

NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION (NRR) IN SOUTH ASIA

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Abstract

India and Pakistan relations teeter precariously on the pivot of unresolved issues like Kashmir. Both countries possess well equipped conventional and strategic forces in order to deter the other from initiating hostilities. These are explosive ingredients that make the region a potential tinderbox. Cognizant of the challenges and hazards that threaten peace and stability both countries would like to reduce the risk of war. Over time, a number of mechanisms have been put in place to lessen the threat of war. These include a host of CBMs. Off late however, there have been developments, which are ominous and can potentially destabilise the region. The chief among these is the rising conventional force asymmetry, the development of the Ballistic Missile Defence Shield (BMDS) and Indian naval nuclear forces. There is a need for the two South Asian countries to engage in bilateral risk reduction measures covering both conventional as well as nuclear forces. India is not in a mood to engage with Pakistan and although the latter can ill afford a debilitating arms race, it finds it contrary to its security requirements to let India acquire a pre-eminent position in the nuclear forces. Differing national ambitions preclude easy solutions. The requirement is that a win-win situation is created, whereby the chances of war in the subcontinent are reduced substantially. The NRR concept needs to be

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overhauled and brought up to date through innovative diplomacy and out of the box thinking.

Introduction

India and Pakistan are located in a crisis zone. During the past six and a half decades they have fought wars and experienced wars and periods of high tension. The unresolved issue of Kashmir is at the heart of the conflict. Both countries possess well equipped conventional as well as nuclear forces. Scholars belonging to the nuclear pessimist group are of the view that the nuclear deterrent in South Asia is dangerous and any miscalculation in security calculus can actually lead to a nuclear war.¹ Such scenario, no matter how farfetched can be catastrophic for a region inhabited by one quarter of humanity. To reduce the possibility of inadvertent nuclear war, a mechanism known as Nuclear Risk Reduction (NRR) was developed during the Cold War. This was built around a collection of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). The Cold War NRR architecture was constructed around nine key elements, which included *inter alia* agreements not to change the status quo, not to indulge in nuclear brinkmanship, minimising or avoiding dangerous military practices, special reassurance measures for ballistic missiles and nuclear weapon systems, trust in the faithful implementation of treaty obligations and CBMs, verification measures, maintenance of reliable lines of communication, establishment of reliable and survivable command and control systems, efficient intelligence capabilities to track the disposition of opposing nuclear forces and commitments to continuously update the existing measures. Other things being equal, the success of this model has been attributed to a fair measure of good luck.²

India-Pakistan CBMs

The South Asian nuclear milieu has similarities and dissimilarities with the Cold War paradigm in a number of ways. Like Cold War Europe, the disputed territory of Kashmir is heavily militarised. The troops manning their posts along the LoC remain on high alert. It is different, however, in case of nuclear forces. Unlike the US and Soviet nuclear forces, the Indian and Pakistani nuclear warheads are in a state of de-alert i.e.

¹ Read S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Paulo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

² Michael Krepon, "Nuclear Risk Reduction: Is Cold War Experience Applicable to Southern Asia?" www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/NRRMKrepon.pdf (accessed February 14, 2012).

these are not mated and are stored separately, during peacetime. In order to reduce the risk of war, a number of CBMs have been agreed upon. These cover the following areas:

LoC Violations. The violations along the LoC range from exchange of small arms and artillery fire to inadvertent border crossings by civilians and their cattle. An unofficial ceasefire has been in effect since November 2003, but minor incidents still take place. A number of bilateral as well as third party measures are in place to reduce the tension along the disputed border. These include:

United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). This is the oldest military observer group of its kind in the world. The UNMOGIP's mandate covers the entire area of the disputed territory.³ However, the Indians are not very forthcoming in allowing the military observers to operate on their side of the LoC.

Flag Meetings between Local Commanders. This forum is activated on required basis to resolve issues in the Areas of Responsibility (AORs) of local commanders in the disputed territory of Kashmir.⁴ The meeting are held at the level of the battalion or brigade commanders to settle minor issues at their ends.

