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SOUTH ASIA

Strategic competition and nuclear policies

Feroz Hassan Khan

With a plethora of new delivery systems and rising fissile material production rates, India and Pakistan continue to defy the global normative nonproliferation regime.¹ These nuclear investments are a symptom of the intense strategic competition that has embroiled India and Pakistan for decades and is now entering a third distinct phase. In the first phase (1974–1998), both states challenged the nonproliferation regime by developing and demonstrating their respective nuclear capabilities. In the second phase (1998–2013), both countries focused on developing operational deterrence force postures, doctrines, and command and control systems. In the ongoing third phase, nuclear capabilities are modernizing and expanding to encompass sea-based delivery systems, completing the third leg of the nuclear “triad.”

Rivalry and distrust between India and Pakistan are the central drivers for this nuclear arms race, and lately, global power politics have been exacerbating these tensions. As the United States pivots to the Asia-Pacific, China feels threatened and increases its defense spending, which in turn spurs India to develop and modernize its own strategic and conventional forces, to include Agni intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) and Sagarika submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). Western powers tacitly endorse India’s strategic ambitions and military investments as a means of “containing” China’s rise, but meanwhile, Pakistan finds itself increasingly vulnerable. Pakistan is geographically exposed to Indian attack and lacks the resources to compete with India’s superior conventional military. Islamabad relies on nuclear weapons to offset this imbalance and has most recently introduced battlefield-range systems, such as the 60 km-range Nasr. In essence, the Asia-Pacific rebalance is indirectly fueling the Indo-Pakistani rivalry and incentivizing the expansion of their nuclear arsenals.

As in the past, the international community does not desire an unhealthy arms race between India and Pakistan. Yet there is no discernable policy or visible involvement in the region that could mitigate regional tensions or resolve a conflict set in motion. The lack of coherent international effort to dampen Indo-Pakistani competition and integrate the two states into the nonproliferation regime has given them carte blanche to double-down on their efforts to expand and improve their strategic arsenals. South Asia therefore continues to fly in the face of the global nonproliferation regime in the twenty-first century.

The first section of this chapter will assess the current status and upward trajectories of Indian and Pakistani strategic forces. The second section examines the evolving military doctrines and command and control arrangements. The third section examines how regional

political dynamics have aggravated the Indo-Pakistani arms race, with specific emphasis on the implications of the A.Q. Khan affair, the US-India nuclear deal, the US rebalance to the Asia-Pacific, and the lack of progress in regional confidence-building measures (CBMs). The final section concludes with some prospects for regional peace and stability and some recommendations for consideration.

Status of India and Pakistan's strategic arsenals

Overview of developments: 1998–2013

India tested its first nuclear device, known as “Smiling Buddha,” in 1974. Despite New Delhi's attempts to characterize the test as a “peaceful nuclear explosion,” the die was cast, and Pakistan began to aggressively pursue the bomb. By the mid-1980s, India and Pakistan had reached nominal nuclear capability and adopted a “recessed deterrence” posture wherein both states produced fissile material at a gentle pace, developed delivery means, and conducted several experiments and cold tests along the way. Nuclear weapons were not overtly declared but both sides tacitly understood one another's nascent capabilities. The 1998 nuclear explosive tests heralded the start of the overt nuclear era. By the turn of the century, conservative estimates of India and Pakistani nuclear weapons hovered around 40–50 weapons. Delivery was inordinately reliant on aircraft, as few ballistic missiles had been flight-tested. Nuclear weapons, in other words, were not fully operational and only notionally employable.

The fifteen years after the 1998 tests have witnessed unprecedented acts of terrorism, military crises, and intense international focus on South Asia. It is perhaps no surprise that during this same period, India and Pakistan have transitioned from a recessed deterrence posture to an operational one, characterized by a steady expansion of delivery systems and fissile material production infrastructure. Three events in particular give context to this momentous shift. First, India and Pakistan came to the brink of full-scale war in 2001–2002 when militants from Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed attacked the Indian parliament building in New Delhi. Second, the discovery and dismantling of the A.Q. Khan network in 2004 put Pakistan in the proverbial proliferation “doghouse,” damaging its international standing and heightening its sense of isolation and insecurity. Third, the US-India nuclear deal, announced in 2005 and legislated in 2008 further heightened Pakistan's sense of isolation and grievances.

