

Nuclear Stability in South Asia

Sumit Ganguly

On May 11 and 13, 1998, India conducted a series of five nuclear tests. Pakistan followed with six tests of its own on May 30 and 31.¹ These tests effectively lifted the veil of opacity that had long characterized the two countries' nuclear weapons programs.² The reactions of the global community, led by the United States, were swift and condemnatory. Policymakers and analysts alike united in issuing harsh indictments of the tests. Their misgivings were twofold: first, they expressed grave concerns about the impact of these tests on the global nonproliferation regime; second, they argued that the tests would further destabilize an already fraught security environment in South Asia. To induce both states to eschew their nuclear weapons programs, the international community imposed a raft of bilateral and multilateral sanctions. Simultaneously, the United States embarked on a dialogue with India and Pakistan in an attempt to convince them to dismantle their nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs and to reduce Indo-Pakistani tensions.³

Yet despite thirteen rounds of arduous talks, neither India nor Pakistan agreed to abandon its ongoing nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. Worse still for nonproliferation advocates, two crises punctuated India-Pakistan relations, in 1999 and 2001–02. Indeed, the 1999 crisis erupted into a limited war.⁴

A decade has passed since the two adversaries crossed the nuclear Rubicon.

Sumit Ganguly is a professor of political science and holds the Rabindranath Tagore Chair at Indiana University, Bloomington.

The author thanks Paul Kapur, Traci Nagle, and Praveen Swami for comments on an initial draft of this article and Manjeet Pardesi for able research assistance.

1. On their respective roads to the nuclear tests, see Sumit Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II: The Sources and Prospects of New Delhi's Nuclear Weapons Program," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 148–177; and Samina Ahmed, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: Turning Points and Nuclear Choices," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 178–204.

2. On the concept of opacity, see Benjamin Frankel, ed., *Opaque Nuclear Proliferation: Methodological and Policy Implications* (London: Frank Cass, 1991).

3. For details about U.S. goals in this dialogue, see Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

4. For the origins of the war and its conduct, see Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

International Security, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 45–70

© 2008 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Accordingly, it may be a propitious moment to take stock of the security environment in the region, especially because South Asia has witnessed much political turbulence since then—including a military coup in Pakistan in October 1999.⁵ Moreover, since the dramatic terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the region, and in particular Pakistan and Afghanistan, has become a major focus of U.S. foreign and security policy concerns.⁶

Is South Asia the “most dangerous place on earth,” as President Bill Clinton once characterized it?⁷ Or has the overt nuclearization of the region dramatically reduced the possibilities of full-scale war? The preponderance of scholarship on the subject suggests that the likelihood of full-scale war with the possibility of escalation to the nuclear level has become significantly higher in the region since the nuclear tests of May 1998.⁸ A smaller corpus of scholarship holds that the overt presence of nuclear weapons has contributed to strategic stability in the region.⁹

In this article I argue that, contrary to the views of the proliferation pessimists, nuclear weapons have reduced the risk of full-scale war in the region and have therefore contributed to strategic stability. I also contend that, barring India’s acquisition and deployment of viable antiballistic missile capabilities, nuclear deterrence in South Asia should remain robust.¹⁰

The next section of this article lays out the arguments of the proliferation pessimists. Subsequent sections examine key propositions about prior wars (1947–48, 1965, 1971) and crises (1987, 1990) in the region, before discussing

5. Sumit Ganguly, “Pakistan’s Never-Ending Story: Why the October Coup Was No Surprise,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (March/April 2000), pp. 2–9.

6. On the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, see *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002). See also James F. Hoge Jr. and Gideon Rose, eds., *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001).

7. President William Jefferson Clinton, as quoted in Alex Perry, “On the Brink,” *Time*, May 27, 2002, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,250061,00.htm>.

8. On this subject, see S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007). See also Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon, “U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia’s Twin Peaks Crisis,” No. 57 (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2006); and Mario E. Carranza, “Avoiding a Nuclear Catastrophe: Arms Control after the 2002 India-Pakistan Crisis,” *International Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (September 2003), pp. 313–339.

9. For arguments about nuclear stability, see Sumit Ganguly and Devin T. Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry: India and Pakistan in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005); John Arquilla, “Nuclear Weapons in South Asia: More May Be Manageable,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (January 1997), pp. 13–31; and David J. Karl, “Proliferation Pessimism and Emerging Nuclear Powers,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996/97), pp. 87–119.

10. For a contrary formulation, see Rajesh M. Basrur, *Minimum Deterrence and Indian Nuclear Security* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006).

how the 1999 and 2001–02 crises evolved and showing that nuclear weapons were critical in preventing the escalation to full-scale war.¹¹ The article concludes with several policy recommendations that flow from this analysis.

The Contours of the Debate

Much of the literature on the consequences of nuclear proliferation, whether optimistic or pessimistic, whether focused on South Asia or elsewhere, is inherently deductive.¹² Proliferation pessimists, while agreeing that the dispersion of nuclear weapons is likely to contribute to greater instability, proffer different reasons for their pessimism, depending on their theoretical preferences. Organization theorists, most importantly Scott Sagan, argue that the dangers of nuclear war stem from various organizational pathologies. He points out two significant issues with regard to nascent nuclear states. First, most professional militaries tend to have inflexible routines and parochial interests that predispose them toward organizational behaviors that are conducive to deterrence failures. Second, and more pertinent, he contends, such organizational propensities can best be curtailed through tight and sustained civilian control over the military; such control, however, is unlikely to exist in new entrants into the nuclear-armed arena.¹³ Furthermore, in the case of South Asia, he contends that with limited budgets military leaders may be tempted to spend scarce resources on weapons development and thereby fail to develop operational practices that enhance the survivability of their small arsenals.¹⁴

Focusing his attention on Pakistan's strategic decisionmaking and the India-Pakistan nuclear dyad, Timothy Hoyt questions Sagan's concerns about the Pakistani military's command and control (C²) of nuclear weapons. He claims that "the Pakistani military's control over nuclear assets, development, and policy represents a theoretically efficient division of labor and a reasonable

11. I refer to the Kargil incursion both as a crisis and a war. It counts as a war because it met the standard criterion of 1,000 battle deaths in an interstate conflict. On this subject, see J. David Singer and Paul Diehl, eds., *Measuring the Correlates of War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).

12. The classic statement remains Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

13. Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994), pp. 66–107.

14. Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation in South Asia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (November–December 2001), pp. 1064–1086.

organizational solution to the command and control dilemma. It provides for substantial physical security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal—no matter, given the possibility of unrest and concerns over Islamic militancy—and substantially ensures that the nuclear force will meet the 'always function' test. Within these operational parameters, it is clearly preferable to other possible C² options."¹⁵ That said, Hoyt argues that the real problem with achieving stability in South Asia lies in what he refers to as the "strategic myopia" of the military establishment, a proclivity that leads its officers to make poor strategic judgments about a more powerful adversary. Unlike Sagan, whose arguments are largely derived from deductive theory and logic, Hoyt's argument is based on the empirical record of India and Pakistan's previous conflicts.

