

SOUTH ASIA'S EVOLVING STRATEGIC DOCTRINES

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Featuring:

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Sameer Lalwani:

So, thank you all for joining us here today. We, the Stimson Center, have been thinking a lot about evolving strategy doctrine and stability issues in Southern Asia. By that we mean not just India and Pakistan, but also the balance of India and China and China's role in South Asia as a whole.

I think we're seeing a lot of major developments taking place over the past... certainly in the last year even. You see a lot of discussions and actual progress in terms of military modernization, missile tests, they seem to be happening every few months. Certainly heightened discussion of doctrine and certainly these new patterns of alliances or alignments, that are either deepening or hardening in certain ways. Also, as we're seeing in an ongoing dispute right now the India and China, you're seeing more friction points, direct exchanges of fire at least on the India and Pakistani line of control or tensions over terrorism, or standoffs, as we're seeing today in India and China.

That's a very useful backdrop for this discussion, which prompted us to put this event together.

Today, it's quite fortuitous, that the *New York Times* has this column called the *Interpreter*, and in this newsletter they sent out today, they actually mentioned an article that's of great relevance to the discussion today. They reference an article that's published by two other MIT-trained scholars, Brendan Green and Austin Long, who've also written work for the Stimson Center. Basically, they're challenging the idea that either the US or Soviet Union actually accepted mutually assured destruction during the Cold War and that, in fact, what they were doing was perpetually trying to look for escalatory or counterforce strategies that allowed them to escape mutually assured destruction.

I think the sort of, not necessarily revisionist history, but this new approach to thinking about how, at least the two competitors and two rivals during the Cold War thought about this problem, might help us understand what's happening today in South Asia, where we're seeing states that might not be actually be comfortable with nuclear sufficiency, and actually are quite motivated to keep competing, even if they have a robust sort of second-strike capability.

To discuss some of these issues and discuss evolutions in strategic doctrines in South Asia, we have three great speakers who will be talking about some of the changes we're observing, some of the causes of this and potential implications for deterrence and stability in the region. We have Vipin Narang, who is an associate professor of political science at MIT and as of July 1st, is fully tenured at MIT. He's been a Stanton junior faculty fellow at Stanford University's CISAC, is the author of *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, which won the 2015 ISA International Security Studies Section Best Book Award. He's currently working on a second book tentatively titled *Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation*.

To my immediate right is Brig. Feroz Hassan Khan, who's a lecturer at the Naval Postgraduate School and a former brigadier in the Pakistan Army. He has served as a director of arms control and disarmament affairs in Pakistan's Strategic

Plans Division (SPD) and is the author of a well-known book, probably the authoritative book, on Pakistan's bomb, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb*.

And finally, to my far right, Michael Krepon, co-founded the Stimson Center in 1989, where we served as the Stimson's president and CEO until 2000. He was appointed the University of Virginia's diplomat scholar, where he taught from 2001-2010. He's the author of 20-something books and counting, including most recently, *The Lure and Pitfalls of MIRVs: From the First to the Second Nuclear Age*.

So, we have a star-studded panel. We're going to spend about maybe 10-15 minutes per speaker with some opening remarks and provocations, and from there we'll probably take it to, what I imagine, will be probably a lively question and answer session. So, with that, we'll start off with Vipin.

Vipin Narang:

Great. Thanks, Sameer. Thanks, Michael. It's a pleasure to be here at Stimson, which was very supportive early on in my career. What Sameer didn't mention is that I was lucky to be on his dissertation committee. So, Stimson is kind of part of the family in a lot of ways and it's a real pleasure to be back here.

I'm going to give the sequel today. I gave a short presentation on this topic at the Carnegie Nuclear Policy Conference in March. It kind of, literally, blew up and the take away from that talk was, "Oh, India has changed its nuclear doctrine. It no longer abides by no first use, " which was not actually the point of the talk and I never said that, but the Indian media decided to run with that and everything kind of ended up shifting into whether India had abandoned no first use.

Let me reiterate, India has not changed its doctrine. It almost certainly will not change its doctrine. India will continue, it is my bet, it will continue to have a declared no-first-use doctrine. But there are changes afoot.

The substantive point of my remarks at the Carnegie conference were that there was authoritative thinking by a former national security advisor, Shivshankar Menon, on consideration about India moving towards counterforce targeting.

It was long presumed that India had countervalue targeting strategy, credible minimum deterrence, large strategic weapons it would use in retaliation. But there were tantalizing hints in his Brookings 2016 book, called *Choices*, that were kind of consistent with some of the technological developments that we've been seeing that India might not be content with countervalue retaliation as its only targeting strategy. And It may think about shifting to, or including in its menu of options, counterforce targeting strategies.

So, what I'm going to do today is talk about the strategic logic for why India might be thinking about this. The evolution of the strategic dynamic between

India and Pakistan and why, when Menon was national security advisor, there may have been incentives to think about creating counterforce options to disarm Pakistan's strategic nuclear weapons force. Then I'll present the evidence with significant caveats that this is Menon's thinking. We can talk about whether it's persisted, whether we think it's persisted, what other indicators we have. The take-home point is that you can't ignore that a former national security advisor has written this. India does not talk about its nuclear doctrine very often. There's only one public nuclear doctrine from 2003, which is now almost 15 years old. When you see authoritative thinking and writing by a national security advisor, the point person in the Indian system managing nuclear strategy, it's important. So, we can't discount what he writes, or what he may suggest is a debate that was ongoing when at least he was national security advisor.

The important piece initially is the strategic logic for why India might be thinking about counterforce options. So, I'll start with some basic theory, the nuclear revolution.

The nuclear revolution is very simple in some ways, easily stated as mutually accepted nuclear vulnerability, at least to high levels of high levels of strategic stability. That's a very specific condition. You have to have secure second-strike forces. Both sides have to accept mutual vulnerability and at that point in a nuclear dyad in which mutually accepted nuclear vulnerability exists, nuclear use is suicidal. So, you get high levels of strategic stability.

All this means, according to the nuclear revolution, is that you will not have strategic nuclear exchange. The core assumptions of the nuclear revolution are two-fold.

The first is that mutual vulnerability is impossible to escape. Once you achieve this condition of secure second-strike forces, high levels of survivability, it is too costly to escape it. The *New York Times* article today and Long and Green's work suggests that there's this belief that it was just too costly to threaten the survivability of Soviet or American strategic nuclear forces, particularly once they went to sea, because the offensive advantage—decoys, chief survivability measures—are more cost effective than threatening survivability. So, threatening survivability is harder than ensuring survivability. That's the core assumption, one of the core assumptions of the nuclear revolution.

The second one, which is related, especially to South Asia now, is the so-called stability/instability paradox. The states are willing to trade high levels of stability for low levels of instability. So, it says, okay, "We're going to have high levels of strategic nuclear stability, but that frees us up again to have low-level conflict, full-scale war." Glen Snyder and his formulation of the stability/instability paradox talked about even tactical nuclear use. You could have tactical nuclear use and that would be a war-terminating event because strategic nuclear exchange was still suicidal under a condition of mutually assured destruction.

