

SECURITY BEYOND SURVIVAL

ESSAYS FOR K. SUBRAHMANYAM

---

EDITOR

P.R. KUMARASWAMY



Sage Publications

New Delhi ♦ Thousand Oaks ♦ London

Copyright © P.R. Kumaraswamy, 2004

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

First published in 2004 by

**Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd**  
B-42, Panchsheel Enclave  
New Delhi 110 017

**Sage Publications Inc**  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320



**Sage Publications Ltd**  
1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road  
London EC1Y 1SP

Published by Tejeshwar Singh for Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, typeset in 10 pt Calisto MT by Star Compugraphics Private Limited, New Delhi and printed at Chaman Enterprises, New Delhi.

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Security beyond survival: essays for K. Subrahmanyam/editor, P.R. Kumaraswamy.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. National security—India. 2. India—Military policy. 3. National security—South Asia. 4. South Asia—Strategic aspects. 5. World politics—21st century. 6. Subrahmanyam, K. I. Kumaraswamy, P.R.

UA840.S357

355'.033054—dc22

2004

2004013131

ISBN: 0-7619-3267-4 (Hb)

0-7619-3268-2 (Pb)

81-7829-405-2 (India-Hb)

81-7829-406-0 (India-Pb)

**Sage Production Team:** Abantika Banerjee, Proteeti Banerjee,  
Radha Dev Raj and Santosh Rawat

---

## CONTENTS

---

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <i>List of Abbreviations</i>  | 7   |
| <i>Preface</i>  | 9   |
| 1. National Security: A Critique<br><i>P.R. Kumaraswamy</i>                                       | 11  |
| 2. India's Place in a West-Dominated World<br><i>Raju G.C. Thomas</i>                             | 33  |
| 3. Eclipsed Moon to a Rising Sun<br><i>Ashok Kapur</i>  | 52  |
| 4. National Security Council: Yet Another Ad Hoc Move?<br><i>D. Shyam Babu</i>                    | 83  |
| 5. Re-examining the 'Forward Policy'<br><i>Rajesh Rajagopalan</i>                                 | 103 |
| 6. India and China: Bound to Collide?<br><i>J. Mohan Malik</i>                                    | 127 |
| 7. Pakistan's Security Perspective: Problems of Linearity<br><i>Ayesha Siddiqa</i>                | 166 |
| 8. Indo-Pak Track II Diplomacy: Building Peace or<br>Wasting Time?<br><i>Stephen Philip Cohen</i> | 192 |
| 9. Nuclear Risk Reduction in South Asia<br><i>Michael Krepon</i>                                  | 218 |
| 10. KS: A Personal Impression<br><i>Selig S. Harrison</i>   | 235 |
| 11. A Rather Personal Biography<br><i>Sanjay Subrahmanyam</i>                                     | 241 |
| KS: A Select Bibliography<br>Compiled by <i>Soundarya Chidambaram</i>                             | 258 |
| <i>About the Editor and Contributors</i>  | 269 |
| <i>Index</i>  | 273 |

---

## NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION IN SOUTH ASIA

MICHAEL KREPON\*

---

One of K. Subramanyam's most outstanding contributions to strategic analysis is surely his chairmanship and principal authorship of the *Kargil Review Committee Report*.<sup>1</sup> Proper implementation of this *Report's* recommendations can significantly improve India's national security. A profoundly important aspect of the *Kargil Review Committee Report* is its endorsement of the applicability of the 'stability/instability paradox' to the subcontinent. The *Report* asked and answered the following question:

Did the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in May 1988 rule out a major conventional war between them? Probably not; but only up to a given threshold, which margin was exploited by Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

The stability/instability paradox has thus travelled with all its attendant baggage to South Asia. This paradox, developed by deterrence theorists in the West during the Cold War, holds that offsetting nuclear weapon capabilities may, indeed, induce caution with respect to escalation to an all-out conventional or nuclear war. However, offsetting nuclear capabilities might also facilitate risk taking at lower levels of violence.<sup>3</sup>

The applicability of the stability/instability paradox to the subcontinent has many important ramifications for the concepts of deterrence, limited war, escalation control, and nuclear risk reduction.

---

\* This essay is adapted from, 'Is Cold War Experience Applicable to Southern Asia', in Michael Krepon and Chris Gagne (eds), *Nuclear Risk Reduction in South Asia* (New Delhi: Vision Press, 2003).

Consequently, nuclear safety in South Asia requires attention to, but not duplication of, Western experience. A useful synthesis might be derived from comparing notes between lessons learned during the Cold War and the very different conditions that exist in the subcontinent. In this constructive spirit, the following analysis is offered.

