

India's Ways of (Non-) War: Explaining New Delhi's Forbearance in the Face of Pakistani Provocations

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ABSTRACT

This article examines four India–Pakistan conflict episodes during South Asia's overtly nuclear era (1998–2018), asking why New Delhi has consistently chosen temperate, measured responses to significant Pakistani and Pakistan-abetted provocations. It argues that, in combination, three of the most common explanations—nuclear deterrence, U.S. crisis management, and a lack of favorable conventional military options—best account for Indian forbearance. Of these three causes, the nuclear factor is most important, because the other two are both linked and subservient to it. The Indo-Pakistani nuclear competition generates the urgent need for crisis management and sharply diminishes New Delhi's favorable options for conventional retaliation. While successive Indian leaders from different political parties have often been criticized for their unwillingness to launch more sizable punitive responses against Pakistan, they should instead be lauded for their strategic moderation. Indian decision making is the chief firebreak against major, possibly nuclear, war in South Asia today.

Keywords: nuclear deterrence, nuclear proliferation, crisis behavior, India—nuclear weapons, Pakistan—nuclear weapons, Kashmir, terrorism

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina cuatro episodios de conflicto entre India y Pakistán durante la era abiertamente nuclear del Sur de Asia (1998-2018), preguntándose por qué Nueva Delhi ha elegido consistentemente respuestas moderadas a importantes provocaciones paquistaníes. Sostiene que una combinación de tres de las explicaciones

más comunes: disuasión nuclear, manejo de crisis de EE. UU. y la falta de opciones militares convencionales favorables—son las que mejor explican la indulgencia india. De estas tres causas, el factor nuclear es el más importante, porque los otros dos están vinculados y subordinados a él. La competencia nuclear indo-paquistaní genera la necesidad urgente de una gestión de la crisis y fuertemente reduce las opciones favorables que tiene Nueva Delhi para la retaliación convencional. Mientras que sucesivos líderes de diferentes partidos políticos han sido criticados frecuentemente por su falta de voluntad para lanzar respuestas punitivas grandes contra Pakistán, deberían más bien ser alabados por su moderación estratégica. La toma de decisiones en India es el principal cortafuegos contra una guerra mayor (y posiblemente nuclear) en el sur de Asia en la actualidad.

Palabras clave: disuasión nuclear, proliferación nuclear, comportamiento de crisis, India—armas nucleares, Pakistán—armas nucleares, Cachemira, terrorismo

摘要

本文检验了1998-2018年间南亚显著核时代时期发生的四次印度-巴基斯坦冲突事件，同时提出疑问：为何新德里在面对显著的巴基斯坦挑衅或由巴基斯坦煽动的挑衅时，持续选择温和措施予以回应。本文主张：总体而言，最常见的三种解释——核威慑、美国危机管理和缺少有利的传统军事选择——最能说明印度的容忍。在这三种原因中，核威慑因素最为重要，因为其他两个因素都与前者有关且屈从于前者。印度-巴基斯坦核竞争催生了危机管理这一紧急需求，并急剧缩小了新德里在传统反击上的有利选择。尽管来自不同政党的历届印度领导者时常被批评为不愿意对巴基斯坦发动更大范围的惩罚性措施，但他们在实施温和战略一事上应该得到赞扬。印度决策是如今反对南亚发生大型战争（核战争也有可能）的主要防火线。

关键词：核威慑，核扩散，危机行为，印度—核武器，巴基斯坦—核武器，克什米尔，恐怖主义

In the two decades since New Delhi and Islamabad went overtly nuclear in May 1998, India has been the victim of repeated armed provocations by Pakistan and substate actors supported by Pakistan. Each of these attacks has sparked a crisis or serious tension in Indo-Pakistani relations, and in each case, Indian political leaders have demonstrated notable forbearance by not striking back in ways that might escalate to a major India–Pakistan war. India's restraint was evident during India–Pakistan conflict episodes¹ in 1999, 2001–2002, 2008, and 2016. The long-standing dispute over the territory of Jammu and Kashmir² was at the root of the spring 1999 conflict, which was sparked by Pakistan's initiation of secret subconventional military operations on the towering Himalayan mountain peaks just across the line of control (LOC) in Indian Kashmir. After initially struggling to mount an effective military response, Indian forces eventually prevailed over the intruders with ground and air attacks that were strictly limited to the *Indian* side of the LOC.³ In December 2001, Jaish-e-Muhammad (“Muhammad's Troops”—JeM) terrorists linked to Pakistan⁴ ignited another crisis with an attack on the Indian parliament in New Delhi. The crisis was prolonged when militants followed up in May 2002 with a mass-casualty attack on an Indian military installation in Kashmir. India responded with a massive mobilization of its military forces along the Pakistani border and LOC, and Pakistan reacted in kind. Although India seemed close to launching a conventional invasion of Pakistan at two

distinct points in the standoff, known as Twin Peaks, the crisis was eventually resolved without the use of force in the autumn of 2002.⁵ In November 2008, 10 terrorists from the Pakistan-linked Lashkar-e-Taiba (“Army of the Pure”—LeT)⁶ roamed around Mumbai unleashing a 60-hour bloodbath. The terrorists came ashore on boats before rampaging through the city murdering civilians at luxury hotels, a busy rail station, and other soft targets. The death toll was 166.⁷ As in 2001–02, Indian decision makers debated launching a punitive military response, but Congress party Prime Minister Manmohan Singh ultimately desisted. Since 2008, there have been no terrorist attacks of a similar magnitude, but a number of smaller attacks—such as the January 2016 siege in Pathankot—have been attributed to terrorist groups that are known to have ties with the Inter-Services Intelligence organization (ISI)—Islamabad's apex spy agency. The most recent of these took place in September 2016, when infiltrators from Pakistan crossed the Kashmir LOC and attacked an Indian military encampment at Uri, killing 19 soldiers. In response, Bharatiya Janata Party (“Indian People's Party”—BJP) Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered what New Delhi termed “surgical strikes” against terrorist “launch pads” on Pakistan's side of the LOC.⁸

In sum, we now have a substantial historical record of Indian decision making across two decades of an overtly nuclear South Asia, involving different types of Pakistani or Pakistan-abetted attacks in both Kashmir and India proper. During this period, different In-

dian political parties and prime ministers have been in office. Diverse groups of Indian political leaders have repeatedly chosen circumspect responses that have clearly been intended to limit escalation to a major India–Pakistan war. Thus, the 20th anniversary of the 1998 Indian and Pakistani nuclear explosive tests is a propitious time to examine India’s political–military behavior in the shadow of nuclear weapons. This paper investigates a question of great importance for the future of crisis stability in a nuclearized South Asia: Why has New Delhi consistently chosen non-escalatory responses in the face of Pakistani aggression?

There can be, of course, no mono-causal explanations for such vital and complex national security decisions. Numerous, varied pressures weigh heavily on decision makers, and different individuals and organizations prioritize these factors in different orders. In addition, each individual conflict episode has its own idiosyncratic contributing factors. Across the four episodes, though, broader patterns emerge from India’s policy choices that narrow causes down to the most essential ones. Broadly speaking, the explanations most often adduced by scholars for India’s cautious responses to Pakistani and Pakistan-abetted aggression identify four causes: (1) *nuclear deterrence*, or the fear that more lethal Indian military action would run the risk of Pakistani nuclear retaliation or set off an uncontrollable escalatory process that could lead to a nuclear exchange;⁹ (2) timely and energetic *U.S. diplomatic intervention* to help manage conflicts

and reduce tensions before they escalate to major war;¹⁰ (3) an Indian “doctrine” of *strategic restraint* that predisposes political leaders to prefer nonmilitary responses to security challenges emanating from Pakistan;¹¹ and (4) a *dearth of good conventional military options* that would induce Pakistan to cease its provocations without running the risk of conflict escalation to major war, perhaps even to a nuclear exchange.¹²

My main argument has two threads. First, three of these four causes—nuclear deterrence, U.S. crisis management, and the lack of good conventional military options—combine to best explain Indian forbearance in the face of Pakistani provocations. Second, the *primary* factor causing India to refrain from more vigorous retaliation has been nuclear deterrence. U.S. crisis management and the absence of good conventional military options were also influential across the four conflict episodes, but less so. These two causes are closely tied—and subservient—to the influence of nuclear weapons, which sparked U.S. crisis management efforts in the first place and severely limited Indian conventional military options. I argue that the least compelling explanation for Indian moderation is the ostensible doctrine of Indian strategic restraint, which stems mainly from the deterrent power of nuclear weapons themselves, not from any doctrine or abiding principle of Indian strategic culture. The remainder of this paper is organized in the following way. The next four sections, respectively, provide succinct narrative accounts of the 1999, 2001–02, 2008, and 2016 India–Paki-

stan conflict episodes. The fifth section is a comparative analysis of the four most prominent explanations of India's strategic temperance in a nuclearized South Asia. I assess how well each of these arguments captures the pattern of Indian caution, explain the relationship between the primary and secondary causes noted above, and elaborate at greater length on why nuclear deterrence is the most critical factor in the Indian decision-making calculus. The sixth and final section briefly examines some implications of my argument.

The Kargil Conflict

In the spring and summer of 1999, India and Pakistan fought a limited military conflict in the Himalayan mountains of the disputed territory of Kashmir. It began when Pakistani troops of the Northern Light Infantry (NLI) covertly occupied a number of ridges on the Indian side of the LOC, which had been vacated by Indian forces in the winter.¹³ By May, more than a thousand troops in civilian clothes, operating in small groups,¹⁴ had secretly dug themselves into more than 130 posts along a 75-mile stretch of Himalayan ridges, "up to five miles deep on the Indian side of the LoC" separating Indian and Pakistani Kashmir. They were armed with "machine guns, antipersonnel land mines, man-portable air defense missiles, mortars ... and light artillery pieces."¹⁵ Some of the intruders' positions overlooked National Highway 1A, which is the best road between Srinagar and Leh—and thus a vital ground supply route to Indian mil-

itary forces both on the Siachen Glacier and along the sensitive border between Ladakh and China.¹⁶ The Indian military discovered Pakistan's intrusion on May 3. Six days later, the Pakistani soldiers destroyed an Indian ammunition dump outside the town of Kargil.¹⁷

New Delhi's initial response was to send in thousands of soldiers to evict the aggressors. Special forces personnel were dropped on to ridges by helicopter. Indian troops equipped with howitzers, rocket launchers, and heavy mortars launched attacks supported by helicopter gunships. "The aim was to surround the infiltrators and choke off their supplies even while building up Indian strength to launch assaults."¹⁸ But, it soon became clear that the army would need help. As Indian forces attempted to push their way up to extremely high altitudes—18,000 feet in some cases—they were easy targets for Pakistani snipers and gunners. Not only that, but helicopter gunships were of limited effectiveness at such altitudes. After taking heavy casualties, the Indians realized that greater firepower would be necessary to dislodge the Pakistanis. The Indian Air Force (IAF) was initially skeptical about using fighter-bombers at Kargil, worrying that it might escalate the conflict. The IAF was supported in its initial caution by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS); however, mounting casualties and subsequent consultation between the army and air force chiefs led them to conclude that the more potent IAF assets should, in fact, be used. On May 25, the CCS ordered the Indian armed forces to "take any action necessary to

evict the invaders.”¹⁹ IAF ground-attack aircraft began to pound the intruders’ positions on May 26. In the ensuing few days, the Indian forces lost two aircraft and a helicopter.²⁰ In the longer term, IAF operations had devastating effects on the Pakistanis’ morale, as fighter aircraft pummeled their vulnerable supply lines.²¹ The possibility of military operations across the LOC was a constant subject of debate within the CCS, but Indian forces were ordered to restrict their operations to the Indian side of the line.²²

Indian leaders also tasked their armed forces to prepare for war all along the Indo-Pakistani border. In late May, U.S. satellites detected these preparations. According to one account, “elements of the Indian army’s main offensive ‘strike force’ were loading tanks, artillery, and other heavy equipment onto flatbed rail cars.” In addition, U.S. officials said later, “armored units intended for offensive use were leaving their garrisons in Rajasthan ... and preparing to move.”²³ As one analyst puts it: “The key offensive formations intended for the international border, the three ‘strike corps,’ were ‘untouched’ by Kargil deployments and thus available if the political decision had been made to deploy them.”²⁴ A senior US official recounts that “we could all too easily imagine ... a deadly descent into full scale conflict all along the border with a danger of nuclear cataclysm.”²⁵

Nuclear-tinged statements by Pakistani leaders fed into these concerns. On May 30, four days after the IAF began attacking Pakistani positions, For-

eign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad said that Pakistan would “not hesitate to use any weapon in our arsenal to defend our territorial integrity.”²⁶ One source speculates that this signaling was intended to caution India “against any further escalation, vertical or horizontal, in its conventional military response along the international border.”²⁷ Indeed, according to then-Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, New Delhi perceived at one point that Pakistan was “operationalizing its nuclear missiles.”²⁸ India’s army chief during the conflict, V.P. Malik, recalls that, in turn, “we considered it prudent to take some protective measures ... some of our missile assets were dispersed and relocated.”²⁹ Although media reports suggested “both sides moved ballistic missiles and possibly initiated nuclear weapons readiness measures during the crisis,” the exact nature of any such activities remains unclear to this day.³⁰

As of mid-June, India’s armed forces continued to have strict orders not to cross the LOC.³¹ The IAF was carrying out some 40 sorties daily,³² in an attempt to rout the Pakistani invaders—or at least to soften up their positions so that Indian ground forces could overwhelm them. In mid-June, the IAF and the Indian Navy were put on alert, with the Eastern Fleet reinforcing the Western Fleet.³³ The navy’s mission in the Arabian Sea was to contain Pakistan’s naval assets in the event of conflict escalation. On June 18, Malik ordered his forces to be “prepared for escalation—sudden or gradual—along the LoC or the international border and be prepared to go to (declared) war at

short notice.”³⁴ However, by the third week of June, the tide had begun to turn in India’s favor. Indian soldiers managed to retake two vital posts on the Tololing Ridge in the Dras sector, which overlook National Highway 1A, the ground supply route to other posts near the LOC.³⁵ By late June, Indian “mechanised and artillery divisions [had] advanced to forward positions all along the border in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir.” All army leave had been canceled. Trains continued to transport tanks and ammunition toward the border in Rajasthan. The Pakistan Army was making similar preparations for war near its preferred point of attack along the Punjab frontier. But neither army “made any decisive movements” of its strike corps, and New Delhi remained resolute against crossing the LOC.³⁶

The Kargil fighting intensified, so did the diplomatic maneuvering between New Delhi, Islamabad, Beijing, and Washington.³⁷ Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, spoke by phone several times in the early weeks of the crisis, with Vajpayee telling Sharif that India would do whatever was necessary to drive the intruders back across the LOC.³⁸ In response, Sharif refused to accept Pakistani responsibility for the invasion. Senior State Department officials also urged Pakistani leaders to withdraw their forces from India’s side of the LOC.³⁹ During a visit to Beijing in late May, the chief of the Pakistan Army, Pervez Musharraf, was urged to pursue peace with India, an “implicit rejection of Pakistan’s efforts to internationalize

the Kashmir issue through its precipitation of the conflict over Kargil.”⁴⁰ When Indian foreign minister Singh met with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott in late May, Washington agreed to take a firm stand with Pakistan, in return for which India reportedly pledged not to cross the LOC or otherwise escalate the fighting.⁴¹ On June 11, Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz traveled to Beijing a day before meeting with Singh in New Delhi. The Chinese urged “negotiations and dialogue” to resolve the Kargil matter; once again, “China’s non-mention of the United Nations or a role for the international community in resolving the Kashmir issue constituted rejection of Pakistan’s Kargil gambit and an implicit gesture toward India.”⁴² Aziz’s talks with Singh the next day were unavailing.