Other analysts, such as Michael Krepon, have focused on the "stability/instability paradox" to contend that the nuclearization of the region may have rendered it more susceptible to conflict. Following the logic of this paradox, Krepon maintains that the problems of controlling the dangers of escalation have increased the risk of smaller wars. He holds that, because neither India nor Pakistan has a clear appreciation of the other's intentions, each is prone to making serious misjudgments through a process of mutual misperception. In the absence of robust risk-reduction measures, he fears, the two states may become trapped in a spiral of misperception and stumble into full-scale war.¹⁶

Paul Kapur offers a somewhat different assessment of the relevance of the stability/instability paradox in the South Asian security context. Kapur argues that nuclear weapons, far from inducing stability in the region, have provided Pakistan (the revisionist power) a compelling incentive to provoke India (the status quo power), with the former secure in the knowledge that its possession of nuclear weapons will limit any Indian retaliatory action.¹⁷ Furthermore, he contends that Pakistan's willingness to prod India has grown commensurate with the development and expansion of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Although India has exercised a modicum of restraint, he believes that its patience has been sorely tried, and that it has come perilously close to expanding the scope of conflict. Repeated Pakistani provocation may fray India's restraint and prod its decisionmakers to take military action in an attempt to put an end to these

15. Timothy D. Hoyt, "Pakistani Nuclear Doctrine and the Dangers of Strategic Myopia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 6 (November–December 2001), pp. 956–977, at p. 976.

16. Michael Krepon, "The Stability-Instability Paradox, Misperception, and Escalation-Control in South Asia," in Rafiq Dossani and Henry S. Rowen, eds., *Prospects for Peace in South Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), chap. 10.

17. Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent*.

periodic attacks. Such actions, he holds, may lead to full-scale war and to nuclear escalation.

Are the proliferation pessimists correct? Has South Asia become more susceptible to conflict and escalation as a consequence of India's and Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons? Or, contrary to the pessimists' claims, has the region become more secure? To assess the consequences of the overt nuclearization of the region, it is useful to summarize some central propositions about the record of conflict there.

Propositions about Wars and Crises in South Asia

In their first sixty years, India and Pakistan have been involved in four wars (1947–48, 1965, 1971, and 1999), three of which (1947–48, 1965, and 1999)¹⁸ were fought over the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir.¹⁹ This particular dispute is of such enduring significance because it undergirds the *raison d'être* of the two countries. India has deemed it necessary to hold on to this Muslim-majority state as a symbol and assertion of its own secular ideology. Pakistan, meanwhile, which was created as a homeland for the Muslims of South Asia, has had an irredentist claim to the state: for Pakistanis, their very identity remains incomplete without the absorption of Kashmir.²⁰ Even though the breakup of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 undercut Pakistan's ideological claim to Kashmir, it has not abandoned its quest to wrest all of Kashmir from India.

Despite the significant stakes involved, all four conflicts, with the possible exception of the 1971 war, involved limited aims. Given the two powers' pau-

18. For discussions of the history of wars and crises in the region, see T.V. Paul, ed., *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For an early treatment, see Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict* (New York: Pall Mall, 1968).

19. The literature on the Kashmir dispute is voluminous. See, for example, Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1846–1990* (Hertingfordbury, U.K.: Roxford, 1991); H.V. Hodson, *The Great Divide: Britain, India, Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Chandrasekhar Dasgupta, *War and Diplomacy in Kashmir, 1947–48* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002); Jyoti Bhusan Das Gupta, *Jammu and Kashmir* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968); Lord Birdwood, *Two Nations and Kashmir* (London: Robert Hale, 1956); Michael Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953); and Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

20. For a discussion of Pakistan's identity, see Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004). For the ideological basis of Pakistan's claims to Kashmir, see Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *The Myth of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). For the Indian position on the Kashmir dispute, see Sisir Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1966).

city of firepower, these wars also produced small numbers of casualties, for a variety of intertwined reasons. Moreover, because the principal military commanders on both sides were mostly British trained (as part of their common colonial military heritage), they could anticipate the other's battle tactics and strategies. As a result, none of these wars saw any dramatic tactical or strategic innovations on the battlefield, with the first three wars witnessing mostly set-piece battle tactics. Finally, in all of these conflicts, both sides exercised considerable military restraint, due not only to the limitations of firepower and predictable battle tactics, but also to the willingness of senior military officers to observe informal agreements that hobbled the use of excessive force.²¹

Multiple crises have also characterized Indo-Pakistani relations—several as early as the 1950s.²² More recently, three crises nearly brought the two states to the brink of war. The first stemmed from Pakistani involvement in an uprising in the Indian state of Punjab and India's response to it through the conduct of a major military exercise, *Brasstacks*.²³ The second erupted as a consequence of Pakistani support for an ethnoreligious uprising that wracked the Indian-controlled portion of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir in December 1989. The third resulted from a series of Pakistani incursions across the Line of Control (the de facto international border in Kashmir) in April–May 1999.

THE BRASSTACKS CRISIS OF 1987

The *Brasstacks* exercise, the largest in independent India's military history, was the brainchild of Gen. Krishnaswami Sundarji, the chief of staff of the Indian Army. Sundarji was interested in testing some newly acquired command, control, communications, and intelligence capabilities and also in developing the Indian Army's maneuverability and mobility. At the time of the exercise in 1987, significant portions of the Indian military were tied down in a major counterinsurgency operation in the border state of Punjab. Since the early 1980s, that state had been in the grips of a Sikh ethnonationalist insurgency with indigenous origins.²⁴ The regime of Gen. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq

21. For a discussion, see Sumit Ganguly, "Wars without End? The Indo-Pakistani Conflicts," *Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Science*, No. 541 (September 1995), pp. 167–178.

22. On these crises, see Jyoti Bhusan Das Gupta, *Indo-Pakistani Relations, 1947–1955* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959).

23. The *Brasstacks* crisis is discussed at length in Kanti P. Bajpai, P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Stephen P. Cohen, and Sumit Ganguly, *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and the Management of Crises in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).

24. On the origins of the Sikh insurgency in the Punjab, see Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle* (Calcutta: Rupa, 1985).

in Pakistan, sensing an opportunity to foment further discord, had quickly become involved in supporting the insurgents.

Accordingly, the exercise was also designed to deliver a clear-cut message to Pakistan that its continued interference in the Punjab was intolerable and that the Indian military, though involved in counterinsurgency operations there, was nevertheless capable of flexing its muscles. As the exercise, which was being conducted in the deserts of Rajasthan along an east-west axis, was about to enter its final phase, the Pakistani military, which was also conducting its own winter military exercises, chose not to return some of its forward-based units to their peacetime positions. Furthermore, neither Indian civilian nor military intelligence could account for the precise location of one of the Pakistani armored units that had been participating in the exercises. These developments caused growing alarm in New Delhi and set off a spiral of mutual misperceptions that contributed to rising tensions between the two countries.

A number of scholars and analysts have claimed that Pakistan delivered a veiled nuclear threat toward the end of the Brasstacks crisis.²⁵ They also have argued that Pakistan took critical steps toward the acquisition of a nuclear-weapons capability in the aftermath of Brasstacks. This crisis was resolved when the U.S. ambassador in Islamabad and his Soviet counterpart in New Delhi met with key Pakistani and Indian officials to forestall an escalation of the crisis.

THE 1990 CRISIS

The second crisis also had its origins in Pakistani support for an indigenous insurgency, this time in the Indian-controlled portion of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir. The insurgency in Kashmir had indigenous origins: it stemmed from the steady erosion of political institutions in the state against a growing backdrop of political mobilization as a consequence of expanding literacy, mass media, and higher education.²⁶ When the insurgency erupted in December 1990, Pakistan quickly jumped into the fray and over the next several years managed to transform the rebellion into a well-funded, carefully orchestrated extortion racket.²⁷ The precise scope and dimensions of the

25. On this subject, see Devin T. Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998).

26. For a detailed discussion of the origins of the Kashmir insurgency, see Sumit Ganguly, "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 76–107.