The abovementioned three events certainly did no favors for Indo-Pakistani relations. Instead, mutual mistrust and security anxieties have increased, and the stakes of conflict are higher than ever as both countries continue to invest in fissile production and delivery systems. Of note, observers have pointed out that India and Pakistan now possess more nuclear-weapon delivery vehicles – including families of cruise and ballistic missiles – than the United States.²

Status of fissile material development

India's nuclear program began a decade ahead of Pakistan's. According to the 2013 *SIPRI Yearbook*, the Indian arsenal comprises 90 to 110 warheads. Estimates in 2012 put India's highly enriched uranium (HEU) stockpile at 2.4 ± 0.9 metric tons, and its weapons-grade plutonium stockpile at 0.54 ± 0.18 metric tons.³

Pakistani security managers have long feared a fissile material gap with India, and this perception gained traction in the wake of the US-India nuclear deal, agreed upon in 2005 and set into motion in 2008. Under the terms of the deal, India was required to separate its civil and military nuclear installations and submit the civil sites to International Atomic Energy

Agency (IAEA) safeguards. In return, India was granted permission to import nuclear fuel and technology despite its not being a party to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This meant that India could now divert its domestic uranium resources toward the military nuclear program while relying on imported uranium to fuel the civilian component.

Pakistan has augmented its fissile production capacity in order to stay competitive with India and keep pace with the rapid induction of new delivery systems on the subcontinent. After the 1998 tests, Pakistan had only one plutonium production reactor at Khushab, but as of 2014, a fourth is in the works. As for HEU, Pakistan has expanded the uranium hexafluoride production capacity at the Chemical Plants Complex at Dera Ghazi Khan, and new-generation gas centrifuges (P-3 and P-4) have been installed at Kahuta.⁴ Open-source analysis from 2012 estimated Pakistan to have 3 ± 1.2 metric tons of HEU and 0.15 ± 0.05 metric tons of plutonium – enough to produce one or two dozen weapons per year.⁵ Pakistan is currently believed to have 90–110 warheads.⁶

In the coming years, Pakistan's fissile material output is slated to rise. Plutonium production will increase when the fourth planned Khushab reactor comes online later this decade. Feedstock for Khushab-IV may come from a new mine that is set to open at Shanawa in 2014, which will boost Pakistan's annual production of natural uranium from approximately 36 to 54 metric tons.⁷ Increased fissile output means more weapons can be produced, and Pakistan can stretch its fissile stocks further if it adopts composite warhead designs or boosts its weapons with deuterium-tritium. On the other hand, as Pakistan's current uranium sources deplete, the nuclear program will suffer because unlike India, Pakistan does not enjoy the benefit of external supply. In any case, given Pakistan's strides in fissile material production and India's external supply advantage, it is no surprise that Islamabad continues to drag its feet in international negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT).⁸

Strategic triad and force modernization

Indian strategic forces are modernizing under an ambitious program that demonstrates the country's burgeoning power projection capabilities. In April 2012, India conducted a flight test of the 5,000km Agni-V solid-fuelled ballistic missile. Declared as an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the Agni is expected to be operational by 2015. India claims it would be equipped with multiple independently-targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), designed to penetrate and defeat enemy missile defenses.⁹ In early 2013, India carried out the maiden test of its 290-km range, supersonic submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM) BrahMos, which was declared to be "ready for fitment on submarines in vertical launch configuration."¹⁰ India also has plans to field submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) such as the 700 km-range K-15 Sagarika, whose development trials were completed in January 2013.¹¹ Sagarika is designed to launch from the Arihant-class ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) and carry a 1,000 kg nuclear warhead. Each Arihant-class submarine would be able to carry 12 K-15 missiles which would later be replaced by the 3,500 km-range K-X. Three Arihant-class SSBNs are currently under construction – one at Visakhapatnam and two in Vadodara, India.¹² Prime Minister Manmohan Singh launched the first nuclear powered boat of this class in July 2009 at Visakhapatnam with great fanfare, with talk of India joining the elite club of nations equipped with nuclear submarines.¹³ In tandem with these new offensive capabilities and delivery systems, India is also actively developing Ballistic Missile Defenses (BMD).

