laid down the basis of the potential peace, security, and confidence building measures.

⁷ The most oft cited reference is from Bruce Reidal who was the note taker during the Clinton – Sharif meeting on 04 July 1999. The categorical denial comes from Pervez Musharraf in *In the Line of Fire*. Also, Lt Gen Khalid Kidwai during a briefing tour in the U.S. in fall of 2006, repeatedly denied any such preparations. Also see Feroz Hassan Khan's interview with Aziz Haniffa in, "Pakistan Did Not Prepare Nuclear Weapons in Kargil Crisis," *India Abroad Weekly Journal* April 2002, (Washington, D.C.).

⁸ Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

The run up to the Lahore Declaration, however, was not without highly intensive engagements of the U.S. with both India and Pakistan. The team, led by Strobe Talbott, was comprised of high-level teams of non-proliferation and arms control experts, with extensive experience of Cold War negotiations. The U.S. experts, however, were unaware of the nuances of regional security compulsions; and, equally, South Asian security managers and the civil and military bureaucracy were equally inexperienced in the logic, lingo, and implications of classic arms control that had evolved during the Cold War nuclear rivalry.

The Pakistani interaction with the U.S. (and dialogue with India) indicated a fast learning experience.⁹ Substantive exchange of non-paper with the US teams led both sides to understand the obstacles and prospects of a minimum deterrence posture. Pakistan proposed the adoption of a Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR) for South Asia. The SRR was to comprise of three interlocking elements: agreed reciprocal measures for nuclear and missile restraints to prevent deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons; establishment of conventional arms balance as a confidence building measure; and establishment of political mechanisms for resolving bilateral conflicts, especially the core disputes over Jammu and Kashmir.¹⁰

From the above three, the two military elements were symbiotic and fundamental to Pakistan's security perspective and deterrent posture. The fundamental principle was a nexus between nuclear restraint and conventional force restraint. India dismissed the notion of conventional force restraints with Pakistan outright, indicating it would only discuss nuclear and missile restraint and doctrinal aspects. The U.S. experts were not enthusiastic either. One interpretation was that linking conventional force restraints with nuclear restraints contained an implicit legitimization of upping the nuclear ante in the face conventional threat. To the Pakistanis, tying down the nuclear hand, while freeing up the conventional hand was tantamount to legitimizing use of conventional force by the stronger and delegitimizing the use of nuclear weapons for the conventionally weaker side. What then was the logic of Pakistan nuclear deterrence that was

⁹ Pakistan took a lead on issues of arms control and disarmament since it had set up a dedicated cell in Army Headquarters in 1994. The author was the first Director of this organization which was later merged with the Strategic Plans Division, Joint service Headquarters in 1999. See Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, New York in the General Debate of the First Committee of the 58th Session of the U.N. General Assembly, 10 October 2003.

obtained after three decades of opprobrium, sanctions, and military defeat in 1971 – the original *raison d'être* for going nuclear?

The process of separated triangular strategic dialogue between each of the three, Pakistan, the U.S., and India, created suspicions as each side was blind to the discussions of the other two. In Pakistan suspicion especially grew for two reasons. First, after 50 years of an alliance relationship with the U.S., Pakistan was less inhibited in candor and trust. For India, this was probably new. However, U.S. sympathy and public cozying up of Strobe Talbot and Jaswant Singh lent credence to onlookers that the U.S. was not interested in an equitable treatment of mutual restraint and potentially had a different agenda with India than with Pakistan. Second, the notion of “de-hyphenation” was evident as the U.S. began to dismiss Pakistani security concerns; and, increasingly, U.S. negotiators began to mirror the perceptions and positions of their Indian counterparts.¹¹

The strategic dialogue lost its seriousness and soon it became a US-India partnership dialogue rather than a US-brokered chance of establishing a structure for regional stability. India was loath to any regional-based proposals as it reduced India's status and elevated that of Pakistan.¹² Nevertheless, Pakistan took away many learning experiences. The dialogue process enabled Pakistan to set its priorities and align the key thinking on issues of doctrine, command and control, arms control, and non-proliferation concerns. In particular, the activities of AQ Khan crystallized the need for responsible oversight and restraint. There was a hiatus in the dialogue between 1999 and 2001 with the military government. President Clinton's reluctant visit in March 2000 with the baggage of Kargil as the backdrop and a failed Agra Summit proved counterproductive in the end.

Encouraged by the success in Kargil and the U.S. response during negotiations, India announced its draft nuclear doctrine in August 1999, later made official in 2003. The draft nuclear doctrine, which announced the no-first-use policy, espoused a massive retaliation doctrine to include the

¹¹ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 2004).

¹² Zafar Iqbal Cheema, “Prospects of Strengthening the CBMs Regime in South Asia,” in Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Imtiaz Bokhari eds, *Conflict Resolution and Regional Cooperation in South Asia*, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2004, p48. “Cheema cites India not in favor of Disarmament”, *News India*, 14 November 1987.

use of nuclear weapons in the event of a major attack against India or Indian forces anywhere. If attacked with biological or chemical weapons, India would retaliate with nuclear weapons; and India backed it up with development of a triad of land, sea and air nuclear weapons platforms. This was further enhanced by formal deployment of the Prithvi missile and subsequent development and deployment of the Agni series and other cruise missiles (Brahmos). On 25 January 2000, on the eve of India's constitutional birthday, Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes announced a doctrine of limited war under a nuclear umbrella. From a Pakistani perspective every Indian pronouncement, India's doctrinal thinking, and its force goals and postures were directed at Pakistan-specific interests and only indirectly referred to other unspecified threats (China).

