

Introduction

When nations with deep grievances acquire nuclear weapons, tensions increase and their crises become more nerve wracking. It is therefore not surprising that India and Pakistan are traversing a very dangerous passage marked by periods of intense confrontation. Offsetting nuclear capabilities on the subcontinent have made crisis avoidance and conflict resolution more imperative, but also more difficult to achieve.

One reason why crises have become more prevalent under the nuclear shadow is that some in Pakistan have sought to use unconventional warfare, backed by nuclear weapons, to leverage a more favorable outcome of the Kashmir dispute. A second reason is that India's ill-advised policies have given ample opportunities for mischief making in Kashmir.

Decades of Pakistani diplomacy, two conventional wars, and unconventional means have failed to wrest territorial gains from New Delhi. Pakistan's failed Kashmir policies have instead worsened social, economic, and political conditions at home, while penalizing those living across the Kashmir divide. It has also pinned down and punished large numbers of Indian security forces. Perhaps India's grief is viewed as a sufficient reward by those in Pakistan who continue to support the "freedom struggle" in Kashmir. Continued support for militancy, however, means that a single catalytic event by *jihadis*, whether operating independently or under guidance, can spark the next severe crisis on the subcontinent.

The outcome of a nuclear-tinged crisis is rarely decisive, since all parties as well as outsiders will seek to prevent a crossing of the nuclear threshold. Indeterminate outcomes have not, however, prevented adversaries from declaring victory once the crisis has passed. These assertions are then belied by subsequent actions taken on the presumption that scores still need to be settled. When unsettled accounts produce yet another crisis, the outcome cannot be confidently predicted. While efforts will again be made to keep the crisis from reaching a boiling point, or to prevent unintended escalation, these plans might fail since the unexpected becomes commonplace during crises and military campaigns.

Despite – or perhaps because of – the inconclusive resolution of crises, some in Pakistan and India continue to believe that gains can be secured below the nuclear threshold. How might advantage be gained when the presence of nuclear weapons militates against decisive end games? Pakistan has answered this question by resorting to unconventional methods. If Indian press reports are to be believed, New Delhi is now contemplating the answer of limited war. Each

answer reinforces the other, and both lead to dead ends. If the means chosen to pursue advantage in the next Indo-Pakistan crisis show signs of success, they are likely to prompt escalation, and escalation might not be easily controlled. If the primary alternative to an ambiguous outcome in the next crisis is a loss of face or a loss of territory, the prospective loser will seek to change the outcome. In South Asia, misery loves company.

Another reason for the reoccurrence of crises on the subcontinent is that the contestants learn different lessons from close calls. Because unsatisfactory outcomes are not acknowledged and new ventures are not foreclosed, the next crisis waits in the wings. These circumstances leave much to chance. In New Delhi, the preferred way to break this dangerous cycle would be for Pakistan to place Kashmir on the back burner. This appears unlikely. Pakistani leaders declare that their preference is to resolve the Kashmir dispute – and the sooner the better. But it is hard to envision New Delhi taking Islamabad up on this offer, or enlisting the active involvement of the United States and other third parties to facilitate a settlement. Under these circumstances, a tenuous and crisis-prone *status quo* is likely to be maintained.

This *status quo* does not serve the interests of India, Pakistan or Kashmiris, but it might look better than some of the alternatives, such as a politically damaging Kashmir settlement or a new kind of crisis that spins out of hand, resulting in inadvertent escalation. National leaders can surely prevent the first unwanted outcome from occurring, but their ability to control the second is less certain than they publicly admit.

Nuclear risk-reduction and confidence-building measures – subjects of intense interest at the Stimson Center – are therefore necessary, but insufficient. These measures may not be relied upon during an intense crisis, and are likely to be shunted aside during conflict. Besides, Islamabad has held these measures hostage in the past to progress toward its preferred outcome on Kashmir, while New Delhi has sought to pursue these and other measures in lieu of progress on Kashmir, which it does not expect. As a consequence, dialogue between Pakistan and India on such measures has been episodic and disappointing. Small steps forward have been checkmated by bureaucratic resistance, domestic political sensitivities, and big explosions.

As this book goes to print, another effort at “composite” dialogue on Kashmir, nuclear issues, trade, and other important topics is underway between New Delhi and Islamabad. Perhaps this time, vested interests that are adept in slowing down, complicating, and torpedoing progress will be overridden by top-down political impulses to succeed. The Stimson Center and the authors of these essays certainly hope so.

Previous attempts on the subcontinent to set favorable conditions for tackling the larger issues in dispute by taking small steps have not succeeded. Small advances are certainly to be welcomed, but they are unlikely to gain traction without a strong and sustained political impulse to tackle bigger issues. Whether national leaders in India and Pakistan pursue this ambitious course or revert to the choreography of backsliding, violent acts can be expected, either to prevent significant progress from occurring or in response to stalemate. Violence can prompt the next crisis, and the next crisis could result in inadvertent escalation. The chances of preventing and containing the next crisis are enhanced if the purpose of violence is to block reconciliation rather than to punish backsliding.

This is the first book written on escalation control on the subcontinent. It draws from western deterrence theory, but the authors are all keenly aware of the need to differentiate Cold War experience from South Asian realities. Because the subject matter is new, we do not presume that our analysis is definitive. Indeed, the authors disagree on some points, and would place different degrees of emphasis on key factors. The Stimson Center hopes that this book will spark further analysis and more intense scrutiny by others on the topics we raise here.

The Stimson Center is grateful to the Nuclear Threat Initiative and the Carnegie Corporation of New York for providing grant support to ameliorate, stabilize, and reduce nuclear dangers on the subcontinent. The Center has sought to advance these goals through innovative “Track II” workshops with Indian and Pakistani participants. These workshops have broken new ground, as they have been designed around sensitive scenarios involving actions that could lead up to, and across, the nuclear threshold. Our quiet deliberations have served to clarify the need for specific nuclear risk-reduction and escalation control measures that are under active consideration in official channels.

Some of the essays that appear in this book originated as background papers for our workshops; others were written after, but informed by, our deliberations. The Stimson Center greatly appreciates the participation and input of the following Pakistani and Indian colleagues who helped to shape this work: Qazi Javed Ahmed, Shankar Bajpai, Zafar Cheema, Mahmud Durrani, Salman Haidar, Jehangir Karamat, Farrakh Khan, Feroz Hassan Khan, Shaharyar Khan, V.P. Malik, S.K. Mehra, K. Raja Menon, M.K. Narayanan, V.R. Raghavan, Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Najmuddin Shaikh, and Saeed Uz Zafar. The Center is also grateful for the guidance received by many American colleagues, including Michael Crutcher, Lisa Curtis, Craig Denny, Lewis Dunn, Robert Einhorn, Jack Gill, Rose Gottemoeller, William Hatchett, Peter Lavoy, Douglas Makeig, Polly Nayak, Michael Oppenheimer, George Perkovich, Joan Rohlfing, Caroline Russell, Scott Sagan, Teresita Schaffer, John Sigler, Scott Taylor, Michael Wasserman, and Richard Winslow. Any weaknesses of analysis or errors in the

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text that might remain are solely the responsibility of the authors.

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