Nuclear risk reduction during the Cold War was a high priority and constant preoccupation of US and Soviet leaders. Over the course of three decades, Washington and Moscow worked hard to put in place nine key elements to prevent the use of nuclear weapons. Despite sustained, high-level efforts to prevent a nuclear exchange and reduce nuclear dangers, US and Soviet leaders experienced several close calls and barely avoided potentially catastrophic accidents. In vastly different circumstances, India, China, and Pakistan are now at the early stages of developing or modernising nuclear weapon and ballistic missile capabilities. While recognising the obvious differences between the US–Soviet experience and the India–China–Pakistan triangular relationship, it might nonetheless be useful to consider whether the key elements of nuclear risk reduction developed elsewhere might also apply in some fashion to southern Asia.

---

### KEY ELEMENTS OF COLD WAR RISK REDUCTION

---

The first key element in the US–Soviet context was a formal agreement not to change the territorial status quo in sensitive areas by military means. The most sensitive Cold War fault lines were the divided Germany and Korea. Tacit agreements not to seek changes in the status of Berlin came after the Berlin blockade in 1948–49, when the Kremlin stopped re-supply by land of the western sectors of the city and in 1961 when the Kremlin built a wall to stop emigration from East to West Berlin. The status quo in Korea was tested and restored only after a lengthy and costly war. The nuclear shadow hung over the Korean conflict, which erupted in 1949, the same year in which the Soviet Union detonated its first nuclear device. The use of nuclear weapons to end this conflict was advocated by some, but rejected by Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower.<sup>4</sup> The most serious challenges to the status quo in sensitive areas took place in the formative stages of the US–Soviet competition. These challenges—such as the Kremlin's blockade of West Berlin—occurred despite US

nuclear superiority. In this case, the shadow of the atomic bomb was ever-present. Indeed, President Truman ostensibly sent nuclear-capable B-29 bombers to Great Britain during the Berlin crisis. Nonetheless, the two dominant factors were of a tactical nature: Washington's commitment to conduct a round-the-clock airlift and the Kremlin's control over the roadways into Berlin.<sup>5</sup>

After these momentous events and after the Cuban missile crisis, the US and Soviet leaders appeared to accept tacitly, but not formally, the territorial status quo, particularly in sensitive locations. At the same time, both superpowers continued to jockey for advantage where the stakes were lower. When either Washington or Moscow managed to get stuck in a quagmire of its own making in some peripheral location, such as Vietnam or Afghanistan, the other did not hesitate to raise the costs. At times this led to brief military interactions, such as when a US fighter aircraft bombed Russian ships supplying North Vietnam, or air defence sites manned by Russian advisors assisting Hanoi. But competition on the periphery was not allowed to escalate to central strategic concerns, whether the division of Europe or nuclear arms control negotiations. This was most evident in May 1972, when President Richard M. Nixon dramatically escalated the US bombing campaign before travelling to Moscow to conclude the first Strategic Arms Limitation accords.

The tacit agreement not to seek territorial changes by force of arms was formalised in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. The guiding principles of the Helsinki accord were respect for sovereign equality and the territorial integrity of participating states, rejection of force or threat to use force, and the inviolability of frontiers. These principles were given added weight because 35 heads of state with a direct stake in avoiding another war in Europe endorsed them. Indeed, the allies of the two superpowers as well as non-aligned and neutral countries were instrumental in brokering this agreement. The Helsinki accord, however, was immediately denounced by those in the US who viewed the accord as a capitulation and as an acceptance of 'captive peoples' in Eastern Europe by President Gerald R. Ford and his administration. In fact, states that fell into the Soviet orbit against their will were strong supporters of what became known as the 'Helsinki process', eventually becoming its principal beneficiaries. Critics of the US policy of engagement with the Soviet Union held the pessimistic view that *detente* would work to the Kremlin's advantage. In retrospect, engagement proved to be as essential as containment in winning the Cold

War. While the Helsinki accord barred any change in the territorial status quo by force of arms, it did not freeze the division of Europe. To the contrary, Helsinki facilitated a wide variety of East–West interactions that, over time, had a profound impact on the status quo. The process of engagement and the standards set in the Helsinki accord were late in coming, however. Washington and Moscow did not agree to a code of political conduct until 25 years after the nuclear standoff was established.