Pakistan's strategic forces comprise various types of short-range and medium-range ballistic and cruise missiles. These include the Hatf-1A, Hatf-II (Abdali), Hatf-III (Ghaznavi), Hatf-IV

(Shaheen-1, Shaheen-1A), Hatf-V (Ghauri), Hatf-VI (b-2), Hatf-VII (Babur), Hatf-VIII (Ra'ad), and Hatf-IX (Nasr).¹⁴ Not content with the suite of delivery options at its disposal, Pakistan is reportedly developing sea-based delivery systems, as indicated by the 2012 inauguration of the Naval Strategic Forces Command. The sea-based deterrent will most likely comprise Agosta-class submarines armed with nuclear-tipped cruise missiles.¹⁵

The rapid development and deployment of delivery systems is not likely to slow down in the near term. India's BMD gambit threatens the integrity of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent (at least in theory if not in practice), thus Pakistan is compelled to diversify its delivery methods and develop penetration aids. For this reason, the possibility of a Pakistani MIRV, though technically complex, cannot be ruled out.

Doctrines and command and control

After the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War in which India successfully dismembered Pakistan and paved the way for creation of Bangladesh, new factors began to shape the rivalry. The advent of Bangladesh, for example, simplified the strategic landscape for India and Pakistan. India no longer had a Pakistani flank on both sides, and Pakistan no longer had to defend two fronts from India. Following a peace accord in 1972, a period of relative stability prevailed between the two states, despite India's 1974 nuclear test which inspired Pakistan's tenacious pursuit to obtain a nuclear-weapon capability.

New Delhi's strategic thinking began to transform by the early 1980s, however, when the Indian military started to contemplate how to defeat Pakistan in a conventional war before its nuclear deterrent became operational. As a means to this end, India's army chief General K. Sundarji reorganized India's army formations into a force that could fight a swift battle to sever Pakistan in two and destroy the country's nascent nuclear capability. The Indian army conducted several exercises in the mid-1980s to perfect this concept, one of which resulted in a major military crisis in 1986–1987 (Exercise Brasstacks).¹⁶

The 1990s were another time of major strategic shifts. The Soviet war in Afghanistan had ended, insurgency in Kashmir ramped up, and in 1998, the historic Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests took place. Thus by the end of the decade, the spectrum of war in South Asia was no longer solely conventional, but also had a sub-conventional and nuclear element. The nuclear tests theoretically restored the strategic imbalance and called for strategic restraint measures, but despite some high-profile political initiatives such as the 1999 Lahore memorandum, India and Pakistan were unable to agree to a formalized arms control and restraint agreement. Instead, a "mini-war" in Kargil in 1999 scuttled the prospect of a structured peace. The atmosphere deteriorated further in the post 9/11 environment when alleged militants from Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed attacked the Indian parliament building in New Delhi, resulting in a ten-month military standoff that lasted from 2001 to 2002.¹⁷

With the overt nuclearization of the subcontinent, India's military concept of the 1980s was due for a revamp, but India's botched response to the 2001–2002 crisis provided the true catalyst for the change. Stunned by the audacity of the parliament attack, India's political masters ordered the army to mobilize and move to the international border, but the process was painfully slow. The strike corps took nearly three weeks to reach their assembly areas. During this period, Pakistan managed to reinforce the border, India's political decision-makers hesitated, and the international community intervened to ease the crisis. Simply put, the Sundarji doctrine proved ineffective and sluggish. As a result, Indian military planners began to rethink their approach toward fighting and winning a war against a nuclear-armed adversary.

