

# SOUTH ASIA'S COLD WAR

Nuclear weapons and conflict in comparative perspective

**Rajesh M. Basrur**

ASIAN SECURITY STUDIES

# **South Asia's Cold War**

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**To Paul Marantz**  
**a fine teacher who made all the difference**





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Rajesh M. Basrur  
31 October 2007



# 1 Thinking about cold wars

The dominant refrain of the present age is that we are in the ‘post-Cold War era’. Beyond that, we are not sure. We may be living amidst the triumph of liberal capitalist democracy and the end of history, or a period of civilizational conflict, or – as the current worldwide turbulence would encourage us to conclude – the age of terrorism. Whatever we choose to believe, we tend to think of the Cold War as a unique event, now the memory of a bygone age. This book tries to correct that impression. The Cold War is over, but cold wars are not. If we agree that the Cold War was an intense confrontation between two nuclear-armed states, yet one in which both sought to avoid actual combat, then we must allow that there is even now more than one being ‘fought’, and that there may well be more to come. If that is so, it might do us some good, and certainly no harm, if we were to examine the cold wars of yesterday and today, and try to anticipate those of tomorrow.

The commonplace notion that there has been only one Cold War is true only if the term is expressed with initial capitals. An eminent chronicler of our times defines the Cold War as ‘the period in which the global conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated international affairs, roughly between 1945 and 1991’.<sup>1</sup> Fair enough. But to imagine that there has been only one conflict of the kind defined above would be to limit our understanding of this particular conflict as well, for the perspective obtained from analysing like events and processes would be missing. It makes sense, therefore, to allow that *the* Cold War was a great historical event, but that it was not unique. In this book, I bow to convention and use the term ‘the Cold War’ to mean the great twentieth-century confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Elsewhere, the term ‘cold war’ (without capitals) is employed to describe all conflicts of a similar nature and sometimes specific ones. As we shall see, the India–Pakistan conflict, the central concern of this book, has for some time displayed the characteristics of a cold war. It helps to use a comparative perspective to understand this particular relationship as well as other, similar ones, and, additionally, the conceptual connections between the various pairs.

## Defining cold wars

Let us begin by defining the term 'cold war' with some care. Strictly speaking, a cold war may occur between any two entities who are at loggerheads but do not fight. The term owes its current usage to Walter Lippmann, who popularized it in 1947, but it is known to have been used much earlier by the Spanish writer Don Juan Manuel, who likened the conflict between Christendom and Islam to a cold war.<sup>2</sup> In this book, I confine myself to treating as cold wars those conflicts that occur between nuclear-armed states. The point is vital. Pre-nuclear cold wars were a matter of choice for the participants. One or the other could have chosen to fight. Nuclear cold wars do not realistically offer the luxury of that choice. Because of their immense destructive power, nuclear weapons have a distinctive quality about them, and it is vital to observe and draw lessons from how nuclear rivals interact, for almost nothing worries us more than the prospect of a nuclear war. While much attention has understandably been paid to the problem of stability between nuclear rivals, it is time to go beyond the debate to grasp the wider influence of nuclear weapons on the dynamics of inter-state rivalry.

The short definition above – that cold wars are tense but war-less confrontations between states with nuclear weapons – serves only as a starting point. But even with this, it is evident that there have been three cold wars in the past. Apart from that in which the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged, the United States and nuclear China were caught up in a bitter quarrel during the 1960s, while at about the same time, and stretching well beyond, the Soviet Union and China also entered a phase of angry confrontation. The next cold war involved India, but was some time in coming. Though India became a nuclear-capable power in 1974, it made no effort to translate its wherewithal into actual weapons for another decade and a half. During this period, its relationship with China was extremely tense at times, but within the terms of our definition, this was not a cold war, because India never produced nuclear weapons. Had it done, we may have had a cold war between these two nations, for there were certainly many elements of rivalry and competition between them, including a border dispute, a history of war, and a prolonged border confrontation between their armed forces in 1986–7.

The last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the fourth cold war, this time between India and Pakistan. The India–Pakistan relationship has had the characteristics of cold war from the time when both were incipient nuclear-armed states in the late 1980s, and remains mired in discord today. By the turn of the twentieth century, yet another cold war emerged, between the United States and North Korea, again one which had a long gestation period while the North Koreans played hide and seek with respect to their nuclear capability. We have, then, a number of cold wars to compare. And to all appearances, there are more on the horizon. North Korea's nuclear test in 2006 raises the prospect of a cold war between it and Japan, which has the technical capacity, and some would say the germs of an inclination, to grasp the nuclear nettle it has shied away from for so long. A nuclear Japan is almost certain to raise China's hackles, paving the way for a possible cold war between them. India and China are emerging powers

and have a violent history as well as an unresolved territorial dispute that could still bring a cold war. Their relationship has warmed considerably, but what if things were to change for the worse? The same might be said, and periodically is, of the relationship between the United States and China. Iran has shown signs of embarking on a nuclear military programme, which will in all likelihood involve it in two cold wars: one with the United States, the other with Israel. That there may be still others in the offing is indicated by the oblique but critically timed December 2006 announcement by a group of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia that they were contemplating a joint programme to develop nuclear energy.<sup>3</sup> We may recognize, too, that like others before them, present-day cold wars may die out. But the phenomenon is likely to persist as long as nuclear weapons exist.

What might we gain from a comparative approach to the study of cold war? To begin with, it is important to recognize that all cold wars, while having basically similar characteristics, may not be entirely alike. A comparative perspective would pinpoint the similarities and the differences among them, helping us to ask several broad questions and anticipate the answers to them in each case. Why do cold wars begin? Can they be avoided or are they, in some less than completely deterministic sense, virtually inevitable once rival states obtain nuclear weapons? What kinds of processes do they undergo? In particular, do they invariably bring up a very real possibility of Armageddon? And finally, how do cold wars end? Or at least, what are the conditions most conducive to their termination? Given the reality that the cohort of states with nuclear weapons has been growing, and that those who have built them are reluctant to give them up (with the singular exception of South Africa), these are questions of some importance. Although the sample is hardly a large one, it nevertheless offers a means for developing an understanding of cold war as a general phenomenon.

Cold wars are produced by powerful ideational and material factors. Differences in the realm of thought – ideational differences encompassing ideology and identity – underpin the rivalries between nuclear-armed states, creating and sustaining mutual resentments, hostility and strong threat perceptions. Differences in power distribution or rivalries over material objectives – material differences – generate serious tensions, exacerbating antagonisms between the two sides. Together, these divergences generate a pattern of oppositional politics that tends towards power games and militarized conflict. Nuclear weapons have complex modifying effects on this politics. Initially, the nuclearization of a hostile relationship generates intense antipathy, raising the temperature several notches. There is then a pull towards the use of force and the two sides are drawn into confrontations and crises. But the prospect of nuclear war compels them to avoid actual combat, for the risk of enormous destruction is not worth the possible gains, if indeed there are any, from a war that may involve a nuclear exchange. All nuclear rivalries, in short, are severely constrained by their being nuclear in the first place. The rivals are forced to cooperate, at least tacitly, in avoiding war. There is also an incentive to cooperate more formally to stabilize a relationship that neither side wants to see getting out of hand. The process is usually not smooth, for the ideational and material sources of conflict remain in place. How the two sides attempt to grapple with



this uncomfortable and uncertain situation is the story of all cold wars. The main point is that the process of coming to terms with the reality of nuclear weapons undercuts the ideational and material underpinnings of cold wars and provides an opportunity for learning, rethinking, and adjustment. How the states concerned actually tackle the problem depends on decisions made on both sides, which in turn are determined by all that goes into the decision-making process.

Since nuclear weapons are central to cold wars, it is important to come to grips with the ways in which they shape the behaviour of states. Most discussions on nuclear weapons are justifiably focused on the question of whether they have stabilizing or destabilizing effects. Optimists believe they have stabilizing effects because they inhibit fighting and engender caution. Pessimists believe they have destabilizing effects as their existence poses grave risks of losing control owing to failures of organization and control.<sup>4</sup> The debate is somewhat misleading, since both are right. Nuclear weapons simultaneously induce caution and spawn risks. The optimists hold that states may feel the need to possess them for security purposes, but few are clear about how the dangers of possession can be minimized. The pessimists warn of the unacceptable risks posed by nuclear weapons, but rarely press their logic to its end point by showing how they can be abolished altogether.

This book looks at nuclear weapons from a somewhat different standpoint. It focuses on the dynamic process of interaction between nuclear rivals. It shows that the weapons have complex effects, intensifying rivalries and yet moderating the way they are played out. Nuclear rivals behave in contrary ways. When war is near, they try hard to avoid it. When it is not, they behave as if it were a viable option. The thrust of my argument is that since war is not a viable option, it would be more sensible to think and act as if it were not, even when war is not close. This has substantial implications for the ways in which we think and act in 'normal' times. Regardless of how strong the basis of conflict is, the reality is that nuclear weapons produce an environment in which cold-warring states have strong incentives to learn and rethink – a process which decision makers can shape. It is here that the stability/instability debate becomes relevant, for if nuclear weapons are both stable and unstable, the risks arising from the latter propensity need to be minimized. Ideally, it would be best if the weapons were eliminated altogether. But this seems unlikely to happen, and the most we can do is set in motion a process of reconstruction that creates a smaller window of risk. This requires us to be clear in the way we think about nuclear weapons.

### **Theory, strategy, and policy**

In dissecting the behaviour of nuclear-armed states, the book has a broader purpose. It aims to raise questions that have to do with how we think about nuclear issues, for this inevitably has a bearing on how we act. The need for this is obvious, since the subject under discussion presents a central contradiction. Nuclear weapons are usable military instruments which many states want to possess, yet their possession brings an even stronger desire not to use them. States which do

possess them tend to head towards conflict, yet go to great lengths to cooperate when conflict approaches. It is important, therefore, to understand the thinking process which accompanies this contradiction. Furthermore, in contrast to this pattern of cooperation, nuclear-armed rivals, when not close to war, tend to think and behave in a quite different fashion, developing ideas and forces as if war were feasible. There are four main intellectual areas which are relevant to the politics of nuclear weapons: strategic theorizing, nuclear doctrine and planning, strategic analysis, and international relations (IR) theory.

Strategic theory relating to nuclear weapons provides the general principles of deterrence and war, including answers to basic questions such as: what are the requirements of deterrence; how much damage should one be able to do in order to deter an adversary? It reflects on key issues about relative balances of capability, issues of credibility, the prerequisites for stability, and the relationship between nuclear war and lower levels of armed conflict.<sup>5</sup> Oddly, even where states have very diverse expectations about nuclear weapons and their utility, the discourse tends to be uniform. For instance, the language and concepts employed in American deterrence theory are ubiquitous in Indian theorizing about deterrence.<sup>6</sup> Both talk about credibility, survivability, and second-strike capability (the ability to hit back after being attacked first). In the pages that follow, some effort will be made to question these concepts and their applicability to the diverse doctrines and forces of the two countries as well as to others. In addition, the study will lead to a fuller understanding of the key question of what deters. If it takes a lot to deter, that has one kind of implication for doctrine and planning; if it takes little to deter, then the requirements are very different. Fundamental issues about assured security and stability are at stake.

Deterrence theorizing bears heavily on nuclear doctrine, which determines the actual force architecture of a nuclear power, or at least what it aspires to. The latter is concerned with practical questions. For instance, given the requirements of deterrence theory, what kind of force quantities and qualities are desirable? What should be the posture with respect to readiness and response to a military threat? If one has to be sure of inflicting large-scale damage, the force requirement is extensive, especially in order to be confident that one's capabilities are not vulnerable to surprise attack by an adversary's higher-quality forces, or to the other side's improved capacity to defend itself. Down the line, this is given concrete shape in the form of spending allocations, planning, organization, weapons acquisition and deployment. If deterrence theorizing rests on the need to be certain of inflicting immense damage in order to deter, then doctrine will reflect this in the types and numbers of forces envisaged, and policy will aim at obtaining the requisite force levels. If deterrence can be obtained with low force levels, and if relative strength does not mean much, then doctrine and force architecture will be differently formulated. The first approach represents 'assured destruction' doctrine, best exemplified by American doctrine, while the second is reflected in 'minimum deterrence', on which Indian and Pakistani nuclear posture rests. The inquiry into nuclear rivalries undertaken in these pages, by scrutinizing actual examples of how deterrence works, will provide a

clearer picture of the appositeness of existing deterrence theory, doctrine, and force planning.

Strategic analysis involves broader investigation into and recommendations about the conduct of inter-state relations, of which the relationship between nuclear rivals is one class. Its findings have considerable influence on the making of foreign policy. Thus, for instance, there have been major debates about the future of relations between China and the United States, both nuclear powers with significant conflicting interests.<sup>7</sup> What does the future hold for this kind of relationship if war approaches? How should policy makers react to the acquisition of new weapons by a nuclear adversary? The answers to such key questions depend on an assessment of how the possession of nuclear weapons by both sides affects the choices available to them. An understanding of the history of cold wars will help clarify the breadth and nature of the realistic and sensible choices available to policy makers.

Finally, and fundamentally, our most basic understandings about inter-state relations and the possibilities of change are drawn from the realm of IR theory. Diverse schools of thought approach these questions in their own ways. Realists, by far the dominant school and the most influential in shaping strategic analysis, nuclear doctrine, and deterrence theory, believe that anarchy or the absence of a higher authority above states makes the possession of military power central to the attainment of security.<sup>8</sup> 'Offensive realists' tend to think of the drive for power as endless (since absolute security is nearly impossible to attain), while 'defensive realists' believe that security might be obtained by other means (say, by an agreement to cooperate), for arming begets rival arming and security might accordingly be reduced.<sup>9</sup> The difficulty that realist thinkers face is that nuclear weapons raise serious objections to the central concept of power. If nuclear war is not a viable option, then what does power mean? This is a troubling question, since its import goes down the line to strategic analysis, deterrence theory and doctrine, and force planning and implementation. In this book, I accept the basic realist premise that in an anarchic system, states may require nuclear weapons for their security. It is also true, as defensive realists point out, that states with nuclear weapons commonly experience the 'security dilemma': not arming would leave them vulnerable to a strong adversary and hence insecure, but arming, by inviting a matching response from an adversary, leaves them just as insecure, perhaps even more so, given the extraordinarily destructive character of nuclear weapons.<sup>10</sup> The findings of this study will indicate how states might best tackle the security dilemma.

Liberal thinkers hold that the world is changing. As it becomes more interdependent and more democratic, there is a steady shift away from war, which is increasingly unaffordable or unnecessary.<sup>11</sup> But while liberals tell us something important about the conditions which make nuclear weapons irrelevant, what can they tell us about nuclear politics when such conditions do not apply? Here, the concept of interdependence is useful. Though it is largely employed in the context of economic interactions, it is also useful in describing other relationships. States may be interdependent on any issue in which the fate of one is determined by the actions of one or more others and by their interaction, such as environmental

stability and military conflict. In every case, there is a point (not easy to determine) beyond which their interdependence reaches such a high level that, regardless of conflictive pressures produced by clashing interests and power differences, they are compelled to cooperate.<sup>12</sup> Here, the concept of strategic interdependence is useful. Hostile states with nuclear weapons are placed in a highly interdependent relationship because a single move by either can have severe consequences, possibly resulting in annihilation, for the other, indeed for both.

The third school of thought, constructivism, stresses the importance of identity and role, arguing that the ways in which we think and act are founded on consensus about reality and appropriate responses to it.<sup>13</sup> From this perspective, the key to change lies not in the material world, but in how we respond to it. Change in the consensus is the basis for change in the way we interact. For present purposes, the concept of ideational structure is useful in describing how established ways of thinking (and acting upon our thoughts) may persist when the reality has changed. The study incorporates this aspect of the constructivist mode of analysis. It also argues that if cold wars are to end, their ideational bases must be tackled.

## **Theoretical perspective and argument**

My approach treats nuclear weapons as autonomous entities that have powerful 'structural' effects on the behaviour of rivals who possess them. The term 'structure' has various meanings. The realist approach adopted by Kenneth Waltz and others uses the term to describe a positional relationship between states (how they relate to one another), which boils down to the existence of anarchy and the distribution of power. This material structure produces a politics characterized by self-interest and power politics which has existed throughout recorded history and is likely to remain unchanged in the foreseeable future. Constructivists espouse a different notion of structure. They argue that shared beliefs or cultures produce an ideational structure that shapes the way states behave and that this is, by virtue of its being a humanly created structure, changeable. My approach begins with the understanding that a structure is a 'pattern of aggregate behaviour over time'.<sup>14</sup> I regard the effects of nuclear weapons as 'structural' in the sense that they induce a particular structure, or recurrent pattern of behaviour, among states. The realist conception of structure is questionable, since it rests on the centrality of power, whereas nuclear weapons undermine the very notion of power as a usable instrument in inter-state relations. The constructivist view of how states behave, extended logically, would allow the belief that material factors do not really matter very much: the ultimate determinant of how states behave is to be found in the realm of ideas. This, too, is qualified in these pages. Nuclear weapons are a material factor closing certain doors to what we can think of doing, while leaving others open.

How precisely do the structural effects of nuclear weapons work in shaping the course of cold wars? Basically, they create a high degree of interdependence between nuclear rivals. That is, the cost of going to war is so high in a nuclear-strategic environment that states are compelled willy-nilly to cooperate in order to

avoid it. As we shall see below, even a small risk of being hit by a small number of nuclear weapons is seen as unacceptable. And because the threshold between conventional and nuclear war is hazy, states go a step further and try to avoid full-scale conventional war as well. There is no case of a full-scale conventional war between nuclear-armed states. Thus nuclear weapons have a structural effect in that they set absolute limits to what their possessors can do. Yet they also generate enormous tensions that add to pre-existing ideational (say, ideological) and material (power differences) sources of conflict. The conflicting tendencies – against war and towards war – produced by these two opposing pressures have both determinate and indeterminate results.

The interdependence created by nuclear weapons has two facets. What I call *general interdependence* is absolute only in the sense that it sets the outer limits to action. Within these outer limits, the possibilities of thinking and doing vary. The second facet of interdependence – its proximity – produces uniform results. When there is a crisis, and the risk of war is high, there is *immediate interdependence*, which compels states to behave with great caution. At this critical juncture, it matters little what either one's own or the adversary's doctrine or weapons capability is. The only sensible option is to try and avoid the outbreak of war. Interdependence is thus not a catch-all category, but can be fruitfully understood in terms of actual experience at any given point in time. In immediate interdependence – when war is nigh – choices are restricted to war avoidance and there is a powerful impulse to cooperate, if only tacitly. Under general interdependence, with the prospect of war less threatening, there is room for choice. States may choose to remain hostile or to build bridges. They may opt for an aggressive military posture or a more circumspect one. Domestic preferences play a role in deciding this, as they do in shaping matters of doctrine and force architecture. Here, conventional habits of thinking and doing have a significant filtering effect on perceptions about how best to deal with an adversary.

The term 'conventional' denotes not only set ways but specifically pre-nuclear patterns of thought and action. In a conventional military world, states know that military power matters. Accordingly, in the face of threats, they resort to internal balancing (producing more and better weapons), external balancing (acquiring the military-strategic support of others through alliances), the projection of threats to go to war, and sometimes to war. In a nuclear world, states cannot fight, but still engage in conventional thinking and actions (other than war) because they are in the habit of doing so. Thus, they acquire more and 'better' weapons, seek alliances, threaten to go to war, attempt to hurt the other through proxies, and prepare elaborate doctrines and plans that take into account the relative strengths and weaknesses of their arsenals – all *as if* they were in a conventional environment.<sup>15</sup> This ideational structure collides in times of crisis with the absolute limits imposed by nuclear weapons and, with the onset of immediate interdependence, promptly retreats, but at other times retains considerable power to determine what states do short of war.

How do states respond to the opposing pressures of nuclear constraint and conventional habit? Ideally, recognition that the instruments of war are of very

restricted utility should produce learning and adjustment. But in practice old habits may die hard and learning is not always an easy process. Cold war pairs, as we will see, exhibit varying responses encompassing a range from resolution to obstinate confrontation. The argument in these pages is as follows. Where the risk of war is high, there is little choice. The structural effects of nuclear weapons in immediate interdependence are absolute in this respect and invariably produce conflict avoidance. Otherwise, under general interdependence, the structural effects of nuclear weapons are less determinate, and are modified by the prevailing ideational structure, which can be powerful in its effects. This is where choice is critical. It is all very well to say nuclear weapons are revolutionary, but they do not necessarily produce a corresponding revolution in the way people think about them at all times. The commonplace reality is that for the most part, those in power find it perfectly normal to think about nuclear weapons and war as if they were not revolutionary. This is a counter-productive way of thinking and calls for reformulation. The difficulty of effecting a conceptual change is evident from the continued adherence to conventional modes of thinking by a large part of the strategic intelligentsia, whose task is to reflect on such things.

To recapitulate, the argument of this book is that cold wars are caused by powerful pre-nuclear material and ideational factors and that the effects of both are sharply circumscribed by nuclear weapons. The material structure is altered by nuclear weapons, which rule out certain actions (nuclear and, as we shall see, even full-scale conventional wars). This provides the conditions for change in how we think about nuclear-strategic relationships. Beyond that, the nuclear structure allows for a variety of ways of dealing with the changed circumstances. Here, the structure of nuclear weapons is confronted (in conditions of general interdependence) by the ideational structure of conventionalized thinking. Given that nuclear military power is lacking in much utility (beyond the promise of deterrence), nuclear rivals may find it wiser to adapt to them by rethinking their relationship. Or they may be poor learners and carry on regardless, though still unable to use nuclear arms, or indeed regular ones in any substantial way. The thrust of the argument is closer to that of the constructivist view: that learning from the limitations imposed by nuclear weapons, states (i.e. those within them who make the decisions) are in a position to alter the ideational structure of their relationships. In other words, nuclear weapons undermine material structures and create the conditions for altering ideational structures. As we shall see, states do discover this, but respond in different ways. The aim of this work is to make that response more cost-effective.

## **Relevance**

The value of this discussion rests on the expectation that cold wars will occur in future. It could well be argued that the expectation is an exaggerated one. One claim, often made by thinkers from outside the discipline of IR, is that the world is changing and that the inexorable process of globalization is leading to increasing interaction, interdependence, transnationalisation, and the decline of states – a

combination which is steadily decreasing the role of military power.<sup>16</sup> True, in a globalizing world, state autonomy has diminished sharply. Yet though the state is in many respects a weakened entity, it still remains the main provider of security. No other agency possesses comparable capability.<sup>17</sup> Interdependence is indeed growing, but high-level economic interdependence exists only between states with advanced and well-developed economies. A quick glance tells us that all the cold wars mentioned so far have occurred between pairs of states that have not shown this characteristic. Until universal high-level economic interdependence comes to exist, military power – and by extension, nuclear military power – will continue to be relevant to international politics. At the same time, globalization has reinforced the role of identity as a factor in inter-state politics and in doing so has renewed tensions between states.

Another sort of argument may be made to the effect that even where economic interdependence is not strong, state behaviour might be sufficiently different as to invalidate the expectation of future cold wars. States may not engage in power politics, but act in accordance with different preferences. For instance, they may seek adjustment to the rise of a specific state by accepting a hierarchical relationship with it, as China's neighbours are said to do in response to its growing power.<sup>18</sup> Alternatively, states may practice a unique historically rooted mode – such as the 'Asian way' or the 'Pacific way' – of dealing with one another cooperatively.<sup>19</sup> Or they may simply make the effort to subsume their differences and construct a framework of cooperative relations, as with the building of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>20</sup> But none of this is foreordained. The fact is that power politics is evident in the Asian response to the rise of China, for several of its neighbours have sought to fortify their positions by strengthening their armed forces, or alliance relationships, or both.<sup>21</sup> As a region, Southeast Asia is something of an exception and is yet not without tensions and lack of trust.<sup>22</sup> The politics of East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East certainly provides little evidence of comprehensive cooperative institution building. South Asia and East Asia already have cold wars in place; North Korea's nuclearization opens up the possibility of another with Japan; and Iran's nuclear ambitions augur two more overlapping ones with the United States and Israel.

From yet another perspective, the politics of developing countries is fundamentally one of intra-state rather than inter-state conflict. The prime security problem for Third World states relates to development, political institution building, legitimacy, and state survival from internal challenges. From this standpoint, theories of power politics based on the Western experience are inadequate.<sup>23</sup> Third World security rests on developmental issues rather than power balances.<sup>24</sup> The problems highlighted are certainly there, but that does not detract from the reality that in Asia at least, the politics of military power and of identity are fused with interest in nuclear weapons, thus setting the stage for existing cold wars in Northeast Asia and South Asia and future cold wars in Northeast Asia and West Asia. Others may follow. Ultimately, the presence of developed liberal-democratic systems and high-level economic interdependence are the only guarantees of the absence of cold wars.



It bears assertion that cold wars between states with difficult histories and on-going conflicts of interest and identity are not inevitable. The India-China case is illustrative. Between these two nations, the ideational and material conditions for a cold war already exist. They have a history of war, confrontation, mutual suspicion, rivalry as role models, balance of power politics, and an unresolved territorial dispute. The Chinese threat was a major factor in India's decision to carry out its nuclear tests in 1998, and the test itself generated considerable heat between them.<sup>25</sup> Yet the two countries chose a positive trajectory and opted to strengthen their trade relationship rather than allow it to deteriorate.<sup>26</sup> While the jury is still out on the future of this relationship, it does demonstrate the importance of choice in shaping an inter-state relationship between states with nuclear weapons and offers a model that others might consider emulating.

Apart from students of strategic studies and IR theory, historians, too, may discover some value in the adoption of a comparative approach. The study of the Cold War is a thriving industry, generating an immense published output – documents, books, journals, websites – in a large portion of which this author has not had the time (or the strength!) to delve.<sup>27</sup> Yet it has the limitation that has been noted above: the tendency to treat the US-Soviet conflict as exceptional. A comparative approach may offer new and richer corrective insights.

For those more concerned with the immediacies of policy than with leisurely reflection, this book may help provide the basis for a framework within which specific policy prescriptions could be made. It is human to draw lessons from history. We do so as individuals and as nations. Indians and Pakistanis are often urged to learn from the Cold War experience. How valid is that experience? There is doubtless much to learn, but if one can learn from a single experience, then how much more might usefully be culled from a series of like experiences? In looking at others, we might appreciate better that there are all kinds of lessons to be learned about what to do and what not to do, perhaps, too, that some 'lessons' are not even there for the drawing. Indians and Pakistanis would certainly benefit from such an education, and so would those who reflect on other cold war pairs. Policy prescriptions that are devoid of these insights will miss something of value to decision makers. This applies simultaneously to the broadest level at which grand strategy is formulated and to the finer points of bargaining at the negotiating table. As will become manifest, there is considerable scope for learning on this score.

## **Outline of the book**

The following chapters attempt to build upon the outline drawn above and generate a more detailed set of patterns and explanations derived from the study of cold wars, first between pairs outside South Asia, and then in greater detail between India and Pakistan. Chapter 2 examines past cold wars between the United States and the Soviet Union, the United States and China, and the Soviet Union and China. It also looks at the somewhat ambiguous case of the cold war between the United States and North Korea. In each case, ideational and material factors are powerful drivers of conflict. And in each case, nuclear weapons have an



even more powerful moderating effect, inducing cooperation when war is close. Yet, when war is not close, cold-warring states are prone to behave in conventional ways, as if war were a feasible option. The chapter shows how these divergent tendencies coexist and how they complicate the process of coming to terms with the fundamental implications of nuclear weapons for the participants' political objectives. The cold war process lays bare the contradiction between weapons and political aims and opens up space for learning, but there is no certainty about how well the participants will learn and adapt to the nuclear environment. Much turns on the choices made by policy makers.

Turning to the specific case of the India–Pakistan cold war, Chapter 3 examines the ideational and material roots of the rivalry. It explores the collective memory of partition and recurring war after independence in 1947, and the deeply problematic issue of identity faced by both states, with the conflict over Kashmir as a symbolic focal point. Power differences created a hegemon–challenger relationship at the start as well as competition for influence elsewhere. Arms racing, crises and war, pre-nuclear phenomena, eventually led to covert nuclearization and heightened threat perceptions. The picture is complicated by the fact that the India–Pakistan relationship is a subsystem of the larger global system. In some respects it is quite autonomous, in others, it is not, and both aspects have a bearing on the cold war process in South Asia. Chapter 4 is the heart of the story. It captures the essential similarities between the India–Pakistan relationship and the other cold wars reviewed here: the ups and downs of cooperation and conflict, and the divergent patterns visible in the contexts of immediate and general interdependence respectively. But the chapter also highlights some significant differences with other cold wars, notably the retention of non-provocative nuclear postures in spite of very high levels of tension.

Chapter 5 aims to do what scholars have been accused of not doing in earlier cases: to anticipate the conditions which bring cold wars to an end, and, in the light of the discussion, to gauge the prospects for the India–Pakistan cold war. Chapter 6, which concludes the study, pulls the threads of the preceding chapters together to consider not only what it tells us about India–Pakistan relations but about other similar relationships as well. What are the lessons of other cold wars for India and Pakistan as they grapple with an unprecedented effort to transform their relationship? And what are the lessons others can learn from India and Pakistan? Finally, what does our cumulative understanding of both sets tell us about policy making and scholarship in a nuclear weapons world?

## 2 Patterns in cold war rivalry

This chapter looks more closely at the phenomenon of cold war. It begins by enunciating the prominent features that drive a cold war relationship towards conflict: its ideational and material bases. It then argues that nuclear weapons have twin effects. They both propel hostile states towards conflict and restrain them from it. The reason for the persistence of these divergent effects is explained by applying a differentiated concept of interdependence. When war is near, the immediacy of interdependence brings caution. When war is not near, states – while aware of the limits to force – are none the less able to adopt strategies as if war were a viable option. A conventional orientation towards conflict is ubiquitous in cold war relationships when they are not in a condition of crisis. States grapple with this contradiction in diverse ways and the process of learning is slow and uncertain. The bulk of the chapter examines how these patterns are played out in specific cold war relationships. The four cold war pairs reviewed are the United States and the Soviet Union, the United States and China, the Soviet Union and China, and the United States and North Korea.

### **Ideational and material bases of cold wars**

There is more to cold wars than nuclear confrontation. Hostile relations between nuclear-armed states are characterized by perceptions of threat that are grounded in beliefs and images on the one hand and in differences in power distribution on the other. In short, cold wars are produced and sustained by a mix of ideational and material factors. This approach will leave many analysts dissatisfied, for there is still a great divide between those who stress that we must act within the constraints laid down by material reality and those who argue that we can transcend them through acts of will.<sup>1</sup> The perennial debate between the given and the doable continues. How states interact is shaped by the structural realities of international life, but also by decisions that men and women make on how to act within the context of these realities.<sup>2</sup> Rather than debating whether what happens is shaped by the material structure of the international system or by the ideational structure within which policy is made, it is more useful to say, paraphrasing Marx, that ‘political actors rationally pursue ideological goals, but not under structural conditions of their own choosing’.<sup>3</sup> These structural conditions, as we shall see, are

three: those imposed by the material reality of the international system; those deriving from how states (their decision makers as well as their peoples) look upon a cold war relationship; and the constraints established by the existence of nuclear weapons.

### *The ideational dimension*

How we think determines how we interact with our interlocutors. In the present context, two ideational factors are particularly important to the generation and persistence of cold wars. The first is a history and collective memory of tension, upon which new tensions are piled when a relationship assumes the character of a cold war. The second is the centrality of identity, which encompasses ideology as well as national identity.

Cold wars do not occur suddenly. On the contrary, they invariably have antecedents. States mired in nuclear confrontation draw upon histories of tension, competition, and conflict, sometimes reaching far back into the past, sometimes of relatively recent origin. These may be conscious or subconscious, resting on specific events (such as defeat in war) or on vague but none the less deeply felt historical-cultural animosities. Such collective memories can exercise powerful effects, for they are susceptible to 'politicized forms of remembering'.<sup>4</sup> All past and current cold wars have been characterized by pre-nuclear tensions involving concrete conflicts of interest and power as well as more nebulous differences of outlook and mutual imaging. History and collective memory are overlaid with the stark tensions that accompany nuclear rivalries.<sup>5</sup>

Like individuals, states have a sense of identity. This may be defined by a complex and comprehensive ideology, such as liberal democracy or socialism, or it may reflect a sense of cultural or national identity, in many cases an aspiration if not an accomplished fact. Critics may carp that ideology and nationalist identity are very different things, for the first is usually clear-cut, based on a well-articulated set of ideas, while the second often tends to be vague and ill defined, lacking substantive content.<sup>6</sup> But for present purposes, they are fundamentally alike in that both are ways of understanding the world and of conceiving of one's role in it. Both provide standards and goals and frames of reference for interacting with others. There is not much utility in insisting that ideational differences do not matter if in fact states behave alike as rational entities, their actions recognizable as standard forms of calculative power politics. What identity does is to intensify differences, harden images of the other, and strengthen the propensity to engage in conflict, sometimes by providing the justification for it, and sometimes by retarding the pace of adjustment to a changing context. Identity also becomes the focal point around which domestic politics revolves, which hampers course correction and compromise. This is particularly germane when a tension-ridden relationship acquires the mass instant-life-or-death dimension of nuclear rivalry. Every cold war is embedded in the dense politics of identity, a zero sum game in which the collective losses of one are counted as the collective gains of the other.

It is commonplace to distinguish between states on the basis of their political organization, i.e. between democracies and non-democracies. The democratic peace thesis certainly has an empirical basis.<sup>7</sup> In the present context, the rule that liberal democracies do not fight is of utility when we examine the matter of how cold wars might end. So far as the emergence of cold wars is concerned, it has something to tell us about future cold wars. From the ideational standpoint, the organization of the state is intrinsic to its identity. Differences in organization become a part of the identity conflicts between cold-warring states. For instance, democracies tend to look upon their non-democratic rivals with a degree of contempt. But whether states are democratic or not, elites require legitimacy. Since the time of Napoleon III, who declared himself emperor of France by *both* divine dispensation and public will, democratic as well as non-democratic elites are aware of the need in some way or other to legitimize themselves in the eyes of the general populace. They often do so by relying on identity (sometimes in the form of ideology) as a legitimating device. This kind of manipulation invariably involves firing up hostility towards outsiders.

A final aspect of the ideational face of cold wars is the relevance of territory. Empirical research shows that the great majority of long-term inter-state conflicts are characterized by territorial disputes.<sup>8</sup> At the very least, we may expect that conflicting claims over territory would greatly aggravate rivalries, since territory is closely linked to identity. After all, most nations are nations by virtue of a territorial base. But this does not necessarily apply directly to cold wars. Of the five past and existing cold war pairs identified in Chapter 1, direct disputes over territory are central to only two: the Soviet–China relationship and the India–Pakistan one. A second look tells us, though, that indirectly, territory is a central issue in the other three as well. The Cold War was from beginning to end marked by a competition to control and influence territorial entities in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Taiwan was and remains today a central issue between the United States and China, as does the continuing division of Korea between the United States and North Korea. In this sense, every cold war that has occurred so far has been a territorial war. In every case, too, the contestation of territory has been closely linked to identity, whether ideological (US–Soviet, US–China, US–North Korea) or national (arguably, all cases).

