India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace

Why Nuclear South Asia Is Not Like Cold War Europe

S. Paul Kapur

The presence of nuclear weapons in South Asia threatens to make regional conflict catastrophically costly. Nonetheless, the subcontinent remains volatile, with recent violence ranging from a Pakistan-supported guerrilla war in Indian Kashmir to protracted combat between Indian and Pakistani armed forces. Given the risks inherent in such confrontation between nuclear-armed adversaries, policymakers have sought to stabilize the Indo-Pakistani security relationship at both the strategic and the tactical levels, thus minimizing the danger of nuclear war while reducing the likelihood of lower-level violence. For example, the 1999 Lahore Declaration, signed by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, states that India and Pakistan will adopt policies "aimed at the prevention of conflict" in both "the nuclear and conventional fields."[1] And as Indian and Pakistani officials prepared for high-level peace talks in early 2004, they considered the negotiation of "a joint agreement to lower the threat of a nuclear or conventional war" between the two countries.[2]

While the goals of promoting strategic and tactical stability are desirable in themselves, an important tension may exist between them; policies seeking to maximize strategic stability in South Asia could make the Indo-Pakistani nuclear relationship safer, but they could also significantly increase the likelihood of lower-level conflict on the subcontinent. Most scholars attribute ongoing violence in the region to a phenomenon known as the "stability/instability paradox." According to the paradox, strategic stability, meaning a low likelihood that conventional war will escalate to the nuclear level, reduces the danger of

S. Paul Kapur is a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation. He is on leave from Claremont McKenna College, where he is Assistant Professor of Government.

1. Text of the Lahore Declaration, February 21, 1999, United States Institute of Peace, Peace Agreements Digital Collection, http://www.usip.org/library/pa/ip/ip_lahore19990221.html.
2. "AFP Asia-Pacific News Summary," Agence France-Presse, February 17, 2004.

launching a conventional war.[3] But in lowering the potential costs of conventional conflict, strategic stability also makes the outbreak of such violence more likely.[4]

This article asks whether continuing violence in a nuclear South Asia has in fact resulted from the stability/instability paradox. The answer to this question has important implications for the regional security environment. If the stability/instability paradox is responsible for ongoing conflict, attempts to stabilize Indo-Pakistani relations at both the nuclear and the subnuclear levels could be futile, or even dangerous, as increased strategic stability allows more low-level conflict. If, by contrast, ongoing violence in South Asia has not resulted from the stability/instability paradox, then ongoing conflict would not demonstrate any necessary incompatibility between tactical and strategic stability in the region, or suggest that danger inheres in current attempts to minimize the likelihood of nuclear war.

Determining the stability/instability paradox's impact on South Asia also has implications well beyond the region. If the paradox does explain ongoing South Asian violence, it would suggest that the relationship between strategic and conventional stability that held for the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War also applies to emerging nuclear-conflict dyads.[5] But

---

3. Although one could imagine other plausible definitions of strategic stability, I adhere to the above definition throughout this article; for my purposes, "strategic stability" refers to the probability that conventional conflict will escalate to the nuclear level. This is the meaning of strategic stability originally embedded in the stability/instability paradox, and it is the one that must be employed when analyzing the paradox, rather than some other phenomenon. Note that the probability of conventional conflict escalating to the nuclear level is not an objective fact, but rather a function of decisionmakers' perceptions, which may change over time.

4. Charles L. Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 46. See also Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 20. For the original discussion of the stability/instability paradox, see Glenn H. Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," in Paul Seabury, ed., *The Balance of Power* (San Francisco, Calif.: Chandler, 1965), pp. 198–199.

5. The security environment during the Cold War differed from the current South Asian security environment in a number of significant respects. For example, neither India nor Pakistan seeks to extend nuclear deterrence to a third party; Indo-Pakistani strategic behavior is subject to far more international pressure than U.S. and Soviet nuclear policy was during the Cold War, and this pressure may act as a check on conflict escalation in South Asia. In addition, India and Pakistan maintain small nuclear arsenals, lacking the large array of tactical and strategic forces that the superpowers deployed during the Cold War. Nonetheless, many scholars and policymakers believe that the same basic logic that governed superpower nuclear behavior during the Cold War should hold for new nuclear states such as India and Pakistan. See, for example, Kenneth N. Waltz, "For Better: Nuclear Weapons Preserve an Imperfect Peace," in Scott D. Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), p. 117; John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 37–40; Scott D. Sagan, "For the Worse: Till Death Do Us Part," in Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, p. 91; and Jaswant Singh, "Against Nuclear Apartheid," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 5 (September/October 1998), p. 43.

if continuing Indo-Pakistani conflict runs counter to the expectations of the stability/instability paradox, then the relationship between strategic and tactical stability, and its resulting dangers, may be different for future proliferants than it was for the United States and the Soviet Union.

The stability/instability paradox does not explain continuing conflict in a nuclearized South Asia. Recent violence has been characterized both by aggressive Pakistani attempts to revise territorial boundaries in the region and by relatively restrained Indian efforts to preserve the status quo; Pakistani forces or their proxies have repeatedly crossed de facto international borders to launch limited conventional attacks on Indian territory, while India has refused to retaliate with cross-border strikes of its own. Contrary to the expectations of the stability/instability paradox, a small probability of lower-level conflict escalating to the nuclear threshold would not encourage such behavior. A low likelihood of nuclear escalation would reduce the ability of Pakistan's nuclear weapons to deter a conventional attack. This reduction in deterrence would leave weaker Pakistan less protected from India's conventional advantage in the event of conflict, and thus would discourage Pakistani aggression. Simultaneously it would encourage vigorous Indian action to defend the status quo and defeat Pakistani adventurism.

Pakistani boldness and Indian restraint have in fact resulted from a different strategic environment, in which instability in the nuclear realm encourages instability at lower levels of conflict. In this environment, limited conventional conflict is unlikely to provoke an immediate nuclear confrontation.[6] However, in the event that a limited conventional confrontation subsequently spirals into a full-scale conventional conflict, escalation to the nuclear level becomes a serious possibility. This danger of nuclear escalation allows nuclear powers to engage in limited violence against each other. In the South Asian context, weaker Pakistan can undertake limited conventional aggression against India, in hopes of altering regional boundaries while deterring a full-scale Indian conventional response. In addition, nuclear danger draws international attention, potentially securing for weaker Pakistan third-party mediation of its territorial dispute with India and a diplomatic settlement superior to any that Pakistan could achieve on its own. Thus, contrary to Cold War stability/instability logic, the existence of a substantial degree of strategic instability has fueled

---

6. By "limited" conventional conflict, I mean either conflict involving guerrilla or proxy forces or conflict involving states' regular militaries that does not cross official international borders on a scale sufficient to inflict catastrophic defeat on the loser. By "full-scale" conventional conflict, I mean conflict that involves states' regular militaries that crosses official international boundaries and that is of sufficient magnitude to threaten the loser with catastrophic defeat.

lower-level violence in South Asia.[7] Ironically, the characteristic of the regional strategic environment that Cold War logic predicts should impede subnuclear conflict has instead facilitated ongoing violence.[8]

In the next section, I assess the South Asian security literature's discussion of the stability/instability paradox. I show that although scholars overwhelmingly agree that the stability/instability paradox is responsible for ongoing conflict in South Asia, they are unclear as to how the phenomenon has actually caused such violence. To clarify the workings of the stability/instability paradox, the article's subsequent section examines the phenomenon in detail, paying particular attention to its emergence in the context of the Cold War. The article then explains the nature of ongoing instability in South Asia, compares this instability to the logic of the stability/instability paradox, and demonstrates that stability/instability logic has not facilitated ongoing Indo-Pakistani violence. I show instead that a significant danger of nuclear escalation has promoted low-level violence on the subcontinent. Finally, the article's conclusion explores the implications of my findings.

The Paradox in the South Asian Security Literature

Scholars are virtually unanimous in their belief that the stability/instability paradox explains the continuing conflict in a nuclear South Asia. Šumit Ganguly, for example, argues that the 1999 Indo-Pakistani border war at Kargil "conformed closely to the expectations of the 'stability/instability paradox,'" according to which nuclear weapons "create incentives for conventional conflicts in peripheral areas as long as either side does not breach certain shared thresholds."[9] Kenneth Waltz accounts for this ongoing violence by ex-

---

7. This is not to claim that the stability/instability paradox rules out the possibility of subnuclear aggression where a substantial likelihood of nuclear escalation exists. A state highly motivated to alter the status quo could engage in aggressive behavior despite a substantial likelihood of triggering nuclear conflict. Under the stability/instability paradox, however, such a high likelihood of nuclear escalation is an impediment to lower-level violence; increasing the probability of nuclear escalation makes lower-level violence less likely. In South Asia, by contrast, increasing the likelihood of nuclear escalation—up to a point—facilitates lower-level aggression. In fact, in this environment, the outbreak of lower-level violence actually requires a significant degree of strategic instability.