India ultimately decided that the only way to fight and win a war against Pakistan without triggering Islamabad's nuclear redlines was to keep the operation limited. India's military goals and tactics were calibrated to avoid deep strikes but use shallow maneuvers and heavy air-land firepower to degrade the Pakistani military. Yet Indian military also needed to overcome its problems of slow mobilization time, political indecision, and diplomatic intervention by the international community. India ultimately decided upon the so-called "Cold Start" doctrine, wherein India would muster division-sized forces known as Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs), which could strike across the international border within 72–96 hours of a crisis and create an opening for follow-on forces to exploit and consolidate. The objective would be to make shallow ingress, inflict maximum destruction of Pakistani military strength, and withdraw – all without triggering Pakistan's nuclear redlines. Operations would cease before the international community could intervene. Naturally, India began to calibrate its military procurement and nuclear policies to support the Cold Start concept.

Pakistan adapted and refined its own military concepts in response to India's doctrinal evolution. It reinforced its passive defenses by constructing a series of obstacles and reduced mobilization times in an attempt to defensively beat India to the punch. As the Pakistan army's 2011 doctrine "Comprehensive Response" points out, "With the possibility of Pakistan being drawn into a war at very short notice, all formations organise their administrative and routine activities in a manner that effective combat potential can be generated within 24 to 48 hours from the corps to unit level and two to three days at the Army level."¹⁸ Decreased mobilization time also grants Pakistan the agility to mount a counteroffensive across the international border at the place of its choosing as a rejoinder to Indian attack.

Despite the changes to its conventional warfighting doctrine, Pakistan still faced inherent geographic handicaps in a conflict with India. Pakistan's main lines of communication are situated perilously close to the border and could be severed quickly by an Indian blitzkrieg. Furthermore, Pakistan's army is conducting counterinsurgency operations in the western tribal areas, drawing a large number of troops from the garrisons close to India's border, leaving the eastern flank somewhat exposed. Pakistani military planners sought a solution for these disadvantages.

In April 2011, Pakistan revealed the Hatf-IX, a 60km-range, road-mobile short-range ballistic missile (SRBM), otherwise known as Nasr. According to a press statement by Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations directorate, Nasr "carries nuclear warheads of appropriate yield with high accuracy, shoot and scoot attributes."¹⁹ This system, in other words, is a tactical nuclear weapon (TNW). The revelation that Pakistan has added TNWs to its arsenal was widely seen as a riposte to India's Cold Start doctrine – an attempt to lower the threshold of credible nuclear use and thereby deny India the space to prosecute a conventional war under the nuclear overhang.

The advent of TNWs in South Asia raised a number of complex questions. First, would deploying the system successfully deter the Indians or incentivize preemption? Second, how would command and control (C2) be articulated for TNW? Centralized C2 would make the deployed weapon safe from accidental use but ineffective and vulnerable in the heat of battle. Third was the question of field security for the weapons. If deployed, they will be located in the midst of conventional forces operating under an entirely different chain of command.

Despite these complexities, however, Pakistan continues to defend the Nasr and attributes its development to the growing technological and quantitative conventional force imbalance with India, as well as the threat posed by India's limited war doctrine. India's answer to Pakistan's 2011 Nasr test was a test of its own SRBM, Prahaar. India is ambiguous whether or not Prahaar carries nuclear warheads, but given its 50–150 km striking range and its possible

role as a replacement for aging Privthi missiles, a dual-use mission is probable – especially since India is believed to have tested compact warhead designs.²⁰

India and Pakistan also have a differing approach to nuclear doctrine. India has officially endorsed a doctrine of no first use (NFU), but reserves the right to retaliate massively if Indian forces are ever attacked with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons – regardless of whether the attack takes place on Indian soil or foreign territory. Islamabad’s nuclear doctrine, meanwhile, maintains the right of first use and dismisses India’s massive retaliation policy as not credible, knee-jerk, and disproportionate. Beyond that, Pakistan’s doctrine is shrouded in ambiguity, and the country’s exact redlines are undeclared. Pakistan believes an ambiguous nuclear doctrine and imprecise thresholds paralyze the Indians from embarking on a hostile course of action. In this formulation, deterrence stability rests on exploiting the adversary’s fear of the unknown. In 2002, however, Strategic Plans Division Director-General Khalid Kidwai listed four broad conditions that could elicit a Pakistani nuclear response. Kidwai remarked that Pakistan would use nuclear weapons if India conquers a large portion of territory, cripples the armed forces, strangles the economy, or threatens regime survival through domestic destabilization.²¹