Violation along the International Border/Working Boundary.⁵ Irritants along the international border/working boundary are resolved by border guards. This is done through regular meetings between the officials of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF)⁶/Pakistan Rangers.⁷ In order to reduce the inventory of disputes, there has been agreement to return inadvertent border crossers immediately.⁸ There have also been proposals to carry out joint border patrols.⁹

³ For details about their mandate read "United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)," <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmogip/> (accessed October 3, 2012).

⁴ "Army seeks flag meeting over ceasefire violation along LoC," The Indian Express, June 19, 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/army-seeks-flag-meeting-over-ceasefire-violation-along-loc/963942> (accessed October 3, 2012).

⁵ The Pakistan India border near the Pakistani city of Sialkot and the disputed territory of Jammu is referred to as the Working Boundary by Pakistan. For details read "Boundary Disputes between India and Pakistan," http://untreaty.un.org/cod/riaa/cases/vol_XXI/1-51.pdf (accessed October 3, 2012).

⁶ Indian Border Security Force (BSF), www.bsf.gov.in/ (accessed October 3, 2012).

⁷ Pakistan Rangers (Sindh), www.pakistanarmy.gov.pk/AWPReview/TextContent.aspx?pld=141 (accessed September 19, 2012), and Pakistan Rangers (Punjab) www.pakistanrangerspunjab.com/index.html (accessed September 15, 2012).

⁸ "India Pakistan Agree to return inadvertent Border Crossers immediately," AndhraNews.net, September 11, 2007, <http://www.andhranews.net/Intl/2007/September/11/India-agree-15152.asp> (accessed November 27, 2012).

⁹ Syed Amjad Shah, "BSF-Rangers mull joint border patrolling," Greater Kashmir, June 24, 2011, <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Jun/24/bsf-rangers-mull-joint-border-patrolling-35.asp> (accessed February 22, 2012).

Hotlines. Ever since the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, hotline between governments has become a standard practice to build confidence and reduce tension. The first hotline between Washington and Moscow, a teletype link was established in 1963. This was subsequently upgraded to speech facility.¹⁰ Telephonic hotlines exist between various government agencies of India and Pakistan and these have been extremely useful in reducing tension during the times of crises. Direct calls outside the hotlines have actually heightened tension. During the Mumbai crisis of November 2007, a direct call allegedly by the then Indian foreign minister Parnab Mukherjee to the President of Pakistan threatened war. This call was later dismissed as a 'hoax' but at that point in time, it actually aggravated the situation.¹¹ The institutionalised direct communication channels are listed below.

The Military Hotline. The military hotline between Army Headquarters was established following the 1971 war.¹² In December 1990, it was agreed to re-establish the hotline and to use it on weekly basis for routine updates. At the February 1999 Lahore Summit, India and Pakistan agreed to review all existing communication links with a view to upgrading the hotline between Director Generals of the Military Operation (DGMOs).¹³ The DGMO hotline channel is used most frequently and has been instrumental in removing doubts and reducing tension.

The Maritime hotline. The maritime hotline between the Indian Coast Guards and Pakistani Maritime Security Agency was set up through an accord signed in January 2004. This communication channel is used for exchanging information on maritime issues, including fishermen straying into each other's territorial waters.¹⁴

The Nuclear Hotline. In 2004, India and Pakistan agreed to establish a telephone hotline between the top civil servants in their

¹⁰ Haraldur Þór Egilsson, "The Origins, Use and Development of Hotline Diplomacy," Discussion Papers on Diplomacy, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael,' Issue 35 (2003): 5, http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2003/20030500_cli_paper_dip_issue85.pdf (accessed October 3, 2012).

¹¹ Nirupama Subramanian Hoax call to Zardari raises new concerns, *The Hindu*, December 7, 2008 <http://www.hindu.com/2008/12/07/stories/2008120750210100.htm> (accessed November 28, 2012).

¹² Pervez Iqbal Cheema, "More Confidence Building Measures," *Pakistan Observer*, October 13, 2007 <http://ipripak.org/articles/newspapers/moreconf.shtml> (accessed October 3, 2012).

¹³ Muhammad Irshad, Indo-Pakistan Confidence Building Measures, *Defence Journal*, August 2002, www.defencejournal.com/2002/august/confidence.htm (accessed February 22, 2012).