8. Of course, an extremely high level of strategic instability would discourage subnuclear violence in South Asia. If the Indo-Pakistani strategic balance were so unstable that even limited conventional aggression was likely to result in immediate nuclear escalation, limited aggression would be excessively risky and thus unlikely. As noted above, however, this is not an accurate description of the South Asian strategic environment; limited conventional aggression on the subcontinent is unlikely to escalate immediately to the nuclear level.

9. Šumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New Delhi: Oxford Univer-

plaining that, under the stability/instability paradox, nuclear weapons "tempt countries to fight small wars."[10] And Jeffrey Knopf claims that "flare-ups in South Asia since the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests of 1998 indicate the continued relevance of Glenn Snyder's 'stability/instability paradox.'"[11]

Despite scholars' agreement on the stability/instability paradox's destabilizing effects, the literature is unclear as to how the paradox actually causes instability in South Asia. Some scholars suggest that the possibility of lower-level conflict spiraling to the nuclear threshold facilitates regional violence. For example, Ganguly broadly attributes the stability/instability paradox's effects to a "fear of nuclear escalation."[12] Similarly, Lowell Dittmer states that "fear of escalation to the nuclear level . . . facilitates the resort to violence" under the stability/instability paradox.[13] Other scholars, by contrast, claim that the paradox allows lower-level violence in South Asia through a lack of escalatory potential. Waltz, for example, maintains that under the stability/instability paradox, "The impossibility of fighting at high levels" creates "the possibility of fighting at low levels."[14] And Scott Sagan argues that conventionally aggressive behavior turns on the belief that "a stable nuclear balance . . . [permits] more offensive actions to take place with impunity."[15]

---

sity Press, 2002), pp. 122–123. India and Pakistan fought for approximately eight weeks in the Kargil sector of the Line of Control. For additional discussion of the stability/instability paradox's effects on the subcontinent, see Šumit Ganguly, "Conflict and Crisis in South and Southwest Asia," in Michael E. Brown, ed., *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), p. 170; Šumit Ganguly, "Indo-Pakistani Nuclear Issues and the Stability/Instability Paradox," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* Vol. 18, No. 4 (October–December 1995), pp. 325–334; and Šumit Ganguly and R. Harrison Wagner, "India and Pakistan: Bargaining in the Shadow of Nuclear War," *Journal of Strategic Studies,* Vol. 27, No. 3 (September 2004), pp. 479–507.
10. Waltz, "For Better," p. 122.
11. Jeffrey W. Knopf, "Recasting the Optimism-Pessimism Debate," *Security Studies,* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Autumn 2002), p. 52. See also David J. Karl, "Lessons for Proliferation Scholarship in South Asia: The Buddha Smiles Again," *Asian Survey,* Vol. 41, No. 6 (November/December 2001), p. 1020; Lowell Dittmer, "South Asia's Security Dilemma," *Asian Survey,* Vol. 41, No. 6 (November/December 2001), p. 903; Feroz Hasan Khan, "Challenges to Nuclear Stability in South Asia," *Nonproliferation Review,* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring 2003), p. 64; P.R. Chari, "Nuclear Restraint, Nuclear Risk Reduction, and the Stability/Instability Paradox in South Asia," in Michael Krepon and Chris Gagné, eds., *The Stability/Instability Paradox: Nuclear Weapons and Brinksmanship in South Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2001), pp. 20–21; and Sagan, "For the Worse," p. 97.
12. Ganguly, *Conflict Unending,* pp. 122–123.
13. Dittmer, "South Asia's Security Dilemma," p. 903.
14. Waltz, "For Better," p. 122.
15. Sagan, "For the Worse," p. 97. Other scholars who mention the lack of escalatory potential in their discussions of the paradox include Khan, "Challenges to Nuclear Stability in South Asia," p. 64. I do not claim that these scholars offer fully developed arguments, or embrace two entirely coherent schools of thought, on the workings of the stability/instability paradox in South Asia. My point, rather, is that the literature contains two broad categories of discussion on this issue: one that emphasizes the danger of nuclear escalation and one that emphasizes the lack of such danger.

The literature's lack of clarity is problematic because to determine whether the stability/instability paradox explains South Asian violence, one needs first to understand how it works. Below, I therefore briefly revisit the stability/instability paradox's emergence during the Cold War.[16] I show that the paradox's destabilizing impact arises from a very small probability of subnuclear conflict escalating to the nuclear level, which erodes nuclear weapons' conventionally deterrent effects, and thus makes lower-level violence more likely.

Stability/Instability Logic during the Cold War

The issue of the stability/instability paradox first emerged during the mid-1950s, as the United States sought to extend nuclear deterrence to its European allies. The United States realized that growing U.S. and Soviet arsenals would make a nuclear conflict between the two states catastrophically destructive. This posed a problem for the conventionally weaker United States, which sought to deter Soviet conventional aggression against Western Europe with the threat of nuclear retaliation.[17] The Soviet Union's increasing strategic power, however, made this threat less credible. While the United States might resort to nuclear war in defense of its homeland, it was unlikely to launch a full-fledged nuclear conflict, and invite catastrophic destruction on its home territory, to protect France or Germany from a Soviet invasion.[18]

Despite U.S. threats, then, a conventional war in Europe was unlikely to escalate to the nuclear level. Therefore the Soviet Union, as the conventionally stronger power,[19] could initiate a conventional conflict in Europe, emboldened

---

16. I offer this brief overview for illustrative purposes only and do not purport to provide a comprehensive discussion of U.S. strategic nuclear policy during the Cold War.

17. George H. Quester, *Nuclear Diplomacy: The First Twenty-five Years* (New York: Dunellen, 1970), p. 96; and Richard Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma: An Introduction to the American Experience in the Cold War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), p. 51.

18. Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma,* p. 84; Bernard Brodie, *Escalation and the Nuclear Option* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 28; and John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 165–166.

19. In 1955, NATO had fewer than twenty-five effective fighting divisions, against twenty-eight to thirty Soviet divisions in Eastern Europe and sixty to seventy additional Soviet divisions in the western USSR. See Stephen J. Flanagan, *NATO's Conventional Defenses* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1988), p. 14. Analysts therefore broadly agreed that the Soviets enjoyed a substantial conventional advantage over NATO during this period. See, for example, ibid., pp. 9–14; Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma,* pp. 66, 85; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment,* p. 168; Brodie, *Escalation and the Nuclear Option,* p. 124; and Ronald E. Powaski, *The Cold War: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1917–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 102–103. The U.S. government, for its part, estimated that in the event of conflict during this period, the Soviets

by the belief that it could prevail over NATO and seize West European territory without triggering a nuclear war.[20] Strategic stability thus threatened to create conventional instability during the Cold War by eroding U.S. extended nuclear deterrence and undermining the United States' ability to defend the European status quo.

The United States dealt with this stability/instability paradox by adopting policies at both the tactical and the strategic levels designed to increase the probability that a Soviet conventional attack on Western Europe would result in nuclear war. In the tactical realm, the United States threatened to initiate a process of escalation that would automatically create the risk of a strategic nuclear response from NATO, even without a deliberate U.S. decision to launch a nuclear war.[21] To this end, the United States introduced conventional ground forces, as well as tactical and eventually intermediate-range nuclear weapons to the continent. The purpose of stationing these assets in Europe was not simply to defend against the Soviet military, but also to ensure that the Soviet Union understood that the United States would be automatically engaged in the event of any aggression against Western Europe. The mission of U.S. conventional ground forces in this regard was to act primarily as a trip wire to trigger nuclear escalation.[22] Similarly, the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons was intended automatically to involve U.S. nuclear forces in any Eu-

would have been able quickly to capture most of Western Europe. See "NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," April 14, 1950, http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm. Note that this view of Soviet conventional superiority was subsequently called into serious question. See, for example, Barry R. Posen, "Measuring the European Conventional Balance: Coping with Complexity in Threat Assessment," *International Security,* Vol. 9, No. 3 (Winter 1984/85), pp. 47–88; Barry R. Posen, "Is NATO Decisively Outnumbered?" *International Security,* Vol. 12, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 186–202; John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly in Central Europe," *International Security,* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Summer 1982), pp. 3–39; and Matthew A. Evangelista, "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised," *International Security,* Vol. 7, No. 3 (Winter 1982/83), pp. 110–138.

20. Nikita Khrushchev explicitly used this argument to threaten the United States with Soviet action against Berlin between 1958 and 1962. See Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 395–396. See also Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 66–67; John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 137; and Quester, *Nuclear Diplomacy,* p. 94.

21. See Brodie, *Escalation and the Nuclear Option,* pp. 30, 101; and Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 43–44.