As fears of escalation grew, U.S. President Bill Clinton called Vajpayee and Sharif on June 14–15, urging both sides to resist widening the conflict.⁴³ But, New Delhi’s patience was wearing thin.⁴⁴ On June 17–18, Vajpayee aide Brajesh Mishra told U.S. national security adviser Sandy Berger that India might be compelled to escalate its operations.⁴⁵ From Washington’s perspective: “by late June the situation was deteriorating fast. The two parties were engaged in an intense conflict along the Kargil front and both were mobilizing their forces for larger conflict. Casualties were mounting on both sides. Our intelligence assessments were pointing toward the danger of full-scale war becoming a real possibility. The danger was that the Indians would grow weary of attacking uphill (actually up-moun-

tain) into well dug in Pakistani positions ... New Delhi could easily decide to open another front elsewhere along the [LOC] to ease its burden and force the Pakistanis to fight on territory favorable to India. Even if the conflict remained confined solely to Kargil, the danger of escalation was high.”⁴⁶ Deeply concerned about the prospect of an escalating war between two nuclear weapons states, Clinton dispatched the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), Gen. Anthony Zinni, to Islamabad from June 23 to 27. Zinni urged Pakistani leaders to call off the Kargil operation;⁴⁷ in response, he reportedly received “fairly clear” assurances from his interlocutors that the so-called insurgents would be withdrawn from the Indian side of the LOC.⁴⁸ Immediately after Zinni’s mission to Pakistan, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Gordon Lanpher briefed Indian officials on Zinni’s trip and urged continued Indian restraint in the face of escalatory pressures.⁴⁹ Then, during a late-June visit to Beijing, Sharif was rebuffed in his efforts to seek Chinese support for “Islamabad’s efforts to internationalize the Kashmir issue.”⁵⁰

Ultimately, New Delhi’s resolve to eject Pakistani forces from its side of the LOC, Indian military successes on the Himalayan ridges, and Pakistan’s diplomatic isolation convinced Islamabad to call off its misadventure. On July 2, Sharif called Clinton, pleading for American intervention to stop the fighting and mediate the Kashmir dispute; Clinton replied that he could only help if Pakistan first withdrew its forces. A similar exchange took place the next

day, with Sharif offering to meet with Clinton in Washington on July 4.⁵¹ According to one account, just prior to the Clinton–Sharif meeting, U.S. officials received “disturbing evidence that the Pakistanis were preparing their nuclear arsenals for possible deployment.”⁵² However, Musharraf contradicts this version of events in his 2006 memoir: “In 1999 our nuclear capability was not yet operational. Merely exploding a bomb does not mean that you are operationally capable of deploying nuclear force in the field and delivering a bomb across the border over a selected target. Any talk of preparing for nuclear strikes is preposterous.”⁵³

The July 4 meeting was tense, with Clinton hammering home both the need for Pakistani withdrawal and the dark specter of nuclear war in South Asia.⁵⁴ At one point, “Clinton asked Sharif if he knew how advanced the threat of nuclear war really was? Did Sharif know his military was preparing their nuclear tipped missiles? Sharif seemed taken aback and said only that India was probably doing the same.”⁵⁵ Indeed, India reportedly had been “doing the same.” In an unverified account that refers to “several high-ranking [Indian] officials” but mentions no exact dates, an Indian journalist writes, “India ... activated all its three types of nuclear delivery vehicles and kept them at what is known as Readiness State 3—meaning that some nuclear bombs would be ready to be mated with the delivery vehicles at short notice.”⁵⁶ Clinton “then reminded Sharif how close the U.S. and Soviet Union had come to nuclear war in 1962 over Cuba. Did Sharif realize

that if even one bomb was dropped ... Sharif finished his sentence and said it would be a catastrophe.”⁵⁷ With Sharif continuing to vacillate over a Pakistani withdrawal from Kargil, Clinton grew angry: “Did Sharif order the Pakistani nuclear missile force to prepare for action? Did he realize how crazy that was? You’ve put me in the middle today, set the U.S. up to fail and I won’t let it happen. Pakistan is messing with nuclear war.”⁵⁸

Finally, Sharif agreed to withdraw Pakistani forces in exchange for U.S. diplomatic cover. In a joint statement, he and Clinton expressed their “view that the current fighting in the Kargil region of Kashmir is dangerous and contains the seeds of a wider conflict.” In return for a restoration of the “sanctity of the LOC,” Clinton pledged to take a “personal interest” in helping to resolve the Kashmir dispute.⁵⁹ Days later, Vajpayee announced that “the enemy’s intrusion and aggression in Kargil has now been decisively turned back ... our troops are back on the LOC A turning point has come.”⁶⁰ On July 11, the Indian and Pakistani directors-general of military operations (DGMOs) agreed to end the fighting. A pullout timetable was reached and the Pakistani withdrawal began.⁶¹ In a televised address on July 12, Sharif told his people “the deterioration in Pakistan–India relations brought our two countries to the brink of war We know that in a nuclear conflict there can be no victors It has been my constant effort that our countries be spared the horror of a nuclear war. Only a desire for collective suicide can prompt us to take such a

step.”⁶² Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes announced on July 17 that “the war in Kargil has come to an end. The last of the Pakistani intruders have vacated our territory.”⁶³

The “Twin Peaks” Crisis

On October 1, 2001, terrorists from JeM attacked the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly building in Srinagar, killing 38 people.⁶⁴ On December 13, JeM attacked the Indian Parliament in New Delhi, leaving 14 dead, including all six of the terrorists. The strike at the heart of India’s government profoundly shook the country’s national psyche. It was described by Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani as the “most audacious and most alarming act of terrorism in the history ... of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India.”⁶⁵ New Delhi responded by launching Operation Parakram on December 18. The Indian Army deployed to border positions as New Delhi put its combined military forces—including those in Kashmir—on high alert. India also severed road, rail, and air links with Pakistan and recalled its high commissioner from Islamabad. Both sides reportedly moved nuclear-capable ballistic missiles to positions closer to the Punjab border.⁶⁶ The Indian government served notice that unless Pakistan reined in its murderous *jihadi* groups, India would do it for them by destroying terrorist training camps, sanctuaries, and supply routes in Pakistani Kashmir.⁶⁷ Ultimately, India moved roughly half a million soldiers—including three armored strike

corps—to the parts of Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat bordering Pakistan.⁶⁸ One account argues that, “in the event of Pakistani noncompliance, the Indians planned to launch rapid, multiple strikes across the Line of Control into Pakistan-administered Kashmir, destroying terrorist training camps and infrastructure and seizing territory that would enable Indian forces to staunch the flow of cross-border infiltration. In case Pakistan sought to relieve pressure on Kashmir by escalating the conflict horizontally, Indian Army forces deployed along the international border would be prepared to meet and repulse any Pakistani attacks.”⁶⁹ Another analyst notes that “what distinguished the mobilization of 1999 from that of 2001–2002 is that in 1999 strike corps were not moved to their launch areas. In 2001–2002, they were.”⁷⁰

Islamabad responded by mobilizing its own armor and 300,000 Pakistan Army troops to the adjacent border areas of Punjab and Sindh.⁷¹ In addition, fearing that its nuclear forces might come under attack, Pakistan “took alert measures to disperse the nuclear weapons and missiles to new locations away from their storage sites.”⁷² Early in the crisis, Pakistani Gen. Khalid Kidwai, director of the Strategic Plans Division, the body responsible for the command and control of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal, publicly stated that nuclear weapons would be used against India “if the very existence of Pakistan as a state is at stake.” In addition, he pointedly set out a number of red lines that would cause Pakistan to respond with nuclear weapons if deterrence failed. Foremost

among these was “India attacks Pakistan and conquers a large part of its territory.”⁷³ Across the border, Indian defense minister George Fernandes hinted that “India had prepared its nuclear assets for retaliatory use in the event of a Pakistani first strike.”⁷⁴ Fernandes added that India “could take a [nuclear] strike, survive and then hit back. Pakistan would be finished.”⁷⁵ As if to underline this point, India test-fired its Agni-I intermediate-range, nuclear-capable missile in January.⁷⁶

India’s compellent strategy was partly aimed at inducing Washington to urge Islamabad to stop supporting *jihad* in Kashmir and India proper. India’s arguments were bolstered by President Bush’s post-9/11 doctrine of targeting terrorists *and* the states that support them. One account says that “in the days after the Parliament House strike, John McLaughlin, then the deputy C.I.A. director, reported to the Bush Cabinet that C.I.A. and other intelligence analysts believed that, because of confusion among Indian and Pakistani decision-makers about when and how a conventional war would escalate, there was a serious risk of the first hostile use of nuclear weapons since Nagasaki.”⁷⁷ On December 29, Bush called Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to urge restraint; he also implored Musharraf to “take additional strong and decisive measures to eliminate the extremists who seek to harm India, undermine Pakistan, and provoke war.” In addition, U.S. and British officials devised a coordinated strategy of back-to-back visits to the region, “with an eye to de-

fusing tensions and postponing decisions to launch hostilities.”⁷⁸ On January 11, 2002, the Indian army chief, S. Padmanabhan, issued a blunt nuclear threat to the Pakistani leadership. If Pakistan were to carry out a nuclear strike against India, he said, “the perpetrator of that particular outrage shall be punished so severely that their continuation thereafter in any form of fray will be doubtful.” Responding to a reporter’s question, he said, “We are ready for a second strike, yes,” adding that India had enough nuclear weapons for such a response.⁷⁹

As in the Kargil conflict, Pakistan hoped that the latest crisis would cause the United States to take a more active role in resolving the Kashmir dispute. Islamabad argued that the necessity of mobilizing troops along the border with India would require Pakistan to deploy fewer soldiers in the post-9/11 hunt for al-Qaeda and Taliban forces in northwestern Pakistan. New Delhi’s diplomatic strategy was more successful; while Washington urged both sides to back off, it pointedly put JeM and LeT⁸⁰ on the State Department’s list of foreign terrorist organizations. Many U.S. officials’ main worry was that the dueling mobilizations of Indian and Pakistani forces would “trigger unintended escalation to a general war or even nuclear use.” As a State Department South Asia specialist framed this concern: “The question was would things get out of hand and prompt one side or another to slide toward [nuclear weapon] use ... Escalation could come quickly.” Another State Department official recollected fearing that India and Pakistan could

misperceive or not recognize each other’s “red lines.” A “seasoned diplomat” in State’s South Asia bureau characterized the main danger as unintended escalation.⁸¹ In her memoirs, U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice wrote: “one thing was clear: whatever the intentions of the two sides, they could easily stumble into war whether they intended to or not. Those nuclear-armed adversaries could, within a matter of hours, plunge the region into chaos—possibly nuclear chaos.”⁸² Senior British officials, too, were alarmed at the possibility of escalation to nuclear war.⁸³

In response to Indian and U.S. pressure, and with U.S. input, Musharraf made an impassioned speech to the Pakistani people on January 12, 2002, in which he condemned the October and December terrorist attacks in India. “The day of reckoning has come,” Musharraf said. “Do we want Pakistan to become a theocratic state? Do we believe that religious education alone is enough for governance, or do we want Pakistan to emerge as a progressive and dynamic Islamic welfare state?” Claiming that “the verdict of the masses is in favor” of the latter course, Musharraf pledged that “no organization will be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir,” and that “Pakistan will not allow its territory to be used for any terrorist activity anywhere in the world.”⁸⁴ Alas, Musharraf proved unwilling to clamp down completely on Pakistan’s *jihadi* groups. In the aftermath of his January 2002 speech, Islamabad arrested some 2,000 militants and closed more than 300 of their of-

fices, but few militants were prosecuted. Moreover, the leaders of JeM and LeT were released in March and promptly vowed to reinvigorate the Kashmir insurgency.

On May 14, terrorists attacked the Indian military base at Kaluchak in Jammu, killing 34 people and reigniting a full-blown crisis. Indian leaders promptly resumed their consideration of military strikes against terrorist training camps in Pakistan.⁸⁵ As one reporter vividly described the situation in late May, “preparations for cataclysm advance daily along the Indo-Pakistani frontier. About 1 million soldiers have crowded to the long border, equipped with missiles, tanks, and fighter jets ... War-fevered politicians in both capitals organize appeals for national unity ... And in the secret military warehouses of both countries, engineers presumably are turning screws on doomsday’s reserve force—two crude but functional nuclear arsenals.” On a visit to Jammu, Vajpayee rallied Indian soldiers: “the time has come for a decisive battle, and we will have a sure victory in this battle.” In turn, Musharraf strongly implied that “if India insists on launching all-out war to attack Pakistan’s support for Kashmiri militants, Pakistan is prepared to go nuclear.”⁸⁶ Once again, the Indian media breathlessly reported official deliberations over military options ranging from limited strikes across the LOC to full-scale war. India’s plan during the summer phase of the 10-month crisis was to “concentrate its three strike corps in the Rajasthan sector, so as to draw Pakistan’s two strike corps into desert terrain and inflict

heavy attrition losses on them.”⁸⁷ The Indian strike corps “were concentrated in their respective assembly boxes, ready to execute deep penetrating maneuvers to engage and destroy Pakistan’s two strike corps and seize the Sindh and Punjab provinces, thus threatening to effectively slice Pakistan in two.”⁸⁸

Foremost in the minds of decision makers on all sides in late May was the nuclear shadow hovering over the Subcontinent. As one Indian diplomat said, “the idea that Pakistan will cooperate in a conflict and comply with India’s wishes to fight a limited war is ridiculous. It will naturally be in their interest to keep any conflagration as unlimited as possible.”⁸⁹ On May 22, the Pakistani Minister for Railways—and former head of ISI—Lt. Gen. Javed Ashraf Qazi, said: “If Pakistan is being destroyed through conventional means, we will destroy them by using the nuclear option.”⁹⁰ As if to underline this message, Pakistan test-fired three nuclear-capable ballistic missiles, which the Indians interpreted “as a warning ... to apply brakes on India’s most ambitious plan ever.”⁹¹ Musharraf claimed that the tests “validated the reliability, accuracy, and ... deterrence value of Pakistan’s premier surface-to-surface ballistic missile systems.”⁹² On May 29, Pakistan’s ambassador to the United Nations defended his country’s refusal to adopt a no-first-use nuclear posture by asking rhetorically: “How can Pakistan, a weaker power, be expected to rule out all means of deterrence?”⁹³ In Washington, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage “worried ... about the

nuclear dimension of the crisis.” One source reports that “the situation from late May onward appeared sufficiently bleak for the Pentagon to reexamine the effects of nuclear weapons’ use on the Subcontinent. One official vividly remembers interagency discussions ... on evacuating the embassies and U.S. nationals in the event of a nuclear exchange. The Subcontinent’s seasonal ‘plumology’ was studied.” U.S. Embassy staff in both New Delhi and Islamabad worried about the possibility of the crisis escalating to nuclear war.⁹⁴ Asked in early June if his government had considered the possibility of war escalating to the use of nuclear weapons, Indian Defense Secretary Yogendra Narain replied, “Certainly. But we don’t know [Pakistan’s] nuclear threshold. We will retaliate and must be prepared for mutual destruction on both sides.”⁹⁵ All in all, reports one authoritative account, “Washington’s regional specialists were nearly unanimous in predicting that war was ... imminent. They saw no obvious pathway for the two governments to walk back from the brink.”⁹⁶ A senior U.S. intelligence analyst with years of regional experience told the author in early June 2002 that he estimated the chances of India-Pakistan war at “100 percent.”