There are a couple of things, however, and Michael can talk about the Cold War dynamic and related to what Sameer was talking about with the US and Soviet, and both trying to escape this condition. This condition basically says you can only have countervalue targeting strategies, anything short of that is a waste of money. And why would you threaten this high-level stability?

Well, it turns out the US and Soviet Union were both kind of interested in escaping this condition so they could win a war, including a nuclear war. But now, increasingly, in the case of India, at least, is it possible to escape mutual vulnerability? Threatening survivability may not be so expensive. ISR is becoming cheaper. Pakistan has only tens of strategic nuclear forces, not tens of thousands. So, the problem is not as hard as the Soviet Union.

The bigger incentive I think for the Indian case is this question about how much instability are you willing to tolerate? The United States did not have to accept terrorism in its metropolises believed to be sponsored by the adversary. The low-level instability that the Cold War was concerned about was in Germany.

India is being attacked in its metropolises by terrorists it believes are being sponsored by, or funded by, and coming from Pakistan. At some point, that becomes untenable. How much revisionism are you willing to accept? How much instability are you willing to accept?

The second thing is the rise of the future. Again, something that the US really didn't have to concern itself with, although some Sovietologists did. Who's going to control the nuclear forces in Pakistan in the future? Right now, it's under army control, but in the future maybe there's domestic political instability and the future control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons is... may worry that it falls into extremist hands. You may have to have this arrow in your quiver to disarm the strategic nuclear weapons because of both of these conditions. You may not know who controls their weapons in the future and how much instability are you willing to accept before you start saying, "Enough is enough" and this umbrella under which India believes Pakistan is aggressing needs to be removed.

Long and Green talk about United States and Michael will probably talk about this more in the future. So, we always thought the US was just the outlier, and extended deterrence is a big piece of that. We can talk about that later. I'm going to present some of Menon's thinking about counterforce would suggest that well, why would India be concerned about this? Why would India be incentivized to do this?

The Indian belief over the past 20 years is that Pakistan uses nuclear weapons as a shield behind which to aggress. India has played around with different options. I'll walk through them, but, at some point, after suffering a Bombay 2008 and concerns about future control of nuclear weapons, you may have to remove the shield.

This incentive has been growing, I argue, over the last 20 years, to at least think about this as a potential option. I think that's kind of where we are, right so the mechanism is not the US case, which was extended deterrence driving counterforce or the American way of war in order to make extended deterrence credible, you might have to think about counterforce options. But the Indian case it's about revisionism from your adversary at very low, but provocative, levels in your homeland and the shadow of the future. Who might control the nuclear forces?

Everybody knows the basic strategic problem. India had conventional superiority, its mainstay conventional strategy was a strike corps concept. Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons basically neutralized the large strike-corps concept, 800,000 forces penetrating the plains and desert sectors of Pakistan. The first, after Kargil, the first major provocation was the 2001 parliament attack.

We forget how provocative that may have been to Delhi because, at the time, we had just suffered 9/11, we were gearing up for the war in Afghanistan, the United States was courting Pakistan again to prosecute that war. On December 13th, you had a group of militants believed to be from the Jaish-e-Mohammed sponsored and funneled from Pakistan, attacking parliament, which looks like a potential decapitation strike on the BJP. I mean this is a pretty provocative. Imagine if a similar tactic were perpetrated on Capitol Hill.

This led to Operation Parakram, those who follow South Asia will be familiar with the ten-month military mobilization. Michael Krepon and Polly Nayak have written, I think, the best brief on the Twin Peaks Crisis, which is available on the web. It goes through just how severe a crisis this was. The lesson for India, after mobilizing the three strike corps during Parakram was they didn't do it fast enough. The army took too long to mobilize and lost the window to retaliate conventionally against Pakistan. That's the lesson that the army drew and, in some ways, that's not really far off the mark because it took about a month for all three strike corps to deploy before the Indian Army was ready to prosecute its conventional option.

That led to this idea of Cold Start, which was debated in the think tanks. We can debate ad nauseam as to whether the Indian Army ever adopted more aggressive versions of Cold Start. The think-tank concept that took hold in the media and in Pakistani imagination was this idea of breaking up the corps into ten so-called IBGs, integrated battle groups, to conduct shallow penetrations across the border. It would be a shorter intense conflict, the idea for the Indians would be to grab some territories as a bargaining chip to dismantle terrorist organizations. Some bargaining-chip idea, and you would have to at some point attrite the Pakistan Army in order to achieve these objectives. This concept was never really adopted. India still has the strike-corps concept, even though it's reoriented its mobilization procedure, the holding corps have become pivot corps. We can talk about what configuration may or may not exist now.

The more extreme version of Cold Start that was propagated seems to not have been adopted by the Indians. This came on the heels of Parakram. So, around 2004 is when the myth of Cold Start is born. That gives genesis to Pakistan's tactical nuclear weapons development. So, the Nasr and other cruise missiles, which are shorter range. Cold Start gave grist to the mill here to develop these tactical nuclear weapons to defeat Cold Start. What's the Pakistani line? That Cold Start will end in hot war. This is repeated in ISPR releases all the time.

So, full-spectrum deterrence takes hold after the development of Cold Start. The idea is tactical nuclear weapons on Indian forces, as they cross into Pakistani territory. The Pakistan Army will stand and fight for a while, it may not be first resort, but it won't be last resort. Tactical nuclear weapons are used to defeat India's conventional attack. The strategic nuclear weapons, the long-range nuclear forces, are used to deter Indian nuclear retaliation.

India's doctrine is no first use and credible minimum deterrence, and that worked when Pakistan only had strategic nuclear forces. You could threaten massive retaliation when they had limited strategic nuclear forces. You could say any use of strategic nuclear weapons would result in massive strategic nuclear retaliation. The problem became with the development of tactical nuclear weapons was a threat of retaliating with seven strategic nuclear weapons against seven Pakistani cities—in the event where they used a single tactical nuclear weapon on Indian forces who were operating on Pakistani soil—was not credible. So, Pakistan develops this idea of full-spectrum deterrence. The idea is to use strategic nuclear forces to deter the Indian strategic nuclear retaliatory attack. That makes the use of tactical nuclear weapons a war-winning strategy.

So, we all knew the cycle, right? Terrorist attack, believed to be sponsored by Pakistan. India retaliates with some version of Cold Start. Pakistan uses tactical nuclear weapons on Indian forces on Pakistani soil. India does not have the justification for retaliating with strategic nuclear forces.

Then comes the Bombay attack in 2008. This really surfaced the dilemma. By 2008, India was supposed to have Cold Start intact. You were supposed to have a credible, conventional, retaliatory option. This was an outrage that was worse than the parliament attacks. 173 people killed, British citizens, American citizens, Israelis, Indians. So, the dilemma is how do you escape the paralysis induced by Pakistan's tactical nuclear weapons following a mass-casualty provocation?