### ***The material dimension***

The material basis of cold war conflicts centres on the nature of the international system. Power is a driving force among nations not because they are led by men who are intrinsically selfish and ambitious, as has sometimes been argued, but because the system of states is anarchic. Because states have no sovereign above them to regulate their behaviour, they exist in a self-help system in which each seeks power for its survival and gives priority to self-interest over the common interest – a combination which periodically leads to war, particularly because the power of one is seen as a threat by others. This is what Jean Jacques Rousseau called the ‘state of war’, an insight which more

recent political realists such as Kenneth Waltz have developed into the theoretical framework known as neorealism.<sup>9</sup>

The realist view of the 'state of war' does not mean constant engagement in war, but rather a continuous awareness of and orientation towards the possibility of war. Because of this, states around the world have acted in similar ways throughout history. They have accumulated weapons, engaged in the diplomacy of power politics with threats of war and promises of peace, from time to time fought wars, and sought to offset the power of others by obtaining the support of third parties, i.e. through the formation of alliances. Specific conditions have made war more likely at some historical moments. Most commonly, changes in the distribution of power have had such effects. For instance, the emergence of a new power upsets the existing power distribution. Hegemonic or dominant powers and challengers have periodically gone to war.<sup>10</sup> If a new rising power feels its interests are not adequately met in the existing order, it is more likely that it will go to war.<sup>11</sup> A state with an expanding population and economy that needs additional resources may go to war to meet these requirements.<sup>12</sup> In one scholar's view, global systems in which power is highly concentrated in centralized states (as in absolutism and industrial capitalism) are more prone to major war than those in which power is less centralized (feudalism and contemporary 'digital capitalism').<sup>13</sup> Wars may occur even if neither side is truly aggressive in intent, because the power of one state is viewed by one or more others as a threat, leading to deterioration in the relations between or among them.<sup>14</sup>

In the present context, there are identifiable conditions under which wars will almost certainly not occur regardless of the material and ideational factors that tend to induce them. First, as noted above, high-level military interdependence between nuclear-armed states rules out rational resort to war. This in essence is why cold wars are cold.<sup>15</sup> Second, high-level economic interdependence has even more profound effects because it creates strong common interests.<sup>16</sup> When states engage in high levels of trade, investment, and other economic exchanges, the cost of war becomes too high to make it a viable alternative. Economic disengagement is not a realistic option. That did occur when the world wars of the twentieth century took place, but states seem to have learned something from the experience. Thus high-level economic interdependence rules out cold wars altogether. Third, war does not occur between well-developed democracies.<sup>17</sup> Here again, the phenomenon seems to occur because they are essentially congruent in their interests. In any case, there is a high degree of economic interdependence between developed democracies. All the cold wars that have occurred so far have taken place between states which have not been involved in economically interdependent relationships and in pairs in which at least one side has not been liberal-democratic. This tells us something important: that when we look for potential cold wars, we may exclude those relationships where there is extensive economic engagement or where there is a democracy on either side of the equation. By the same logic, where economic interdependence does not exist, and where liberal democracies are not found on both sides, cold wars are possible.

## Behaviour patterns among nuclear rivals

Because they have a history of tension, are propelled by clashing conceptions of identity, and are insecure about each other's military capabilities, cold-warring states compete with great intensity. The advent of nuclear weapons in their relationship raises tensions sharply, as each accumulates the accoutrements of nuclear weaponization: bombs, delivery systems, and doctrines to match. Initially, the state which already has nuclear weapons may be tempted to prevent its adversary from going nuclear. By the same token, the state which is nearing nuclearization will tend to fear a preventive attack. Subsequently, the tendency to fight is strong, usually leading to crises. Yet they cannot fight. On the contrary, when it comes to the crunch, states in cold war confrontations display a high degree of caution. During episodes of great tension, they try to steer clear of direct military conflict. Where fighting does break out, they carefully avoid escalation and ensure that it is limited to a level below the threshold of regular war. In every case, they stop well short of conventional war, though they do from time to time engage in marginal fighting.

Yet states tend otherwise to behave in conventional ways, for the historically embedded ideational structure of strategic politics does not easily dissolve. The consequence is the appearance of a schizophrenic pattern of behaviour. At what might be called a primary level – which has to do with survival – states engage in war avoidance. As the discussion below shows, in practice, the existence of nuclear weapons prohibits resort to war even when there is a huge difference between adversaries in the number and quality of weapons they possess. Balances count not at all, only the risk of enormous destruction. Note that the perception of risk has little to do with the *probability* of receiving a nuclear hit. Given the scale of destruction that nuclear weapons are capable of causing, the *possibility* of being hit is enough to deter a state from going to war and indeed to cause it to seek to avoid war. As McGeorge Bundy puts it, deterrence rests ultimately on uncertainty, i.e. on 'what *could happen*'.<sup>18</sup> And as Kenneth Waltz avers, 'contemplating war when the use of nuclear weapons is possible focuses one's attention not on the probability of victory but on the possibility of annihilation'.<sup>19</sup> That risk can never be eliminated in a confrontation between nuclear powers, a reality that causes the state which has a much larger and more sophisticated arsenal at its disposal to balk at the moment of decision. This is what is meant by high-level interdependence, when the potential cost of failure is extremely high. As will be seen below, nuclear-armed states play it doubly safe. Knowing that there is always a risk of escalation, they try to ensure a wide margin of safety by stopping short of full-scale conventional war as well.

Though the use of military power is sharply circumscribed, cold-warring states tend in non-crisis times to let conventional thinking prevail. First, they accumulate nuclear weapons beyond the minimal requirements of deterrence. When a small number of simple weapons and delivery systems are sufficient to deter by posing a risk of large-scale destruction, they nevertheless prefer to build up diverse stocks of weapons. Thinking as if these weapons were usable in the same way as

conventional ones, they worry, and act upon notions of 'balance', 'reliability', 'vulnerability', 'accuracy', and so on. Though at every crunch moment they seek to avoid engaging in conventional warfare, they also continue to build up their conventional weapons armouries. Moreover, they take seriously the commonplace and self-contradictory argument that the conventional balance matters because it reduces the likelihood of a nuclear war. Second, nuclear rivals frequently engage in external balancing by seeking allies. Though the addition of unusable military forces is of little utility, they think and act as if it were. Third, nuclear rivals periodically threaten to go to war, sometimes with nuclear weapons, sometimes with conventional forces. They really cannot afford to do so, but nevertheless use threats to signal intent for the purpose of coercion. And fourth, they resort to proxy wars, which usually means using third parties to fight, though on occasion their forces may clash marginally on the border or away from their territories in a third zone. All of this is substantiated below. The main point is that none of these conventional approaches can get around the absolute limits imposed by nuclear weapons, which is that war cannot be rationally fought. And none of them, or indeed no combination of them, is sufficient to win a cold war. On the contrary, all of these plays raise the risk of actual combat, which at minimum has no appreciable effect and at most eventually runs into the brick wall of the veto imposed by nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, nuclear risk compels cold-warring states to cooperate. All nuclear rivals do so when they are in a state of immediate interdependence, i.e. when war is near. The process is usually tacit to begin with, illustrated by war-avoiding behaviour in crises. Beyond this, it usually (though not necessarily) becomes explicit through negotiation. States have displayed the capacity to learn from their mistakes and attempted to stabilize their relationship through diplomatic engagement. This process of coming to terms with the limitations of what they are able to do and what they are not has injected a measure of stability to their relationship. Yet the relationship itself has remained embedded in insecurity and competition. The termination of cold wars is the ultimate form of 'cooperation', involving a fundamental recognition that there is no alternative solution. Since the conflict between cold-warring countries cannot be resolved militarily, its resolution has to be negotiated. Though it appears that the Soviet Union threw in the towel, its cold war relationships with the United States and China could not have ended without a series of agreements between the main parties *before* the end of each conflict, when the collapse of the Soviet state was not expected by anyone.

But getting to that end is the main problem, and different cold war pairs have travelled along different paths. In three of the five cases (United States–Soviet Union, Soviet Union–China, and India–Pakistan), they have been through ups and downs marked by shifts in interdependence from general interdependence ('normal' times) to immediate interdependence (during crises) and back again. Change in the US–China relationship did not occur through a similar process, but, ironically, through balance of power calculations by both, even though the change was a militarily meaningless one. As we shall see, this amounted to a postponement rather than a resolution, as subsequent developments have revived the possibility



of a cold war between them. In the fifth case, the Soviet–China cold war, the two sides eschewed crises and remained at a high level of strategically ‘distant’ rivalry till the process of negotiations began to assume meaningful shape. In every one of these cases, conventional thinking has retained its influence on decision makers in non-crisis situations. The key to understanding both the process and the resolution of cold war conflicts is to see how decision makers have come to terms with the structural effects of nuclear weapons. In particular, this involves the extent to which they have been able to overcome their own tendency to formulate strategy conventionally. The power of conventional thinking is not easy to overcome. Its persistence in the military planning of states long after the termination of cold wars is testimony to its resilience.

## **The United States and the Soviet Union**

### *Ideational and material dimensions*

Though the Cold War is usually said to have begun in the aftermath of the Second World War, with cracks in the US–Soviet alliance appearing during the war itself, collective memories of antipathy between the two countries go back to a much earlier period. From a realist perspective, that antagonism began to emerge as the interests of the two countries clashed in the Asia-Pacific region. In the late nineteenth century, the United States expanded its power westward across the Pacific, while the Russian empire spread eastward overland, their interests colliding in Northeast Asia.<sup>20</sup> Spurred by news of anti-Semitic pogroms and the horrendous conditions prevailing in Russian prisons, the American public supported the *real-politik* calculations of their leaders, who supported Japan during the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, which alienated the Russians.<sup>21</sup>

History and identity together underlined the tensions between the two countries following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. The ideological divide between Lenin’s Russia and Wilson’s America generated the competing myths – world revolution versus democratic world order – that survived till the end of the Cold War.<sup>22</sup> The United States sent a small contingent of troops to fight with the anti-communist White Armies. These remained in Russia until April 1920, their presence hardening the Russian conviction that the United States was bent on destroying the revolution in its infancy. Meanwhile in the United States, the ‘Red Scare’ of 1919 saw mass arrests in a preview of the McCarthyism of the 1950s.<sup>23</sup> In the inter-war years, each viewed the economic crisis faced by the other (Russia in the 1920s, the United States in the 1930s) as proof of its own system’s superiority.<sup>24</sup>

Fundamental differences over ideology bolstered the self-image of each and aggravated mutual hostility. These were by no means ephemeral identities, and ideological competition must not be interpreted as secondary to the conflict, for each viewed itself as the standard bearer of a system potentially writ large across the globe. The Cold War was not a mere power struggle, but a ‘struggle between competing and in many ways mutually exclusive ideational blueprints



for constructing political orders'.<sup>25</sup> Each had powerful roots. The American campaign against communism was permeated by a tradition drawing from radical Protestantism and classical republican and liberal thinking expressed in a 'language about freedom and slavery and unconditional surrender'.<sup>26</sup> On the other side, Stalin saw himself as the heir to the Russian empire in a fusing of ideology and nationalist history, a contradiction that was apparently dissolved by the view that Russia was the core of the universal Marxist domain.<sup>27</sup> Domestic ideological politics was also closely linked to cold war politics. American presidents were constantly under pressure to demonstrate that they were not 'soft' on communism.<sup>28</sup> Soviet leaders attacked rivals on the ground of ideological 'correctness' to strengthen their positions at home, and harped on the imperialist threat to stave off any question of accountability.<sup>29</sup> Though there was no direct territorial dispute, territory mattered a great deal in this global contest. The world was the arena of competition, and every political-cartographic gain for one was a victory for its ideology and a validation of its identity in the epic struggle.

Between the superpowers, as they came to be known, there was little trade, and hence the role of power in their relationship was limited by only one factor: nuclear weapons. Even this was not clear for a while. The Second World War had consumed many millions of lives, and the nuclear bomb was for some time viewed as a usable device. Despite the advent of nuclear weapons, it was widely believed that the next war would be 'a long-drawn-out and bitter struggle over much of Europe and Asia, involving million-strong land armies, vast military casualties and widespread civil war'.<sup>30</sup> It did eventually dawn on both countries that nuclear war was impractical and politically undoable; none the less, the habit of engaging one another by means of power politics had been formed, and remained with them. The world seen through the lenses of *realpolitik* was a bipolar one of the two major powers and their allies, but it was also bipolar in the sense that it was divided between two systems of thought and organization. In reality, the United States had a far greater strategic reach than the Soviet Union. As a leading or hegemonic power, the US dominated the globe politically with its capacity to influence, reward, and punish states on every continent. In contrast, the Soviet Union was a rising challenger, striving at great cost to itself to catch up with the hegemon. It was able to do this by the 1960s in military terms by a massive armament programme and by proffering aid to allies and Third World states, again much of it military. But it never made equivalent progress as an economic entity because its political economy, inherently unable to generate momentum, became stagnant.

Nevertheless, both sides built up their alliance systems, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact, which stood face to face, with large conventional and nuclear arsenals in the middle of Europe. Across the globe, the two competed for influence in Asia, Africa, and to a lesser extent in Latin America.<sup>31</sup> When things did not go their way, they intervened forcefully: the United States in Latin America, Korea, and Vietnam, the Soviet Union in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan.

### ***Nuclear behaviour***

The politics of the Cold War was intensely competitive and played out on a global scale. From time to time, the two sides came close to war and were involved in a series of crises, most notably in Berlin in 1961, Cuba in 1962, and the Middle East in 1973.<sup>32</sup> In the first of these, President Kennedy actually discussed the possibility of war, including the feasibility of a nuclear first strike, but drew back because there was no certainty that it could be controlled and prevented from escalating to a nuclear exchange.<sup>33</sup> The decision was taken not to risk nuclear war in spite of the knowledge that American forces were far greater in quantity and quality than those of the Soviet Union. Kennedy also initiated direct backchannel efforts (bypassing the US and Soviet bureaucracies) to defuse the crisis and both sides agreed to withdraw the forces that were in eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation in Berlin.<sup>34</sup> In Cuba and the Middle East, the story was repeated: confrontation, force alerts, war planning, backchannel diplomacy, and compromise (though in the latter case, their forces did not actually come face to face). Contrary to popular perception, shots *were* fired occasionally. For instance, an American U2 spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union on 1 May 1960. Again, on 27 October 1962, Soviet forces in Cuba shot down a U2 aircraft at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Yet confrontations invariably stopped short of war. Their periodic clashes boiled down to who would take that first fateful step to armed conflict, which neither was prepared to do. On some occasions, the risk was dealt with by tacit understanding; on others, it came close to the point of no return.

The Cuban Missile Crisis has gone down in nuclear-strategic history as the classic example of new nuclear powers testing how far they could go without actually tumbling into war. Both sides, looking into the abyss, chose to hold back and turned to diplomacy to resolve their differences.<sup>35</sup> In 1961 and 1962, the United States had an enormous quantitative and qualitative lead in weaponry, but this did not give it the confidence to risk nuclear war. The caution displayed by both sides in these crises was a form of tacit cooperation, which was buttressed by informal negotiations. In the wake of the Cuban crisis, a formal arms control process was set in motion that eventually led to the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties (SALT I and II).

Despite the mutual recognition that war was not a viable option, both sides continued to behave in conventional ways. The interplay of fears, amplified by the presence of nuclear weapons, set off a technology-driven action–reaction process that led to an arms race of unprecedented proportions.<sup>36</sup> The accumulation of weapons proceeded as if they were conventional instruments that were realistically usable in war. The United States' stock of strategic nuclear warheads rose from 450 in 1950 to 5,500 in 1965, and 13,616 in 1990. Likewise, the Soviet Union, which had barely begun to embark on its nuclear military build-up in 1950, had accumulated 600 strategic warheads by 1965, and 13,292 by 1990. The same runaway process of garnering strategic delivery vehicles in great numbers saw the United States pile up its inventory from 1,850 in 1965 to 3,719 in 1990, with the Soviet Union again playing catch up, its inventory rising from 475 to 3,951 in the

same years.<sup>37</sup> The two great arsenals confronted each other on a round-the-clock, high-alert basis.

Unable to fight directly, the nuclear adversaries used proxies to fight wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and Nicaragua; and sought to gain or retain control in third countries through aid, intervention, and alliances. From time to time, they contemplated the use of nuclear arms, or threatened to do so.<sup>38</sup>

Gradually, the United States and the Soviet Union went through a process of learning, which helped them steady their relationship.<sup>39</sup> This was an uneven process, with ups and downs. After Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev sought peaceful coexistence, but soon took the first steps – placing missiles in Cuba – that brought on the Cuban Missile Crisis. Following that crisis, there was a concerted effort through the process of 'détente' to reduce risks, launch arms control, and, more broadly, not to rock the boat too much.<sup>40</sup> By the late 1970s, there was a renewed chill, and relations hit rock bottom when Soviet forces moved into Afghanistan in 1979. It is one thing to learn *that* a specific mode of dealing with an adversary is unproductive and even dangerous, and quite another to learn *how* to do it better.<sup>41</sup> The course of coming to terms could never be easy, because fundamental differences remained strong and cold war competition continued until the Cold War began to unravel in the latter half of the 1980s.

## **The United States and China**

China has had the unique experience of participating in three cold wars: as an adjunct to the Soviet Union in the Cold War, and as a main actor in cold wars with the United States and the Soviet Union. This section focuses on the first conflict in the latter category.

### ***Ideational and material dimensions***

China's role in the US–Soviet conflict set the stage for an intense confrontation, but the history of Sino-American tensions goes back to the nineteenth century, when the United States entered Northeast Asia as a colonial power. Each had its own sense of identity – China as a 'bearer of tradition' and the United States as a 'destroyer of tradition' – which made the collision between them that much more unpleasant, leaving a legacy of bitterness.<sup>42</sup> American support for Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) during the Chinese civil war and for his government in Taiwan after 1949, China's entry into the Korean war, and Chinese aid for the socialists in Indochina added layer upon layer of hostility, which reached a peak during the heyday of Sino-Soviet comradeship in the 1950s.<sup>43</sup> This period was marked by China's readiness to take on American power directly in Korea and Taiwan. Hostility ran deep. In 1962, two years before China exploded its first nuclear weapon and entered its own cold war (as defined here), Americans considered China a greater threat than the Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup> Ideological differences between the 'defender of democracy' and the new 'champion of Marxism-Leninism' added to

mutual perceptions of the aggressive other, combining to create mirror 'devil images'.<sup>45</sup>

We have seen something of the propulsion that American identity and ideology gave to the Cold War. The thrust remained the same in this cold war. On the Chinese side, Mao's revolutionary outlook, like Stalin's, did not contradict his strong sense of national identity. On the contrary, Maoist ideology simultaneously aimed to spread revolution and strengthen China, thereby combining class analysis with national identity.<sup>46</sup> The strength of national identity has never dissipated. China's determination to reabsorb Taiwan, which has caused enormous tension with the United States, can be explained only by the power of its national identity.<sup>47</sup> Mao's efforts to 'shake the existing order' by backing Third World national liberation movements may be interpreted as stemming from China's identity as both revolutionary leader and emergent power.<sup>48</sup>

In terms of power politics, China after 1949 had sought the shelter and assistance of its 'elder brother' through the Sino-Soviet alliance. The United States naturally viewed it as an adversary, though, contrary to established wisdom, American policy makers from time to time did explore the possibility of weaning China away from the Soviet fold.<sup>49</sup> But China preferred in the 1960s to wage two cold wars at the same time and charted an independent course. As a weak power, it pursued the acquisition of nuclear weapons, which were seen as essential for its survival in a hostile world.<sup>50</sup> Given its past experience of explicit American nuclear threats in the 1950s, this was hardly surprising.<sup>51</sup> The American threat was back on the drawing board in 1963, when President Kennedy's strategic planning included the possibility of a preventive attack to 'strangle the baby in the cradle' with Soviet acquiescence.<sup>52</sup> As it happened, Khrushchev was not interested.

China's independent stance, put into place in Korea and consolidated in the Taiwan Straits Crises of 1954-5 and 1958, became further evident from its role in Indochina during the French occupation and later, when the Americans replaced the French.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Behaviour as nuclear powers***

The United States more than once thought seriously of using nuclear weapons against China. American anxieties about China's nuclear capabilities were visceral. As Kennedy put it in a cable to Averell Harriman: 'I agree that large stockpiles are characteristic of US and USSR only, but consider that relatively small forces in hands of people like CHICOMS [i.e. Chinese Communists] could be very dangerous to all.'<sup>54</sup> The Chinese approach was apparently one of unconcern. Mao famously dismissed the atom bomb as a 'paper tiger', but in reality, Chinese leaders were aware of the American nuclear threat, were optimistic about the Soviet umbrella, and set out on the road to nuclear development soon after their revolution.<sup>55</sup> With China proceeding towards nuclearization, tensions grew rapidly. The Chinese were aware of the risk of an American preventive attack and made preparations for a major conflict. As the temperature rose,

Premier Zhou Enlai warned that in the event of a US air strike, China would respond on the ground and that once war began, there would be 'no boundaries'.<sup>56</sup>

Both sides observed abundant caution once their confrontation acquired a nuclear dimension. Following China's first test in October 1964, President Lyndon Johnson kept open the possibility of attacking China's nascent arsenal, but this was no longer a serious option. Lyle Goldstein has argued that China's rudimentary arsenal was not a deterrent, but the evidence is thin that Johnson himself considered it from this angle, since he never came close to a decision to attack.<sup>57</sup> In any case, there was doubt whether the targets could be destroyed by a single attack.<sup>58</sup> This left open the question of what the Chinese might do with those weapons left undamaged, an issue for which there is no available evidence. This might have been discussed if there had been a serious plan to carry out the attack, but there was not, as Goldstein admits.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, there is no available evidence at all as to how costly a Chinese nuclear riposte might have been. Instead, the president altered the means-end calculation by reassessing American goals, which, in effect, downgraded the idea of a preventive and later a pre-emptive strike.<sup>60</sup> During its bombing campaign against North Vietnam, no doubt learning from its experience in Korea, the United States heeded China's warning that it would not tolerate transgression of its border. For their part, the Chinese broke a promise to North Vietnam and refrained from providing Hanoi with pilots.<sup>61</sup>

Conventional conflict-oriented behaviour nevertheless did manifest itself almost immediately upon China's nuclearization. In the first half of 1965, both began a proxy war in Vietnam. The United States, fearful of the Chinese threat, intensified its involvement in Vietnam, sending in an increasing number of combat troops (30,000 by March, steadily growing to 200,000 by the end of the year) and escalating its bombing campaign. China responded by sending in seven divisions of engineering troops in June and two divisions of anti-aircraft batteries in August.<sup>62</sup> The total number of Chinese troops in Vietnam was large, peaking at 170,000 in 1967.<sup>63</sup> China also emphasized its capability by carrying out a second nuclear test in May 1965. Though both were cautious, as in the Cold War, there was considerable testing of limits and brinkmanship. Their forces came regularly into direct violent contact in a third country and occasionally along the Chinese border with Vietnam. Chinese anti-aircraft batteries in Vietnam, according to Chinese records, shot down as many as 1,608 American planes by the time they were withdrawn in March 1969.<sup>64</sup> Head-to-head air combat did actually occur from time to time. On 26 April 1966, an aerial dogfight took place between two American Phantom F-4C fighters and a Chinese MiG-21 and on 27 May 1966, another occurred between five American and one Chinese aircraft. The Chinese claimed that one US aircraft was shot down in the first encounter and one of theirs in the second. An American denial was forthcoming only with respect to the loss of a fighter in the first case.<sup>65</sup> According to Chinese records, between April 1965 and November 1968 their air force shot down twelve American aircraft (not counting unmanned reconnaissance planes) inside China's air space.<sup>66</sup> There were other cases of

brinkmanship. But both President Johnson and Premier Zhou Enlai had already made it clear that they did not want war, and neither side went too far.<sup>67</sup>

In contrast with the Cold War, there was no arms race. This may have been partly because the Chinese did not have the capacity to catch up with the United States, but an important consideration would be that they made no effort to do so, whereas the Soviet Union did go to great lengths to obtain parity. Instead, China contented itself with a doctrine of minimum deterrence that required no more than a relatively modest nuclear force.<sup>68</sup> What it did do was to accelerate its thermonuclear bomb development programme, which bore fruit in 1967. This reflected the questionable understanding that bigger is better. There was no fresh alliance seeking by the United States, which already had alliances in place. China, however, did try to expand its influence by supporting anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa. This had limited success and in any case had no bearing on its strategic capacities.

The process of learning and adjustment did occur, but in a way that was different from the US–Soviet case. Both sides saw that there was nothing to be gained from confrontation and risk. Rather than addressing the basic problem between them, they resorted to conventionalizing behaviour: the formation of a quasi-alliance against their common adversary, the Soviet Union.<sup>69</sup> Such an alliance meant an amalgamation of power, which was meaningless in a nuclear context, since war was ruled out, and they could do little with it. The basis of their rivalry, rooted in ideational and material differences, remained unresolved, and has emerged as a prime issue in the early twenty-first century.

## **China and the Soviet Union**

### *Ideational and material dimensions*

Like the cold wars previously discussed, this one was built on a foundation of historical tensions. The Russian view of the Chinese people, combining prejudice (a belief in European superiority) with fear (memories of the Mongol invasions), was negative from at least the late eighteenth century.<sup>70</sup> Its persistence in the age of proletarian brotherhood was reflected in Khrushchev's suspicions about Chinese labour migration into Siberia.<sup>71</sup> Russia's participation in the virtual colonization of China was a powerful memory for the Chinese, sustained by Stalin's insistence on retaining some colonial privileges, such as the open-ended use of the Dalian Port and the application of Soviet criminal law to Russians in China.<sup>72</sup> During the civil war in China, the Chinese Communist Party received relatively little support from Stalin, who was more concerned with the strategies of the Second World War and the need for a 'united front' that included Jiang's Guomindang.<sup>73</sup> The Sino-Soviet alliance of 1950 yielded benefits to both, but Mao's dissatisfaction on numerous counts grew steadily. On the Chinese side, the major sources of the Sino-Soviet split, which was complete by 1960, were inadequate economic and technical aid, including for the nuclear bomb; tepid Soviet support for China when it was faced with American nuclear threats over Korea and Taiwan, and during China's brief

war with India in 1962; Khrushchev's shift to 'peaceful coexistence' with the United States, which was backing the Guomindang in Taiwan; and Khrushchev's 'adventurism' and 'capitulation' in the Cuban Missile Crisis. For their part, the Soviets were angered by China's rejection of Khrushchev's 'destalinization' and 'peaceful coexistence', which were centrepieces of the new post-Stalin dispensation; Mao's refusal to accede to joint naval forces; China's own 'adventurism' over Taiwan; and the Chinese push – against Soviet advice – for radical rural communization through the Great Leap Forward.<sup>74</sup>

Ideology, which had brought them together as fellow revolutionaries, played a significant part in the break-up of the alliance. This is unsurprising, since ideology in both countries was inextricably linked to nationalism. China refused to remain for long in its role as the junior partner in the relationship, increasingly accusing the Soviet Union of 'big power chauvinism'. The break became inevitable when Khrushchev sought rapprochement with the West, for Mao, still fresh from his revolution and bent on continuing the process, saw it as accommodation with the enemy. In terms of ideological evolution, their outlooks were asynchronous: 'the ideology of mature socialism in the Soviet Union pursued stability; the ideology of revolutionary (young) socialism in China advocated change'.<sup>75</sup> Mao, particularly, sought to meld domestic and external revolutionary change, which made him an ideological rival to post-Stalin Russian leaders. The meshing of ideology with national identity, seen above, accentuated the tensions between them. The territorial factor was a major part of the dispute, centring on the border rivers called the Amur/Heilongjiang and the Ussuri/Wusuli.<sup>76</sup> This dispute was to take them to the verge of war in the late 1960s.

The rupture in comradely relations brought on classic power politics. Even before 1960, Mao had resisted Soviet dominance. He rejected outright the establishment of a joint radio communication system and a joint nuclear submarine flotilla based in China, which he recognized as a veiled attempt to secure bases.<sup>77</sup> Despite the failure of the Great Leap Forward, Mao was also determined to sustain his 'permanent revolution' and cast China as the appropriate model for the Third World. In the mid-1960s, he launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which further widened the breach between the two socialist powers. But he recognized that it all came down to power, and that China needed the one thing that would offset the military threat from the United States as well as the Soviet Union: nuclear weapons. Chinese anger over the US–USSR–UK Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963 was palpable. It was seen as a blatant attempt 'to consolidate their nuclear monopoly', designed to prevent 'all the threatened peace-loving countries, including China, from increasing their own defence capability'.<sup>78</sup> Following the Soviet Union's refusal to keep its promise of giving them the atom bomb, the Chinese were determined to produce it on their own, which they did by 1964, following it up with the thermonuclear bomb in 1967. The latter enabled them, in the words of a leading nuclear scientist of the time, Liu Xiyao, to 'overcome nuclear blackmail'.<sup>79</sup>



### ***Behaviour as nuclear powers***

The nuclearization of China brought rising Sino-Soviet tension in its wake. The border issue became increasingly tense and was marked by regular local confrontations, especially from 1966.<sup>80</sup> In February 1967, Chinese Red Guards, unleashed by the Cultural Revolution, laid siege to the Soviet Embassy in Moscow for more than a week. The rising border tension culminated in a series of armed clashes between March and August 1969.<sup>81</sup> Soviet leaders were so furious that they discussed the possibility of using nuclear weapons. Minister of Defence Andrei Grechko is reported to have favoured a massive attack, while others preferred a limited strike against Chinese nuclear targets. But in the end, Brezhnev settled for nuclear deployment and did not go further.<sup>82</sup> The Chinese leadership was conscious of risk and went to the extent of placing its armed forces, including its nuclear weapons, on full alert, ready for 'instant retaliation' on 18 October 1969.<sup>83</sup> Like the US-Soviet confrontation over Cuba, the border conflict brought the Soviet Union and China close to the brink, and both chose to hold back. Unlike the other two cold wars discussed above, this one did see direct armed combat on the ground over a period of several months. Yet both sides took care to keep the conflict local, i.e. along the border, and neither attempted seriously to make deep inroads into the other's territory, which would have inevitably brought on a full-scale war.

A second crisis occurred in 1978-9 when Vietnam, a Soviet ally, invaded Cambodia and was in turn attacked by China.<sup>84</sup> However, this time there was no direct military clash. The Chinese took care to convey to the Soviet Union that they had only the limited objective of teaching Vietnam a 'lesson', and communicated an informal reassurance that they would effect an early withdrawal.<sup>85</sup> On its part, the Soviet Union committed itself through a November 1978 treaty with Vietnam only to 'consult' and not to provide military assistance. Initially, Soviet leaders had advertised the treaty as a deterrent, but once the war began, they made no further mention of this. Soviet military support for Vietnam was restricted to intelligence and reconnaissance; the flotilla despatched to the region remained in the East China Sea and did not move to the South China Sea during the fighting.<sup>86</sup>

The Sino-Soviet cold war was not characterized by arms racing. Though there was little doctrinal thinking during the quest for the bomb, Mao had made it clear that China's bombs 'won't be numerous'.<sup>87</sup> In addition, China's focus on 'no first use' and its preference for a second-strike posture, including the confidence that an enemy first strike would not be able to destroy all of its missiles, indicated that it had opted for a minimum deterrence strategy.<sup>88</sup> The Chinese did not attempt to compete with the Soviet Union, but were content to develop a sufficiency of deterrence forces that included the thermonuclear bomb and missiles of varying ranges.

But in many other ways, conventional behaviour was evident throughout. The Soviet Union launched a massive arms build-up from 1965, especially in its Far East. China, slowed down by the Cultural Revolution, responded by 1968.<sup>89</sup> The Soviet Union deployed more than 150 intermediate-range nuclear missiles, strategic bombers, and tactical nuclear weapons; China responded with its own DF-4



missiles, which were armed with one-megaton warheads.<sup>90</sup> The build-up continued till 1972, after which it slowed down as the border became less unstable. There was a revival in the late 1970s as the Soviet Union began to upgrade and reorganize its forces in the east, partly in response to increasing US–China–Japan cooperation.

China's sense of vulnerability did not dissipate entirely despite the acquisition of the bomb. The 'Brezhnev Doctrine' claimed that the Soviet Union had the right to intervene against counter-revolution in the socialist world. In August 1968, Leonid Brezhnev sent Soviet forces into Czechoslovakia to crush a budding liberal movement. These events played a significant part in sharpening Sino-Soviet tensions. That September, China announced its 'firm support' for Albania's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, warned other socialist countries against Soviet 'social imperialism', and began drawing attention to the border dispute.<sup>91</sup> Alliance politics came to the fore. The Soviet Union signed a military alliance with Mongolia in 1966 and extended its military build-up there. It also began to make significant gains in Iran and India, though that was more in relation to its competition with the United States.<sup>92</sup> China, fearing encirclement and isolation, sought first to build relations with Pakistan and, eventually, turned to a quasi-alliance with the United States. The triangular game was a complex one, as the United States and the Soviet Union were also in a period of relative peace – *détente* – during the first half of the 1970s. At the time, the Soviet Union tried to wean the United States away from China, but failed. Thereafter, as Soviet–American competition intensified, China and the United States drew still closer. China also opened normalization talks with Japan and pulled socialist Albania away from the Soviet fold, while the Soviet Union signed a friendship treaty with India in 1971, and allied formally with Vietnam in 1978. The power game was played as if nuclear weapons had not brought any change.

Proxy wars were intrinsic to the game. China supported the Khmer Rouge resistance in Cambodia against the invading Vietnamese and in 1979 invaded Vietnam, while the Soviet Union backed Vietnam and was in return given access to bases at Cam Ranh Bay and Danang. The two also sponsored rival movements in civil wars in Angola, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and South West Africa (Namibia).<sup>93</sup> The Soviet Union also encouraged ethnic unrest in China's Xinjiang province.<sup>94</sup>

Like the other cold wars, this one, too, gradually saw a decline in tensions and a coming to terms. But unlike the cyclical cooperation–competition process of the US–Soviet cold war and the sudden realignment that marked the US–China cold war, this cold war was marked by a long period of stagnation – stable hostility – as the two groped uneasily for a *modus operandi*. As early as 1972, the Soviet Union proposed a non-aggression pact, but received no response. The Chinese leadership instead harped on the border problem. A decade later, both began moving cautiously to talks. By this time, following Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping and his colleagues had replaced Mao's doctrine of continuous revolution with a new focus on 'forces of production', stressing development imperatives, and adopted a 'peace and development' line.<sup>95</sup> As a result, tensions gradually declined. The stage was set for the possible – but by no means inevitable – end of the Sino-Soviet cold war.

## **The United States and North Korea**

The cold wars discussed above have receded into history. This one continues to be prominent on the current stage of world politics, though it appears to be winding down at the time of writing (October 2007). While it is difficult to give its origins (as per our definition of cold war) a precise date because of the covert character of North Korea's nuclearization, it would be reasonable to locate it in the early 1990s, since North Korea's first threat to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1993 would probably, in hindsight, have been based on some level of technical capability.

### ***Ideational and material dimensions***

US–North Korean tensions can be traced to the nineteenth century, when the Korean government, spurred by suspicion of Christian missionaries entering the country, ordered a crackdown on their activities and sought to isolate the land from the influence of outsiders. American sea power, unmindful of such prohibitions, sailed up the Taedong river in 1866 in the form of the armed merchant ship, the USS *General Sherman*, engaging in a violent confrontation that set the tone for a relationship that has since then been erratic at best and tension-ridden as a rule.<sup>96</sup> The end of the Second World War saw Korea carved into a major arena of the Cold War, arbitrarily divided into the Soviet- and China-backed communist North and the US-supported South at the 38th parallel. The long and costly Korean war (1950–3), ended in a stalemate that flowed almost naturally into a cold war, with the North Koreans developing their nuclear capability.

The clash over the North's nuclear quest had a basis not only in history but in identity as well. North Korea's doctrine of *juche* or self-reliance, announced by Kim Il Sung in December 1955, was a smorgasbord of anti-colonial resistance, militant national pride, absolute power, personality cult, and socialism.<sup>97</sup> Against this, the United States brought to bear a militant pursuit of its vision of liberty, casting the contest in a vocabulary of good and evil.<sup>98</sup> Ideology was an additional divider, of course, but not only in the sense of worldviews and frameworks of action. For North Korea, it provided the arena for a struggle against its American-backed Southern other in a competitive politics of state making, identity building, and legitimacy seeking.<sup>99</sup> For the United States, there was (and is today), an additional complexity: the search for an appropriate construction of its identity as the sole superpower in an ill-defined era, a search in which the neoconservatives were the new missionaries.<sup>100</sup>

The termination of the Cold War played a significant part in the renewal of confrontation in Northeastern Asia. With Russia and China gravitating towards the South, North Korea's sense of insecurity was aggravated, invigorating its hunt for the bomb.<sup>101</sup> In effect, it had no allies left. Although it did have a huge armed force, the numbers were deceptive. South Korea alone had by the late twentieth century built up a sizeable and much more sophisticated military.<sup>102</sup> The North did, however, have the capacity to cause enormous damage to two of the United States'

allies: South Korea and Japan. Yet the sense of insecurity that arose from the nuclear threat by the United States would have been deep. That threat had been actively posed from time to time over the years: during the Korean War, and periodically thereafter.<sup>103</sup> Given the massive bombing to which it had been subject during the Korean war, North Korea would have viewed American power as threatening its very existence.<sup>104</sup> Besides, the United States had threatened to use nuclear weapons in Korea on three occasions.<sup>105</sup> With neither allies nor a conventional advantage available as adequate response, North Korea was left with only one option other than capitulation: acquisition of nuclear weapons.