*Second* key element of Cold War nuclear risk reduction was the tacit agreement by US and Soviet leaders to avoid nuclear brinksmanship in each other's neighbourhood. The most well-documented and harrowing case of nuclear brinksmanship was the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. There have subsequently been two limited clashes between nuclear rivals: border skirmishes in 1969 between China and Russia and the brief high-altitude war between India and Pakistan in 1999. The Cuban missile crisis involved the forward deployment of tactical nuclear weapons, the shipment by sea of missiles designed for nuclear attack, and the imposition of a blockade on the high seas. Some historians have argued that the Kremlin's surreptitious effort to place tactical nuclear weapons and missiles in Cuba were defensive manoeuvres, prompted by fears of another US-backed effort to overthrow Fidel Castro.<sup>6</sup> Even if this were the case, the forward deployment of nuclear weapons and missiles was certainly not perceived by US leaders as defensive in nature. Nor did Soviet leaders view the deployment of US missiles based in Turkey as a defensive posture. Rather, the forward deployment of nuclear-capable weapon systems during the Cold War was viewed as an offensive threat, not as a reinforcement of the status quo.

The Cuban missile crisis came 12 years after the Soviet Union joined the US as a nuclear weapon state. It is quite evident that the advent of offsetting nuclear capabilities did not reduce the severity of the Cuban missile crisis, nor produce stabilising or cautious behaviour. The Kremlin's security concerns were not alleviated by joining the nuclear club. Indeed, some historians postulate that a growing asymmetry in US and Soviet nuclear capabilities prompted the Kremlin to take this desperate gamble in search of a quick 'missile-gap repair'.<sup>7</sup> This crisis, which led to the removal of ballistic missiles from both Cuba and Turkey, did have a chastening effect, however. After this brush with nuclear disaster, US and Soviet leaders continued to jockey

for geopolitical advantage but with a common understanding not to play for such high stakes so close to each other's home.

*Third* key element of Cold War nuclear risk reduction was a common agreement by Washington and Moscow to minimise or avoid dangerous military practices. In the early decades of their strategic competition, the US and Soviet forces engaged in activities with a potential for grave escalation or accidents. Surface naval vessels and submarines collided or jostled for position in strategically sensitive bodies of water; combat aircraft carried out war-fighting exercises in close proximity to national borders; and provocative intelligence-gathering operations were carried out. Guidelines to lower the temperature of US-Soviet military interactions also took time to evolve. Like the Helsinki Final Act, risk reduction accords also took time to be realised. The first such agreement, to avoid incidents at sea, was negotiated in 1972, more than a decade after the Cuban missile crisis. The 'IncSea' accord started a process that continued until the end of the Cold War, when an agreement to prevent dangerous military practices on land and in the air was belatedly negotiated in 1989.

*Four*, special reassurance measures for ballistic missiles and nuclear weapon systems were another key element of Cold War nuclear risk reduction. Reassurance was provided by formalised, prior notifications of missile launches and other arrangements, embedded in treaties, requiring transparency for the deployment and dismantlement of nuclear forces. These reassurance measures also did not come quickly. Typically, nuclear weapon states that were beginning to develop their capabilities were not inclined to clarify their holdings. In such circumstances, transparency could demonstrate weakness rather than strength, or facilitate an adversary's targeting. In addition, the military and strategic cultures of most states do not prize openness. Transparency is an acquired habit, one that nuclear powers usually accept only after they believe they have acquired an assured second-strike capability.

The first reassurance measure related to nuclear weapons was a commitment not to place weapons of mass destruction in outer space or on celestial bodies. This threat was conceivable but remote in 1967, when the Outer Space Treaty was negotiated. In contrast, the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty imposed restraints on existing military capabilities. In this accord the US and the Soviet Union agreed not to deploy national missile defences, on land, at sea, or in space. The ABM Treaty sanctified 'national technical means' as instruments to monitor treaty obligations and forbade both countries from



interfering with these remote capabilities, mostly satellites, as well as from engaging in deliberate concealment measures to impede verification. Killing or disabling satellites, like deploying missile defences, were well within US and Soviet military capabilities. Had standard military impulses dominated policy, both superpowers would not have accepted defencelessness to missile attacks. Nor would the ABM Treaty's prohibition against the weaponisation of space would have been accepted. Instead, the Pentagon and the Soviet Ministry of Defence would have contested the high ground of space. Had the weaponisation of space and anti-satellite capabilities been pursued in the same manner as other aspects of the military competition, there would have been little reassurance and less assured means to monitor treaty obligations. The marriage of reassurance and restraint made nuclear arms control possible during the Cold War.

*Five*, nuclear risk-reduction reflected the trust in the faithful implementation of treaty obligations and confidence-building measures. Without trust, these arrangements were nothing more than paper promises. On occasion, trust was generated through unilateral or reciprocal actions, such as by the removal from operational status of the least safe and secure nuclear weapons in 1989 by presidents George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev. This extraordinary set of undertakings was carried out against the backdrop of treaty obligations previously negotiated, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (1987). Unilateral measures that are not backed up by treaty obligations might still be useful, but they are also likely to be more tenuous.