¹⁴ "Coastguards of Pakistan, India to set up hotline," *Dawn*, January 31, 2004, archives.dawn.com/2004/01/31/top8.htm (accessed February 22, 2012).

foreign ministries to reduce nuclear risks.¹⁵ So far, there has been no report of this hotline having been actually used.

The Counter Terrorism Hotline. Another hotline was established between the interior ministries in March 2011 to control tensions from spiking during incidents of terrorism.¹⁶

Agreement on Prevention of Airspace Violations. This Agreement was signed by the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan in New Delhi on April 6, 1991. It has 10 articles and covers the mechanism of preventing air space violations.¹⁷

Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities. This benchmark CBM was signed in Islamabad on December 31, 1988 and enforced on January 27, 1991. This obligates both countries to exchange the list of their nuclear facilities with geographical coordinates. Lists have been exchanged punctually on the first of January each year since 1992 despite extremely low points in the two countries' relations. The Agreement encourages each state party to "refrain from undertaking, encouraging or participating in, directly or indirectly, any action aimed at causing the destruction of, or damage to, any nuclear installation or facility in the other country." A nuclear installation or facility includes "nuclear power and research reactors, fuel fabrication, uranium enrichment, isotopes separation and reprocessing facilities as well as any other installations with fresh or irradiated nuclear fuel and materials in any form and establishments storing significant quantities of radioactive materials."¹⁸

Agreement on Advance Notification on Military Exercises, Manoeuvres and Troop Movements. This Agreement makes it mandatory for each side to give prior notice of military drills and troop movements to prevent speculations and counter movements. This was signed in New Delhi on April 6, 1991.¹⁹

Agreement on Pre-Notification of Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles. This Agreement has been one of the most important CBMs in case of India and Pakistan. This requires the two countries to issue advance notifications of flight-tests of all kinds of ballistic missiles, three days in advance in a 'five-day launch window.' The warning includes Notice to

¹⁵ Peter Foster, "Pakistan and India to set up nuclear hotline," The Telegraph, Jun 21, 2004, www.telegraph.co.uk, (accessed February 22, 2012).

¹⁶ Dean Nelson, "India and Pakistan to establish counter-terrorism hotline," The Telegraph, March 29, 2011, www.telegraph.co.uk (accessed February 22, 2012).

¹⁷ "Agreement between India and Pakistan to prevent Air Space Violations," <http://www.stimson.org/research-pages/agreement-between-pakistan-and-india-on-prevention-of-air-space-violation/> (accessed October 3, 2012).

¹⁸ South Asia Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) Timeline 1988 – Present, Stimson Center, <http://www.stimson.org/data-sets/south-asia-confidence-building-measures-cbm-timeline/> (accessed September 24, 2012).

¹⁹ "Pakistan India CBM Timelines," Jinnah Institute website: jinnah-institute.org/pak-india-pcm/pcm-timeline (accessed February 22, 2012).

Airmen (NOTAM) and Navigation and Weather Warnings in the Area (NAVEREAs). The Pre-Notifications are conveyed through the respective Foreign Offices and the High Commissions, as per the format. The Agreement requires that the test launch site(s) should not fall within 40 km, and the planned impact area should not fall within 70 km, of the International Boundary or the LoC. The planned trajectory of the ballistic missile should not cross the International Boundary or the Line of Control and should maintain a 40 km horizontal distance from the International Boundary and the LoC. The bilateral Pre-Notification exchanged, has to be treated as confidential, unless otherwise agreed upon. Annual meetings are to be held to review and amend the Agreement. The Agreement is automatically renewable after a five-year period and each country has the right to withdraw from it, giving six months written notice.²⁰

Joint Declaration on the Complete Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Both India and Pakistan are signatories of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). They have also signed a bilateral agreement on complete prohibition of chemical weapons. This Agreement was concluded in New Delhi on August 19, 1992.²¹

Agreement on Nuclear Test Moratorium. After the nuclear tests of May 1998, both India and Pakistan declared a unilateral moratorium on further testing. In 2004, the two countries formalized this no-test initiative into an agreement. The Agreement obligates each party to observe a moratorium on further nuclear testing “unless, in exercise of national sovereignty, it decides that extraordinary events have jeopardised its supreme interests.”²²

Agreement on Reducing the Risk from Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons. In order to reduce the risk of arising out of nuclear incidents, an agreement was signed on February 21, 2007. The validity of the Agreement was extended with mutual consent with effect from February 21, 2012.²³

Meetings and Dialogues. Meetings and dialogues have been held regularly at official and unofficial forums to build an atmosphere of trust. The unofficial and semi-official dialogues are organised within the framework of Track 2 and 1.5 series respectively. The aim is to let former

²⁰ Agreement between India and Pakistan on Pre-Notification of Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles, <http://www.stimson.org/research-pages/agreement-between-india-and-pakistan-on-pre-notification-of-flight-testing-of-ballistic-missiles/> (accessed February 22, 2012).