After Bombay, it was clear that there was really no credible ground retaliatory option to strike back with. Toby Dalton and George Perkovich at Carnegie have written *Not War Not Peace*, a great book, which goes through why there are other options, but it takes inner service coordination to develop them. India's always focused on the ground options. The ground option, though, wasn't available.

If your solution to Pakistan's tactical nuclear weapons was trying to operate below the threshold, say okay we're going to develop a Cold Start-like strategy, so we don't cross Pakistan's nuclear threshold. After the Bombay attacks, you have this problem, how do you ensure that Indian forces stay below the threshold? How do you ensure that you know if Pakistan devolves tactical nuclear weapons in a crisis, that one brigadier or major general that has control of the system doesn't use it? How many thresholds do you have to calibrate against? How do you stop your forces from getting drunk on success if you get going?

This idea of Cold Start was frozen after the Bombay attacks and thereafter. The conventional option is still going to be worked on, I imagine. It also meant thinking about potential adjustments to nuclear strategy. So, I'll very quickly walk through the evidence that I presented earlier. We'll start with the holy doctrine.

The 2003 official release of the doctrine is only eight bullet points. A draft nuclear doctrine in 1999 is a long and meandering, and at times inconsistent, and was probably never intended to be released publicly. The only official release is the 2003 doctrine.

There are three core pillars of the official doctrine. Credible minimum deterrence, pillar number one. Pillar number two is no first use, although it is caveated already by bullet point six when India leaves open the possibility for retaliating with nuclear weapons against chemical or biological use. And then the third pillar is the idea of massive nuclear retaliation. So, this is the doctrine.

So, we don't have official any official updates to the doctrine since 2003. And there's very little writing by authoritative figures about the doctrine. You have some SFC commanders that write after they leave, like Admiral Vijay Shankar, General BS Nagal, but in the Indian system, the point person is the national security advisor. The coordinator for all nuclear strategy forces and posture is the national security advisor. Brajesh Mishra was very powerful, was responsible for the release of the doctrine itself, and the standing up the Strategic Force Command (SFC). Then you had several national security advisors along the way who manage the force and then enters Shivshankar Menon in the early 2010s.

Who says that massive retaliation has to be countervalue? The doctrine doesn't say that. In response to this dilemma about having limited conventional options, or unattractive conventional options, after a Pakistani terrorist attack, Menon writes, "If Pakistan were to use tactical nuclear weapons against India, even against Indian forces in Pakistan, it would effectively be opening the door to a massive Indian first strike, having crossed India's declared red lines. There would be little incentive once Pakistan had taken hostilities to the nuclear level, for India to limit its response, since that would only invite further escalation by Pakistan. India would partly risk giving Pakistan the chance to carry out a

massive nuclear strike after the Indian response to Pakistan using tactical nuclear weapons."

That sentence is really important. He lays out the logic for not allowing Pakistan to use its long-range strategic force if India were to retaliate with either proportional retaliation or strategic nuclear retaliation. "In other words, Pakistani tactical nuclear weapon use would effectively free India to undertake a comprehensive first strike against Pakistan."

Now nuclear jargon, for those of us who've been studying nuclear weapons for a long time, "comprehensive first strike" is an alarm bell. It has a very specific meaning. It means strategic nuclear counterforce. So, one of the criticisms I got after the Carnegie conference was, "Oh, Menon didn't know what 'comprehensive first strike' meant. But he's a pretty sophisticated national security advisor, he's a foreign ambassador to China, he's been studying this stuff for a long time. And even if you think that, the sentence before it is really important, because he's basically laying out the logic: we would not risk giving Pakistan the chance to carry out a massive nuclear strike after the Indian response to Pakistan using tactical nuclear weapons. He's talking about disarming the strategic nuclear force.

From the Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces 2017, we know that the responsiveness of the force has increased over the past several years. One interesting tidbit is the SFC controls all of India's nuclear warheads. Now this could be sloppy because the SFC itself may still be comprised of civilian agencies. It's unclear whether the joint doctrine here is saying something new or is kind of folding it in, but the bigger thing for me was this is the first official doctrine that I know of that dropped "credible minimum deterrence" and the joint doctrine itself refers to maintaining just a credible deterrence. This was a sloppy doctrine in a lot of ways. A lot of typos, even in the publicly released version. But given all the kerfuffle over all this, dropping one of the pillars of the official doctrine in another official release, instead of going from credible minimum deterrence to credible deterrence has some significance—if they meant it. But I'll leave that one aside.

The other piece of this—which is what I think a lot of the Indian media focused on—was, well, if you think about counterforce, you really have to think about preemption. You can't afford to go second with counterforce doctrines. You can't afford to have any of your forces attrited because you're accounting and how many forces you allocate to your adversary's forces are very precise. What Menon says about preemption is interesting. There's no need to have this language or paragraph in his book if there actually wasn't a gray area. He says, "There is potential gray area when India would use nuclear weapons first against another nuclear weapons state. Circumstances are conceivable in which India might find it useful to strike first, for instance, against a nuclear weapons state that had declared it would certainly use its weapons and if India were certain that adversary's launch was imminent. But India's present public nuclear doctrine is silent on this scenario."

There are two things I want to highlight here. First, this classic defensive preemption. If you think your adversary is going to go imminently, international law carves out exceptions for preemption, you could say this is defensive. The other interesting line is the last sentence. "But India's present public nuclear doctrine is silent on this scenario." Now, India has done some internal reviews. Does this suggest that the private or classified version of the doctrine says something about preemption? There's no reason to have this in there otherwise. Why even flag this, the phrase "present public nuclear doctrine," if there wasn't some debate or thinking about carving out an exception and making nuclear-weapons use preemptively against an imminent use consistent with no first use? This is basically the debate that China had about whether preemption would still be consistent with no first use.

We saw this thinking on preemption emerging for a while. Parrikar, the sitting defense minister at the time, brings it up. He talks about how no first use is not... you know, no book is going to constrain me when nation security is at stake, and I don't believe we should have no first use, but, no, doctrine hasn't changed. He was very clear to say that he personally didn't believe it. Well this is sitting defense minister. Without a clarification, all that is doing is injecting ambiguity into how flexible you think no first use is.

Whether you can make preemption consistent with no first use, which is what Nagal tried to do in one of his earlier writings. Why would you have to think about this, though, if countervalue targeting is your mainstay strategy? Because countervalue targeting doesn't require preemption. You can have a relaxed posture. The only reason to think about it is if you think about counterforce.

The way Menon pieces these writings together in a chapter, which is labeled "Why India Has a No-First-Use Doctrine." If you read the chapter, it becomes clear to me at least, my interpretation, feel free to disagree, it is not a fulsome defense of NFU as a sacrosanct policy. He says it needs to be reviewed. Is it in India's security interest? He goes through the history and says look we have it because we have it, but you know it's something that's not fixed in stone. It needs to be continuously revisited to see if it's in India's security interest. When he has the language about the gray area and then he talks about counterforce, the only condition under which you'd have to think about preemption, then this all starts adding up into thinking about flexibility of the doctrine.