The implications of the Indo-Pakistani nuclear doctrinal mismatch are potentially grave. Imagine a scenario in which India initiates Cold Start and sends its ICBMs across the international border into Pakistan. India believes that its massive retaliation policy will deter the Pakistanis from employing TNWs, but the Pakistanis doubt that massive retaliation is a credible response to a few low-yield tactical strikes – especially since Pakistan would be able to survive enough strategic nuclear assets to launch a retaliatory salvo of its own. To simplify, both India and Pakistan believe that their own second-strike capability deters the other side from using nuclear weapons, which in turn fosters a misplaced feeling of impunity and incentivizes brash behavior. And as the repertoire of Indian and Pakistani nuclear delivery capabilities expand, so does the mutual distrust between the two.

Regional politics

The nuclear and doctrinal competition between India and Pakistan is a symptom of their frayed bilateral relationship and mutual mistrust. Unfortunately, the diplomatic outlook in South Asia is not encouraging, as several factors have exacerbated Pakistan’s sense of international isolation and its strategic anxieties over India. Specific factors include international opprobrium over the A.Q. Khan network and increased US-India strategic cooperation (apparent from the nuclear deal and the Asia-Pacific rebalance). Making matters worse, there has been a distinct lack of progress in confidence-building and arms control on the subcontinent. India seems to have little incentive for dialogues on peace and security with Pakistan, citing lack of satisfactory progress in bringing justice against the perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. The end result is a regional strategic environment that is politically prone to crisis and perhaps conflict.

A.Q. Khan fallout

In January 2004, Pakistani nuclear scientist and head of the Pakistani centrifuge program Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan admitted to running a proliferation ring that came to be known as the infamous “A.Q. Khan network.” The illicit network spread nuclear technology not only to Pakistan but also to defiant regimes such as Iran, Libya, and North Korea. A decade later, Pakistan continues to suffer the consequences of the network’s unraveling.

A.Q. Khan is viewed as a national hero in Pakistan and is considered to be the “father” of the Pakistani bomb. Pakistanis believe he has been unfairly castigated for providing Pakistan with the ultimate deterrent. In contrast, the western narrative views A.Q. Khan as a villain who established a proliferation ring composed of greedy businessmen who made a fortune by peddling dual-use technology. This narrative holds that Pakistan’s enrichment capability is the product of stolen centrifuge designs.

Pakistan has steadfastly denied any official complicity in the proliferation network. As a gesture of good faith, Islamabad agreed to investigate A.Q. Khan and his accomplices in Pakistan and share information with the international community, but stopped short of permitting outside interrogation. In addition, Pakistan dismantled the network from its end and has subsequently taken major steps to improve and tighten its nuclear security and safety regime.²² Yet these actions have failed to erase the blemish on Pakistan’s reputation. Although a decade has passed since the A.Q. Khan network’s unraveling, Pakistan’s image remains tarnished, and allegations of state complicity continue.

US-India nuclear deal

While Pakistan has grappled with the aftermath of the A.Q. Khan fiasco, India has reaped the benefits of a nuclear deal with the United States, announced in 2005 and legislated in Washington in 2008 as the Hyde Act. The deal essentially granted India a waiver from the export controls of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), allowing the free importation of nuclear fuel and technology for civilian purposes. In return, India agreed to disaggregate its civilian and military nuclear installations and open the civilian sites to IAEA inspection and safeguards. The deal was controversial from the outset and once again made South Asia the center of the global nonproliferation debate.