With Pakistan sending “many signals to Delhi that any invasion of Pakistan would warrant a Pakistani nuclear response,”⁹⁷ Washington began another flurry of diplomatic activity to prevent war in South Asia. The State Department also issued a travel advisory urging U.S. citizens to leave India.⁹⁸ On June 6, Armitage went to Islamabad,

where he reportedly elicited a promise from Musharraf to “end cross-border infiltration permanently.”⁹⁹ Armitage relayed this pledge to Indian officials in New Delhi the next day. Two weeks later, though, Musharraf seemed to backtrack when he told a reporter, “I’m not going to give you an assurance that for years nothing will happen.”¹⁰⁰ That said, infiltrations across the LOC did decrease during the summer before rising again in the autumn, “but not to the level that they had been at previously, prior to the commitments made by the Pakistani government.”¹⁰¹ Although the immediate crisis faded in June, the Indo-Pakistani troop buildup lasted until October, when India announced that it would withdraw its forces from the border with Pakistan. The Indian decision came on the heels of state elections in Kashmir, after which “there was no reason to continue a deployment that has placed enormous strains on personnel, equipment, and morale.”¹⁰² Pakistan immediately reciprocated the troop withdrawal. All sides agree that India and Pakistan nearly fought a major war in the summer of 2002. Musharraf said war was “very close.” Vajpayee called it “a touch-and-go affair.” U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian affairs Christina Rocca stated that the two sides had “barely averted war.”¹⁰³

The 26/11 Mumbai Terrorist Attacks

On November 26, 2008, 10 LeT terrorists went on a killing spree in Mumbai, India’s commercial capital and second-largest city.

Armed with AK-56 automatic assault rifles, pistols, hand grenades, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and supplied with satellite phones and GPS sets,¹⁰⁴ they murdered 166 people¹⁰⁵ and wounded more than 300 in a 60-hour rampage. They departed from Karachi by boat, hijacked an Indian vessel at sea, arrived in Mumbai under cover of darkness, split into four teams, and systematically carried out their assaults at multiple locations, including the luxury Oberoi-Trident and Taj Mahal Palace hotels; a major railroad station, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus; a high-end restaurant popular with tourists, the Leopold Cafe; and a hostel run by the Jewish Chabad-Lubavich movement.¹⁰⁶ The terrorists were directed during the attacks in real time by LeT handlers in Pakistan, and live television coverage added to the shock value of the assaults. Similar to the way Americans remember “9/11,” Indians recall the Mumbai carnage simply as “26/11.” The attacks did not ignite a full-blown crisis like Twin Peaks; nor did they set off an Indo-Pakistani military conflict like Kargil. However, “there was a sense of crisis, even if less severe than in previous confrontations.”¹⁰⁷ A subsequent U.S. Ambassador to India, Timothy Roemer, said of 26/11: “[the terrorists] almost started a war between Pakistan and India that might have resulted in some kind of a nuclear war.”¹⁰⁸ At a minimum, the massacre generated extreme pressure on the government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to retaliate against Pakistan with military force, which in turn stoked escalating Indo-Pakistani tensions.¹⁰⁹ The U.S. ambassador to India at the time of

the attacks, David Mulford, characterized the prevailing atmosphere in New Delhi as “war fever.”¹¹⁰

The aura of looming confrontation was intensified by a bizarre incident on November 28, while the attacks were ongoing. A person claiming to be Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee made a telephone call to Pakistan’s president, Asif Ali Zardari, in which the caller threatened war.¹¹¹ Then-U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recalls being told by a National Security Council (NSC) staffer the next day that “the Pakistanis say the Indians have warned them that they’ve decided to go to war.” Rice was surprised to hear this, as Indian officials had been emphasizing “their desire to defuse the situation.” When she finally reached Mukherjee by telephone, he was away from New Delhi campaigning in his constituency. He said to her: “Would I be outside New Delhi if we were about to launch a war?”¹¹² For U.S. officials, the mysterious telephone call “conjured the specter of Pakistani military action to preempt a feared Indian attack.” One NSC official recollected that “the fake phone call recounted by Pak officials changed everything—risked having all spin out of control. The key was that we were confident that India did not say this [that India was preparing to attack Pakistan], but they [Pakistani officials] were all ramped up. Our job was to bring them down.”¹¹³

Discussions between Indian leaders focused on India’s “options, the likely Pakistani response, and the escalation that could occur.”¹¹⁴ Senior national-se-

curity officials met on November 29, the last day of the bloodshed, to discuss possible Indian responses. The gravity of the situation was reflected in the meeting's roster of attendees, which included Prime Minister Singh, the Defense Minister, the National Security Adviser, the heads of India's two intelligence agencies, and the service chiefs.¹¹⁵ Although Singh made it clear at the outset that he was not in favor of another massive mobilization of forces like Operation Parakram in 2001–02, more limited military options were thoroughly discussed.¹¹⁶ Air Chief Marshall Fali Major reportedly "suggested striking terrorist camps" on Pakistan's side of the LOC in Kashmir.¹¹⁷ Another credible account of the meeting says that while Major did say that Indian ground-attack aircraft could hit training camps across the LOC, he added that "precise coordinates and adequate imaging weren't available."¹¹⁸ Missile strikes against Pakistani targets were another option, but "no one could guarantee missile strikes wouldn't escalate into war, or even a nuclear exchange."¹¹⁹ As for potential ground operations, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Kapoor subsequently raised the possibility of a limited ground strike approximately 10–15 kilometers into Pakistani Punjab.¹²⁰ According to one account, however, both he and Major "made it clear that they lacked the wherewithal for war if Pakistan decided to escalate matters, adding that the Pakistan Army was unlikely to not retaliate."¹²¹ Kapoor also told Singh that special forces operations might well fail.¹²² In another meeting between Defense Minister A.K. Antony and the service chiefs, Antony asked Kapoor again about the prospect

of limited ground strikes. One reliable account has it that "Gen. Kapoor is said to have responded that an operation was possible but he would need a week's notice and that it would be a 'highly risky' affair In the Army's assessment, any strike would definitely lead to an escalated military conflict and the government ought to be prepared for it. The air force agreed that a strong Pakistani reaction was certain."¹²³ Covert operations were also discussed, but the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's external intelligence agency "admitted that it had no assets in Pakistan to carry out such an action."¹²⁴

In sum, secret Indian deliberations about the use of force in response to the 26/11 attacks were characterized by deep uncertainty about the likelihood and nature of Pakistani retaliation, leavened with worst-case expectations of significant escalation potential. One thorough study of the 26/11 episode argues that "Indian officials were genuinely conflicted about how to respond to Pakistan. They certainly did not want to risk a nuclear exchange. They also wanted to avoid undercutting a new and fragile civilian government But they did not want their country to appear weak."¹²⁵ As a consequence of this dilemma, senior Indian officials signaled mixed messages regarding their intentions, especially in the early days following the attacks. On the one hand, they periodically issued warnings that all options, including military ones, were on the table.¹²⁶ Accompanying these signals were stern pronouncements, such as Mukherjee's veiled threat that "we are determined

to take the strongest possible measures to ensure that there is no repetition of such acts.”¹²⁷ On the other hand, Indian officials repeatedly maintained that the political leadership had decided against military action.¹²⁸ Meanwhile, reputable media accounts in early December tended to focus on the possibility of so-called surgical strikes against “militant infrastructure” in Pakistani Kashmir, even as prominent national-security figures weighed in with warnings about the dangerous consequences of even limited attacks.¹²⁹ Across the border, Pakistani leaders, uncertain which of these messages were authentic, grew fearful that India was gearing up for a military response and braced themselves for an attack.¹³⁰ One retrospective account suggests that both the Indian and Pakistani air forces raised their alert levels “during and immediately after the attacks,” and that Pakistan put its “advance ground units on alert.”¹³¹ Pakistan’s concerns about Indian military action drove esteemed nuclear scientist Samar Mubarakmand to note in a television interview that Pakistan was “capable of launching a nuclear missile against India with ten minutes’ notice,” and that “the force that launched first had an advantage.”¹³²

As in 1999 and 2001–02, U.S. policymakers were quick to mobilize in an effort to prevent Indo-Pakistani tensions from spiraling into a full-blown crisis or even war. Within 24 hours of the attacks, President Bush had spoken with both the Indian and Pakistani leaders by telephone. He counseled restraint and offered investigative resources to India. The administration also began to

coordinate with President-elect Barack Obama, who would inherit the aftermath of the crisis in January 2009.¹³³ A Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) team arrived in Mumbai on December 1.¹³⁴ U.S. decision makers initially feared that India might carry out air strikes on LeT camps in Pakistan. LeT’s “home base” was in Muridke, Punjab, in a heavily populated area about 20 miles north of Lahore. Said one official: “It would have meant a conventional war or worse. Plus the bad guys would have been long gone.”¹³⁵ Another concern was that Pakistan might try to preempt limited Indian Army thrusts across the international border, often referred to under the moniker of “Cold Start.”¹³⁶ U.S. analysts tried hard to read Indian intentions as the confrontation unfolded, but their view inside the CCS was “incredibly murky.”¹³⁷ As one granular narrative summarizes U.S. perceptions: “The Mumbai attacks sparked concerns about a replay of escalatory actions by India and Pakistan” during the Twin Peaks crisis. “Indian officials were ... blaming Pakistan for the attacks. Any conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbors could get out of hand. Pakistani leaders vowed to respond to any attack by India as a threat to Pakistan’s sovereignty and survival, while Indian leaders pointedly did not take off the table limited-war scenarios.”¹³⁸

Senior U.S. officials also traveled to the region to meet with their Indian and Pakistani counterparts. Secretary Rice interrupted a trip to Europe to meet with Mukherjee on December 3. She cautioned New Delhi against actions that might produce “unintended

consequences.” At the same time, Adm. Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), was in Islamabad meeting with President Zardari and COAS Ashfaq Parvez Kayani. Rice then traveled from India to Pakistan, where she met with Zardari, Kayani, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.¹³⁹ Immediately after the Mumbai attacks, India had demanded that Pakistan apprehend 20 high-profile terrorist suspects and extradite them to India for trial.¹⁴⁰ Rice and Mullen complemented that message by urging their Pakistani interlocutors to aggressively investigate and bring to justice those responsible for the carnage, with Rice adding that there was “irrefutable evidence” that Pakistani nationals were involved in the massacre.¹⁴¹ Days later, U.S. Sen. John McCain, visiting Islamabad after talks in New Delhi, warned Pakistani leaders that India “would be left with no choice but to carry out surgical strikes against” targets linked to the Mumbai attacks unless Pakistan cracked down on terrorist elements.¹⁴² In sum, U.S. crisis-management priorities in early December were to convince New Delhi not to respond militarily to 26/11, and to “get the Pakistanis to cough up people and clamp down [on terrorists].” In response, Islamabad—which denied any connection to the Mumbai tragedy—went through the motions of arresting 22 LeT members, banning LeT affiliate Jamaat-ud-Dawa (“Society for Proselytization”—JuD), and putting LeT/JuD leader Hafiz Saeed under house arrest. But, there was “no systematic crackdown on LeT’s infra-

structure and apparatus in Pakistan.”¹⁴³

A week after the LeT attacks, it looked as though the danger of a major crisis had been contained. An Indian diplomat emphasized to his counterparts in the U.S. embassy in Islamabad that “India has issued no war warnings to Pakistan and had not mobilized its forces.”¹⁴⁴ Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon subsequently told U.S. diplomats that “India, in the wake of the Mumbai attacks, had consciously not built up troops on the border, as it had following the 2001 attack on its Parliament.”¹⁴⁵ New Delhi did, however, put on hold the “Composite Dialogue,” a diplomatic process begun in 2004 that had generated some momentum in attempting to resolve a number of India–Pakistan political conflicts. As U.S. diplomats in New Delhi explained, “the Mumbai terrorist attacks deeply angered the Indian public. This time, in addition to the reactions against Pakistan, Indians directed a new level of fury at their own political establishment, which they feel failed to protect them.” The “public’s anger pushed” Prime Minister Singh to “shelve” the dialogue.¹⁴⁶ In a forceful speech in Parliament on December 11, Singh described Pakistan as the “epicenter of terrorism,” warned that Indian restraint should not be “misconstrued as a sign of weakness,” and demanded that the “infrastructure of terrorism” in Pakistan be “dismantled permanently.” But, the bulk of the prime minister’s speech focused on the necessity of domestic security reforms and improving future efforts to prevent attacks.¹⁴⁷ Generally speaking, New Delhi’s “focus was primarily on domes-

tic security measures, rather than on military action or on coercive threats aimed at Pakistan The Indians took no rhetorical or military steps to threaten to attack Pakistan as they did during the 2001–2002 crisis.”¹⁴⁸

Still, tension lingered into mid-December and beyond. Islamabad claimed that Indian fighter jets violated Pakistani airspace on December 13.¹⁴⁹ Alongside media reports that “Indian air force units were placed on alert for possible strikes on suspected terrorist camps inside Pakistan,”¹⁵⁰ this heightened the tension among Pakistani decision makers. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) carried out exercises over major northern cities and Kashmir on December 22, and on December 23, the head of India’s Western Air Command, Air Marshal P.K. Barbora, said that India had “earmarked” 5,000 Pakistani targets for air strikes.¹⁵¹ At the same time, Pakistani COAS Kayani warned that Pakistani military forces would “retaliate within minutes” if India carried out a surgical strike within Pakistan.¹⁵² In late December, the Indian Army extended the presence of two brigades in Rajasthan after scheduled seasonal exercises.¹⁵³ In response, Islamabad moved some 5,000–7,000 troops from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), bordering Afghanistan, eastward to positions along the LOC and the Punjab frontier.¹⁵⁴ Senior Pakistani officials asked the Indian side to pull its forces back from the border area, and repeated that Pakistan would meet any Indian aggression, even surgical strikes, with quick retaliation. Still, the two sides continued to communicate direct-

ly in an effort to ease the tension. On December 26, for example, the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad told the Pakistani foreign secretary “that India had no plans to go to war.”¹⁵⁵ With the arrival of the new year, hostilities gradually abated. India had once again chosen not to retaliate militarily in the face of egregious provocation by Pakistan-based terrorists.

The Uri Attack and Indian “Surgical Strikes”

In the pre-dawn hours of September 18, 2016, four guerrillas from Pakistan attacked an Indian army encampment roughly 6 kilometers from the LOC. The attackers, armed with grenades and assault rifles, slaughtered 19 Indian soldiers and wounded 20, before themselves being killed in a 3-hour gun battle. The scene of the carnage, a brigade headquarters, was unusually crowded at the time with two battalions of soldiers rotating in and out. Many of the casualties had been sleeping in tents and other temporary shelters, which quickly caught fire when the attackers used incendiary ammunition. The assault at Uri was India’s largest mass-casualty attack since Mumbai in 2008 and the deadliest raid on an Indian base in Kashmir since 2002. It was carried out in the context of a rapidly deteriorating security situation in Indian Kashmir since the July 8 killing of a Hizbul Mujahideen commander, Burhan Wani, in a shootout with security forces. Since Wani’s death, more than 80 people had been killed and thousands more wounded in hostilities between protest-

ers and government forces. The attack also followed on the heels of cross-border strikes on an Indian police station at Gurdaspur in July 2015 and an IAF base at Pathankot in January 2016, both in Punjab. Seven Indians were killed in each of those assaults.¹⁵⁶

The Uri massacre caused an outcry in India. The number of dead and wounded, and the gruesome manner in which they were killed or injured, generated heated demands for a punitive response by the BJP government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Elected in 2014, Modi had offered Pakistan several olive branches in an attempt to stabilize Indo-Pakistani relations, but his efforts had come to naught. Modi had been critical of the previous government of Manmohan Singh for not retaliating more forcefully to Pakistani provocations like the Mumbai attacks of 2008. Modi's supporters strongly approved of his more muscular disposition, and the Indian media in Uri's aftermath were filled with breathless speculation about strikes against "terrorist infrastructure" on the Pakistani side of the LOC. Hours after the attack, Modi pledged that "those behind this despicable act will not go unpunished." The BJP's national general secretary, Ram Madhav, added fuel to the fire by declaring: "For one tooth, the complete jaw. [The] days of so-called strategic restraint are over." India's DGMO said that the attackers were "foreign terrorists" whose weapons had "Pakistani markings."¹⁵⁷ Indian home minister Rajnath Singh was more explicit, tweeting that: "Pakistan is a terrorist state."¹⁵⁸