The only public statement that Menon gave after what I call Counterforce Gate, is that India's doctrine has far greater flexibility than it gets credit for. He's not denying that he was talking about counterforce. The two pieces are, is preemption consistent with no first use, maybe. There are arguments that you can make that it's defensive and use against imminent use is retaliatory first use. Nothing in the doctrine says that targeting has massive retaliation has to be countervalue. This would be a massive use of nuclear weapons when you're talking about counterforce.

All of this suggests that, at least, he was thinking and wanted to put this in a published book. Why he wanted to do it, we can talk about later... I have a hypothesis. I don't think we have a definitive answer. It maybe that India didn't actually adopt this. It may be that it was wishful thinking. It may be that he was opposed to it and decided to float the trial balloon to have everybody come out against it. There are a lot of hypotheses and we can talk about what I think is most likely.

Can India do this? Well, there are a lot of pieces, and I've written about this before. It's working on ISR. BrahMos is one helluva counterforce weapon. You may not even have to put nuclear ordinance on it, but it is the supersonic and hypersonic versions in joint development with the Russians, are good for very precise counterforce. They're very accurate and they're very fast. And if you are investing this much in real time ISR, and highly accurate missiles, why do you need accuracy with countervalue targeting? Why are you working on MIRVs? Maybe MARVs, which heighten accuracy?

The criticism I got was that the Agni-5 is China specific. After the Hwasong-14 test, if anybody tells me that the Agni-5 can't be used against Pakistan, you have to give me a reason why. You can loft these trajectories, and the minimum ranges tend to be classified, but there's a rule of thumb. The horizontal distance of the Hwasong-14 test was 950 kilometers and it was... the full range was about 9,500 kilometers, so 10 percent. So, the minimum ranges, you know, go accordingly. So, the Agni-5, let's call it 5,000 kilometers, your minimum range, if you loft it, is, you know, 500 kilometers. All of these missiles, there's no specificity. You can't use short-range systems against long-range targets, but you can use long-range missiles against short-range targets and it actually makes defeating BMDs easier because the trajectories make it very easy for the RVs to defeat missile defenses.

India is investing in missile defenses. The idea with missile defenses is if I can attrite 40 or 50 long-range Pakistani strategic nuclear systems. If I have missile defenses that can pick up a couple, I don't need to get them all. I just need to shrink the strategic nuclear force by 90 percent maybe. I'm not saying it's a great idea. I'm just saying that the logic would be, if I can, you know, get 50 down to five, my missile defenses can pick up five, at least I have a massive damage-limitation effort. That would be at least the proponents of shifting the counterforce would make this harder.

It's still a very hard problem. This is just a rough estimate. This is where Pakistan's air bases, missile garrisons, nuclear-related production facilities are. This is basically your minimum counterforce target set. And Chris Clary and I are working on a longer paper on this doing the force exchange analysis. They're not going to be sitting idle in a crisis. These things are going to be flushed out, this is a lot of targets to hit, and you have to do it in real time.

The reason you have to use nuclear weapons for counterforce is, your blast radius has to be bigger than your ISR uncertainty. This may be hardened.

Conventional counterforce is something the US can think about. It may not be something you ever think about counterforcing, the Indians may have to after a while a nuclear counterforce. But this is a hard problem set. Right? So, the skeptic says look you're talking about irradiating the state of Pakistan if you're talking about counterforce. It's a massive nuclear strike to disarm even their strategic... Even if you say I don't care about the tactical nuclear systems, because they can't range my cities, as a civilian national security manager, the Nasr system isn't what you're concerned about. You're concerned about the Shaheens. You just need to get to the Shaheens because those are the ones that can hit your population centers. Even if you say okay that's ... and prioritize those and that's a more manageable set, you still have a lot of systems to deal with.

The challenge is that Pakistan is not going to sit idly by. This is an incentive for Pakistan to build up, build out, and move things around. In some ways, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. It becomes a garrison state as it has to invest so much in long-range strategic nuclear forces and move them around to ensure survivability. Really risky deployment procedures. You get into first-strike stability issues. Both sides have "use them or lose them" pressures, so, as soon as you get a crisis, it's a race to the exits. Who uses them first? So, whatever relaxation you had because India had a relaxed, assured retaliation, countervalue targeting strategy goes out the window.

How do you reassure China? If China thinks you're coming after their strategic nuclear forces, decoupling these strategies is what this would require, can you do that? That's a tough problem. Finally, is it just India? I think no. So far, the Israeli strategy has been to hit every reactor in the region that it sees and stop other states from getting nuclear weapons, if they can. But if a day comes where a state in the region acquires nuclear weapons and uses them as a shield behind which to aggress against Israel, then do you think for a second Israel won't be tempted by counterforce? Eliminate the shield? It's the easiest way to deal with the strategic problem because it opens up your conventional superiority again. This is the Indian aim with thinking about adding this option to the menu, which is all I'm claiming this is.

I'll stop there. I look forward to questions and discussions. I want to reiterate that this isn't about changing Indian doctrine. Nothing in the declared nuclear doctrine needs to change for India to think about nuclear counterforce or think about adding that as one of the target sets to its nuclear strategy. No first use is not going anywhere. There may be an effort to make preemption, in this very limited scenario, consistent with no first use. But this about adding a targeting option to deal with a very real strategic problem that India's had and it's important to read Menon because he was a former national security advisor and managed the program for five or six years, but he's only one voice. So, the caveat is, has this persisted since he left office? We don't know. We have to do more legwork and the Indians have to come out and either rebut this or confirm it. This is one person's view, but we can't ignore it. And with that I'll turn it over

to Feroz Khan for comments and discussion and I look forward to your questions.

Sameer Lalwani: All right, for those of you who were wondering why I wasn't enforcing time there, let me just assure you that the credibility of the deterrent I wield is quite minimal. Feroz, please.

Feroz Khan: Thank you, thank you, Vipin. Thank you, Stimson Center, for inviting me. You know, Vipin's presentation has provoked me to respond point by point, but that's going to take several hours if I do that. I will not do that.

But I think it's important that at least two points that he brought out in the beginning, reflecting what India's thinking is behind, if at all, India's posture or thinking is changing. I would like to bring that on the record. The view in Delhi is that there will be, somehow, a radical Islamic takeover in Pakistan, including in the military. The historical record does not suggest that, or any poll that you take in Pakistan, does not suggest that this has ever happened or likely to happen in any shape and form. That is a myth that has grown in Delhi's thinking about Islamic takeover that will affect command and control.

And the other thing is the claim that asymmetric warfare is waged under the shadow of nuclear deterrence. I think that's a second myth. Asymmetric warfare in South Asia has existed from the very day India was partitioned into India and Pakistan. The very fact that Kashmir is divided today was a result of not regular forces, but irregular forces. Both India and Pakistan have used a strategy of softening up the other by using asymmetric forces, self-commissioned forces. One has failed to succeed. Oh, by the way they use soften-up and then they seal with conventional force. That was exactly the strategy that Pakistanis thought that they were going to be clever to do so in the 1965 war. This is the same strategy that India used in Bangladesh. Soften up for nine months and then they seal. India succeeded in that. It's important to remember that this history is archived in the memory of the Pakistan security managers as they went towards the nuclear capability. *Eating Grass*, my book, talks a lot about that.