The process of bargaining and negotiation that accompanied North Korea's attainment of nuclear military power was marked by a series of crises from the early 1990s.<sup>106</sup> When North Korea announced its decision to withdraw from the NPT in 1994, the Clinton Administration planned a preventive strike, but decided to negotiate, as a conventional reprisal would have engulfed the region in a costly war.<sup>107</sup> In February 2005, North Korea proclaimed its attainment of nuclear weapons capability and confirmed it through a single test on 9 October 2006.

### ***Behaviour as nuclear powers***

Despite high rhetoric and mutual threats, the US–North Korean war has followed the precedent of other cold wars. There has been no imminent threat of intended nuclear use, though the possibility has been raised from time to time. The George W. Bush Administration was unwilling to negotiate with a member of the 'axis of evil', and considered the possibility of a pre-emptive strike, as it feared that North Korea, given time, would become even more dangerous with the accumulation of more nuclear weapons. Intelligence information in 2002 that Pyongyang was engaged in a secret uranium enrichment programme brought another crisis. But despite its reluctance to negotiate, the Bush Administration eventually found itself doing exactly that. The same story was repeated when North Korea asserted it had the bomb and when it tested. Bush has been criticized for his poor strategic planning and for the 'strategic muddle' that tried to combine pressure and negotiation.<sup>108</sup> The key question is: why did the United States, with its enormous military strength, both nuclear and conventional, hold back from a pre-emptive strike?

Apart from the fear of a conventional war, there were problems relating to North Korea's nuclear and other unconventional (chemical and biological) capabilities. According to one estimate, a general war could have led to a million fatalities.<sup>109</sup> In 2002, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stated that North Korea already had two nuclear weapons. These could in the worst case have been delivered by *No-dong* missiles on targets in South Korea and Japan.<sup>110</sup> There was no certainty of success in pre-emption, as many North Korean nuclear and missile facilities were widely distributed and were hidden and heavily protected in thick-walled bunkers located deep underground.<sup>111</sup> In 2006, neoconservative supporters and even former Clinton officials pressed for pre-emption, but Bush, on consulting the military, found the option unacceptable. Vice President Dick Cheney warned that 'if you're going to launch strikes at another nation, you'd better be prepared to not

just fire one shot'.<sup>112</sup> As an unnamed official put it, 'It sounds good ... until you ask yourself the question, what good is a strike if it leaves their nuclear capability untouched?'.<sup>113</sup> The problem is well illustrated by a detailed report of a war game conducted in the United States by the *Atlantic Monthly* in 2005.<sup>114</sup> The participants, mainly former government officials in key policy positions, found (with one exception) that the cost of a pre-emptive strike against North Korea was unacceptable for all the reasons identified above. Yet those who advocated negotiations felt that if talks failed, pre-emption was a logical option!

North Korea, for its part, has given the appearance of being unpredictable through 'calculated irrationality' designed to keep the United States off balance and to induce others to intervene in order to stabilize the situation.<sup>115</sup> American perception of its 'irrationality' encourages caution and thereby strengthens deterrence.<sup>116</sup> But the fact that North Korea has concentrated on building its missile capability in the direction of firepower and range rather than accuracy would seem to indicate that it is interested in deterrence rather than in attaining the capability to attack first.<sup>117</sup> North Korea does not have the wherewithal for arms racing with the United States, but has sought to demonstrate its capacity to unleash large-scale damage on a US ally, Japan, by test-firing a missile across it. In doing so, it has displayed a familiar readiness to involve third parties in its nuclear strategy.

It is too early at the time of writing to expect much of a learning and adjustment process to manifest itself. Nevertheless, there are indications that point in this direction. Like other cold-warring pairs before them, the United States and North Korea have engaged in what by now may be seen as a standard pattern of competitive behaviour between nuclear rivals. They have threatened each other, used intemperate rhetoric, and yet been prepared to negotiate, and at times (as in the period between the first two crises) showed a willingness to talk and try and come to terms.<sup>118</sup> That they came to the table in the wake of the 2006 North Korean test and signed a denuclearization agreement in February 2007 is a sign of positive learning. However, the agreement, still being implemented at the time of writing, requires North Korea only to dismantle its nuclear facilities, not its bombs or missiles. The potential for a revival of nuclear tensions remains, in which case a similar cycle of confrontation and compromise may occur.

## First lessons from cold war experiences

What can we discern from this review of four cold wars? The bigger picture will become clearer after the detailed discussion that follows in the next three chapters, but a first cut is useful in identifying the factors at play.

First, ideational differences clearly matter. Collective memories are the foundation on which hostilities are built. Histories of tension and conflict, which generate expectations of threat, are constant reference points that sharpen antagonisms between cold-warring states. These are further intensified by differences over identity. Distinctions of ideology and identity shape divergent interests, create a strong sense of other-ing between 'us' and 'them', and help produce a zero sum whatever-you-win-I-lose (and vice versa) orientation. This encourages

competition and confrontation and the pattern of straining at the nuclear leash that is evident in every case. Ideational differences also have a restraining effect on efforts to change policy and rethink the relationship in the light of its associated risks. As a result, they produce a tendency towards a high level of sustained tension or what is sometimes referred to as the basic rivalry level (BRL).<sup>119</sup>

Second, material factors matter as well. In the anarchic self-help system that is world politics, the power of one is threatening to the other, and in a cold war relationship, this means mutually reinforcing threat perceptions. Anarchy produces a fundamental lack of trust. Each side tends to look first to its own interest rather than to common interests. Prior to the appearance of nuclear weapons on both sides, the possibility (and sometimes the reality) of war is always alive. The bigger power has a predisposition to consider the use of force as an option, while the smaller one is predisposed to resist. The acquisition of nuclear weapons is an attractive option for the weaker state.

Third, nuclear weapons have powerful effects that shape the chief characteristics of a cold war relationship. These are 'structural' effects in the sense that the basic patterns of cold war behaviour tend to congeal around them. They are also dual effects. On the one hand, the advent of a nuclear bilateral relationship aggravates existing tensions, leading to the projection of threat and counter-threat, brinkmanship, and crises. On the other hand, the same weapons also produce caution, particularly when the prospect of nuclear war begins to loom large. No matter how high their mutual threat perceptions and tensions, nuclear rivals display great caution in trying to prevent their conflict turning into regular war. Invariably, they abide by what I call the 'two-steps-short rule'. They keep their confrontation on the safer side of two thresholds: that between conventional war and nuclear war and that between sub-conventional or marginal war and conventional war.<sup>120</sup> In short, nuclear rivals invariably avoid not only nuclear war, but conventional war as well. This always involves tacit understandings and thus a form of unintended cooperation, but may also involve explicit cooperation.<sup>121</sup> In short, nuclear weapons mitigate the conflictive proclivities produced by both ideational and material factors.<sup>122</sup>

In generating cooperation, nuclear weapons cancel out power differences. The potential effects of their use are so immensely harmful that no political leader finds the risk of war worth taking in relation to any reasonable political objective. This is most starkly demonstrated in the Soviet–Chinese clashes of 1969 and the US–North Korean confrontation, when huge differences in military power gave the apparently stronger power no advantage. Nuclear weapons have a powerful equalizing effect. They do not merely 'truncate' asymmetry; they eliminate it.<sup>123</sup> As a result, they tend to create a 'lock-in effect' of stalemate over time, which prevents a clear win for either side and tends to aggravate tensions.<sup>124</sup> The high levels of risk that such relationships entail encourage but do not necessitate learning and adjustment. That is, they weaken the effects of both the ideational and material bases of cold war and create opportunities for change. This may occur through arms control and confidence building, realignment, or identity change. Decision makers may choose to recognize the reality and negotiate.

Alternatively, this may not happen. Decision makers may instead continue to engage in cold war politics or even seek to use 'safe' strategies, such as using proxies to carry on their competition. This helps explain why cold wars sometimes do not end when opportunities are at hand. The issue is discussed at length in Chapter 5. For the present, the central point is that nuclear weapons carry an inherent contradiction: they aggravate tensions and thereby create the conditions that open the way to reducing them. The history of cold wars is a history of this dialectic. Decision makers constantly struggle to cope with the dual effects of nuclear weapons. Where they learn and adjust to the structural effects of nuclear weapons, the process is complex and difficult, marked by ups and downs, progress and regress. The eventual outcome is not predetermined, but depends on choices made by political elites whose decisions are crafted in the context of domestic politics. The structural effects of nuclear weapons are thus not entirely deterministic.

The structural effects of nuclear weapons are partly offset by the tendency of those in power to continue with conventional politics: to seek alliances which do not make a difference to the symmetry produced by nuclear weapons; to make as well as expect threats of war which cannot be implemented; and to accumulate conventional and nuclear weapons that cannot be used. Though the weapons eliminate power differences, nations may behave as if they do not and resort to arms accumulation. However, this does not necessarily mean excessive arms racing of the kind that was such a visible feature of the US–Soviet relationship. None of the other three cold wars exhibited an arms racing pattern. But even if we leave aside the extreme and singular case of the US–Soviet arms race, the tendency to 'conventionalize' nuclear weapons is ubiquitous in the nuclear weapons discourse of all countries (the North Korean discourse is largely unavailable to us). Their strategic vocabulary is replete with arguments about the accuracy, reliability, and survivability of weapons – a language far removed from the real concerns of political decision makers, which boil down to the question: what if one bomb were to fall on us? That question tends to attain prominence when there is a crisis. At other times, decision makers tend to allow the conventionalized discourse and domestic political calculations to shape strategic thinking and the size and posture of their arsenals. Choices about how much is enough and how to respond to an adversary's capabilities tend to be arbitrary. Patterns of competition for influence, alliance building, and influence seeking recur (though not in the US–North Korea case) as if military power were a usable commodity. Coming to terms thus becomes a difficult exercise.

The strategic effects of nuclear weapons are by no means simple and direct. Here, I return to the distinction between immediate and general interdependence made in Chapter 1. This is analogous to, though distinct from, Patrick Morgan's distinction between general and immediate deterrence.<sup>125</sup> In general interdependence, nuclear weapons have a permanent effect. They block the capacity to go to war and thereby alter the very meaning of power by setting outer limits to state action in a conflict setting. Logically, this means that power balancing in the military sense is superfluous. Yet the presence of nuclear weapons does not entirely prevent states from behaving conventionally, i.e. *as if* military power were still



usable, which explains why states may continue to acquire the instruments of war (internal balancing) and enter into alliances (external balancing). In immediate interdependence, i.e. when crises occur, conventional behaviour is quickly abandoned. The overriding concern is to avoid war and potential catastrophe. Considerations of relative balance, nuclear doctrine, and force posture recede into the background as both sides seek tacitly and often explicitly to obtain a measure of stability. Immediate choices are restricted.

How states respond upon returning to general interdependence depends on their learning and the subsequent policy choices made by decision makers. They may quickly elect to negotiate their way substantively out of a situation which does not allow a military solution to their conflict (which has never happened); they may opt for a 'stable' tense relationship in which war is avoided, but there is limited cooperation (the Soviet Union and China after 1969); they may choose to make up on the basis of *realpolitik* (the United States and China); or they may revert to the earlier pattern of confrontation and rediscover the imperatives of immediate interdependence (the United States and the Soviet Union, and the United States and North Korea). Put theoretically, nuclear weapons have formidable structural effects that determine what states cannot do, but they give states much leeway on responding to that effect in terms of what they *can* do. In short, a structural theory of nuclear weapons need not leave defensive realists and constructivists with much to complain about.

Why do old habits of thinking and doing in conventional ways persist in spite of the logic of the nuclear revolution? There are several explanations. First, the revolutionary effect of nuclear weapons was not as great as it now appears when they first entered the strategic landscape. Towards the end of the Second World War, the level of mass destruction by way of massive conventional attacks on urban centres was immense. Though a single atomic bomb could do more than thousands of tonnes of conventional bombs dropped by waves of bombers, the damage actually caused did not then seem qualitatively different. As a recent study shows, Japanese leaders did not seem to have viewed the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as decisive in the conduct of the war.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, the devastation caused by the war did not prevent its participants, winners and losers alike, from recovering and attaining growth and prosperity in its aftermath. Notably, the Soviet Union, despite suffering tens of millions of deaths and huge economic damage, quickly attained the status of a superpower. The broad result was to convey the sense that nuclear weapons, while devastating in their consequences, did not create a totally new strategic environment. Millennia of thinking about military conflict was not immediately displaced. Even those who early recognized the revolutionary character of nuclear weapons remained ambivalent. Bernard Brodie, widely quoted for his assertion in 1946 that the 'chief purpose of our military establishment' must now be to avert war, was to say two decades later that 'our retaliatory force must ... be capable of striking first, and if it does so it had better be, as nearly as possible, overwhelming to the enemy's retaliatory force'.<sup>127</sup>

Second, as nuclear weapons steadily acquired unprecedented capacity to destroy, thinking about them as military instruments developed a symbolic form.

The harder it became to conceive of using them, the more they acquired a symbolic character which incorporated conventional ways of thinking. The lack of experience with actual nuclear war has created a symbolic 'thought style' that incorporates simplified conventional ways of thinking.<sup>128</sup> Nuclear weapons are treated as if they are conventional weapons and great attention is paid to superficially practical concerns about their characteristics, types, and numbers. The illusion of control is maintained and the problem of goals (what justifies nuclear war?) is underemphasized. When two sides interact in this symbolic way, their conception of reality is based on mutually reinforcing beliefs about each other's beliefs about nuclear weapons.<sup>129</sup> This works in two ways. At one level, while the error of thinking conventionally is recognized, it is argued that since the other side is not rational, it makes sense for us to behave irrationally as well, or else the adversary will not be deterred. At another level, it is allowed that both sides are rational, but argued that the other side does not know that we are rational and hence will behave as if we are not, which in turn requires us to behave irrationally.<sup>130</sup> Symbolic thinking thus becomes embedded on both sides. Moreover, because the threat to launch nuclear weapons lacks credibility (why should anyone be prepared, in effect, to commit suicide?), the demonstration of 'resolve' and 'credibility' becomes very important. Nuclear weapons become message symbols for conveying resolve.<sup>131</sup> Weapon tests during crises and arms racing beyond the requirements of deterrence are manifestations of this.

Third, these patterns of thinking and behaviour become deeply embedded and over time replicate themselves through a crystallized strategic culture.<sup>132</sup> Responses to environmental stimuli then tend towards a significant degree of 'automaticity'.<sup>133</sup> Automatic responses are observable not only at the subconscious level, but in higher-level conscious behaviours that are goal-directed. In the present context, this is a useful way of understanding how thinking and behaviour relating to nuclear weapons, having assumed a symbolic form, become structures that constrain future thinking and actions. This gives us some sense of how difficult it is to change long-established patterns.

Thus we find both 'rational' (cost-effective) and 'non-rational' (costly) politics at work in cold wars. The rational aspect comes to the fore when the threat of war is high; the non-rational part is allowed leeway when the threat is relatively low. The persistence of non-rational politics explains much of the waste as well as the risk (produced by the mere presence of nuclear weapons) that is part and parcel of nuclear politics. The lowering of the costs and risks associated with cold war politics requires attention to this distinction.



### 3 South Asia's cold war

#### Ideational and material sources

The India–Pakistan conflict has endured for six decades, a series of wars and crises marking its course. In this chapter, the chief drivers of the conflict in the realm of ideas and material power are sketched out to show the intensity of the conflict and its constant gravitation towards war. The first part highlights the history of their violent separation at birth and its recurring theme both as cumulative collective memory and as contesting identities. The latter half shows how the contest was played out in the theatre of power in terms of antithetical roles and interests. The discussion as a whole provides the backdrop for the analysis of their behaviour as nuclear-armed states in the following chapter.

#### Collective memory and identity

##### *Partition: the power of collective memory*

Behind the confrontation between nuclear India and Pakistan lies a long trail of social and political violence. As British rule wound down and the prospect of independence approached towards the middle of the twentieth century, tensions between the Hindu and Muslim communities over the coming political dispensation began to grow. The Muslim League led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah eventually succeeded, amidst rising Hindu–Muslim and Sikh–Muslim violence, in obtaining the consent of a reluctant Congress Party to the bifurcation of the emergent political entity into two states. Pakistan, staking its claim to a separate state for the Muslims, was carved out of the eastern and western extremities of colonial India in August 1947, though a large proportion of Muslims remained in independent India. The sundering necessitated mass migration of people in both directions, a turbulent process that aggravated frictions and led to an unprecedented eruption of violence.<sup>1</sup> An estimated 12–15 million people were displaced, and some 2 million died.<sup>2</sup> The legacy of Partition (never without a capital P) remains strong today, with its memory of ‘severed limbs and blood-drenched bodies ... a nightmare from which the subcontinent has not yet fully recovered’.<sup>3</sup>

The symbolic power of that horrific event has been sustained for several reasons. Though memory dwells in the ideational realm, it retains a material basis in recurring experience relating to symbols of the past.<sup>4</sup> First, the political

cartography of Partition remains unfinished. Differences in the demarcation of the Kashmir border, depending on which map one looks at (Indian, Pakistani, or others) are constant reminders that both countries have a sense of still being torn and incomplete. For Pakistan, it is said, Kashmir represents the 'unfinished business' of Partition.<sup>5</sup> How could it feel complete with the Muslim majority state of Kashmir not within its borders? Yet it is incomplete for India as well, for its organizing principle – that of a heterogeneous secular state – could be questioned if Kashmir were to go to Pakistan.<sup>6</sup> Second, Partition bred a form of 'pathologically ethnicised politics' that continues to find fertile ground in the socially unstable societies of India and Pakistan today.<sup>7</sup> For instance, India's professed secularism has been blunted by a pervasive suspicion about the loyalty of Muslims in the India–Pakistan context that can be traced directly back to Partition.<sup>8</sup> Third, the serial wars and crises of Indo-Pakistani history have created a painful and growing memory of conflict. Almost immediately after independence, the two countries went to war. The war of 1947–8 was followed by fresh outbreaks in 1965 and in 1971. A major crisis that might have resulted in war occurred in 1986–7, when both countries stood at the threshold of nuclearization. As nuclear powers, India and Pakistan experienced at least two serious crises in 1990 and 2001–2, and a near-war in 1999.<sup>9</sup>

Other forms of conflict continue to occur, as will be seen in the next chapter. As a result, Partition and its legacy remain alive today. It was hardly surprising then that when a newly started train from India to Pakistan was bombed by terrorists in February 2007, killing dozens of Pakistani and some Indian citizens on Indian territory, Partition was quickly recalled on both sides. For journalists reporting from both countries, the dead were those trying to transcend Partition and its 'bitter legacy'.<sup>10</sup> But the attempts to transcend the divide have been insufficient to heal the 'permanent scars of geography', which are at once 'scars on the land' and 'scars on the psyche', cut deeper by every episode of violence between the two countries.<sup>11</sup>

## *Identity*

The lingering memory of Partition constitutes one layer of hostility between India and Pakistan. A heavier and more complex layer is the problem of identity faced by both. Identity is a powerful yet slippery thing. Though it is commonplace to describe India as 'Hindu-dominated' and Pakistan as 'Muslim', identities are not cast in stone. On the contrary, to borrow from a slightly different context, they are 'imagined' and constructed.<sup>12</sup> Anthropologists have found that ethnic groups are often hard to define by clear-cut physical or cultural characteristics, and tend to be 'emic' or self-defining rather than 'etic' or empirically defined by the observer.<sup>13</sup> Because they are constructed, identities are neither inevitable nor permanent.<sup>14</sup> How are collective identities constructed? An individual's sense of identity rests on two sources – the self and the relationship of the self with the larger social collectivities to which he or she belongs.<sup>15</sup> Extending this, the sources of group identity are located in the intra-group realm (internal) and the inter-group realm

(external). In the case of states, these are the intra-state and inter-state realms. Internally, the key is commonness; externally, it is difference. If the former is absent or weak, the latter assumes larger significance and facilitates a tendency to emphasize otherness and conflict.

Two important internal components of ethnic identity, and by extension other collective identities like the nation, are 'feeling' or belonging and 'doing' or participation.<sup>16</sup> Participation is crucial, since it is unlikely that a sense of belonging can be meaningful without participation in the activities and decisions of a collectivity. Participation is not merely a formal process but one that is responsive to the needs of those engaged in it. In a large collectivity such as the (aspiring) nation, in which face-to-face contact between constituents is limited, the role of institutions is critical, particularly when there are many divisive forces at work. Institutions provide the framework for interaction among these constituents and can maximize meaningful participation or pose obstacles to it. This bears on the extent to which citizens perceive the national collectivity positively or not.

Competition for resources subdivides the collectivity into smaller groups, especially pre-existing social groups with 'primary' characteristics, such as religion and ethnicity, into which most people are born.<sup>17</sup> An individual who is a member of a group engaged in intense competition with other groups tends to see those other groups in inimical terms. Thus acute intra-national competition undermines the cohesion of the larger collectivity, the nation, and reduces the sense of feeling or belonging to the latter.<sup>18</sup> Broad globalization processes under way today increase competition among groups within nations. They generate new rivalries between winners and losers and facilitate the mobilization of social movements by the latter.<sup>19</sup> Developing countries like India and Pakistan are particularly susceptible to ethnic and sectarian violence, because rising expectations are not met.<sup>20</sup> Generational shift adds to the problem. A new generation is unwilling to accept the old bargain (less present freedom in exchange for the promise of future benefit) and wants its due now.<sup>21</sup> The result of such frustration can be found along a continuum of fear, anger, and hate, periodically exploding into violence.<sup>22</sup> At its extreme, this can become a 'cosmic war' in which it is not so much religion that is politicized as it is politics that is 'religionized', and religious fundamentalists perpetrate indiscriminate violence.<sup>23</sup>

When the degree of conflict is high, the effect on the national collectivity is to enfeeble its internal cohesion and sense of identity severely. By default, national identity is left with only the external world as a defining source, one that is provided with ballast by self-preserving national elites. Since this source of identity underscores the politics of difference, we have in place a powerful incentive for inter-state conflict. National elites lacking strong domestic underpinnings and facing internal challenges will be tempted to use conflict with other states to safeguard their positions. They may not go to war, but sustained hostility is a useful instrument to channel tensions away from themselves. The prospects for international peace then lie to a significant degree in the ability of national elites to build institutional and other mechanisms that moderate domestic political conflict. Such mechanisms may include demarcation of national subdivisions so that their

composition is multiethnic, special arrangements for marginalized groups, power sharing through proportionate representation, and, above all, participatory political arrangements that recognize and respect the rights of all groups.<sup>24</sup> These may not eliminate domestic conflict, but have the potential to mitigate it considerably.

In attempting to understand the identity problem that is widely recognized as intrinsic to the India–Pakistan cold war, it is therefore important to pay adequate attention to the domestic politics of the two countries and their institutional capacities to alleviate domestic pressures and to develop confident self-images that lessen the scope for conflict with each other. Both countries have struggled in their own ways to build a postcolonial nation-state – struggles made more difficult because they have not sought simply to attain some modular form of nationhood and statehood, as is often believed, but to build nation-states of their own imaginations, incorporating their own particular cultures and historical experiences.<sup>25</sup> At the moment of independence, India and Pakistan were faced with similar problems of state building as well as nation building. The construction of a national identity as well as a political framework for it was central to their efforts. Both were societies seeking to construct an identity in process, as it were. The external dimension was already in place by way of the violent rupture wrought by Partition. The internal dimension was far more problematic as they were extremely segmented societies, divided by language, religious affiliation, class, tribe, and caste. The ways in which they sought to construct their respective polities from within had long-term effects on their relationship.

### *India's strengthening identity*

The shearing off of Pakistan in 1947 was a traumatic event that scarred Indian identity deeply. The outbreak of war with Pakistan a few weeks after independence and the contest over Kashmir placed a large question mark over the pervasive belief that India's civilizational identity could accommodate and absorb an infinite variety of social groups, as indeed it had throughout its history.<sup>26</sup> Kashmir was important to this self-image precisely because it had a Muslim majority, and the struggle to hold on to it against Pakistan's irredentist claims gave India's early political life a strong outward orientation. The definition of India, it seemed, would be determined by its ability to keep Kashmir. A second aspect of this external dimension of India's identity was the fear that the loss of Kashmir would set in motion a domino effect, setting a precedent for other regions (notably in the north-east) to break away. Over time, however, the anxieties generated by Kashmir have dissipated somewhat. First, Pakistan has simply failed to detach Kashmir despite wars, crises, insurgencies, terrorism, and pressure from the major powers. Second, India has been able to negotiate with several secessionist movements – most prominently in Punjab – and no region has seceded in the six decades since independence. Third, India is in practice (though not formally) content with the long-standing division of Kashmir because there is still a Muslim-majority area on its side of the Line of Control (LoC) that separates Indian-held Kashmir from Pakistan-held Kashmir. In short, India is a largely satisfied state *vis-à-vis* Pakistan

because its identity is not perceived to be at grave risk. But most importantly, the domestic sources of Indian identity are relatively strong despite many internal divisions and conflicts.

It is a commonplace that India is a greatly segmented society. Its population of over a billion is divided into cross-cutting categories of innumerable languages and dialects (depending on the basis of demarcation), six major religions, some 6,400 castes and sub-castes, and fifty-two major tribes.<sup>27</sup> Cultural practice is actually less fragmented. Anthropological studies show that 65 per cent of communities are bilingual (most tribal communities are trilingual); and identities often transcend apparently separate religious categories (including Hindu and Muslim), with over 1,000 communities using the services of priests in dual religious orders.<sup>28</sup> Still, one would expect that creating a unified identity would be difficult, especially when inter-group competition and violence occur regularly, as they do in India. In fact, the opposite may be true. Strong social group identities may resist being subsumed by larger ones that seek to fashion national identity in their own image. The one social identity that has appeared close to doing this is the Hindu identity, but because of internal differentiation it has been unable to retain its coherence in spite of intense mobilizing efforts. It is widely and correctly said that a democratic political set-up facilitates the articulation and negotiation of divergent interests. But it is also true that in India, state building through the democratic process has been facilitated precisely because of the fragmented character of Indian society. With no single group able to dominate the political system, democratic mechanisms have been used by social groups to negotiate coalitions in order to obtain power. This, of course, is a broad-brush perspective. The process has been marred by regular and sometimes serious distortions in the form of economic exploitation or neglect and violence in the name of religion, tribe, and caste.

As in most developing countries, Indian elites began with the belief that a strong state was an essential prerequisite for nation building. The state would be the vanguard of economic development, the protector of minority rights, and the guarantor of the democratic rights and laws enshrined in the Constitution. Above all, the state would be instrumental – through the Constitution and its implementation – in the promotion of democratic values in a hierarchic society. But state power had its limits. A segmented society produced a multiparty rather than a two-party system, which meant that over time, coalition building – and all the negotiations and compromise it required – became ubiquitous at the centre as well as in the states. On the negative side, economic growth was slow and uneven, and as frustration with unmet expectations grew, conflict became endemic. Part of the reason was that the institutional framework of liberal democracy was weak in important respects. It incorporated a ‘weak multiculturalism’ which gave religious minorities the rights needed to preserve their identities through separate personal laws, but did not ensure their adequate representation.<sup>29</sup> At the time of independence, the opportunity was at hand to create a truly secular polity based on a uniform legal system applicable to all citizens. Instead, the constitution retained separate personal laws and through its Directive Principles called, contradictorily, for both a uniform civil code and the abolition of cow slaughter. Though ‘non-justiciable’

(one could not go to court to demand their implementation), these provisions served to pander to Hindu fundamentalist sentiments.<sup>30</sup>

Uneven growth meant uneven distribution, leaving many deeply dissatisfied. From a very early stage, there were violent movements – largely regional in scope – demanding secession (notably in the northeast) or class revolution (eastern and south-central India). Even where there was rapid growth, there were serious problems. In the northern state of Punjab, where the Green Revolution brought rapid agricultural growth, those who were left behind by the unbalanced growth process were drawn to religious fundamentalism. The result was the outburst of a very violent Sikh movement for an independent 'Khalistan'.<sup>31</sup> Hindu-Muslim conflict became widespread, particularly in urban centres. If anything, competitive democratic politics led to the use of religion as a symbolic device for garnering votes.<sup>32</sup> The 'roots of Hindu rage' were located in the economic dislocations of postcolonial India, the rising demands of the lower strata, and the desire of the urban middle classes to recover a self-esteem in tatters.<sup>33</sup> The apparently paradoxical phenomenon of a minority complex – of being under siege – became widespread among the Hindu majority as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its fellow organizations – the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and the Bajrang Dal – mobilized successfully in the name of 'Hindutva' (Hinduness).<sup>34</sup> As democratic institutions struggled to cope with the rising tide of dissatisfaction and violence, the politics of the saffron trident sought a reformulation of national identity under the banner of Hindutva.<sup>35</sup>

The first major attempt to centralize power was without real ideological underpinnings, though it did carry a populist banner. In 1975, Indira Gandhi declared an Emergency to bypass a judicial threat to her power (her election had been declared unlawful by the Allahabad High Court), but ultimately returned to normal democratic politics by calling elections in 1977. The Hindu right tried a radical tack in attempting to transform the identity of the nation-state. This involved cultivating a fundamental change from a nationalism of cultural inclusion – signified by the Nehruvian slogan of 'unity in diversity' – to a nationalism based on a 'community of blood' – resting on the ahistorical notion that Hindus (which for the Hindu right included Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains) were a single ethnic group (as were converts from Hinduism to other religious traditions) and that Muslims were essentially the detritus of invaders from outside the region.<sup>36</sup> The cognitive features of the Hindutva campaign were typical of such regressive movements. Cultural similarity was stressed to override equality issues and keep lower social strata in place; a history of past suffering at the hands of Muslim 'invaders' was conjured; and social complexity was reduced to simple contrasts between 'us' (Hindus) and 'them' (mainly Muslims, but sometimes Christians as well).<sup>37</sup>

The challenge to India's democracy was made possible by that very democracy and the populist politics it allowed. But again, it was that same democracy which blunted the saffron trident. Even before attaining power, the BJP had to adjust to political realities. Accordingly, the coalition it led from the 1990s no longer spoke of a common civil code or of scrapping the special privileges accorded to the state of Jammu and Kashmir by the Constitution. The BJP also dropped its hostility to

economic liberalization and to the United States, instead embracing both with startling enthusiasm in its quest for a 'shining India'. This change is testimony to the strength of the democratic structure, which withstood the most profound challenge to its survival.

In the meantime, dissatisfaction with the formal system and its working had produced another type of activism in the form of an increasingly vigorous civil society that concerned itself with a wide range of issues, from rural poverty to environmental degradation to state assaults on civil liberties.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the strength of civic associations was and remains a powerful antithesis to the politics of religious violence by providing an additional mechanism for the resolution of differences and for maintaining stability at the local level in violence-prone urban India.<sup>39</sup> Democratic politics is the channel through which traditionally weaker sections of the population – the backward castes – have been able to mobilize and find a voice.<sup>40</sup> Political mobilization of the poor, though relatively weak, has nevertheless been a characteristic of Indian politics.<sup>41</sup> This has occurred not only through direct political competition but through such pragmatic-cum-symbolic movements as the demand for educational and job quotas, which the 'Other Backward Castes' (OBCs) have been successful in pushing.<sup>42</sup> Regional movements for autonomy or secession have been less easily moderated by democratic politics, since they generally represent small constituencies whose voices are lost in the incredible cacophony of Indian politics. The result has been the periodic outbreak of violence.<sup>43</sup> But many secessionist movements – the Assam movement, the Gorkhaland agitation in the hill districts of West Bengal, and the Khalistan movement in Punjab, to name a few – have been defused through a process of accommodation.

Indian identity, then, is deeply political. Its heart is the very process of articulating and negotiating differences through the democratic structure.<sup>44</sup> With respect to India's external face, the overall picture that emerges from this brief review is of an increasingly confident democracy that 'does not suffer from any real vulnerability complex – including with China ...'.<sup>45</sup> In this sense, India is a relatively satisfied power internally and hence not particularly inclined to reinforce its identity in opposition to other states, especially Pakistan. This is one reason why even the BJP-led government that was in power during the period 1998–2004 made several attempts to bury the hatchet with Pakistan in spite of serious crises in 1999 and 2001–2.

Yet a number of significant problems remain. For one, it is increasingly evident that while the institutions of democracy are strong, serious distortions remain with respect to distribution, participation, corruption, and human rights.<sup>46</sup> How well institutions work, moreover, depends on the health of the economy. India's economic growth has picked up pace, and there are positive signs that poverty is decreasing since the turn of the millennium.<sup>47</sup> Yet it is also true that the top 10 per cent of the population owns 53 per cent of the country's wealth, while the bottom 50 per cent has only 8 per cent.<sup>48</sup> The depth of rural anger is evident from the spread of a Maoist insurgency through more than a dozen states in India's heartland.<sup>49</sup> Ethnic ire in Kashmir and the northeast also remains strong, heightened by



the brutality of the state. As one critic has pointed out, Indian nationalism is still far from being wholly inclusive.<sup>50</sup> Muslims continue to be a marginalized minority, as a recent state-commissioned report notes.<sup>51</sup> Hindu extremism is still capable of such mass bloodletting as the pogrom against Muslims in Gujarat state in 2002. Given the reality that the economy still faces many structural problems and is subject to the volatility of global market forces, the possibility of serious upheavals in the future cannot entirely be dismissed.<sup>52</sup> To that extent, we must recognize, the secure outward gaze of India's identity is not necessarily a permanent one.