As in previous crises, India's national-security leadership gathered quickly to discuss "possible long-term options to retaliate against jihadist logistics and the Pakistani military infrastructure." In a September 19 meeting at Modi's residence, the prime minister, home minister Singh, Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval were told by the senior military leadership that Pakistan had "raised its defensive posture along the LOC" by "fortifying its positions," making an Indian military response risky.¹⁵⁹ On September 22, the Indian DGMO, Lt. Gen. Ranbir Singh, briefed Modi and his national security team more specifically on "LOC strike options."¹⁶⁰ An American analyst captured the dilemma faced by New Delhi: "India still lacks military options that could satisfy its strategic objectives, the first of which is to get the Pakistani army to demobilize the most potent anti-India militant groups." Punitive retaliation "robust enough to really harm the Pakistani military could also leave that military unwilling and unable to demobilize the most potent anti-India militants in Pakistan. And even if Indian forces had the ability to move into Pakistani territory to inflict major damage on the army, Pakistan could use its nuclear weapons to stave off defeat. ... But a restrained use of force could signal lack of Indian resolve, thereby emboldening the Pakistani military."¹⁶¹

Meanwhile, Pakistan's leadership vigorously denied any involvement in the Uri attack, instead criticizing New Delhi for the ongoing violence in Kash-

mir. In a speech before the U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) on September 21, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif argued that “a new generation of Kashmiris has risen spontaneously against India’s illegal occupation—demanding freedom from occupation. Burhan Wani, the young leader murdered by Indian forces, has emerged as the symbol of the latest Kashmiri intifada,” while New Delhi has responded with “brutal repression by India’s occupation force of over half a million soldiers.”¹⁶² During the UNGA meeting in New York, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met with both Sharif and Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, urging them to avoid escalating the conflict in Kashmir.¹⁶³ At home, Pakistani leaders girded themselves for a potential Indian attack, while at the same time issuing their by-now characteristic nuclear deterrence threats. Army chief Raheel Sharif said that his forces were in their “highest state of vigilance” along the border.¹⁶⁴ PAF fighter aircraft practiced takeoffs and landings on a major six-lane highway connecting Islamabad and Lahore, in the process blocking traffic and closing commercial airspace. Although officials characterized this as a “routine” air defense exercise, it was anything but.¹⁶⁵ Meanwhile, in a September 26 television interview, Pakistan’s Defense Minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif said: “Tactical [nuclear] weapons, our programmes that we have developed, they have been developed for our protection. We haven’t kept the devices that we have just as showpieces. But if our safety is threatened, we will annihilate them [India].”¹⁶⁶ However,

unbeknownst to Islamabad, Modi had already made his decision in favor of a limited military strike and conveyed it to his senior-most advisers on September 23.¹⁶⁷

On September 29, Indian DGMO Singh announced that the army had carried out “surgical strikes” the night before against terrorist “launch pads” on the Pakistani side of the LOC. “Terrorist teams,” he said, “had positioned themselves” at these staging areas “with an aim to carry out infiltration and terrorist strikes in Jammu and Kashmir and in various other metros in our country.” Singh claimed that the Indian strikes had caused “significant casualties,” but pointedly added that the army had no “plans for continuation of further operations.” Lastly, Singh said that he had informed the Pakistani DGMO of the Indian operation and “explained our concerns.”¹⁶⁸ In the following days, details of the “surgical strikes” emerged in the Indian and international media, although many of them were contradictory or simply mistaken.¹⁶⁹ Apparently, some 70–80 special forces commandos crossed the LOC on foot under cover of Indian mortar and machine gun fire. Armed with assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, shoulder-fired missiles, pistols, and plastic explosives, the soldiers advanced some 1–3 kilometers into Pakistan-administered territory and attacked six to seven launch pads—essentially safe houses where militants gather prior to infiltration across the LOC. Early Indian estimates put the number of militants killed in the raids as high as 45, which is almost certainly inflated. The *Economist’s* estimate of “a

dozen or fewer” killed is probably closer to the mark.¹⁷⁰

While some early accounts of the Indian strikes portrayed them as a fundamental change in New Delhi's policy regarding Pakistan's support for subconventional operations across the LOC,¹⁷¹ it was soon revealed that India had occasionally executed its own shallow incursions across the LOC to prevent and disrupt such operations.¹⁷² What was different this time was the “public—and political” announcement of the strikes.¹⁷³ Of all the available military options, Modi had chosen the one that was least likely to escalate into a larger conflict with Pakistan,¹⁷⁴ while at the same time sending a message to Islamabad, the international community, and Modi's frenzied domestic audience. Indeed, the option he chose was so limited that Pakistani leaders were able to deny that it even happened, so as to preempt pressures from their own public to retaliate in ways that might spark escalation. Pakistani officials termed India's assertion of “surgical strikes” a “fabrication,” claiming instead that two of their soldiers were killed by Indian forces firing across the LOC.¹⁷⁵ New Delhi had also received diplomatic cover from the United States in the form of a telephone conversation between national security adviser Doval and his U.S. counterpart, Susan Rice. In that conversation, which seems to have occurred just before the strikes, Rice “strongly condemned” the Uri attack and highlighted the “danger that cross-border terrorism poses to the region.”¹⁷⁶ Indian officials publicized Rice's message at the same time that the surgical strikes were announced, leaving

the strong impression that Washington supported India's right to self-defense and did not oppose the attacks.

In the immediate aftermath of India's surgical strikes, both sides braced themselves for more violence. Fearing a Pakistani reprisal, India ordered an evacuation of communities in a 10-kilometer belt along the Punjab border between the two countries.¹⁷⁷ New Delhi also raised the alert status of its Western and Northern commands and canceled leaves in both commands,¹⁷⁸ while the Pakistan Army maintained its own heightened state of readiness and also canceled all leaves.¹⁷⁹ Clashes continued in their “normal” fashion across the LOC, with regular exchanges of small arms and mortar fire.¹⁸⁰ At the same time, the two governments indicated that they did not wish to see the fighting escalate. In the first week of October, the Indian and Pakistani national security advisers spoke by phone multiple times and agreed to defuse tensions along the LOC.¹⁸¹ Modi's decision to retaliate in a limited way across the LOC, targeting militants rather than Pakistan army forces, combined with Islamabad's decision to deny that the surgical strikes had even taken place, dampened what otherwise might have developed into a full-blown Indo-Pakistani crisis.

Comparative Analysis

This section analyzes the relative strength of the four most common explanations for India's moderation in response to Pakistani and Pakistan-abetted armed provocations over the last two decades. Again, this is

not a question of one explanation being “right” and the others “wrong.” Mono-causal explanations rarely suffice when it comes to complex national decisions regarding the use of force. Rather, a combination of three of the four factors presented in the introduction—nuclear deterrence, U.S. crisis management, and the lack of good conventional military options—more effectively explains Indian forbearance in the face of Pakistani provocations. Below, I assess their relative importance to generate a rich explanation. My analysis leads me to conclude that the *primary* factor causing India to demonstrate “uncommon restraint after severe provocations”¹⁸² has been nuclear deterrence. Two other factors, U.S. crisis management and the absence of good conventional military options, were also influential across the four conflict episodes, but less so. The least compelling factor was the ostensible doctrine of Indian strategic restraint, which rests on shaky premises. Both secondary factors are closely tied—and subservient—to nuclear weapons, which sparked energetic U.S. crisis management efforts and severely limited Indian conventional military options. Moreover, nuclear deterrence was the real cause of India’s “strategic restraint.”

Each of the four cases under examination began with aggression against India emanating from Pakistan. Two of the attacks—one by Pakistani forces in 1999, the other by Pakistan-based terrorists in 2016—involved breaches of the LOC dividing the two countries’ territory in Kashmir. The other two assaults were carried out in

India’s largest cities—New Delhi in 2001 and Mumbai in 2008—by terrorist groups with close ties to Pakistan’s intelligence agency, the ISI. (And the 2001 onslaught was followed by another mass-casualty attack against an Indian military installation in Kashmir in 2002.) Each of these strikes was severely provocative, because of the large number of fatalities, the audacity of the target, or both. In every case, India’s most senior national security officials convened quickly in the CCS to discuss a range of potential responses.¹⁸³ The mooted military options tended to involve everything from very limited, post-Uri-like ground incursions across the LOC, to air strikes against terrorist targets in Pakistani Kashmir or Punjab, to a conventional ground invasion across the international border.¹⁸⁴ In each case, the Indian prime minister chose a measured response tailored to avoid escalation to major conventional war, and possibly a nuclear exchange.

Nuclear deterrence was the deepest root of Indian caution. Any analysis of the role of nuclear deterrence on Indian decision making must begin with a simple truth: It is difficult, if not impossible, to “prove” that nuclear deterrence “worked” in any given case. In order to do so, one would have to compile mutually consistent, authoritative accounts of key decision makers, to the effect that they were primed to order military operations but refrained from acting because they feared nuclear retaliation by the other side or an escalation spiral that might lead to a nuclear exchange. Indian leaders would naturally be reluctant to admit either that they

were actively planning military strikes or—more importantly—that they were dissuaded from doing so by Pakistani nuclear weapons, which would signal weakness and set a bad precedent.¹⁸⁵ As Robert Jervis writes, “to project an image of high resolve and preserve their bargaining power for future confrontations, states have an interest in minimizing the extent to which others believe that they were influenced by their adversary’s threats, especially threats to use nuclear weapons.”¹⁸⁶ What analysts sometimes forget is that it is equally difficult to “prove” that nuclear deterrence “did not work” during a particular conflict episode. Nuclear deterrence is a psychological process wherein one side’s capabilities and signaling work in often subtle ways on the perceptions, fears, and ambitions of the other side’s most important actors. What we are left with, then, is to assess the *plausibility* of deterrence having “worked.”

Generally speaking, the effects of nuclear deterrence on Indian behavior since 1998 have been twofold. First, the option of a major conventional military invasion of Pakistani territory (not Pakistani Kashmir) is no longer feasible for Indian decision makers. This is a stark contrast with South Asia’s pre-nuclear era, when New Delhi launched substantial ground attacks on Pakistani soil during wars over Kashmir in 1965 and Bangladesh in 1971. The implications of this change can scarcely be overstated. What it means is that the punitive option that would best leverage India’s overall advantages in material power over Pakistan, a war of attrition employing India’s greater military and

economic resources, has been removed from the Indian strategic toolkit. Second, Indian planners are acutely aware that *any* substantial military response to cross-border provocations raises the possibility of an escalation spiral that is fraught with peril and might lead to nuclear war. As a consequence, they have been forced to choose options that have little or no chance of triggering a process of escalation to conventional, and then possibly nuclear, war. Thus, India’s abiding strategic dilemma in South Asia’s nuclear era is that any military offensive robust enough to compel Pakistan to change its behavior runs the risk of nuclear retaliation, while Indian military strikes that are certain *not* to provoke a Pakistani nuclear response, or an escalatory spiral that might lead to such a response, are unlikely to change Pakistan’s behavior.

During the 1999 Kargil crisis, India responded forcefully after the discovery of Pakistani intruders on its side of the LOC in Kashmir.¹⁸⁷ However, India’s military forces had strict orders from the political leadership to carefully limit their operations to the *Indian* side of the LOC, despite the fact that more aggressive operations *across* the LOC would have empowered the air force and army to disrupt Pakistani supply lines and shortened the conflict. One source says that Pakistan made four distinct nuclear threats toward India in an attempt to deter New Delhi from escalating the conflict.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, each side repositioned its ballistic missiles, raising concerns across the border. These signals seem to have worked: numerous analysts “concur

that the prospect of a Pakistani nuclear reprisal deterred New Delhi from escalating the conflict in ways that not only would have worked to India's tactical advantage, but also would have saved Indian lives."¹⁸⁹ Paul Kapur marshals an impressive roster of senior Indian officials who deny that Pakistan's nuclear weapons deterred Indian forces from breaching the LOC in 1999.¹⁹⁰ But, other accounts suggest that some of those same Indian leaders were actually very mindful of the nuclear dangers. One observes that "Prime Minister Vajpayee was known to have seriously considered a Pakistani nuclear strike had India escalated the war." In a "crucial closed-door meeting, ... Vajpayee expressed his apprehension about Pakistan using the nuclear weapon if India enlarged the conflict by crossing the LOC."¹⁹¹ Army chief Malik recounts that "the nuclear weapons factor played on the minds of the political decision makers ... political and military planning and preparation for conflict escalation had to be carried out carefully. Escalation control was essential."¹⁹² It was not the fear of an immediate Pakistani nuclear reprisal that deterred New Delhi from sending its army across the LOC; it was, rather, Indian officials' understanding that the war could escalate from there to the international border, and perhaps beyond, into the nuclear realm. Many observers have pointed out that this dynamic represents a distinct shift in Indian behavior since the 1965 war, which began with a clandestine Pakistani effort to foment rebellion among Muslims in Indian Kashmir. For example, Narang writes that: "The BJP, fearing Pakistan's

now-credible nuclear threats, curtailed the Indian military's options to expel Pakistani forces and strictly prevented any operations on or above Pakistani soil. This was in striking contrast to the manner in which India had conducted previous engagements with Pakistan, most notably in response to the 1965 infiltration, which provided the blueprint for Kargil."¹⁹³ Although Indian officials are circumspect about admitting that they were deterred by Pakistan from choosing more muscular military options, for the reasons noted above, "it is exceedingly difficult to imagine their having been so restrained in the absence of the dissuasive power of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. This is especially so when 1999 is viewed in contrast to the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war, when—in response to successive Pakistani provocations—India chose escalatory options both in disputed Kashmir *and* along the international border."¹⁹⁴

The influence of nuclear deterrence on Indian calculations during the 2001–02 crisis was even more profound. For nine months after the attack on the Parliament complex, India and Pakistan's armed forces were mobilized along the international border and LOC, including long stretches of time at their highest alert levels. India enjoyed an advantage with three strike corps to Pakistan's two; unlike during Kargil, the Indian strike corps were poised for action in their forward launch areas. Both sides tested nuclear-capable ballistic missiles and repositioned missiles closer to the international border. Pakistan also deployed its nuclear-capable attack aircraft to forward bases near the

border.¹⁹⁵ Senior officials on both sides exchanged pointed, aggressive, nuclear-tinged threats. Pakistani president Musharraf recalls that he transmitted repeated nuclear-deterrent messages to Indian prime minister Vajpayee via intermediaries. One retrospective analysis counted 17 nuclear threats, nine issued by Pakistan and eight by India.¹⁹⁶ India was ready to launch major conventional military operations, and Vajpayee apparently came very close to making a decision for war in both January and June 2002.¹⁹⁷

Instead, he chose peace. Authoritative accounts based on extensive interviews point to nuclear deterrence as the main factor inducing New Delhi to stand down. "The risk of nuclear escalation, [Indian] officials said, was important in shaping Indian policy responses. Vajpayee feared that a full-scale military response to Pakistan-backed terrorism could precipitate a wider conflagration." Even small reprisals across the LOC could lead to an escalatory spiral—a "possibility unacceptable in a nuclear South Asia." The same source concludes that "nuclear weapons played a central role in ensuring that the crisis provoked by the terror strike on India's Parliament did not lead to war."¹⁹⁸ Vajpayee's National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, recalls that in January 2002 there "was a 90 per cent possibility of going to war."¹⁹⁹ Mishra says: "we were pretty sure—fairly certain—that if we crossed the border, Pakistan would threaten the use of nuclear weapons. Actual use is uncertain, perhaps doubtful." In Mishra's view, "the risk of nuclear weapons use increased sharply

as soon as Indian forces crossed either the LOC ... or more critically the international border." He maintains that "there was no such thing as limited war in the India–Pakistan context, arguing that 'if you cross the [LOC] or the Punjab border there is bound to be an all-out war,' and that Pakistan would escalate and this would be the mechanism for nuclear use."²⁰⁰ Narang writes: "Just as in Kargil, India was—at great cost—deterred from employing limited, let alone overwhelming, conventional force against Pakistan across the international border or the LOC. Although several factors may have stopped Delhi from executing Parakram, the role of Pakistan's asymmetric escalation posture in deterring India's conventional assault was crucial Such an attack, as was contemplated in May and June 2002, risked triggering nuclear use and was thus no longer possible."²⁰¹ Indian fears were shared across the border. In interviews, President Musharraf has recalled "many sleepless nights" just after the Parliament attack, asking himself whether he would or could deploy nuclear weapons." He "contemplated the use of nuclear weapons, but decided against doing so out of fear of retaliation."²⁰² During the second peak of the crisis, Musharraf remembers that he "hardly slept for several nights" and "feared nuclear war." According to Michael Cohen, who interviewed Musharraf, the latter "knew that any Indian invasion would have quickly triggered Pakistani nuclear escalation," and he "worried that nuclear war would engulf his country."²⁰³ In sum, the Twin Peaks crisis had the effect of further

embedding the fear of nuclear war in the perceptions of Indian and Pakistani officials. As one analysis notes, with each new crisis, the “constraining role of nuclear weapons” became “more explicit.”²⁰⁴

Despite the severity of the Mumbai attacks, the near-crisis that followed receives less attention than Kargil or Twin Peaks. This is ironic, because while this episode was relatively muted, it was muted mainly because—10 years after South Asia’s overt nuclear weaponization and seven years after India’s frustrating Operation Parakram—it had been established that a significant conventional Indian military response was simply out of the question. Thus, the case in which the impact of nuclear deterrence on Indian behavior may have been greatest is the least examined one. Indians were naturally outraged at the slaughter in Mumbai, but Congress Prime Minister Singh decided virtually immediately that his government would react with restraint and deliberation, not repeating the Twin Peaks rush to mobilization, which had cost India dearly in blood, treasure, and reputation. New Delhi’s circumscribed response represented the evolutionary “locking in” of nuclear deterrence between the two South Asian rivals.