27. On Pakistani involvement in and support for the insurgency, see R.A. Davis, "Kashmir in the Balance," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (April 1991), pp. 301–304.

1990 crisis are still shrouded in mystery and doubt.²⁸ Indian anxieties about Pakistan's behavior were heightened, however, when, toward the end of December 1989, around the time of the outbreak of the Kashmir insurgency, Pakistan completed its largest-ever peacetime military exercise, Zarb-i-Momin. This exercise was clearly a response to Brasstacks and involved seven infantry divisions and one armored division. In the words of the Pakistan Army chief at the time, Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg, the exercise was designed to test a new strategy focused on carrying a future war into India. As he stated, "In the past we were pursuing a defensive policy; now there is a big change since we are shifting to a policy of offensive defense. Should there be a war, the Pakistan Army plans to take the war into India, launching a sizeable offensive on Indian territory."²⁹

To the dismay of India's decisionmakers, well after the exercises were completed, the Pakistani forces did not return to their routine peacetime deployments; instead they stayed on near the international border and the Line of Control.³⁰ Worsening matters, as the uprising continued apace in Kashmir, Pakistani leaders, most notably Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, traveled to the Pakistani side of the Line of Control on March 13, 1990, where she promised a "thousand-year war" against India.³¹ Not surprisingly, Indian Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh came under enormous public and political pressure to offer a suitable riposte to her statement. Speaking to the Indian parliament, he stated, "I do not wish to sound hawkish but there should be no confusion. Such a misadventure would not be without cost."³² The war of words continued throughout the spring, as India came to deploy as many as 200,000 troops in Kashmir—both Indian Army units and paramilitary forces—in an effort to stop the Pakistan-supported infiltrators and quell the insurgency.³³

Even though most Indian and Pakistani armored capabilities were not mobi-

28. For one of the better accounts of the crisis, see P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Stephen Philip Cohen, *Perception, Politics, and Security in South Asia: The Compound Crisis of 1990* (London: Routledge, 2003).

29. Quoted in Mushahid Husain, "Pakistan, Responding to Change," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, October 14, 1989, p. 779.

30. Gen. V.N. Sharma, interview, "It's All Bluff and Bluster," *Economic Times* (Bombay), May 18, 1993.

31. Raja Asghar, "Bhutto Predicts Victory for Kashmir Independence Campaign," Reuters Library Report, March 13, 1990.

32. Quoted in Moses Manoharan, "Indian Leader Tells Pakistan to Stay Out of Kashmir Uprising," Reuters Library Report, March 13, 1990.

33. See the discussion in Ganguly and Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry*.

lized and remained in their peacetime deployments, the growing instability within Kashmir and the increasingly bellicose rhetoric from both India and Pakistan caused growing anxiety in Washington. U.S. misgivings about the unfolding crisis stemmed mostly from the knowledge that both sides had made significant strides in their efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. The existence of these incipient nuclear arsenals was of particular concern to policymakers in Washington, given the long history of conflict and discord in the region.

Accordingly, on April 18 the deputy national security adviser, Robert Gates, was dispatched to Islamabad and New Delhi. In Islamabad, Gates categorically informed his Pakistani interlocutors that, in every U.S. war-game scenario involving Indian and Pakistani forces, Pakistan emerged the loser; that Pakistan should not count on U.S. support if a war with India were to ensue; and that it should refrain from supporting terror in Kashmir. In New Delhi, Gates told Prime Minister Singh that the situation in Kashmir was so fraught with tension that any Indian provocation could lead to a spiral of conflict with unforeseen and potentially dangerous consequences. Within two weeks of the Gates visit, the tensions subsided, with both sides making reciprocal concessions. Also, in the aftermath of the Gates mission, India put forward a package of confidence-building measures that became the basis of bilateral talks that helped reduce tensions.³⁴

Despite the end of the crisis, the India-Pakistan relationship remained troubled because of the ongoing insurgency in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Indo-Pakistani relations deteriorated sharply as the insurgency in Kashmir continued to gather force. India, drawing on its experiences with insurgent movements, resorted to a time-honored strategy of using dramatic force against the insurgents while holding out the promise of negotiations and political compromise as long as the insurgents agreed to drop their demands for secession. This strategy had served India well in coping with insurgencies in the northeast and in Punjab, but it proved less effective in Kashmir, where there was a powerful and committed external actor—Pakistan—and where the popular disaffection with the Indian state was widespread. Nevertheless, toward the end of the decade, India had managed to restore a modicum of order (if not law) in the state through an amalgam of political concessions and steady military repression.³⁵ Furthermore, as India managed to contain the insurgency, global interest in and attention to the conflict started to flag.

34. Much of this discussion has been drawn from *ibid.*

35. Praveen Swami, *The Kargil War* (New Delhi: Leftword, 1999).

THE KARGIL CRISIS OF 1999

The next significant crisis in Indo-Pakistani relations took place in the wake of the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests of May 1998.³⁶ This one culminated in a limited war. In the aftermath of the nuclear tests, when faced with considerable international opprobrium, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Pakistan while inaugurating a bus service linking the capital cities of the Indian and Pakistani states of Punjab, Amritsar, and Lahore. Subsequently, he signed a number of nuclear confidence-building measures with his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif. In a significant symbolic gesture, Vajpayee publicly reaffirmed India's commitment to Pakistan's territorial integrity at the site where the Muslim League, the principal Pakistani nationalist party, had passed its historic resolution calling for the creation of Pakistan in 1940. In light of these developments, the coalition government led by Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party had concluded that relations with Pakistan were improving despite the tensions that followed on the heels of the nuclear tests. Consequently, they chose to lower the state of alertness along the Indo-Pakistani international border as well as along the Line of Control in Kashmir.

The precise motivations underlying the Pakistani incursions across the Line of Control in Kargil remain controversial, despite the emergence of a spate of literature on the subject.³⁷ Most explanations suggest that Pakistan was motivated to refocus international attention on the Kashmir question.³⁸ Simultaneously, the Pakistani military was interested in a "fait accompli" strategy,

36. For a discussion of the origins of the nuclear tests, see, for example, Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to Be a Nuclear Power* (New Delhi: Harper Collins India, 2000). On Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons, see Ashok Kapur, *Pakistan's Nuclear Development* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

37. There is a paucity of Pakistani literature on the origins of and motivations behind the Kargil crisis. Gen. Pervez Musharraf's memoir, *In the Line of Fire* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), is not especially revealing, as it is both self-exculpatory and disingenuous. In this book he claims that the principal goals of the Kargil incursion were to plug existing gaps along the Line of Control to prevent Indian incursions. The memoir of his Indian counterpart, Gen. Ved Prakash Malik, titled *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory* (New Delhi: HarperCollins India, 2006), is somewhat more forthcoming. It too shifts the bulk of the blame for the intelligence failure onto his civilian counterparts in India. For details of the Indian military operation, see Amarinder Singh, *A Ridge Too Far: War in the Kargil Heights, 1999* (Patiala: Motibagh Palace, 2001). See also Maj. Gen. Ashok Kalyan Verma, *Kargil: Blood on the Snow: Tactical Victory, Strategic Failure* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002). On various aspects of the conflict, see Jasjit E. Singh, ed., *Kargil, 1999: Pakistan's Fourth War for Kashmir* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 1999). For the official Indian account of India's intelligence failure and the subsequent conduct of the war, see Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Committee Report* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000) [hereinafter *The Kargil Committee Report*].