### *Pakistan's struggle to define itself*

The external dimension of Pakistan's identity is in large measure related to India. Pakistan was extracted from India on the grounds that the Muslims of the subcontinent could not lead fulfilled lives under Hindu domination. The fact that a large proportion of the region's Muslims remained in India was problematic, but not as much as Indian control over Kashmir, which was the sole Muslim majority region that did not accede to Pakistan. In contrast, the Hindu majority state of Junagadh, whose Muslim ruler preferred to join Pakistan, was incorporated by India in 1948 after a period of turbulence. Kashmir thus became a powerful symbol for Pakistanis at the time of independence. That it has been an instrumentally useful issue for the country's ruling elites to gain political support is true enough, but the fact is that it has been an effective rallying point precisely because the issue raises 'deep passions and emotions' that touch the heart of Pakistani identity.<sup>53</sup> For many Pakistanis, Kashmir is so central to their conception of national identity that, without it, Partition still remains 'fundamentally incomplete'.<sup>54</sup>

Despite Pakistan's unrelenting desire to wrest Kashmir, it has been thwarted repeatedly. Every stratagem – political alliance with the United States and China, multilateralist pressure through the United Nations, the Islamic card via the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and its individual members, war, proxy war – has failed to achieve the objective. The upshot is that Kashmir seems to have congealed Pakistan's incompleteness – a condition solidified by nuclear reality, on which more later. From this perspective, Pakistan's identity remains indefinitely external in its gaze. But that is not the whole story, for the bigger problem lies within. It is by looking within that we find the reasons why the question is asked whether Pakistan exemplifies 'nationalism without a nation'.<sup>55</sup> Without detracting from the insecurity that emanates from India's denial of Kashmir to it, we must recognize, too, the domestic roots of Pakistan's anxieties and the 'multiplicity of alienations' that turn its face so insistently outward.<sup>56</sup>

Most fundamentally, Pakistan began with a self-definition that lacked a firm territorial base. The Muslim League espoused a 'two-nation theory' that, in affirming the separateness of Muslims and Hindus, 'embodied a fundamentally non-territorial vision of nationality'.<sup>57</sup> There was much uncertainty in the geographical definition of Pakistan. Bengal (the eastern portion of which became part of Pakistan until it broke away as Bangladesh in 1971) was not part of the acronym that constituted its name. The main thrust for the creation of the new state



came from Muslim-minority lands which could not have been and were not included in the new country.<sup>58</sup> This explains the extraordinarily powerful symbolic importance of Kashmir, for the violence of Partition was due to 'the disjunction between the framework of place and the attempted redefinition of moral community in territorial terms', and this in turn 'burned into popular consciousness the importance of boundaries mapped on the land'.<sup>59</sup>

In contrast, other self-definitions are older and stronger. As Pushtun leader Wali Khan famously put it, he had been a Pushtun for 4,000 years, a Muslim for 1,400 years, and a Pakistani for forty years.<sup>60</sup> Like India, Pakistan is a mosaic of numerous cultural identities, divided by half a dozen major and many more minor languages, and by sectarian cleavages among the Muslim majority (Sunnis 77 per cent, Shias 20 per cent).<sup>61</sup> In addition, there are numerous tribal groups which have preserved their cultural and political autonomy till the present. All of these have their own histories and traditions, whereas Pakistan as a whole has no clear conception of its history. There are diverse interpretations of what constitutes national history, with some arguing that it began with independence, others holding that it goes back to the first Muslim rulers of the region, and still others believing that Pakistani history must begin with prehistoric pre-Muslim society.<sup>62</sup> Efforts to construct an identity through officially backed national ideology and history have foundered against more deeply embedded regional counter-narratives, creating instead the 'embattled terrain of Pakistani historiography'.<sup>63</sup>

The drive to build a national identity naturally revolved around state capacities, but the state itself was weak from the beginning.<sup>64</sup> Leadership was set back by the early demise of the two foremost leaders of stature. Mohammad Ali Jinnah died soon after independence, in September 1948, and Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated in October 1951. The party system was frail. Most senior members of the Muslim League were migrants from lands which remained in India and lacked a solid support base. As a result, the task of nation building fell into the lap of the civil service and the army, which allied with the West Pakistani landowning and business elites to dominate politics. Economic growth was – after 1960 – better than India's, but there were serious problems: rapid population growth, corruption, ballooning deficits, and high levels of inequality, especially in access to basic welfare.<sup>65</sup> Competitive politics reigned. This in turn bred political violence and further weakened the state and the aspiring nation. For instance, the conflict between landlords and migrant labourers in parts of Punjab turned into violent sectarianism because the former were Shias and the latter Sunnis.<sup>66</sup> Above all, there was a failure to accommodate the claims of diverse social groups. Civil society groups remained weak, lacked strong grass-roots links, and sometimes supported military rule, notably when General Pervez Musharraf came to power in October 1999.<sup>67</sup> Minorities, often subject to harassment and violence, received little protection from the state, and struggled to fend off the misuse of discriminatory laws such as the Blasphemy Law and prohibitions against the practice of the Ahmadiyya faith.<sup>68</sup>

Ethnic conflicts persistently enervated the national project. Ironically, it would seem that Pakistan was not divided *enough*. Unlike India, where no social group

was able to dominate the society and its politics, Pakistan was from the beginning burdened by hegemonic struggles which made it difficult to develop a 'national culture'.<sup>69</sup> In 1947, Bengalis constituted more than half its population, but the more powerful Punjabis would not countenance their democratic claims, which eventually led to civil war and the break-up of the country in 1971.<sup>70</sup> The Punjabis had in 1947 allied with the Mohajirs (who made up much of the early leadership). Subsequently, in alliance with the Pushtuns, they sidelined the Mohajirs and established their control over the state through the army and the bureaucracy.<sup>71</sup> In doing so, they suppressed others' claims to a share in power and in effect indigenized the colonial state, substituting one type of unrepresentativeness with another.<sup>72</sup> Linguistic identities cut across religious ones, with the result that Islam as a factor has never been sufficiently strong to hold the country together. Muslim unity in Pakistan has been as limited in its capacity to bind as Hindu unity in India. The secession of Bangladesh is testimony to this, as is resistance to Islamabad in Balochistan and the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.

The uncertain foundations of the state and the nation encouraged religious identification and religious conflict. Jinnah, himself a secular person who had publicly called for a secular state in 1947, promised as early as January 1948 to base law on the *Sharia*.<sup>73</sup> Subsequently, the pressure for Islamization escalated and bore fruit under General Zia ul Haq, who adorned military rule with Islamic law to strengthen his position. This in turn encouraged sectarian conflict, with Sunnis and Shias pitted against each other, frequently in violent encounters.<sup>74</sup> Islamic parties also emerged as a political force. In the 2002 elections, an alliance of Islamic parties – the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) – was able to come to power in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan (by means of a coalition in the latter). The drift to extremism and the growth of a 'jihadi culture' are evidence of divisiveness and the failure of Islamic orthodoxy to implement its vision of a unified theocratic state and society.<sup>75</sup> The multiplicity of insurgent groups claiming to be the true standard bearers of Islam reflects a similar problem of discord, much of it attributable to ethnicity.<sup>76</sup>

The consequence of a fractious politics of ethnicity and sectarianism has been the inability of the state to consolidate itself without falling back on the army.<sup>77</sup> The army has directly controlled the state for long periods – 1958–71, 1977–88 and from 1999 onwards – but despite its professionalism, has been hard put to sustain control.<sup>78</sup> It has tried to strengthen its position by allying with religious parties, by selectively using extremist groups against opponents, and by obtaining financial and political support from the United States.<sup>79</sup> Army rule has taken diverse forms: secular in the first phase under Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan, religious under Zia in the second, and hybrid (having drawn support from religious parties and groups) under Musharraf. Over the years, it has entrenched itself in the state apparatus by occupying key positions in the civilian administration (even running universities) and in the economy through commercial organizations euphemistically called 'foundations'.<sup>80</sup> But neither direct military rule nor indirect control has sufficed, not least because the army itself is not a

representative body and has not been immune to participating actively in ethnic politics in order to shore up its political position.

Political weakness has also made Pakistan vulnerable to external pressures. From the 1970s, the radicalization of religious groups and sectarian conflict was accelerated by the rising influence of Saudi Arabia, which funded Sunni groups, and Iran, which sponsored Shia groups.<sup>81</sup> Pakistan's role in building up the Afghan *mujahideen* as an instrument of US Cold War policy led to the rapid rise of religious extremism. Subsequently, Pakistan invested in raising the Taliban to take control of Afghanistan. The investment turned sour after 2001 when Musharraf was compelled to join the US war in Afghanistan as the Taliban had strong links in Pakistan, especially in the Pakistan–Afghanistan border region. At the time of writing, this linkage is the major source of an on-going crisis that has left Pakistan unstable and highly vulnerable to a prolonged period of political violence.

Current trends are not entirely negative. Market research carried out by Goldman Sachs classifies Pakistan as an N-11 country, i.e. a developing country with significant market potential.<sup>82</sup> The political scene is unclear, with a struggle for power building up between three major forces: the army, liberal elements in the mainstream political parties backed by the judiciary, and the religious right. The Pakistani political system is under great pressure through the challenge from extremist forces both in the border areas and in the Punjabi heartland. The economy's capacity for sustained growth will be determined by the state's ability to induce stabilization and attract investment. In the meantime, Pakistan's internal coherence remains uneasy, its identity unsure. In August 2007, the observation of Pakistan's sixtieth independence anniversary was marked by subdued and often pessimistic speculation. From Peshawar came news that frontier tribesmen had observed a 'black day'; in Quetta, the administration shut down shops and major roads to prevent violence; and media commentaries ranged from regret over Pakistan's 'wasted childhood' to calls for reform and democratization.<sup>83</sup> It would appear that the intensity of the internal crisis has taken attention away from India and the Kashmir issue. The main internal components of identity – 'feeling' and 'doing' – are still racked by the search for cohesive participation in a common future.

Questions are being raised as to Pakistan's identity. Haider Nizamani reminds Pakistan that Jinnah had told the Raja of Mahmudabad in the mid-1920s that he was an Indian first and then a Muslim, and calls for a new definition of the nation based on 'a contract that would be perceived as fair, democratic and federal by its people'.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, the external gaze of Pakistani identity remains strong. India and Kashmir still evoke deep emotion. There is a degree of admiration for India's success story of rising economic growth and a working democratic system.<sup>85</sup> There is also a sense of loss reflected in the day-to-day interest in the fate of Kashmir. But that is only part of the story. Why Kashmir is an issue that is no longer amenable to resolution through power politics is the other part, which will become clearer in later chapters.

## **Material dimension: structure and strategy in power politics**

A review of the relationship between India and Pakistan from independence in 1947 till the late 1980s, when they both became covert nuclear powers, reveals a pattern of strategic behaviour that is typical of realist power politics. The concept of system provides a useful framework for fleshing out this pattern. As an analytical construct, an abstraction from reality for purposes of analysis, a systems theory aims to arrive at a holistic picture of some set of relationships. Any set of relationships may be treated as a system. The primary criterion for choosing to investigate a particular set is whether it is interesting. As David Easton notes:

Where the selected parts of political life are relevant, show some degree of interdependence, and seem to have a common fate, we can say that we have an interesting and useful system from the point of view of understanding the way in which political systems are likely to operate.<sup>86</sup>

Kenneth Waltz's neorealist theory provides a sound basis for identifying the chief features of the international political system.<sup>87</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, the starting point of neorealism is the anarchic character of the international system (the absence of a higher authority), which compels states rationally to value self-help. This means two important things: states cannot trust each other, which makes cooperation difficult; and states seek military power for survival, which produces tensions since the power of one is a threat to others. International politics, then, is characterized by recurrent power politics. States do not trust each other, are prone to war, tend to engage in competitive arms build-ups, and seek alliances to bolster their relative positions.

Waltz does not attempt to identify the strategies of specific states, only the general characteristics of the system as a whole. However, in a surprisingly little-noticed work, Michael Mandelbaum shows how a state's relative position in the system produces a specific set of strategies.<sup>88</sup> In a nutshell, Mandelbaum argues that strong and weak states both tend to have relatively narrowly defined external orientations, while middle-level states have a wide range of options. Strong states tend to expand because they possess the means to do so and because they want to maximize security in an anarchic system which places a premium on power. Weak states submit to strong states if they have no other option. Otherwise, they seek to distance themselves from the latter and bolster their defensive strength with the help of other strong states. Middle-level states have wider choices available to them: collective security arrangements, alliances, conciliation, and the use of force. What they choose to do at any particular point in time depends on existing circumstances. In this chapter, drawing upon Mandelbaum's framework, I treat India as a relatively strong state and Pakistan as a relatively weak state within the South Asian system. The idea of a South Asian system is not new, having its variants in an intellectual history that goes back to the early 1960s.<sup>89</sup>

The relationship between a system and a higher-level or supersystem (of which

it is the subsystem) is important. The former is subject to change or constraints by way of the influence of the latter. In complex systems, the relationship between system and supersystem is generally one of 'loose vertical coupling'.<sup>90</sup> This means that lower-order systems have a substantial degree of autonomy. In international politics, however, the impact of the supersystem on the system is considerable. In the present context, this means that the South Asian regional system is subject to the influence of the global supersystem, especially through the ways in which external powers become involved in the regional system. The involvement of an external power in a regional system may have a significant bearing on the structure of the system, for instance, by changing the distribution of power. Strong vertical links between members of the regional system and those of the global system may also be influential in shaping what happens in the regional system. For instance, if a weak regional state has strong external economic links, its ability to minimize economic relations with a strong regional power is greater, which in turn means it is less vulnerable to the regional strong power. The system-supersystem linkage is important in shaping strategies. A strong state has an interest in ensuring close intra-systemic links with weak states and less close linkages between the system and the supersystem as it stands to maximize its power. A weak state has precisely the opposite preferences and will tend to stay aloof from the strong state and to utilize external links to strengthen its position.

It is important to recognize the limits of power analysis. Power is an elusive concept, often hard to quantify. Only some of its elements – such as armed forces – are measurable. In the broadest sense, it involves questions of leadership, morale, the quality of diplomacy, and political, economic, and social stability.<sup>91</sup> Attempts to quantify such intangibles are unlikely to be useful. For instance, Ray Cline has tried to quantify 'strategy' and 'will' in assessing global power distribution, which leads him into obvious incongruencies: his final ranking places Brazil third after the US and the Soviet Union, while Vietnam (sixteenth) is ranked above India (twentieth), Pakistan (twenty-fourth) and Iran (fortieth).<sup>92</sup> More commonly, the concept of power is narrowed down to military strength as in the case of Berridge and Young's conceptualization of 'great power', which takes into account certain non-military indicators such as size (area, population) and gross national product (GNP).<sup>93</sup>

The possession of power as attribute does not necessarily translate into actual ability to shape the behaviour of others. There is a certain logic to repeated failures by militarily 'superior' countries to achieve success against 'inferior' forces. While there is an asymmetry in military power, there may be an inverse asymmetry in commitment.<sup>94</sup> A big power has many interests and its commitment to a conflict with a smaller power is limited. For the latter, the very asymmetry of power distribution threatens its existence and hence its commitment is very high. Or, more simply, the quantitative and qualitative power differences between the larger and the smaller state may not be sufficient to allow the former to act owing to the potential cost involved. The relation between ends and means should be such that the use of power should be a viable course. None the less, the power differential is

useful in describing the *strategies* that strong and weak states usually exhibit in their relationship.

Strong and weak states display very different strategic preferences. The essence of their relationship is frequently one of hegemony and challenge and displays certain characteristic features.<sup>95</sup> First, strong states try to retain the existing power distribution and if necessary counter challenges to it, whereas weak states try and offset their limitations in this respect by internal balancing (arming) and by external balancing (seeking allies). Second, strong states prefer to resolve their disputes through bilateral bargaining, where they have an advantage, while weak states try to compensate for their bargaining difficulties by inviting third parties to become involved, which by extension involves a preference for multilateral solutions. Third, strong states encourage closer economic relationships with small neighbours as this gives them greater leverage; but the latter resist this for precisely the same reason. And fourth, the strong tend to flex and utilize their muscle as and when the opportunity arises, while the weak resist as best they can, usually by maximizing all of the first three strategies. This is not to say that strong states alone are aggressive. Weak states have the option of low-cost strategies that place the strong under pressure without necessarily inviting a powerful response, since the latter may not find this optimal politically.

### *India and Pakistan – the structural relationship*

The India–Pakistan relationship for the first five decades after independence displayed a typical strong versus weak state pattern. The material distribution of power at the close of the twentieth century, when both formally became nuclear powers, was clear-cut. Indeed, India's sheer size dominated the South Asian region. Its share of the region's land area was 73 per cent, of population 77 per cent, and of GNP 77 per cent.<sup>96</sup> In military terms, India's position *vis-à-vis* Pakistan was very strong. In 1985, India's total military expenditure was US\$ 8,921 million as against Pakistan's US\$ 2,957 million, the gap further increasing by 1998, when India spent US\$ 13,780 million while Pakistan spent US\$ 3,920 million.<sup>97</sup> The strain on Pakistan's economy was much greater. In the same years, India's expenditure as a percentage of its GNP was 3.0 per cent (both years), while for Pakistan the figures were 6.9 per cent and 6.5 per cent respectively.<sup>98</sup> The major indicators of military power were skewed in India's favour. Its active armed forces numbered 1,173,000 as against Pakistan's 587,000; and the difference was further reflected in relative capabilities with respect to main battle tanks (3,414 and 2,320), major naval combat ships (42 and 18), and combat aircraft (853 and 296).<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, the popular conception that emerged in the late 1980s of India as a 'regional superpower' or even an emerging 'great power on the world stage' neglects the limitations on its actual exercise of power.<sup>100</sup> For instance, India's military capabilities were not enough to defeat the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka during the late 1980s.<sup>101</sup> None the less, the strategic behaviour of the two countries displayed the strong/weak state patterns described above.

The expectations of neorealist theory are borne out in the history of the strategic relationship between India and Pakistan. It is a history of territorial contest, distrust, arms competition, and war that need not be recounted in detail here.<sup>102</sup> In 1947, the conflict began with a tribal revolt against the Maharaja of Kashmir, who was unwilling to join either India or Pakistan. The rebels, assisted by Pakistani forces, gained control over a considerable swath of territory, whereupon the Maharaja acceded to India and the two countries went to war. The war ended in stalemate on 1 January 1949, with roughly a third of Kashmir remaining under Pakistani control. The second war, which took place in two phases in January–May and August–September 1965, was bigger, since both forces were better equipped and organized. Once again, it began with irregular forces backed by Pakistan eventually joined by the Pakistan Army, and again it ended indecisively, with no significant change in the status of Kashmir. Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin brokered the Tashkent Agreement (1966), which led to the withdrawal of forces to their respective pre-war territories. The third major war (fourth, if the 1965 wars are counted separately, which they usually are not) was not directly over Kashmir, but over East Pakistan's rebellion against the dominant West.<sup>103</sup> Indian military intervention in December 1971 brought a quick victory and the birth of Bangladesh later that month. The Simla Agreement of 1972 settled issues relating to the war, but not the status of Kashmir. Subsequently, there was a prolonged lull as both states struggled with their internal difficulties. India's first nuclear test in 1974 underlined its enhanced structural position, though it was not followed by weaponization.

Though no more wars took place, conflicts of a minor nature were a recurring feature. Border skirmishes and cross-border firing took place regularly. On a more significant scale, there was a contest for control of the Siachen glacier, an icy wasteland in the northern reaches of Kashmir that remains formally undefined.<sup>104</sup> Competing claims over the area led to periodic fighting till Indian troops acquired control of the glacier in 1984. Repeated Pakistani attempts to drive out Indian forces have failed. The Siachen 'war' represents the extreme lengths to which conflicts over identity can go, for the land is of little strategic value.

On the whole, Indian and Pakistani strategies in the pre-nuclear era conformed to the structural patterns outlined above. In the early years, India's superior capacities were yet to develop, which was evident from its inability to drive Pakistani forces out of Kashmir in 1947–8 and its drubbing at the hands of China in the Himalayan war of 1962. This explains some deviations from the strong state/weak state pattern, such as Pakistan's readiness to initiate war until 1965 and India's resort to a multilateral approach in taking the Kashmir issue to the United Nations in 1947. Subsequent to these early actions, Pakistan refrained from initiating war, while India rejected a role for the United Nations (or any other state actor) in the Kashmir dispute.<sup>105</sup> Barring these brief departures from normal patterns, the essence of the relationship between India and Pakistan in the pre-nuclear era is that between systemic hegemon and challenger as described in Robert Gilpin's classic *War and Change in World Politics*. Even after making allowances for the limited nature of India's hegemony and the significant capacities of Pakistan to resist it, the strategies followed by them are typical of strong and weak states.



As a relatively strong power, India armed rapidly and gradually began to assume the role of a 'regional security manager'.<sup>106</sup> There is considerable evidence of a new hegemonic assertiveness on the part of India *vis-à-vis* its smaller neighbours during the late 1980s. Nepal, which was trying to balance India and China, found its access to overseas trade restricted, which resulted in an economic and then a political crisis. India intervened forcefully (if unsuccessfully) in Sri Lanka and also demonstrated a rapid force projection capability, albeit in a minor way, by intervening to overthrow a coup in the Maldives in 1988. All of this, plus the sudden expansion of the Indian Navy into the Indian Ocean 'left the neighbourhood wondering'.<sup>107</sup> In its relationship with Pakistan, after the initial moment of weakness in going to the United Nations, India insisted on bilateral resolution of all disputes. Though the Soviet Union facilitated the end of the 1965 war, the Tashkent Agreement itself was a purely bilateral one, as was the Simla Agreement.

Pakistani resistance to Indian hegemony through alliances led India to try and contain it by building cooperative strategic relationships with Afghanistan and Iran.<sup>108</sup> This containment strategy was supplemented by arms acquisition from the Soviet Union. India's reluctant acceptance of a quasi-alliance with the Soviet Union in spite of its commitment to nonalignment was a tactical response to its sense of isolation in 1971, when it felt deeply threatened by the emerging Pakistan-China-United States axis. In part, its subsequent fear of dependence on the Soviet Union was responsible for its decision to conduct the 1974 nuclear test as a symbol of its autonomy. Simultaneously, India sought closer economic and cultural relations with Pakistan, which had the potential to enhance its leverage with that country. Finally, India made the most of Soviet backing to intervene in Pakistan's internal crisis in 1971 and help create the independent state of Bangladesh.

Pakistan followed opposite strategies. It tried to offset India's military advantage by procuring arms at, as we have seen, a high cost to itself. To underline this, in 1985 and 1998, its per capita military expenditure was US\$31 and US\$28 respectively, in comparison with India's figures of US\$12 and US\$14 for the same years.<sup>109</sup> This costly effort at internal balancing overlapped with a policy of external balancing, i.e. seeking alliances. In the 1950s, this was achieved by exploiting cold war rivalry to its own advantage. Membership of the US-promoted South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) provided Pakistan with American weapons as well as American political support on the Kashmir issue. In the 1960s, the close relationship that developed between Pakistan and China was based on the realist axiom that the enemy of an enemy is a friend. As noted above, this developed into a triangular relationship, but that did not prevent India from severing its eastern half from Pakistan. As a result, Pakistan reverted to internal balancing and sought to compensate for India's conventional advantage by pursuing a nuclear weapons programme.<sup>110</sup> None the less, it did revive the external option in the 1980s when it joined hands with the United States to fight a proxy war against the Soviet Union by backing the Afghan *mujahideen*.



On the Kashmir issue, Pakistan adopted a sustained multilateralizing strategy, making constant appeals for support to the United Nations, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and individual states. It also followed a low-cost strategy of providing support for insurgents in India – an option that was readily available with the state of Punjab erupting into violence in the 1980s, followed by Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s.<sup>111</sup> With respect to trade and cultural relations, Pakistan followed a moat-building strategy, discouraging both types of relations. Indian films and music, popular in Pakistan, had little access to that market. Though indirect and clandestine trade did take place, these would not have added substantially to official trade, which was kept to a very low level. In the second half of the 1990s, Pakistan's exports to India were just 0.42 per cent of its total exports and its imports from India just 1.22 per cent of its total imports.<sup>112</sup> In consequence, India had no capacity to leverage its soft power or relative economic strength.

The intractable hostility of the relationship did not prevent the two sides from negotiating over contentious issues. A number of agreements incorporating treaties and confidence-building measures were signed by the two countries both before and after their nuclearization.<sup>113</sup> The best known is the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960. The process of confidence building, encompassing communication, constraint, transparency, and verification, was sustained despite periodic war and crises. However, none of this altered the essentially conflict-oriented character of India–Pakistan relations. By the early 1990s, both states had covertly developed nuclear weapons, and it is after this that there were substantive changes in the relationship. These are discussed in the next chapter.

## **Conclusion: the embedded dynamic of ideational and material structure**

This chapter has shown that the ideational and material bases of the India–Pakistan cold war were strong. The two countries, violently rent by Partition, began their political journeys as independent states that were nevertheless bound to each other by a tangled skein of domestic insecurity and external violence. At home, the binding effects of doing (participation) and feeling (belonging) were tenuous, which magnified the external aspect – the tussle over Kashmir and recurring armed conflict. On the whole, India's experience was more positive, which explains why it gradually developed a status quo-ist outlook, though this did not extend to tolerating the possible loss of all of Kashmir. Pakistan, in contrast, remained a dissatisfied state, its identity torn by intensifying political conflict, which made the yearning for Kashmir much greater.

On the material side, the anarchic nature of the international system and their territorial dispute produced distrust, tension, and war between India and Pakistan. The distribution of power in the South Asian system shaped their positions and strategies as hegemon and challenger, strong state and weak state. To some extent, this was modified by two factors, both to Pakistan's advantage. First, Pakistan retained a measure of autonomy within the system by minimizing

its non-political contacts with India. Second, it augmented its limited military capacities by drawing military and political support from the global supersystem through alliances and a multilateralizing strategy. Together, the ideational and material drivers of the cold war pressed in the same direction, i.e. towards sustained conflict and rivalry. The unremitting hostility between them led both to reach for nuclear weapons, which further intensified tensions and saw the onset of fresh crises. How that process has played out is sketched in the next chapter.

## 4 The India–Pakistan nuclear relationship

We have seen in Chapter 2 that nuclear-strategic relationships between cold war pairs involve identifiable patterns. Typically, such relationships, already cast in a hostile mould by ideational and material factors, become intensely hostile when they become nuclearized, i.e. when both sides come into possession of nuclear weapons. Fear for survival – a constant feature of inter-state politics – is exacerbated by the advent of nuclear weapons. The resultant tension drives the contestants in the direction of crisis and war. The latter never happens, because states draw back from the precipice as the fear of mass destruction arises in a more immediate and intense form. The threat of war compels them to cooperate, which they do at least tacitly and often explicitly in order to prevent war. This sort of cooperation appears in conditions of immediate interdependence, when the two sides are locked in a dance taking them perilously close to mass death. Once the crisis has passed, they have options open to them. They may cooperate in a more sustained way or they may not. The first option helps mitigate the risks arising from the underlying conflict in the relationship. The second option offers two possibilities: stalemate or a fresh cycle of confrontation and retreat. This chapter traces the evolution of the India–Pakistan nuclear relationship, which has undergone three cycles of conflict and cooperation since their cold war commenced in the late 1980s.

The alternation we find between crisis and collaboration is similar to that which occurred during the US–Soviet Cold War. However, there are some important differences. The Cold War was a much longer conflict, involving nuclear competition and antagonism over four decades, from 1949 (the year the Soviet Union obtained nuclear weapons) to about 1989, whereas in South Asia the comparable period (so far, to be fair) has been much shorter. If we date the nuclearization of the two countries to *c.* 1989, then it is about two decades old. Second, whereas the Cold War involved the active deployment on alert status of very large and technically sophisticated forces on both sides, India and Pakistan have thus far refrained from similar deployment of their relatively small and less developed forces even at the height of crisis. Given time, might they follow the same path? Third, because the large deployed forces of the United States and the Soviet Union posed serious risks in times of relative stability as well, there was a greater incentive to engage in strenuous efforts at arms control. In contrast, the Indian and Pakistani forces in

their recessed postures do not produce such great anxieties. This means there is less pressure to engage in arms control and a greater focus on confidence building. This is less binding, because verification is not a vital component, yet in some ways more promising since it leans heavily on political understanding, which is the key to resolving disputes.

### **Conflict and cooperation: three crises in the nuclear shadow**

In the aftermath of the 1971 war, a sundered Pakistan began to pursue its covert nuclear weapons programme seriously. By the 1980s, it had made considerable headway and aroused considerable alarm in India, which had done little to develop a nuclear armoury since the 1974 test. A covert race began, raising tensions between them. Pakistan, buoyed by its role as a frontline state in the US-backed *mujahideen*'s campaign against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, began providing support in the mid-1980s to Sikh secessionists fighting the Indian government for an independent 'Khalistan'.<sup>1</sup> In the heights of the undefined mountain reaches of Kashmir, a struggle to obtain military control over the Siachen glacier led to a series of skirmishes. Indian troops gained possession of the area in 1984. As the temperature rose, large-scale military exercises by both states in 1986–7 led to a war scare as the two armies faced each other close to the border.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, the Brasstacks crisis (named after India's exercise) dissipated when Indian and Pakistani officials agreed in January 1987 to hold talks to defuse the tension. It has been claimed that India contemplated a preventive war to strike against Pakistan's fledgling nuclear weapons facilities, but there is little evidence to support this thesis.<sup>3</sup> The crisis does not seem to have had a significant nuclear element. Though Pakistan's nuclear capability was disclosed to an Indian journalist by nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan in January 1987, the revelation occurred when the process of winding down the tension was already under way.<sup>4</sup> None the less, the episode was a precursor to bigger crises that were to follow. It also underscored Pakistan's enduring fear of a preventive or pre-emptive attack against its nuclear facilities. The pattern of confrontation–crisis–negotiation was to repeat itself under the gathering shadows of nuclearization.

#### ***The 1990 crisis***

As India and Pakistan developed their nuclear arsenals, the relationship became increasingly militarized, and the frequency and level of conflict increased.<sup>5</sup> An insurgency in India in the state of Jammu and Kashmir gave Pakistan a fresh opportunity to support secessionists, this time on a bigger scale. It reopened the possibility of detaching the Indian-held portion of Kashmir and simultaneously bleeding India through a protracted low-intensity conflict.<sup>6</sup> India began to build up troops along the Line of Control (LoC) that divided Kashmir between the two countries, while Pakistani forces, having completed a major military exercise, *Zarb-i-Momin*, lingered in the area fearing an Indian attack.<sup>7</sup> Troop deployments

soon stretched across much of the border and the LoC, with forces barely 200 metres apart in some areas. The positioning of forces, and especially the preparations made by the two air forces, fuelled mutual suspicions even though their deployments were essentially defensive. In April 1990, the Pakistan government asked the United States to verify whether Indian forces had been moved into offensive positions. An American official termed the request 'panic stricken', though it is not clear whether this was quite true.<sup>8</sup> The action–reaction process of competitive build-ups was a classic case of sliding down a slippery slope without either side intending to initiate war.

Alarmed, the United States, which had begun to take an active interest in the developing crisis from as early as January, sent a special mission under Robert Gates to mediate. In May, Gates visited Islamabad and New Delhi and helped wind down the crisis, though some analysts believe that the real stabilizing role was played by the US ambassadors in the two capitals.<sup>9</sup> In any case, India announced the withdrawal of its armoured forces and proposed confidence building talks, to which Pakistan responded favourably.

The role of nuclear weapons during the crisis has been the subject of some debate. At the time, US officials were alarmed by intelligence reports that Pakistan was making preparations for a nuclear strike. One report stated that its F-16s were 'pre-positioned and armed for delivery – on full alert, with pilots in the aircraft'.<sup>10</sup> The evidence proved illusory, but this does not mean this was a non-nuclear crisis. Paul Kapur questions the role of deterrence, arguing that both sides harboured doubts about the other's capability.<sup>11</sup> However, there is evidence showing that while there was uncertainty about their actual capabilities, neither side could be sure that the other did *not* have a deliverable bomb. India's Air Chief Marshall Mehra later recalled that 'we really didn't know if Pakistan's F-16s were capable of delivering such weapons or not'.<sup>12</sup> India's basic capability had already been demonstrated in 1974 and it had the aircraft to deliver the bomb. As P. R. Chari and his colleagues note, both knew the other had some capability, but neither knew how much.<sup>13</sup> And both sides also gave oblique nuclear signals that could not be ignored.<sup>14</sup> Chari *et al.* assert that nuclear capability 'does not appear to have been a determining factor in preventing a wider conflict', but qualify this by saying that both countries did have basic capabilities.<sup>15</sup> They also make contrary assessments, stating in one place that Indian leaders believed that Pakistani nuclear capability was 'either minuscule or non-existent' and elsewhere that 'they were persuaded ... that a war with Pakistan was quite likely and that it might be a nuclear war'.<sup>16</sup> More significantly, the authors note in their concluding pages that while Indian intelligence and military officials seemed sanguine about Pakistani nuclear capability, 'political leaders were more alarmed'.<sup>17</sup> Ganguly and Hagerty conclude from the available evidence that even if neither side had significant operational capabilities, existential deterrence was at work.<sup>18</sup>

Might it be that neither side wanted war anyway, and that nuclear weapons therefore did not play a crucial part in preventing one? So far, the evidence does seem to be ambiguous, as it will remain until (and if) the key decision makers tell us exactly what they thought at the time. Still, the case for the working of

deterrence is more than plausible if we recognize that it works on a minimal basis: states are deterred by the possibility rather than the probability of being struck by nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons did exist, even if in rudimentary form. Moreover, both sides knew that the other had them, though not how many or how effective they would be. Here, as in every case reviewed in Chapter 2, low-level capability sufficed to restrict the options for the belligerents. The only difference between the 1990 crisis and other nuclear confrontations is that in 1990, both sides had minimal nuclear weapons capability.

The pattern of cautious confrontation seen in other cold-war relationships is repeated here. During the crisis, while each tended to fear the worst, both sides displayed abundant restraint. Though their air forces were positioned to strike one another, a necessary posture given the vital advantage successful conventional air strikes could confer, the armoured divisions of both countries remained in non-offensive positions.<sup>19</sup> The sole exception was the one Indian division that had been carrying out exercises near the border, and even this one was rotating its units rather than taking up an integrated offensive position.<sup>20</sup> Troop movements were similarly defensive rather than offensive.<sup>21</sup> War preparations such as cancellation of leave, full operationalization of forward air bases, and daily meetings of defence committees were noticeably absent.<sup>22</sup> Apart from the tacit cooperation displayed in avoiding provocation, India and Pakistan made explicit efforts to stabilize the situation. India's Foreign Secretary travelled to Islamabad on an unpublicized trip. The two Foreign Ministers met in New York in April and agreed to keep all channels of communication open between them.<sup>23</sup> American involvement was welcomed. It helped assure both countries that the other was not poised to attack.<sup>24</sup> American officials, as noted earlier, played a significant role in damping down the fires throughout the crisis.

The 1990 crisis is an interesting case in that its course is in accord with the patterns we have seen in all other cold-war pairs. It is closest to the US–North Korea case (which occurred later) in that nuclear weapons were not central to the confrontation. While in the former case, one side's (North Korea's) capability was unclear, in the 1990 crisis that uncertainty applied to both. Overall, the broad pattern stands: rising threat perceptions, military build-up and crisis, cautious behaviour during the crisis, and a negotiated end – all this with nuclear weapons in rudimentary condition and kept sheathed.

### ***The Kargil conflict, 1999***

In May 1999, Pakistani forces in civilian garb began occupying key positions along the Kargil heights on the Indian side of the LoC in Kashmir. Initially, India believed that it was a small incursion by Islamist *mujahideen*, but it soon became clear that the force was a professional one and was large in number.<sup>25</sup> Owing to the harsh climate and geography of the region, Indian forces had withdrawn, as was their custom, from their posts during the long winter. The intruders were thus able to penetrate deep into Indian territory, in places up to twelve kilometres, along a 150-kilometre front. India responded by attempting to send troops up the steep

mountains, but these efforts proved costly and ineffective. Subsequently, the Indian Air Force was called in and the Army's counter-attack reinforced with 155-mm howitzers. The terrain made the process of ousting Pakistani forces a slow one. Fighting continued well into July, when Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called his troops back under American pressure.

The role of nuclear weapons in the Kargil conflict was indirect, yet central. By this time, both countries had conducted nuclear tests in mid-1998. However, while the tests strengthened deterrence by precluding conventional war, they did not prohibit fighting at a level below that of conventional war. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, nuclear powers had fought in a marginal fashion before. This happened in the Sino-Soviet border skirmishes of 1969 (which were prolonged and quite costly, but which hardly anyone calls 'war'); and again in the Sino-US fighting that occurred over several years in a third country: Vietnam. The Kargil conflict was similarly marginal in nature. As V.R. Raghavan, a former Director-General of Military Operations with the Indian Army, observes, Kargil was not even a limited war, but merely 'a series of local military actions ... to clear Indian territory of intruders'.<sup>26</sup> Pakistan's deterrence shield gave it the opportunity to place India under pressure in an innovative variation on the 'stability/instability paradox'. The concept was originally conceived of as space for conventional war under conditions of mutual nuclear deterrence.<sup>27</sup> However, its practice by nuclear-armed states has been different. Aware of the risk of escalation, they have kept to a relatively less risky level below that of conventional war. This has allowed them to engage in marginal combat as noted above or in proxy wars through third parties, as the United States and the Soviet Union did in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and numerous other theatres. The Kargil conflict falls under the category of marginal conventional conflict.<sup>28</sup>

As we have seen with respect to other cold wars, the nuclearization of the relationship between India and Pakistan brought rising tension. One manifestation of this was the Pakistanis' fear of a pre-emptive strike, which had given them some anxiety from time to time.<sup>29</sup> After their tests, Indian leaders rather extravagantly spoke of having a 'big bomb' and warned Pakistan it would need to 'roll back; its policy on India'.<sup>30</sup> The Pakistanis' unease, according to Sumit Ganguly and Devin Hagerty, turned into alarm when intelligence reports evidently indicated that Israeli aircraft were flying from India to target Pakistani nuclear facilities in an apparent repeat of their attack on Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981.<sup>31</sup> Though nothing happened, Pakistan's old fears of pre-emption were sharpened. This provided the impetus for Pakistan's decision to end internal debate over testing and to proceed with its own tests.<sup>32</sup> It is possible, though, that the scare was simply a tactic to justify a decision already taken to go ahead with the tests.