When Indian national security officials met after Mumbai, they discussed military options ranging from, at the high end, limited ground strikes across the Punjab border and, at the low end, “surgical strikes” against terrorist targets in Pakistani Kashmir. In between were air and/or missile strikes

against terrorist “infrastructure” across the LOC, but military leaders admitted that they lacked reliable enough intelligence to recommend such operations. The strong consensus among the services was that Pakistan would retaliate for any Indian aggression, and the service chiefs made it abundantly clear that they were not ready to engage in a substantial conventional conflict with Pakistan (which will be further addressed below). Political leaders were themselves very mindful of the escalation risks, and did not want to run the risk of a nuclear exchange. Although insisting that all options were on the table, the government “conceded that its military options to retaliate against Pakistan were again limited, because any meaningful strikes risked uncontrollable escalation, possibly up to the nuclear level. India was once again deterred by Pakistan’s perceived low nuclear threshold from executing retaliatory airstrikes against suspected [LeT] camps in Pakistan for fear of escalation to general war.”²⁰⁵ Michael Krepon writes: “[Prime Minister] Singh, like Vajpayee, appears to have concluded soon after the Mumbai attacks that the benefits of punishing Pakistan would likely be modest and the risks would likely be great. Foremost among those risks was the possibility of uncontrolled escalation resulting in nuclear detonations.”²⁰⁶ Because of New Delhi’s subdued reaction, the resulting tension saw limited escalation and only three nuclear threats.²⁰⁷ The Pakistan Army took several precautionary steps, such as moving a modest number of ground forces and heightening the alert status of others. Both air forces were

briefly on alert, and the PAF carried out and loudly advertised exercises of its fighter aircraft. Ultimately, though, India refrained from launching military strikes, again demonstrating its dilemma in South Asia's overt nuclear era: meaningful military operations against Pakistan run the risk of catastrophe, while lesser ones have little chance of bringing about desired changes in Pakistani policies.

The September 2016 Uri attack and India's response again demonstrated the effects of nuclear deterrence on Indian decision making. Prime Minister Modi had repeatedly criticized New Delhi's weakness in not standing up to Pakistani provocations, often calling out his predecessor, Manmohan Singh, by name for not retaliating against Pakistan after the 2008 Mumbai slaughter. Modi's senior national security aides had pledged on many occasions that Indians could expect him to respond to Pakistani aggression with much greater resolve than had his predecessors. Then the gruesome Uri attack sparked the onset of a familiar cycle—full-throated calls for revenge in the Indian media, a cross-border war of words including a very precise nuclear threat by the Pakistani defense minister, both armies put on alert in Punjab and Kashmir, an emphatic show of force during PAF “exercises,” and India's evacuation of border villages in Punjab. After the usual Indian discussion of military options, Modi then picked one with little potential for escalation to a conventional war and, possibly, a nuclear exchange. As a longtime Indian defense journalist put it, Modi “chose the option that was

least likely to escalate to an all-out war.” More robust choices “were ruled out as they raised the specter of a nuclear conflict.”²⁰⁸

Overall, after 20 years of an overtly nuclear South Asia, there is a broad consensus that Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons deter major war between New Delhi and Islamabad. Stephen Cohen calls this the “reality of [nuclear] deterrence” on the Subcontinent. Ashley Tellis writes: “Pakistan's construction of a large, diversified, and ever-expanding nuclear arsenal ... serves to prevent any significant Indian retaliation against Pakistan's persistent low-intensity war for fear of sparking a nuclear holocaust.” This represents an “insidious kind of ‘ugly stability’ over the past few decades.” After the 2008 Mumbai episode, Kenneth Waltz wrote: “Both countries know that a serious conventional conflict risks a resort to nuclear weapons. Given that neither India nor Pakistan can know whether its opponent will resort to nuclear use, either inadvertently or on purpose, both are disincentivized from beginning a conventional conflict at all as the anticipated result is simply disastrous.” Also after Mumbai, Krepon wrote: “Nuclear weapons have played a significant part in previous crises on the subcontinent. As deterrence optimists argue, nuclear weapons may well have reinforced caution and helped to forestall escalation across the nuclear threshold.” For Narang, the Kargil, Twin Peaks, and Mumbai episodes “reveal that Pakistan's asymmetric escalation posture means that major conventional war—even in retaliation—is no longer a viable option

for India ... Pakistan's ... posture inhibited Indian leaders from executing militarily effective retaliatory options that might have otherwise been on the list of choices for fear of triggering Pakistani nuclear use." In George Perkovich's view, expressed just after the Uri attack, "mutual nuclear deterrence has made leaders on both sides conclude that major warfare between the two states would be suicidal." But, the Pakistan-generated "low-intensity conflict can escalate," leading to what he calls an "unstable equilibrium." The bottom line, however, is that: "The leaders of India and Pakistan understand that they have more to lose than to gain by military conflict. They both have interests in avoiding escalation, in part due to the shadow of potential nuclear war if escalation did occur." Perkovich and Toby Dalton write: "Reviewing the record of conflicts and crises in South Asia since 1990 through a prism of escalation dominance indicates that the threat of any conflict becoming nuclear has had a dampening effect on Indian strategy and decisionmaking ... The possibility of escalation drove India to limit the geographic scope of its airstrikes during the 1999 Kargil crisis. It was also a major element of the decision calculus that led India to mobilize forces but not cross the border during the 2001–2002 crisis, and to limit responses to economic and diplomatic means following the attacks in Mumbai in 2008." Rajesh Rajagopalan observes that the "fear of nuclear escalation prevented India from responding to terror attacks on ... the Indian Parliament [2001], on Indian military establishments, and on

Mumbai, as well as many other less serious attacks."²⁰⁹

Another significant factor in New Delhi's choices to respond to Pakistani aggression in ways that would not escalate out of control was the crisis management role of the United States. U.S. initiatives to dissuade Indian decision makers from carrying out more punishing military operations were most important during the Kargil and Twin Peaks episodes. In the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks, U.S. intervention was significant, but less so than in 1999 and 2001–02, mainly because Prime Minister Singh decided very early on that India would not mobilize its armed forces, which in turn sent a strong signal to Pakistan and the world that New Delhi would not mount a robust military reprisal. U.S. crisis management was notably less pronounced during the 2016 Uri aftermath, with senior Obama administration officials seeming implicitly to condone India's right to respond proportionately.²¹⁰

If it is difficult to show that nuclear deterrence has "worked" in a given situation, it is too *easy* to show that U.S. suasion "worked" in the same context. While deterrence is invisible and plausibly deniable by the deterree, crisis intervention is typically highly visible, with senior U.S. officials embarking on whirlwind tours of South Asia at critical junctures, activity that is highly visible via the media and for which the intervening government is always willing to take credit. Particularly salient in this regard were trips to the region by CENTCOM commander Zinni in June

1999, as the Indian government was facing severe escalatory pressures during the Kargil conflict; by Deputy Secretary of State Armitage in June 2002, as the Twin Peaks crisis crested its second peak; and by Secretary of State Rice and JCS chairman Mullen during the Mumbai tensions in December 2008. Furthermore, in all three cases, presidents Clinton and Bush energetically worked the phones with their Indian and Pakistani interlocutors.

Just as important as the fact, and number, of the visits and phone calls by U.S. (and occasionally British) officials was the message they consistently hammered home; namely, that any escalation of the crises to substantial cross-border military operations would run a serious risk of further tit-for-tat escalation. Were that to happen, U.S. leaders could easily imagine two possible paths to a nuclear exchange: first, if India decided during such an escalation process to invade Pakistan, and its forces were winning preliminary engagements and making progress into Punjab or Sindh, Islamabad would begin to consider, and perhaps eventually order, nuclear strikes against the invading forces or on targets within India; second, the fog of war during escalation would generate severe stresses on men and machines, with the possibility of inadvertent escalation to a nuclear exchange growing with every step up the ladder. In each case except for Uri in 2016, there was a distinct synergy between nuclear deterrence and U.S. conflict management, which complemented, reinforced, and strengthened each other. However, nuclear deterrence

deserves pride of place, because if nuclear weapons had not been potentially involved, crisis-management efforts would have been less urgent, possibly even negligible. This synergy between them was demonstrated most obviously during the Kargil conflict, whose denouement included the extraordinary meeting in which President Clinton accused Pakistan of “messing with nuclear war.” Zinni, too, was unsparing in his language to Pakistani officials: “I put forward a simple rationale for withdrawing: ‘If you don’t pull back, you’re going to bring war and nuclear annihilation down on your country.’”²¹¹ As Lavoy summarizes the synergy between nuclear deterrence and crisis management in 1999, “the fear of nuclear war did drive the international community to end the crisis as quickly as possible and prevent Pakistan from claiming a victory that could validate a defense strategy based on nuclear threats and military aggression.”²¹² Similar dynamics were apparent in the Twin Peaks and Mumbai cases. U.S. diplomatic intervention undoubtedly played a role in persuading Indian leaders not to attack Pakistan in response to the terrorist attacks in New Delhi, Kashmir, and Mumbai. Here again, though, it is virtually impossible to disentangle U.S. diplomacy from the underlying fear of possible escalation to a nuclear exchange. As Krepon writes, “Washington did not need much prompting to engage in crisis management, as nuclear capabilities and the potential for missteps, accidents, and breakdowns in command and control grew on the subcontinent. While nuclear dangers during crises re-

mained hard to assess, underestimating them was a luxury that senior US policy makers could not afford.”²¹³

One analysis completely discounts the role of nuclear weapons and deterrence in arguing that U.S. conflict management was the cause of Indian restraint during Kargil and Twin Peaks. Mistry maintains that these “crises ended because of non-nuclear factors rather than because of nuclear deterrence. A larger war was averted not because—as supporters of nuclear deterrence theory would suggest—the threat of Pakistani nuclear retaliation deterred Indian military action against Pakistan. Instead, war was averted because of U.S. diplomatic efforts that restrained the parties from military escalation.”²¹⁴ It is difficult to accept the idea that, in two major crises within four years of India and Pakistan conclusively demonstrating their long extant nuclear prowess, nuclear weapons would have had no discernible effect at all on the perceptions and strategic calculations of Indian decision makers. Part of the problem with Mistry’s analysis is that he repeatedly conflates Indian *planning* that was not deterred and escalatory *possibilities* with actual military *operations*. His article is littered with Indian military actions that “could have” happened, “would have” happened, were “likely to have” happened, “came close” to happening, and other similar formulations.²¹⁵ At one point, he writes about the Twin Peaks crisis: “Neither was India’s military deterred from an attack against Pakistan. India’s military *came close to attacking Pakistan* on two occasions.”²¹⁶ (Emphasis added.) Surely attacks either happen

or they do not, and nuclear deterrence is about deterring action rather than planning. In any event, Mistry contradicts himself by offering a more tenable posture in another 2009 writing: “The [Kargil and Twin Peaks] crises did not escalate to a major war. Nuclear deterrence induced caution among security planners on both sides and was one factor that checked them from quickly escalating to large-scale military operations, although conventional deterrence and international diplomacy also contributed to this military restraint.”²¹⁷ The threat of escalation to the nuclear level provided both the best reason for Washington’s crisis management efforts and the most compelling argument U.S. interlocutors could use to ease the two sides away from war.

A third causal factor in the pattern of Indian moderation has been New Delhi’s lack of favorable conventional military options at key moments. This might be framed as conventional deterrence, but—here again—it is analytically difficult to disentangle conventional from nuclear inhibitions against the Indian use of large-scale force. As noted previously, Pakistan’s nuclear weapons have taken away the option that in South Asia’s pre-nuclear era was India’s ace in the hole: a major conventional assault across the India–Pakistan frontier that would take advantage of India’s superiority in armored strike forces, attack aircraft, and overall material resources to overwhelm Pakistan’s armed forces.²¹⁸ For the last two decades, India’s conventional military advantage has rested not on glaring net asymmetries between Indian and Paki-

stani air and ground forces,²¹⁹ but rather in its ability to grind Pakistan down in a longer, attrition-style ground war. But, this is exactly the type of assault Pakistan's nuclear weapons and asymmetric escalation posture most credibly deter.²²⁰ During the cases under examination, if India had clear, even blitzkrieg-level, superiority in ground forces, and could have inflicted a severe defeat on Pakistani forces, it would have run serious risks of a nuclear reprisal. Furthermore, looming over Indian consideration of even limited conventional strikes across the established international border is that India is damned if it loses, but also damned if it wins, because Pakistan might well respond to imminent defeat by resorting to nuclear weapons. Large military organizations are not enthusiastic about, or good at, winning big ... but not too big. The champions of Cold Start-type limited war operations have not succeeded in convincing their political masters that they know where the line is between penetrating "far enough" versus "too far" into a nuclearized Pakistan.