In December 2001, just when US forces were pounding at the Tora Bora hills to destroy the remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, Pakistani armed forces were moving into the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). Operation Enduring Freedom had passed through a critical phase with Pakistan providing major logistics, intelligence, and operational space. Pakistani forces were required to be the anvil as U.S. forces were conducting operations across the region. This was the most crucial phase of the war against Al Qaeda for which the U.S. required major Pakistani military force deployment to block the porous border as best as they could. As military operations proceeded along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, five alleged terrorists attacked the Indian parliament in New Delhi on 13 December 2001. This attack was the second of its kind within two months of each other. The first attacks were on the State Parliament in Srinagar, Kashmir on 01 October 2001. Enraged, India ordered complete mobilization of the Indian armed forces and the Indian Prime Minister called for a "decisive war" against Pakistan. Since 1984, this was the fifth crisis and the largest and, at 10 months, the longest military standoff between the two rivals. This was also the first time that Pakistan armed forces were physically confronted on two battlefronts, particularly in the spring of 2002 when U.S. forces conducted another follow up military operation (Operation Anaconda).¹³ As brinkmanship and force deployment deepened on both sides, another terrorist incident occurred in May 2002 and war between the two neighbors seemed imminent. The consequence of the military standoff between India and

¹³ Pakistan was also confronted on two fronts in the 1980s crises, but its armed forces were not physically involved. It was focused on proxy war against the Soviet Union then.

Pakistan provided an opportunity for remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda to escape into the porous borderlands with greater ease than would have been possible had Pakistan focused on a single front. The prospects of Pakistani force effectiveness in the tribal borderlands would have been greater then because tribal areas had up until then given no resistance to Pakistani force movement, allowing peaceful penetration into tribal areas. During the compound crises in 2002, India and Pakistan respectively signaled strategic unease through missile testing at two peak moments of their military standoffs. India tested its Agni-1 in January 2002, and Pakistan flight-tested three ballistic missiles in May 2002, prompting U.S. intervention to diffuse the crisis.¹⁴ Given the crisis propensity of the region for the past decades, and with no prospects of conflict ending, there is not enough confidence that a miscalculation can be prevented in the future. The region refuses to acknowledge that limited or low-level conflict carries a threat of nuclear inadvertence.

¹⁴ Feroz Hassan Khan, "Nuclear Signaling, Missiles, and Escalation Control in South Asia," in Michael Krepon, Rodney Jones, And Ziad Haider, eds. *Escalation Control and the Nucleus Option in South Asia*, (Washington D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2004): 88.

SECTION 2: POSSIBLE CAUSES OF A NUCLEAR EXCHANGE BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

The legacy of suspicion created by violent events at partition still exists amongst many of Pakistan and India's ruling elites.¹⁵ Consequently, India and Pakistan have focused on internal balancing (i.e., modernizing their armed forces and eventually going nuclear) and external balancing (i.e., forging alliances or "treaties of friendships" with great powers).¹⁶ This in turn contributed to the hardening of their respective stances on conflict resolution and the increasing frequency of cross-border crises. The nuclear capabilities of each only exacerbate the tensions inherent between the two countries, pushing each toward unilateral internal security-building measures. The double effect of the nuclear capability is that on the one hand it has contained crises and prevented major wars (deterrence optimism), but on the other hand, failed to prevent a series of military crises and dangerous confrontations (proliferation pessimism).¹⁷ The mix of violent extremism and terrorism in the milieu has made regional security issues no longer an exclusive domain of any one state in the region.¹⁸ Today, terrorist acts are not only affecting societies within the South Asian nations, but its effects ripple through the regions and the world.

This section begins with a premise that surprise or unexpected nuclear exchange between two countries is remote. This condition may change in the future for two reasons. One, change will happen if nuclear weapons are mated with delivery systems and deployed arsenals are routinely maintained, as was the case in Europe during the Cold War. Two, if strategic weapons asymmetry between India and Pakistan accentuates, it will increase India's first strike options in terms of capabilities, notwithstanding India's declared intentions of no first use in its official

¹⁵ Rifaat Hussain, "The India-Pakistan Peace Process," *Defense & Security Analysis* 22, 4 (2006): 409.

¹⁶ Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001): 204, 209- 211.

¹⁷ Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003).

¹⁸ Right wing politics in both India and Pakistan generate religious hatred and extremist ideological positions. A ritual cleaning act was performed by Jamait Islami and Shiv Sena respectively after PM Vajpaae's visit to the Pakistan Monument in 1999 and President Musharraf's visit to the Gandhi Memorial in 2001. See Rizwan Zeb and Suba Chandran, "Indo-Pak Conflicts Ripe to Resolve," *RCSS Policy Studies* 34 (Colombo: Regional Center for Strategic Studies, 2005), 23.

doctrine. This imbalance will occur in the future due to the introduction of destabilizing technologies and the freeing up of India's domestic fissile stock for military purposes, as and when the Hyde Act of 2007 is implemented.