But there were other ways in which India-Pakistan tensions were already on the upswing. As a dissatisfied power, Pakistan had developed an attractive low-cost option in its unrelenting effort to gain control over Kashmir.<sup>33</sup> It was able to use the protective shield of nuclear deterrence to put pressure on India at a level below that of conventional conflict. Nuclear weapons increased its capacity to exert such pressure by neutralizing India's advantage in conventional forces. One tack it successfully took was providing active support for *mujahideen* groups fighting

Indian forces in Kashmir. As the Indian post-mortem on Kargil, the *Kargil Review Committee Report*, later pointed out, nuclear deterrence gave Pakistan the confidence to adopt a more aggressive policy. ‘Otherwise, it is inconceivable that it could [have] sustain[ed] its proxy war against India, inflicting thousands of casualties, without being unduly concerned about India’s “conventional superiority”.’<sup>34</sup>

Kargil was one more attempt to put India under pressure. It is best viewed as a creative exercise in compellence within the framework of the new stability/instability paradox. It was moreover a two-pronged application of compellence. The occupation of the Kargil heights was designed to give Pakistan direct bargaining power over India *vis-à-vis* Kashmir. Simultaneously, the creation of a war scare was expected to arouse the concerns of the international community, especially the United States, over the potential of Kashmir to create instability in a freshly nuclearized environment. The United States, it was hoped, would bring pressure to bear on India to negotiate. Thus compellence, both bilateral and trilateral, sought to leverage Pakistan’s nuclear capability for political advantage.<sup>35</sup> The strategy led to mounting tension and the outbreak of fighting along the mountainous heights of Kargil, as we would expect. India is believed to have used napalm bombs against Pakistani forces.<sup>36</sup> Both India and Pakistan feared the other might use chemical weapons.<sup>37</sup> Pakistan also from time to time made veiled threats of a nuclear response to an Indian attack.<sup>38</sup> American intelligence reported that Pakistan was preparing its nuclear arsenal for deployment, but this turned out to be as unsubstantiated as the preparations said to have been made in 1990.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, as we would also expect, both sides exercised considerable caution. First, the fact that Pakistan opted for a deniable strategy, using a small number of troops in mufti to occupy Indian positions, shows that its aims were very limited. Second, once Pakistani forces were forced to retreat under heavy fire, there was no effort to back them up.<sup>40</sup> Third, while India threw its air force into the conflict, Pakistan did not, which left its men vulnerable in their exposed positions. Fourth, Prime Minister Sharif took the ‘courageous’ decision to call off the venture in spite of the great political risk attached to failure against India.<sup>41</sup> Fifth, India refrained from expanding the war to other fronts though it had done so in the past.<sup>42</sup> Sixth, in ordering its air force not to cross the LoC, which slowed down the campaign to recover lost territory, India accepted considerable losses. Seventh, both sides did not mobilize for a broader war. In effect, both came to recognize and abide by the LoC/border as a ‘red line’ or *Laxman rekha* that could not be crossed without incurring the risk of a war that might escalate to the nuclear level.<sup>43</sup> And eighth, diplomatic efforts continued throughout the crisis. Backchannel meetings begun prior to the conflict between representatives of the two countries – India’s R.K. Mishra and Pakistan’s Niaz Naik – continued.<sup>44</sup> Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz of Pakistan met his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, on June 12. With India refusing to negotiate further, the United States stepped in and was accepted as an interlocutor (not as a mediator) by both sides. General Anthony Zinni, then heading the US Central Command, was sent to Pakistan to put pressure on Sharif. The latter eventually travelled to Washington and was given no choice by President Clinton but to back down unconditionally, which he agreed to do.



In the aftermath of Kargil, efforts to stabilize the relationship were revived. In late 2000, India declared a unilateral ceasefire in its counter-insurgency operations in order to facilitate negotiations with Kashmiri militants. India and Pakistan agreed to revive the hot line (between their respective Directors-General of Military Operations) that had become inoperative a year earlier. Subsequently, renewed diplomatic efforts led to the Agra summit between Prime Minister Vajpayee and Pakistan's new military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf. Though the summit failed to yield an agreement, the process was none the less viewed as positive.

Thus, the pattern we have come to expect was repeated. There were two important differences between 1990 and Kargil. First, India and Pakistan were now declared nuclear powers, which removed all ambiguities about nuclear risk. Second, their forces engaged in combat for about two months, which raised the risk of war to a much higher degree than before. This meant caution came at a higher price as well, but we have seen that both were prepared to pay that price. As with other cold-war confrontations, cooperation yielded some results by way of stabilization. It demonstrated the rapidly declining value of military force between nuclear powers. Yet it left the ideational sources of conflict in place. The question was whether the belligerents would learn some fundamental lessons from the experience. Quite evidently, they did not.

### ***Operation Parakram: the crisis of 2001–2***

An important reason for the renewal of tensions was that both sides saw distinct gains from the Kargil episode. India thought it had gained politically from American support and that Pakistan had been exposed as an irresponsible nuclear power. Pakistan, while receiving a severe setback in terms of global criticism of its risk-taking, considered it had gained in forcing India to rethink its obstinate refusal to negotiate on Kashmir. Pakistan's low-cost stratagem of supporting *ihadis* in Kashmir was also left largely intact, since global and especially American concerns were related to the risk of nuclear war arising from combat between the neighbours. Indian complaints about cross-border terrorism went largely unheeded, partly because India's culpability in sustained neglect and oppression in Kashmir was evident. The seeds of the next crisis were soon to bear fruit. Nuclear weapons were at the centre of the worsening environment.

India's perception was increasingly one of being straitjacketed by the nuclear environment. After Kargil, the tide of terrorism swelled, compounding Indian frustrations. The hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft to Kandahar by Pakistan-based terrorists in December 1999 and the forced release of their associates from Indian jails was a particularly agonizing episode. To Indians, it seemed Pakistan was increasingly confident that India was severely hamstrung by Pakistan's nuclear capability. Indian thinking struggled to define a strategic response that might enable India to break out of its strategic paralysis. The discourse steadily drifted away from the search for political solutions to developing an appropriate means of using force against Pakistan. The options aired included hot pursuit of terrorists into Pakistani territory, limited strikes or special operations missions

against terrorist camps in Pakistan, and an ambiguously conceived notion of ‘limited war’. In January 2000, Defence Minister George Fernandes asserted that nuclear weapons ‘can deter only the use of nuclear weapons, but not all and any war’, and that Kargil had demonstrated that Indian forces ‘can fight and win a limited war, at a time and place chosen by the aggressor’.<sup>45</sup> While admitting that in a nuclear weapons environment there were ‘definite limitations if escalation across the nuclear threshold was to be avoided’, Fernandes claimed that conventional war ‘has not been made obsolete by nuclear weapons’.<sup>46</sup>

In practice, there were constraints. The risks attached to war were now too great for a military solution to be considered viable. Besides, the international community was bound to come down against even limited military action. The terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 altered the environment. With the United States going to war in Afghanistan, India, which had suffered years of terrorist violence, felt justified in projecting a threat of military action against Pakistan. The pressure to do something grew rapidly and came to a head with terrorist attacks on the Jammu and Kashmir legislature on 1 October 2001, and a similar attack on the Indian parliament on 13 December. In response, India blamed Pakistan for backing the attackers, threatened to go to war, and initiated Operation Parakram, a massive military build-up along the entire border and the LoC. Pakistan responded in similar fashion.

The role of nuclear weapons in the new crisis was more prominent than in the past. Apart from being the generative environment by way of Pakistan’s exploitation of the stability/instability paradox, nuclear weapons became central to the discourse in unprecedented ways. On 24 December, India announced that it had ‘moved’ but not ‘deployed’ its nuclear-capable Prithvi missiles from distant storage sites to the border area.<sup>47</sup> Shortly, it stated that the missiles were ‘in position’.<sup>48</sup> On 25 December, Vajpayee declared, ‘We do not want war, but war is being thrust on us, and we will have to face it.’<sup>49</sup> On 25 January 2002, India tested the Pakistan-specific Agni-I medium-range missile, which had a declared range of 700–900 kilometres.<sup>50</sup> Pakistan again responded in similar fashion. On 20 May, it made known through the press that it had deployed the 750-kilometre-range Shaheen missile.<sup>51</sup> Shortly afterwards, Pakistan conducted a series of three missile tests, the first for the medium-range (1,500–2,000 kilometres) Ghauri missile, the remaining two for short-range missiles.<sup>52</sup> From the beginning, the rhetoric was direct. India’s Defence Minister, George Fernandes, declared:

Pakistan can’t think of using nuclear weapons despite the fact that they are not committed to the doctrine of no first use like we are. We could take a strike, survive, and then hit back. Pakistan would be finished. I do not really fear that the nuclear issue would figure in a conflict.<sup>53</sup>

The argument reflected the interesting logic that mutual nuclear deterrence permitted limited war and that India enjoyed the advantage of being less vulnerable to a nuclear exchange. In short, the stability/instability paradox was now being expressed in a form closer to the original conception that conventional war

(albeit 'limited' in this case) is possible in a nuclear environment. India's strategy was to turn the stability/instability paradox right around and direct it against Pakistan. Just as Pakistan had done in Kargil, India followed a two-pronged compellence strategy. Bilaterally, it threatened Pakistan with war if it did not concede to Indian demands to end cross-border terrorism. Simultaneously, India put the United States under pressure to twist Pakistan's arm for the same purpose. The strategy was partially successful in that Pakistan was forced to respond. Musharraf denounced terrorist activity in a major speech in January 2002, outlawed several *jihadi* groups, and arrested several of their members. But this was a retractable commitment, which became clear as the flow of terrorists into Kashmir never stopped. In June 2002, senior Pakistani military officers privately told *The Washington Post* that support for insurgents fighting in Kashmir remained central to Pakistan's strategy.<sup>54</sup> The more serious problem for India was that it could not follow through on its threat because it ran straight into the problem of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Compellence was overridden by deterrence.

Though tensions rose very high, particularly in December–January 2001/2 and again in May 2002, both sides once again took great care to avoid war. First, though there was much nuclear rhetoric, it was always defensive in the sense that neither side threatened to initiate nuclear use. Second, and more importantly, despite the verbal threats of nuclear use and signalling by way of missile tests, neither side actually deployed its weapons. Third, both sides tolerated the shooting down of their unarmed aerial vehicles (UAVs) without fuss.<sup>55</sup> Fourth, and above all, India did not carry out its threat to go to war. On the contrary, Indian leaders were sensitive to the potential for a nuclear conflict if they did make such an attempt.<sup>56</sup> In two cases, top commanders who incurred risks were disciplined. In January 2002, Lieutenant-General Kapil Vij, who headed India's 2 Corps, a strike corps, was removed from his post for positioning his forces too close to the border.<sup>57</sup> In March, Air Marshal V. K. Bhatia was shifted out of the LoC/border theatre after his aircraft strayed into Pakistani air space, was hit by Pakistani fire, and had to make a distress landing at Leh.<sup>58</sup> During the crisis, direct communication between India and Pakistan was sharply reduced as India cut transport links and recalled its High Commissioner. But the deep involvement of the United States mitigated the problem somewhat and helped the crisis out of its worst moments. American diplomacy, aiming primarily to avoid war and end the crisis without jeopardizing the US campaign in Afghanistan, was successful in securing restraint on both sides. It may, of course, have been helped by the Indian government's lack of interest in actually going to war even while threatening it.<sup>59</sup>

In the aftermath of the 2001–2 crisis, the tense peace took some time to show results. Eventually, India and Pakistan began a fresh dialogue that was more comprehensive than prior efforts. On nuclear issues, the first moves toward stabilization after the 1998 tests had taken the form of the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Foreign Secretaries of the two countries in 1999. Under the MoU, India and Pakistan had agreed to abide by their respective unilateral moratoria on nuclear testing and to work towards greater stability through a range of confidence-building measures (CBMs) such as missile test

notification and communication on nuclear accidents. The process was taken up in 2004 through a ‘Composite Dialogue’ that included the Kashmir problem. This is discussed in Chapter 5.

Once again, the pattern of rising tension followed by cooperation in war avoidance and subsequent negotiations was repeated. Though there was no fighting apart from stray minor incidents, the risk was higher than in the Kargil case because both sides were fully mobilized for war. Had there been a local breakdown, it could quickly have escalated into major war. The third cycle of crisis and cooperation thus tested decision makers’ understanding of their relationship much more than previous ones. With each episode it was becoming clearer that the use of force was not a viable option between nuclear-armed states. Lower-level options were available, and both India and Pakistan tried to exercise compellence by raising the threat of war, but these attempts heightened the risk of unintended war breaking out, which neither wanted. With each crisis, the experience of immediate interdependence became sharper, bringing into question existing ways of approaching the larger issue of political conflict between the two countries. Learning from the experience would require that this problem be addressed by a fresh approach to political resolution that discarded the old mindset that had brought recurring political deadlock and rising military risk. But changing mindsets is no easy task. As we will see below, in several respects Indian and Pakistani leaders continued to think in old ways, even as they grappled with the need to adopt a new approach to their rivalry.

## **Conventional thinking and behaviour in the nuclear era?**

In Chapter 2 we saw that cold-warring states during confrontations and crises exhibit great caution, showing that they do not think war is a viable option, even for states with vastly greater nuclear firepower. But at other times, they tend to think and act as if war is a viable option. How far do India and Pakistan reflect these conflicting tendencies? To arrive at an answer to this question, I examine Indian and Pakistani understandings of deterrence and its requirements, and the extent to which their nuclear doctrines and postures are consistent with the minimal way in which deterrence actually works. Since the ways in which we think are important in determining how we respond to our environment, this will take up the greater part of the remainder of this chapter. Thereafter, attention will turn to related concerns: how far India and Pakistan engage in conventional power politics and how they see their respective systemic roles in the nuclear era in comparison with the pre-nuclear past.

### ***Deterrence thinking***

The empirical evidence from the India–Pakistan relationship, as well as from the other cold-war relationships discussed earlier, is clear. Nuclear weapons constrain their possessors from thinking in conventional ways when they are in situations of immediate deterrence, i.e. when war is near. Doctrines that emphasize types of

forces and force balances are of little relevance in such circumstances. Hence, concepts that are built upon notions of credibility or resolve and the distribution of capabilities are inconsequential. Moreover, since nuclear rivals are careful to eschew conventional war as well, absolute and relative conventional military capabilities do not count for much, either, except to the extent that they may be useful in marginal conflict or against other non-nuclear adversaries. Let us examine how India and Pakistan think about these issues.

India has not released a detailed document on its nuclear doctrine. Its only official document is a brief press release on the operationalization of doctrine dated 4 January 2003.<sup>60</sup> The only other detailed statement of doctrine by a government official can be found in a lengthy newspaper interview given by Minister of External Affairs Jaswant Singh on 29 November 1999.<sup>61</sup> The widely cited Draft Nuclear Doctrine (DND), cobbled together by the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), was released in August 1999 but never officially adopted. On the contrary, Jaswant Singh made it clear in his interview that it was 'not a policy document of the Government of India'.<sup>62</sup> Pakistan has not declared its nuclear doctrine publicly. Again, the only semi-official statement of doctrinal thinking is to be found in an interview given by Lieutenant-General Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, then head of the Strategic Plans Division, which was published by an Italian think tank, Landau Network – Centro Volta, in January 2002.<sup>63</sup> The analysis that follows is culled from these and from statements and writings made both by officials and non-official strategic thinkers from both countries over the years.

### *Credibility and survivability*

Deterrence theorists set great store by the concept of credibility.<sup>64</sup> This is considered particularly important because of the inhibitions attached to the use of nuclear weapons. In reality, the concept is vague because it leans heavily on the adversary's perception and does not seem relevant in nuclear crises. In the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Soviet Union made no nuclear threats, but its nuclear capability, though much smaller than that of the United States, was taken very seriously by the latter. In the India–Pakistan crises discussed above, there is no evidence that the question of credibility significantly shaped the thinking of either side. Both simply did not want to take the risk of assuming that the other did not have the resolve or capability. Yet we find that Indian and Pakistani deterrence thinking is replete with the concept. Both enunciate their doctrines as minimum 'credible' deterrence, whatever that might mean.

Strategic experts in India believe that credibility is central to effective deterrence. India's DND (which, though unofficial, does reflect expert thinking) emphasizes 'will' and the importance of communicating will: 'any adversary must know that India can and will retaliate'.<sup>65</sup> Credibility is also frequently equated with the survival of one's weapons from a first strike. Deterrence is held to be credible if the adversary is 'convinced' of one's capacity to retaliate.<sup>66</sup> There must therefore be, it is said, a 'guaranteed second-strike' capability.<sup>67</sup> Minimum deterrence is defined in terms of 'assured survivability against repeated attrition attacks'.<sup>68</sup> This

means that the survival of one's weapons in significant numbers is an essential prerequisite for second-strike capability, which implies a large arsenal.<sup>69</sup>

Pakistani thinking is similar. Rifaat Hussain cites Tariq Ashraf as saying that the 'demonstration of national will and resolve to use nuclear weapons' is vital.<sup>70</sup> Kamal Matinuddin claims that 'the weaker nation must show a *greater* ability to use nuclear weapons because deterrence lies in its determination to use them when necessary. Capability and credibility are inversely proportional to each other.'<sup>71</sup> Some strategic thinkers, however, are closer to reality in their belief that ambiguity is good enough. The enemy need not be certain about one's capability. President Zia ul-Haq, for example, stated that 'with respect to ... nuclear capabilities, if they create ambiguity, that ambiguity is the essence of deterrence'.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, General Aslam Beg believed that uncertainty and ambiguity between India and Pakistan 'serves as a meaningful deterrence'.<sup>73</sup> But for the most part, Pakistani deterrence thinking rests on the imperative of credibility and survivability. As Abdul Sattar puts it: 'In order to ensure the survivability and credibility of the deterrent, Pakistan will have to maintain, preserve and upgrade its capability.'<sup>74</sup>

Once the twin concepts of credibility and survivability are admitted, issues of balance become important, for one must then have comparable and preferably more forces than the adversary in the event of a first strike by the latter. Here we have the seeds of arms racing or at least the need for significantly large and varied forces.

### *Size and variety*

Indian thinking is indicative of this problem, for there is considerable inconsistency about how much is enough. In his more minimalist enunciation of the components of minimum deterrence, Jaswant Singh explicitly states that 'parity is not essential for deterrence'. Yet in the same interview he declares that the concept of 'minimum' cannot be a 'fixed physical quantification', but is a 'dynamic concept' that is 'firmly rooted in the strategic environment, technological imperatives and national security needs'. Similarly, K. Subrahmanyam asserts that nuclear deterrence is not a 'numbers game'.<sup>75</sup> Yet he increases his estimate of the size of a minimum nuclear force for India from 60 (pre-1998) to 150 (post-1998) warheads without offering a clear justification.<sup>76</sup> One commentator calls for 'overwhelming superiority' *vis-à-vis* Pakistan.<sup>77</sup> Size in terms of a bigger bang (high-yield weapons, usually thermonuclear weapons) draws support from several strategists for its allegedly greater deterrence value.<sup>78</sup> With respect to delivery vehicles, there is wide support for a triad, mainly on the vulnerability grounds discussed above. The standard argument, reflecting American doctrine, is that bombers and land-based missiles are not enough. An undersea-based deterrent is vital because nuclear-powered submarines, the delivery platforms of choice, are hard to target. The DND envisages a triad of air-, land- and sea-based delivery systems whose 'survivability will be enhanced by a combination of multiple redundant systems, mobility, dispersion and deception'. Technical sophistication is also seen as an essential requirement to ensure reliability and penetrability.<sup>79</sup>

Pakistani thinking reflects the same distortions. Kamal Matinuddin allows that, *vis-à-vis* India, 'credible nuclear deterrence does not require a bomb-for-bomb or a missile-for-missile policy'.<sup>80</sup> Rais similarly asserts: 'It is neither necessary nor desirable for Pakistan to match Indian nuclear strength warhead for warhead or delivery vehicle for delivery vehicle.'<sup>81</sup> But this perception does not enjoy wide support. Shahi, Khan, and Sattar, for instance, say on the one hand that deterrence 'is not degraded by quantitative or qualitative superiority', but contradict themselves when they assert that 'our deterrence force will have to be upgraded in proportion to the heightened threat of pre-emption and interception'.<sup>82</sup> Sattar elsewhere argues that 'the minimum cannot be quantified in static numbers. The Indian build-up will necessitate review and reassessment. In order to ensure the survivability and credibility of the deterrent, Pakistan will have to maintain, preserve and upgrade its capability.'<sup>83</sup> Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Nations, Munir Akram, addressing the United Nations Security Council in April 2004, stated that Pakistan would '*continue to develop* its nuclear missiles and related strategic capability to *maintain* the minimum credible deterrence vis-à-vis our eastern neighbour'.<sup>84</sup> The need for a triad is based on the same sort of argument used in India. Thus, Zafar Nawaz Jaspal argues that 'possession of several systems greatly reduces India's ability to destroy all Pakistan's retaliatory forces'.<sup>85</sup>

### *Nuclear and conventional weapons*

We have seen that nuclear powers are careful to avoid conventional war. This means that deterrence theory must consider whether the traditional approach to conventional weapons is meaningful in the nuclear context. Indian strategic thought does not generally do this. Most analysts either separate the two and say little about conventional weapons in their deliberations on nuclear doctrine; or make the argument, again drawn from American strategy, that strong conventional forces are necessary to keep the nuclear threshold high. The DND, for instance, holds that robust conventional forces are necessary in order to raise the nuclear threshold. This erroneously assumes that nuclear powers will be willing to engage in conventional war in the first place, which we know to be untrue. As we have already seen, India has frequently argued that 'limited war' is possible under the nuclear shadow, but, in practice, the leadership has never been confident that this sort of theorizing is adequate to cover the risk of actually doing so.

Pakistani thinking is contradictory. On the one hand, most Pakistani experts argue that India's conventional superiority has been nullified by Pakistan's nuclear deterrent. On the other, the belief that the balance of conventional forces matters is ubiquitous. President Musharraf observed in December 2004 that a conventional balance is important for Pakistan.<sup>86</sup> Naeem Salik argues that Pakistan has been able to deter India because it has been able to maintain a 'manageable ratio of forces', and that because of major acquisitions by India, 'it will not be long before the disparity will become unmanageable with the undesirable effect of lowering Pakistan's nuclear threshold'.<sup>87</sup> The theme is repeated by Zafar Iqbal Cheema, who argues that 'growing conventional military and strategic asymmetry between India



and Pakistan has profoundly dangerous implications for South Asian stability and security'.<sup>88</sup> The point about the lowering of Pakistan's nuclear threshold is made frequently.<sup>89</sup> It assumes that war between nuclear powers becomes feasible if the conventional balance tilts too much to one side. The evidence from the cold wars examined in Chapter 2 illustrates that it does not.

The subcontinental deterrence thinking briefly brought out above is deeply problematic. Despite the commitment to 'minimum' deterrence, there are no clearly established basic principles for defining what the doctrine is all about. While it is impossible to quantify a minimum deterrent force without being arbitrary, it is not difficult to enunciate the fundamentals on which deterrence doctrine rests. Unfortunately, neither India nor Pakistan has been able to do this. The discussion in Chapter 2 should help to clarify matters, for it clearly shows that to be effective, deterrence does not have to be credible; that considerations of adequacy, vulnerability, and survivability do not play a role when nuclear powers are face to face with the possibility of war; that relative nuclear capabilities are in fact irrelevant to the practical working of deterrence; and that this applies to conventional forces as well. Small ambiguous forces can deter just as well as large 'credible' ones. But India and Pakistan display competitive behaviour in their weapons development and acquisition policies, which are open-ended rather than minimalist.

In other respects, Indian and Pakistani deterrence thinking is more promising.

### *Targeting*

On the question of targeting, almost all Indian strategists are opposed to counter-force options.<sup>90</sup> Jaswant Singh has stated categorically that 'we have discarded the Cold War reference frame of nuclear war fighting'. The main reason for the rejection of counter-force strategy is that there is an unacceptable risk of escalation, particularly since many counter-force targets (such as airfields and cantonments) are close to population centres. These views are in accord with minimum deterrence, because they appreciate the higher risk of war inherent in counterforce strategy. Tactical nuclear weapons are a liability. They encourage the false perception that escalation to counter-value or 'city-busting' war can be prevented. There is some concern in India that Pakistan's strategy includes the use of tactical weapons for nuclear warfighting.<sup>91</sup> However, a review of Pakistani writings on the subject reveals little interest in the targeting issue. As Brigadier A. R. Siddiqi (retd), editor of *Defence Journal*, points out, 'the virtual disappearance of the dividing line between cities and the cantonments' has made the distinction 'wholly academic'.<sup>92</sup> And Pakistani policy makers surely know that a twenty-kiloton bomb dropped on the cantonment area of Karachi would, as in a 1990 estimate, cause 128,000 immediate deaths.<sup>93</sup>

### *Testing*

Here too India and Pakistan are generally in agreement. After the 1998 tests, India announced a moratorium on further testing and Pakistan followed suit. The Indian



atomic energy establishment declared that more nuclear tests were not necessary. In the domestic debate over the India–US nuclear agreement, though Indian scientists objected strongly to the US condition that the deal would be called off if India were to carry out a nuclear test, the objection was really to a permanent limitation being put in place by an outside power. There was no reference to the need for testing in order to obtain a better deterrent.<sup>94</sup>

Initially, Pakistani leaders felt that it was necessary to carry out the 1998 tests to demonstrate Pakistan's capability. Munir Ahmed Khan, a former chairman of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, argued that a failure to test would convey the impression that Pakistan might be 'bluffing'.<sup>95</sup> Subsequently, there has been little pressure for testing. Policy has been India-centric. Pakistan has announced and abided by a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, but has made it conditional on Indian strategic restraint.<sup>96</sup> The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was also rejected after India walked out of the negotiations.

### *Deployment*

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the India–Pakistan nuclear relationship – and its most stabilizing characteristic – is the absence of deployment. Despite repeated crises, there is no evidence that either has actually prepared its weapons, normally kept in 'de-mated' condition, for potential use. On the Indian side, the most succinct statement of the reasoning behind this was made by one of the early thinkers on nuclear strategy, K. Sundarji:

'Weaponization' need not mean that the nuclear warhead has already been married to the bomb-casing or placed in the missile's bomb compartment. Likewise, 'deployed' need not mean that the completely assembled missile has to be in or very near its launch pad. If the doctrine demands reaction within say six hours, the definition of 'weaponized' and 'deployed' would reflect the state of readiness which such doctrine demands.<sup>97</sup>

The Pakistani perception on deployment is similar. Shahi, Khan, and Sattar assert that in 1990, 'even though nuclear weapons were not assembled, the recessed capability was credible enough to induce restraints against escalation'.<sup>98</sup> The position, again, is Indo-centric, implying that if India does not sustain its status, Pakistan may need to be on a 'high state of alert'.<sup>99</sup> This reflects a pervasive concern about pre-emption, but is also contradictory since Pakistan's deterrent has certainly grown considerably since 1990. There is recognition that because of the geographic contiguity of Pakistan and India, the flight time for missiles is a matter of a few minutes. Deployed forces would be highly threatening and could induce hair-trigger postures and launch-on-warning strategies. These in turn would create problems regarding early use as a result of misperception or accident.<sup>100</sup>

### *Arms control/confidence building*

Both India and Pakistan are well disposed to stabilization processes, as is evident from their long history of negotiation and agreements. In comparison with other hostile nuclear pairs, their list of achievements, described in the next chapter, is quite significant. Extensive arms control was a feature of only one prior cold war, that between the United States and the Soviet Union. That, of course, did not quite rein in the arms race between them.<sup>101</sup> The thinking behind the India–Pakistan arms control process, which has focused entirely on confidence-building measures, has been very different. It has concentrated not on the quantitative details of warheads and delivery systems but on improved communication and transparency in what is primarily a political process. This is reviewed in the next chapter.

The compatibilities outlined above, especially on non-deployment, have provided a measure of stability to an otherwise fractious and unsteady relationship. There are some grey areas on which the two do not see eye to eye or are inconsistent and these remain sources of uncertainty.

### *Escalation*

Both countries are conscious of the risk of escalation, which is evident from their caution during crises. Yet both have clearly taken risks and produced situations that might have launched an escalatory process. In contrast with American deterrence theory, there has been no significant interest in developing elaborate conceptions of the escalation ladder and planning flexible responses appropriate to its rungs. It has simply been assumed that once the threshold of conventional war is crossed, escalation may occur very quickly and therefore the initial steps should not be taken. Yet there has been inconsistency in this approach. Both countries have pushed at the edges of escalation in pursuit of political ends by attempting compellence. India did this in the Parakram crisis, while Pakistan did it in Kargil and in supporting cross-border terrorism. Both failed to obtain a clear advantage from their efforts, but it is also true that both did gain something from it. India successfully drew global attention to Pakistan's low-intensity conflict strategy, while Pakistan brought Kashmir back to centre stage. This remains a potential problem area between the two countries. On the positive side, India and Pakistan do seem to have learned that the risks taken have been inordinate, which explains their persistence with the slow process of engagement that has been uninterrupted since 2004.

### *Timing of retaliation*

India and Pakistan have opposite views on when they might first use nuclear weapons. India has placed great emphasis on its commitment to the principle of No First Use (NFU). Pakistan, conscious of its relative weakness, has rejected the principle. On the face of it, this difference would seem to be significant. In practice, it is not. There are three reasons for this. First, NFU is only a principle, not a fact of life. That Pakistan does not take India's adherence to it seriously is well

known. Indeed, the fact that one of its primary anxieties stems from the possibility of a pre-emptive strike indicates as much. Second, regardless of the principle that a state might espouse, who exactly might initiate a nuclear exchange cannot be clear in advance. In a situation of mutual deterrence, no rational decision maker is likely to launch a first strike except under grave threat. In such circumstances, with all the tension that goes with it, a decision to strike first is likely to be driven by psychological factors and to be made on the spur of the high-tension moment without reference to principles. And third, contrary to the commonplace argument that adherence or otherwise to NFU determines posture, it is quite obvious that it does not, since India and Pakistan have adopted more or less the same posture while claiming opposite preferences on the timing of retaliation. This concept, then, is irrelevant to their relationship.

### *Missile defence*

India and Pakistan have profound differences over missile defence as well. India's favourable disposition to this technology is essentially based on a normative rejection of the idea that stability can be best obtained by mutual threats of annihilation.<sup>102</sup> For this reason, India has long had an interest in developing missile-defence capability. The Pakistani view is more in tune with mainstream Western deterrence theory. It stems from the notion that missile defence is destabilizing because it alters the balance of capabilities by giving the defender an advantage. Hence Foreign Secretary Inamul Haq's observation that the development of 'shields' would impel others to improve their 'lances', and that this could 'heighten tensions between major powers, jeopardize the global strategic balance and turn back the disarmament clock'.<sup>103</sup> In the subcontinental context, India's acquisition of missile-defence capability would mean 'Pakistan's limited missile force and deployments would be completely vulnerable, and therefore, its deterrence weakened, since it would now not be premised on mutual vulnerability in relation to India'.<sup>104</sup> As we have seen, balances really do not mean anything between nuclear-armed states. Nevertheless, to the extent that Pakistanis believe that they do, this can be an area of tension. The key question is how India would respond to a Pakistani build-up in response to its deployment of missile defences. Adherence to minimum deterrence does not require a matching response. After all, India has not evinced much interest in reducing the capability gap with China.

This brief review reveals major areas of compatibility as well as significant ones of incompatibility between the ways in which India and Pakistan think about nuclear weapons and the requirements of deterrence. The areas of convergence between the two countries are strong in positive as well as negative ways. On the positive side, neither is inclined to counter-force strategy; both are content with minimal testing, which points to a low operational interest in nuclear weapons; both have adopted non-deployed postures to which they have adhered through severe crises; and both have displayed an abiding interest in negotiated stabilization. To the

extent that they are aware of the risks of escalation and have observed caution during crises, there is an additional plus point in their relationship. On the negative side, both have an unfounded belief in the concepts of credibility, vulnerability, and survivability. This pushes them towards the empirically indefensible principle that balances matter, which in turn undercuts their minimum deterrence doctrines. This weakness permits them to pursue the chimera of stability through ever-growing acquisitions and disposes them towards arms racing. This can be destabilizing. So long as they retain their non-deployed postures, they are less at risk. The real problem can come in their thinking about the boundaries between what is doable and what is not, which are hazy. Both have been inclined in their different ways to press close to the threshold of conventional war. Repetitions of these strategies can prove risky as both build larger and more sophisticated systems. More serious still are the risks associated with weapons systems that blur the lines between nuclear and conventional war, such as cruise missiles, which both have expressed readiness to deploy.

While differences over NFU do not amount to much, opposing positions on missile defence may cause some tension. However, this problem is mitigated by the fact that the technology, besides being enormously expensive, is still in its infancy and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future.

From this analysis, we can deduce that India and Pakistan will be on a stable trajectory so long as they stay with their existing preferences on testing and, especially, deployment. Simultaneously, they are likely to continue along the path of building capabilities that are of nothing more than symbolic value to them. This trend is already well in place.

## **The rival capabilities**

Harking back to the working of deterrence in other cold wars, we know that immense differences in the sophistication levels and sizes of rival arsenals have not been destabilizing. On the contrary, big powers faced with small arsenals have invariably acted with caution. After all, as we have seen, deterrence works not because of the elaborate theories built around it but because no one wants to risk large amounts of damage within minutes of an outbreak of war. The key is risk. The risk of an early catastrophe alters the relative weights of means and goals in favour of the former. One need only pose the risk of catastrophe (rather than the certainty of it) to achieve deterrence. The requirements of deterrence are therefore very limited. One might reasonably argue that a few dozen warheads and a single type of delivery system are adequate for the purpose. Nuclear powers, however, tend to go well beyond the requirements imposed by this central principle and pursue excessive capabilities. India and Pakistan are no different.

In terms of the nuclear arsenals they possess, India and Pakistan have small and still developing arsenals. Though official data are not available, the following are widely accepted as reliable.<sup>105</sup> India has about 50–60 nuclear warheads. Delivery vehicles include the following aircraft: Mirage 2000H, Jaguar IS, Mig-27, and Su-

30 MKI. Missile platforms include the Prithvi 150-kilometre short-range ballistic missile (SRBM), air and under-sea versions of which have been tested and are under development. The 700-kilometre medium-range Agni-I and the 2,000-plus-kilometre-range Agni-II have officially been inducted into the Army, but there seems to be some doubt as to whether they have been operationalized.<sup>106</sup> The 3,000-plus-kilometre-range Agni-III was successfully tested in April 2007 and is expected to be ready for deployment by 2010. A July 2007 news report said the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) had already tested an 800-plus-kilometre-range submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) twice.<sup>107</sup> In the same month, Indian scientists announced the development of the Nirbhay, a 1,000 km-range multi-platform medium range ballistic missile (MRBM). The missile will be tested in mid-2009, it was stated.<sup>108</sup> A nuclear submarine known as the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) is under development. In August 2007, the DRDO announced that a 5000-kilometre-range Agni-IV was being developed.<sup>109</sup> India also has a supersonic cruise missile programme, the 290-kilometre-range BrahMos, developed jointly with Russia. The land-based version was declared inducted into the Indian Army in June 2007 and naval and air versions are under development at the time of writing (September 2007). The Indian Navy envisages its deployment on surface vessels, submarines and naval reconnaissance aircraft. Though the BrahMos is not designated a nuclear missile, that capability may not be far off.

This brief description reveals that the Indian missile programme is open-ended, without any basis in clear-cut doctrine. When questioned about the need for a long-range missile, V. K. Saraswat, Chief Controller, R&D (Missiles and Strategic Systems), at the DRDO, justified the programme on the grounds that 'we feel that ranges from 2,000 km to 5,000 km will give enough capability to have credible deterrence'. He added that the need might arise for a 10,000 kilometre missile in future.<sup>110</sup> This is a long way from Jaswant Singh's statement in his 1999 interview that credible deterrence does not require a triad. It appears that R&D work is being propelled by a *tous azimuts* conception of future needs when in fact the Agni II and III series provide sufficient missile capability to deter Pakistan and China respectively.