38. For a crisp summary of Pakistani military and political motivations in launching the Kargil operation, see Frasn K. Sengupta, "Mountain Warfare: The Kargil Experience," *Asian Defence Journal*, Vol. 10 (October 1999), pp. 42–46.

which, if successful, could interdict India's principal supply route to the disputed Siachen Glacier.³⁹ In pursuit of these goals, the Pakistani military marshaled a substantial body of forces: four independent groups drawn from four infantry battalions and two companies of the highly trained Special Services Group. These units were under the aegis of the Forward Commander Northern Areas and comprised elements of 4 Battalion, the FCNA reserve located in Gilgit, the 6 Northern Light Infantry (NLI) Battalion located in Skardu, the 5 NLI Battalion stationed in Minimarg, and the 3 NLI at Dansam.⁴⁰ It is pertinent to mention that Pakistani apologists, most notably Gen. Pervez Musharraf (then chief of the Pakistan Army) have claimed that the Kashmiri mujahideen were responsible for the initial incursions. Only after India began attacking the infiltrators, Musharraf contends, did the NLI become involved. There is little or no evidence to support this assertion.⁴¹

The first clash occurred between an Indian Army patrol and Pakistani forces on May 5, 1999, in the Kaksar region in the northern reaches of Indian-controlled Kashmir. This patrol had been dispatched to verify information on intrusions that two local residents (and part-time intelligence informants) had provided.⁴² The patrol disappeared without a trace. As a consequence of this abrupt disappearance, the commander of the 121 Brigade organized a detailed surveillance and discovered that there were at least 100 intruders in the area. By mid-May, the commander drastically revised his estimate after realizing that as many as 800 enemy personnel were in the region and that important breaches of the Line of Control had taken place in Mushkoh Valley, Kaksar, and Batalik. By the end of the month, the military had again revised its estimates, concluding that significantly more than 800 men had crossed the Line of Control and that those troops had managed to occupy a number of vital strategic salients directly above the road from Kargil to Leh and were now po-

39. For a discussion of the concept of a *fait accompli* strategy, see Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). For an Indian perspective on the Siachen Glacier dispute, see Anand K. Verma, "Siachen: An Episode to Remember," *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (August 2007), <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/?p=63>. For a Pakistani perspective, see Humera Niazi, "The Siachen Glacier: 1984 to 1998," *Defence Journal*, January 1999, <http://www.defencejournal.com/jan99/glacier.htm>.

40. Sengupta, "Mountain Warfare."

41. The dubiousness of these assertions is forthrightly dealt with in Ashley J. Tellis, C. Christine Fair, and Jamison Jo Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella: Indian and Pakistani Lessons from the Kargil Crisis* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2001).

42. Praveen Swami, deputy editor, *Frontline* (New Delhi), personal communication with author, June 15, 2008.

sitioned to interdict Indian military traffic from Ladakh to Kashmir. Further aerial surveillance revealed that the intruders were well equipped, with snow-mobiles, artillery, and substantial stocks of supplies.⁴³

India's initial response was inept, given a paucity of accurate intelligence on Pakistani troop deployments, strength, and capabilities. Consequently, its preliminary assaults on the Pakistanis' well-ensconced positions at higher altitudes resulted in substantial Indian casualties. Toward the end of May, the Indian forces realized that without the use of airpower they would not be able to dislodge the Pakistanis and would continue to take massive casualties in frontal assaults. Accordingly, the apex Cabinet Committee on Security decided to send as many as three more brigades into the region and also permitted the use of airpower to dislodge the intruders. Once the requisite permission had been granted, the Indian Air Force carried out its first series of air strikes on May 26. On May 27 the air force launched a second series of strikes specifically directed against Pakistani forces located in Batalik, Turtuk, and Dras.⁴⁴ As the Indian forces demonstrated their resolve, on May 31 Pakistan's foreign secretary, Shamshad Ahmed, made what most observers have concluded was a veiled nuclear threat. In an interview he stated, "We will not hesitate to use any weapon in our arsenal to defend our territorial integrity."⁴⁵

Subsequent Indian assessments of the Kargil war suggest that this threat was not lost on Indian policymakers. Among other matters, the Indian leadership embarked on a concerted effort to formulate a military doctrine that would enable India to respond to Pakistani conventional aggression without risking escalation to the nuclear level. Gen. Ved Prakash Malik, the chief of staff of the Indian Army during the Kargil crisis, played a critical role in trying to formulate such a military doctrine.⁴⁶

It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed account of all the military engagements that were fought during the course of the Kargil conflict. Accordingly, only the key military developments and political turning points during the war are highlighted in the remainder of this section. In the initial

43. Further details about the military dimensions of the initial intrusions can be found in Maj. Gen. Ashok Krishna, "The Kargil War," in Krishna and P.R. Chari, eds., *Kargil: The Tables Turned* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), pp. 77–138.

44. Manoj Joshi, "The Kargil War: The Fourth Round," in Kanti Bajpai, Afsir Karim, and Amitabh Mattoo, eds., *Kargil and After: Challenges for Indian Policy* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2001).

45. "Pakistan May Use Any Weapon," *News* (Islamabad), May 31, 1999.

46. *The Kargil Committee Report*. See also P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Stephen P. Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process: American Engagement in South Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007); and Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*.

stage of the operations, the Indian Army suffered a number of important setbacks despite the use of airpower. One of the most difficult operations involved the capture of the Tololing complex in the Dras sector, where Indian infantry were asked to make daytime assaults up steep and unforgiving terrain. An initial attempt to capture another important feature, Tiger Hill, met the same fate. Faced with these setbacks, the Indian military resorted to the greater use of artillery to soften up Pakistani positions, called for the more extensive use of airpower (despite the explicit political injunctions against crossing the Line of Control), and doggedly made progress against the well-entrenched intruders.⁴⁷ By early June the Indian military, in a series of counter-offensive operations—some during daylight and others under the cover of night—managed to recapture twenty-one positions along the Line of Control. The air operations proved exceedingly difficult because of Pakistan's substantial surface-to-air missile capabilities, the inability of the principal Indian attack helicopters to operate well at high altitudes, and the rugged terrain, which enabled the Pakistanis to conceal their surface-to-air missile batteries.⁴⁸ The Pakistani military was equipped with shoulder-fired FIM-92A Stinger and Anza Mk2 air defense missiles; it also possessed 12.7-millimeter air defense machine guns.⁴⁹ Consequently, it was able to fend off Indian air attacks with some success.

Between June 14 and 16, the Indian forces captured two critical positions near Dras and Batalik.⁵⁰ The fall of these two positions was of considerable importance because they overlook the principal supply route for the Indian forces located on the disputed Siachen Glacier. In the wake of these successful attacks, on June 20 the Indian forces managed to fully reestablish control over the Batalik region.⁵¹

Despite these Indian military successes, the hostilities showed few signs of abating. In an effort to prevent possible escalation of the conflict, the commander in chief of the U.S. Central Command, Gen. Anthony Zinni, visited Pakistan toward the end of June and bluntly told Prime Minister Sharif to end military operations.⁵² Shortly thereafter, the U.S. deputy assistant secretary of

47. Marcus P. Acosta, "The Kargil Conflict: Waging War in the Himalayas," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (September 2007), pp. 397–415.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 405.