Three major developments will erode the current balance in future: Increasing capacities in advanced information, surveillance and reconnaissance systems (Israeli-supplied Phalcon and Green Pine radars for example); acquisitions of Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) systems; and the steady militarization of outer space in which India has recently shown interest. Even if the possibility of a surprise strike against Pakistan may be remote and arguably meant for balance against China, these developments will force Pakistan into countervailing strategies. Pakistan's geo-physical vulnerabilities to Indian aggression will increase compared to China or any other country. This perceived invincibility against strategic arsenals would encourage India to wage limited wars with conventional forces. Since the 2002 military standoff and relative tranquility between India and Pakistan, the Indian military has toyed with new ideas of waging conventional war with Pakistan, as illustrated by the emerging military doctrine of Cold Start.

India's Cold Start military doctrine envisages creating multiple integrated battle groups that are self sufficient in limited offensive capacities – maneuver and firepower – forward deployed to garrisons close to Pakistan. One study suggests that the doctrine requires reorganizing offensive power of the three Indian Army strike corps into eight integrated battle groups, each roughly the size of a composite division, comprised of infantry, armor, and supporting artillery and other fire power units. This force would resemble the erstwhile Soviet Union's offensive maneuver groups, capable of advancing into Pakistan on different axes with the support of the Air Force and Naval Aviation.¹⁹ The fundamental purpose of such a doctrine is to redress India's time-consuming mobilization of offensive mechanized forces, which loses surprise and allows Pakistan time to outpace India due to the short distances required for deployment. This was demonstrated in the 2002 crisis, and the Indian military was somewhat frustrated because of heavy-handed political control, diplomatic intervention, and loss of military opportunity to wage a short and limited, but intense, punitive war. Cold Start reflects several assumptions on the part

¹⁹ Walter Ludwig III, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine," *International Security* 32, 2 (Winter 2007/08), 158-190.

of India. It dismisses Pakistan's nuclear capability, assumes accurate calculations of redlines, assumes it can control the degree of escalation, underestimates Pakistan's reciprocal conventional preparations and the subsequent retaliatory damage, assumes Indian and Pakistani governments will accept fate accompli, and believes the reaction of outside powers (read U.S.) would be manageable and would help keep the conflict purely conventional and limited. These are all sizeable and significant assumptions; the failure of any opens the door to uncontrollable escalation to the nuclear level. The possible long-range outcomes for maintaining such a doctrine include an increasingly fortified India-Pakistan border, continued tension and pressure to maintain strategic weapons deployment, and a regional arms race. All three outcomes hinder the development of each country, but would be especially be debilitating for Pakistan as it struggles to maintain two borders and a multitude of domestic crises.

Nuclear Force Deployment Scenarios

Should security dynamics continue as described above, Pakistan will be forced to become a security state, far removed from the vision of a welfare state. In a heightened security environment with no peace prospects, there are four possible general scenarios in which Pakistan would be forced to consider deploying nuclear weapons, as outlined below:

- 1) **Hot pursuits.** India conducts punitive raids across the LoC or the international border. Imminent tactical preparations in India will force Pakistan conventional force reserves to mobilize.
- 2) **Brass-tacks and composite crises 2002 revisited.** Indian conventional force builds up for coercive deployment or decisive war (Brass-tacks or 2002 deployment) and nuclear forces are alerted and deployed.
- 3) **East Pakistan revisited.** India abets internal discords within Pakistan, inducing civil war and finally seeks an opportunity to assail it as it did in 1971. Baluchistan and parts in Sind and North West Frontier Provinces, where domestic unrest and religious and tribal extremism are high are good candidates for such a design.
- 4) **Peacetime deployment of strategic weapons.** India opts for formal deployment of nuclear forces, citing China or other strategic threat and Pakistan follows suit.

The strategic picture profoundly changes should any of above conditions manifest. Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai, in an interview with two Italian physicists, discussed hypothetical use scenarios and generally defines Pakistan's nuclear thresholds. Paolo Cotta-Ramusino and Maurizio Martellini quote Kidwai: "Nuclear weapons are aimed solely at India. In case that deterrence fails, they will be used if:

- a. India attacks Pakistan and conquers a large part of its territory [space threshold]
- b. India destroys a large part either of its land or air forces [military threshold]
- c. India proceeds to the economic strangling of Pakistan [economic strangling]
- d. India pushes Pakistan into political destabilization or creates a large scale internal subversion in Pakistan [domestic destabilization]."²⁰

The four thresholds – geographic, military, economic, and domestic, as defined by Lt. General Khalid Kidwai – are factors that would determine the decision for deliberate use by a national command authority. These are not red lines, defined and understood by the adversary or other external parties. A clearly defined redline erodes nuclear deterrence and provides room for conventional force maneuver or destruction by firepower. The other possibility is inadvertent nuclear use. In this paper, I use the Barry Posen model of inadvertent escalation and apply that model to the conditions applicable to South Asia.²¹

Nuclear Use Scenarios

In the absence of any structure of strategic restraint between nuclear-armed neighbors, the possibility of conventional wars breaking out is more likely. This then raises the question Barry Posen had raised nearly two decades back: the probability of inadvertent use. I argue that once the conventional war breaks out, the fog of war sets in and two major factors can create conditions for inadvertent use. First, during a conventional war, deceptions, counter control targeting and communication breakdowns are routine consequences of war fighting. These elements contribute to the fog of war, which is further thickened by other conditions, as elucidated by Clausewitz in *On War*. Second, during peacetime, nuclear weapons safety is more

²⁰ "Nuclear safety, nuclear stability and nuclear strategy in Pakistan," (Como, Italy: Landau Network, Centro Volta, January 2002), <http://lxmi.mi.infn.it/~landnet/Doc/pakistan.pdf>.