Across the border, the story is similar. Pakistan has an arsenal of some 60 warheads. Air delivery platforms are the F-16A and B, the Mirage-V and the Chinese A-5. Its missile programme includes the approximately 400-kilometre-range Ghaznavi/Hatf-3 and the 400-plus-kilometre-range Shaheen-1/Hatf-4 SRBMs; the >1,200-kilometre-range Ghaury/Hatf-5 MRBM; and the 2,000–2,500-kilometre-range Shaheen-2/Hatf-6 IRBM (the latter under development). Pakistan's Babur/Hatf-7 500-kilometre-range cruise missile, first tested in August 2005, is slated to be built for air, land and sea platforms and has been explicitly declared nuclear-capable. The range of the Babur was extended to 700 kilometres in March 2007.<sup>111</sup> As in the Indian case, the Pakistani programme does not appear to have a clear rationale. Since India is the sole adversary identified, and many major cities fall within the range of its MRBMs, the development of IRBMs appears to be unnecessary, providing it with the symbolic value of being able to target a larger number of Indian cities.

### ***A destabilizing scenario***

Neither country seems aware that cruise missiles are highly destabilizing weapons. In June 2007, when India announced that the BrahMos Land Attack Cruise Missile (LACM) had been inducted into the Army, military sources indicated that the LACMs would be deployed against ‘value targets’ along the plains of the India–Pakistan border.<sup>112</sup> Many of Pakistan’s major cities and strategic assets such as military bases and nuclear facilities would be threatened, causing it to deploy its own Babur LACMs, thereby giving rise to the same threat perception in India. As is well known, Pakistan fears, above all, the danger arising from a sudden attack on its strategic assets. Deployment of LACMs will sharpen that fear.

Cruise missiles are essentially first-strike warfighting weapons and invite high alert levels and quick reaction postures such as launch-on-warning. Because of the negligible reaction time involved, both countries would have an incentive to place their LACMs on alert and thereby raise mutual fears of pre-emptive attack. They may also try to reduce the risk to their nuclear assets and simultaneously enhance their deterrence ‘credibility’ by actively deploying their nuclear weapons. These developments may not occur under stable conditions, but they could take place if relations turn sour. If there is another crisis, there is a significant probability that they will. The upshot is that the risk of escalation from crisis to war will increase quickly. So long as LACMs are not nuclear weapons – they could assume that role, and Pakistan has announced that the Babur is nuclear-capable – controls over them are likely to be less tight and authority to launch them more easily delegated. This will further increase the likelihood of unintended war. In short, LACMs erode the conceptual firewall between conventional and nuclear weapons and create grave new risks. But there is no evidence that Indian and Pakistani strategists are aware of this.

### **Systemic roles and external balancing**

As noted in Chapter 2, nuclear rivals tend to engage in power politics in pre-nuclear ways. We have also seen (Chapter 3) that the pre-nuclear politics of the subcontinental system was one in which India played the role of hegemon and Pakistan that of the challenger. As the regional hegemon, India tended to intervene in its neighbourhood and to resist intervention by extra-regional powers in South Asia. Pakistan followed the opposite strategy of establishing links with outside powers in order to strengthen itself. It is interesting to assess whether this pattern remains unchanged.

Since the 1990s, India has emerged as a rising power, with strategic horizons stretching well beyond the subcontinent.<sup>113</sup> Its fast-paced economic growth and, additionally, its crossing of the nuclear Rubicon have brought it increasing global attention. As its worldview has expanded, India has begun to alter its approach to its neighbours. Its regional and global roles are related in two significant ways. First, India needs to resolve its regional problems in order to stake a solid claim to a global standing. Second, its global rise and new relationships, particularly with the United States, have lowered its local security costs. The United States, seeking

allies in its hedging strategy against China, the next superpower, began to engage it seriously in the post-Cold War era. The first sign of this came as early as the mid-1990s, when the US foreign policy establishment began to rethink policy towards India. The nuclear tests brought a halt to the process, but it was soon resumed in the form of an intense dialogue that stretched from June 1998 to February 1999 between Jaswant Singh, India's Minister for External Affairs, and Strobe Talbot, Deputy Secretary of State in the Clinton Administration. Under President George W. Bush, Indo-US relations improved significantly. The Bush strategy was to strengthen ties with India for two reasons. First, in an increasingly complex world, the United States needs reliable allies, and India as an emerging power as well as a democracy is well placed in that respect. Second, while Sino-US relations have been on a fairly even keel, the US views China as a potential problem. In American perceptions, because China is not a democracy, its political future and hence its strategies may shift in a direction adverse to US interests. India, too, views the Indo-US relationship partly through the lens of a similar hedging strategy, even as its relationship with China improves steadily. At the same time, its relationship with the United States is not only a source of economic advantage but an avenue to enhanced global status. In this sense, India, once resistant to American power, is today 'bandwagoning' with the US. The India-US nuclear agreement of July 2005 and increasing India-US defence cooperation represent key steps in the process of redefining India's Asian and global roles.

India's expanded strategic horizons have brought a new interest and involvement in Asian politics. A central plank of this approach has been the so-called 'Look East' policy.<sup>114</sup> It has forged close relations with the countries of the region and steadily integrated itself with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), first as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner (1992), then as a full Dialogue Partner (1995), and consequently a member of the security-related ASEAN Regional Forum (1996) and ASEAN Plus (2002). The mutual interests between India and Southeast Asia are both strategic (the China factor) and economic (trade and investment).<sup>115</sup> During the 1990s, India's Asian interests also spread to Japan and South Korea in the hunt for foreign direct investment (FDI). On the other side, India's relations with West Asia, long considered important, have developed further.<sup>116</sup> The driving forces are Islam, fossil fuels, and jobs.<sup>117</sup> A vital concern is the rise of Islamic radicalism in the arc from West Asia to Central Asia via Afghanistan and Pakistan. India is conscious of the need for stability in the region as a prerequisite for a steady energy supply and to prevent a spillover of Islamic radical violence into its territory. To the north, India has developed a growing interest in Central Asia.<sup>118</sup> The region is important as a potentially major source of energy supply, and because it is a focal point of the global drug trade, which is associated with terrorist activity. Significantly, India's first foreign military base has been established, jointly with Russia and Tajikistan, at Ayni in the latter country.<sup>119</sup>

In contrast, India has kept a relatively low profile in its own neighbourhood.<sup>120</sup> Despite official invitations to intervene, it has avoided deeper involvement in Sri Lanka. It did play a role in the political crisis that virtually overthrew the monarchy



in Nepal, but not a dominant one, as was its wont historically. With regard to Bangladesh, India was relatively tolerant of repeated clashes between the border guards of the two countries and disinclined to exert much pressure on important issues like the growth of Islamic militancy in that country. In the case of Pakistan, India demonstrated a willingness to come to terms within a year of the Parakram crisis and entered into a sustained dialogue with it in 2004. The outcomes of this process are discussed in the next chapter. The broad picture is that of an altered role in the subcontinent. India no longer displays hegemonic pretensions and its neighbours no longer resist cooperation with it. The old pattern of power politics has changed. Despite its growing power, India plays a more benign regional role than before. Nuclear weapons give it basic security from external military threat. Other threats emanating from regional spillovers remain, but it has learned from its experiences in Sri Lanka (the disastrous intervention in the 1980s) and with Pakistan that military power does not provide it with the capacity to exercise control by resort to force. This has made India more amenable to a larger American role in the region. An important consequence of this is that its posture towards Pakistan is now fundamentally different from what it was in the past.

Has Pakistan's strategic role changed? In the pre-nuclear period, Pakistan had played the role of challenger to India's hegemonic designs. It had sought to balance Indian power by forging strategic links with major extra-regional powers, mainly the United States and China. It had also pursued the development of its nuclear and missile capability by obtaining technical assistance from China and North Korea.<sup>121</sup> The possession of nuclear weapons has given it military security by way of the ability to deter India. But it has not obtained the political security it seeks from gaining control over Kashmir. Moreover, nuclear weapons complicate matters quite a bit. Though some success was attained in putting India under pressure through Kargil and the backing given to non-state actors trying to detach Kashmir from it, the risks that arose and the political pressures applied by the international community meant that Pakistan's political options actually diminished. The cultivation of *jihadis* for exerting pressure on India, a strategy that originated with the attempt to gain control of Afghanistan, rebounded on Pakistan when the *jihadis* began increasingly to challenge the state that had nurtured them.<sup>122</sup> The campaign to bleed India was a form of balance of power politics, seeking the weakening of India, but in the end it contributed to weakening Pakistan even more.

The post-Cold War era has produced a number of difficulties for Pakistan's foreign policy.<sup>123</sup> The United States, with which it has allied reluctantly in the war on terrorism, has provided considerable economic and military aid.<sup>124</sup> But no one in Pakistan seriously believes that the alliance has prospects beyond the terrorist threat. Politically, the United States has for some time 'de-hyphenated' India and Pakistan. China remains a dependable supplier of conventional weapons (whose role is questionable in the nuclear era), but no longer supports Pakistan on Kashmir and follows a more even-handed South Asia policy of 'standing on two pillars', i.e. of avoiding a choice between India and Pakistan.<sup>125</sup> Even if Pakistani leaders wanted to pursue the obsolete balancing option, there is no one to lean on.



But there may be some more fundamental rethinking taking place. Pakistan's policy of trying to obtain control over Afghanistan was long predicated on three assumptions.<sup>126</sup> First, control was believed to be necessary because Afghan claims to Pushtun lands threatened the integrity of the Pakistani state. Second, as a relatively small country in comparison with India, Pakistan sought to obtain 'strategic depth' from control over Afghanistan. Third, there was the fear of 'encirclement' and 'containment' – hardy Cold War concepts – if India established a firm base in Afghanistan. Pakistani policy has been problematic on all three counts. The revival of the Taliban in the region straddling Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan has drastically undermined the Pakistani state's control over its own territory. The concept of strategic depth is meaningless in a nuclear relationship because all of Pakistan's major cities are well within the reach of Indian weapons and even more because India is anyway deterred by Pakistan's nuclear weapons from contemplating war. And, finally, containment cannot mean much for a nuclear power. What might conceivably apply is compellence. India would have the capacity to play the low-intensity card against Pakistan via Afghanistan. Such claims have already been made.<sup>127</sup> But it is hard to see why India, which worries about radicals gaining control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, would want to do this. There is some evidence that at least the prevailing wisdom on strategic depth is being questioned. In 2002, General Mirza Aslam Beg, who had first articulated this concept, declared in the context of the turmoil in Afghanistan that it had 'no military logic'.<sup>128</sup>

Power politics has clearly lost its shine for Pakistan. Nuclear weapons offer security from external threat. The more serious threats at this time come from an altogether different direction that has much to do with the country's internal instability. Cross-border flows have produced the paradoxical phenomenon of Pakistan being increasingly fenced in in a globalizing world. India began closing off its western boundary some time ago with barbed wire to prevent *jihadis* from crossing over; Pakistan in 2007 began doing the same on its Afghan border; and Iran followed suit that year on its Pakistan border. As Pakistan struggles with domestic turbulence, it looks less and less able to assume the role of challenger it had in the past. As the following chapter shows, it seems less inclined to do so as well.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that India and Pakistan have in many ways displayed patterns typical of cold-war pairs. Nuclearization has given their hostility a sharper edge, bringing confrontation and crises. In each face-off, they have been provocative to begin with, but have quickly become cautious and eventually cooperated with outside help to end the crisis. There has followed a period of institutionalized cooperation through confidence building, which is discussed in Chapter 5. Like the United States and the Soviet Union, they have been relatively slow learners and have gone through three cycles of conflict and cooperation before engaging in a more protracted dialogue that has produced a series of agreements and substantial changes in the relationship.

The overall picture provides some source for optimism. Despite their risk-taking proclivities, both countries, on finding themselves in a condition of immediate interdependence, have exercised care at the time of actual conflict. At other times, when general interdependence has prevailed, they have shown a mixed pattern of thinking and behaviour. In some ways, doctrine and posture have been remarkably stable. In great contrast to the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia, they have conformed to the tenets of minimum deterrence by refraining from deployment. They have also adopted minimalist positions on targeting (eschewing counter-force strategy) and testing, and have shown their understanding that escalation is a major risk. Yet significant elements of instability remain. The uncritical acceptance of Western deterrence concepts – credibility, survivability, vulnerability, and second-strike capability – has made them intellectually open to military build-ups and arms racing. In this respect, they have clearly taken a trajectory of weapons development and acquisition that goes well beyond the limited requirements of deterrence demonstrated by a review of all cold wars, especially their own. Since human beings have a substantial capacity to sustain contradictory behaviours over time, this inconsistency may not mean much. But a single change in the form of deployment would render the entire relationship suddenly more unstable.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, the failure to understand clearly the nature of the relationship between nuclear and conventional weapons has the potential to produce a calamity. This is evident from the relative lack of concern in the region about the grave risks associated with the deployment of cruise missiles.

On the political aspect, we have seen significant changes in the behaviour of both countries. India no longer presents the image of a systemic hegemon. Partly because of this and partly because of its own shifting concerns, Pakistan no longer poses a challenge to Indian power. On the whole, there are critical differences from other cold-war patterns appearing quite early in the game that indicate continuing uncertainties but also give signs of positive change. In short, there appears to be light at the end of the cold war tunnel. How India and Pakistan might emerge into the sun is discussed in the next chapter.

## 5 Anticipating cold war's end

The end of the Cold War was as surprising to most people as it was dramatic. For the discipline of international relations, it was embarrassing as well. In a hard-hitting critique, historian John Lewis Gaddis showed how contemporary international relations theory, for all its scientific claims, had utterly failed to forecast such a hugely transformative event.<sup>1</sup> Gaddis went on to dismiss the whole enterprise as inherently incapable of doing the job and concluded that 'the "scientific" approach to the study of international relations appears to work no better, in forecasting the future, than do the old-fashioned methods it set out long ago to replace'.<sup>2</sup> The first criticism has considerable merit, for the discipline had failed to examine the scope for change seriously, and it was not inaccurate to say, as another critic observed, that 'measured by its own standards, the profession's performance was embarrassing'.<sup>3</sup> But the truth of the matter is that the profession had not really *looked* at the possible end of the Cold War. To this extent, the fault lay not so much in the discipline but in its practice. In developing countries, this was understandable: the real issue for them was economic, and the debates of the time revolved around issues of global economic structure. In the West, there was concern about the consequences of what was thought to be *American* decline. Alternatively, it was held that the decline was not serious and that the primary issue was that of systemic stability. The immensely influential work of Kenneth Waltz, around which circled much intellectual combat, centred on this issue. Furthermore, the discipline's fascination with Waltz's elegant structural theory meant that serious attention was not paid to ideas as a source of change.<sup>4</sup>

The same error will not be committed here. In this chapter, I examine at length the prospects for the cold war between India and Pakistan. I attempt no forecasting, for that – contrary to Gaddis's chief allegation – is not the business of any discipline where human choice is involved. What I try and do is identify the conditions under which change may occur (or not) and the factors that shape what happens. Such an exercise, in itself difficult because of the complexities involved, helps anticipate the end of a cold war from not too great a distance in time and at least recognize it when it begins to happen (or not). For all their history of wars and crises, India and Pakistan have achieved unprecedented levels of cooperation since 2003. The central question, then, is whether the India–Pakistan cold war drama has shifted irrevocably from conflict to cooperation and, second, whether the curtain

will come down on it any time soon. Furthermore, I ask, what is the role of nuclear weapons in facilitating developments in one direction or another? To answer these questions, this chapter begins by establishing an analytical framework that draws from earlier cold-war experiences. For practical reasons of time and space, this framework retains a general perspective but focuses at greater length on the United States–Soviet Union relationship. This is followed by consideration of the cold war in South Asia. Careful examination of material and ideational factors and their operation at different levels of analysis will show that the process of cooperative engagement is likely to be sustained, but that it is likely to remain gradual. The possibilities for a dramatic breakthrough remain limited.

### **History, the materialist–ideational divide, and levels of analysis**

How did past cold wars end? The pages of *Cold War History*, the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, and other scholarly publications have been the arena for considerable academic fencing about how the process played out, with much of the cut and thrust pertaining to the relative significance of power and ideas. Materialist interpretations have crossed swords with ideationalist ones, the former largely identifiable with realists, the latter with constructivists. On the materialist side, issues of relative power and threat predominate. The realist approach underlies most arguments, though some scholars appear chary of a somewhat discredited label in Cold War scholarship. It is contended that the Cold War ended because the Soviet Union went into relative decline, which created increasing incentives for ‘retrenchment’, and that this eventually led to the end of the Cold War.<sup>5</sup> Sino-Soviet normalization may be seen as similarly motivated by Soviet retrenchment in response to structural decline. There is internal debate among the materialists as to whether the Soviet reversal of cold-war policies is attributable to American pressure. Some argue that American pressure pushed the Soviet Union into overstretch and forced it to rethink its capacity to sustain the struggle;<sup>6</sup> others hold that the decline was primarily internal.<sup>7</sup>

With respect to the US–China rapprochement, the materialist view is that the Soviet threat was the basis of China’s policy change. In particular, the Sino-Soviet clashes of 1969 and the war scare in China caused Mao and his colleagues to shift from a position of equal hostility towards both adversaries to one in which Soviet ‘social imperialism’ was identified as the bigger threat, which opened the way to a reoriented relationship with the United States.<sup>8</sup> The United States reassessed the Chinese threat for the same reason.<sup>9</sup> In short, the end of all three cold wars can be attributed to changing power relations. The common thread running through them is the realist contention that the main driver of international politics is power. The Soviet decline case represents a neorealist balance of power line of reasoning. In the US–China case, the argument is a neoclassical realist one of balance of threat rather than mere balance of power.<sup>10</sup>

Ranged against the materialist/realist position is the view that ideas matter more. Material conditions for change may exist, but it is change in thinking that is the

basis of an altered relationship. For instance, it has been argued that Soviet decline notwithstanding, it was the 'sweeping changes' in Soviet ideology that unravelling the cold war by removing its ideological foundation.<sup>11</sup> The 'ideas first' position is that Mikhail Gorbachev's radicalism had a long lineage, that his major policy initiatives were visible before the Soviet Union was faced with a serious crisis, and that the opposition to his reforms showed that there were alternatives.<sup>12</sup> Ideas in the form of Gorbachev's 'new thinking' made all the difference. Embedded in some institutions, they gained purchase when the Soviet Union's stagnation presented an opportunity for them to offer alternatives.<sup>13</sup> While structural conditions conducive to change did exist, the radical changes introduced were filtered through ideas, and particularly Gorbachev's ideological and political leanings, which made him willing to end Soviet control over Eastern Europe.<sup>14</sup>

Ideational explanations for the end of the Sino-American cold war have also appeared. For instance, Chen Jian has linked the failure of the Cultural Revolution and the resultant loosening of China's ideology with Mao's willingness to make an opening to the United States.<sup>15</sup> On the American side, it has been argued, change in thinking accounts primarily for change in policy. After the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, American discourse was hostile to a breakthrough, and it was only after the discourse was reconstructed by concerted efforts on the part of US policy makers to treat China as a tacit ally that rapprochement became possible.<sup>16</sup> This represents a classic statement of the constructivist approach, which holds that ideational structures shape interactions and that they can be altered through political action.

The material versus ideational argument remains unresolved. Both sides allow that the factors stressed by their opponents are relevant. As an intellectual exercise, one need only eliminate material or ideational factors to arrive at the obvious: both mattered. If the Soviet economy had been strong, there would hardly have been good reason or the political space to transform the Soviet system drastically. Absent Gorbachev and new thinking, the Cold War might have been modified, but not ended. The 'debate' is between complementary positions about which type of factor matters more. The 'stage-complementarity model', whichever way it is presented, leaves us without a clear understanding of the relationship between material and ideational factors. Attributing relative weight to the two types of factor is difficult and likely to be arbitrary. To place the problem in comparative perspective, we might ask: why is it that whereas Khrushchev failed to achieve a combination of domestic reform and 'peaceful coexistence', Gorbachev succeeded? In both cases, material factors and ideas for change were present. In both cases, regime change presented an additional window of opportunity for new leaders with fresh ideas. The need for a conceptual and operational linkage between ideas and material factors is apparent. The same problem arises with other explanatory models.<sup>17</sup>

That linkage is provided by an understanding of domestic politics. While material conditions for policy change may exist, as might ideas for how to go about making the changes, the key determinant of what actually happens is to be found in domestic politics. It is here that one finds the *capacities* to achieve change through the implementation of ideas. Whereas Khrushchev did not have the capacity to

contrive change, Gorbachev did. In the realm of domestic politics, there is continuous interaction between material structure and ideas about how to respond to it. Gorbachev succeeded because he was able to manipulate the Soviet political system successfully by controlling key appointments and channelling the support of the 'system modernisers' towards his goals.<sup>18</sup>

From the discussion above, we arrive at a framework that examines the ending of cold wars by segregating, for analytical purposes, factors operating at three levels of analysis: the systemic, the state, and the individual (the last incorporating small decision groups). Each produces a different facet of understanding and all three are connected, with the domestic politics level playing the central role in determining capacities for action. This mode of analysis has a long and respectable lineage, though there are differences over the identification of levels. Arnold Wolfers focuses on two major actors: the individual and the state.<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Waltz adds a third, the international system.<sup>20</sup> Robert Jervis brings in yet another, bureaucratic processes.<sup>21</sup> To add to the confusion, as it were, David Singer points out that 'many others are available'.<sup>22</sup> In the discussion that follows, I confine myself to the three levels preferred by Waltz, viz. the individual, the state, and the international system. The systemic level is close to the structural conception espoused by realists. The state and individual levels produce ideas and hence are the plane on which constructivists focus their analysis. However, the division is not hard and fast. Neoclassical realism, which holds that structural factors must be supplemented by the perceptions and decisions of policy makers, spans all three levels of analysis.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the systemic level need not be confined to the realist notion of structure. At this level, there is also the phenomenon of process, i.e. the manifold and continuous interactions between and among states. This is not merely a matter of the thousands of discrete state interactions that occur every day. We can usefully conceive of systemic aspects of process, such as the degree of interaction or what has been called its 'density'.<sup>24</sup> In this context, the impact of the nuclear revolution in altering the meaning of power as a usable instrument of state policy is clearly systemic. The liberal conception of interdependence and its strategic variant applied here with respect to nuclear weapons are systemic (though not uniform in their appearance). Interdependence is not a characteristic of states but of the relationship between them. This is where the role of nuclear weapons in shaping the course and outcomes of cold wars is critical.

But before we come to that, let us briefly review the different levels of analysis and how they might help in putting together a systematic examination of how cold wars end. At the level of the system, we may profitably examine the sources of change in three ways. First, the effect of anarchy is, as we have seen, to create a pattern of behaviour in which self-interest prevails over common interest and power is privileged as the sole guarantor of security, which means that having more power than one's adversaries is highly valued. System change, which is hardly ever thought of, is conceivable as the end of anarchy, which may seem far-fetched for the system as a whole, but is certainly feasible in the relationship between two or a few states by way of union, whether voluntary or otherwise. System-level change is more usually expected to occur when there is a shift in the

distribution of power. This may happen with respect to military power, but also with respect to economic power. Finally, systemic change may occur with interdependence, whether of the military or economic type.

At the level of the individual or small group, leadership, personality, and political skill play a major role. Certainly, few today would admit to anything like Thomas Carlyle's sweeping generalization that 'the history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here'.<sup>25</sup> Yet, despite the proliferation of levels of analysis, the position of the individual has remained important, not least because any causal explanation divorced from human agency must stand guilty of determinism and of divesting men and women of their moral nature. Much work has been done on the complexities of individual and small-group decision-making.<sup>26</sup> That need not detain us here. What we do need to recognize is the importance of the personalities of decision makers and their capabilities in achieving their political ends. In ending the Cold War, for instance, Gorbachev's personality characteristics – his confidence and his deep aversion to the use of force – were profoundly important.<sup>27</sup> As noted, his political skills in pursuing his goals were critical to the ending of the Cold War. Equally, his personality failings – his lack of foresight, his preference for ad hoc responses – were responsible for his lack of perspicacity in letting the process of change he set in motion go out of control. Either way, individual personality and ability are unquestionably major determinants of any political process, and we will find it useful to keep these in mind when attempting to gauge trends in the India–Pakistan relationship.

At the intermediate or state level of analysis, the political process links the pressures of system structure and preferences framed by individual choice. As Arnold Wolfers observes:

The minds-of-men approach ... cannot do justice to all the essential events that fill the international arena. There can be no 'state behaviour' except as the term is used to describe the combined behaviour of individual human beings organized into a state. Not only do men act differently when engaged in pursuing what they consider the goals of their 'national selves,' but they are able to act as they do only because of the power and influence generated by their nations organized as corporate bodies.<sup>28</sup>

Just as Gorbachev's capacity to realize (for better or worse) his new thinking was dependent on domestic politics, so, too, as we shall see, the prospects for ending the India–Pakistan cold war are and will be shaped by this level of analysis. Moreover, because it takes two hands to clap, the US–Soviet relationship could not have been transformed had it not been for a positive reaction to Gorbachev's initiatives on the part of the United States. The deepening of the Soviet democratization process from April 1988 convinced American leaders that irreversible change really was occurring in their adversary's domestic political system. The positive American response thus led to the rapid unravelling of the Cold War in what came to confirm the democratic peace thesis.<sup>29</sup>



Where do nuclear weapons fit into this scheme of analysis? Some argue that they do not really matter.<sup>30</sup> Charles Kegley claims that American nuclear weapons cannot be said to have deterred the Soviet Union and contributed to the end of the Cold War for four reasons. First, the Soviet Union had no plan to attack. Second, many other factors (such as the absence of a territorial dispute) were operating and we cannot separate nuclear weapons from them. Third, nuclear weapons actually increased tensions rather than diminished them. And fourth, nuclear weapons were increasingly regarded as unusable weapons and hence had little value.<sup>31</sup> A response to these points is in order. First, the Soviet Union may have had no plans to attack precisely because it was deterred. Second, the fact that there were many factors at work does not mean that nuclear weapons did not matter. The behaviour of nuclear powers in crisis, as shown in Chapter 2, clearly illustrates that they did matter. The third and fourth points actually support the contention here that nuclear weapons heightened tensions yet ruled out war, thereby facilitating cooperation.

Let us look more carefully at the impact of nuclear weapons on the cold-war relationships discussed in Chapter 2. At the level of the system, the anarchic structure of international politics generates lack of trust, which makes cooperation difficult and armament necessary. Nuclear weapons were acquired by states because they existed in an anarchic system and felt the need to obtain them in order to counter threats to their security. Moreover, tensions in every case actually increased when the rivalry became nuclear (i.e. when both sides were in possession of nuclear weapons). Yet the weapons had the effect of undercutting one historical consequence of anarchy: the prioritization of conflict over cooperation. Nuclear weapons do not eliminate distrust, but they do compel at least tacit cooperation and encourage explicit cooperation in order to avoid war. A second historical consequence of anarchy has been that it makes the relative distribution of military power meaningful. More power (including its organization) has meant more security. But the advent of nuclear weapons has effectively nullified this principle, even in cases of considerable 'imbalance'. Moreover, nuclear weapons not only rule out nuclear conflict but conventional conflict as well, which means that conventional 'imbalances' are also irrelevant.

Going beyond the neorealist conception of structure, we have seen that nuclear weapons create a high degree of strategic interdependence between rival states, making war unaffordable and at least minimal cooperation necessary. By ruling out the use of force to resolve conflict, however intense it might be, nuclear weapons leave three options: revert to periodic confrontation; stay distant so as to avoid crisis, but without making a compromise; or negotiate and try to resolve the dispute. The first two options offer no hope of victory and entail risks. It can be argued, of course, that staying the course can wear out the adversary, and certainly many hardliners in the United States believed this was the best option and that it eventually worked. But it was not and could not have been known in advance that a new-thinking Gorbachev would emerge, which meant that the Cold War might have continued indefinitely, carrying attendant



costs and risks. What the presence of nuclear weapons did to each cold-war relationship was to create space for learning and for the rethinking of goals and identities in the light of the cold-war experience.

At the level of the individual and small decision-making groups, this learning varied. American and Soviet leaders stepped back from the brink in 1962 (though not after the Berlin Crisis of 1961) and cooperated explicitly, but eventually reverted to competition and a resurgence of hostility by the late 1970s. Neither side questioned the primacy of its goal, which was to 'win' the Cold War. In the 1980s, Gorbachev decided the Soviet system itself was dispensable. He did not so much 'lose' the Cold War as cancel the race by transforming that system. The Soviet Union may have collapsed because of his inability to control the process of reform, but the reality is that by then the Cold War had already ended as a non-zero-sum game: both sides benefited by way of lower costs and risks from the denouement regardless of that particular outcome. This was an outcome very different from those of previous wars and post-war settlements. At any rate, the key point here is that Gorbachev and his colleagues did have the option to adopt a different course, including continuing the competition and retaining the essentials of the Soviet system. After all, the Chinese leadership has been able to attain high economic growth without abandoning its political organization or accepting American dominance.

In the US–China case, there was no such radical rethinking of the ideational basis of the conflict. The rapprochement was driven by pure *realpolitik*. In consequence, the ideational difference between the two remains and has produced rumbles reminiscent of the past. Thus, how individuals respond to a situation created by nuclear confrontation varies with what they learn from the process and how they respond. The Soviet–China cold war showed a pattern of sustained distrust after the 1969 conflict and ended only when Gorbachev initiated serious change in the mid-1980s. Each of the three cold wars showed a different pattern: cyclical conflict and cooperation (US–Soviet) prior to a sudden end; rapid realignment after a relatively short span of conflict (US–China); and prolonged but relatively low-level hostility before cooperation resumed (Soviet–China). In the case of the United States and North Korea, while it is too early to say that the cold-war relationship has ended, it is evident that the process has been cyclical and is still incomplete, since the ideational basis of the conflict remains untouched. North Korea's leadership has clearly shifted its priorities from privileging military power to a new stress on economic growth.<sup>32</sup> But that apart, it retains some of its nuclear capability and its authoritarian system.

Finally, as shown above, while nuclear weapons generate structural changes in the form of opportunities and encourage rethinking among leaders and elites, what actually happens depends on the political process in each state and reciprocity between them. Leaders must have the capacity to translate rethinking into practice, which requires them to prevail against domestic opposition. This must happen on both sides for an attempt at resolution to work.

## India and Pakistan: the peace process

Following the last major crisis between them in 2001–2, India and Pakistan gradually revived their on-again-off-again negotiations. Throughout their rivalry, they had never completely broken off from each other, and from time to time had even achieved significant progress. It is useful to recount in brief the history of their agreements. In the period preceding their 1998 tests, these included the following:<sup>33</sup>

- *Water rights*: the Indus Treaty (1962), an agreement on sharing of the waters of the transnational Indus River Basin.
- *Communication measures*: a dedicated ‘hotline’ between their respective Directors-General of Military Operations (1971) and a separate one between their Prime Ministers (1997), the latter being a revival of an earlier link that had fallen into disuse.
- *Notification measures*: an agreement on prior notification of military exercises (1991).
- *Transparency measures*: invitation of foreign observers during military exercises by both countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s.
- *Border security measures*: the Agreement on the Violation of Airspace (1992), which prohibits combat aircraft from flying within a zone ten kilometres on either side of each other’s airspace, and prohibits unarmed aircraft from flying within one kilometre of either side’s airspace.
- *Consultation measures*: the establishment of an Indo-Pakistani Joint Commission (1982) to facilitate ministerial-level discussion, later (1990) replaced by regular Foreign Secretary-level meetings.

Given this background, it is not surprising that nuclearization has consistently produced attempts at stabilization. Although the post-Kargil Agra summit of July 2001 between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf ended in failure, the renewal of crisis in 2001–2 brought a more wide-ranging – and still on-going – series of discussions from February 2004 known as the India–Pakistan Composite Dialogue.<sup>34</sup> The eight-point agenda of the on-going dialogue encompasses (i) confidence-building measures (CBMs); (ii) Jammu and Kashmir; (iii) Siachen; (iv) Sir Creek; (v) Wullar barrage/Tulbul navigation project; (vi) terrorism and drug trafficking; (vii) economic and cultural cooperation; and (viii) promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields. Dialogue on nuclear weapons-related issues comes into the first category. Again, not surprisingly, the most significant progress has been made in this area.

### *The nuclear dialogue*

After the crises of 1999 and 2001–2, it was natural that the two countries paid particular attention to building mutual confidence on nuclear issues. India and Pakistan, unlike other nuclear rivals, began the process of engendering nuclear

stability remarkably early. Their first agreement was signed in December 1988 when neither was officially a nuclear-armed state. The India–Pakistan Agreement on Non-attack of Nuclear Facilities committed the signatories to exchange lists of all nuclear-related facilities and to refrain from attacking each other's facilities. This proto-nuclear agreement, reached when both were developing their nuclear capability covertly, involved the recognition that nuclear facilities may be viewed as weapons for the enemy when they are considered as targets.<sup>35</sup> It has been scrupulously observed even when tensions have been high. After the two publicly adopted nuclear deterrence doctrines and postures in 1998, they took a step forward with the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 1999. Under the MoU, the two sides agreed to:

- engage in bilateral consultations on security concepts and doctrines
- provide advance notification of impending ballistic missile tests
- undertake national measures to reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, and to notify each other in case such an event should occur
- abide by their respective unilateral moratoria on nuclear testing
- conclude an agreement on avoiding incidents at sea
- engage in consultations on existing and new CBMs, communications links, and security, disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

The Kargil conflict (1999) brought the negotiation process to an abrupt halt. However, negotiations resumed in 2004 as part of the composite dialogue and, following a two-day meeting of officials, the two sides agreed in June that, among other things:

- the existing hotline between their Directors-General of Military Operations would be upgraded
- a new hotline would be established between their Foreign Secretaries
- negotiations would commence on technical parameters for a missile test notification agreement
- both would continue their respective testing moratoria.

Building on the background of the Lahore MoU and a joint statement in June 2004, a series of expert level talks was launched on nuclear CBMs in December 2004. In August 2005, the two sides agreed on the establishment of a secure hotline between their Foreign Secretaries and on pre-notification of ballistic missile flight tests. This involved the formalization of a process that had already become a convention between them.

The hotline agreement is a useful communications measure for the two sides to establish immediate contact in the event of a crisis, or of actual hostilities breaking out, whether by design or not, or in case of a destabilizing incident such as a major act of terrorism or an accidental launch. The Foreign Secretary level is appropriate, since this official is an executive with knowledge but no immediate decision-

making power, which is reserved to a political leadership that generally has limited direct and detailed knowledge of the subject.

The launch notification agreement provides for a minimum three-day advance notice of intent to launch a surface-to-surface ballistic missile within a five-day window. It also states that such a launch will not be from a site less than forty kilometres from the international border or LoC, that its trajectory should be at a minimum of forty kilometres horizontally from the international border or LoC, and that the point of impact should be at least seventy kilometres from the border or LoC. The purpose of the agreement is to ensure that each is aware of a forthcoming launch and that there is no possibility of misperception resulting from an unexpected launch. The hotline is a useful back-up in case a launch is misdirected.

In August 2005 and January 2006, India and Pakistan agreed to continue consultations on national measures to reduce the risk of unauthorized or accidental use of nuclear weapons. They also agreed to consult each other on security concepts and nuclear doctrines; discuss an agreement on preventing incidents at sea and in the air; and deliberate on an agreement not to locate strike formations permanently near their border. Subsequently, an agreement on Reducing the Risk from Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons was signed in February 2007 and went into effect immediately.<sup>36</sup> The two countries agreed to notify each other in the event of a nuclear accident through hotline links between their Foreign Secretaries or Directors-General of Military Operations. The agreement is to remain in force for five years and is renewable thereafter. Article 2 of the Agreement specifically notes that it seeks to avoid 'the risk of an outbreak of a nuclear war between the two countries'. This testifies to Indian and Pakistani awareness of interdependence not only by way of mutual deterrence but also through the risk of accidental war.