But one thing that existed throughout, for the last 40 years and in particularly 20 years of having demonstrated, that India and Pakistani did not believe that there will be a sudden bolt-out-of-the-blue strike, what has just been described, you just heard. They always believed that that's unlikely to happen, but there is always a pathway. The pathway was just described by Vipin, and I'll not contest the pathway, where terrorist incident will result in conventional war. But I was part of the system when all these doctrinal things were evolving, so I will focus on that in a while. Rather than just responding to Vipin.

I just want to say something, from the very beginning, I'm going almost 40, 50 years back. The original thinking on Pakistan as to why would they go nuclear was essentially to offset India's conventional superiority and that study was pretty much mimicking from what the first draft said or the Cold War in Europe strategy of ours.

Every study in Pakistan was derived from that. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the father of the Pakistan political bomb and had that idea in mind. Ironically, it was the Pakistan military at the time that was saying they needed conventional weapons to fight, not nuclear weapons. So, the Pakistani dilemma from the very beginning was how do you replace conventional defense weakness with nuclear weapons? That is very easy, but practically that's a very big challenge. The new jargon is one of the studies even before India and Pakistan conducted the test concluded that nuclear weapons do not replace conventional defense weakness. So, that is where the Pakistani dilemma begins when they demonstrated deterrence, not as he said to deter India's nuclear attack only, but also how to... that's the main challenge of Pakistan. And as India's doctrine evolved as explained by Vipin, Pakistan's challenge continues to compound.

It will be really easy for me to say about the Pakistani doctrine that nothing has changed about Pakistani doctrine and when I was preparing some of the notes, I came across one of very important essay written by a colleague, Sadia Tasleem in a recent Carnegie publication by Ashley Tellis. In fact, she captures a lot of Pakistan's current thinking with the spectrum of interviews that she did... captures what is changing in Pakistan. There are some constants in Pakistan that are unlikely to change, and I'd like to just comment on that and why that is the case.

The first constant is that Pakistan will never declare that it's going to use nuclear weapons. Which means that they will never have an officially declared doctrine. It's almost like a dogma for them, not to declare that. For that reason alone, the analysis that supported Vipin's argument is seldom in Pakistan, because these things do not come out of Pakistan. Neither in official non-nuclear posture review of that kind comes out, nor the analysis comes out from the think tanks from Islamabad the way you describe it. They don't write that way. If at all, they justify why they are doing something rather than analyzing deeply about stability and challenges to the command system.

I will try to unfold more challenges that the Pakistanis are facing. So, I was mentioning before about Sadia. Sadia mentioned that this was one constant. But then there are certain other changing things that are happening. The trends that she mentioned I am also observing separately from other sources and other research that we do at the Naval Postgraduate School. So, those trend lines are that—and I'm using Sadia's words— that the Pakistanis are moving from a simple existential deterrence model to a more complex deterrence model. The complex deterrence model that she describes, doesn't describe much in detail except to say that the suite of delivery beings and the diversity of systems that has been. Vipin did not mention Pakistani cruise missiles. That is part of the Pakistani arsenal and is a very important component of defeating a large number of things that India is doing.

This year, Pakistan introduced two more elements into its arsenal. One was a MIRV test and the other was sea-based strategic deterrence, and that's a new dimension that is added to the Pakistani thinking. Not just tactical nuclear

weapons, and each one of them have implications on their thinking. You can pick up trends as to the practice rather than, you know, any declarative position that would come out.

So, the number one trend is that the Pakistanis are maybe thinking in terms of everything that you heard from Vipin. By the way, when Vipin made the statement at the Carnegie conference, the reaction in Islamabad was there's nothing new that Vipin has said that we didn't know earlier, which is an indication that the Pakistanis were always dismissive of the credibility of Indian doctrine in the first place. There are changes on counterforce targeting that is what is the premise, which they will not say openly, but that's the premise on which they will work on.

So, that trend would mean that sooner or later, there are voices in Islamabad and among other think tanks and retired bureaucrats in Islamabad talking about that it's about time that this recessed mode in Pakistan is no longer going to work. It's getting too dangerous as technological maturations, space-based assets that Vipin described... that we were too vulnerable, therefore the state of readiness from unmated to mated and maybe even high alert or hair-trigger environment could well be in the interest of Pakistan to deter any adventures from India.

We talked about the Pakistani prospects of radical takeover, but, if you talk to every person in Islamabad, they believe that a radical takeover in India has already taken place. It is not the nature of sophisticated diplomats talking, like Shivshankar Menon and others, but it is the nature of regime in Delhi, which is a fusion of strange ideology and very aggressive nationalism.

Therefore, that might be with Pakistan thinking differently about the posture in peacetime. That is the one major trend that I believe is changing. The other trend was to target everything that is within their range. The longest they have demonstrated so far is Shaheen-3, which is 2,750 kilometers. The explanation given here in Washington was that this is to target the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the justification was that we would deny India a second-strike option. That's how it was described here. The other thing is the short range to introduce *Nasr*. But the introduction of sea-based deterrence and the *Nasr* implies that Pakistani centralized control will have to change at some point or the other. And what are the implications of this command-and-control dynamic?

Let me say a few more things about what is changing. In my view, the character of warfare has changed in the region. There's a lot of debate that goes on in Washington about the 1st offset, the 2nd offset, and the 3rd offset. When you apply this debate to the region of South Asia, you come out with some very, very difficult, scary scenarios. So, let me say that what are the four major changes that are affecting thinking in the region.

First change is in the actors. I think Vipin has described how non-state actors are operating in the region that can bring two nuclear-armed powers to war. That is

the most dangerous pathway. Especially if the belief in New Delhi is that any incident that happened is essentially sponsored by the nuclear-armed neighbor and they believe that is the case. That is the first change that is going to change.

Second is the methodology change, which undercuts classic deterrence as we have learned in the 20th century. I think there are other studies that talk about the second nuclear age. Today we are living in the age of hybridity. It's often called fourth-generation warfare. The thinking inside the Pakistani security establishment and other think tanks that I interact with is that India has already waged hybrid warfare on Pakistan. In fact, both countries are engaged in that kind of hybrid warfare. And if you really go down deep history, they probably been doing to each other throughout their history anyway. That is the second change where the classic deterrence may not work.

The third change is the environment. These security things are no longer going to be in border areas, as Vipin has described. I think that with all the things that are happening, the classic border war of the land may well be stabilized. In fact, the border is going into peripheral spaces. That peripheral space includes the maritime space. Our study at the NPS indicates a crisis will start on land, but it might move to sea. This is going to have a very different implication for first and second strike.