49. Sengupta, "Mountain Warfare."

50. "India Retakes Two Key Peaks in Kashmir," *Straits Times* (Singapore), June 16, 1999.

51. "India Reports Major Highway Recaptured from Rebels," *New York Times*, June 21, 1999.

52. Farhan Bokhari and Mary Louise Kazmin, "U.S. General Presses Pakistan on Kashmir," *Financial Times*, June 25, 1999.

state, Gibson Lanpher, visited New Delhi, where he apprised Sharif's Indian counterparts about the substance of Zinni's message and counseled restraint on their part. He also informed Indian officials that General Zinni had categorically told the Pakistanis that the United States would not countenance efforts to link their withdrawal from Kargil to the overall Kashmir question.⁵³ Despite Zinni's firm message, the fighting continued until early July. No doubt surprised by the scope and intensity of the Indian attacks and unable to persuade either the United States or other major powers to back Pakistan, Prime Minister Sharif visited Washington on July 4 in the hope of finding a face-saving solution to the crisis. To his surprise (and to that of his Indian counterparts), the message from President Clinton was unequivocal: the Pakistan Army had to bring about an unconditional withdrawal from Kargil, and the "sanctity of the Line of Control" had to be maintained.⁵⁴ Even in the face of this uncompromising message, the Pakistani troops continued to fight. Only on July 9 did Pakistan send an envoy to New Delhi to discuss a possible de-escalation of the crisis. Initially, India expressed little interest in talks, but it later agreed.

On July 12 Prime Minister Sharif gave a nationally televised address where he called for a withdrawal of Pakistan's forces from their mountain redoubts.⁵⁵ In his speech, however, he carefully refrained from making any reference to the redeployment of the Pakistani regular forces, maintaining throughout that the mujahideen had scaled and seized the redoubts of their own accord. By July 14 the first group of infiltrators had withdrawn from their positions and ceded ground to the advancing Indian forces. In mid-July, for all practical purposes, the conflict came to a close.

Despite the profound sense of betrayal by the Pakistani regime (and Sharif, in particular), the presence of a jingoistic regime in New Delhi, and the possession of sufficient capabilities for horizontal escalation, Indian policymakers carefully confined the conflict to the Kargil region. They also placed important political constraints on the use of airpower, categorically limiting its employment to the Indian side of the Line of Control. The Indian decision not to ex-

53. C. Raja Mohan, "Pak Must Pull Out Troops," *Hindu*, June 28, 1999.

54. See White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Joint Statement by President Clinton and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan," July 4, 1999. For a detailed firsthand account of the negotiations at Blair House, see Bruce Riedel, *American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House* (Philadelphia: Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, 2002).

55. Agencies, "Sharif to India—Let's Talk, Not Waste Time," *Indian Express*, July 13, 1999, <http://www.indianexpress.com/res/web/pla/ie/daily/19990713/ige13071.html>.

pand the scope of operations despite grave provocation and the existence of adequate conventional forces appears puzzling.

One seemingly plausible explanation for India's restraint might have been the perceived need to court international public opinion in the aftermath of the nuclear tests. This argument does not withstand scrutiny, however. Given the resentful public mood within the country, an upcoming general election, and the existence of a regime that had few qualms about the use of force to resolve disputes, the inhibitions of global public opinion could not have served as a powerful barrier to the expansion of the conflict. Nor does the swift U.S. intervention provide a sufficiently compelling explanation for the conclusion of the conflict, for the war continued well after U.S. efforts to terminate it. Consequently, even in the absence of incontrovertible public statements, through a process of inference and attribution, one can make a cogent argument that the principal source of Indian restraint was Pakistan's overt possession of a nuclear arsenal. Indian policymakers, cognizant of this new reality, were compelled to exercise suitable restraint for fear of escalation to the nuclear level.

The Road to Operation Parakram

Relations between India and Pakistan remained strained over the next two years, exacerbated by the emergence of a military regime in Pakistan following the October 1999 coup. The situation in Kashmir remained unsettled, as infiltration from Pakistan continued. The event that set in motion renewed tensions came in the wake of a major, if abortive, terrorist attack. On October 1, 2001, a group of insurgents disguised as police officers managed to hijack an official vehicle, load it with explosives, and ram the gate of the well-guarded Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly building in the Indian-controlled portion of Jammu and Kashmir. The ensuing explosion killed twenty-six individuals. Subsequently, all the attackers were killed in a gun battle with Indian security forces. None of the legislators were killed, as they had left the building several hours prior to the attack. A Pakistan-based insurgent group, Jaish-e-Mohammed, claimed responsibility for the attack.⁵⁶ This episode constituted the most brazen assault on a governmental body since the onset of the insurgency in Kashmir. Not surprisingly, India lodged a vigorous protest in Islamabad and called on Pakistan to ban the terrorist group. Although con-

56. Barry Bearak, "26 Die as Suicide Squad Bombs Kashmir Legislative Building," *New York Times*, October 2, 2001.

demning the attack, Pakistan refused to take such action.⁵⁷ In the wake of this incident, no further events of any consequence punctuated Indo-Pakistani relations, even though ties remained extremely strained.

The next terrorist attack, which took place on December 13, 2001, set in motion a chain of events that could have culminated in another war. Assuming that the groups involved in the attack did have its roots in Pakistan, India clearly had sufficient grounds to retaliate militarily against Pakistan. Yet, all India undertook was a significant and protracted exercise in coercive diplomacy, code-named Operation Parakram.⁵⁸ What explains India's unwillingness to resort to military action against Pakistan despite a substantial provocation? Three possible explanations suggest themselves. First, India may have lacked the requisite capabilities for a quick, calibrated attack against specific Pakistani targets. Second, deft U.S. diplomacy may have helped stave off an Indian attack. Third, India may have feared that military action could escalate to the nuclear level. In effect, Pakistan's possession of a limited nuclear arsenal acted as a sufficient deterrent to Indian action. To assess the strength of each of these three competing explanations, it is necessary to at least briefly recount the critical set of events that transpired.

On December 13, 2001, a nondescript white Ambassador, a model of car that senior Indian government officials routinely use, drove past the security cordon of the Indian parliament.⁵⁹ Within seconds, six armed gunmen emerged from the vehicle and proceeded toward the Central Hall of parliament, which was in session at the time. An unarmed "watch and ward" guard had the presence of mind to quickly close the doors of the Central Hall and sound an alarm shortly after the assailants fired their first shots. A gun battle ensued between the assailants and the security forces assigned to the parliament, leaving all six of the attackers dead.⁶⁰ Based on telephone intercepts, Indian authorities claimed that the attackers were all members of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed.⁶¹

57. Celia W. Dugger, "India Wants End to Group in Kashmir Attack," *New York Times*, October 3, 2001.

58. For the classic statement on the subject, see Alexander L. George, *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1991).

59. Joanna Slater, "A Tremor at the Fault Line," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 27, 2001–January 3, 2002, pp. 22–23.