22. Powaski, *The Cold War,* p. 103. See also Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1992* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), pp. 125–126; Quester, *Nuclear Diplomacy,* p. 95; Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 217; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment,* p. 168; and Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* p. 47.

ropean conflict; in case of war with the Warsaw Pact, U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe would either be targeted by invading forces or be used.[23]

At the strategic level, the United States included measures in its force structure and doctrine that would have made the deliberate U.S. use of nuclear weapons more likely. For example, the United States adopted limited nuclear options (LNOs), under which it would attack restricted Soviet targets, leaving other targets that the Soviets valued unscathed but hostage to future U.S. strikes.[24] The United States also sought to make its nuclear threats more credible through the creation of a counterforce capability that would destroy enemy nuclear assets rather than civilian targets. Counterforce could be used to enhance U.S. limited nuclear options,[25] or to create incentives for a U.S. preemptive nuclear attack during a crisis.[26] Despite their differences, both LNOs and counterforce served the same strategic purpose: making the deliberate U.S. use of nuclear weapons during a European conflict more likely.

Two key points emerge from this brief discussion of the Cold War case. First, the Cold War makes clear that a small probability of subnuclear conflict spiraling to the nuclear threshold facilitates low-level violence under the stability/instability paradox. The unlikelihood of nuclear escalation reduces nuclear weapons' ability to deter conventional conflict, thereby making low-level aggression more likely.[27] Second, a low likelihood of nuclear escalation encour-

---

23. Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy,* p. 92. See also Gaddis, *We Now Know,* p. 137; and George H. Quester, "The Continuing Debate on Minimal Deterrence," in T.V. Paul, Richard J. Harknett, and James J. Wirtz, eds., *The Absolute Weapon Revisited: Nuclear Arms and the Emerging International Order* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 169.
24. The threat to employ LNOs was deemed more credible than threats to launch all-out nuclear attacks against the Soviet Union because LNOs, by sparing a range of enemy targets, created Soviet incentives not to respond to a U.S. attack with a full-scale retaliatory strike. See Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy,* pp. 216–217; and Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* pp. 190–192, 202–203.
25. Because counterforce would have struck Soviet nuclear weapons while sparing civilian targets, it could have provided the United States with a means of attacking a restricted target set, thereby avoiding all-out Soviet retaliation. As Glaser points out, however, counterforce was probably not necessary to enhance limited nuclear options. See Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy,* pp. 216–222.
26. By striking first with counterforce, and destroying a significant number of Soviet nuclear weapons, the United States could in theory limit damage to itself by reducing the Soviets' retaliatory capability. Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy,* p. 70; Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy,* p. 224; and Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* pp. 193–194. Note that many analysts doubted this logic. See, for example, Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy,* pp. 32–35; and Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy,* pp. 54–55.
27. This is why the United States adopted tactical and strategic measures designed to increase the likelihood of nuclear escalation during the Cold War. A high probability of conventional conflict reaching the nuclear level would make conventional conflict more dangerous, thereby reducing the likelihood of Soviet aggression. The Soviet Union's failure to attack Western Europe thus does not mean that the stability/instability paradox did not apply to the Cold War, or that the Soviets

aged Soviet aggression because the Soviets, the potentially revisionist power in Cold War Europe, were conventionally stronger than NATO.[28] Because U.S. nuclear escalation was very unlikely, the conventionally stronger Soviet Union could have defeated NATO and seized West European territory without fear of triggering a nuclear conflict. If the Soviet Union had been conventionally weak relative to NATO, it would have been unlikely to prevail over the alliance in a strictly conventional conflict, and a low likelihood of nuclear escalation would not have encouraged aggressive Soviet behavior.[29]

Do these conditions, through which the stability/instability paradox could have facilitated conventional violence during the Cold War, apply to contemporary South Asia? The answer is no. Indeed, the strategic conditions that gave rise to Cold War stability/instability dangers are reversed in contemporary South Asia. Pakistan, the revisionist state in the Indo-Pakistani conflict dyad, is conventionally weak relative to India. A highly stable strategic environment, in which nuclear escalation was extremely unlikely, would undermine Pakistani nuclear weapons' conventionally deterrent effects. This would leave Pakistan more vulnerable to Indian conventional strength and make aggression exceedingly dangerous for Pakistan; India could crush any Pakistani adventurism with a full-scale conventional response, confident that the ensuing conflict was unlikely to escalate to the nuclear level.

Unlike in Cold War Europe, then, in contemporary South Asia a high degree of strategic stability does not encourage conventional violence. Rather, a significant degree of strategic instability facilitates violence at the conventional

---

did not actually believe the logic of the paradox. Rather, it suggests that U.S. and NATO efforts to increase the likelihood that a conventional conflict would escalate to the nuclear level, and thereby to mitigate the stability/instability paradox's conventional dangers, were effective.

28. By "revisionist," I mean a state whose leaders are dissatisfied with existing territorial boundaries and wish to alter them. The leaders of a "status quo" state, by contrast, are satisfied with existing territorial boundaries and wish to maintain them. See Arnold Wolfers, "The Balance of Power in Theory and Practice," in Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), pp. 125–126; and Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 72–107. My purpose here is not to make definitive claims about actual Soviet intentions regarding Western Europe. My point, rather, is that the principal Cold War danger as perceived by the United States and NATO was that the Warsaw Pact would attempt to seize territory in Western Europe. As the literature cited above makes clear, the Western alliance's primary goal during the Cold War therefore was to confine the Warsaw Pact to Eastern Europe and prevent this from happening.

29. The Soviet Union's relative weakness would have been unlikely to encourage NATO aggression because the alliance's goal was to contain Soviet power and defend Western Europe, not to seize territory in the East. Thus NATO would probably have used conventional superiority to maintain the status quo, rather than to alter it.

level. A brief examination of the nature of the South Asian security environ-
ment and the behavioral incentives that varying levels of strategic stability cre-
ate for India and Pakistan helps to explain why this is the case.

Instability in South Asia

Ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan is rooted in their dispute over
the territory of Kashmir.[30] In the Indian view, the territory has been an integral
part of the Indian Union since the maharaja of Kashmir signed an instrument
of accession and joined India in 1947. The Indian government believes that
Pakistani support for the Kashmir insurgency, and Pakistan's cross-border in-
cursions into Kargil, are the latest in a long list of Pakistani attempts to take
this vital territory by force.[31] The Pakistani government, for its part, believes
that Kashmir's accession to India was illegal and undemocratic. Further, the
Pakistanis argue that India's continued refusal to hold a plebiscite on the ques-
tion of accession denies the Kashmiri people their right to self-determination.[32]
Support for the insurgency and the eventual "liberation" of Indian Kashmir is

---

30. The Kashmir dispute is the subject of innumerable scholarly and polemical works, and I do
not discuss it at any length here. For detailed analysis, see, for example, Robert G. Wirsing, *India,
Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: On Regional Conflict and Its Resolution* (New York: St. Martin's,
1998); Joseph Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954); Alastair Lamb,
Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1846–1990 (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1991); Prem Shankar Jha,
Kashmir, 1947: Rival Versions of History (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Lars
Blinkenburg, *India-Pakistan: The History of Unsolved Conflicts* (Odense: Odense University Press,
1997), Vol. 1.
31. See Ashley J. Tellis, C. Christine Fair, and Jamison Jo Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear
Umbrella: Indian and Pakistani Lessons from the Kargil Crisis* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001),
pp. 16, 50. Pakistan also launched wars to take Kashmir in 1947 and 1965. For concise discussions
of these wars, see Ganguly, *Conflict Unending,* pp. 15–50. Kashmir's value lies in its water resources
and strategic access to both India and Pakistan, as well as its symbolism; India believes that relin-
quishing the Muslim-majority territory to Pakistan on the basis of religion would undermine In-
dia's secular credentials, as well as create dangerous demonstration effects for other minority
groups within the Indian Union. Pakistan, for its part, believes that leaving Kashmir under Indian
control contradicts Pakistan's founding principle: that South Asian Muslims need their own home-
land. On these points, see Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings,
2001), pp. 212–213, 215; Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (New Delhi: Oxford University
Press, 1998), p. 114; Lamb, *Kashmir,* pp. 148, 149–150; Jasjit Singh, "The Kashmir Issue," in Singh,
ed., *Kargil, 1999: Pakistan's Fourth War for Kashmir* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 1999), pp. 2–3;
and Šumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1997).
32. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru promised in 1947 to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir to
ratify the territory's accession to India, but the vote was deferred until normal conditions could be
reestablished in the territory. India has yet to hold the plebiscite. See Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir,*
p. 10.

a central national project,[33] and the Kashmir dispute, in the Pakistani government's view, constitutes the "core issue" in Indo-Pakistani relations.[34]

Regardless of the relative merits of these competing claims, Pakistan has been responsible for most of the recent cross-border aggression on the subcontinent.[35] Unlike the Indians, who would be willing to accept a permanent division of territory along the Line of Control (LoC) currently separating Indian from Pakistani Kashmir,[36] Pakistani leaders are deeply dissatisfied with the status quo in the region and seek to wrest further Kashmiri territory from Indian control.[37] To this end, Pakistan strongly supports the ongoing Kashmir insurgency. Although the Pakistani government maintains that it offers only moral and political backing to the insurgents, it has provided them with extensive material assistance, including training, arming, and infiltration and exfiltration of fighters across the Line of Control. Indeed, Pakistan's backing for the Kashmiri jihad has become a major factor in its foreign policy and has fundamentally shaped the nature of the Kashmir conflict. Through this sup-

---

33. "Excerpts from Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's Address to the Nation," May 27, 2002, *BBC News,* http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/media_reports/2011509.stm.