Proponents of the nuclear deal argued that India was a responsible actor and the deal would yield substantial benefits. They hailed India’s relatively clean external proliferation record – contrasting with Pakistan, whose record was irrevocably sullied by the A.Q. Khan affair.²³ They also pointed out India’s status as an emerging power with democratic credentials. The benefits of the deal were primarily threefold for the United States. First, it would bolster the US relationship with India, a strategic partner and regional counterweight to China. Second, it made good economic sense, as it would provide the US nuclear industry with lucrative business deals, especially in the sale of power plants and other related services. Third, although the deal would not formally bring India into the NPT, New Delhi’s acceptance of IAEA safeguards for its civil nuclear sites seemed to be a step in the right direction.

Skeptics of the deal voiced serious concerns over its consequences. They argued that the deal violates the very fundamentals on which the NPT is based, both in letter and spirit. It stands prejudicial to Article 1 of NPT; dis-incentivizes Article 4 for those NPT member states who received legal promise of access to peaceful technology by foregoing nuclear weapon ambitions; and makes a mockery of Article 6. The deal confers *de facto* nuclear weapon status on India, which is not a party to the NPT and has no legal obligation toward the treaty. Meanwhile, the deal undermines the United States’ credibility to use the NPT as a legal basis for pressuring the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs. Skeptics of the deal also argued that US businesses might not profit as envisioned because cost overruns and liability insurance problems in the US nuclear and defense industry would make Russia and France more competitive for contracts. Significant for Pakistan’s strategic calculus, meanwhile, was that the deal explicitly exempted eight power reactors from IAEA safeguards and freed up India’s domestic uranium resources entirely for military purposes. Several American experts on South

Asia testifying on the congressional hearings over the Hyde Act warned that it could aggravate the nuclear arms race in South Asia.

Five years have passed since the Hyde Act was signed into law, and it seems that many of the warnings on the hill are coming to fruition. The deal changed Pakistan's calculations over India's fissile stocks, compelling Islamabad to step up production of both plutonium and HEU. Sino-Pakistani nuclear cooperation has increased. Pakistan continues to oppose the FMCT and maintains an unattainable hope for a US-Pakistan nuclear deal. No lucrative Indo-American business deal came to pass, but Russia, France, and Australia have benefited.

Moving forward, Indian membership in the NSG appears likely. The United States, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom have thrown their support behind India's bid, though China remains opposed and several other countries have expressed reservations. Indian membership would be ironic considering the fact that the NSG was established in reaction to India's 1974 nuclear test. There is not even talk of Pakistani membership, however. The A.Q. Khan affair has tainted Pakistan's record, though Pakistanis feel that the West is exploiting the scandal to unfairly deny them the privileges of membership. Pakistan's accusations of discrimination could be blunted, however, if membership in export control regimes was based on a dispassionate, criteria-based approach instead of politics and favoritism. A legalistic approach toward membership would also strengthen global nonproliferation norms. As long as Pakistan feels discriminated against and isolated, it will continue to seek nuclear weapons to guarantee its security and punch above its weight.

Strategic cascade of the US rebalance

The US rebalance to the Asia-Pacific has been criticized as an exercise in rhetoric as opposed to substance. This analysis may be premature as the rebalance has barely entered its third year, but regardless of whether Washington underwrites the policy with a credible show of military and diplomatic force, China and other regional powers in Asia are taking it seriously. China's reaction to the rebalance will cause a strategic ripple effect that reverberates throughout South Asia, indirectly aggravating the Indo-Pakistani arms race.

Beijing perceives the rebalance as an attempt at containment despite Washington's claims to the contrary. Fearing encirclement, China has augmented its military spending and will continue to improve its naval reach and missile forces, which naturally threatens China's regional rival, India. India has responded by raising a new mountain corps (17 corps) to be headquartered in Panagarh with divisions in Assam and Bihar, not far from the disputed territory of Arunachal Pradesh. In addition, India continues to invest considerable sums in its military hardware. India plans to acquire hundreds of new T-90S main battle tanks to replace its aging T-72s, and several air platforms are on order, including Apache attack helicopters and the new Dassault Rafale fighter. India meanwhile continues to fine-tune its Agni, BrahMos, and Sagarika series of missiles. All of these acquisitions would be employable against Pakistan.