*Six*, treaties that are faithfully executed build trust, and trust in treaty obligations requires verification. As President Ronald Reagan used to say, quoting from a Russian proverb, 'Trust, but verify'. The US and Soviet leaders did not believe in each other's pronouncements—at least not during much of the competition. (During the Cuban missile crisis, for example, the Kremlin flatly denied having placed missiles in Cuba.) All of the key elements of nuclear risk reduction needed to be observed. Word needed to be matched by deed, and deed needed to be monitored. The ABM Treaty's protection of 'national technical means' was therefore not only essential for specific treaty provisions, but also for nuclear risk reduction measures, broadly defined. Over time, remote technical means of monitoring obligations were supplemented by intrusive measures. In 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev convinced his colleagues in the Kremlin to accept on-site inspections, a historic shift in Soviet military culture. After being successfully

applied in the Stockholm accord relating to confidence building in Europe, on-site inspections were then negotiated for subsequent nuclear arms control and reduction treaties.

The political symbolism of inspections was as important as their substantive value in building trust during the Cold War. Inspections quietened hardline opponents in both countries, as they demonstrated convincingly how much bilateral relations had changed from the premises still held by committed opponents of cooperation. Successful blocking actions in the past were based on a lack of trust; inspections at military installations previously closed to foreigners removed the blocks from more ambitious accords, accords that greatly increased reassurance while reducing nuclear risks. On-site inspections were not used to score points, to place one another at a disadvantage, or to engage in public relations exercises. Instead, inspections were business-like, focused on monitoring very specific obligations spelled out in treaty texts.<sup>8</sup> On-site inspections symbolised a sea change in relations by demonstrating a willingness to accept harder tests of trust. Moreover, the professional conduct of inspections produced other beneficial effects. Responsibility for the implementation of Cold War treaties fell mostly on men and women in uniform. Consequently, military bureaucracies took greater 'ownership' of the treaties under their care. They took pride in carrying out inspections in a professional manner and resisted efforts by political figures to politicise the accords under their care. By participating in a direct way in treaty implementation, military institutions became parties to a process of trust based on verification.<sup>9</sup>

*Seven*, another key element in Cold War nuclear risk reduction was the establishment of reliable lines of communication across borders, for both political and military leaders. The first communication channel, the 'hotline' was established immediately after the Cuban missile crisis, which clarified the dangers inherent in taking many hours to send, receive, translate, and interpret messages. Subsequently, the hotline was improved by the establishment of improved communication links.<sup>10</sup>

*The eighth* key element of nuclear risk reduction during the Cold War was the establishment of reliable command and control systems, as well as the intelligence capabilities to track the disposition of opposing nuclear capabilities that could cause devastating harm. Unlike nuclear risk reduction measures such as treaty inspections and hotline

arrangements, which required close collaboration, improvements in command, control, and intelligence capabilities were unilateral undertakings. The expense of these arrangements was considerable, but received a high priority. The exceptionally large and diverse nuclear forces deployed by the US and the Soviet Union posed serious challenges for both countries, particularly with respect to the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons. Because both arsenals were large and capable enough to worry national leaders about being greatly disadvantaged in the event of a surprise attack, many thousands of nuclear weapons were kept ready for rapid launch. The requirement for prompt utilisation worked at cross-purposes with the requirement for positive central control, a dilemma that the US and Soviet leaders resolved primarily by crisis management and by avoiding the nuclear threshold.

*Nine*, during the Cold War, the US and Soviet were not satisfied with existing measures. Instead, both worked to upgrade and strengthen nuclear risk reduction accords in quiet times as well as during crises. As noted earlier, the original hotline has been improved considerably. Agreements to minimise dangerous military practices started with naval forces and were then expended to ground and air forces. Remote monitoring arrangements were supplemented with on-site inspections. At the end of the Cold War, nuclear risk reduction was receiving as much, if not more, attention than earlier, with the negotiation of the 1992 Open Skies Treaty and the broader scope of controls promised in the second Strategic Arms Reduction accord, signed in 1993. During the Cold War, the body of risk reduction measures grew considerably. These arrangements were substantive as well as symbolic. The emphasis was on concrete, observable obligations, rather than rhetorical expressions of good intentions. The US and the Soviet Union were obligated to demonstrate good faith to each other and to the international community.