34. K.J.M. Varma, "Pak Not Ready to Sideline Kashmir: Musharraf," Press Trust of India, June 17, 2003.

35. This is in no way to argue in favor of India's position on Kashmir, or to maintain that India has not behaved aggressively in the region. Indeed, the Kashmir insurgency emerged during the late 1980s in reaction to decades of Indian misrule in the region, which included the arrest of popularly elected officials, the rigging of elections, and a steady erosion of Kashmir's autonomous status within the Indian Union. India has been widely condemned for systematic human rights abuses against the Kashmiri population in its efforts to quell the rebellion. See, for example, Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir;* Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan, and the Unending War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003). India proved willing to seize contested territory in Kashmir, such as Siachen Glacier, long after the 1972 India-Pakistan Agreement on the Promotion of a Friendly Relationship established the Line of Control—though the capture of Siachen probably did not technically violate the LoC. See V.R. Raghavan, *Siachen: Conflict without End* (New Delhi: Viking, 2002); and Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute,* pp. 75–83. My point here is simply that Indian transgressions in the region have generally not taken the form of cross-border aggression. Pakistan and its proxies, by contrast, have repeatedly engaged in such activity, and scholars arguing that the stability/instability paradox explains ongoing conventional violence in South Asia are in fact attempting to account for this aggressive behavior.

36. Cohen, *India,* p. 219; Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute,* pp. 219–220; and Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella,* p. 69.

37. Cohen, *India,* p. 219; Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella,* p. 46. See also Thomas Perry Thornton, "Pakistan: Fifty Years of Insecurity," in Selig S. Harrison, Paul H. Kreisberg, and Dennis Kux, eds., *India and Pakistan: The First Fifty Years* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 184; Ganguly, *Conflict Unending,* p. 128; and Devin T. Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), p. 135. As Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf put it, "LOC is the problem and can not be a solution." "LOC Is the Problem, Not Solution: Musharraf," *Times of India* (New Delhi), Press Trust of India, June 17, 2003.

port for the insurgency, the Pakistanis seek to "bleed" India and coerce the Indians into negotiating a diplomatic settlement on Kashmir.[38] Persistent Pakistani denials notwithstanding, Pakistan army forces also crossed the LoC at Kargil in 1999,[39] taking a swath of Indian territory 8 to 12 kilometers deep along a 150-kilometer front and triggering the first Indo-Pakistani war in twenty-eight years.[40]

Could a high degree of strategic stability have facilitated such aggressive Pakistani behavior as the stability/instability paradox would expect? To answer this question, I briefly consider Pakistan's military position relative to India. Despite overall Indian conventional superiority, rough military parity prevails in the vicinity of the Indo-Pakistani border, with dispersed peacetime deployment patterns limiting India's ability to bring its forces to bear on Pakistan. In fact, in the short term, Pakistan may be able to field a somewhat larger force in the border region than the Indians.[41] Additionally, Pakistan's doctrine of "offensive defense" would respond to an Indian attack with a combination of holding actions and Pakistani counteroffensives, blunting the Indian advance and carrying the fight back into Indian territory. "However

---

38. Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute,* pp. 118–124, 134; and John Lancaster and Kamran Khan, "Extremist Groups Renew Activity in Pakistan; Support of Kashmir Militants Is at Odds with War on Terrorism," *Washington Post,* February 8, 2003.
39. Although Pakistan repeatedly claimed that only irregular mujahideen had crossed the LoC at Kargil, the intruders in fact were members of the Pakistan army's Northern Light Infantry, supported by civilian insurgents. See Brian Cloughley, *A History of the Pakistan Army: Wars and Insurrections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 376–377. The Pakistan government has finally admitted that its forces entered Indian territory at Kargil, but maintains that they did so only after the fighting was already under way. See "Troops Were in Kargil, General Doesn't Rule Out Repeat," *Indian Express* (Mumbai), Express News Service, June 14, 2003.
40. The Kargil conflict resulted in more than 1,000 battle deaths and thus meets the standard social science definition of a war. See J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War, 1816–1965: A Statistical Handbook* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972); and Faten Ghosn and Glenn Palmer, "Associated Document for the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data, Version 3.0," Correlates of War 2 Project, http://cow2.la.psu.edu, p. 3. For battle-death estimates, see Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report* (New Delhi: Sage, 1999), pp. 23, 98; Amarinder Singh, *A Ridge Too Far: War in the Kargil Heights, 1999* (New Delhi: Motibagh Palace Patiala, 2001), pp. 101–103; Sumantra Bose, "Kashmir: Sources of Conflict, Dimensions of Peace," *Survival,* Vol. 41, No. 3 (Autumn 1999), p. 150; K. Alan Kronstadt, "Nuclear Weapons and Ballistic Missile Proliferation in India and Pakistan: Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service, report RL30623, July 31, 2000, p. 5. For detailed discussions of the Kargil conflict, see Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning;* Singh, *A Ridge Too Far;* Y.M. Bammi, *Kargil, 1999: The Impregnable Conquered* (Noida, India: Gorkha, 2002); and Ashok Krishna, "The Kargil War," in Krishna and P.R. Chari, eds., *Kargil: The Tables Turned* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), pp. 77–138.
41. Ashley J. Tellis, *Stability in South Asia* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1997), pp. 20–21. See also V.K. Sood and Pravin Sawhney, *Operation Parakaram: The War Unfinished* (New Delhi: Sage, 2003), pp. 145–152; and Kanwar Sandhu, "Can India's War Machine Deliver the Killer Punch?" *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), January 10, 2002.

many of us they kill," argues Pakistani President and Chief of Army Staff Pervez Musharraf, this policy of "strategic defense through tactical offense" will enable Pakistan to "kill enough [Indians] to make their losses unacceptable."[42] Pakistani attacks on Indian territory would likely be directed at the area between Poonch and Pathankot, in an attempt to sever India's road links with Kashmir. In addition, Pakistan could launch diversionary offensives to the south, in Rajasthan and the Punjab.[43]

Pakistan thus could enjoy an advantage for the first few weeks of a conventional conflict with India, particularly if the Pakistanis were able to achieve strategic surprise. In a protracted Indo-Pakistani conflict, however, India's vastly superior resources would become decisive. Drawing on an active-duty force nearly double that of the Pakistan military,[44] and enjoying a roughly 2:1 advantage in combat aircraft and a 1.7:1 advantage in main battle tanks,[45] India over time could deploy sufficiently robust assets to the region to "achieve escalation dominance" and defeat the full spectrum of Pakistani defenses.[46] Within three weeks India could reach a force ratio of roughly twenty-

---

42. Interview with President Pervez Musharraf, Rawalpindi, Pakistan, April 2004. See also Mirza Aslam Beg, "Deterrence, Defence, and Development," *Defence Journal,* Vol. 3, No. 6 (July 1999), p. 5; Ayaz Ahmed Khan, "Armed Forces Wargaming," *Defence Journal,* Vol. 6, No. 1 (August 2002), http://www.defencejournal.com/2002/august/gaming.htm; Tellis, *Stability in South Asia,* pp. 17–18; Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 145; and Kanwar Sandhu, "Pak Strategy Will Be to Sever Link with J&K," *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), January 11, 2002.

43. Sandhu, "Pak Strategy Will Be to Sever Link with J&K."

44. The Indian armed forces consist of approximately 1,173,000 active-duty service members and 840,000 reservists, compared with Pakistan's 550,000 active-duty service members and 513,000 reservists. R.K. Jasbir Singh, ed., *Indian Defence Yearbook, 2002* (Dehra Dun, India: Natraj, 2002), pp. 311, 317.

45. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2003–2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 136–138, 140–142. India possesses 32 squadrons of ground-attack aircraft and 6 fighter squadrons, for a total of 744 combat aircraft, versus Pakistan's 6 ground-attack and 12 fighter squadrons, totaling 374 combat aircraft. And India fields approximately 3,900 main battle tanks and 1,660 armored infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers versus Pakistan's 2,300 main battle tanks and 1,200 armored personnel carriers. Also, India's larger defense industrial base and supply of advanced weaponry from Russia give its forces a qualitative advantage over those of Pakistan. Anthony H. Cordesman, *The India-Pakistan Military Balance* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2002), p. 4. Economic, demographic, and geographic factors favor India as well. India's $505 billion gross domestic product is approximately eight times Pakistan's $68 billion gross domestic product; its $15.6 billion defense budget is roughly five times that of Pakistan's $2.8 billion budget; its population of more than 1 billion dwarfs Pakistan's approximately 147 million people; and its vast size gives it strategic depth that Pakistan sorely lacks. See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2003–2004,* pp. 288, 289; and Cordesman, *The India-Pakistan Military Balance,* p. 3.