²¹ “Pakistan India CBM Timelines,” Jinnah Institute website: jinnah-institute.org/pak-india-pcm/pcm-timeline (accessed February 22, 2012).

²² “India, Pakistan Agree to N-test Moratorium,” Business Standard, June 24, 2004, <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/india-pakistan-agree-to-n-test-moratorium/154442/> (accessed November 27, 2012).

²³ Baqir Sajjad Syed, “Accord on reducing risk of nuclear accidents extended,” Dawn, February 22, 2012.

retired officials from civil and military backgrounds to discuss options beyond the established positions. These meetings are held in a third country, out of media glare to allow the dialogists to participate in an atmosphere free of encumbrances. The official meetings are alternately held in Islamabad and Delhi at various levels of officialdom from heads of states and governments down to the experts. These meetings are categorised as:

Summit Level Meetings. Summit meetings between the heads of states and governments and states are a rare phenomenon but informal meetings on the sidelines of international conferences have taken place on a number of occasions. President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan made a religious pilgrimage to Ajmer Sharif in India in his private capacity in April this year. He took this opportunity to call upon the Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. He used the opportunity to negotiate the release of the Pakistani octogenarian Dr Khalil Chishti held under murder charges for the last two decade.²⁴ Zardari also extended an invitation to the Indian PM to visit Pakistan, which he renewed in the Non Alignment Movement (NAM) conference held in Tehran in August.²⁵ It was expected that the Indian Prime Minister would take up on the offer and pay a return visit before the year was out. Such a visit would have generated a lot of goodwill and reduced tension, but this didn't materialise.

Minister Level Meetings. Pakistani foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar visited India in July 2011 and made a very good impact.²⁶ Her counterpart, S.M. Krishna, returned the call by visiting Islamabad in September, this year.²⁷

Secretary Level Meetings. The foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan met in July 2012 and reviewed the implementation of the existing nuclear and conventional confidence building measures (CBMs). They decided that separate meetings of the Expert Level Groups on Nuclear and Conventional CBMs would be held at a future date "to discuss implementation and strengthening of the existing CBMs and suggest additional mutually acceptable steps that could build greater trust and

²⁴ "Who is Khalil Chishti?" The Nation, April 10, 2012, <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/10-Apr-2012/who-is-khalil-chishti-thenation-monitoring> (accessed November 27, 2012).

²⁵ "Manmohan Singh, Zardari meet on sidelines of NAM Summit in Tehran," August 30, 2012, Yahoo.com, <http://in.news.yahoo.com/manmohan-singh-zardari-meet-sidelines-nam-summit-tehran-154810142.html> (accessed November 27, 2012).

²⁶ Nikita Mehta, "Hina Rabbani Khar's Birkin Bag in the Spotlight," Wall Street Journal Blog, July 28, 2011, <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2011/07/28/hina-rabbani-khar%E2%80%99s-birkin-bag-in-spotlight/> (accessed November 27, 2012).

²⁷ "Pakistan visit fruitful, says SM Krishna," The Times of India, September 9, 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-09-09/india/33713197_1_pakistan-visit-hina-rabbani-khar-rehman-malik (accessed November 27, 2012).

confidence between the two countries, thereby contributing to peace and security.”²⁸

Expert Level Meetings. In the pursuance of what their foreign secretaries had formally decided, the nuclear experts, when they met in the sixth round of expert level talks held on December 26-27, 2011 at Islamabad,²⁹ agreed upon to move forward on proposals to extend two key agreements on pre-notification of ballistic missile tests and reduce the risk from accidents related to nuclear weapons.³⁰

Unilateral CBMs. Both countries have undertaken certain unilateral CBMs. These include:

Nuclear Policies. India has a draft nuclear policy, while the Pakistani nuclear position is well known and is based on a number of official statements issued from time to time. India claims to subscribe to a No First Use Policy. Pakistan has given no such understanding.