This body of work became no less, and perhaps more, important after the Cold War ended, and a new complex of nuclear dangers came to the fore. Nuclear risk reduction measures subsequently focused on the safe dismantlement of obsolescent nuclear forces in the former Soviet Union, the control of fissile material and weapons of mass destruction, and the provision of shared early warning arrangements to Moscow. The purposes and techniques of nuclear risk reduction were applicable to vastly different circumstances because the dangers inherent in nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles remained constant.

*The tenth* key element of nuclear risk reduction during the Cold War was good fortune. Even with all of the measures described here, US and Soviet leaders still found themselves 'eyeball to eyeball' with nuclear danger on several occasions. High alert rates compounded nuclear dangers during the Cold War, including aircraft crashes and runway fires involving nuclear weapons.<sup>11</sup>

---

### EVALUATING THE US-SOVIET EXPERIENCE

---

Good fortune, divine intervention, or plain dumb luck, was important in helping US and Soviet leaders to avoid nuclear disaster during the Cold War. No high-ranking official in Washington or Moscow could depend on these intangibles for nuclear safety, however. Consequently, the US and Soviet leaders took unilateral steps to improve command and control, deploy survivable retaliatory nuclear forces, and put in place expensive verification capabilities for monitoring opposing nuclear forces and crisis behaviour. These unilateral steps were widely viewed as essential, but insufficient. Soviet and US leaders also engaged in cooperative arrangements to build trust, control their nuclear competition, and reduce risks. Such cooperative arrangements included treaties requiring intrusive monitoring, executive agreements to avoid or minimise dangerous practices, and communication links. Nuclear risk reduction during the Cold War was a central preoccupation of US and Soviet leaders, given the adversarial nature of the geopolitical competition. Citizens in both countries expected their leaders to defend their national interests, but not in a reckless way. Consequently, public support for nuclear risk reduction was unflinching, especially during rough patches in bilateral relations.

The US-Soviet experience at nuclear risk reduction is sobering in many respects. To begin with, there were close calls even with the considerable effort expended to avoid crossing the nuclear threshold. Brushes with nuclear confrontation occurred not only in the early stages of the nuclear competition, when they would be most expected, but also after both Washington and Moscow accepted the logic of Mutual Assured Destruction, and after signing two historic strategic arms limitation accords. Long after both countries had assembled huge nuclear arsenals, they were still flirting with nuclear disaster and as late as 1983, the Kremlin's paranoid intelligence agencies were

watching blood banks in the US for preparatory signs of a surprise attack, while the US Central Intelligence Agency was issuing worried estimates of a confident Soviet adversary seeking to secure nuclear advantage.<sup>12</sup>

Nuclear weapons prompted paranoid behaviour and worst-case thinking for most of the Cold War and clouded intelligence estimates when this war was winding down. The most dangerous nuclear crises occurred from 1947–61, when there was no safety net to accompany an intense phase of geopolitical competition and when the development and deployment of new nuclear arsenals were underway. During this early phase of the competition, neither side had the monitoring capabilities to determine whether it was ahead or behind in the nuclear arms race. Secrecy increased insecurity. Using the language of Western nuclear deterrence theory, neither side had yet acquired assured retaliatory capabilities and thus new offensive capabilities increased fears of a pre-emptive strike.

A decade after the Cuban missile crisis, this phase of nuclear insecurity formally ended with the signing of the first strategic arms limitation accord and the ABM Treaty in 1972. Nonetheless, the institutionalised anxieties generated by the nuclear competition continued to hold sway. Even after decades of remote monitoring produced an acquired familiarity with nuclear forces and operations, and even with the 'cushion' provided by huge nuclear arsenals, Washington and Moscow suffered from severe mis-communication and spikes in nuclear danger. Hardliners in both capitals played off against each other in repeatedly pernicious ways, as was evident in the interactions between the Reagan and Andropov administrations.

---

### LESSONS FOR SOUTHERN ASIA?

---

The Cold War experience with nuclear risk reduction was obviously unique. It took place in the context of a bipolar strategic and ideological competition. A great distance separated the antagonists. Both the US and the Soviet Union accumulated huge and diverse nuclear arsenals, which were governed by treaty constraints. And both superpowers managed alliances under protective nuclear umbrellas. Clearly, none of these conditions apply to southern Asia. And yet, the key elements of nuclear risk reduction during the Cold War still appear to be

applicable. Regional stability and risk reduction in southern Asia obviously require tacit or formal agreements not to change the territorial status quo in sensitive areas by military means. And how can India, Pakistan, and China reduce nuclear risks if they engage in brinkmanship along national borders or lines of actual control? In southern Asia, no less than along the inter-German or Korean borders, there is an evident need to minimise or avoid dangerous military practices. Nuclear risk reduction between India and Pakistan, or between China and India, is very hard to envision without special reassurance measures directly related to weapon systems that are most worrisome. The absence of trust in the faithful implementation of agreed obligations is no less corrosive between India and Pakistan, or India and China, than between the US and the Soviet Union. Proper implementation of risk reduction agreements reached is, therefore, required in all such cases, as is the imperative to build trust through verification. It is also self-evident that nuclear risk reduction, regardless of region, requires reliable lines of communication across borders, reliable command and control systems, and ceaseless attention.