And finally, the most important changes are the technological and information age maturation that are happening. India and Pakistani are living in the era of the 3rd offset. But the strategy and their mindset is still in the 1st offset. They are now acquiring those technologies that were acquired in the West in the 1970s. They are reaching that area now. Whereas, the information age has advanced so much. This is the dichotomy in which they live.

Michael Krepon:

Vipin and Feroz are part of the Stimson family. We are grateful for that. We have benefited from their thinking. We have benefited from their published works. They are front and center in this important evolutionary practice of deterrence. I will say straight out for the first time in a public audience, that I am not a creationist. But evolution isn't always a good thing. Evolution on nuclear issues is usually a bad thing. Capabilities grow, stockpiles grow, targeting lists grow, this is the natural order of things in this business. Countervalue targeting evolves into counterforce targeting. The hidden assumptions behind counterforce targeting are crucial, and they do need to be aired out. These two hidden assumptions are escalation dominance and escalation control. You really can't do counterforce targeting with any rationale unless you believe that you can enforce escalation dominance and escalation control.

If these are not fantasies enough, if you want to go the whole nine yards, there is the fantasy of escaping from deterrence in its entirety. You would think that as nuclear capabilities grow, as stockpile size grows, as targeting lists grow, that one would embrace or at least accept the notion of vulnerability that lies at the heart of mutual vulnerability, that, as Vipin said, lies at the heart of deterrence

stability or strategic stability. I think there's a lot to the writing of Brendan Green and Austin Long, and I urge you to look up that writing.

Vipin Narang:

We call them the Counterforce Cowboys.

Michael Krepon:

The Counterforce Cowboys. I think they're right that the United States, the Soviet Union back in the day, the United States the Russian federation today, didn't reach these logical conclusions of accepting mutual vulnerability. Instead, it is the nature of the addiction to nuclear weapons to seek advantage and to continue to pursue the dream, the fantasy, of damage limitation, the fantasy of escape. If you're going to go down the rabbit hole of seeking escape from deterrence, then you can only go to preemption, in a big way.

Austin and Brendan are right that these theoretical constructs of deterrence stability, strategic stability, crisis stability, arms-race stability—the liturgy that we learn when we were studying arms control back in the day—that these abstract concepts were defeated by the pursuit of advantage, and by seeking to avoid disadvantage. And so, as every additional warhead came online, as every additional tiny improvement in accuracy and ISR, when all of this happened, evolved, improved, Washington and Moscow just kept going. It took two presidents who were not enthralled to the political and military utility of nuclear weapons to pull the plug on these dynamics.

But we're back now. These instincts are so inculcated. The eggheads, the wiz-kids, the IR theorists, the arms controllers who devised these useful concepts of deterrence stability, strategic stability, arms-race stability, etc., they didn't make the decisions when it came to strategic modernization programs. They didn't make decisions with respect to warhead accuracies and numbers. And they sure as hell didn't get in the room when the psyop was pulled together. They never did. So, let's not blame the arms controllers for the failure of constructs they didn't have a chance to implement. I take issue with Brendan and Austin on that because that's my inference from their writing.

Can we escape the same dynamic on a smaller scale in Southern Asia? Or will China, India, and Pakistan follow the same sad and senseless progression of a nuclear competition, as did we and Moscow? Make no mistake, we are here talking about this at the right time. Because China and India and Pakistan are on the cusp of their own counterforce compulsion. It's happening now. And the counterforce compulsion can lead to the damage-limitation compulsion. If China and India head down this rabbit hole, they will have learned nothing from Washington and Moscow, or they will have learned the wrong things from Washington and Moscow.

I am still counting on New Delhi and Beijing being smarter than that, smarter than we were, smarter than Moscow is. If I'm wrong, then one key factor of restraint in the second nuclear age will go by the boards.

We have not recognized how fortunate we have been, so far, that Beijing and New Delhi think, or have thought, that this whole nuclear competition business of the first nuclear age was crazy, wasteful, and stupid. That's where they've been. I'm counting on the continuation of cautious civilian leadership in Beijing and New Delhi. A civilian leadership that has, heretofore, not been enthralled to nuclear weapons.

I'm still counting on the inertia of India in this respect. I will grant you that Pakistan is more susceptible to the counterforce compulsion than either India or China. Rawalpindi has already defined, as has been said, requirements for full-spectrum deterrence to include counterforce targeting, at both the low end of the range scale and the high end of the range scale. Rawalpindi borrows heavily, too heavily, on US nuclear warfighting concepts.

If it draws from old US Army field manuals on tactical nuclear weapons, will it also draw on US plans for targeting longer-range missiles? And we know, in Pakistan, Rawalpindi decides. The civilians salute. Totally different than Beijing and China. Still, Pakistan faces, and Feroz, correct me if I'm wrong, I believe Pakistan faces significant constraints on how far it will go down this rabbit hole. No ISR to speak of, a lagging space program. It will need lots of help from Beijing if it goes down this rabbit hole. If China supports Pakistan's need for real-time targeting, that's a whole new ballgame. It's possible. There fissile material and financial constraints to the Pakistani nuclear program, as robust as it is. Counterforce targeting, successful counterforce targeting depends on India, India's leaders being totally asleep at the switch.

We can't discount that. But still, you got to believe that New Delhi, while being slow off the mark, will take steps to foil preemption. So, for all these reasons, I still maintain there are reasons for cautious optimism. I know there are signals to which Vipin is very right to call our attention. But I maintain there are reasons for cautious optimism. Although, I will grant that optimistic appraisals of nuclear restraint in 1998 didn't turn out so well and they may not turn out so well now.

Lastly, I will also grant that Menon's book stokes these fires. You have to believe that Rawalpindi has memorized the passages that Vipin has put on the screen. So, we're really at an important point here.

Sameer Lalwani: Okay. We've got a lot of provocations on the table. We have about 20 minutes for questions and answers. So, let's keep this disciplined. Please wait for the mic. And then introduce yourself and then pose your question in the form of a question and keep it succinct. Depending on how much enthusiasm is here, we'll try to maybe bundle some questions together to get a chance for all the speakers to respond. So, with that, have at it.

Atif Khan: Thank you all for being here. Atif Khan from Duke University. My question is about compellence. I mean, forgive me, but I think we've spent a lot of time today discussing the size of the powder keg, and the worries of what will happen when the powder keg explodes. My question, I guess, is about the

relationship between the powder keg and the spark, in the sense that Dr. Narang outlined how the change in nuclear doctrine may be in response or maybe in response to security threats for India. My question then is, how does the change in doctrine impact internal Pakistani policy? Then I guess the question for you, General, is how does the change in the doctrine require Pakistan to change its internal calculus when it comes to internal terror threats? Thank you.

Sameer Lalwani: Gentleman in the back there.

Guy Thomas: Guy Thomas. I've been involved in ISR since 1968. I was a space specialist in the navy and, before that, a command reconnaissance person. Started in the space business in the mid-80s. I was one of the people who wrote what our vulnerabilities were to maritime terrorism at the direction of the president, and what we could do about it. That led me to commercial space and what's happened there. You gentleman have just referred to the ISR problem as being crucial and you, sir, said that China was going to have to help India.