Even absent the constraints imposed on Indian decision making by Pakistan's nuclear weapons, it is arguably the case that India has never had good options for going on the offensive against Pakistan over the last 20 years. Strikes against terrorist targets across the LOC are likely to have minimal impact on Pakistan's willingness to support cross-LOC attacks. Kashmir's mountainous terrain is unpromising for meaningful conventional incursions, militants are likely to have evacuated their rudimentary encampments

and escaped at first warning of major Indian military operations, and—in any event—Pakistan's terrorist infrastructure extends well beyond Kashmir. Only a successful Indian conventional invasion across the international border might compel changes in Pakistani behavior, but—nuclear weapons aside—analysts tend to agree that India does not have sufficient conventional superiority along its Western frontier to be confident of victory. India's overall advantages in conventional military forces are reduced by its need to keep hundreds of thousands of troops engaged in Kashmir²²¹ and deployed in the eastern part of the country against potential threats from China. Although the Indian army has three strike corps to Pakistan's two, their peacetime positions are relatively far from the border, and their mobilization times remain slow. Pakistan Army strike corps are much closer to the border in peacetime, and the country's narrow geography means that its internal lines of supply and communications are considerably shorter than its opponent's. Because India would be unlikely to have the advantage of strategic surprise in a sudden crisis, by the time its strike corps are poised for battle after 2–3 weeks of mobilization, Pakistan's would be well positioned for both defensive and counter-offensive operations.²²² While India enjoys somewhat favorable ratios of tanks, fighter aircraft, and other equipment, these ratios are not high enough for Indian military planners to provide assurances of success to the political leadership.²²³ Lastly, India's armed forces have been plagued by obsolete tanks, armored vehicles,

artillery pieces, and other equipment, as well as chronic shortages of officers, ammunition, missiles, air defense assets, and war stores.²²⁴

These restraints on India's conventional warfighting potential came into play in each of the four cases. During Kargil and Twin Peaks, official Indian estimates put the country's conventional combat edge over Pakistan at an estimated 1.1–1.2:1, essentially “operational-level parity.”²²⁵ The official Indian government review of the Kargil conflict says flatly: “On the Indian side, it had been made abundantly clear that the Indian Army has not for sometime enjoyed a punitive edge over the Pakistan Army to adopt an effective pro-active strategy”²²⁶ were India to escalate the fighting. During Twin Peaks, New Delhi opted for a full mobilization of Indian forces without any specific guidance as to what their mission(s) would be. V.K. Singh, then a Brigadier with the XI Corps in Punjab, recalls that the “very first few days of Operation Parakram exposed the hollowness of our operational preparedness.”²²⁷ With three strike corps ready to roll out of their launch areas, Prime Minister Vajpayee twice backed away from the brink of war. One account quotes a senior BJP foreign policy adviser as saying, “the notion that international pressure from the United States impelled India to hold fire in 2001–2002 and defuse the crisis was a political excuse. The real problem was a lack of viable military options.”²²⁸ In 2008, Prime Minister Singh, apparently having learned from the 2002 mobilization fiasco, resisted pressures to order the

Indian military into action in retaliation for the Mumbai massacre. Singh's instinctive caution was undoubtedly bolstered by senior army leaders' view that an “inadequate and obsolete arsenal at their disposal mitigated against” war.²²⁹ The army chief's admission that India was unprepared for war with Pakistan was the “most visible manifestation of the ‘hollowing out’ of the Indian Army.”²³⁰ After intensive discussion of options, even the most limited military response was ruled out, owing partly to Indian conventional deficiencies.²³¹ In 2016, with Indian military forces still suffering from shortcomings that “raise serious questions whether India can undertake large-scale military operations at all,” and which suggest that “Indian policy makers cannot be confident that even a limited resort to military force would achieve a rapid result,”²³² Prime Minister Modi belied his more hawkish reputation by ordering pinprick military operations in Kashmir that were militarily insignificant. One influential Indian defense analyst was of the view that Indian conventional warfighting capabilities were even worse in 2016 than they had been in 2008.²³³

A fourth potential explanation for Indian forbearance in the face of repeated provocations is New Delhi's alleged “strategic restraint doctrine,” which is said to be a driving force behind the political leadership's tight limitations on the use of military force.²³⁴ For Cohen and Dasgupta, India has a “deeply embedded tradition of strategic restraint.” In this view, “reticence in the use of force as an instrument

of state policy has been the dominant political condition for Indian thinking on the military.”²³⁵ This “long-standing international political–military posture” can be traced to the views of Indian nationalist heroes like Gandhi and Nehru, who “saw the use of armed force as normatively flawed and practically costly for India.” Going back to Independence, this argument continues, “the Indian political leadership has generally seen military force as an inappropriate instrument of politics.”²³⁶ Indian strategic restraint is rooted in a “political culture stressing disengagement, avoidance of confrontation, and a defensive mindset.”²³⁷ In Sarang Shidore’s conception, strategic restraint is one of the “operational elements” of India’s strategic culture specifically “with respect to nuclear weapons and security relations with Pakistan.” Shidore traces India’s alleged strategic restraint to the post-Independence leadership: “Moralism has traditionally been a prominent driver in India’s strategic restraint doctrine. Nehruvian ideas of resolution of conflict through communication influenced the defining of Indian restraint.”²³⁸ In more recent decades, he says, “liberal globalism is also a driver for the continued persistence of India’s strategic restraint policy”; New Delhi’s economic liberalization and high economic growth rates have generated a “view that a major conflict with Pakistan carries unacceptable risks to India’s prospects for development and security.”²³⁹ One proponent of this argument, retired Indian brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal, claims that New Delhi has observed “immense strategic

restraint” in the face of “grave provocation.” As examples, he includes: “low-intensity limited conflict and proxy war since 1947 in Jammu and Kashmir; Pakistan’s Operation Gibraltar (1965); Pakistani support to the Khalistan movement in Indian Punjab (1980s); the Kargil conflict (1999); the attack on the Indian parliament, Operation Parakram, and the attack on Indian Army family quarters, Kaluchak (2001–02); and the Mumbai terrorist strikes (2008).”²⁴⁰ Shidore concurs, writing that “strategic restraint in Indian security policy is largely borne out by the empirical record with respect to Pakistan. India’s response to pointed provocations such as terrorist attacks has traditionally been overwhelmingly diplomatic rather than military.” He specifically refers to Kargil, Twin Peaks, and Mumbai as good examples of Indian strategic restraint in practice.²⁴¹

Although a comprehensive history of India’s use of military force is beyond the scope of this article, there are strong reasons to doubt that a doctrine of strategic restraint has caused India to shy away from wielding military power, either in general or during the episodes examined above. In the pre-nuclear era, New Delhi ordered substantial military operations in Kashmir in the autumn of 1947, a provocative and disastrous “forward policy” toward China in the leadup to the Sino–Indian war of 1962, an invasion across the international border with Pakistan in 1965 (escalating the second Kashmir war, begun by Pakistan), another invasion of Pakistan during the Bangladesh war of 1971, a military occupation of the Siachen Gla-

cier in 1984, and an enormous military exercise in Punjab which kicked off the Brasstacks crisis and near-war with Pakistan in 1986–87. Drawing on Alastair Iain Johnston's theoretical framework,²⁴² Ali Ahmed argues convincingly that "India has not shied away from the use of force. Such resort has been discreet and conditioned by strategic considerations. It has displayed both resolve and restraint." Furthermore, the "operational set in India's strategic culture was never as pacifist as suggested by India's popular self-image."²⁴³

In the post-nuclear era, India has mounted vigorous attacks against Pakistani positions during the Kargil conflict,²⁴⁴ attempted via a massive military mobilization in 2001–02 to coerce Pakistan to modify its behavior,²⁴⁵ and resorted to "surgical strikes" across the LOC on several occasions, including after the 2016 Uri massacre. However, unlike in the pre-nuclear era, New Delhi has refrained from launching major attacks across the LOC or the international border. As discussed in previous sections, the combined effects of nuclear deterrence, U.S. crisis management, and a dearth of good conventional military options together provide a robust explanation for Indian restraint. Nuclear weapons, in particular, have induced demonstrable caution, evident in the cases presented above and in the numerous scholarly analyses cited in this article. In contrast, supporters of the strategic restraint explanation never even attempt to show through evidence or a specific causal mechanism that such a "doctrine" in fact animates Indian behavior. Their ar-

gument is tautological: India acts with restraint; therefore, it must have a doctrine of strategic restraint. Indeed, they sometimes inadvertently betray their belief that the *primary* phenomenon at play is actually nuclear deterrence, while strategic restraint is distinctly *epiphenomenal*. For example, Dasgupta and Cohen maintain that "once India and Pakistan accepted the basic reality of nuclear deterrence ... restraint by choice became restraint without choice. No Indian leader could risk the chance of a Pakistani [nuclear] attack on an Indian city."²⁴⁶ Cohen, writing with two colleagues about Kargil, notes that Indian "restraint was in marked contrast to India's response in the 1965 and 1971 conflicts, when nuclear weapons had not entered the equation and it had not displayed any inhibitions in invading Pakistan."²⁴⁷ Another observer writes about Twin Peaks: "Vajpayee's admirers would praise him for 'strategic restraint.' His critics called him indecisive. No one, in public at least, would admit the possibility that he might be being realistic. The Indian Army was not in a position to deal a decisive blow against Pakistan."²⁴⁸ Strategic restraint in its truest sense is simply an inclination toward moderation under the nuclear shadow. "It means responding in a way that does not potentially become strategically costly for India by risking a broader conventional war, which carries with it not only human and economic costs, but also the risk of nuclear use if the war spills across the international border."²⁴⁹ Claiming a doctrine of "strategic restraint" makes a virtue out of necessity.

Implications

The main causes of Indian temperance in the four cases examined in this paper are nuclear deterrence, a paucity of good conventional military options, and U.S. efforts to manage Indo-Pakistani conflicts, and ease tensions. Nuclear deterrence is the most significant of these factors, because it spawns and strengthens the other two. The underlying presence of nuclear weapons triggers U.S. conflict management and provides the most compelling rationale for Indian and Pakistani interlocutors to heed the warnings of U.S. diplomats. The ever-present possibility of escalation to the use of nuclear weapons strictly limits Indian conventional military options, including the one most likely to inflict defeat on Pakistani forces and potentially bring an end to Islamabad's subconventional operations on Indian soil (including Indian Kashmir). Framed another way, nuclear deterrence is the cause which, if taken away, would make the most difference. It is difficult to imagine that the Indian political leadership would, in the absence of nuclear weapons, have resisted pressures to order more punitive military strikes against Pakistan.

Given the daunting constraints they have faced when contemplating the retaliatory use of force against Pakistan, Indian decision makers have acted with prudence, wisdom, and rationality. Unfortunately, this is not how many Indians see it. Indian analysts and the population at large, justifiably livid after years of Pakistani and Pakistan-supported attacks, often bemoan their political leaders' lack of "resolve" in

not responding with decisive military force. While their frustration is understandable, they should instead celebrate their government's sober assessments of the costs and benefits of striking back hard against Pakistan. Indian decision making is the chief firebreak against major, possibly nuclear, war in South Asia. Indians should prefer that the power of escalation control rest in their hands, rather than in Pakistan's. Crossing the international border with large conventional military forces has now been established as the brightest of red lines in a nuclear South Asia. Like early American nuclear analysts before them, Indian strategists are chafing against the dictates of the nuclear revolution. They continue to search desperately for "space" under the nuclear threshold to punish Pakistan for its transgressions, coming up with a range of Cold-Start-type "proactive" options. But, the political leadership is rightly skeptical of these "solutions," instinctively understanding that there really is no safe "space" for substantial conventional operations, given the never-negligible chance that armed clashes might escalate out of control. Two analysts capture the essential logic of Indian restraint: "as horrific as these acts [against India] are ... they are not existential threats to Indian security—but overreaction and a war that risks nuclear escalation could be."²⁵⁰ Hard as it is to stomach, India's strategic elites should accept, not resist, the simple logic of the nuclear revolution.

The first priority of any two adversarial nuclear weapon states should be to establish and institutionalize a re-

lationship of mutual nuclear deterrence. Unfortunately, Pakistan is likely to keep poking and prodding, testing India and attempting to keep Kashmir on the boil. Indian political leaders should continue to resist pressures from the armed forces, domestic political opponents, the 24/7 media, and the public to rise to Pakistan's bait by retaliating with sizable conventional military attacks. Indian strategists should also abandon their hopeless quest for Cold Start-style limited war options under the nuclear threshold.²⁵¹ Continuing to design and publicly discuss "limited" invasion plans that, if implemented, might spark a Pakistani nuclear riposte is simply unwise. There is no prospect that Indian military planners can, in the abstract, calculate the precise magnitude of a limited conventional attack that is appropriately punitive, effective in coerc-

ing Islamabad to revise its strategy of subconventional provocations, but not so threatening to Pakistan's vital interests that it would not unleash its nuclear arsenal in response. India's "Cold Start" discourse plays directly into the hands of the Pakistan Army, which has used it to build its case for the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons and what it calls "full-spectrum deterrence." Furthermore, were Indian leaders actually to yield to the temptation of launching a "limited" military offensive, Pakistanis would rally around the flag, reinforcing the Pakistan Army's dominant position in society. At the same time, Pakistan-based terrorists would not be put out of business; indeed, a major India-Pakistan war is high on their list of goals. In short, under the nuclear shadow, any movement up the escalation ladder is potentially catastrophic.

Notes

- 1 I use this terminology instead of the word "crises," because the 2008 and 2016 cases were arguably not actual crises. For a contrary view, see Sameer Lalwani and Hannah Haegeland, eds., *Investigating Crises: South Asia's Lessons, Evolving Dynamics, and Trajectories* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2018).
- 2 For an overview, see Sumit Ganguly, *Deadly Impasse: Indo-Pakistani Relations at the Dawn of a New Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). I will refer to the disputed territory in the conventional shorthand, as "Kashmir." While each side claims the entirety of Kashmir, the Indian- and Pakistani-administered parts of the territory have been divided by a line of control (LOC) since the 1972 Simla Agreement. For the sake of convenience, I refer to these areas as "Indian Kashmir" and "Pakistani Kashmir."
- 3 Detailed accounts of the Kargil conflict include: Sumit Ganguly and Devin T. Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 143-66; Government of India, *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000); S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 117-31; Peter R. Lavoy, ed., *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); V.P. Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2006); Pervez Musharraf, *In the*

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- Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 87-98; Shaukat Qadir, "An Analysis of the Kargil Conflict 1999," *RUSI Journal*, 147, no. 2 (April 2002): 24-30; Praveen Swami, *The Kargil War* (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2000); and 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, CA: Rand, 2001).
- 4 On Pakistan's support for JeM and other terrorist groups, see S. Paul Kapur, *Jihad as Grand Strategy: Islamist Militancy, National Security, and the Pakistani State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
 - 5 In-depth studies of the Twin Peaks crisis include: P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Stephen P. Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process: American Engagement in South Asia* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2007), 149-83; Ganguly and Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry*, 167-86; Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent*, 131-39; Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon, "U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," Report 57, The Stimson Center, Washington, DC, September 2006; and V.K. Sood and Pravin Sawhney, *Operation Parakram: The War Unfinished* (New Delhi: Sage, 2003).
 - 6 On LeT and its connections to the Pakistani state, see Stephen Tankel, *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
 - 7 Detailed accounts of the 2008 Mumbai attacks include: Myra MacDonald, *Defeat Is an Orphan: How Pakistan Lost the Great South Asian War* (London: Hurst, 2017), 189-207; Shivshankar Menon, *Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2016), 60-81; Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon, *The Unfinished Crisis: U.S. Crisis Management after the 2008 Mumbai Attacks* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2012); Bruce Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon: America, India, and Pakistan to the Brink and Back* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2013), 1-25; Cathy Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy, *The Siege: 68 Hours Inside the Taj Hotel* (New York: Penguin, 2013); and Tankel, *Storming the World Stage*, 207-33.
 - 8 For overviews of the Uri attack and Indian response, see Arka Biswas, "Surgical Strikes and Deterrence-Stability in South Asia," *ORF Occasional Paper No. 115* (Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, June 2017); Nitin A. Gokhale, *Securing India the Modi Way: Pathankot, Surgical Strikes and More* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2017), 1-52; Lalwani and Haegeland, eds., *Investigating Crises*; MacDonald, *Defeat Is an Orphan*, 255-61.
 - 9 Representative treatments include: Sumit Ganguly in Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur, *India, Pakistan, and the Bomb: Debating Nuclear Stability in South Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Ganguly and Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry*; Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 253-82; and Kenneth Waltz in Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).
 - 10 See Dinshaw Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," *Security Studies* 18, no. 1 (2009): 148-82; Nayak and Krepon, "U.S. Crisis Management"; Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*; Moeed Yusuf, *Brokering Peace in Nuclear Environments: U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018); and Moeed Yusuf and Jason A. Kirk, "Keeping an Eye on South Asian Skies: America's Pivotal Deterrence in Nuclearized India-Pakistan Crises," *Contemporary Security Policy* 37, no. 2 (May 2016): 246-72.
 - 11 Works in this vein include: Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2010); Sunil Dasgupta and