Nuclear Command & Control Authorities. Pakistani National Command Authority was created in 2000, while the Nuclear Command Authority was created sometime later. These are meant to formalise the nuclear command and control systems and lay down the correct chain of command.

Nuclear Export Controls. In 2004, the Pakistani parliament passed a bill tightening controls on the export of nuclear and biological weapons technology and missile delivery systems.³¹

Conventional Forces

Nuclear deterrence is not brittle. The tensile strength is enhanced through skillful diplomacy and imaginative posturing of conventional forces. In a hypothetical scenario, the situation will inclemently go from bad to worse. It will be preceded by a flurry of activity. This will include, not necessarily, in the same order: a war of words, severance of trade, expulsion of diplomatic staff, closure of air corridors, mobilisation of troops, hot pursuits and violation of air and ground space and perhaps a limited war. There will be time before or during the conventional war to pull back from the brink. Therefore, it is important that trust is built in the area of conventional forces as well. First and foremost is the deployment

²⁸ “India Pakistan Experts to meet over Nuclear CBM’s,” July 5, 2010, TwoCircles.net, http://twocircles.net/2012jul05/india_pakistan_experts_meet_over_nuclear_cbms.html (accessed November 27, 2012).

²⁹ “Pakistan, India to start talks on CBMs on 26th,” Dawn, December 23, 2011.

³⁰ “India, Pakistan agree to move ahead on missile tests notification,” The Economic Times, December 27, 2011,

³¹ “Pakistani Law Makers Pass Nuclear Export Controls,” NTI, September 14, 2004, <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/pakistani-lawmakers-pass-nuclear-export-controls/> (accessed November 27, 2012).

of conventional forces. Currently, the two militaries are deployed in a manner that these require some time to come into action. The Indian Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) aims to reduce mobilisation time and launching shallow manoeuvres below the perceived Pakistani nuclear thresholds within 72 to 96 hours of the initiation of hostilities. To actualise such a scenario, troops and equipment of the Indian strike formations have been deployed in the AORs of the holding formations, with a view to enabling eight integrated battle groups supported by integral aircraft, helicopter gunships, and self-propelled artillery to make swift inroads into Pakistani territory before it responds by pressing the nuclear button. The Indian Army has carried out drills in the Rajasthan desert to practice the CSD concept.³² Such developments are dangerous and serve no other purpose but skipping a number of rungs on the escalation ladder. This has triggered responses from the Pakistani side such as the development of short range missiles like Nasr.³³ A missile carrying a conventional warhead can always be misconstrued for the diabolical nuclear first strike, unleashing multiple retaliatory strikes. Such a scenario can only be avoided if there is a treaty on reduction of conventional weapons on the pattern of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). The CFE laid down the scale of conventional weapons i.e. tanks, artillery guns and aircraft in the European theatre.³⁴ A similar formula can be prepared for India and Pakistan, whereby troop and weapon deployment in offensive posture near the international border is reduced. This will reduce the threat of a quick invasion within the parameters of the CSD.

Anti-Ballistic Missile Forces

Another area, which is a cause of grave concern, is the Indian plan to erect a Ballistic Missile Defence Shield (BMDS). India has been evaluating Russian, American and Israeli ballistic missile interceptor

³² Azam Khan, "Understanding the Cold Start Doctrine," *The Express Tribune*, October 18, 2011, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/276661/understanding-indias-cold-start-doctrine/> (accessed February 22, 2012).

³³ Read Shireen M. Mazri, "Battlefield Nukes for Pakistan: Why Hatf XI (Nasr) is essential for Pakistan's Defence Posture and Doctrine," *Pakistan Defence Unit*, September 2012, http://pakdefenceunit.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/105792427-battlefield-nukes-for-pakistan-why-hatf-ix-nasr-is-essential-for-pakistan_s-deterrence-posture-doctrine.pdf (accessed November 28, 2012).