²¹ Barry R. Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation: Conventional War and Nuclear Risks*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

important than effectiveness, especially if chances of war are small. But in war, the safety coefficient is of lesser significance than battle effectiveness. Again, this factor is not simply common sense, but critically important for deterrence stability. An unmated safe weapon will likely failsafe but is more vulnerable to preventive strikes. Nuclear command authorities cannot afford this risk and therefore must not only make weapons invulnerable but also effective to retaliate. It is the combined effect of these two factors that form the danger of inadvertence in the fog of war. As Martin Schram put it, “Danger of inadvertence is not guided by human planning but human frailty.”²² Following are possible scenarios that can cause inadvertence in the fog of war.²³

Fog of War Scenario One: When strategic arsenals are deployed for war, deployed delivery vehicles capable of carrying both conventional and/or nuclear warheads are dispersed for protection and invulnerability. In addition, dummy warheads and real ones are mixed to deceive and keep the enemy guessing. The probability of misperceptions with the adversary increases, especially in South Asia. In the midst of war, any launch by such a strategic weapon (ballistic or cruise missile) will reach the target within three to five minutes. Depending on what warning and damage it does, any weapons fired from a strategic delivery vehicle will evoke unpredictable responses and the dimension of the battle will change.²⁴

Fog of War Scenario Two: The second scenario could be derived from a communications break down in conjunction with a perceived rumor of decapitation or crippling of national leadership or the national command centers. Most modern wars commence with such a

²² Martin Schram “Avoiding Armageddon: Our Future, Our Choice” (New York: Basic Books, 2003): 53.

²³ Also author’s interview with Martin Schram for PBS Ted Turner Documentaries, PBS series. This was compiled in the book *Avoiding Armageddon* cited above which gives identical scenarios extracted from the author’s interview, p53-57.

²⁴ India’s Prithvi and Pakistan’s Hatf series of ballistic missiles, if deployed, may have mixed warheads. Improved surveillance and intelligence capabilities in both countries will know both deployment sites and launch times; but neither side will ever be certain about the composition of incoming warheads. A launch-to-target time of only a few minutes will reveal the kind of warhead used once the first warhead explodes on target. However, strategic weapons fire exchanges from nuclear-capable delivery systems will inevitably follow, which will leave neither side assured of constant non-nuclear responses through the duration of war. If a conventionally armed warhead, launched from a nuclear-capable delivery vehicle, targets a nuclear weapon site of the adversary, it is reasonable to believe that a nuclear response would result.

strike. Aircraft and ballistic or cruise missiles are ideal weapons to take out leadership in counter control strikes to decapitate nuclear forces, which are then either rendered incapacitated or ineffective to retaliate. These forces, usually dispersed, camouflaged and concealed, could then be neutralized by other means. In such an extreme case, for deployed nuclear forces to be effective the “always” element of the command and control dilemma would become more expedient than the “never” element.²⁵ The last resort scenario would necessitate a “manual override” capability with nuclear weapon units.²⁶ This can only be undertaken in extremis, and it still does not necessarily imply that weapons units are independent or not under command or control of a formalized chain of command.

Fog of War Scenario Three: A conventional attack by aircraft destroys a nuclear weapon convoy or a fixed site on ground resulting in an explosion featuring a radioactive plume. In this case, it is unclear whether a nuclear weapon was used or the nuclear asset was blown up on the ground. Imagine a hypothetical scenario in which a Pakistani Air Force plane or ballistic missile were to hit an Indian nuclear weapon site or ballistic missile convoy. Will India construe this to be a first nuclear strike by Pakistan? Will India retaliate as enunciated in its strategic doctrine, or will India deliberate and evaluate what had happened before responding?

In all of the above scenarios, the best outcome would be that the respective national command authority does not jump the gun, assesses damage, and evaluates options. The worse case response, however, would be one made out of haste or impatience; war situations can cause irrational responses leading to an upward spiraling of panic within militaries and civil societies. The short flight times between countries suggest that this is a plausible scenario; therefore, the confusion and time-compressed reactions and responses in the heat of war should not be discounted. It is hard to predict the reaction and response of units in the field if some of their

²⁵ The term “never-always” is borrowed from Peter Feaver. See, Peter Douglas Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

²⁶ The term “manual override” implies passing the electronic code manually to enable the launching of weapons. In Western jargon the term “jury-rigged” is often used.

nuclear assets are destroyed or made ineffective by conventional attacks. In the ensuing chaos, would surviving units, if capable of operating manually, wait for authorization (enabling codes) and deliberation of the national command authority? Discipline, training and Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) would suggest they might; but as of yet, there is no precedent in history that sets a barometer to predict battlefield responses of militaries armed with both lethal conventional as well as nuclear weapons.