- Stephen P. Cohen, "Is India Ending Its Strategic Restraint Doctrine?" *Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 163-77; and Sarang Shidore, "India's Strategic Culture and Deterrence Stability on the Subcontinent," in *Deterrence Instability and Nuclear Weapons in South Asia*, ed. Michael Krepon et al. (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2015), 119-47.
- 12 For works focused on the India–Pakistan conventional military balance, see: Christopher Clary, "Deterrence Stability and the Conventional Balance of Forces in South Asia," in *Deterrence Stability and Escalation Control in South Asia*, ed. Michael Krepon and Julia Thompson (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2012), 135-60, and Walter Ladwig, III, "Indian Military Modernization and Conventional Deterrence in South Asia," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 5 (May 2015): 729-72.
 - 13 Pakistan's motives for launching the Kargil initiative are discussed in Feroz Hassan Khan, Peter R. Lavoy, and Christopher Clary, "Pakistan's Motivations and Calculations for the Kargil Conflict," in *Asymmetric Warfare*, ed. Lavoy, 64-91. Prior to the publication of Lavoy's book, many analysts argued that Pakistan's aggression was emboldened by its newly overt nuclear weapons capabilities, demonstrated in its May 1998 explosive tests. See, for example, Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella*, 48, 49 and Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent*, 115-31. Khan, Lavoy, and Clary rebut this argument, writing that the Kargil planners "were not directly emboldened to undertake this operation because Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability was demonstrated in the previous summer. Nuclear deterrence was at best a vague notion at this point in time" (90). Also see Lavoy's "Introduction: The Importance of the Kargil Conflict," where he says, "Pakistani planners were not motivated by a calculation that the risk of nuclear escalation would deter India from counterattacking" (11). However, in a more recent analysis, Michael Cohen writes: "Much evidence suggests that Pakistani nuclear weapons were central to the Kargil plans and that the intrusion was part of a nuclear weapons-emboldened assertive foreign policy." See his *When Proliferation Causes Peace: The Psychology of Nuclear Crises* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 133. This question remains unresolved.
 - 14 Lavoy, "Introduction," 19. John H. Gill puts the "total number of intruders," including escorts, porters, and other support personnel, at "at least 1,500–2,000." "Military Operations in the Kargil Conflict," in *Asymmetric Warfare*, ed. Lavoy, 96.
 - 15 Gill, "Military Operations," 99.
 - 16 In April 1984, Indian military forces occupied the Siachen Glacier in far northern Kashmir, just south of China's Xinjiang province. Pakistani forces soon followed suit, and sporadic battles have been fought between the two sides since June 1984. The glacier occupies some 1,000 square miles of territory in the Karakoram Mountains, much of which lies at elevations above 17,000 feet. The question of which country is sovereign over the Siachen Glacier is a dispute within a dispute; because both India and Pakistan claim all of Kashmir, each country also claims complete control over the glacier. The Siachen conflict has its roots in the vagueness of the 1949 Karachi Agreement, which demarcated the Cease-Fire Line between India and Pakistan after the first Kashmir war. That pact delineated the ostensibly "temporary" boundary between the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, and Azad ("Free") Kashmir and the Northern Areas, both held by Pakistan. When the Cease-Fire Line was drawn, roughly 40 miles of the boundary leading up to the Chinese border was left undelineated, because the area "was considered an inaccessible no-man's land." The issue remained unresolved by the Simla Agreement of 1972, which replaced the Cease-Fire Line with the new LOC without addressing the matter of the undrawn boundary. See Robert G. Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security under Zia: The Policy Imperatives of a Peripheral Asian State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 143–94.

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- 18 Ramesh Vinayak, "Nasty Surprise," *India Today International*, May 31, 1999, 21; Harinder Baweja and Ramesh Vinayak, "Peak by Peak," *India Today International*, June 14, 1999, 17-21.
- 19 Manoj Joshi and Harinder Baweja, "Blasting Peace," *India Today International*, June 7, 1999, 12-17. See also Gill, "Military Operations," 106-7.
- 20 Joshi and Baweja, "Blasting Peace"; Michael Fathers, "On the Brink," *Time*, June 7, 1999, 48-49.
- 21 Government of India, *From Surprise to Reckoning*, 105. For the most comprehensive evaluation of India's use of airpower during the Kargil conflict, see Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Airpower at 18,000': The Indian Air Force in the Kargil War* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012)
- 22 Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, "The Dove at War," *India Today International*, July 12, 1999, 26-27.
- 23 Lancaster, "U.S. Defused Kashmir Crisis on Brink of War."
- 24 Gill, "Military Operations," 105.
- 25 Bruce Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House," Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2002, 4.
- 26 Lavoy, "Introduction," 11, note 31.
- 27 Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella*, 15.
- 28 Jaswant Singh, *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2006), 320.
- 29 Malik, *Kargil*, 259-60.
- 30 Gill, "Military Operations," 111. See p. 112, notes 64 and 66 for media references. For an analysis, including many instances of disorganized nuclear signaling, see Timothy D. Hoyt, "Kargil: The Nuclear Dimension," in *Asymmetric Warfare*, ed. Lavoy, 144-70. A concise overview of Kargil's nuclear dimensions is in Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 147-55.
- 31 Manoj Joshi and Raj Chengappa, "The Marathon War," *India Today International*, June 21, 1999, 12-13.
- 32 Baweja and Vinayak, "Peak by Peak," 18.
- 33 Harinder Baweja, "Slow but Steady," *India Today International*, June 28, 1999, 21; Government of India, *From Surprise to Reckoning*, 105.
- 34 Malik, *Kargil*, 146-47.
- 35 Lavoy, "Introduction," 21. See Gill, "Military Operations," 114-19, for a detailed discussion of the Indian Army's increasingly successful efforts to dislodge the invaders.
- 36 Raj Chengappa, "Will the War Spread?" *India Today International*, July 5, 1999, 14-17.
- 37 For an overview, see Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2004), 154-69.
- 38 Raj Chengappa, "Minefield Ahead," *India Today International*, June 7, 1999, 17.
- 39 Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit," 4.

- 40 John W. Garver, "The Restoration of Sino-Indian Comity Following India's Nuclear Tests," *China Quarterly*, no. 168 (December 2001): 882.
- 41 Raj Chengappa, "Face-Saving Retreat," *India Today International*, July 19, 1999, 16.
- 42 Garver, "Sino-Indian Comity," 882.
- 43 Raj Chengappa, "On High Ground," *India Today International*, June 28, 1999, 25.
- 44 The most authoritative account of the Kargil conflict, Lavoy's *Asymmetric Warfare*, concludes that "Indian troops were within days of opening another front across the LOC and possibly the international border, an act that could have triggered a large-scale conventional military engagement, which in turn might have escalated to an exchange of recently tested Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons." Lavoy, "Introduction," 2.
- 45 Chengappa, "Face-Saving Retreat," 17.
- 46 Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit," 6.
- 47 Chengappa, "Will the War Spread?" 14.
- 48 Lancaster, "U.S. Defused Kashmir Crisis on Brink of War."
- 49 C. Raja Mohan, "Pak. Must Pull Out Troops," *The Hindu*, June 28, 1999.
- 50 Garver, "Sino-Indian Comity," 884.
- 51 Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit," 6, 7.
- 52 Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit," 8, 9.
- 53 Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 97-98.
- 54 Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit," 9-12.
- 55 Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit," 11.
- 56 Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to Be a Nuclear Power* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2000), 437. The three delivery systems were the Prithvi and Agni missiles, as well as the Mirage-2000 attack aircraft. Lavoy contends that "neither Pakistan nor India readied its nuclear arms for employment." "Introduction" to *Asymmetric Conflict*, 11.
- 57 Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit," 11.
- 58 Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit," 12.
- 59 "Press Briefing by Senior Administration Official on President's Meeting with Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan," Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, July 4, 1999, <http://www.fas.org/news/pakistan/1999/990704-pak-wh2.htm>.
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- 61 "India, Pakistan Agree to End Kashmir Fighting," *CNN Interactive*, July 11, 1999.
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- 66 Nayak and Krepon, "U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," 52.
- 67 Dennis Kux, "India's Fine Balance," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 3 (May–June 2002): 98-100; Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*, 73-79.
- 68 John Lancaster, "Pakistan to Follow India in Removing Troops from Border," *Washington Post*, October 18, 2002.
- 69 Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent*, 134.
- 70 Hoyt, "Kargil: The Nuclear Dimension," 160, note 58.
- 71 John Lancaster, "India to Remove Some Forces from Border with Pakistan," *Washington Post*, October 17, 2002. The oft-quoted figure of one million Indian and Pakistani soldiers facing off against one another included troops in Kashmir.
- 72 Sagan and Waltz, *Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 146. (Sagan)
- 73 Devin T. Hagerty, "The Nuclear Holdouts: India, Israel, and Pakistan," in *Slaying the Nuclear Dragon: Disarmament Dynamics in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Tanya Ogilvie-White and David Santoro (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 223-24.
- 74 Praveen Swami, "A War to End a War: The Causes and Outcomes of the 2001–2 India-Pakistan Crisis," in *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia: Crisis Behaviour and the Bomb*, ed. Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur (London: Routledge, 2009), 144.
- 75 Kanti Bajpai, "To War or Not to War: The India–Pakistan Crisis of 2001–2," in *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia*, ed. Ganguly and Kapur, 165.
- 76 Rajesh Basrur, *South Asia's Cold War: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in Comparative Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2008), 61.
- 77 Steve Coll, "The Stand-Off," *New Yorker*, February 13, 2006 (no p. # in online version), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/02/13/the-stand-off>, Coll adds that, "by Christmas Day of 2001, C.I.A. and other intelligence analysts in Washington had concluded that an invasion of Pakistani territory by Indian forces could escalate to nuclear conflict."
- 78 Nayak and Krepon, "U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," 52, 24-25.
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- 80 LeT played a small part in the Parliament attack. Tankel, *Storming the World Stage*, 112.
- 81 Nayak and Krepon, "U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," 25-26.
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- 83 MacDonald, *Defeat Is an Orphan*, 137.
- 84 President Pervez Musharraf's Address to the Nation, January 12, 2002, http://www.pak.gov.pk/President_Addresses/President_address.htm.
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- 86 Steve Coll, "Between India and Pakistan, a Changing Role for the US," *Washington Post*, May

- 26, 2002; Nayak and Krepon, "U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," 19. Musharraf recalls that he "personally conveyed messages to Prime Minister Vajpayee through every international leader who came to Pakistan, that if Indian troops moved a single step across the international border or Line of Control, they should not expect a conventional war from Pakistan." Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," 171.
- 87 Chari, Cheema, and Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process*, 154.
- 88 Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, 275.
- 89 G.V. Gireesh, "Game of Patience," *Outlook*, May 27, 2002, 34-39.
- 90 Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, "Nuclear Doctrine, Declaratory Policy, and Escalation Control," in *Escalation Control and the Nuclear Option in South Asia*, ed. Michael Krepon, Rodney W. Jones, and Ziad Haider (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2004), 109.
- 91 Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*, 82-83. Pakistan also moved its nuclear-capable missiles in May. Mistry, "Tempering Optimism," 172.
- 92 Feroz Hassan Khan, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 350.
- 93 Nayak and Krepon, "U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," 55. Also see Rahul Bedi, "The Military Dynamics," *Frontline*, June 8–21, 2002.
- 94 Nayak and Krepon, "U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," 33-36. A former U.S. official, Bruce Riedel, recounts that both Powell and Armitage later told him "that they thought that war was a very real danger and that if it began, it would go to the brink of nuclear war, if not over." *Avoiding Armageddon*, 151.
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- 98 Ganguly and Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry*, 177-80.
- 99 Rahul Bedi and Anton La Guardia, "Pakistan Steps Back from Brink," *Daily Telegraph*, June 8, 2002.
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- 104 Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*, 1; Angel Rabasa et al., *The Lessons of Mumbai* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 4; Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 5;
- 105 MacDonald, *Defeat Is an Orphan*, 203; Menon, *Choices*, 60; Tankel, *Storming the World Stage*, 215.

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- 108 "Mumbai Attack Might Have Led to Ind-Pak Nuclear War: Roemer," *Indian Express*, September 1, 2011.
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- 110 Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 719.
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- 112 Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 720.
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- 114 Menon, *Choices*, 62.
- 115 Pranab Dhal Samanta, "26/11: How India Debated a War with Pakistan That November," *Indian Express*, November 26, 2010. Army Vice-Chief M.L. Naidu sat in for army chief Deepak Kapoor, who was abroad.
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- 117 Samanta, "26/11"; Pravin Sawhney, "Whither Our War Preparedness?" *Pioneer*, June 4, 2015.
- 118 Praveen Swami, "Talking to Pakistan in Its Language," *The Hindu*, June 11, 2014.
- 119 Swami, "Talking to Pakistan in Its Language."
- 120 Sawhney, "Whither Our War Preparedness?"
- 121 Sawhney, "Whither Our War Preparedness?"
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- 124 Samanta, "26/11."
- 125 Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*, 44.
- 126 Raj Chengappa and Saurabh Shukla, "Reining in the Rogue," *India Today*, December 4, 2008; Basrur, *2008 Mumbai Terrorist Attacks*, 18; Samuel Black, "Appendix I: The Structure of South Asian Crises from Brasstacks to Mumbai," in *Crises in South Asia: Trends and Potential Consequences*, ed. Michael Krepon and Nathan Cohn (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2011), 52, 53.
- 127 Chengappa and Shukla, "Reining in the Rogue."
- 128 Rama Lakshmi, "Cabinet Member Resigns amid Anger in India," *Washington Post*, December 1, 2008; "Indian Defense Chief: No Plans for Military Action," *Associated Press*, December 16, 2008.
- 129 Chengappa and Shukla, "Reining in the Rogue." This piece quotes former Indian Army chief

V.P. Malik as saying: “Such strikes are a risky gambit,” as they “can trigger a full scale war.”

- 130 “We Feared Indian Strike: ISI Chief,” *The Hindu*, January 8, 2009.
- 131 Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 22.
- 132 Basrur, *2008 Mumbai Terrorist Attacks*, 22.
- 133 Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*, 13.
- 134 Black, “Structure of South Asian Crises,” 51.
- 135 Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*, 27.
- 136 Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*, 27-28. In the early 2000s, frustrated by their inability to punish Pakistan for its persistent subconventional aggression, Indian military planners developed ideas for conventional retaliatory options that (they hoped) would not cross Islamabad’s nuclear “red lines.” For more details, see George Perkovich and Toby Dalton, *Not War, Not Peace? Motivating Pakistan to Prevent Cross-Border Terrorism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 73-103, and Christopher Clary and Vipin Narang, “Doctrine, Capabilities, and (In)Stability in South Asia,” in *Deterrence Stability and Escalation Control in South Asia*, ed. Krepon and Thompson, 94-99. The so-called Cold Start option refers to the rapid unleashing of shallow armored incursions along a broad front, intended to seize limited territory and impose a political settlement on Pakistan. In theory, such a quick, measured response could be undertaken before third parties (e.g., the United States) can get involved in crisis management. Indian political leaders have been skeptical of these designs, and Cold Start has never been official Indian doctrine, but Pakistani military planners had repeatedly expressed to U.S. officials their concerns regarding Cold Start.
- 137 Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*, 19. Interestingly, both the external affairs minister, Mukherjee, and the foreign secretary, Shivshankar Menon, favored a military response. In addition to Nayak and Krepon, p. 19, see Menon, *Choices*, 61.
- 138 Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*, 7, 28.
- 139 Black, “Structure of South Asian Crises,” 51.
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- 141 Emily Wax and Rama Lakshmi, “As Rice Presses Pakistan, Mumbai Residents Hold Massive Rally,” *Washington Post*, December 4, 2008; Black, “Structure of South Asian Crises,” 51.
- 142 Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*, 42. See also Muhammad Saleh Zaafer, “India Planned Strike on Muridke after Mumbai Attacks, Reveals Kasuri,” *The News International*, August 28, 2015.
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- 144 U.S. Embassy Islamabad to Department of State, “GOI Embassy Draws Distinction between ISI and Civilian Leaders,” secret cable, December 5, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/30/pakistan-usforeignpolicy1>
- 145 U.S. Embassy New Delhi to Department of State, “Indian Foreign Secretary: ‘Huge Stake’ in Special Representative Holbrooke’s Success,” secret cable, February 17, 2009, <http://theguardian.com/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/192309>
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- 174 One very experienced Indian defense correspondent argues that Modi "chose strikes across the LOC as these had been carried out before and the two armies had dealt with such situations without escalating things further." Raj Chengappa, "Game Changer," *India Today*, October 6, 2016.
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- 176 "Statement by NSC Spokesperson Ned Price on National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice's Call with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval of India," The White House, Washington, DC, September 28, 2016. Barry and Masood, "India Claims 'Surgical Strikes' across Line of Control in Kashmir."
- 177 "India Strikes Back, Carries Out Surgical Strikes on Terror Launch Pads at LOC," *Times of India*, September 29, 2016.
- 178 Pubby, "Army's Daring Surgical Strike."
- 179 ANI, "Aftermath of India's Surgical Strikes in POK," *Business Standard*, October 5, 2016.
- 180 "Indian and Pakistani Troops Exchange Fire in Kashmir," *Associated Press*, October 3, 2016.
- 181 Samanth Subramaniam, "What Actually Happened in Kashmir," *The Atlantic*, October 6, 2016.