### ***Other developments***

There has been significant improvement in the relationship in several other respects. Trade, which was paltry, has begun to grow quickly. Total trade rose from \$616 million in 2004–5 to \$1.6 billion in 2006–7, and is projected to reach \$10 billion by 2010.<sup>37</sup> Remarkably, India has begun to make significant concessions. These include relaxing non-tariff barriers; refraining from demanding reciprocity by way of concessions on transit facilities for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia and on Most Favoured Nation treatment (which Pakistan has held back); and appointing a committee to redress the trade balance, which is tilted in its favour.<sup>38</sup> The opening of banks on both sides, expansion of transport services for both passengers and goods, and plans to commence trade across the LoC in Kashmir are all part of the positive trend. Maritime authorities communicate via hotline to reduce incidences of fishermen being arrested for entering each other's coastal waters.<sup>39</sup> An ambitious project to pipe natural gas from Iran to Pakistan and India has been under negotiation for years. Though its progress has been slow, the fact that it has been negotiated at all is a sign of the change in the India–Pakistan relationship. It is also significant that both India and Pakistan have resisted pressure from the United States to cancel the project.<sup>40</sup> Cultural exchange has already

been opened up by satellite television, which enables people on either side to watch programmes on the other. Other forms of cultural cooperation are in evidence. In March 2007, it was reported that India's premier cultural body, the Sahitya Akademi, had awarded its new fellowship in the name of Indian writer Premchand to a Pakistani writer, Intezar Hussain.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, cartographic and resource-related disputes have proved more difficult. Siachen, the Wullar Barrage/Tulbul project and the Kishanganga hydel power project have remained intractable. A joint mechanism on terrorism, agreed in September 2006, was formally launched in March 2007, but has made limited progress, in large part because of differences over what constitutes terrorism. Rising domestic turbulence in Pakistan is partly responsible for slowing down the process.

While Pakistanis have from time to time expressed impatience with the slow pace of progress on Kashmir, fundamental changes had taken place by mid-2007. The leaderships of the two countries viewed each other more favourably than ever before. India, which had been deeply suspicious of the Pakistani military, now looked on General Musharraf as a 'credible interlocutor'.<sup>42</sup> On the other side, Mahmud Ali Durrani, Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, praised India as a 'role model' for its economic progress and its democracy.<sup>43</sup> In short, there were signs of a kind of 'new thinking' about the other on both sides. From a zero-sum approach, both countries shifted to a middle ground which envisaged the search for a solution acceptable not only to them but also kept in mind the concerns of the people of Kashmir. The idea of a 'soft' border in Kashmir as part of a process of increasing communication and movement between the two parts of Kashmir was a major advance. In effect, the fading of the dividing line in Kashmir was being envisaged as occurring simultaneously with the lessening of India-Pakistan tensions. How far will this process go? Are we on the verge of the end of this cold war or will détente be followed by regression and renewed conflict, as was the case with the United States-Soviet relationship? The remainder of this chapter assesses the possibilities in accordance with the levels-of-analysis framework developed above.

## **Gauging the prospects for India and Pakistan**

### *System-level factors and material incentives*

Here, modification of the effects of anarchy may be considered in several ways. Because India and Pakistan exist in an anarchic system, they have engaged in wars, conflicts and crises over sixty-odd years. One possibility worth considering is whether anarchy might end, not in the sense that world politics might be dramatically transformed, but in the sense that the anarchic relationship between two states may cease to exist. After all, while there is debate over when exactly the Cold War ended, there was a certain finality in the extinction of the Soviet Union. In the India-Pakistan case, there are two possibilities: the amalgamation of the two states or the disintegration of at least one of them. Amalgamation by military

conquest is ruled out since both of them possess the deterrent power of nuclear weapons. Amalgamation by choice is a possibility. After all, Sikkim became a part of India as late as 1975 with no internal opposition and no subsequent backlash. But the reunification of India and Pakistan is something that old-timers waxing nostalgic thought wishfully about or Pakistanis worried about in the early years after Independence. Barring occasional mild speculation, it is not on the cards because no one seriously thinks it feasible.<sup>44</sup>

What of disintegration? Both countries have been dogged by secessionist movements. India has struggled with movements in Punjab, Kashmir, and the northeast. The last has seen an on-going series of movements in states like Assam, Nagaland, and Tripura over more than half a century. Yet, despite the considerable difficulties the Indian state has encountered in bringing these movements to an end, none has succeeded in breaking away. In general, a mixed policy of force and negotiation has succeeded in keeping the country together, with local elites periodically being incorporated into the mainstream. (Kashmir is an exceptional case since it involves an inter-state dispute with Pakistan and because it has a special status under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.) Notwithstanding the domino theory of secession, there is no longer acute anxiety that India might fall apart, which is why it no longer presses for the unification of Kashmir within its own territory. There is awareness that the dream of a secure prosperous society is still some way short of coming true, but there is optimism. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's address to the nation on the sixtieth anniversary of India's independence on August 15, 2007, stressed the importance of growth and social justice, but made no mention of fissiparous tendencies.<sup>45</sup> Media commentary similarly reflected a sense of what remains to be done by way of public welfare, but there was no speculation that things could go seriously wrong.<sup>46</sup>

In Pakistan, the mood was different. The atmosphere of crisis amidst the rise of radical violence, the inability of the military to control it, and anxieties about the future have been noted in Chapter 3. Based on a set of twelve social, economic and political indicators, the Failed States Index for 2007 showed Pakistan ranked twelfth in the world (starting from the weakest), faring poorly on every count except its economy.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the country does not appear anywhere close to breaking up. Political turbulence takes place over control of the country in its present form. There is no significant secessionist movement except in Balochistan, where the resistance from rebels is considerable but represents a struggle for local autonomy and has not developed into a serious movement to break away. Even in the highly unlikely event of disintegration, the core of Pakistan centred on Punjab will remain unchanged, economically strong, and a nuclear-armed state, and the India-Pakistan cold war would continue if other factors remained constant.

Another aspect of structure could be distribution of power. Though both have nuclear weapons, giving them the capacity to deter states with much larger military forces, it is possible that a commonly perceived threat from a third country might bring them together. This is what brought the United States and China together. But there does not seem to be much likelihood of a common enemy emerging. The possibilities are Iran, China, and the United States, since only these three are

geopolitically close. Iran's relationship with Pakistan has at times been uncomfortable. In the aftermath of the Khomeini revolution, Iran provided support to the Shias in Pakistan and backed their resistance to Sunni radicals. When the Pakistan-sponsored Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, Iran supported the Northern Alliance that fought against it. Although Iran–Pakistan relations have been on the upswing, there is some concern in Pakistan about Iran's nuclear programme. However, even if the relationship were to turn sour, India has no reason to make common cause with Pakistan over Iran. On the other hand, the three countries have been negotiating, if very slowly, for the construction of the Iran–Pakistan–India pipeline, which will bring them closer together. China is even more unlikely to be a common threat. The China–Pakistan relationship has long been an 'all-weather' one and there is no reason to believe it will not remain so, particularly since Pakistan remains a strategic card for China in its hedging policy against India. The United States and India are drawing closer, a process likely to remain in place despite hiccups, because their broad strategic interests – regional stability, anti-terrorism, and hedging against China – are common.

Finally, a sharp change in the distribution of power is a factor that might make a difference. We have seen that so far as military power is concerned, both have the deterrent power of nuclear weapons. On the economic side, India is on a rapid growth trajectory that Pakistan will find hard to keep pace with, even if it were to stabilize quickly. According to a Goldman Sachs projection, India's economy will overtake that of Japan in GDP terms by about 2030 and the United States about a decade later.<sup>48</sup> Even if this is taken with a measure of caution, the trend is clear, and other studies confirm it.<sup>49</sup> By itself, this does not mean much, except that India will gradually have greater economic leverage over Pakistan. On the political front, though, the changing architecture of Asian security will add to India's broad political influence. Already, India is emerging as a major player in Asian politics. A triangular politics of hedging is evident among India, China, and the United States in which the United States and India are cooperating with China and simultaneously attempting to balance it.<sup>50</sup> This may turn into a more serious but still symbolic balance-of-power game. Alternatively, the emerging linkage between India and the United States, Japan, and Australia – sometimes referred to as the (putative) 'coalition of democracies' – may lead to a wider game of cooperation and confrontation with China.<sup>51</sup> The large-scale naval exercises conducted by the four along with Singapore in September 2007 indicated a coalition-building effort. This movement need not necessarily be a design to contain China, since all its members have a large stake in expanded economic cooperation with that country. It could turn into the basis of a future institutional arrangement in Asia that incorporates other major players active in the region, mainly China, Russia, the European Union, and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>52</sup>

Either way, India will don a mantle that will effectively leave Pakistan in its political shadow. This cannot undermine Pakistan's physical security, but it could have a significant effect on its political choices. Since Independence, Pakistan has pursued its claim to Kashmir by attempting to draw support from the international community. With nuclear weapons entering the equation, the use of force is ruled



out. The Kargil episode and the backing of terrorists did succeed in putting India under pressure to negotiate on Kashmir, but they also created fresh problems. The first branded Pakistan as an irresponsible nuclear power. The second, in conjunction with its history of stoking the fires of militancy in Afghanistan, produced a domestic environment that gravely threatened the stability of the Pakistani state. India's political take-off as a regional and emerging global power has closed the last political option for Pakistan *vis-à-vis* the international community. In the political sense, therefore, structural developments favour the making of a deal with India over Kashmir. That Pakistanis were aware of this was evident from their plaintive objections to the India-US nuclear agreement. Though their protests were officially based on nonproliferation grounds (emphasizing the discriminatory favour shown to India) and on the contention that the agreement would generate an arms race, the real anxiety stemmed from the political advantage accruing to India as a result of its strategic partnership with the United States.<sup>53</sup>

We saw earlier that the structural position of a state produces typical patterns of strategy. To recapitulate, India as a strong state and Pakistan as a relatively weak state established a hegemon-challenger relationship. However, India's rising global aspirations required it to alter its orientation towards its neighbours. It could hardly claim to be a major Asian power if it was swamped in subcontinental entanglements involving hostile relations with its neighbours.<sup>54</sup> It needed to go beyond cooperation and erase the hegemonic past, which it was successful in doing gradually, notably with Sri Lanka.<sup>55</sup> India's concessions to Pakistan on trade, noted above, fell in with this new pattern.<sup>56</sup> Pakistan now had an incentive to respond, and stood to gain significantly as a result because, as the newspaper *Dawn* observed, 'it makes sense to do business with the cheapest supplier'.<sup>57</sup>

Systemic interaction has two facets in the present context. Both involve the role of interdependence, which creates disincentives for conflict and incentives for cooperation. The emergence of economic interdependence gradually changes the balance between incentives in favour of cooperation. India and Pakistan are both part of a larger global economic system that is increasingly integrated and places a premium on stability in order to induce foreign direct investment (FDI) and technology, which are vital for growth. Even crises without fighting are extremely expensive. The 2001-2 crisis is believed to have cost Pakistan \$3.3 billion in the first six months alone.<sup>58</sup> The ten-month deployment set India back by \$1.6 billion.<sup>59</sup> As India and Pakistan become more integrated into the global economic system, conflict becomes more costly and cooperation cheaper. Furthermore, to be competitive, it is necessary to ensure a stable environment conducive to FDI. This was brought home to India during the 2001-2 crisis, when foreign business slowed down and the government came under pressure from the Indian business community to end the confrontation.<sup>60</sup> The growing trade between India and Pakistan, stemming from the increasing integration of the global economy, reflects a shift in the relative weights of economic concerns and strategic politics. This has helped reverse the old distance between the two countries. We must recognize the limits of this factor. It by no means creates direct economic interdependence between India and Pakistan. That future is still distant. Nevertheless, as their stake in each



other grows, the political cost of going ahead will decrease and the political cost of turning back will increase.

The effects of strategic interdependence have already been made clear in the preceding chapter. To reiterate, nuclear weapons made the resort to war too costly and caused both sides to engage in tacit as well as explicit cooperation during their crises. As seen above, awareness of this interdependence led the two countries to engage in extensive negotiations which resulted in a series of nuclear and other CBMs. This in turn created a habit of negotiations underlined by strategic interdependence and opened up space for rethinking the politics of the relationship among the chief decision makers on both sides. As Pakistan's Senator Mushahid Hussain told an audience at Johns Hopkins University in January 2007, India and Pakistan had rejected war as an option and developed new 'rules of behaviour'.<sup>61</sup> One caveat needs to be introduced here. I pointed out the distinction between general and immediate interdependence earlier in this book. The critical aspect of the difference between them involves the experience of being bound together in a common fate. It may happen that lack of awareness suppresses this experience. A vivid example alluded to in the previous chapter is the evident lack of attention that both countries have given to the deployment of cruise missiles.<sup>62</sup> These are dual-use weapons (Pakistan has clearly called them nuclear-capable, while India has not). Because they are fast and hard to detect, they encourage the adoption of alert nuclear postures and erroneous perception of nuclear attack during a crisis. Because they raise the risk of war, they generate immediate interdependence, just as intermediate-range missiles positioned in Europe did during the Cold War. Yet, at the time of writing in late 2007, India and Pakistan have not made any effort to curtail the deployment of these weapons.

A glance back at the systemic level of analysis reviewed here indicates that in several respects there are incentives for cooperation that outweigh the incentives for conflict inherent in an anarchic system. System-level change not only encourages cooperation for the purpose of stabilization, but prevents resolution by force. How have decision makers responded to the changed balance of systemic incentives?

### *Individuals and ideas*

While it is common to use terms such as 'India' and 'Pakistan' in security discourse, the fact remains that specific acts carried out on behalf of states arise from decisions made by particular individuals or small groups. Leadership can and does often play a determining role in shaping policy, though it is constrained by factors operating at other levels of analysis. Some leaders may rise above such constraints, others may not. The personal preferences of statesmen and their personalities and perceptions are important. No analysis of the Cold War can ignore the profound impact of a single individual, Mikhail Gorbachev, in initiating the dramatic transformation in US-Soviet relations. That Ronald Reagan, most determined of Cold Warriors, was prepared to grasp Gorbachev's olive branch speaks equally strongly of the role of the individual. It is not difficult to conceive of a very different outcome had the thinking of either been different.

Might we see a Gorbachev (or even two!) in South Asia? A leader able to alter the trajectory of his or her country's history is rare indeed. Leaders can bring transformation only when conditions are suitable for change. In South Asia, both India and Pakistan would certainly benefit from an end to their perennial hostility. But the key point is whether their leaders are confronted with a situation that makes a change to reverse existing policy politically expedient and feasible. From the Indian standpoint, the pressure is not very strong. The economy is expanding faster than anticipated, and military expenditure does not consume a very large proportion of revenues. Yet, at some personal political risk, former Prime Minister Vajpayee showed a persistent interest in mending fences with Pakistan. In this context, it is worth recalling that the Indian leadership has had low confidence in President Musharraf, who is held responsible for what is universally perceived in India as the Kargil betrayal. Despite this, Vajpayee was prepared to meet Musharraf at Agra in 2001. Furthermore, notwithstanding the immense hostility generated by the terrorist attack on India's Parliament in December 2001 and the subsequent crisis, he once again conveyed his readiness to negotiate to Pakistan in 2003. This launched the on-going dialogue between the two countries. Manmohan Singh has sustained the movement towards improved relations with Pakistan. Musharraf, similarly, was willing to come to terms, though, as a military man, he carried in his mind the long and bitter history of India-Pakistan conflict.<sup>63</sup>

Leaders on both sides were disinclined to lean too heavily on understandings about the role of nuclear weapons derived from the Cold War. Vajpayee's doubts about the value of nuclear weapons were expressed as early as 1979, when, as Minister for External Affairs in Prime Minister Morarji Desai's cabinet, he opposed reviving the Indian nuclear weapons programme despite intelligence to the effect that Pakistan was making progress in uranium enrichment.<sup>64</sup> In his poetry, he reflected that the 'ultimate weapon' was 'monstrous' and that history would never forgive its makers if they failed to recognize this.<sup>65</sup> Manmohan Singh publicly acknowledged that 'the only lasting solution to any political or bilateral dispute is one that is negotiated through dialogue and discussion'.<sup>66</sup> The revolutionary character of nuclear weapons was acknowledged by Musharraf when he asserted in March 2003 that where nuclear weapons were concerned, numbers did not matter 'beyond a point'.<sup>67</sup> Notwithstanding their propensity to signal warnings through verbal combat and symbolic missile testing, leaders on both sides refrained from deploying their nuclear weapons even during the worst of crises, when threat perceptions were high. They also avoided taking undue risks that might have caused them to slide into conventional war.

The lesson they learned from their crises was that they must persist with negotiations. India's anger over Kargil did not lead it to abandon diplomatic and political efforts to improve relations. Similarly, despite the frustration of the Kargil setback and the continuing sparring over Kashmir, Musharraf was willing to engage with Indian leaders. After the initial acrimony, a range of initiatives was undertaken to improve the political environment through talks. Vajpayee and his colleagues also began to rethink Kashmir. In late 2000, a unilateral ceasefire was declared to facilitate talks between the government and Kashmiri secessionists. India and Pakistan

agreed to revive the hot line (between their respective Directors-General of Military Operations), which had fallen into disuse a year earlier. Subsequently, renewed diplomatic efforts led to the Agra summit between Vajpayee and Musharraf, and, of course, the current and sustained round of negotiations began to take shape barely a year after the 2001–2 crisis. Both could have refrained from talks. India had gained to the extent of focusing the world's attention on Pakistan's role in fostering cross-border terrorism. Pakistan could have been content with continuing its strategy of backing the fighters in Kashmir at a lower level than before, but nuclearization had created new risks that encouraged them to talk. This led them to move from war avoidance to risk reduction. They then went beyond.

More significantly, both sides began to see their conflict anew. The shift in their positions on Kashmir was substantial.<sup>68</sup> Both abandoned their previous non-negotiable positions on assimilating the whole region. Gradually, they moved away from the border question by agreeing to find ways to soften the existing divide created by the LoC. India began to talk seriously with the main political opposition in the Kashmir Valley, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), and Pakistan began to encourage the APHC to negotiate with India. These changes reflected 'a dawning recognition that the true stakes in the India-Pakistan conflict, as they have evolved over 60 years, are low'.<sup>69</sup> Without a comprehensive statement to express them, a set of principles emerged. The LoC would not be altered; the focus would be on self-governance on both sides of the line; military forces would eventually be reduced substantially; and India and Pakistan would together develop a mechanism to implement the process.<sup>70</sup> The new thinking, while not as dramatic as that which propelled the end of the Cold War, nevertheless brought unprecedented and unexpected changes. As Verghese Koithara points out, it infused the idea of a compromise solution with 'respectability'; made the future more important than the past; brought a new focus on the people of Kashmir; and created a smooth and regular negotiating channel between the old rivals.<sup>71</sup> Pakistan made some major concessions. In March 2006, Musharraf suggested joint management of Kashmir.<sup>72</sup> By the summer of 2007, Pakistan had reversed its backing for *jihadis* fighting in Kashmir.<sup>73</sup> Musharraf's willingness to go a long way quickly was such that moderate Kashmiri leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq asked him to go slow on the peace process.<sup>74</sup> India's Home Minister, touching on the subject of continuing violence in Kashmir, acknowledged in July 2007 that 'we should not blame Pakistan for every ... increase in infiltration and spurt in violence here (Kashmir)'.<sup>75</sup>

The trajectory of the relationship has undoubtedly changed significantly with this new thinking. Yet its culmination point is not clear. For a better appreciation of the forces at work, we need to look more closely at domestic politics.

### *The state level – identities and capacities for change*

Domestic politics is a critical site for the transformation of inter-state conflict. In it we find the crucial source of how identity works: whether citizens' sense of 'doing' and 'feeling' are strong enough to generate the kind of confidence that provides a sound basis for identity, or whether participation and belonging are weak and

permeated with frustration, so that identity is reinforced by outward hostility. Here, we must look at the nature of domestic political life and how far it provides security and involvement for the citizen. Second, at this level there is the question whether leaders have the ability to turn the conjunction of structural and ideational factors into reality. The two are connected, for a secure society is more likely to be amenable to the transformation of external relationships than one that is not.

For Indians, as Chapter 3 demonstrated, the democratic experience has had a palliative effect. The decline of the once-dominant Congress Party, the advent of an era of coalition governments, and the slow but steady empowerment of the underprivileged have all contributed to the development of a decentralized and more confident national identity. But that confidence will take time to consolidate, especially in the light of the tensions still characteristic of Indian democracy, including persistent secessionist violence in different parts of the country. Partition and inter-faith tension remain alive, history feeding into current conflict and further reinforcing divisive collective memories. The integration of Muslims into Indian society, for example, remains incomplete, as has been recognized and articulated at length in the Sachar Report. On the other hand, right-wing parties oppose the implementation of the report.<sup>76</sup> Regular episodes of violence – Hindu attacks on Muslims, Muslim groups' resort to terrorist acts – perpetuate and intensify the problem. So long as these pressures persist, the twin problems of Pakistan and Kashmir will remain a reminder of all that can go wrong. Despite being a relatively satisfied power, India is unlikely to be agreeable to an early final resolution of the Kashmir problem.

For Pakistanis, the Kashmir cause retains its vitality. In a country buffeted by social and political instability, and lacking the confidence of a long and clearly defined history, Kashmir and the Indian 'other' remain the glue to hold together a society that has the potential to unravel politically. Pakistani politics is at a critical turning point, caught in the battle for supremacy among the Army, the democratic movement, and the religious right. At the time of writing, it is impossible to foresee the direction it will take. So long as national identity remains an outstanding problem, it is hard to see how either side could accept a clear-cut conclusion to the Kashmir situation. Kashmir remains a powerful symbol that opposition groups can use to further their cause.

The difficulty is aggravated by the growth of right-wing, fundamentalist pressures in both countries. In India, the rise of Hindu fundamentalism has been exemplified by the political ascent of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Though the BJP has had perforce to temper some of its radicalism on the anvil of political exigency, it cannot afford to antagonize the right wing beyond a point, for the latter enjoys considerable support within the Party itself and from fraternal organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal. The setback experienced by the BJP in the 2004 elections does not change things much. As an opposition party, the BJP is critical of a deal on Kashmir. Responding to Prime Minister Singh's expressed desire in July 2007 to convert the Line of Control into a 'line of peace', the BJP was vociferous in asserting that this went 'against the spirit' of a 1994 parliamentary resolution calling for the incorporation of all of Kashmir into

India.<sup>77</sup> The growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan has already been mentioned. This has manifested itself in the rise of the Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA), an alliance of six religious parties. In the 2002 elections, the MMA came to power in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan (through a coalition in the latter). The MMA rejected any 'third option' other than a referendum in Kashmir for its full and complete accession to either Pakistan or India.<sup>78</sup> Thus, governments in both countries have been susceptible to right-wing pressures that greatly undermine their capacity to compromise. Given the uneven processes of economic and social change to which both societies are subject, the present patterns of unstable politics are bound to persist for some time. It is very unlikely that the elite in either country will feel confident enough to take the risk of alienating such powerful right-wing forces.

A major reversal of policy requires a strong government. India has been in an era of coalition politics since the 1990s. Coalition governments do not have the capacity to make major controversial decisions without risking their survival. They are subject to attack from three sources: intra-party, intra-coalition, and opposition parties. The Congress-led coalition government of Manmohan Singh, in power since 2004, does not have the capacity to make a major concession on Kashmir. Its weakness was clear from its struggle to clear the way for the India-US nuclear agreement, which foundered under opposition from the left. Pakistan has not seen a single elected civilian government complete a full term in office. Military governments may appear tougher, but are not free from the pressures of governing a turbulent society. The Pakistan Army, which has its own institutional interests, is more concerned with relative stability than with transforming relations with India, which in their current state underline the role of the military. Besides, the Army does not appear to have the interest or the capacity to control the religious right, and has failed to undertake the numerous reforms to which it had committed itself earlier.<sup>79</sup> By the second half of 2007, Pakistani politics was deeply divided, with the Army, mainstream political parties, and the religious right vying for power. This does not portend a strong government. Even the establishment of democratic rule is unlikely to alter the equation significantly. An elected government would still have to contend with opposition from the religious right even if indications that the Army has shifted its position on Kashmir and India are proved right.<sup>80</sup> For these reasons, a dramatic breakthrough in India-Pakistan should not be expected.

Will generational change and public opinion make a difference? Arguably, the post-Independence generation of today, which does not carry the painful baggage of the past, might be more inclined to the peaceful resolution of conflict. In the Soviet Union, Gorbachev represented a post-Revolution generation less committed to the ideology and ideals of its predecessors. Few identified with the Soviet system, which was virtually comatose by the 1980s. In contrast, while the desire for peace is said to be there in South Asia, generation change in India and Pakistan does not have beneath it a groundswell of yearning for something dramatically new. Indeed, public opinion has if anything been characterized by unprecedented volatility, see-sawing between high degrees of warmth and hostility towards the neighbour. Not long ago, when the two governments confronted each

other with mobilized military forces, public opinion in both countries was hostile to the 'enemy'. Today, as governments proffer olive branches to each other, public opinion is marked by unprecedented cross-border affection. This suggests that, rather than shaping state policy, public opinion may be a creature of it.

A related question is that of democracy and its effects on inter-state relations. There is certainly a good case for saying that democracies do not fight. But this applies to democracies with advanced, industrialized economies. India and Pakistan have not yet attained that level. It may be expected that as both countries proceed on the path of democracy, they would tend to become more inclined towards a peaceable relationship. Such an argument has to be qualified. For one, from a strictly methodological point of view, there are too few cases to underline this 'law' of international behaviour. On the contrary, we do know that the democratization process in South Asia has not necessarily been conducive to better relations. More generally, historical evidence shows that the path to democratic peace is perilous, for states in the process of democratizing are prone to fight.<sup>81</sup> As if to confirm this, the near-war in Kargil took place when there was a democratic regime in Pakistan, at a time when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's position was virtually unchallenged. Besides, Pakistan has never been more than a 'hybrid' democracy, with mainstream political parties exercising power in the shadow of the military.<sup>82</sup> Leaders attempting to transform India–Pakistan relations face the challenge of obtaining the assent of all three poles in Pakistani politics: the Army, the mainstream parties, and the religious right.

On the whole, there is little prospect of a rapid unwinding of the India–Pakistan cold war because at the level of domestic politics, the identity issue revolving around Kashmir and the domestic politics of the two countries are not conducive to it. As Musharraf lamented in May 2007:

If we have to reach a conclusion then both sides have to give up. And when both give up, then in both countries there is opposition and a hue and cry. Everybody says develop a consensus first. *Arrey bhai* [Oh, brother], how to develop a consensus here? It will take years to develop a consensus, and we will never be able to solve it.<sup>83</sup>

While Musharraf's frustration is understandable, it is still remarkable that the rivals have been able to travel as far down the road of compromise as they have.

Might the peace process be reversed? On the Indian side, it is unlikely to be thrust back, as there is no constituency for such a reversal. Though resistance to major concessions remains, the failure of 2001–2 has closed the preferred option of hardliners. Opposition parties and sometimes unwilling coalition partners are likely to retard the process of coming to terms, but not to try and roll it back. If the relationship heats up, there is more likely to be a braking effect than reversal. With Indian attention shifting to the Asian and global arenas, there is not as much political capital in hostility to Pakistan as there was in the past. Much depends on the future of Pakistan, which stands at a critical juncture in its political history. The military has been weakened by the democratic surge emanating from the

successful movement for the restoration of suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry (March–July 2007) and by the rising tide of ‘Talibanization’ and terrorist violence not only along the western border but in the heart of the country, as symbolized by the Lal Masjid crisis.<sup>84</sup> Yet its power is deeply embedded in the administrative structure and the economy, as we have seen. The peace process could conceivably be reversed in three ways. First, more conservative elements in the Army could take control and try and revert to anti-Indianism in order to strengthen their base. This will not be effective for very long, as it is an option that made little headway in the past and is less promising now than it was then.

Second, if the liberally inclined democratic parties allow their rule to degenerate again as they did in the 1990s, the religious right, which opposes a deal on Kashmir, might attain greater electoral success. But here again, we might remember that it was the religious right in India which began the current peace process. At least one prominent member of the Pakistani religious right, Maulana Fazlur Rehman of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI), has openly favoured a rapprochement with India and even assented to the conversion of the LoC into a border.<sup>85</sup> A third possibility is a civil war followed by a Taliban-like government taking control, which would be most likely to unravel the movement towards entente. However, this does not seem likely. While the religious extremists are powerful in the border regions, they are at best problematic in the rest of the country. Pakistani democracy might be weak, but it has adherents, as was visible from the mass support received by Chief Justice Chaudhry during his comeback campaign. Hence there is good reason to be optimistic that the peace process has a basic vigour that will see it through uncertainties to come. India and Pakistan have come a long way since the 2001–2 crisis. With every development in the peace process engendered by new thinking and the cumulative effect of dialogue and confidence building, it becomes more costly and difficult to turn back.

At the same time, we must recognize that the process will not move forward at a rapid pace. It is more likely to proceed at a moderate speed best captured by the concept of graduated reciprocation in tension reduction (GRIT), which involves mutually interacting efforts to reduce tension and build confidence.<sup>86</sup> India and Pakistan are still short of the half-way point in a three-stage accommodation process of the kind seen in the ending of the Cold War.<sup>87</sup> The first stage involves reduction of the threat of war, in which considerable progress has been made. The second involves negotiation and agreement on a broad array of social and economic issues involving people, not just governments. That has begun, but is yet to develop fully. In the third stage, ‘cooperation must be seen by peoples and leaders alike as the “natural” order of things, and war, [sic] not only unlikely, but almost unthinkable’.<sup>88</sup> This seems a long way away, as both countries, for all their cooperative engagement, have simultaneously been building up their armouries and have still to grapple successfully with the issue of Kashmir.



## **Conclusion**

The three historical cold wars that have ended did so in two different ways. The US–Soviet and Soviet–Chinese rivalries drew to a close when the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev was able to grasp the structural moment, rethink the relationship, and steer it through the shoals of domestic resistance. The effort succeeded only when the rival state's leadership reciprocated. Nuclear weapons effectively eliminated the structural basis of rivalry by making war rationally unviable. The rethinking process cut the Gordian knot of ideational differences relating to ideology and identity. In the US–China case, there was no fundamentally new thinking, but rather realignment based on old structural thinking. Balance of power considerations rather than a questioning of ideational differences drove the creation of the US–China quasi-alliance against the Soviet Union. Differences over identity were suppressed rather than dissolved, which explains the revival of the adversarial element in their relationship in the post-Cold War era.

India and Pakistan have clearly learned that nuclear weapons have left them with no option but to seek a political resolution of the Kashmir dispute. New ideas have sprung from the failure of the old. At the critical state level of analysis, which determines whether and when these ideas are successfully turned into practice, there is considerable uncertainty as to the pace of change, but we do have a basis for expecting that the process will not collapse. It is possible that some sort of shock comparable to the terrorist attack on India's Parliament or worse could turn the clock back. It is equally feasible that a shock would push them close together. For instance, a trans-border nuclear accident might have just this effect. These can only be speculations. More probably, the process will build slowly over time, punctuated by occasional setbacks. The key issue is identity, and two points are vital here. First, the way domestic politics will play out in the two countries is important for creating the conditions which make the external face of identity less central and thereby improve the prospects for compromise. Second, the same domestic politics will determine through the interplay of internal power relations the pace and extent of change. While India is not without its problems, developments in Pakistan are critical because of the uncertainties over its political future. The key issue is not so much whether the question of Kashmir's identity will be resolved as when Kashmir will cease to be the determinant of the identity of India and Pakistan. Already, a perceptible shift is visible.

It is not reasonable to expect social scientists to forecast the end of a cold war. But it is certainly reasonable to ask them whether the factors that will cause this to happen and the process by which it will happen, or not, can be identified. This chapter has identified the factors at three different levels of analysis, the relationships among them, and the pace at which this is likely to happen. In sum, the prospects look positive. The expectation is that the present pace of movement will be gradual, and that its end point will be final and not incomplete, as was the case with the US–China cold war.



## 6 Conclusion

The preceding chapters have sketched the dynamics of the India–Pakistan cold war in a comparative perspective. All cold wars across time and space reveal a common element: the central role of nuclear weapons in shaping the similar though not identical course they take. It remains to summarize the processes at work, draw lessons from the India–Pakistan cold war and other cold wars, and consider the broader implications of this study for nuclear deterrence theory, nuclear doctrine and force design, the analysis of strategic politics in the contemporary and future worlds, and international relations theory.

The broad patterns of cold war processes over nearly six decades since nuclear weapons were invented are clear. They can be discerned in a wide variety of cases ranging from *the* Cold War, which is the only example of a truly global conflict between nuclear-armed states, to the India–Pakistan confrontation, a strictly regional phenomenon. The states involved vary in many ways: in level of development, type of government and political system, nuclear doctrine, size of nuclear arsenal, quantitative and qualitative features of capability, and mode of deployment. But the pattern of interaction is essentially the same. In every case, ideational differences are major drivers of conflict. All cold wars emerge out of the experience of historical tensions going back – sometimes far back – into the pre-nuclear era. Collective memories of conflict are the foundation upon which other ideational differences are built. These are differences of identity in the broad sense of a community's worldview and its perception of its place in the world. In every case, national identity is a powerful factor, while in several the conception of nationhood is entwined with formal ideology. Even in the case of India and Pakistan, one might usefully think of the two-nation theory which sundered Pakistan from India as an ideological factor. Identity differences create a strong divide between the self and the other which is exacerbated by tussles over space. Geographic space is an issue in all cold wars, sometimes directly in the form of contested political territory, as with Kashmir, and sometimes less directly, as with the global competition for geopolitical influence between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The (pre-nuclear) material distribution of power is an equally important factor in shaping hostilities. Because they exist in an anarchic self-help world, states are unable to trust one another, and generate mutual tensions by arming for security.

Systemic roles typically take the form of hegemon and challenger. The stronger power seeks to maximize its position by retaining the status quo, while the weaker seeks to change it. Nuclear weapons are an attractive option for the weaker power because they are great equalizers, giving the weak unprecedented capacity to hurt the strong and thereby deter the latter from using force to resist their challenge. The advent of nuclear weapons exacerbates the conflict. Invariably, the stronger of the two sees the acquisition of nuclear weapons as an unacceptable threat. The strong have an incentive to prevent the weak from going nuclear, which tempts them to consider preventive attack. The United States contemplated such attacks in all its cold wars, while the Soviet Union considered a pre-emptive attack against China in 1969. Even if the threat is not present, as in the India–Pakistan case, the weaker state fears such an attack.<sup>1</sup> Once they have acquired nuclear capability, the weak have an incentive to exploit the shield of deterrence by pressurizing the strong at a level below that of war. Thus, shortly after acquiring nuclear weapons, China intensified its border dispute with the Soviet Union. Pakistan did the same with India. The nuclearization of the relationship – the early stage of the cold war – is invariably marked by high tension, and the prospect of war looms large.

Yet when war approaches, the belligerent states show circumspection. Nuclear weapons, having intensified their hostility, now restrain it. Rhetoric may remain high, but actual behaviour is cautious. For both sides, the cost of a war is unaffordable. Historically, wars did periodically produce large numbers of deaths, yet were still considered ‘tolerable’. But the pain was distributed over long periods of time. Nuclear weapons threaten large-scale destruction within minutes or hours, which greatly reduces the weight of political or economic advantage that might accrue from war. Differences in capability quickly become irrelevant, as even states which possess weapons of much greater quality in much greater quantity are deterred by the prospect of mass death. States find themselves cooperating at least tacitly and often explicitly in avoiding war. Once the crisis has passed, they frequently come to the negotiating table to try and ensure a degree of stability in their relationship. This does not always go very far. The underlying sources of tension remain strong and they may find themselves in a crisis all over again, as the United States and the Soviet Union did and as did India and Pakistan. Part of the problem is that once relations are relatively stable, the cold warriors revert to thinking as if war were a viable option. They accumulate nuclear and conventional forces they cannot use, calculate balances in capability that mean nothing, build alliances that have no effect in achieving the desired outcome, and compete vigorously, as if power politics can still produce desirable results.

The difference between the two divergent behaviours is best explained by distinguishing between immediate and general interdependence. Interdependence is normally understood as a situation in which two (or more) entities are tied in to a common future. What one does profoundly affects the other, and vice versa. In terms of costs, it means that neither can afford a breakdown of the relationship. But this conception, while fundamentally correct, can be modified to take into account the experience of interdependence at any given point of time. If breakdown, with its inevitable high costs, is imminent, there is a sufficient degree of cooperation to

prevent it. If a breakdown is not imminent, the level of cooperation may vary, and a degree of non-cooperative thinking and action is possible so long as the situation remains relatively stable. The former situation represents immediate interdependence and the latter general interdependence. Between nuclear-armed states, this boils down to whether the prospect of war is near. If war is near, the risk of non-cooperation is unaffordable. Both sides will do their best to avoid fighting. If war is not near, that risk is correspondingly low and they have the option to behave as if war is feasible. Such dualistic behaviour is observable in every cold war and India and Pakistan are no exception. Though behaviour as if war were feasible is unproductive, it has a powerful symbolic content, which causes states to persist with it.