60. Celia W. Dugger, "India Recalling Pakistan Envoy over Delhi Raid" *New York Times*, December 22, 2001.

61. For a discussion of Pakistan's involvement with terrorist groups, see Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 6 (November/December 2000), pp. 115–126; and Daniel

THE FIRST PHASE

The evolution of this crisis can be divided into two distinct phases. In the immediate aftermath of the attack, the Indian political leadership acted with alacrity. Within a day, the Indian authorities issued a series of demands to Pakistan and also started a process of military mobilization. They called on Pakistan to ban both Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, to extradite twenty individuals who India claimed had been involved in terrorist attacks on its soil, and to cease all infiltration into Indian-controlled Kashmir.⁶²

On December 18, Indian officials issued a firm warning that India's patience was waning and they expected Pakistan to take action against terrorist groups operating from within its borders.⁶³ As Pakistani officials equivocated, the United States, on December 20, declared both the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed to be foreign terrorist organizations. In the wake of this declaration, Pakistani authorities froze the assets of the Lashkar-e-Taiba. Nevertheless, to express its unhappiness with Pakistan's limited response, India withdrew its ambassador from Islamabad—a measure it had not resorted to since 1971 when the two countries had gone to war. Faced with ratcheting Indian and U.S. pressure to act against the terrorist groups, General Musharraf's regime arrested fifty militants toward the end of December.⁶⁴ India still demanded that Pakistan hand over twenty individuals accused of terrorist attacks on Indian soil, but Pakistan refused.

Faced with what it deemed to be Pakistani intransigence, India continued with its troop buildup and brought seven divisions into attack positions near the Pakistani border.⁶⁵ On January 11, in a further attempt to exert pressure on Pakistan, Gen. Sundararajan Padmanabhan, the chief of staff of the Indian Army, in uncharacteristically blunt language stated at a press conference in New Delhi that any country that was "mad enough" to initiate a nuclear strike against India would be "punished severely."⁶⁶ Padmanabhan's remarks

Byman, *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

62. Celia W. Dugger, "Group in Pakistan Is Blamed by India for Suicide Raid," *New York Times*, December 15, 2001.

63. Economist Global Agenda, "Terror in India," *Economist*, December 19, 2001, http://www5.economist.com/agenda/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=E1_JTSDPQ.

64. John F. Burns, "Pakistan Moves against Groups Named by India," *New York Times*, December 29, 2001.

65. John F. Burns and Celia W. Dugger, "India Builds Up Forces as Bush Urges Calm," *New York Times*, December 30, 2001.

66. Quoted in "We Are Prepared: Army Chief," *Hindu*, January 12, 2002.

were significant because the uniformed military in India rarely, if ever, makes public statements about the higher direction of war.⁶⁷

Against this backdrop of steadily rising tensions and repeated calls from Washington for mutual restraint, Musharraf gave a speech on Pakistani national television on January 12, 2002, where he proclaimed that he would not allow Pakistani territory to be used to carry out terrorist attacks on India or any other foreign country. Still he refused to end Pakistani support for the Kashmiri cause, stating that "Kashmir runs in our blood. No Pakistani can afford to sever links with Kashmir."⁶⁸ While welcoming Musharraf's speech, Indian authorities nevertheless insisted that they would withhold judgment until they saw evidence that corroborated his promise.

THE SECOND PHASE

India refused to lower its military alertness throughout January and into early spring, despite U.S. reassurances that progress was being made to curb the support for religious extremism emanating from Pakistan.⁶⁹ Admittedly, levels of infiltration across the Line of Control did taper off in the wake of Musharraf's speech. It was difficult, however, to ascertain if such a decline in infiltration could be attributed to Indian military pressure, U.S. diplomatic exhortations, or simply the normal seasonal lull brought on by high levels of snowfall in the Himalayan region. This lull came to an abrupt end on May 14, 2002, when two suicide bombers attacked an Indian military base in Kaluchak, near Jammu, killing thirty-three individuals, mostly the wives and children of Indian Army personnel. Lashkar-e-Taiba initially claimed responsibility for the attack but subsequently denied involvement.⁷⁰ The timing of the suicide attack was significant, because it came during a visit to New Delhi by Christina Rocca, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs. Despite the continuing military confrontation along the Indo-Pakistani border, tensions had eased slightly. This attack, as far as Indian policymakers were concerned, portended one of two possibilities. Either General Musharraf was unwilling or unable to control the jihadis operating from Pakistani territory, or he did not

67. Sumit Ganguly, "From Aid to the Civil to the Defense of the Nation: The Army in Contemporary India," *Journal of Asian and African Affairs*, Vol. 26, Nos. 1-2 (1991), pp. 1-12.

68. See "President of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf's Address to the Nation," Islamabad, January 12, 2002, <http://www.millat.com/president/1020200475758AMword%20file.pdf>.

69. Todd S. Purdum and Celia W. Dugger, "Powell Now 'Very Encouraged' on Kashmir," *New York Times*, January 19, 2002.

70. Edward Luce and Farhan Bokhari, "Bombers Kill 33 in Kashmir as U.S. Envoy Visits India," *Financial Times*, May 15, 2002.

wish to expend the necessary political capital to rein them in. Consequently, faced with renewed public outrage in India and growing anger within the military, Prime Minister Vajpayee gave a speech to troops deployed along the Indo-Pakistani border where he called for a “decisive fight” against Pakistan. This was no idle threat, because the Indian armed forces were carefully configured along the Indo-Pakistani border to undertake a significant invasion of Pakistan.⁷¹ The message, no doubt, was intended for multiple audiences: Indian, Pakistani, and American. It certainly reached one of its target audiences, for the George W. Bush administration reacted with alacrity. Secretary of State Colin Powell immediately called General Musharraf and reiterated the importance of promptly reining in the terrorists operating in Kashmir. Simultaneously, State Department officials urged Indian officials to eschew military options and to seek a diplomatic resolution of the crisis.

Toward the end of May, war appeared all but imminent. India started to shift critical military assets into position along the border. The Indian Air Force moved several squadrons of fighter aircraft to forward bases; the navy rushed five of its most sophisticated warships from the eastern to the western fleet; and the navy’s only operational aircraft carrier, the INS *Viraat*, was removed from dry dock and placed on alert off the port city of Bombay (Mumbai).⁷²

These military maneuvers, the bellicose rhetoric from New Delhi, and Islamabad’s feckless behavior generated serious concerns in Washington. On May 30, 2002, President Bush sent Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to the region. Referring to General Musharraf, Rumsfeld publicly stated, “He must stop incursions across the Line of Control. He must do so. He said he would do so. We and others are making it clear to him that he must live up to his word.”⁷³

Despite Rumsfeld’s visit to the region and his explicit warning to Pakistan, tensions continued to mount. Reflecting this heightened possibility of war and perhaps hoping to send a warning to both parties, the United States issued a travel advisory urging all Americans to leave the region. In response, several other key states, most notably the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan, all issued similar advisories. Simultaneously, Deputy Secretary of Defense

71. “Indian PM Calls for a ‘Decisive Fight,’” Reuters, May 22, 2002. For a detailed depiction of the full-scale Indian war plan for early June, see V.K. Sood and Pravin Sawhney, *Operation Parakram: The War Unfinished* (New Delhi: Sage, 2003).

72. Josy Joseph, “The Mood Is for War,” *India Abroad*, May 31, 2002, p. 3.

73. Quoted in Elisabeth Bumiller and Thom Shanker, “Bush Presses Pakistan on Kashmir and Orders Rumsfeld to Region,” *New York Times*, May 31, 2002.

Paul Wolfowitz met with India's defense minister, George Fernandes, in Singapore in an attempt to defuse tensions. Confronted with these multiple pressures, Pakistan finally changed course. In early June Indian authorities announced that they had detected the first signs that insurgent activities in Kashmir were abating.⁷⁴ By mid-June the crisis showed further signs of easing, as truculent statements from both sides drew to a close and further military maneuvers along a tense border ceased. By the end of June, tensions had abated to a degree that India was able to remove its ban on Pakistani overflights of Indian territory and stand down its warships from aggressive patrolling in the Arabian Sea.⁷⁵ For all practical purposes, by early July the crisis had ended. India would not withdraw the majority of its forces from the border, however, until October 2002.