Pakistan's National Command Authority retains assertive control during peace and war. In a state of war, nuclear weapons will be mated with delivery systems; permissive action links to enable weapons would be established with a two to three man rule; and clearly articulated instructions about the authorization would be clearly issued to all commands.²⁷ However, it is unclear how command and control will cope with electronic jamming or other information warfare techniques that may preclude enabling weapon systems. Alternative command and communication channels are therefore always planned. In Pakistan, command and communication systems are war-gamed each year to test the efficacy of the system. Even if redundancies fail, methods of establishing contact will be made through any means of transportation including helicopters or ground transportation. Absence of communications will force local leaders to make use-it-or-lose-it decisions in case of severe attacks. However, should all other means fail, the last resort would necessitate pre-delegation to next-in-command or alternative commands as redundancy to assure retaliation, further enhancing deterrence.

²⁷ Kidwai interview with Maurizio and Paolo.

SECTION 3: UNILATERAL AND BI-LATERAL ANTI-ESCALATION STEPS FOR PAKISTAN AND INDIA

Unlike Pakistan, India is in a different position when it comes to reducing military tension between itself and Pakistan specifically and in South Asia generally. Its geographical size, central location, and military strength give India hegemonic influence that it uncomfortably and inconsistently wields. In South Asia's turbulent history, India passed through its most dangerous decades relatively better than others, its smaller neighbors lacking adequate structure and strength to stem crises and wars. Regional security issues compounded also due to India's steadfast reluctance to accommodate its neighbors and focus on a grand strategy of regional hegemony.²⁸

India is still searching for the right strategy to deal with its neighbors, arguably impeding its own rise.²⁹ Two opposing schools of thoughts have emerged in the past two decades. The first school was based on engagement with its smaller neighbors on the basis of non-reciprocity, also referred to as the Gujral Doctrine.³⁰ The second school of thought seeks a dominant posture and assertive policy towards neighbors, as enunciated in the Gandhi Doctrine.³¹ India followed both tracks at various times, eventually favoring the hegemonic model. Had India pursued a broad approach of accommodation with its neighbors, it would not only facilitate better regional integration, but the prospects of fostering sustained peace and conflict resolution would be greater as well. A self-confident neighborhood that has a stake in, rather than a fear of, India's rise is a harbinger for stronger structures of peace.

²⁸ Manjeet Singh Pardesi, "Deducing India's Grand Strategy of Regional Hegemony from Historical and Conceptual Perspectives," *Draft working paper no 76* (Singapore: Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies), April 2005, available at <http://www.ntu.edu.sg/rsis/publications/workingpapers.asp?selYear=2005>, (accessed June 7, 2008).

²⁹ C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Viking, 2004): 156.

³⁰ Peter J Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005): 236.

³¹ The doctrine is named after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi's security approach in the 1970s and 1980s where India aggressively pursued a policy of assertion with all its neighbors from Sri Lanka to China. Major military and naval exercises were conducted along Pakistani and Chinese borders, India flexed its muscles in Sri Lanka with the peace accord of 1987, and it intervened in the Maldives.

As brought out above, India enjoys an edge in geophysical as well as qualitative and quantitative superiority over Pakistan. India can choose the time and place for an offensive and it “is the conventional imbalance that could bring both sides to the nuclear brink.”³² Zawar Haider Abidi explains the Pakistani nuclear posture, which rejects the concept of no-first-use primarily due to its perceived vulnerability to Indian conventional advantage.³³ A RAND Corp study endorses the unlikelihood of a change in Pakistan’s nuclear posture “without shifts in the conventional balance of forces, requiring CBMs to demonstrate non-hostile intent” (e.g., halting training along the LOC in Kashmir or the pre-notification of major military exercises).³⁴ As argued elsewhere in this paper, the best pathway to assured non-use of nuclear weapons is to undertake conventional arms control measures.

India and Pakistan go back a long way in negotiating treaties and elaborate confidence-building measures (CBMs).³⁵ Unfortunately, the record of implementation is rather unimpressive.³⁶ However, CBMs are no panacea to peace and security, but they are a useful foundation for potential structural arms control agreements. The basic reasons for failure of CBMs is continuing distrust, aggressive force postures, forward deployment of military units, and continuing violence in the region. As one Indian author says, “India has significant and identical CBMs with both China (stronger) and Pakistan (weaker) neighbors, the implementation of Sino-India and Indo-Pakistani CBMs have been different. With China, India has had positive experiences with forces pulled back and tensions eased. India believes this is so because there is greater political will and common desire to normalize relations in the case of China but not so in

³² Andrew Winner and Toshi Yoshihara, “India and Pakistan at the Edge,” *Survival* 44, 3 (Autumn 2002). Also see Rodney Jones, *Conventional Military Imbalance and Strategic Stability in South Asia*, *South Asian Strategic Stability Unit* (Bradford, UK: University of Bradford, 2005).

³³ Zawar Haider Abidi, “Threat Reduction in South Asia,” Occasional paper 49 (Washington D.C: Henry L Stimson Center, 2003).

³⁴ Dalis Dassa Kaye, *Talking to the Enemy: Track Two Diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation Study) 2007.

³⁵ The Karachi Agreement of 1949; Simla Accord of 1972; Lahore Agreement of 1999; and Islamabad Accord of 2004 are some of the impressive bilateral accords.