- 182 Michael Krepon, "Crises in South Asia: Trends and Potential Consequences," in *Crises in South Asia*, ed. Krepon and Cohn, 8.
- 183 See the table in Sameer Lalwani and Hannah Haegeland, "Anatomy of a Crisis: Explaining Crisis Onset in India–Pakistan Relations," in *Investigating Crises*, ed. Lalwani and Haegeland, 35.
- 184 The exception, of course, was India's Kargil response, because the aggressors were on the Indian side of the LOC.
- 185 Devin T. Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 163.
- 186 Robert Jervis, "Kargil, Deterrence Theory and International Relations Theory," in *Asymmetric Warfare*, ed. Lavoy, 390.
- 187 There is a great deal of confusion in the literature about the nature of Pakistan's aggression at Kargil in 1999. Narang refers to Pakistan's "conventional aggression," arguing that "India was unable to deter Pakistan from launching a relatively aggressive conventional attack." *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, 253. Also see pp. 7, 11, 296. Elsewhere, Narang notes India's failure to deter "high-level conventional conflict, such as the Kargil War" (297) and India's inability to deter "high-intensity wars, such as the 1999 Kargil War" (11). Other analysts use terms like "asymmetric operation," Gill, "Military Operations," 123; "limited military exercise," Government of India, *From Surprise to Reckoning*, 236; "limited war," Krepon, "Crises in South Asia," 27; "low-intensity conflict," Rajesh M. Basrur, *Minimum Deterrence and India's Nuclear Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 73-74; "sub-conventional" conflict, Yusuf and Kirk, "Keeping an Eye on South Asian Skies," 11-12; "unconventional" conflict, Tellis, Fair, and Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella*, xi, etc. Pakistan's covert infiltration of the Kargil area was not a conventional invasion. The territory was claimed by both countries, with the dispute between them unresolved. The NLI intruders were "lightly-equipped" paramilitary forces, "not designed for major offensive operations," who relied on "pack mules and human porters" for logistical and other needs. Gill, "Military Operations," 97-98; Khan, Lavoy, and Clary, "Pakistan's Motivations and Calculations for the Kargil Conflict," 67. They fought in local civilian garb, i.e., *shalwar kameez*. The terrain was "highly glaciated and avalanche-prone, a desolate, uninhabited desert waste of serrated, knife-edge ridges piercing the sky" at altitudes of 13–18,000 feet. This was "not a very major operation either in terms of size or capability." Government of India, *From Surprise to Reckoning*, 17, 103-4. With its forceful response, it was India that "conventionalize[d] the unconventional conflict." Lavoy, "Introduction," 4-5. Also see pp. 8-9, 26. Pakistan's Kargil incursion did not represent a failure of India's nuclear posture to deter a conventional invasion. (Emphases added.)
- 188 Samuel Black, *The Changing Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons: Nuclear Threats from 1970 to 2010* (Washington, DC: 2010), 17-18. These signals consisted of three menacing statements by Pakistani civilian and military leaders, as well as the suggestive but ambiguous nuclear-related activity discussed in the Kargil section above.
- 189 Devin T. Hagerty, "The Kargil War: An Optimistic Assessment," in *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia*, ed. Ganguly and Kapur, 110. Also see: Cohen, *When Proliferation Causes Peace*, 138; Dalton and Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Options and Escalation Dominance*, 7; Gill, "Military Operations," 124; Jervis, "Kargil, Deterrence Theory and International Relations Theory," 395-96; S. Paul Kapur, "Revisionist Ambitions, Conventional Capabilities, and Nuclear Instability: Why Nuclear South Asia Is Not Like Cold War Europe," in *Inside Nuclear South Asia*, ed. Scott D. Sagan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 197; Lambeth, *Airpower at 18,000'*, 2; Lavoy, "Introduction," 33; Sagan, in Sagan and Waltz, eds., *Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 145-46;

- Sechser and Fuhrmann, *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy*, 150; Waltz, in Sagan and Waltz, eds., *Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 163.
- 190 Ganguly and Kapur, *India, Pakistan, and the Bomb*, 52-53
- 191 Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*, 70-71, 106.
- 192 V.P. Malik, *India's Military Conflicts and Diplomacy: An Inside View of Decision Making* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2013), 127.
- 193 Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, 271. Also see: Chari, Cheema, and Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process*, 139 and Cohen, *When Proliferation Causes Peace*, 141.
- 194 Hagerty, "The Kargil War," 112. Musharraf's assertion that Pakistan did not have an operational nuclear weapons capability in 1999 is irrelevant in this context. At the time, Indian leaders had to assume that Pakistan *might* have such a capability.
- 195 Black, *Changing Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons*, 16.
- 196 Black, *Changing Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons*, 16-18. These signals included threatening statements by senior officials, raised alert levels, movements of ballistic missiles, ballistic missile tests, and movements of nuclear-capable aircraft.
- 197 Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," 174; Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*, 9.
- 198 Swami, "A War to End a War," 150, 145.
- 199 Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," 174
- 200 Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, 278.
- 201 Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, 277. Narang's analysis confirms and reinforces similar conclusions reached previously by scholars, for example: Basrur, *South Asia's Cold War*, 62; Chari, Cheema, and Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process*, 160, 163, 172, 173, 182; Ganguly and Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry*, 167-86; Kapur in Ganguly and Kapur, *India, Pakistan, and the Bomb*, 58; Dinshaw Mistry, "Complexity of Deterrence among New Nuclear States: The India-Pakistan Case," in *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age*, ed. T.V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 24; Rajesh Rajagopalan, *Second Strike: Arguments about Nuclear War in South Asia* (New Delhi: Viking, 2005), 204; Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*, 83, 97, 116, 144, and Waltz, in Sagan and Waltz, eds., *Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 171-72.
- 202 "Interview: Ex-Pakistani Pres. Musharraf Mulled Using Nukes Against India after 2001 Attack," *The Mainichi*, July 26, 2017.
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- 204 Chari, Cheema, and Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process*, 197.
- 205 Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, 279.
- 206 Krepon, "Crises in South Asia," 9. Singh "reportedly asked whether Pakistan could misperceive an Indian conventional strike as a nuclear one and respond by launching its own nuclear forces. No one could answer with any certainty." Perkovich and Dalton, *Not War, Not Peace?*, 2. For other endorsements of the nuclear deterrence argument, see: Rafiq Dossani and Jonah Blank, "Could the Kashmir Standoff Trigger Nuclear War," rand.org, October 7, 2016; PTI, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Deterred India," *The Hindu*, March 10, 2009; and Waltz, in Sagan

- and Waltz, eds., *Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 173.
- 207 Black, "Structure of South Asian Crises from Brasstacks to Mumbai," 51; Black, *Changing Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons*, 15. Two of the threats involved increases in the alert levels of the Pakistan Army and PAF. One was a pointed statement by a senior Indian official.
- 208 Chengappa, "Game Changer."
- 209 Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2013), 194; Ashley J. Tellis, *Are India-Pakistan Peace Talks Worth a Damn?* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2017), 37, 71; Waltz in Sagan and Waltz, eds., *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 172-73; Krepon, "Crises in South Asia," 11; Vipin Narang, "Posturing for Peace? Pakistan's Nuclear Postures and South Asian Stability," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (Winter 2009/2010): 64; George Perkovich, "Uri Won't Lead India to Undertake Major Military Action," rediff.com, September 21, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/09/21/uri-won-t-lead-india-to-undertake-major-military-action-pub-64649>; Toby Dalton and George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Options and Escalation Dominance* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016), 16; Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Annex B. India's National Security Perspectives and Nuclear Weapons," in *The Strategic Chain Linking Pakistan, India, China, and the United States*, ed. Robert Einhorn and W.P.S. Sidhu (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2017), 28.
- 210 Secretary Kerry's meetings with Indian and Pakistani leaders at the UNGA in September 2016 were just about the least that Washington could have done. Days later, the readout of national security adviser Rice's call with her Indian counterpart was limited to condemnation of Pakistan's provocation and cross-border terrorism more generally.
- 211 Chari, Cheema, and Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process*, 133.
- 212 Lavoy, "Introduction," 12; also see p. 28. Similar arguments appear in: Lavoy, "Why Kargil Did Not Produce General War," 197, 200-1; Jervis, "Kargil, Deterrence Theory and International Relations Theory," 391; Rodney Jones, "The Kargil Crisis: Lessons Learned by the United States," in *Asymmetric Warfare*, ed. Lavoy, 374; Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," 156; and Yusuf and Kirk, "Keeping an Eye on South Asian Skies," 7, 11.
- 213 Krepon, "Crises in South Asia," 13. See pp. 20-26 for an overview of U.S. crisis-management efforts during all of the cases through Mumbai. Several detailed accounts of Twin Peaks and the Mumbai episode document the important role of U.S. diplomacy in helping to dampen India's understandable desire to punish Pakistan. On Twin Peaks, see Bajpai, "To War or Not to War," 163, 171, 175-77; Chari, Cheema, and Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process*, 149; Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," 163-75; Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, 275; Nayak and Krepon, "U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," 37-43. On Mumbai, see Nayak and Krepon, *Unfinished Crisis*, 53.
- 214 Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," 149. See also pp. 162 and 168.
- 215 Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," 149, 153, 160, 171, 174, 175, 176, 177. Another problem is Mistry's contention that we need to "focus on the principal events responsible for de-escalation at the time de-escalation occurs rather than on the extended period of the entire crisis," which is methodologically dubious. The impact of nuclear weapons or the conventional military balance is logically pertinent throughout the crisis, not at one particular threshold moment. If, for example, Pakistan's nuclear posture takes

a large Indian conventional thrust off the table at the outset, that impacts all of the Indian decisions during the rest of the crisis. The shadow of nuclear weapons is a constant over time; it does not go on and off.

- 216 Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," 172.
- 217 Mistry, "Complexity of Deterrence," 186.
- 218 Tellis, *Are India-Pakistan Peace Talks Worth a Damn?*, 36.
- 219 Ladwig, "Indian Military Modernization and Conventional Deterrence in South Asia," 21-31; Clary, "Deterrence Stability and the Conventional Balance of Forces in South Asia," 141-52.
- 220 Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, 281. Tellingly, Ladwig's 2015 analysis of conventional deterrence in South Asia examines only limited Indian attack options, given the implausibility of larger operations in the shadow of nuclear weapons. "Indian Military Modernization," 8-9.
- 221 Ali Ahmed writes: "Since the mid-1990s, a large proportion of the army has been deployed in Kashmir, perhaps over a third. Even though the army in the period acquired a third strike corps, Pakistan succeeded in bogging down in Kashmir any surplus conventional advantage India might have gained, thereby neutralising India's conventional edge." "Corrosive Impact of Army's Commitment in Kashmir," *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 25, 2017.
- 222 Ladwig, "Indian Military Modernization," 16-17.
- 223 Ladwig notes that while force ratios vary, "in any instance the margin of India's local force advantage is not decisive." He puts the Indian manpower advantage in the Western theater at 1.1-1.2:1, well short of the 2:1 or higher ratios that would be preferable. He also puts the Indian advantage in tanks at 1.1:1 and "modern, high-performance main battle tanks" at 1.3:1, again much lower than Indian military planners would prefer. Ladwig, "Indian Military Modernization," 27-30. Clary estimates that the ratio of combat power "may be closer to 1:1 at the theater level on day 1 of conflict than it is to 2:1." "Deterrence Stability," 159-60, note 84.
- 224 Shashank Joshi, "The Mythology of Cold Start," *New York Times*, November 4, 2011; MacDonald, *Defeat Is an Orphan*, 135-37; Ladwig, "Indian Military Modernization," 6; "Guns and Ghee," *The Economist*, September 24, 2016.
- 225 Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*, 158-59, 77, 170, 145.
- 226 Government of India, *From Surprise to Reckoning*, 77.
- 227 MacDonald, *Defeat Is an Orphan*, 136.
- 228 Perkovich and Dalton, *Not War, Not Peace?*, 8.
- 229 Siddarth Srivastava, "Indian Army 'Backed Out' of Pakistan Attack," *Asia Times Online*, January 21, 2009.
- 230 Ladwig, "Indian Military Modernization," 7.
- 231 Samanta, "26/11."
- 232 Ladwig, "Indian Military Modernization," 6.
- 233 Sawhney, "Whither Our War Preparedness?" On India's "effective conventional parity" with Pakistan, see Manoj Joshi, "Why Things Will Likely be All Quiet on the Western Front," *The Wire*, September 26, 2016.

- 234 Dasgupta and Cohen, "Is India Ending Its Strategic Restraint Doctrine?" 163-77; Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, especially ix-xiii and 1-28; Shidore, "India's Strategic Culture and Deterrence Stability on the Subcontinent"; Ali Ahmed, *India's Doctrine Puzzle: Limiting War in South Asia* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014), 110, 115-50.
- 235 Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, xiii, 1.
- 236 Dasgupta and Cohen, "Is India Ending Its Strategic Restraint Doctrine?" 163.
- 237 Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, 147.
- 238 Shidore, "India's Strategic Culture," 119, 135.
- 239 Shidore, "India's Strategic Culture," 135.
- 240 Presentation at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, January 23, 2015.
- 241 Shidore, "India's Strategic Culture," 133-35. With respect to Twin Peaks, Shidore also cites nuclear deterrence and U.S. crisis management as other causes of Indian restraint. On Mumbai, he argues that "there is no evidence that the Cabinet Committee on Security seriously considered a military response" (134). This is refuted by first-person accounts, including Menon, *Choices*, 60-81.
- 242 Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). Johnston differentiates between a country's "symbolic set" and its "operational set." The former is a "symbolic or idealized set of assumptions and ranked preferences"; the latter "reflects [a] hardpolitik strategic culture [arguing] that the best way of dealing with security threats is to eliminate them through the use of force." x.
- 243 Ahmed, *India's Doctrine Puzzle*, 130, 150. For a particularly convincing critique of the "strategic restraint" logic in South Asia's pre-nuclear era, see Rudra Chaudhuri, "Indian 'Strategic Restraint' Revisited: The Case of the 1965 India-Pakistan War," *India Review* 17, no. 1 (March 2018): 55-75.
- 244 Gill, "Military Operations," 114-19, especially 115; Rajesh Rajagopalan, "India: The Logic of Assured Retaliation," in *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21st Century Asia*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 204.
- 245 For a more complete summary of Indian military activities, see Ahmed, *India's Doctrine Puzzle*, 129.
- 246 Dasgupta and Cohen, "Is India Ending Its Strategic Restraint Doctrine?" 166-67.
- 247 Chari, Cheema, and Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process*, 139.
- 248 MacDonald, *Defeat Is an Orphan*, 144.
- 249 Vipin Narang, "The Lines That Have Been Crossed," *The Hindu*, October 4, 2016.
- 250 Ankit Panda and Vipin Narang, "Nuclear Stability, Conventional Instability: North Korea and the Lessons from Pakistan," November 20, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/11/nuclear-stability-conventional-instability-north-korea-lessons-pakistan/>.
- 251 Devin T. Hagerty, "India's Evolving Nuclear Posture," *Nonproliferation Review* 21, no. 3-4 (September-December 2014): 307-8.