³⁴ CFE Treaty, www.fas.org/nuke/control/cfe/index.html (accessed February 22, 2012).

systems.³⁵ They also have their eyes on the Israeli Iron Dome system to deter short range missiles.³⁶ Media reports suggest that Indians have tested Prithvi Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABMs).³⁷ The BMDS is a prohibitively expensive programme and is not inviolable against concentrated missile and air attacks, nonetheless, the threat of missile shield may have already triggered a missile race. Pakistan is investing a lot of resources in fine tuning their surface to surface and air to surface cruise missiles that can fly below the radar cover of the Indian BMDS. A missile shield will also heighten the temptation to go for a nuclear first strike in the opening phases of a war, dramatically and unfortunately shortening the nuclear ladder. There is a dire need to work out an Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty on the lines of the one that existed between the US and the USSR/Russian Federation before it was scrapped in 2001.³⁸ This treaty should specify the number of interceptors that each country can deploy and the likely sites that each country would cover with an ABM umbrella.

The Naval Nuclear Forces

The third area, where asymmetries are on the rise is the Indian Ocean.³⁹ In 2013, the Indian Navy plans to add two powerful surface and sub-surface assets to their existing fleet. They will take possession of their second aircraft carrier, announced the former Admiral Gorshkov (INS Vikramaditya) late next year.⁴⁰ They also plan to deploy their nuclear-powered submarine Arihant sometime next year. This submarine is based on the design of Russian Charlie II class submarine, which was leased to

³⁵ Sanjay Badri Maharaj, "Ballistic Missile Defence for India," www.bharat-rakshak.com/IAF/Today/Contemporary/328-BMD.html (accessed February 23, 2012).

³⁶ Indrani Bagchi and Josy Joseph, India eyes Israel's Iron Dome to counter Pak, puppets, *The Times of India*, Nov 23, 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-11-23/india/35317887_1_iron-dome-short-range-rockets-short-range-missiles (accessed November 28, 2012).

³⁷ Martin Sieff, Space War, March 11, 2009, http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Prithvi_ABH_hits_target_missile_999.html, (accessed February 23, 2012).

³⁸ ABM Treaty, www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/abm/abm2.html, SimilarYou +1'd this publicly. Undo, (accessed February 23, 2012).

³⁹ Iskander Rehman, "Drowning Stability: The Perils of Naval Nuclearization and Brinkmanship in the Indian Ocean," *Naval War College Review* (Fall 2012): 64-88, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/08/21/drowning-stability-perils-of-naval-nuclearization-and-brinkmanship-in-indian-ocean/djqy> (accessed October 3, 2012).

⁴⁰ "Delivery of Admiral Gorshkov delayed, may arrive only by 2013-end," *The Times of India*, September 18, 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-09-18/india/33924837_1_admiral-gorshkov-aircraft-carrier-sevmash (accessed November 28, 2012).

India between 1988 and 1991. Arihant will carry ballistic missiles.⁴¹ Five versions of the Arihant will be fabricated in local dockyards.⁴² The introduction of nuclear submarines in the regional waters will be very destabilising indeed.⁴³ India has already acquired an Akula II class Russian nuclear-powered submarine, now called INS Chakra II.⁴⁴ Nuclearpowered submarines can go undetected for prolonged periods of time. Needless to say, Pakistan is also developing its own nuclear-powered submarine. Before it is able to do that, it may resort to stopgap measures like mining the submarine approaches and likely battle stations.

Proposed NRR Structure

Disarmament is ideally suited to eliminate the chances of war but a regional or a global zero remains a pipe dream. Bilateral arms control is another way to put brakes on sudden escalation. A range of political and military CBMs can strengthen the NRR regime and make it a workable option. In this respect, the following is recommended:

Revisit Past Proposals. There is a need to seriously revisit past proposals like South Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ), bilateral test ban treaty, No War Pact and Nuclear Risk Reduction Centre (NRRC). The No War Pact has been suggested by Prime Ministers Nehru and Shastri on the Indian side and Presidents Ayub Khan, Zia ul Haque and Musharraf on the Pakistani side.⁴⁵ The NWFZ and bilateral test ban treaty was suggested by Pakistan through Prime Minister Junejo in 1987.⁴⁶ Nothing would be lost if these proposals are brought out of the archives and re-examined. Accepting the NWFZ may appear like unilaterally accepting nuclear disarmament but then there can be imaginative variations like declaring certain areas of historical and cultural significance and heavily populated as non-nuclear target zones. Other areas can still remain fair game. No War Pact is still a possibility because it will not put caps on acquiring weapons but then it will build a domestic

⁴¹ Rajit Pandit, "India's elusive nuclear triad will be operational soon: Navy chief," The Times of India, August 8, 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-08/india/33099651_1_ins-arihant-ssbns-slbm (accessed September 19, 2012).