³⁶ An acknowledgement to this effect has been in the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that seeks a mechanism for the implementation of existing CBMs.

the case with Pakistan.”³⁷ The reasons go beyond the political will: India’s and China’s force deployments against each other is neither threatening in real time nor accompanied by active violence.

There is also a fundamental disagreement over the approach to peace and CBMs. India insists on transparency of doctrines as an important ingredient to tension reduction, particularly emphasizing a no-first use policy. Since Pakistan refuses to agree to such a step in the face of a superior conventional force, its diplomats concentrate on bilateral conventional and nuclear force reduction steps and India’s offensive doctrines and force postures.³⁸ Subsequently, the process of agreement is extremely slow. Regardless, there are unilateral and bilateral measures the two countries can take to reign in the nuclear risks.

Unilateral Anti-Escalation Measures

Even though bilateral measures have the greater potential to reduce the likelihood of conventional escalation, there are steps each country can take without reciprocity, which could also mitigate escalation. On Pakistan’s side, they can go beyond their ill-defined deterrence doctrine by specifically defining (and announcing) specific policies on key issues with appropriate parliamentary backing.

Strategic Weapons (warheads and missiles): Pakistan could make an official strategic doctrine that encompasses its concerns, doctrinal approach, and security obligations. Four main ingredients around which its doctrinal pronouncements could revolve are:

- 1) Minimum Credible Deterrence and eschewing of an arms race with India
- 2) No first use of force – conventional or nuclear
- 3) No transfer of nuclear technology to any state or non-state entity or provisions of extended deterrence to any other country

³⁷ Karan R. Sawny, “The Prospects for Building a Peace Process Between India and Pakistan,” in Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Imtiaz H Bokhari, eds. *Conflict Resolution and Regional Cooperation in South Asia* (Islamabad Policy Research Institute 2004): 32-40.

³⁸ See, for example, the statement by Ambassador Munir Akram in the general debate of the first committee of the 58th session of the U.N. General Assembly, New York, 10 October 2003.

4) No use or threat of use of force against non-nuclear state

Strategic force postures: Pakistan can formally announce that unless the security situation dramatically deteriorates, its nuclear weapons will remain de-alerted; its missile and nuclear warheads will not be kept mated with delivery vehicles (aircraft or missiles); strategic weapons will remain operationally non-deployed; and Pakistan will provide notification of all missile tests. Islamabad should consider broadening its notifying policy by including all neighbors of its tests, particularly Iran, Afghanistan, and China.

Conventional forces: Pakistan can formally announce it will not engage in a conventional arms race and will only maintain an acceptable ratio commensurate with its threats; Pakistan will not engage in dangerous hot pursuits, surgical strikes or limited war with any neighbors across recognized borders or agreed lines of deployments (i.e no more Kargils.)

Low-intensity conflicts: Pakistan should explicitly renounce the asymmetric strategies of use of non-combatants in any shape or form as part of its security policy. It should explicitly announce that it will not allow its state territory or territory under its control for training, organizing, preparing and executing any form of cross-border violence (i.e., no more Operational Gibraltar or other forward policy as an extension of strategic depth). Pakistan should offer a joint regional terrorism cooperative center and open it to all neighbors and likeminded countries.

India, too, has some non-reciprocity steps it can take to mitigate conventional escalation. The South Asian hegemon can unilaterally announce that it will neither cross borders or the LoC (i.e., no more Siachins), mobilize mechanized forces (i.e., no more Exercise Brasstacks), or undertake coercive operations (i.e., no more Operation Parakarms) against SAARC members, only maintaining defensive formations within border areas. This would preclude Brass-tacks-like developments and allow its smaller neighbors, Pakistan in particular, to focus their domestic military operations on counter-insurgency efforts. Furthermore and most importantly, India does have room to renounce its offensive military doctrines such as Cold Start and unlink future doctrines from the concept of limited war under a nuclear umbrella. Also, India's offensive military exercises can be reshaped to not obtusely portray Pakistan as the sole opposition force.

“Brazen Chariots,” an exercise conducted in April 2008, is one such example that continues to harden Pakistan’s belief that India’s war preparations are Pakistan-specific. Lastly, India has the capacity to take the lead in coordinating joint military and naval exercises that support regional objectives, such as piracy reduction, expansion of search and rescue networks, and support of disaster relief contingencies. Such exercises not only expand the capabilities and skill sets of each country’s militaries and actually improve the safety and security of the region, but it expands the breadth of relationships between rival countries, thereby lessening the chances of a conventional or escalating war.

Bilateral or Reciprocal Anti-escalation Measures

On the heels of the unilateral measures described above, previously hard-to-attain bilateral agreements will not be so daunting. And as far as reducing the risk of nuclear war on the subcontinent, bilateral and reciprocal measures will have exponentially greater success, making them essential ingredients to long-term nuclear stability. Since nuclear war will most like be a result of conventional escalation, preventing military crises is the optimum goal of bilateral agreements and can be achieved through systematic steps.

First, India and Pakistan must agree to pull back forces that are identified as offensive and threatening to the other. This is not an untenable goal and, even if not entirely successful at first, can have a stabilizing effect. Merely getting together and pointing out what force postures are threatening will create an awareness of issues and attenuate the risk of inadvertently sending the wrong strategic message. After that, the mutual creation of a “Low Force Zone” in which force deployments will be mutually negotiated and a “No Offensive Forces Zone” as appropriate.