46. Interview with Gen. V.P. Malik, chief of staff of the Indian army (ret.), New Delhi, India, April 2004.

five divisions against Pakistan's twenty-one; approximately six weeks into a crisis, India's force advantage would be roughly twenty-eight to twenty-one divisions.[47] Although these ratios are not overwhelming, they would be sufficient for India to begin driving armor and mechanized infantry into southern Pakistani Punjab, while fighting holding actions to fix Pakistani forces in northern Punjab and Kashmir. The Indians could also launch deep penetration attacks from Rajasthan toward Rahimyar Khan and the Indus River; Suleimanki or Bahawalpur; and Sukkur or Hyderabad.[48] Over a period of months, such offensives would enable India to destroy key Pakistani military assets, sever vital lines of communication, and capture critical territory in Kashmir, West Punjab, and Sindh, thereby achieving decisive victory.[49] Thus, despite its extensive military capabilities, Pakistan suffers from a significant degree of conventional insecurity vis-à-vis India—a fact of which Pakistani policymakers are keenly aware and that, in their view, makes nuclear deterrence essential to Pakistan's defense policy.[50]

Given these facts, would a high level of strategic stability facilitate Pakistani aggression, as expected by the stability/instability paradox? If a high degree of

47. Tellis, *Stability in South Asia,* p. 23. The Kargil war illustrates this point, though on a much smaller scale. During the conflict, India shifted ground forces to the region from elsewhere in the country, giving it sufficient numbers to launch successful offensive operations in a highly defense-dominant tactical environment. Indian force levels in the Kargil sector increased from fewer than 10 infantry battalions in May 1999 to more than 50 by late July. Because they had deployed there from outside of the area of operations, many of these troops had to undergo high-altitude acclimatization upon arrival in Kargil. See Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning,* pp. 85–86; Singh, *A Ridge Too Far,* p. 68; and Krishna, "The Kargil War," p. 110. India also moved elements of its Eastern Fleet to join its Western Fleet in the North Arabian Sea, enabling it to contain the Pakistan navy in Karachi and to threaten a blockade of that crucial port. Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning,* pp. 22, 101; Singh, *A Ridge Too Far,* pp. 70–71; and Krishna, "The Kargil War," pp. 135–137.

48. This was essentially the strategy of India's Operation Parakram during the crisis following the December 2001 attacks on the Indian Parliament. See Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram,* pp. 80–83.

49. Tellis, *Stability in South Asia,* pp. 17, 23; Kanwar Sandhu, "India's Strategy: Attack across a Wide Front," *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), January 12, 2002. Ashley J. Tellis argues that even in the event of a Pakistani first strike employing tactical nuclear weapons, India's conventional superiority should enable it to draw out the war, steadily mass its forces, and eviscerate Pakistani military capabilities. See Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001), p. 133.

50. Interview with Jalil Jilani, director general for South Asia in Pakistan's ministry of foreign affairs, Islamabad, Pakistan, April 2004. See also, for example, Waltz, "For Better," p. 111; Ganguly, *Conflict Unending,* pp. 101–102; Pervez Hoodbhoy, "Pakistan's Nuclear Future," in Samina Ahmed and David Cortright, eds., *Pakistan and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), p. 70; and Neil Joeck, "Maintaining Nuclear Stability in South Asia," Adelphi Paper No. 312 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1997), pp. 37–38.

strategic stability prevailed, Pakistan would face strong incentives to avoid aggressive behavior; a small possibility of subnuclear Indo-Pakistani conflict spiraling to the nuclear level would reduce the ability of Pakistani nuclear weapons to deter an Indian conventional attack. If both sides understood that the probability of nuclear use was actually very low, it would be difficult for Pakistani leaders credibly to threaten to employ nuclear weapons in a crisis. Such a reduction in deterrence would encourage Pakistani caution, because it would leave Pakistan less protected from India's conventional advantage and more vulnerable to catastrophic defeat in the event of a full-scale Indo-Pakistani conflict. Additionally, reducing the danger of conflict escalating to the nuclear level would lower the likelihood of outside diplomatic intervention, undercutting an important incentive for Pakistani aggression. India, by contrast, would be emboldened by such a highly stable strategic environment. If it were the case that a large-scale conventional conflict was very unlikely to escalate to the nuclear level, Indian leaders would be less likely to be deterred from launching a major conventional response to end Pakistani aggression and preserve the status quo.[51]

Pakistani adventurism would be encouraged only if nuclear escalation became a serious possibility in the event that a limited Indo-Pakistani confrontation spiraled to the level of full-scale conventional conflict. In this scenario, Pakistani leaders could engage in limited conventional aggression believing that India would probably be deterred from launching a full-scale conventional response. Additionally, third parties, which might otherwise be uninterested in an Indo-Pakistani conflict, would likely become concerned and possibly seek to mediate the Kashmir dispute in an effort to prevent a nuclear confrontation. Thus Pakistani aggression would be likely in a South Asian security environment where instability at the strategic level enabled limited conventional instability.[52]

---

51. Because India is satisfied with the territorial status quo in Kashmir, high strategic stability would not be likely to encourage Indian aggression beyond that necessary to defeat Pakistani adventurism and restore existing regional boundaries.

52. This is not to argue that continuing violence in a nuclear South Asia has resulted solely from the structure of the regional security environment. Other nonstructural variables, particularly organizational pathologies, have led to poor strategic decisionmaking, which in turn has helped to promote ongoing regional conflict. For example, the organizational biases of Pakistan's army have resulted in aggressive Pakistani policies that have sought tactical advantage at the expense of broad strategic success; that have overestimated nuclear weapons' coercive value; and that have failed to incorporate appropriate cautionary lessons from past conflicts. See, for example, Sagan, "For the Worse," pp. 96–98. Such problems have emerged, however, in an environment already structurally predisposed to low-level violence. Thus despite their importance, organizational and

Figure 1. Strategic and Subnuclear Violence: Cold War Europe versus Nuclear South Asia

Strategic stability level

	High stability	Significant instability
Cold War Europe	Subnuclear violence likely. Stability/Instability paradox is in effect.	Subnuclear violence unlikely. Soviets deterred by nuclear danger.
South Asia	Subnuclear violence unlikely. Pakistan deterred by conventional danger.	Subnuclear violence likely. Pakistan emboldened by nuclear danger.

Case

Figure 1 summarizes my argument regarding the difference between the effect of strategic stability on subnuclear violence in Cold War Europe and in contemporary South Asia. During the Cold War, high strategic stability encouraged lower-level violence, as the stability/instability paradox would expect; a small probability of nuclear escalation made aggression relatively safe for the conventionally strong Soviet Union. In contemporary South Asia, however, this situation is reversed. A high degree of strategic stability on the subcontinent does not encourage lower-level violence, because a small probability of nuclear escalation increases the odds that a conventionally weak Pakistan will face Indian retaliation. Rather, a significant degree of strategic instability has allowed ongoing Indo-Pakistani conflict. The danger of nuclear escalation enables Pakistan to engage in low-level violence while insulated from Indian retaliation; it also attracts outside attention.

Recent Indo-Pakistani behavior illustrates my argument. With Pakistan's achievement of a de facto nuclear capability during the late 1980s,[53] Pakistani policymakers decided that any full-scale conventional conflict with India was

---

other nonstructural variables have not been essential to the continuing violence in South Asia; a significant amount of limited conflict in the region was likely even without these factors.
53. By "de facto" I mean that even though Pakistan did not possess nuclear weapons, it probably could have assembled them on short order. India achieved a de facto nuclear capability at roughly the same time as Pakistan. See Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation,* p. 126; and Leonard Spector, *The Undeclared Bomb: The Spread of Nuclear Weapons, 1987–1988* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1988), pp. 69–70.

likely to escalate to the nuclear level. Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto explains that she and other Pakistani leaders concluded that "having [a] nuclear capability would ensure that India could not launch a conventional war, knowing that it if did, it would turn nuclear, and that hundreds of millions would die. . . . It would have meant suicide not just for one, but for both nations."[54]

Pakistani leaders soon came to believe that this danger of nuclear escalation, by insulating Pakistan from Indian conventional attack, would allow Pakistan not simply to ensure its own security, but also to pursue a strategy of limited conflict against Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir. Bhutto recalls that in 1989, during her first term as prime minister, Pakistan's emerging nuclear capacity's "ability to ward off [an Indian] conventional act may have led to the conclusion that a low-scale insurgency in the disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir could focus international attention on the oldest item on the United Nations agenda, which had remained unresolved. Perhaps a low-scale uprising could convince India and the rest of the world community, including the United Nations, to address this very important dispute."[55] Pakistan subsequently began an extensive project of providing political, material, and military support for the anti-Indian insurgency in Kashmir.[56] According to Bhutto, top Pakistani army officers were convinced that India "could not resort to conventional war" in retaliation for these Pakistani provocations "because we had nuclear deterrence." In the Pakistan army's view, the Indians "knew that if they resorted to conventional war and we suffered a setback, we could use the nuclear response."[57]

---

54. Interview with Benazir Bhutto, August 2004.

55. Ibid. While the Pakistani government has consistently sought to attract international mediation of the Kashmir conflict, Indian leaders have rejected any third-party involvement, maintaining that the two countries must resolve their disagreements on a purely bilateral basis. See Cohen, *India,* p. 219; Cohen, *The Pakistan Army,* p. 145; and Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 80, 107. On the issue of internationalizing Kargil, see also Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning,* p. 89; D. Suba Chandran, "Why Kargil? Pakistan's Objective and Motivation," in Krishna and Chari, *Kargil,* pp. 23–38; Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella,* p. 38; Mirza Aslam Beg, "Kargil Withdrawal and 'Rogue' Army Image," *Defence Journal,* Vol. 3, No. 8 (September 1999), pp. 8–11; Irfan Husain, "Kargil: The Morning After," *Dawn* (Karachi), April 29, 2000; A. Rashid, "Responsibility for Kargil," *Dawn,* July 22, 2000; and Zahid Hussain, "On the Brink," *Newsline,* June 1999, p. 30.