There are something like 300 satellites today, with earth observations capabilities in orbit today. Within the next five years, there's going to be a thousand that all you have to do is write a check for. They're going to be able to take a picture and get it to you, you write the check, that's all you got to do, within an hour, at less than a meter resolution. That's going to be a major change in this situation here, folks, in the counterforce problem. It's also going to be a change on the maritime world. Counterforce is going to be a viable thing from commercial space in all of our lifetimes.

Vipin Narang: Can we do two a time?

Sameer Lalwani: Yeah, let's do two. Michael, do you want to start it?

Michael Krepon: Depends on shutter control, and to be determined. So, if there's no shutter control, do you know what I mean by shutter control?

Sameer Lalwani: Why don't you explain it?

Michael Krepon: So, if there's a big crisis somewhere in the world, the United States, up till now, has been able to override checkbooks. We have relationships with the companies and we can say, "No pictures to anybody except us." I'm simplifying, but a lot depends on shutter control. As more companies come online, if there is shutter control, the work around for Pakistan is China.

Sameer Lalwani: Feroz, how might doctrine affect Pakistan's policy on the ISR?

Feroz Khan: Michael, you were right pointing out that one of the weakness of Pakistanis would be the ISR, the space-based assets. One thing, Vipin correct me on another aspect, the other authors in India have written that India's changing

doctrine may have a different doctrine than China and a different one for Pakistan.

Vipin Narang: That was my inference. If you're shifting to, I mean the doctrine is uniform right, the issue is, as Menon stated, the doctrine is more flexible than it gets credit for. So, you can have a different strategy towards China than you have towards Pakistan under the umbrella of the same doctrine. My point was about nuclear strategy being decoupled or de-linked from the two.

Feroz Khan: Yeah, so in Islamabad, you are looking at this decoupling of the strategy and you're seeing your own weaknesses there. I don't see that happening now, but many authors in Pakistan are saying that they may change from this laid-back posture towards more hair trigger. In the absence of ISR, this is going to be very problematic thing because if you're changing the peacetime posture into a crisis mode—and as Vipin said, this would mean dispersal—this would mean getting into a more ready-to-go state. That means that the safety coefficient will have to be reduced in favor of battle effectiveness. That transition from peacetime safety to battle effectiveness, that transition will depend on technological assistance. I have no knowledge about what's the nature of China-Pakistan cooperation but I would assume that if China and Pakistan both believe that India is raising a threat to them, it incentivizes China to help Pakistan in that posture, letting India have to deal with Pakistan first.

Vipin Narang: Sir, thank you for your point. I think it's absolutely right, and it gets to the fundamental shift that is happening. So, you have all these commercial satellite companies like Planet Labs, but this is not beyond the means of a country like India to have persistent surveillance over Pakistan. It's a small territory, especially the land-based systems, and a limited number of sites, and they've been watching them for 15 years. The other half of the Counterforce Cowboys are Daryl Press and Keir Lieber, you know all big part of the MIT family. Their focus is on the accuracy revolution and they've correctly pointed that out. They've also talked about the ISR revolution and I think that's understated. I think the ISR revolution is real and that is the fundamental bottleneck when you think about counterforce strategies, right, because if you can't find them in real-time in a crisis, then game over. Then you're just talking about putting so many taps on everything to try and hit the strategic nuclear forces that it becomes kind of prohibitive. But if you have good ISR and if a commercial satellite company can do it, certainly a country like India can do it. It's just getting cheaper.

The incentive for India has risen. Feroz made the point that asymmetric warfare has been part of South Asia for a long time. True, but the nature of asymmetric warfare as far as India is concerned has amplified to an intensity level that for domestic political reasons... no nation state can tolerate how many Bombays in a decade, right? My line is always if the United States had suffered Bombay, we would have ended a state.

India took it and behaved in a restrained manner. I think that gave rise to this thinking about the conventional option being riddled with a lot of strategic problems, organizational problems. You just don't know where it's going to end up. The *Indian Express* article a couple years after the Bombay attack recounted some of the CCS meeting minutes. The point was Prime Minister Singh said, "Well, if I start this thing, where does it end?" And that's a question no one can answer and no civilian wants to really think about. So, the idea that India might be pushed into thinking about adding this strategic option to its nuclear strategy isn't that insane. I mean, what else are you going to do as a nation state? Your conventional military option has all these problems. Your traditional countervalue strategic targeting doesn't deter Pakistan from doing this. This might if you think you can shake Pakistan out of complacency and they worry about losing the shield under which their aggressing. I do think that that security pressure combined with the domestic political compulsions in India gave rise to this thinking about, "Well, what else can we do?"

You know, as Michael said, there are models out there. The US never walked away from counterforce. There's a myth that we walked away from it, maybe for a brief period, but we've always thought about counterforce. When the costs are falling to the point where you can think about it—and, like I said, Pakistan has tens of strategic weapons and not tens of thousands—this is where small numbers work in a counterforce's favor. It's not a prohibitive problem at the moment, especially for the land-based systems.

We didn't talk about the sea-based systems. So, one of the counterargument is well if Pakistan goes to sea, there's a survival second-strike capability. I'm not so sure that's true. I mean, we got pretty good at hunting Soviet boomers as Brendan and Austin have pointed out, and India's ASW is pretty good. There are a limited number of ports and they don't have the seaboard that the Soviet Union did. Chris Clary and Ankit Panda have a piece coming out in the *Washington Quarterly* on this, on the move to sea and how survivable all these systems are going to be. I don't think we should take it for granted that sea-based systems guarantee survivability

Sameer Lalwani: That's actually at Stimson event we had, maybe two months ago, there's a transcript of Chris's discussion of some of the risks of Pakistan going to sea with nuclear weapons.

Lydia Walker: Thank you so much. Lydia Walker, a graduate student in the Harvard History Department. My question is for Vipin. If you would speculate a bit about what you think Shivshankar Menon is doing right now with this kind of strategic ambiguity? What do you think he might be signaling and to which audience, and why now and why not in the last two years? And why... is this about today and last year? Or is this about more his time as national security advisor

Sameer Lalwani: We're running out of time, so this gentleman here.

Steve Winters: Steve Winters, independent consultant. Could you comment on how what your assessment is of the chance of a total accident or misreading of intelligence and so forth would lead to a nuclear exchange in proportion to the chances it was an adventurous act by one party or another? You would probably agree, at least, that with the move toward counterforce, the possibility of misinterpreting something and an accidental exchange is exponentially increasing.

Sameer Lalwani: And then, this woman here.

Rani Mullen: Hi, Rani Mullen, William and Mary. I was wondering if both you, Vipin and General Khan, could comment on the issue on the impact of government or indeed regime stability/instability on the evolution of this doctrine. I will grant you there's a more radical regime, if you want to call it that, in power in New Delhi, but surely it's much more stable than what's happening in Pakistan these days. I think going forward, what does the sort of domestic majority of the BJP government under Modi and the wins they've had in local elections mean going forward in terms of being able to plan a strategy?