The essential question, then, is not whether, but how, the key elements of nuclear risk reduction should best be adapted to southern Asia's unique strategic and political cultures, geography, geopolitics, and nascent nuclear and missile programmes. The regional competition in southern Asia consists of two dyads, India versus Pakistan, and China versus India, and one triangle. In each of the dyads, the stronger of the two antagonists does not outwardly acknowledge the competition, making cooperative nuclear risk reduction extremely difficult. Nor do Pakistan and China acknowledge their previous collaboration against India. A triangular effort at nuclear risk reduction would be plagued by this history and by the lack of symmetry resulting from complex three-cornered interactions.

Triangular or bilateral treaty obligations involving China, India, and Pakistan would be very difficult to negotiate since neither equality nor formalised inequality is likely to be acceptable to one or more parties. Even if treaties were negotiable during the formative and most dangerous phase of their nuclear competition, India, Pakistan, and China do not have the independent, reliable means to monitor treaty obligations, the willingness to accept transparency necessary for treaty verification, or a true interest in accepting intrusive monitoring by third parties. The role that treaties played in reducing nuclear risks during the Cold War is, therefore, unlikely to be available to national

leaders in China, India, and Pakistan. In this event, stand-alone nuclear risk reduction arrangements become more essential, but also more difficult, given the absence of trust that verifiable treaty obligations might generate.

National leaders in China, India, and Pakistan have all declared their firm intention not to repeat the nuclear excesses of the US and Soviet Union. No one expects them to accumulate the liabilities that come with bloated nuclear arsenals. But excessively large nuclear arsenals carried the presumed benefit of providing insurance against a surprise attack, making strategic defeats or pre-emption impossible. Conversely, small nuclear arsenals might not provide that much of an insurance policy, particularly in the risk-laden, early phases of a nuclear competition. In other words, limited arsenals might generate risks rather than guarantee risk reduction. Indeed, the historical record suggests that security concerns have been particularly worrisome to states possessing small nuclear arsenals. This was certainly true for the US-Soviet experience, when nuclear risks were greatest in the early phases of arsenal building, when vulnerabilities were evident, verification weak, and command and control untested. The brief, crisis-filled record since India and Pakistan acquired nuclear capabilities seems to confirm this proposition. If China, India, and Pakistan are to demonstrate a superior wisdom that resists ever-increasing nuclear capabilities, they must also demonstrate a superior wisdom to reduce nuclear risks.

This analysis suggests that nuclear risk reduction will be a far more complex undertaking in southern Asia than was the case for the US and the Soviet Union. As bad as Cold War nuclear dangers were, bipolarity provided a measure of simplification. The nuclear balance could be codified in treaties predicated on equality. A common understanding of stabilising and destabilising activities could also be negotiated. Competition was pervasive, and yet aspects that were most dangerous were placed off-limits. Berlin and Korea were divided, but Washington and Moscow did not exchange artillery fire across these lines. Nor were the US and Soviet military planning predicated on daily, violent interactions.

India, Pakistan, and China are very far from these stabilising conditions. In Central Europe, international boundaries were fixed, but India, Pakistan, and China share lines of control instead of international borders. The relatively quiet Line of Actual Control (LAC) dividing India and China is nonetheless the occasional scene of jockeying between military patrols. The situation along the Line of Control

(LOC) dividing Kashmir is usually far worse with Indian and Pakistani troops over-running each other's posts, engaging in small arms, mortar, and artillery fire, and regularly taking casualties. Nothing in Cold War experience remotely replicates these patterns of ritualised violence.

---

## THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

---

Indian and Pakistani government officials and strategic analysts regularly assert that they will not fall into the traps of US–Soviet competition. To avoid these traps, restraint in spending and force sizing is necessary, but insufficient. Nor can national leaders hope to succeed at nuclear risk reduction solely by undertaking unilateral actions to improve command and control and cross-border monitoring. Successful nuclear risk reduction in southern Asia—as was the case for the US and Soviet Union—requires collaborative as well as unilateral actions.