56. This is not to argue that Pakistan invented the Kashmir insurgency. As noted above, the insurgency has deep indigenous roots. Pakistani backing came only after there was already an existing current of discontent in Kashmir to exploit. See Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute,* pp. 114–118; and Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir,* pp. 14–42.

57. Interview with Bhutto. For a similar assessment of Pakistani strategy, see Shireen Mazari, "Kashmir: Looking for Viable Options," *Defence Journal,* Vol. 3, No. 2 (February–March 1999),

Throughout most of the 1990s, Pakistan restricted its involvement in the Kashmir insurgency to supporting Kashmiri and foreign militants struggling against Indian rule. After the 1998 Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests and the acquisition of an overt nuclear capacity, however, Pakistan exceeded those previous limits. In early 1999, Pakistan army forces crossed the LoC at Kargil, seizing territory that enabled them to threaten vital Indian lines of communication in Kashmir and provoking a limited Indo-Pakistani war.[58] Pakistani leaders undertook the Kargil operation based in part upon their belief that Pakistan enjoyed a local tactical advantage over India, and that Pakistan would receive international support for its position in the confrontation.[59] Apart from these tactical and diplomatic factors, however, Pakistani leaders' willingness to launch the Kargil conflict turned upon their nuclear capability; the Pakistanis believed that their new, overt nuclear status would enable them to deter the Indians even more effectively than their de facto nuclear capacity had previously done, while attracting the attention of third parties anxious to

http://defencejournal.com/feb-mar99/kashmir-viable.htm. See also Samina Ahmed, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: Turning Points and Nuclear Choices," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 178–204; Hoodbhoy, "Pakistan's Nuclear Future," p. 71; Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, p. 92; and V.R. Raghavan, "Limited War and Nuclear Escalation in South Asia," *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Fall–Winter 2001), p. 4.

58. The fighting at Kargil continued from March through July 1999 when, under a U.S.-brokered arrangement, Pakistani forces withdrew from the Line of Control. As part of the agreement, President Bill Clinton promised to take a "personal interest" in encouraging Indo-Pakistani efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute. See Bruce Reidel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House" (Philadelphia: Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, 2002), http://lists.cs.columbia.edu/pipermail/ornet/2002-May/004384.html.

59. On these points, see S. Paul Kapur, "Nuclear Proliferation, the Kargil Conflict, and South Asian Security," *Security Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Autumn 2003), pp. 87–88. Although the Pakistanis were ultimately forced to abandon the area, their views on the tactical environment at Kargil were not wholly unfounded. Dug high into the Kargil sector's mountain peaks and overlooking the exposed approaches to their positions, Pakistani forces proved extremely difficult for the Indians to dislodge. Pakistani expectations of international support for the Kargil adventure, however, proved to be disastrously wrong, and seem to have been based upon little more than wishful thinking. Ganguly notes that, in launching Kargil, "the Pakistani leadership simply assumed that the United States and other major states would step in to prevent an escalation of the crisis. . . . There is little or no evidence that the leadership had any tangible basis for their belief in international support." Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, p. 122. As Tellis, Fair, and Medby put it, "Pakistan made unrealistic assumptions about the range of possible outcomes. Fundamentally, Pakistan did not anticipate the intolerance that the international community . . . would demonstrate for its attempts to alter the status quo." Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella*, pp. 38–39. And Ejaz Haider similarly maintains that "no causal logic" underlay the Pakistani leadership's expectation of international support at Kargil. Their expectations were based simply on faith that the international community would see the justice of the Pakistani position on Kashmir. Interview with Haider, news editor, *Friday Times*, Lahore, Pakistan, April 2004.

defuse a potential nuclear confrontation in South Asia. As the director general for South Asia in Pakistan's ministry of foreign affairs, Jalil Jilani, explained, "Since Pakistan's acquisition of [an overt] nuclear capacity, Pakistan has felt much less threatened" by Indian conventional capabilities, and thus "more confident" vis-à-vis India. This increased confidence has enabled the Pakistanis to adopt policies that "put a check on Indian ambition" in South Asia. At Kargil, Pakistan was able "to block the supply of [Indian] troops in Kashmir. And there [were] limits as to what India could do in response." Simultaneously, Kargil said to the outside world that "India's adverse possessions" in Kashmir "should be looked at."[60]

The Kargil operation, like Pakistan's earlier Kashmir policy, assumed the existence of sufficient stability in the Indo-Pakistani strategic relationship to allow Pakistan or its proxies to launch limited conventional attacks against India without immediately triggering a nuclear war. Beyond this background assumption of initial strategic stability, however, Pakistan's policy exploited the possibility of subsequent nuclear escalation in a full-scale Indo-Pakistani conventional confrontation. As Jilani put it, central to Pakistani strategy has been the recognition that "it is always possible for [conventional conflict] to get out of hand." This recognition has "deterred India" and made clear to the international community that it "has a stake in achieving peace in this region."[61]

Pakistani leaders' efforts to "put a check on Indian ambition" in South Asia

---

60. Interview with Jilani. Kapur, "Nuclear Proliferation, the Kargil Conflict, and South Asian Security," pp. 88–89; Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, p. 92; Raghavan, "Limited War and Nuclear Escalation in South Asia," p. 4; Karl, "Lessons for Proliferation Scholarship in South Asia," p. 1020; Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella*, p. 49; Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning*, p. 89; Jasjit Singh, "The Fourth War," in Singh, *Kargil, 1999*, pp. 123, 132–133; interviews of retired Indian generals, New Delhi, India, May 2001; and Shireen Mazari, "Re-examining Kargil," *Defence Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 11 (June 2000), pp. 44–46. Other Pakistani goals at Kargil probably included undermining the legitimacy of the Line of Control and bolstering the anti-Indian insurgency in Kashmir, which in recent years had been flagging. See Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning*, pp. 89–90; J.N. Dixit, "A Defining Moment," in Rahul Bedi, Bharat Bhushan, Pamela Constable, Moti Dar, Saurabh Das, Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, J.N. Dixit, Muzamil Jaleel, Suketu Mehta, and Sankarshan Thakur, *Guns and Yellow Roses: Essays on the Kargil War* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 1999), pp. 188–191; F.S. Lodi, "Kargil: Its Aftermath," *Defence Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (July 1999), pp. 7–8; Nasim Zehra, "Anatomy of Islamabad's Kargil Policy," *Defence Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 7 (August 1999), pp. 2–4; Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, pp. 121–122; Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella*, p. 38; Husain, "Kargil"; Ayaz Amir, "What Is the Political Leadership Up To?" *Dawn* (Karachi), July 2, 1999; Hussain, "On the Brink," p. 24; and Shaukat Qadir, "An Analysis of the Kargil Conflict, 1999," *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, Vol. 147, No. 2 (April 2002), p. 3.
61. Interview with Jilani.

have been neither risk nor cost free. Their support for the Kashmir insurgency has drained Pakistan economically and has damaged its international reputation. Pakistan also paid a heavy price for its Kargil incursions: it lost hundreds of soldiers; it was diplomatically isolated; it experienced increased civil-military tension, which contributed to the October 1999 coup; and in the end it withdrew from the area.[62] Finally, Pakistani adventurism has risked setting off a conflict with India that could end in nuclear war. Nonetheless, the Pakistanis have been willing to pay the costs and run the risk inherent in such a policy. Indeed, nuclear risk has made limited Pakistani aggression feasible, forcing Indian leaders to choose between exercising restraint and launching a conventional war that could result in a nuclear confrontation. Thus by exploiting instability in the Indo-Pakistani strategic balance, and giving India the "last clear chance" to avert potential disaster,[63] Pakistan has pursued its objectives in Kashmir insulated from the full extent of India's conventional military advantage, while attracting the attention of third parties anxious to avoid a nuclear confrontation on the subcontinent.