The next series of bilateral steps would focus on the nuclear weapons themselves. However, such achievements are unlikely without outside support for such moves, particularly from the U.S. and China, and will therefore be discussed in the next section.

SECTION 4: THE ROLES AND INFLUENCES OF EXTERNAL POWERS IN REDUCING RISK

Unfortunately, the influences of the U.S., China, and Russia have not historically been consistently beneficial to the stability of South Asia. The super-powers have notoriously applied military and diplomatic pressure upon Pakistan and India when and where it seemed to best oppose the converse efforts of its adversaries, regardless of the effects it had on the civilians and governments that bore the brunt. Aid and technology was granted and denied to South Asia based not on the long-term regional stability implications, but on the respective central government's perception of its own periphery threats and its ability to provide such support. As the tides of support ebbed and flowed, South Asian countries redirected their solicitation as needed.

U.S. military and economic support was particularly critical to Pakistan's survival, but the U.S. lent support to India when it was in its own interest such as the 1962 war with China. In addition, the U.S. has played a significant role in de-escalating Indo-Pak crises a number of times. Invariably, the regional countries looked towards other partners, namely Russia and China, when the expected support from the U.S. did not measure up or materialize.

The U.S. still exhibits the same pattern of behavior. In the decade following the end of Cold War, it abandoned Pakistan in favor of connecting with a rising India, only to return to Pakistan after 9/11.³⁹ Seven years later, the U.S. is in an unprecedented position of influence in Delhi, Kabul and Islamabad, each important partner in their own right and significance. However, the suspicions of the other in the ongoing regional rivalry compounds regional and global security prospects and, worse, help its enemies like Al Qaeda.

A contention of this paper is that war prevention between India and Pakistan is intrinsic to war against Al Qaeda – a hostile Indo-Pak relationship, particularly if it escalates toward force mobilizations against each other, hampers the U.S.-led war on terror. The U.S. policy has been

³⁹ At the time of this writing in September 2008, there is an unprecedented tension between United States and Pakistan. Pakistan has strongly protested US Special Forces cross-border incursions and open statements by US policy makers to expand the war into Pakistani territory.

to prevent nuclear weapon capability towards war prone states, and if that fails, to prevent wars between nuclear armed states. However, the India-Pakistan rivalry has direct impact on the most crucial security issue in contemporary times and all efforts to prevent the “nuclearization” have failed, mandating a change of tack for the states wielding influence in South Asia. The U.S., China, and Russia should proactively engage in three areas: conflict resolution between all states; strategic weapon threat reduction between India and Pakistan; and conventional arms control between India and Pakistan.⁴⁰

Conflict Resolution

The U.S. will need to spend a huge amount of time, energy, and money to bring Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India into a mode of conflict resolution, hampered by anti-U.S. sentiment in all countries. But it is time to override objections and find a way to convince India that concessions made in the name of conflict resolution neither reduce India’s status nor undermine its ambitions. Chinese involvement can serve to assuage fears of U.S. imperialism or over-reaching while also providing a hegemonic stability upon which stability regimes can be constructed. The new U.S. administration in 2009 should soon consider a Madrid-like process for South Asia.

Strategic Weapons Threat Reduction

It will likely be futile for the U.S. to work on lowering strategic force goals as past experience has indicated resistance from both India and Pakistan. More pragmatic would be to help India and Pakistan formalize non-deployment plans for their strategic weapons, dissuade the introduction of nuclear and non-nuclear destabilizing technologies, and assist in best practices for their nuclear regimes. Specifically, international actors should encourage Pakistan and India along the following four areas:

- Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers (NRRCs). The basic purpose of NRRCs in each capitol will be to have a focal point to prevent an impending crisis from escalating. Outside countries can join in to help establish such centers. The U.S. can play a vital role in encouraging nuclear and political confidence building measures.

⁴⁰ India and Pakistan should engage in the three areas bilaterally. The initial role of the United States should be to act as a catalyst and honest broker between allies.

- Personnel Reliability Program (PRP). Sharing experience on “organization best practices” such as Personnel Reliability Programs (PRP) and procedures to manage sensitive technologies will help respective national command authorities adopt most stringent practices of safety, security, and reliability. As mentioned, training and selection of personnel to withstand psychological pressures in the fog of war will be of utmost importance in the crises-prone region.
- Accident Avoidance. The United States, China, and Russia all have a role to play in the realm of accident avoidance as they provided much of the original technology in use in South Asia. They could also share and possibly train a core of people on accident avoidance techniques and reduction of technological errors, such as electromagnetic radiation and computer fallibility.
- Physical Protection Technology. The use of some generic physical protection and material accounting practices such as sophisticated vaults and access doors, portal command equipment should be mutually agreeable.⁴¹ Again, there is sensitivity in both countries to such intrusion so this cooperation must remain within the bounds of general training and allow countries to develop their own technology if desired.

Conventional Force Restraints

There are three principle reasons for a U.S. role in conventional force restraints in South Asia. First, the U.S. is the main supplier of sophisticated technologies and state-of-the-art platforms to the region. It must understand how this will affect regional strategic instability and why the need for conventional agreement is necessary. Second, the U.S. prime concerns are on the Pakistan–Afghanistan border. The U.S. expects and desires Pakistan armed forces to focus their military might on this all-important front – an unlikely occurrence absent a force restraint agreement with India. Third, the U.S. needs to examine not just the physical postures and build up of conventional forces but emerging military doctrines (Cold Start) and (Low intensity conflicts/ Proxy wars) under the nuclear umbrella. These strategies undermine U.S. objectives of war against Al Qaeda.