The rhetorical declarations of peaceful intent and negotiated confidence-building measures (CBMs) that Islamabad and New Delhi have relied upon instead of treaties provide a completely inadequate basis for nuclear risk reduction. Rhetorical pronouncements have usually been advanced to place 'the other' at a political disadvantage.<sup>13</sup> The impulse for negotiating CBMs has usually followed wars or crises in the subcontinent, and then waned after the crisis has passed. The subsequent record of existing CBMs—where obligations are initially honoured, only to be superseded by unrestrained military practices—hardly builds confidence. In this context, 'confidence building' is designed primarily to assuage foreign audiences that leaders in South Asia are capable of managing their differences. But confidence building is not applied in any sustained way to military interactions. At a minimum, confidence building requires a quiet line of control along the Kashmir divide. Existing CBMs could provide a solid foundation for nuclear risk reduction, but only if there is a sea change in Pakistani and Indian implementation practices.

If nuclear risk reduction is treated in the same cavalier political fashion as confidence building, then Pakistan, India, and China face a rough and dangerous passage. The introduction of overt, offsetting nuclear capabilities and ballistic missiles has clearly increased tensions



and risks in the subcontinent, at least in the short run, as was most evident in the intense, limited war fought in the heights above Kargil in 1999. How long this period of tension and risk extends depends, in large measure, on how serious political leaders are in pursuing an alternative course.

Serious nuclear risk reduction is not possible in the absence of meaningful official dialogue. Since the 1998 nuclear tests, substantive dialogue on nuclear matters between India and Pakistan has been minimal. And for two years after the Kargil misadventure, India rejected official dialogue with Pakistan. A policy of diplomatic isolation or nuclear non-engagement runs at cross-purposes to the pursuit of risk reduction. Given the dismaying history of Indo-Pakistani interactions, it is understandable why New Delhi would believe that a policy to isolate Pakistani perpetrators of Kargil and supporters of militancy in Kashmir would yield more benefits than a dialogue on nuclear risk reduction. But India's leaders have a higher responsibility to their citizens than to work towards Pakistan's isolation. Likewise, Pakistani leaders have a higher obligation to their citizens than the continued facilitation of militancy in Kashmir and the pursuit of failed policies that place at risk the well-being of its citizens. Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf acknowledged this imperative at the SAARC summit in Islamabad held in January 2004.

As Pakistani officials repeatedly declare, nuclear risk reduction is inextricably linked to tensions in Kashmir. But those tensions are also inextricably linked to the transit by militant groups based in Pakistan across the LOC. Those carrying out militant operations often receive logistical, intelligence, and material support from Pakistan. These operations have no chance to pry Kashmir from Indian control, but they have a high probability of increasing Pakistan's economic, political, and diplomatic woes. If Pakistan's military leaders are truly serious about a nuclear risk reduction agenda, they would need to dampen the fires of militancy in Kashmir, since escalatory spirals begin with the militants crossings of the LOC.

Typically, when India and Pakistan reach an agreement in principle, one or the other side refuses to formalise it, wary of a domestic backlash. This pattern might well be revisited, once bilateral discussions resume on nuclear risk reduction. Near-term agreement on such matters as prior notification and directional constraints on ballistic missile flight tests seem quite possible, given the clear overlap between Indian and Pakistani risk reduction agendas. Another indicator of

seriousness would, therefore, be for Indian and Pakistani leaders to promise their citizens to refrain from holding risk reduction measures hostage to favoured outcomes in Kashmir. If successfully negotiated, another test of seriousness would be proper and sustained implementation of any agreements reached.

The barriers against nuclear risk reduction between Beijing and New Delhi are much more scalable. They can be reduced further only if both capitals pursue with specificity and dispatch applicable measures, rather than engage in a vague and leisurely 'strategic dialogue'. Serious risk reduction between China and India would be greatly hampered if Beijing's covert support for Pakistan's nuclear and missile programmes continue. Even so, a serious dialogue on applicable measures cannot be avoided. Both New Delhi and Beijing are modernising missiles that place each other's distant cities within cross hairs. The readiness posture and positioning they choose for these missiles would either increase tensions or alleviate them. Another key manifestation of serious nuclear risk reduction would be concerted actions by New Delhi and Beijing to turn their imprecisely demarcated LAC into an international border.

---

## CONCLUSION

---

The US and the Soviet Union were fortunate to manage their competition without the use of nuclear weapons. Perhaps India, Pakistan, and China will be similarly lucky, but they would be wise not to depend too heavily on faith, good fortune, or divine protection. It took Washington and Moscow two decades to pass through a dangerous opening phase of nuclear competition to establish treaty-based and less formal risk reduction arrangements. India, Pakistan, and China are now in this difficult passage, but without the likely prospect of treaties to curtail regional nuclear dangers.