⁴² "India Launches the Mysterious Arihant, Strategy Page, July 28, 2009, www.strategypage.com/htmwnw/htsub/20090728.aspx (accessed January 12, 2012).

⁴³ India submarine 'threatens peace,' BBC News, July 28, 2009, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8171715.stm, (accessed February 14, 2012).

⁴⁴ INS Chakra SSN, Indian Defense Projects Sentinel, idp.justthe80.com/naval-projects/submarines/ins-chakra-ssn, (accessed February 23, 2012).

⁴⁵ Siddharth Varadarajan, "No-war pact can cut both ways," The Times of India, July 11, 2001, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2001-07-11/india/27220958_1_india-and-pakistan-pact-war (accessed November 28, 2012).

⁴⁶ "Pakistan Proposes Nuclear Test Ban in South Asia," The New York Times, September 25, 1987, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/25/world/pakistan-proposes-nuclear-test-ban-in-south-asia.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

consensus against spending scarce national resources in the absence of a real enemy. Nuclear Risk Reduction Centre (NRRC) in South Asia was an idea that was suggested in 2004 and a paper was produced by the US Center of Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).⁴⁷ The idea did not find favour in official quarters. Perhaps it is time to give this idea another chance through bilateral discussions.

Identify Causes. There is a need to task think tanks on both sides to study past cases of wars and tensions and come up with a joint lessons learnt paper. These should then be accepted by both sides and methods be adopted at the policy and doctrinal level to avoid these in the future.

Monitoring. For any system to work, there is a need for transparency. This can only be done through mutually agreed monitoring measures like using existing national technical means, joint aerial observation and onsite inspections by neutral or national observers.

The Framework. There is got be a framework to develop a NRR. Ideas cannot be left hanging in mid-air. To build sturdy structure would require political will and conscious effort. If India feels that it is on a tremendous economic trajectory and that it does not need to engage with Pakistan, there will be no progress. No deal can be agreed on the basis of inequality. If the national leaderships are truly concerned about the welfares of their two people, they will always find ways to move forward. There are plenty of home grown and foreign ideas that can find roots in the South Asian strategic landscape to ease tensions and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. For starters, NRR should be introduced into the national policies of the two countries as a long-term project. For this concept to succeed, it has to move beyond the realm of CBMs. This would require the changing of mindsets. From top down, this can be done by training political leaders, other stakeholders like academia, businessmen, youth and the popular media towards working jointly to build trust and reduce acrimony. Statements like 'all options are open,' should be avoided at all costs. Stereotyping and typecasting should be banned by law. Rabble rousers on both sides should be shunned as aberrations and not representatives of the common man. Foreign offices should be tasked to seriously identify convergences instead of divergences and methods identified to resolve peripheral issues like Siachin and Sir Creek. Efforts should be doubled to resolve intractable issues like Kashmir. This would be easier said than done but then it should not be given up as a lost cause. Loose ends must be tied up to remove all causes of friction.

⁴⁷ Teresita Schaeffer, "Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers in South Asia," CSIS, <http://csis.org/publication/nuclear-risk-reduction-centres-south-asia> (accessed November 28, 2012).

Conclusion

For NRR to materialise there is a genuine need for honesty of purpose. It is a viable option provided that there is seriousness on both sides. Nuclear weapons have provided strategic stability in an accident-prone region in the last fourteen years, but this is a temporary phenomenon. An open-ended arms race, either in the realm of conventional weapons, or nuclear weapons can disturb this precarious balance. It also denies the common man essential utilities like food, clean drinking water, energy and basic health. A country investing in weapons of any classification or category does so at the cost of the welfare of its people. It is high time to move beyond acrimony and build understanding and trust in South Asia, so the two countries progress in all fields of human endeavour, while maintaining independent identity and spirit.

