

## Preface

It is with great pleasure that I present the latest publication of the Stimson Center's South Asia program, *Escalation Control and the Nuclear Option in South Asia*. We believe this book of essays by prominent American, Pakistani, and Indian authorities will advance our understanding of this poorly explored topic.

India and Pakistan have been beset by several serious crises since the advent of offsetting nuclear capabilities. To date both countries have sought to manage nuclear dangers primarily by unilateral means. Bilateral negotiations seeking cooperative approaches have so far produced disappointing results. The international community and policy makers around the globe also seek to ensure that India and Pakistan manage this potentially destructive capability responsibly, particularly since the two programs are not bound by international conventions or treaties.

The Stimson Center's Michael Krepon has been engaged in serious discourse with all concerned to illuminate the best paths to responsible stewardship, and this new volume represents the fruits of two years of programming to identify concepts and concrete ideas for escalation control on the subcontinent. This critical subject warrants far greater attention.

These essays refer to the literature of the Cold War period, but are mindful of the differences between the Cold War and South Asia cases. To this day, wise and learned people can disagree about whether deterrence was proven right, was dangerously close to failure, or was irrelevant to the outcome of the superpower competition. We are all grateful that our data set does not include the consequences of a nuclear exchange between the rival powers.

This volume represents the beginning of a new literature that pays homage when due to the intellectual legacy of the Cold War, but also recognizes the need for fresh thinking that is grounded in South Asian realities. We hope that this book will stimulate further thinking about escalation control, nuclear doctrine and policy, and conflict avoidance in South Asia. It ends with an essay by Michael Krepon that begins to identify a new theoretical construct that takes into account the particular dynamics of the region, including the possible sparks to conflict that could escalate, and the way the region's leaders think about limited war and its consequences.

I will welcome your reactions to this latest publication of our South Asia program, and hope you will find it a useful contribution to the shared goals of a peaceful and safe region.

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