Sameer Lalwani: How about we start with Feroz first, then I'll go to Vipin.

Feroz Khan: Okay, let me answer your question. I think you have a point here. India has a consistent democracy. The system is not going to derail. This is new in Pakistan, this democracy evolving now in Pakistan for the last decade or so. But I can say now on the record that the likelihood of a military takeover in Pakistan is very remote given the changes that are happening in Pakistan. It'll be a very huge surprise to everybody if that happens. So, this messy political instability in Pakistan, in my view, may be temporarily sorrowfully upsetting but as president Obama says, "Democracy is messy." They have to go through this messy process in order to become better and, even if there is a political change in Pakistan, I think the military is not intervening at all in that system. The system in Pakistan, what Vipin alluded to was that it is military controlled. Michael also said that. I'll concede that there is consensus within Pakistan that this is a good system at the moment. This is best for the country that it remains the way the system is functioning. It's a very functioning system and that should not be tampered with because of the political instability.

Sameer Lalwani: There was a question on misreading the intelligence...

Feroz Khan: Yes, I think you are right. I am very confident that the Indian or the Pakistani leadership will not engage in a deliberate nuclear war. They will most likely blunder into a nuclear war for the reasons that you mentioned. That will answer the question of ISR. Maybe the lack of ISR is a blessing in disguise because the other party doesn't know much what's going on. But at the same time the absence of real-time intelligence, you could over-read and do something more. My concern is because I mentioned that if the weapons are out from peacetime storage and flushed out.

Michael Krepon: Bad news.

Feroz Khan: ... that is not good news because then you have a very different regime of safety, security, and command-control system. That pathway is a dangerous one. That's where mistakes are likely to happen. An inadvertent war in South Asia is more likely than a deliberate war.

Sameer Lalwani: So, Vipin, you've got Menon's intent and then you can comment on these other ones?

Vipin Narang: Lydia, great question. I don't know why Ambassador Menon chose this particular vehicle to write about and layout the logic. There was this rise in the late 2000s and early 2010s of what was called tit-for-tat thinking or proportional retaliation. He spent some time dismissing it. So, what does proportional retaliation mean? And then he drops in this argument about counterforce. I know the draft of the book was written in early 2016. He was a fellow in Cambridge at the time, and so we chatted about it, but I don't think it hit me until I read the book. It wasn't in response to Uri... this all pre-dated that

I think this is a long-term, deep structural problem that as national security advisor he identified. I think the way to read it is this isn't chunking everything else out the window. It's about creating options. More options are better for civilian leaders... If having this option on the menu in the event it's necessary, is not a bad thing. He lays out why they arrived here given the history since 1998. I think the audience was largely Pakistan because there's a belief in Delhi that Pakistan had gotten really complacent. Tactical nuclear weapons, war winning, game over, you got no response. Cold Start, look, after Bombay you did nothing. I think that really grated in India strategic circles. What's left? Yes, you're going to work on the conventional peace. Don't think that they've abandoned some version of Cold Start or other standoff options. You have got to push on that door. But you can also push on this door.

You know, don't think that we're not, we don't have other options in our nuclear strategic portfolio, that can be an answer to what you think is now a war-winning strategy. I think there are a lot of questions about why he did it, who the audience was. That's my hypothesis, but it's just my hypothesis and I'm open to quite a few. But it was deliberate and it's in a published book. This is for everyone to read.

As I said, it's not my fault other people didn't read it earlier. It did take me two or three times to read and get it carefully, too. You know, the language is very precise, but it's very easy to gloss over if you're not familiar with it. If his intent was to shake Pakistan, Rawalpindi knows what this means. SPD knows what "comprehensive first strike" means. So, they would know. But maybe it was done in a somewhat subtle fashion until analysts and scholars picked it up.

The risks, I think Feroz's point of if Pakistan goes out of a peacetime deployment procedure, I do worry about inadvertence, I do worry about accidental use or theft ... and that's something really to watch for because I do think the controls in the Pakistani system tend to fail lethal, not fail safe. That's something I think would greatly sharpen the risk of nuclear use on the Pakistani side. I think the Indian system is still probably more relaxed during peacetime.

Rani's question, excellent. I do think and this gets to Feroz's point that he made earlier. It is perhaps true that radical takeover by either a civilian government or the military in Pakistan is a six or ten sigma event. But we've seen six and ten sigma events before. So, if you're an Indian national security advisor, you can't dismiss the possibility that you may one day need to do this because the control of your adversary's strategic forces are no longer predictable. I do think that is something that is perfectly reasonable for the Indian state to worry about and plan for, but it does potentially come with some risk because it pushes Pakistan into doing things that may make it more likely, too. So, there is a risk and a tradeoff. When I was in Delhi, I heard this several times and, you know, at least if you're laying out a strategic logic for why you would think about it, this plus the domestic political pressure of how many Bombays can you take before you say "Look, I got to get rid of the shield." I think on the Pakistani side that's something you need to worry about.

Sameer Lalwani: So this is quick clarification and then we'll let Michael wrap it up.

Feroz Khan: My clarification is that I'm not advocating or suggesting that the Pakistanis are going towards a high-alert environment. There's no such indication as of now, but if they move towards a hair trigger or flush from the peacetime change to the crisis mode, it would only happen not because of statements or publications in India, but by watching what India does. It is an action that they would be looking more rather than simple writing or a statement. I just want to clarify that it is not as bad as it might look. But if it goes in that direction, then inadvertence opens up.

Vipin Narang: One footnote to Rani's question. We don't know whether this thinking has persisted in the current BJP government. So, Ajit Doval would be the point person on nuclear strategy, and there is a person in the NSCS, or there was at least, who is charged with targeting and force posture and planning, and he was a holdover from Shivshankar Menon, but has recently left the system. But we don't know, right? And so the point is that this is what Menon thought, it was probably his thinking either when he was in the system, maybe afterwards. Maybe it was a post talk, he's out, we really should have done this and, you know, I wish we had done this when I was national security advisor. Don't know even the answer to that. What we really don't know is whether this is, whatever momentum may have been created or whatever thinking may have taken hold, continued after he left office. I just want to make sure that's clear.

Michael Krepon: Miscalculation is South Asia's middle name. We're talking here about two countries. They have fought each other. You could make the argument that in

every case of kinetic engagement on a serious level, the country that has initiated it has been unpleasantly surprised by the result. So, this isn't a good track record for stabilizing deterrence.

Sameer Lalwani:

Okay. Well we've run out of time. I know there are a lot of questions. You can feel free to talk to the speakers afterwards. I just want to mention that next week, next Thursday, we'll be hosting scholars here to talk about some of the domestic political evolutions that are taking place within India and Pakistan and those implications, particularly for foreign policy and national security.

I want to thank our speakers for joining us today, for flying out here to make this happen, and for all of you for joining us. Stay tuned for a transcript for those of you who want to follow back on some of the discussions here today.