⁴¹ David Albright, “Securing Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Complex: Thought-Piece for the South Asia Working Group,” paper presented at the Stanley Foundation conference on “US Strategies for Regional Security,” Airlie Conference Center, Warrenton, VA, October 25-27, 2001.

The US should encourage developing some overarching principle of identification, mechanism and non-aggression agreements alongside strategic weapon restraints. It would make sense to proceed gradually and simultaneously on parallel track towards conventional force restraint.

Four stages of a conventional arms agreement can be brokered:

- a. Identify offensive and defensive forces and requirement for other security forces.
- b. Agree on designation of a determined 'Low Force Zone'. Any increase in strength equipment or structure is voluntarily notified under a CBM to each other.
- c. Engage in restructuring and relocation of offensive conventional forces so as to build confidence and trust as other peace objectives are achieved.
- d. At a last stage, India and Pakistan must engage in proportional force reduction on the pattern of Mutually Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR).

In addition to the objectives outlined above, Chinese actions carry some added weight. Whether or not China builds up its nuclear capability based on South Asian security concerns or outside influences, it upsets whatever balance India might feel it has regarding the Asian power. The United States' reliable replaceable warhead (RRW) program exemplifies this. Although China may feel its 200 nuclear warheads is an adequate balance to the 10,000 warheads in the US, the RRW threatens that balance and could cause escalatory ripples in South Asia via China.⁴² Although Chinese-Indian interaction has become increasingly positive and more frequent as of late, China's internal force posturing, especially in the nuclear realm will invariably create waves in India and in turn Pakistan. Support for Pakistan has become less overt under the scrutiny of the U.S.'s military involvement in the area, but China also needs to keep in mind the indirect effect it has on the sub-continent when it starts altering the status quo of its forces.

⁴² Dingli Shen, "Upsetting a Delicate Balance," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 63, 4 (July 1, 2007): 37.

SECTION 5: KEY ARGUMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A nuclear-armed subcontinent is now a reality. Creating a structure upon which the basic tenets of deterrence work will, if successful, arm proponents of nuclear weapons with evidence that they do, in fact, act as deterrence to conventional war. However, reliance on the nuclear umbrella “sheltering” South Asia seems to have given militaries on both sides of the border more strategic room with respect to perpetuating low intensity warfare and escalating conventional war fighting doctrines. Additionally, this paper has argued that the most probable cause of a nuclear exchange on the subcontinent will most likely be a result of conventional war escalation – either through accident in the fog of war or due to establish protocols – and less an accidental incident. Therefore, preventing a nuclear exchange in South Asia is less dependent on strategic weapons safeguards, although they remain a key to strategic stability, and more dependent on the prevention of conventional warfare escalation. Conventional, and therefore nuclear stability can start through unilateral steps taken by Pakistan, but more importantly India, which, as the regional hegemon, has significant responsibilities in preventing nuclear war and initiating anti-escalation measures. Where real stability will be achieved, though, is through bi-lateral and multi-lateral strategic actions improving the safeguards and reducing the apparent threats to opponents, superimposed by coherent super-power policies and involvement.

Because of India’s primacy in South Asia, it must take the lead initiating stability-inducing policies and doctrines, particularly due to its relative military strength. Its behavior has not been consistent over time, vacillating between accommodating (Gujral doctrine) and confronting (Indira Gandhi doctrine) in its dealings with other South Asian neighbors. India has leaned towards the latter as new international trends like Asian power balance and globalization, for instance, favored India leaving little incentive for the former model.⁴³ Shifts in the international system – global terrorism, globalization, informational and economic interdependence – will make traditional security issues less relevant. Regional security issues in South Asia are now qualitatively different and interrelated such as energy, water, food, poverty, terrorism, and rising religious extremism. India must take the lead.

⁴³ Mohan, 155-156.

A structured peace and security regime between India and Pakistan is now a geo-political compulsion. A cooperative relationship between India and Pakistan is directly related to peace and stability in Afghanistan. Unless India and Pakistan stabilize their relationship and change the culture from confrontation and exploitation to cooperation and collective gain, success in the global war against Al Qaeda will remain elusive.

The United States, in concert with major powers, can turn this grim and seemingly intractable security situation into a unique opportunity of security paradigm change from suspicion and rivalry to one of conflict resolution and stability. The stakes of preventing war and crises between India and Pakistan (and Pakistan and Afghanistan) is now an extremely important ingredient of the global war on terror and is not just simply a matter of moving toward a peace between two nuclear-armed countries.

Nuclear neighbors with a long history of unsettled disputes, cognitive biases, crises and wars require years of crisis-free confidence and trust building to mature into détente, aided by a supportive international community. Conditions for instabilities will continue so long as the dangerous trend of seeking space for low-level conflicts continues and the feasibility to wage limited conventional war under the nuclear threshold is not taken off the table. Nevertheless, as has been shown in this paper, there are unilateral and bilateral steps India and Pakistan can take to reign in the risk of nuclear war on the subcontinent.

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