While this escalatory danger has emboldened Pakistan, the risk of conventional conflict spiraling to the nuclear level has encouraged Indian caution. As a recent analysis explains, Indian leaders believe that Pakistan might use nuclear weapons during a conflict in any number of ways, including "in a preemptive mode, early in a war, when the going gets tough, or when ultimately pushed to the wall by India's conventional forces. This has instilled uncertainty amongst Indian planners," who believe that "Pakistan's rash military leadership cannot be trusted with nuclear weapons."[64]

This sense of uncertainty has helped to dissuade India from launching full-scale conventional efforts to end Pakistani or Pakistan-backed aggression. For

---

62. See Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella,* pp. x, 41, 55; Husain, "Kargil"; Hussain, "On the Brink"; Jones, *Pakistan,* p. 104; Irfan Husain, "The Cost of Kargil," *Dawn* (Karachi), August 14, 1999; Shireen M. Mazari, "Kargil: Misguided Perceptions," Pakistan Institute for Air Defence Studies, http://www.piads.com.pk/users/piads/mazari1.html; Samina Ahmed, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: Moving Forward or Tactical Retreat?" Occasional Paper No. 18:OP:2 (Notre Dame, Ind.: Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, February 2000), http://www.nd.edu/?krocinst/ocpapers/op_18_2.pdf, p. 17; and "Statement of Nawaz Sharif in ATC-1," *Dawn,* March 9, 2000.
63. As Thomas Schelling explains, "Skillful diplomacy . . . consists in arranging things so that it is one's opponent who is embarrassed by having the 'last clear chance' to avert disaster by turning aside or abstaining from what he wanted to do. . . . The risk of disaster becomes a manipulative element in the situation." Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* pp. 101–102.
64. Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram,* pp. 147–148.

example, despite its conventional advantage, India has refrained from attacking insurgent bases and infrastructure in Pakistani Kashmir. And during the Kargil conflict, the Indian government ruled out full-scale war even in response to incursions into Indian territory by Pakistan army forces, thereby abandoning India's long-standing policy of retaliating against Pakistani attacks on Kashmir with all-out horizontal escalation.[65] In both cases, Indian caution resulted at least in part from concern over the possibility of a Pakistani nuclear response.[66]

In the wake of the Kargil conflict, however, the Indian government began to take a more optimistic view of strategic stability on the subcontinent. Indian civilian and military leaders became increasingly convinced that Pakistan's aggressive behavior was based on "bluff and bluster," "exaggerating the likelihood of nuclear escalation" to "blackmail" India and the international community.[67] In truth, according to a senior Indian army officer and strategic analyst, many Indian policymakers came to believe that "Pakistan will not use nuclear weapons until it is half gone."[68] Pakistan would be very unlikely to launch a nuclear strike on India, former Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes argues, because if it did, India would retaliate in kind. Given the size disparity between the two countries, the effects of such an exchange would be grossly unequal; a nuclear confrontation would be extremely costly to India, but it would probably mortally damage Pakistan. As Fernandes puts it, after an initial Pakistani nuclear strike on India, "We may have lost a part of our population." But after India's retaliatory strike on Pakistan, "Pakistan may have been completely wiped out."[69]

---

65. For example, India escalated horizontally in response to Pakistan's attack on Kashmir in 1965. See Ganguly, *Conflict Unending,* pp. 33, 38, 44, 48. Also note that combat at Kargil occurred in glacial conditions at altitudes generally higher than 15,000 feet. Attempts to eject Pakistani intruders from the sector's mountain heights forced Indian troops to advance uphill under withering artillery and machine-gun fire. See Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning,* p. 83; and Gurmeet Kanwal, "Pakistan's Military Defeat," in Singh, *Kargil, 1999,* p. 153. Expanding the conflict horizontally could have enabled the Indians to attack the Pakistanis elsewhere under more favorable conditions.

66. Interview with Malik; and P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Stephen Philip Cohen, *Perception, Politics, and Security in South Asia: The Compound Crisis of 1990* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p. 143.

67. Interview with senior Indian scholar and nuclear policy adviser closely involved with the formulation of Indian nuclear doctrine, New Delhi, India, April 2004.

68. Interview with senior Indian army officer, New Delhi, India, April 2004.

69. Interview with former Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes, New Delhi, India, August 2004.

This strategic asymmetry, combined with Pakistan's diplomatic, economic, and conventional military weakness, led Indian policymakers to conclude that India could probably fight a limited conventional conflict to end Pakistani adventurism in Kashmir without escalation to the level of nuclear confrontation.[70] Ironically, Pakistan's own actions in Kashmir may have provided India with the most compelling evidence of the feasibility of limited war in a nuclear South Asia. As former Indian Army Chief of Staff V.P. Malik explains, "Kargil showed the way. If Pakistan could do Kargil [without escalation to the strategic level], India could do something similar" in response to continued Pakistani provocations in Kashmir without fear of a nuclear confrontation. Thus, in the wake of the Kargil war, there was an "increasing realization in India that stability exists in the strategic balance. How low or high stability is will always be a question mark. But it's there."[71]

As their confidence in the subcontinent's strategic stability grew, Indian leaders threatened to become more aggressive in their efforts to defend the Kashmiri status quo and end Pakistani provocations in the region. In contrast to its previous restraint, in the wake of the Kargil conflict, India adopted a policy of compellence, vowing to launch a limited conventional war against Pakistan if the latter did not curb cross-border violence in Kashmir. Possible Indian action ranged from attacking terrorist camps and Pakistani military assets within Pakistani Kashmir to destroying military targets and seizing territory within Pakistan proper.[72]

The results of India's compellent strategy have been mixed. In the policy's most dramatic application, following a December 2001 terrorist assault on the Indian Parliament, India massed roughly 500,000 troops along the LoC and the

---

70. See Gaurav Kampani, "India's Compellance Strategy: Calling Pakistan's Nuclear Bluff over Kashmir" (Monterey, Calif.: Monterey Institute of International Studies, March 2002), http://www.cns.miis.edu/pubs/week/020610.htm, p. 3.
71. Interview with Malik. See also V.P. Malik, "National Seminar on Challenge of Limited War: Parameters and Options," address before the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, India, January 6, 2000. Discussions with senior-serving army and ministry of external affairs personnel evinced a similar viewpoint.
72. Kampani, "India's Compellance Strategy," p. 11; and Karl, "Lessons for Proliferation Scholarship in South Asia," p. 1021. See also Khan, "Challenges to Nuclear Stability in South Asia," pp. 64–65. On the conceptual roots of the limited-war policy, see C. Raja Mohan, "Fernandes Unveils 'Limited War' Doctrine," *Hindu* (Chennai), January 24, 2000. An Indian attack on Pakistan proper would have been highly circumscribed, so as to avoid threatening Pakistan with catastrophic defeat. Interview with V.K. Sood, former vice-chief of staff of the Indian army, New Delhi, India, August 2004.

international border,[73] and demanded that Pakistan turn over to New Delhi twenty criminals suspected of residing in Pakistan. It also demanded that Pakistan unequivocally renounce terrorism; shut down terrorist training camps in Pakistani territory; and check militant infiltration into Jammu and Kashmir.[74] Most important, the buildup was meant as a warning against any follow-on terrorist attacks, which the Indians feared were imminent. As Fernandes explains, "There were intelligence reports that there could be more such attacks on different targets in the country. So the message that went by mobilizing our forces and keeping them there for a length of time was that if anything should happen from any quarter . . . we would have taken [Pakistan] on in a conventional war."[75]

Indian threats initially met with a degree of Pakistani compliance. In January 2002 President Musharraf banned the militant organizations Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed and publicly promised not to allow Pakistani territory to be used as a launching ground for terrorism in Kashmir.[76] In the spring of 2002, U.S. officials reported that Musharraf had assured them that terrorist training camps in Pakistani Kashmir would be shut down permanently and cross-border infiltration brought to an end. These developments coincided with a notable decrease in terrorist infiltration into Indian Kashmir.[77]

Ultimately, however, Pakistan failed to accede to Indian demands. Despite a temporary lull in cross-border infiltration, by mid-2002 the flow of militants

---

73. This was the largest mobilization in Indian history.
74. See Praveen Swami, "Beating the Retreat," *Frontline*, October 26–November 8, 2002.
75. Interview with Fernandes.
76. See President Pervez Musharraf, "Address to the Nation," January 12, 2002, http://www.jang-group.com/thenews/spedition/speech_of_musharraf/index.html. The Indian government blamed Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed for the December 2001 Parliament attack. See Rana Lakshmi, "Indians Blame Attacks on Pakistan-Based Group; Fears of Renewed Tension Increase," *Washington Post,* December 15, 2001; Ewan MacAskill, "India Says It Has Evidence Linking Pakistan with Raid," *Guardian,* December 17, 2001; and Sayantan Chakravarty, "The Plot Unravels," *India Today,* December 31, 2001. For detailed discussions of these and other militant groups in Kashmir, see K. Santhanam, Sreedhar, Sudhir Saxena, and Manish, *Jihadis in Jammu and Kashmir: A Portrait Gallery* (New Delhi: Sage, 2003).
77. Fahran Bokhari and Edward Luce, "Western Pressure Brings Easing of Kashmir Tension," *Financial Times* (London), June 8, 2002; C. Raja Mohan, "Musharraf Vows to Stop Infiltration: Armitage," *Hindu* (Chennai), June 7, 2002; Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram,* pp. 95, 98–99; and Shishir Gupta, "Advantage India," *India Today* (New Delhi), June 24, 2002. Indian Defense Minster George Fernandes claimed in November 2002 that cross-border infiltration during the first ten months of that year was down to 53 percent of what it had been during the same period in 2001. See "India: Fernandes Says Forward Mobilization of Troops Achieved Objectives," World News Connection, November 21, 2002; and "Government Carrying Out Strategic Relocation of Army," Press Trust of India, November 20, 2002.