If New Delhi, Beijing, and Islamabad are to find nuclear safety, they will likely do so through a combination of reassurance measures, restraint, bilateral cooperation, and unilateral preparation. In the absence of verifiable treaty regimes, nuclear risk reduction is likely to be found through an acceptance of bilateral asymmetries in force sizing and deployment readiness. Pakistan, the state with the weakest military posture and most vulnerable nuclear deterrent, would have to refrain

from competing with India, while maintaining some nuclear capabilities in a survivable, but non-deployed status—an extremely difficult posture to attain. New Delhi would need to refrain from competing with China and from posturing its nuclear capabilities so as to threaten Pakistan. Beijing will do much to establish the pace and scope of the nuclear competition in southern Asia by the nature of its strategic modernisation programmes. This, in turn, would depend in part on the missile defence architecture chosen by Washington. The more ambitious the US architecture and the larger China's nuclear arsenal grows, the more likely it is that it will generate cascade effects elsewhere in the region.

The establishment of asymmetrical nuclear postures in southern Asia would require extensive thought and discussion. This is an enormously difficult and ambitious agenda, one every bit as challenging as the US–Soviet experience of nuclear risk reduction. Successful nuclear risk reduction will require a seriousness of purpose on the part of India, Pakistan, and China that has previously been lacking. Success also requires sustained and substantive official dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad, and between New Delhi and Beijing. Nuclear stabilisation will likely rest on a unique mixture of transparency and survivability for nuclear capabilities, as well as creative monitoring arrangements that provide reassurance without increased vulnerability.

The stability–instability paradox is alive and well in the subcontinent. India and Pakistan are going through a rough passage, just as the US and the Soviet Union did after demonstrating offsetting nuclear capabilities. The early years of this competition are usually the most dangerous. New Delhi and Islamabad need not wait as long as Washington and Moscow did to stabilise their troubled relationship. The way to demonstrate responsible nuclear stewardship is to negotiate and faithfully implement nuclear risk reduction measures.

---

#### NOTES

---

1. *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
3. See B.H. Liddell Hart, *Deterrent or Defence* (London: Stevens and Sons, 1960), p. 23; Glenn H. Snyder, 'The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror', in Paul Seabury (ed.), *The Balance of Power* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965),

- pp. 184–201; and Robert Jervis, *The Illlogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 226.
4. David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964); Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 426, and Herbert Brownell with John P. Burke, *Advising Ike* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), pp. 138–39.
  5. See Thomas Parrish, *Berlin in the Balance, 1945–1949: The Blockade, the Airlift, the First Major Battle of the Cold War* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1998) and W. Phillips Davison, *The Berlin Blockade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).
  6. Sovietologist Herbert S. Dinerstein concluded that Soviet missiles were supposed '... to protect Cuba and other progressive regimes' and 'to deter a direct US attack on Cuba'. *The Making of a Missile Crisis: October 1962* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 186–87.
  7. The phrase was coined by James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), p. 116.
  8. For a first person account of the initial inspections, see Don O. Stovall, 'The Stockholm Accord: On-Site Inspections in Eastern and Western Europe', in Lewis A. Dunn and Amy E. Gordon, *Arms Control Verification & The New Role of On-Site Inspection* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989), pp. 15–39.
  9. For an official history of this process, see Joseph P. Hanrahan and John C. Kuhn, III, *On-Site Inspections Under the CFE Treaty: A History of the On-Site Inspection Agency and CFE Treaty Implementation, 1990–1996* (Washington, DC: The On-Site Inspection Agency, US Department of Defence, 1996). See also David Willford, *A Brief History of the On-Site Inspection Agency* (Washington, DC: Department of Defence, 1997).
  10. See Barry M. Blechman and Michael Krepon, *Nuclear Risk Reduction Centres* (Washington, DC: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1986).
  11. Essential reading in this regard is Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Bruce G. Blair, *The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1993).
  12. See Peter Vincent Pry, *War Scare* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, Inc., 1997). See also Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990); and ANIE 11-3/8-83, 'Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Nuclear Conflict, 1983–93 (6 March 1984)', in Donald P. Steury, compiler, (Declassified) *Estimates on Soviet Military Power, 1954 to 1984, A Selection* (Centre for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC, 1994).
  13. See P.R. Chari, 'Declaratory Statements and Confidence Building in South Asia', in Michael Krepon, Jenny S. Drezin, and Michael Newbill, *Declaratory Diplomacy: Rhetorical Initiatives and Confidence Building* (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Centre, Report 27, May 1999).