SEEKING EXPLANATIONS

Despite the gravity of the provocation, the evidence linking the terrorist groups to the Pakistani state, and the depth of anger in India, why did a regime dominated by a right-wing political party with a history of bellicosity not resort to a military strike against Pakistan? It is tempting to suggest that deft and sustained U.S. engagement or a lack of adequate conventional capabilities compelled India from attacking Pakistan. Yet the evidence for both these arguments, though suggestive, is incomplete. The Indian military mobilization, as argued earlier, started in the wake of the initial terrorist attacks. Toward the beginning of January 2002, Indian military capabilities were largely in place—although admittedly, any element of surprise had been lost and Pakistan had launched a countermobilization. Furthermore, in the aftermath of General Musharraf's January 12, 2002, speech, Indian authorities felt under considerable international (and especially U.S.) pressure to exercise military restraint and enable Pakistani authorities to demonstrate that they were willing to make commensurate changes in their policies. In the wake of General Musharraf's January 12 speech, Pakistani infiltration did subside significantly and no dramatic attacks took place. (Of course, as argued earlier, during this time of year, levels of infiltration naturally decline to a considerable extent because of the effects of seasonal snowfall.)

Nevertheless, when the second attack took place on May 14, Indian forces

74. Raymond Bonner, "India Believes Pakistan Restrains Militants," *New York Times*, June 6, 2002.

75. Josy Joseph, "India Removes Overflight Ban on Pakistani Aircraft," *India Abroad*, June 21, 2001, p. 15.

were in place and should have been able to carry out concerted attacks against key targets, especially terrorist training camps in Pakistan. What explains the Indian decision not to act? Once again, a partial explanation can be adduced. Some evidence suggests that India lacked the highly mobile forces equipped with suitable weaponry and night-vision equipment to carry out the type of sharp, quick strikes that would inflict the maximum possible damage on Pakistani-sponsored and -supported training bases.⁷⁶ Yet these tactical constraints can only explain India's failure to resort to calibrated, small-scale attacks; they cannot explain why India chose not to resort to a larger war. India clearly had the requisite forces deployed to conduct such a war and a political regime that had successfully defied international public opinion in carrying out nuclear tests. In addition, it had shown the determination to successfully prosecute the Kargil war. Consequently, explanations that rely on the dissuasive powers of timely U.S. diplomacy, or the lack of sufficient military capabilities, while seemingly tempting, nevertheless are not entirely convincing.⁷⁷

The Robustness of Nuclear Deterrence

As the outcomes of the 1999 and 2001–02 crises show, nuclear deterrence is robust in South Asia. Both crises were contained at levels considerably short of full-scale war. That said, as Paul Kapur has argued, Pakistan's acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability may well have emboldened its leadership, secure in the belief that India had no good options to respond. India, in turn, has been grappling with an effort to forge a new military doctrine and strategy to enable it to respond to Pakistani needling while containing the possibilities of conflict escalation, especially to the nuclear level.⁷⁸ Whether Indian military planners

76. For a discussion of the limitations of Indian capabilities, see Rahul Bedi, "The Military Dynamics," *Frontline* (Chennai), June 21, 2001. See also V. Sudarshan and Ajith Pillai, "Game of Patience," *Outlook* (New Delhi), May 27, 2002, pp. 35–39.

77. It is, of course, possible that another source of Indian restraint stemmed from India's reluctance to launch a military strike against Pakistan because it would have inevitably interfered with and diverted attention from the U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan, reliant as it was on both Pakistani support and the use of its territory and airspace. That said, there is no evidence that this consideration weighed heavily in the strategic calculations of India's decisionmakers. One of the few suggestions in the literature that U.S. misgivings about an Indian attack influenced Indian military calculations is provided in Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*.

78. On this subject, see Walter Ladwig, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? An Assessment of the Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Winter 2007/08), pp. 158–190; and V.R. Raghavan, "Limited War and Nuclear Escalation in South Asia," *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Fall–Winter 2001), pp. 1–18.

can fashion such a calibrated strategy to cope with Pakistani probes remains an open question. This article's analysis of the 1999 and 2001–02 crises does suggest, however, that nuclear deterrence in South Asia is far from parlous, contrary to what the critics have suggested. Three specific forms of evidence can be adduced to argue the case for the strength of nuclear deterrence.

First, there is a serious problem of conflation in the arguments of both Hoyt and Kapur. Undeniably, Pakistan's willingness to provoke India has increased commensurate with its steady acquisition of a nuclear arsenal. This period from the late 1980s to the late 1990s, however, also coincided with two parallel developments that equipped Pakistan with the motives, opportunities, and means to meddle in India's internal affairs—particularly in Jammu and Kashmir. The most important change that occurred was the end of the conflict with the Soviet Union, which freed up military resources for use in a new jihad in Kashmir. This jihad, in turn, was made possible by the emergence of an indigenous uprising within the state as a result of Indian political malfeasance.⁷⁹ Once the jihadis were organized, trained, armed, and unleashed, it is far from clear whether Pakistan could control the behavior and actions of every resulting jihadist organization.⁸⁰ Consequently, although the number of attacks on India did multiply during the 1990s, it is difficult to establish a firm causal connection between the growth of Pakistani boldness and its gradual acquisition of a full-fledged nuclear weapons capability.

Second, India did respond with considerable force once its military planners realized the full scope and extent of the intrusions across the Line of Control. Despite the vigor of this response, India did exhibit restraint. For example, Indian pilots were under strict instructions not to cross the Line of Control in pursuit of their bombing objectives.⁸¹ They adhered to these guidelines even though they left them more vulnerable to Pakistani ground fire.⁸² The Indian military exercised such restraint to avoid provoking Pakistani fears of a wider attack into Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and then into Pakistan itself.

Indian restraint was also evident at another level. During the last war in

79. Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II."

80. For a reasonably comprehensive list of these jihadi groups, see K. Santhanam, Sreedhar, Sudhir Saxena, and Manish, *Jihadis in Jammu and Kashmir: A Portrait Gallery* (New Delhi: Sage, 2003).

81. On this subject, see J.N. Dixit, *India-Pakistan in War and Peace* (New Delhi: Books Today, 2002), p. 55.

82. Midlevel Indian Air Force personnel, interviews by author, Washington, D.C., December 1999. For more evidence, see Jaswant Singh, *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2006).

Kashmir in 1965, within a week of its onset, the Indian Army horizontally escalated with an attack into Pakistani Punjab. In fact, in the Punjab, Indian forces successfully breached the international border and reached the outskirts of the regional capital, Lahore. The Indian military resorted to this strategy under conditions that were not especially propitious for the country. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, had died in late 1964. His successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, was a relatively unknown politician of uncertain stature and standing, and the Indian military was still recovering from the trauma of the 1962 border war with the People's Republic of China.⁸³ Finally, because of its role in the Cold War, the Pakistani military was armed with more sophisticated, U.S.-supplied weaponry, including the F-86 Sabre and the F-104 Starfighter aircraft. India, on the other hand, had few supersonic aircraft in its inventory, barring a small number of Soviet-supplied MiG-21s and the indigenously built HF-24.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the Indian military remained concerned that China might open a second front along the Himalayan border. Such concerns were not entirely chimerical, because a Sino-Pakistani entente was under way. Despite these limitations, the Indian political leadership responded to Pakistani aggression with vigor and granted the Indian military the necessary authority to expand the scope of the war.