into Jammu and Kashmir had begun to increase once again.[78] On May 14, 2002, terrorists launched another major attack, killing thirty-two people at an Indian army camp at Kaluchak in Jammu.[79] And the Pakistan government flatly refused to turn over to New Delhi the Indians' list of twenty wanted fugitives. Despite this noncompliance, India eventually demobilized its forces without attacking Pakistan. Having lost the element of surprise, anxious to avoid angering the United States by attacking its key ally in the Afghan war, and concerned with the conventional costs and nuclear risks of a large-scale Indo-Pakistani conflict, the Indians began withdrawing from the international border and the LoC in October 2002.[80] Significantly, however, the withdrawal did not mark an abandonment of India's compellent policy. Rather, Indian leaders hoped that the "strategic relocation" of their forces would enable them to husband their resources and, if necessary, fight later under more favorable circumstances.[81] India's posture remained, in the words of V.P. Malik, "All-out conventional war, no. Limited conventional war, yes."[82]

India's adherence to this approach has coincided with the emergence of more restrained Pakistani behavior, with Pakistan gradually taking steps to reduce, though not eliminate, cross-border violence.[83] The ensuing thaw in Indo-Pakistani relations has seen the initiation of a cease-fire along the Line of

---

78. V. Sudarshan and Ajith Pillai, "Game of Patience," *Outlook* (Mumbai), May 27, 2002; Shishir Gupta, "Keeping the Heat On," *India Today* (New Delhi), May 20, 2002; "The General's Broken Promise," *Washington Post*, May 15, 2002; and author interviews of retired Indian generals, New Delhi, India, August 2004. According to the Indian ministry of home affairs, 4,038 terrorist incidents occurred in Jammu and Kashmir during 2002, an overall decline of approximately 11 percent from 4,522 total incidents in 2001. See Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, *2003–2004 Annual Report*, http://mha.nic.in/annual_reports.htm, p. 12. According to the Indian army, 1,063 non-Kashmiri terrorists were killed in 2002 by security forces in Jammu and Kashmir, compared with 1,198 killed in 2001, an overall decline of roughly the same percentage. For Indian army statistics, see http://www.armyinkashmir.org/v2/statistical_facts/ft_actual_data.shtml.
79. Most of the victims were family members of army personnel stationed at Kaluchak. See Raj Chengappa and Shishir Gupta, "The Mood to Hit Back," *India Today* (New Delhi), May 27, 2002, pp. 27–30.
80. Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*, pp. 80, 82, 87; Sudarshan and Pillai, "Game of Patience"; Shishir Gupta, "When India Came Close to War," *India Today* (New Delhi), December 19, 2002; and interviews of retired Indian generals, New Delhi.
81. Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*, p. 11
82. Interview with Malik.
83. See Sujit Chatterjee, "Pak Has Taken Steps to Put Down Cross-Border Terror: Fernandes," Press Trust of India, February 11, 2004; Vasantha Arora, "India Might Reconsider Stand on Troops for Iraq: Natwar," Indo-Asian News Service, June 11, 2004; Chidanand Rajghatta, "India, U.S. Pledge Stronger Ties," *Times of India* (New Delhi), June 12, 2004; "Natwar, Powell Discuss Bilateral, Regional Issues," Press Trust of India, June 11, 2004; and Simon Denyer, "India Says Kashmir Infiltration Lower but Not Over," Reuters, June 18, 2004.

Control; a resumption of air and rail links between India and Pakistan; a written commitment by Pakistan not to allow its territory to be used for terrorist activity; meetings between the Indian government and leaders of the Kashmiri separatist All Parties Hurriyat Conference; and peace talks between the Indian and Pakistani foreign secretaries.

A range of factors, including growing international pressure to curb terrorism in Kashmir, India's renewed willingness to discuss the Kashmir issue, and Pakistan's A.Q. Khan nuclear proliferation scandal, have contributed to these developments.[84] Determining the effect of New Delhi's compellent policy on Islamabad is therefore difficult. What is clear, however, is that a growing perception of strategic stability did not lead to increased regional conflict. Rather, it emboldened Indian leaders to threaten more assertive efforts to end Pakistani challenges to the territorial status quo. Although this threat did not succeed in the immediate achievement of specific Indian security goals, it has broadly coincided with the emergence of more moderate Pakistani behavior and a decline in Indo-Pakistani tensions.

Conclusion

Contrary to the expectations of the stability/instability paradox, a very low likelihood of subnuclear Indo-Pakistani conflict escalating to the nuclear level has not facilitated ongoing violence in South Asia. Rather, South Asian violence has resulted from a strategic environment in which nuclear escalation is a serious possibility in the event that a limited Indo-Pakistani confrontation spirals into a full-scale conventional conflict. This environment has enabled Pakistan to launch limited conventional attacks against India, while insulating itself against the possibility of full-scale Indian conventional retaliation and attracting international attention to the Kashmir dispute. Thus a significant degree of instability at the strategic level, which Cold War logic predicts should discourage lower-level violence, has actually promoted tactical instability on the subcontinent.

The fact that the stability/instability paradox has not facilitated recent conflict in South Asia indicates that Indo-Pakistani tactical and strategic stability are not mutually incompatible. Therefore policies seeking to achieve such

---

84. See Bushra Asif and Sean Farrell, "India and Pakistan: Breaking the Deadlock," Center for Strategic and International Studies, *South Asia Monitor,* No. 67, February 1, 2004, p. 1.

dual stability in the region will not necessarily be futile or dangerous. Indeed, increased strategic stability on the subcontinent has aided Indian efforts to preserve the status quo and has coincided with a decline in Indo-Pakistani tensions.

More generally, the relationship between strategic and tactical stability for new nuclear powers may be different than it was for the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Assessments of the dangers of nuclear proliferation for states such as North Korea and Iran must address the possibility that instability in the strategic realm could have destabilizing effects at the lower levels of conflict must be considered. If the leaders of newly nuclear states are dissatisfied with the territorial status quo, they may engage in limited aggression, believing that the danger of nuclear escalation will reduce the risk of full-scale conventional retaliation by stronger adversaries and will attract international attention. Such behavior would result not from organizational pathologies or irrationality on the part of nuclear proliferants, but rather from calculations based on their strategic environments, their conventional military capabilities, and their territorial preferences. In these cases, the strategic approach most likely to minimize conventional violence would be the reverse of the strategically destabilizing policies that the United States and NATO pursued during the Cold War; arms control and confidence-building measures designed to increase strategic stability and lower the likelihood of nuclear escalation would undercut a new proliferant's ability to engage in aggressive conventional behavior from behind a shield of nuclear deterrence.

Just as important as these strategic and technical measures, however, will be energetic diplomatic attempts to ameliorate ongoing territorial disputes. Such efforts can help to reduce a key incentive for aggression by new nuclear states, thereby lowering the potential costs of future nuclear proliferation. In the South Asian case, international political and economic support for the Musharraf government's recent efforts to rein in the Kashmir insurgency, and to forge a more cooperative relationship with India, could be useful. While such support cannot ensure increased regional stability, it can help to reduce the Pakistan government's desire to alter the Kashmiri status quo, and thus may lower the likelihood of Indo-Pakistani conflict despite their nuclear weapons' potentially destabilizing effects. An important means of avoiding nuclear danger may thus have more to do with diplomacy than with nuclear weapons themselves.

This article has been cited by:

1. THEO FARRELL. 2010. Nuclear non-use: constructing a Cold War history. *Review of International Studies* **36**:04, 819-829. [CrossRef]

2. Vojtech Mastny. 2010. The Soviet Union's Partnership with IndiaThe Soviet Union's Partnership with India. *Journal of Cold War Studies* **12**:3, 50-90. [Abstract] [PDF] [PDF Plus]

3. Vipin Narang. 2010. Posturing for Peace? Pakistan's Nuclear Postures and South Asian StabilityPosturing for Peace? Pakistan's Nuclear Postures and South Asian Stability. *International Security* **34**:3, 38-78. [Abstract] [PDF] [PDF Plus]

4. MATTHEW KROENIG. 2009. Exporting the Bomb: Why States Provide Sensitive Nuclear Assistance. *American Political Science Review* **103**:01, 113. [CrossRef]

5. Kailash Joshi, Srikanth Mudigonda. 2008. An analysis of India's future attractiveness as an offshore destination for IT and IT-enabled services. *Journal of Information Technology* **23**:4, 215-227. [CrossRef]

6. Walter C. Ladwig III. 2008. A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War DoctrineA Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine. *International Security* **32**:3, 158-190. [Abstract] [PDF] [PDF Plus]