Unable to match India's conventional largesse, Pakistan has doubled-down on its nuclear program, which has most recently developed TNWs and the 60 km-range *Nasr*. Sea-launched delivery systems are also in the pipeline. The strategic cascade does not end with Pakistan, however. Pakistani military advancements – and its close relations with Saudi Arabia – cause anxiety in Iran; Iranian advancements threaten Saudi Arabia and Israel; and so on. Security among rivals, after all, is a zero-sum game. As the US rebalance continues into this decade, the security competition will heat up in South Asia and perhaps beyond.

Negligible progress in CBMs and arms control

Confidence-building and arms control in South Asia exist in a state of limbo. The 2008 Mumbai attack poisoned the well for a diplomatic breakthrough, and relations remain tense today. Although there are a number of confidence-building measures (CBMs) on the books, such as crisis hotlines between the prime ministers and Directors-General of Military Operations, as well as mutual notification of ballistic missile flight tests, there is a distinct feeling that the low-hanging fruit has already been plucked and both sides lack the political will to engage in more substantive arrangements. Another pervasive belief is that CBMs are ineffectual for easing crisis and dissuading conflict. The Lahore Declaration of February 1999, for example, was a celebrated bilateral agreement in which India and Pakistan promised to resolve disputes peacefully in good faith, improve bilateral dialogue, and avoid nuclear provocation, but three months later, Pakistani soldiers snuck across the line of control in Kashmir and occupied abandoned Indian posts, sparking the Kargil War. Beyond CBMs, there is also a noticeable dearth of arms control agreements. There is no agreement to limit conventional force expansion, nor is there any limitation against delivery system development or fissile material production. Thus fissile stocks, nuclear arsenals, and delivery systems in South Asia continue to expand unabated.

Many opportunities for arms control exist if only the Indians and Pakistanis would come to the bargaining table. Pakistan and India both have aging, obsolete SRBMs (the Hatf-I and Privthi-I, respectively) that are ripe to be decommissioned and dismantled. If India and Pakistan could agree to dismantle these missiles jointly and transparently, it could inspire mutual confidence and serve as a foundation for future arms control efforts.²⁴ Such an agreement, however, requires political will. So long as New Delhi and Islamabad lack the political will to make a diplomatic overture and accept the political risk that comes with doing so, the outlook for substantive arms control and diplomatic rapprochement in South Asia will remain gloomy.

Conclusions

South Asia continues to fly in the face of the global nonproliferation regime. Strategic arsenals are expanding, doctrines and command and control are shifting, and Indo-Pakistani relations remain tense. The situation is unlikely to improve as the United States rebalances to the Asia-Pacific. China will continue to invest heavily in its military, adding sophisticated missile systems and naval platforms. India will react accordingly with military investments of its own, which will naturally threaten Pakistan. Lacking the resources to match India conventionally, Pakistan will continue to invest heavily in nuclear weapons to deter Indian aggression. This strategic cascade will continue to intensify the security dilemma on the subcontinent.

South Asia lacks an effective safety valve to ease Indo-Pakistani strategic anxieties. Although a number of CBMs are on the books, no viable bilateral initiatives for arms control or strategic restraint exist. South Asia will therefore continue to pose a major challenge to the nonproliferation regime – even more now than in the early period of the NPT (1970s), wherein both India and Pakistan directly interpreted the treaty as a challenge to their respective national security. The motivations underlying the Indian and Pakistani nuclear programs are fundamentally more intense than was the case in the earlier phases of their nuclear history, and the lack of diplomatic progress makes détente or rapprochement unlikely.

The outlook for stability in South Asia is bleak. Unless regional leaders emerge that see wisdom in restraint over competition, any future crisis in the region is likely to escalate rather than be resolved positively. The international community should encourage India and Pakistan to construct a strategic restraint arrangement. A peace and security architecture of this sort

would facilitate conflict resolution and help bring an end to the destabilizing security competition between these nuclear-armed rivals.

Notes

1. This chapter contains the author's personal views and does not represent US Department of Defense, the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) or the Pakistani government. The author is grateful to Ryan French – NPS research associate, MA Security Studies – for his research assistance.
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