In marked contrast to the politico-military context of 1965, in 1999 India had a self-confident (if belligerent) political leadership and a substantially more powerful military apparatus. Moreover, the country had overcome most of its Nehruvian inhibitions about the use of force to resolve disputes.⁸⁵ Furthermore, unlike in 1965, India had at least two reserve strike corps in the Punjab in a state of military readiness and poised to attack across the border if given the political nod.⁸⁶ Despite these significant differences and advantages, the Indian political leadership chose to scrupulously limit the scope of the conflict to the Kargil region. As K. Subrahmanyam, a prominent Indian defense analyst and political commentator, wrote in 1993:

83. On the Indian military debacle of 1962, see Steven A. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

84. For details about the Indo-Pakistani military balance in 1965, see Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*.

85. On the decline of Nehruvian inhibitions about the use of force, see Kanti Bajpai, "India: Modified Structuralism," in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Asian Security Practices: Material and Ideational Differences* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). See also Sumit Ganguly, "India's Foreign Policy Grows Up," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Winter 2003–2004), pp. 41–47.

86. Gen. Ved Prakash Malik, chief of staff of the Indian Army, interview by author, San Francisco, California, November 1999.

The awareness on both sides of a nuclear capability that can enable either country to assemble nuclear weapons at short notice induces mutual caution. This caution is already evident on the part of India. In 1965, when Pakistan carried out its "Operation Gibraltar" and sent in infiltrators, India sent its army across the cease-fire line to destroy the assembly points of the infiltrators. That escalated into a full-scale war. In 1990, when Pakistan once again carried out a massive infiltration of terrorists trained in Pakistan, India tried to deal with the problem on Indian territory and did not send its army into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.⁸⁷

Subrahmanyam's argument takes on additional significance in light of the overt acquisition of nuclear weapons by both India and Pakistan.

Third, Sagan's assertion about the dominance of the Pakistani military in determining Pakistan's security policies is unquestionably accurate. With the possible exception of the Kargil conflict, however, it is far from clear that the Pakistani military has been the primary force in planning for and precipitating aggressive war against India. The first Kashmir war, without a doubt, had the explicit approval of Pakistan's civilian authorities.⁸⁸ Similarly, there is ample evidence that the highly ambitious foreign minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, goaded President Ayub Khan to undertake the 1965 war.⁸⁹ Finally, once again Bhutto, as much as the Pakistani military dictator Yahya Khan, was complicit in provoking a war with India in 1971, following the outbreak of a civil war in East Pakistan.⁹⁰

Consequently, even though deductive theories may suggest that military organizations are universally more prone to the use of force and the adoption of offensive military doctrines, an assessment of the empirical evidence from South Asia suggests a more complex reality. Even though the Pakistani military has been risk prone and intransigent toward India, the evidence does not support the proposition that the Pakistani military has been more war prone. Civilian decisionmakers have often played a critical role in urging the military to undertake aggressive actions. Furthermore, in the context of weak demo-

87. K. Subrahmanyam, "Capping, Managing, or Eliminating Nuclear Weapons?" in Kanti P. Bajpai and Stephen P. Cohen, eds., *South Asia after the Cold War: International Perspectives* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993), p. 184.

88. On this subject, see Hodson, *The Great Divide*. See also the rather self-serving account of Maj. Gen. Akbar Khan, *Raiders in Kashmir: The Story of the Kashmir War, 1947-48* (Karachi: Pak Publishers, 1970).

89. Brines, *Indo-Pakistani Conflict*.

90. The best discussion of Pakistani decisionmaking can be found in Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

cratic institutions and with politicians desirous of exploiting an existing culture of populist jingoism, civilian regimes, especially in Pakistan, have demonstrated a substantial propensity to resort to war.⁹¹

Was the Kargil conflict, then, an important exception to the Pakistani civilian elite's propensity for bellicosity toward India? Was Nawaz Sharif merely the hapless victim of General Musharraf's machinations? The evidence on the subject remains both incomplete and murky. It is incomplete because there are no adequate and dispassionate Pakistani accounts of civil-military relations during the Kargil crisis. It is murky because key individuals who were involved in making the decisions have provided self-serving and utterly contradictory accounts.⁹² On the basis of the available evidence, it appears that Sharif had some inkling of the military's plan for making incursions into Kargil. He may not have been fully briefed however, and he may not have adequately comprehended the scope and dimensions of those plans.⁹³

What policy implications flow from this analysis? U.S. and multilateral efforts to roll back the Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs have all proven futile. Neither country in the foreseeable future will willingly dispense with these programs. Under the circumstances, it behooves the United States and other major powers, given Pakistan's parlous political order, to help secure its nuclear arsenal from theft, sabotage, or unauthorized usage. Some information within the public domain suggests that the United States has already undertaken modest efforts toward those ends.⁹⁴ Simultaneously, it would be desirable to urge India to adhere to its plans to create a "minimum deterrent capability."⁹⁵ Despite some setbacks, the dramat-

91. On the war proneness of weak democratic regimes, see Jack L. Snyder and Edward D. Mansfield, "Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War," *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Spring 2002), pp. 297–337.

92. For a sound assessment of the limited evidence, see Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002).

93. For a thoughtful assessment of the contradictory claims, see Ayaz Amir, "The Ghost That Won't Go Away," *Dawn* (Karachi), July 23, 2004. See also Shaukat Qadir, "An Analysis of the Kargil Conflict, 1999," *Royal United Services Journal*, Vol. 147, No. 2 (April 2002), pp. 24–30. The controversy about the extent of Sharif's knowledge of Musharraf's war plans continues. In an interview (in Urdu) with a private Pakistani television channel, Geo TV, on June 2, 2008, Gen. Jamshed Gulzar Kiyani, the deputy director-general of the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate during the Kargil operation, claimed that Sharif had not been fully briefed on the likely costs and consequences of the operation. The interview is accessible at <http://hk.youtube.com/watch?v=WpeaO119CDE&feature=related>. (I am grateful to Aqil Shah, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University, for providing me with the electronic link.)

94. David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "U.S. Secretly Aids Pakistan in Guarding Nuclear Arms," *New York Times*, November 18, 2007.

95. Basur, *Minimum Deterrence and Indian Nuclear Security*.

ically improved climate in Indo-U.S. relations makes it possible for the United States to hold meaningful discussions with India on a range of strategic issues without provoking the misgivings of India's strategic community about such a dialogue.⁹⁶ Finally, to avert further Indo-Pakistani crises over Kashmir, both sides need to be encouraged to continue with the peace process that they embarked on in 2004. Specifically, the United States should urge India to pursue a meaningful political dialogue with disaffected Kashmiris with a view toward bringing them into the political process. Although such a dialogue has been under way for some time, substantive progress has been limited. Washington should also prod the Pakistani government to abandon its reliance on various jihadi groups to prosecute its strategic aims in Kashmir. This issue is of particular significance because these groups may not always remain answerable to their Pakistani sponsors and may carry out acts of violence and terror that could easily destabilize a fraught bilateral relationship.

96. Daniel Dombey and Edward Luce, "Ties Expected to Prosper Despite Diplomatic Setback," *Financial Times*, June 11, 2008.