Thus, nuclear weapons both drive and undermine the conflictive character of cold war politics. Because they prevent resolution of the conflict through the use of force, and because they increase the risk of a disaster that neither side wants, their presence should give pause to the two sides to think more carefully about their predicament and what it implies for the future of their relationship. The key point is that nuclear weapons override the material basis of a cold war, but do not override its ideational basis. Only policy can do that. What nuclear weapons do is create the intellectual space to rethink goals in the light of the means at hand. That is, the means – nuclear weapons as instruments of military power – are not only unavailable in a usable sense but are counterproductive because they generate risks and undermine the security states seek. What states then do depends on the choices political leaders make. They may choose to go through repetitive cycles of conflict and cooperation; to stand back and remain hostile but distant; or to end the cold war. India and Pakistan, like the United States and the Soviet Union (and, after a fashion, the United States and North Korea), did the first; the Soviet Union and China the second; and, eventually, the US-Soviet and Sino-Soviet cold wars went the third way.

Ending cold wars requires states to dissolve the ideational basis of conflict. This happened in the cold wars between the United States and the Soviet Union and between the Soviet Union and China. At the time of writing (October 2007), it may be beginning to happen between the United States and North Korea, though it is too early to say. In the case of the United States and China, the cold war 'ended' without a change in ideational differences, which leaves the possibility of revival open today. Mutual concessions on the Kashmir issue and their willingness to meet each other half-way on its status point to the possibility that India and Pakistan have moved in the direction of a full resolution of their conflict. Yet, as noted in Chapter 5, it is far from clear that political leaders on either side have the capacity to translate their new thinking into practice. Nevertheless, there is room for optimism when we observe the extent to which they have shifted from a zero-sum to a positive-sum game.

## **Lessons for and from India and Pakistan**

A comparative framework is useful because it helps us to draw lessons from one set of experiences and apply them to another. The lessons, of course, may be drawn

on the basis of their similarities as well as their differences. If  $x$  is like  $y$ , then  $x$  may draw from the experience of  $y$ . To the extent that  $x$  is not like  $y$ , it may find that being more like  $y$  is to its advantage. This applies the other way, too, with respect to the lessons  $y$  may draw from a comparison with  $x$ . India and Pakistan are often urged to draw from the lessons of the Cold War. The present analysis enables them to learn from the wider set of cases encompassing the totality of cold wars. In the reverse direction, it is obviously too late for the India–Pakistan experience to apply to other cold wars, with the exception of the United States–North Korea relationship. But it could offer important lessons for future cold warriors.

### *Lessons for India and Pakistan*

India and Pakistan can draw a number of valuable lessons from the cumulative experience of other cold wars as well as their own.

First, nuclear deterrence works in a minimalistic way. There are two aspects to this: relative strength and operational posture. With respect to the former, all the cases reviewed in this book show that one side was on paper much stronger than the other, with the US–North Korea case being the most extreme. But the stronger power did not find the prospect of receiving much less damage sufficient to give it the confidence to go to war. In a nuclear world, a little damage is actually a lot and is universally unacceptable. Learning from this, India and Pakistan should not worry about relative capabilities in the future, whether in their relationship with each other or in their relationships with others. Yet we saw in Chapter 4 that they have been developing force architectures of great variety when in fact each can easily deter the other, since both have major cities close to the border.

India has embarked on a programme to build an array of missile capabilities encompassing different ranges and launch platforms. The Prithvi series and the Agni-I are sufficient to deter Pakistan. The only advantage of the Agni-II is that it can be based far from the Pakistan border. This is not an advantage from the standpoint of survivability, which we have seen is irrelevant, but because it allows more time for Pakistan to react to a false alarm or an accidental launch. The planned development of other missiles, including a submarine-launched missile, cannot add to the deterrence of Pakistan. The commonplace notion that submarine-based weapons confer the advantage of survivability is untenable in the light of history, for states without this capability have repeatedly deterred adversaries with much larger and more sophisticated forces. On the contrary, submarines (indeed, all sea-based launch platforms) are inherently risky since they cannot observe red lines in the way that land- and air-based forces can. In addition, tightly centralized control of sea-based forces is relatively difficult. India's current policy of keeping warheads separate from delivery vehicles may not be as easy to sustain for submarines and surface ships. Pakistan has trodden a similar path in its force development. It too has built or is building a spectrum of missiles without a clear rationale.

The same general argument applies to other existing or potential adversaries. So far, India has not shown an inclination to compete with China, only to obtain the capacity to deter it with a missile that has sufficient range. Accordingly, it has been

developing the Agni-III intermediate range ballistic missile (3,000-plus kilometres) which, it is reported, will be deployable by 2010.<sup>2</sup> That should suffice, as an extended version of the Agni-III (5,000 kilometres) will not add to deterrence; nor will sea-based missiles, as argued above. For Pakistan, it is conceivable that Iran might emerge as a threat at some point in the future. A Pakistani official in the strategic apparatus once privately told this author that, given past Pakistan–Iran tensions and uncertainties about the future, the prospect of a nuclear Iran worries Islamabad. He added that Pakistan would be acutely discomfited if it were to find itself sandwiched between two nuclear adversaries. But, leaving aside the dubious question of Iran and India finding a joint attack on Pakistan appealing, two nuclear powers cannot meaningfully gang up against a third. Balances do not make a difference, whether it is one against one or one against two. The weapons systems that deter India will also deter Iran. Balance-of-power thinking is also evident in Pakistan's objections to India's interest in missile defence. Unless a missile defence system is guaranteed to stop all incoming missiles, it cannot provide its possessor with the confidence to launch a first strike. No one can reasonably claim to have such a system, for the simple reason that no one can know in advance that it will work with total effectiveness. One study has shown that even a highly sophisticated defensive system will still leave a significant risk of penetration by a force of only four missiles.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Pakistan (like India) has the option of using cruise missiles, which cannot be countered by missile defences.

As regards operational posture, it is evident that India and Pakistan have been able to deter each other without deploying their weapons in a ready-to-use stance. Similarly, China and North Korea have maintained a non-deployed posture without detracting from their deterrence capability. The lesson for India and Pakistan is that in future, no matter what tensions they face with each other or with others, they need not and should not abandon their non-deployed posture. If they do so, they will only create more tensions and risk arising from potential misperceptions, false alarms, the possibility of unauthorized launch, and vulnerability to terrorist attack.

A second lesson is that conventional war is not a viable option for nuclear rivals. In every cold war, states have sought to avoid conventional war because of the risk of escalation from the conventional to the nuclear level. India and Pakistan have certainly fought marginal skirmishes, as have others. But this is the rational limit, and these have yielded no gain, only high risk. If they did not learn from the Sino-Soviet experience, they ought certainly to learn from their own. The Indian notion of a 'limited war' has no basis in reality. Pakistan's fear that a conventional imbalance favouring India will undermine its security is equally unfounded. Conventional acquisitions by both countries must be shaped by the new requirements of the nuclear weapons environment. They do not need much of the equipment they used in their previous wars.

All of this means there is a third lesson to be learned: that India and Pakistan have to think more critically about the roles and missions of their forces. As shown in Chapter 4, neither country has a clear doctrine. While subcontinental nuclear practice has been minimalist, deterrence theorizing has been confused. It has been

unduly influenced by Western, mainly American, deterrence theory, which is attached to quite different forms of doctrine and force planning based on the perceived need to build large forces and keep them on high states of alert in order to obtain deterrence. Western doctrine is itself unrelated to actual behaviour patterns during confrontations, which makes it even less useful. India and Pakistan would therefore do well to start from scratch and rethink the basis of deterrence, derive a fresh set of doctrinal principles, and plan their forces accordingly. The alternative is wasteful acquisition and higher risk.

A fourth lesson is that compellence is not a good idea. True, both India and Pakistan gained something from compellence, but they also failed in important respects. India was able to draw attention to Pakistan's support for cross-border terrorism by initiating the crisis of 2001–2, but the flow of terrorists was not stemmed and India risked a war it clearly did not want. The Kargil intrusion and support for terrorists enabled Pakistan to bring India to the negotiating table on Kashmir, but, into the bargain, it risked war and brought upon itself severe international pressure (limited only by American interests in Afghanistan) and domestic turbulence as the *jihadis* went out of control. Compellence in the form of the threat to use force never really works the way it is expected to, which explains why states with immense forces are unable to extract significant concessions from nuclear adversaries that appear to be much weaker. Diplomatic and economic pressure works much better than the threat of force. The United States–North Korea case is the most graphic example in this respect.<sup>4</sup>

A fifth lesson is that cold war cycles produce little gain and a good deal of risk. India and Pakistan went through three post-nuclearization crises and remained much in the same position at the end of the third. The experience of other cold wars should have taught them that their basic dispute cannot be resolved by the threat of force, because nuclear weapons rule out the use of force; and hence that the only way to break the impasse is by negotiation. Doubtless they have appeared to learn something from their own experience, but, as noted in Chapter 5, the conflict resolution process that began in 2004 could still be stalled. A major act of terrorism or a realignment of domestic political forces and competitive 'outbidding' that puts a premium on hostility towards one's neighbour may bring this about. Future decision makers would do well to appreciate that while such tactics can yield temporary domestic gains, they simultaneously bring increased risk. This risk will inevitably force them to back down and 'fail' in their *realpolitik* approach. Historically, even committed revolutionaries seeking to transform international life found themselves compelled to return to ordinary politics by the exigencies of international life. Nuclear weapons impose one such exigency: they will not permit change other than by negotiated agreement.

This leads to the sixth lesson: that tackling identity issues head-on holds the key to obtaining security in cold-war politics. Instruments of power cannot erase the insecurities that permeate cold wars. Leaders may prefer to let these insecurities remain in the interest of holding on to power, which is no doubt often the case. But their failure to attain the objective of resolving the problem without incurring heavy costs is likely to have political costs in the longer term. It makes political

sense to downplay ideational differences and to tackle their central manifestations (such as the Kashmir problem) creatively. The more powerful the symbolic value given to an issue, the more problematic it will be over time as it eludes resolution, which is inevitable in a nuclear context. The US–Soviet cold war ended only with the resolution of the identity issue. In contrast, the US–China cold war was deflected by *realpolitik*, only to be brought back in a modified though still incipient form in the post-Cold War era. Indian and Pakistani leaders seem to have understood the centrality of the identity issue. Their efforts to find common ground indicate a lesson well learned which future leaders would do well to emulate.

A final lesson is that identity is closely linked with domestic political life. As argued in Chapter 3, identity is a powerful driver of inter-state conflict because states do not have internal cohesion and confidence, which makes external threat a vital glue that they employ to hold themselves together. But the same glue prevents the energization of domestic life. Gorbachev understood this and attempted to transform the Soviet Union by simultaneously restructuring its domestic and external identities. That he failed in the first endeavour does not mean he was wrong in his analysis of the problem, only that he did not have the capacity to carry it out successfully. For India and Pakistan, the need for radical domestic transformation does not exist. What both require is a consolidation of internal unity, which alone can make identity a lesser issue between them. One may recollect that Alsace-Lorraine, like Kashmir, was a bone of contention between France and Germany from 1870 to 1945. It is not so today. Superficially, it could be argued that the catastrophe of the Second World War, France being on the winning side, and the unification of Europe combined to leave the region permanently with France. But surely the key point is that Alsace-Lorraine has long ceased to be an issue for Germany because its symbolic value has faded. Germany does not need it to define itself. Much the same could be said about the ‘intractable’ issue of Kashmir. Whatever form the geopolitical ‘solution’ to Kashmir might take, the problem would have begun to resolve itself from the time when it ceased to define the identities of the two contestants for its possession. Possibly, that moment is already behind us. If the process that has brought it thus far were to be threatened, those in whose hands its future lies would be well advised to keep this point in mind.

### ***The India–Pakistan experience: lessons for others***

The primary lesson for others is that the India–Pakistan case demonstrates that a low-key nuclear posture is perfectly compatible with effective deterrence. One need not possess a large arsenal in order to obtain security. Indian and Pakistani forces were extremely limited during the 1990 crisis and grew only a little thereafter. Yet both sides were aware of each other’s basic nuclear capability. Equally and perhaps even more important, deterrence was exercised without the weapons ever being deployed – this despite the intensity of the clash, which was at least as deep-rooted as any other cold-war conflict. Since deterrence is easily obtained at a low level of capability, it follows that others might profit from this lesson. Future



nuclear aspirants, possibly Iran or Japan, may anticipate the need for no more than a simple arsenal which can be kept in recessed mode. Small non-deployed forces are cheap and effective. They also minimize the risk of something going wrong. Every nuclear weapon is a candidate for accidents and a potential target for terrorists. The fewer they number, the better. The more they are kept in a state of readiness, the more they threaten others and raise tensions. Non-deployed postures are the least threatening, and because they do not subtract from deterrence, as the India–Pakistan experience illustrates, are optimal.

The same lesson applies to existing nuclear powers. The United States has retained a large and sophisticated arsenal in the post-Cold War era, but can do nothing with it. Nuclear ‘primacy’ is meaningless because it does not provide a usable force for compellence.<sup>5</sup> This was amply revealed when the United States was forced to abandon force and negotiate with North Korea. The same case indicated that North Korea’s marginal nuclear capability could not be ignored by a much larger power. The India–Pakistan example confirms that compellence does not work, because it is invariably overridden by deterrence at a fairly rudimentary level of technical capability, and that deterrence operates without having to communicate capability or demonstrate resolve by the exhibition of nuclear forces. The value of anything more than a minimal force is only symbolic. Russia’s flexing of its nuclear sinews with the announcement of new weapons systems such as the Bulava-M intercontinental ballistic missile and the revival of Cold War era bomber patrols is only symbolic. China has retained a minimal posture but its evident interest in reinforcing and expanding its capabilities though the development of the new Type 094 Jin-class nuclear submarine and anti-satellite capabilities reflects a similar misunderstanding about how much it takes to deter. A careful look at the India–Pakistan case and other cold war relationships would be instructive as to the value of such efforts.

An associated lesson is that a significant degree of nuclear arms reduction is not as difficult as it is often made out to be. Most resistance to major reductions is based on arguments about vulnerability and survivability that we have seen are untenable in the light of cold-war experience. What nuclear history tells us is that there is no need for detailed negotiated agreement on verifiable and equitable arms reduction. Since the possession of arms beyond the minimum confers no advantage, arms can be reduced unilaterally without worrying about cheating. A state that wishes to possess excess arms may do so to no practical gain and at least some potential cost. From the India–Pakistan case, moreover, states might usefully learn that nuclear weapons do not have to be kept in active mode for quick use, because that use is precisely what no one wants and because non-deployment provides sufficient deterrence capability.

Yet another lesson is that, contrary to the prevailing wisdom among the big two (or the big one-and-a-half, if you wish), the real gain in stabilization comes from confidence building rather than arms control in the accepted sense. India and Pakistan have signed not a single agreement that limits their weapons systems, yet their strategic relationship has a strong foundation of stability in their tacit understanding on non-deployment. However dangerous their relationship might have



been in the past, it was never comparable to that of other cold wars during their many crises, because India and Pakistan never deployed their weapons. By exercising this restraint even during intense crises, they maintained a vital strategic distance between themselves that offset the risk associated with their physical proximity. Other confidence-building measures have been agreed upon, as shown in Chapter 5, and these have added to stability. But the vital point is that the building of stability comes primarily from a political understanding of the essential character of nuclear weapons. Political leaders in India and Pakistan (and China as well) have understood this better than their strategists. Political leaders in other nuclear powers and aspiring ones would benefit by learning from this understanding.

Finally, India and Pakistan offer a lesson of sorts in demonstrating their capacity to rethink their dispute and their relationship within a surprisingly short space of time. The United States and the Soviet Union took four decades to come to terms. The Soviet Union and China took three. The US–China cold war was a very short one but does not quite count as it did not resolve the identity problem between them. The time frame for India and Pakistan (and, conceivably, the United States and North Korea) is much shorter. Their cold war began in the late 1980s and appears to have started winding down from about 2004, a decade and a half later. For a good part of this period, up to 1998, they were covert powers, unwilling to admit their status and therefore unable to interact properly as nuclear weapons powers. The fact that they underwent three crises, including two serious ones after 1998, within a compressed time span may have something to do with it. What is more important is that they came to the nub – Kashmir – from non-negotiable positions and began thinking creatively around it with remarkable alacrity, thereby demonstrating a willingness to shed identity claims central to their dispute. Future cold warriors would benefit from a similar approach and a readiness to come to the heart of the matter even as they follow an incremental path to change. Unlike the US–Soviet case, India and Pakistan have both moved towards a meeting point in their dispute. The US–Soviet example is not the most appealing since it involved a radical transformation of the Soviet Union and its resultant demise.

## **Implications for scholarship and policy**

The study of cold wars undertaken in these pages provides an opportunity for us to examine critically how we think about nuclear weapons and how we devise practical policies around them. In this section, I will briefly dwell on three areas. First, nuclear deterrence theory is about the basics of the role nuclear weapons play in the strategic relations between and among nuclear-armed states. From it we derive nuclear doctrine, which shapes the requirements for and the acquisition of nuclear forces for obtaining security. Second, strategic analysis consists of the ways in which scholars and policy makers understand the key security relationships among states based on which they devise policies that states may follow. And third, at the broadest level, international relations (IR) theory provides the intellectual foundation upon which thinking about security rests. I argue, in brief, that most nuclear

deterrence theorizing is irrelevant to the security needs of states; that much of what constitutes nuclear doctrine overstates the requirements of deterrence and hence produces an ineffective basis for force planning and posture; that strategic analysis suffers from acute distortions arising from an inadequate appreciation of the limits imposed by nuclear weapons on power politics; and that IR theory requires considerable modification and refinement if it is to present an accurate understanding of the realities of a nuclear world. This is a task of considerable magnitude. Each subsection could easily fill an entire chapter and the whole argument would require a volume of its own to be presented comprehensively. The pages that follow constitute a small beginning.

### *Nuclear deterrence theory, doctrine and force planning*

Strategic thinkers have tended to enunciate the requirements of nuclear deterrence through deductive reasoning rather than by drawing from the actual experience of states. While such experience has thankfully not involved nuclear war, we have seen in this volume that cold wars – confrontations between nuclear powers – have occurred with frequency over the past six decades. This book touched briefly on several in Chapter 2 and on one such set of confrontations between India and Pakistan in some detail in Chapter 3, 4 and 5. The patterns discerned are starkly at odds with the standard tenets of nuclear deterrence theory. The central finding in this study is that nuclear deterrence is a very simple phenomenon. It is produced by minimal capability on the part of the deterrer. To deter any adversary, a state need only create in the adversary's mind a small risk of large-scale damage. This confirms the argument made by Kenneth Waltz that deterrence is obtained not by one's being certain to produce immense damage but by the adversary's being uncertain about avoiding large-scale damage.<sup>6</sup> Yet most deterrence theorizing rests on the opposite notion that it takes a lot to deter and that assured capacity to cause enormous damage is vital. Such an argument provides the foundation for a series of second-level concepts that drive deterrence thinking, such as 'assured second-strike capability', 'survivability', 'vulnerability', and of course the ubiquitous 'credibility'. These concepts logically privilege concerns about the distribution of capabilities, which facilitates arms racing or at least the acquisition of nuclear weapons well beyond the minimal capability that is actually required, as this study has shown.

While it is not possible to traverse the historical landscape of deterrence thinking around the world at length, it is useful to hark back to its early days, for much that is articulated today is an elaboration on the foundations laid in the aftermath of the Second World War. I turn therefore to what might be called the 'debate' between two early proponents of diametrically opposite conceptions of the requirements of nuclear deterrence, Albert Wohlstetter and P. M. S. Blackett.<sup>7</sup> Wohlstetter, in his famous discourse upon the 'balance of terror', argued that 'to deter an attack means being able to strike back in spite of it' and that this involves a 'numerical interaction' between rival forces.<sup>8</sup> He went on to outline the requirements of effective deterrence, which are central to the concepts employed by

deterrence theorists today. These include the ability to survive an attack and to penetrate active enemy defences (survivability) and the technical capability to assure high levels of damage. Here we have the foundational position of much that constitutes current deterrence thinking: that it takes the threat of a lot of damage to deter, that one must be certain to inflict this damage, that one has to worry about a first strike, that one must have survivable forces to be sure of deterring, and that the preferred option is a numerical advantage in forces. Criticizing this approach, Blackett countered that Wohlstetter's requirements were excessive and that even if the enemy has 90 per cent success in a first strike (which he deemed very unlikely), the ability to retaliate would still remain sufficiently high to inflict unacceptable damage. In essence, this was an argument between assured destruction and minimum deterrence.

Eventually, Wohlstetter's position took precedence and has become the basis for mainstream deterrence theory. I do not mean to say that theorists the world over have read and drawn from his writings; only that theorists the world over have adopted a line of thinking that follows Wohlstetter's reasoning. The present study culls empirical evidence from nuclear weapons history to provide a definitive endorsement of Blackett's position. Since this history is hardly a secret, the fact that much deterrence thinking remains unchanged is testimony to the power of embedded thinking. It is not surprising that strategists of the big nuclear powers, official and non-official, should adhere to unfounded concepts. American and Soviet deterrence thinking was, after all, born in an era when conventional and nuclear weapons had wreaked mass destruction on Germany and Japan and nuclear weapons were considered usable. Decades later, the United States has failed to learn from repeated experience of the inutility of its enormous nuclear arsenal and is still attached to a combination of Wohlstetter's conception of the requirements of deterrence and Thomas Schelling's ineffective and risky ideas on compellence.<sup>9</sup> Russian thinking, too, has not departed significantly from the Cold War days, when it reflected essentially the same understanding of nuclear deterrence in terms of size, vulnerability, and so on as its American counterpart.<sup>10</sup>

That states with a very different approach to nuclear weapons should take assured destruction concepts seriously when their own practice is at odds with it tells us that the incongruence of theory and practice is sustainable over time. In Chapter 4 we saw this distortion in Indian and Pakistani deterrence theorizing. The same tendency exists in Chinese thought.<sup>11</sup> Most interestingly, a review of the literature shows that even those scholars who are deeply sceptical of the benefits of nuclear deterrence harbour basic concepts traceable to Wohlstetter. For instance, McGeorge Bundy, who argues for nuclear minimalism in his articulation of the concept of 'existential deterrence', believes it takes the colossal damage potential of thermonuclear weapons to obtain deterrence.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Robert Jervis, who firmly rejects notions of nuclear balance, holds that 'the possibility that all cities can be destroyed within a period of hours ... can deter' and that US-Soviet strategic relations assumed stability only when both had acquired 'overwhelming levels of destructive capability'.<sup>13</sup> Scott Sagan considers second-strike capability the *sine qua non* of strategic stability.<sup>14</sup> Even Waltz, the most consistent and

iconoclastic critic of mainstream deterrence theory, slips occasionally into Wohlstetter-like argument about the basis of deterrence being the 'invulnerability of a sufficient number of warheads' and about submarine-launched weapons making a weapons system 'invulnerable'.<sup>15</sup>

This study clearly shows that without exception invulnerability is not a prerequisite for deterrence to work and that capability balances do not matter. Second-strike capability need not be assured; it has to be assumed. The potential attacker need only be uncertain about the possibility of retaliation to be deterred, because that possibility invokes the fear of large-scale, unacceptable damage. This being the case, most deterrence theorizing is of no value either to scholarship or policy. On the contrary, mainstream concepts encourage the wrong kinds of anxieties – about having to be certain to deter – and facilitate deterrence doctrines that are wasteful and carry unnecessary risk. If a small non-deployed force can do the job, why bother with more? Current deterrence theory may thus be likened to a balloon filled with gas, flying high but giving a less and less accurate understanding of empirical reality.

Once it is admitted that a small recessed force is sufficient to deter anyone, it follows that nuclear doctrine can safely shed much of its fat. It should instead call for a small number of warheads; a limited range of delivery vehicles, preferably excluding sea-based launchers, that can be bolstered with protected or mobile basing; and for a conventional armoury that serves the needs of a nuclear age by focusing on capabilities for marginal and low-intensity fighting.<sup>16</sup> Concepts such as assured second-strike capability, credibility, survivability, and vulnerability can be discarded without regret. Missile defences are not something to be worried about since they do not undermine deterrence. No first use is a principle that has little basis, because no one wants to go first anyway and because first use is compatible with a recessed posture, as Pakistan has shown. Flexible response is a useful idea only at levels below the conventional threshold, which is the ceiling for nuclear rivals. Pre-emption is not an option for even the most powerful states and hence not a cause for worry. The benefits of such doctrines and force planning are lower costs and lower risk without subtracting from deterrence. It is surely time for India and Pakistan and for others as well to rethink deterrence theory and doctrine and make it more sensible and useful. A minimalist approach to deterrence thinking and practice is good enough, because it has invariably worked.

### *Strategic analysis*

Standard forms of strategic analysis, which are underpinned by realist thinking cast in the pre-nuclear mould, are frequently distorted and inaccurate because they lack a proper understanding of the dynamics produced by nuclear weapons. There is also inherent in such a mode of thinking a strong element of self-fulfilment. Because we think that nuclear conflict may occur, we act accordingly and produce policies designed to meet the risk. In doing so, we might just be producing the opposite effect and actually making such an event more likely. To appreciate this, it is useful to touch briefly upon the possibility of future nuclear confrontations and

anticipate what they might entail if we think in alternative ways about the politics of nuclear weapons.

### ***Future cold war confrontations***

In at least three cases, the possibility exists of cold war rivalry emerging. How will the relationships play out? In each, the two sides are in opposition to each other in terms of the two main drivers of cold war: identity and material power. Nuclear weapons already constitute a part of the relationship, whether in their actual or their potential presence on both sides. From the historical evidence before us, these cases seem likely to follow the patterns we have seen of conflicts of interest, rising tensions, and confrontation, immediately accompanied by prudent war avoidance and followed by negotiation. Then we can expect to see the cycle repeated or distant hostility maintained over a period of time until a more concerted effort is made towards conflict resolution. In the interim, the two sides can be expected to strengthen their military sinews by means of qualitative and quantitative expansion of their weapons systems and by seeking allies or quasi-allies to buttress their positions. Are these patterns inevitable or can they be avoided by recognizing the limits set by nuclear weapons as well as the opportunities created by them?

The foremost of these potential cold wars can be discerned in the tension between the United States and China. The two countries have a cold war history already and we need not replay their collective memories. We do know that the cold war between them ended without addressing their identity differences. That problem remains in two ways: disparity in political organization and the issue of Taiwan. On the material side, the rise of China as the next potential 'superpower' and challenger to American global preponderance is the source of much tension.<sup>17</sup> Americans debate Chinese intentions endlessly.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Chinese thinkers wonder whether the United States will be able to cope gracefully with the rise of China.<sup>19</sup> They tend to worry about each other's nuclear capabilities. China is uneasy about post-Cold War American hegemony, fearing that this will make it more interventionist and aggressive. It also fears an American intent to contain China – an anxiety expressed publicly in the wake of the five-power Malabar naval exercise conducted in September 2007 by the United States, Japan, India, Australia, and Singapore amid reports about an emerging 'quad' among the first four.<sup>20</sup> On its part, the United States has periodically raised its eyebrows over China's military spending and modernization, and was particularly concerned over China's successful testing of its anti-missile capability in January 2007.<sup>21</sup> The central issue over which it is often said they might approach war is Taiwan, which has been showing signs of moving towards independence.<sup>22</sup> The seriousness with which China views the American threat is indicated by a senior Chinese military official's declaration in 2005 that China would have to abandon its cherished commitment to no first use of nuclear weapons if it were subject to an American conventional attack.<sup>23</sup>

On both sides, scholars and policy makers alike have viewed the changing situation through the standard realist lenses of strategic analysis. Not only have they failed to give adequate weight to the rising trade and investment relations between

the two countries, they have ignored the lessons of nuclear history. Apart from the patterns we have seen in this book, they might have learned from their own experience. Between October 1995 and March 1996, a crisis of sorts built up over Taiwan as China carried out a series of aggressive exercises very close to the island to warn it against moving towards independence with American support.<sup>24</sup> The United States moved two carrier battle groups to the vicinity, but eventually chose to ignore the exercises and the affair died down. Both sides were fully aware that they did not want to risk war. In short, the near-crisis between them was played out in much the same fashion as cold war crises in the past, though at a much lower level of intensity. From the standpoint of mainstream analysis, this event could be and has been seen as a precursor to what could happen. But it demonstrates precisely the essential nature of their relationship as nuclear powers. Since the United States and China are nuclear-armed powers, no matter how unequal in a purely formal quantitative sense, they cannot afford to fight; their changing capabilities in terms of weapons or alliance-like relationships make no difference to this reality; the exercise of compellence only raises risks without bringing benefit; and their conflicts of interest cannot be resolved in any way other than by sitting down at the negotiating table. The real question is whether they can learn to look at changes in their relative capabilities as irrelevant, ignore the putative threats they impose, and get down to the business of hard thinking about their differences. The evidence in this book shows that if they fail to do so, they may indeed be condemned to repeat history.

Another future cold war that shows every sign of emerging is one between Iran on the one hand and Israel and the United States on the other. An atmosphere of crisis has built up over Iran's apparent drive for nuclear weapons capability.<sup>25</sup> The United States, as on many earlier occasions, has contemplated the possibility of preventive strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, including the possible use of nuclear weapons to destroy buried targets.<sup>26</sup> Identity issues exercise a powerful influence on thinking on both sides. Iran has a history of colonial exploitation and nurses bitter memories of the use of American power to overthrow its legitimate government in the 1950s.<sup>27</sup> Israel worries deeply about another holocaust if an adversary were to obtain nuclear weapons.<sup>28</sup> The United States harbours painful memories of the Iran hostage crisis in which American officials were held captive for a year in the aftermath of Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution. On the material side, there are equally powerful factors pushing towards conflict.<sup>29</sup> Iran fears US domination, especially after witnessing American intervention in neighbouring Iraq and in Afghanistan. The United States and Israel fear Iran will use nuclear capability to deter them while expanding its power in the Middle East. At the time of writing (October 2007), the picture is somewhat hazy as Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons, widely believed to be on its anvil, is by no means certain. The United States and Israel have shown an interest in using force to prevent this, but, as in the case of North Korea, risk unleashing chaos in the region should they attempt to do so.<sup>30</sup>

What will happen if Iran does go nuclear? The Sagan–Waltz debate on post-proliferation stability has been carried over into this context.<sup>31</sup> Sagan argues that

Iran may become emboldened into adventurism and may not have full control over its weapons; Waltz argues that, as before, the possession of nuclear weapons will engender caution. Again, both are right. There is then the prospect of yet another cycle – maybe more than one – of confrontation and cooperation. War is unlikely, but could still happen, to no one's benefit. It makes sense to go beyond the constraints of common or garden strategic analysis to examine more carefully the extent to which incompatible positions can be bridged. In particular, identity differences need to be re-examined in the search for solutions. Gorbachev and Reagan showed it could be done; Musharraf and Vajpayee/Manmohan Singh stretched the art of the possible; Iranian, Israeli, and American leaders would find it profitable to follow suit.

The last case offered up for consideration is that of India and China. This is instructive because it carries the potential for cold war and yet has shown strong signs of avoiding one altogether. On the identity side, both sides have collective memories of war (1962) over a territorial dispute that remains unresolved more than four decades later. The war was followed by a prolonged chill and a major military confrontation in 1986–7 and occasional minor ones have occurred since then.<sup>32</sup> Both countries have identity issues related to the border dispute in that they have as yet vulnerable national identities that do not allow easy acceptance of territorial loss. They also have different forms of government. As for the material aspect, India has concerns over China's transfer of nuclear and missile technologies to Pakistan.<sup>33</sup> India has also raised an eyebrow over China's successful testing of its anti-satellite capability in January 2007.<sup>34</sup> Each worries that the other may be pursuing a containment strategy. China's involvement in port construction projects in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar is viewed with suspicion by some Indian strategists.<sup>35</sup> China has protested against efforts to build a quadrilateral security relationship sometimes called the (putative) 'quad' or Coalition of Democracies among India, the United States, Japan, and Australia.<sup>36</sup> In carrying out its 1998 nuclear tests, India cited the Chinese threat as a reason, which brought a sharp reaction from the Chinese.

Yet relations have remained positive despite their differences.<sup>37</sup> The two countries have reached an understanding on letting the border issue remain on the back burner while building a strong trade relationship. India recognizes China's claim over Tibet; China does the same with respect to India's incorporation of Sikkim. India has accommodated China as an observer in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), while China has allowed India to gain observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Trade has boomed, growing from \$1.1 billion in 1995 to \$24.9 billion in 2006.<sup>38</sup> Despite the politics of hedging displayed by the pushes and pulls of the India–China–United States relationship, it seems unlikely that a cold war will emerge to make the subcontinent a 'new battle-ground for political competition'.<sup>39</sup> While the two countries are aware that each has the other in mind as a deterrence target (though India has yet to develop this capability fully), questions of nuclear threat and counter-threat are far from prominent in the discourse about their relationship. The India–China relationship tells us something about the scope for avoiding cold war-type



confrontation as a matter of carefully deliberated policy. India, particularly, could have chosen, as the weaker state, to build an alliance with the United States, but has repeatedly assured China that it has no such intention. China, for its part, has shown no interest in curbing India's nuclear capabilities. The first successful test of the China-specific Agni-III missile in April 2007 drew a muted reaction from China.<sup>40</sup> In short, cold wars are not inevitable.

## International relations theory

The findings of this book have some significant implications for IR theory. Each of the three most prominent schools of thought – realism, liberalism, and constructivism – needs to be modified.

### *Realism*

The dominant school in the years after the Second World War, realism has been in retreat of late. This is reflected in the decreasing number of scholarly articles informed by realism during the period 1970–2000, with a marked downturn after 1995.<sup>41</sup> Yet reports of its impending demise are greatly exaggerated, for realism, which dates at least as far back as Thucydides and Kautilya, has shown a remarkable capacity to reinvent itself.<sup>42</sup> I make no attempt to cast it aside, only to point out that this study confirms some of the profound failings noted by its critics and to urge realists to restate their claims. The realist starting point that anarchy is the essential characteristic of the structure of inter-state politics is unexceptionable. What nuclear weapons do is transform state behaviour in the condition of anarchy. According to the faction known as 'offensive' realists, states in an anarchic system are disposed to accumulate power almost endlessly in the search for security.<sup>43</sup> This is clearly not valid in any meaningful sense where nuclear weapons are concerned. Beyond a limited point, it is obvious that the accumulation of nuclear and conventional weapons becomes futile in a relationship between nuclear-armed states. John Mearsheimer, the pre-eminent offensive realist, declares that 'it is *possible* a nuclear-armed great power *might* conclude that it could fight a conventional war against a nuclear-armed rival without the war turning nuclear' and that this justifies its search for ever-expanding conventional capabilities.<sup>44</sup> The double qualification carries possibility a long distance. Nothing in these pages supports this claim. Nuclear powers do accumulate nuclear and conventional weapons in great variety and number, but this is better explained by the symbolic character of such activity, for they studiously avoid war, even conventional war, when it approaches. Nuclear weapons render offensive realism obsolete.

Defensive realists like Waltz argue that security is the end and may be obtained not only by acquiring weapons but also by agreeing to limit them. Yet like all realists they claim that distribution of power is a central characteristic of the structure of inter-state relations. Because he views nuclear weapons technology as relevant to the level of systemic process rather than structure, Waltz fails to recognize its revolutionary character in his theory of the system.<sup>45</sup> Yet in his writings on nuclear



proliferation and strategy, he contradicts himself completely when he claims that nuclear weapons rule out war. The logical question then is: what is the meaning of power if weapons are not usable? How can the distribution of power have any effect on state security in a nuclear weapons environment? The failure of realists to justify the relevance of their approach in the light of nuclear weapons is fatal to their theory. As Campbell Craig shows in his devastating critique of realism's failure to respond intellectually to the advent of nuclear weapons, the most prominent realists of the contemporary world have simply ignored the nuclear revolution's implications for their thought.<sup>46</sup> Niebuhr abandoned his realist conception of morality and war to urge that the chief moral duty of humankind was to find ways to prevent thermonuclear war. Morgenthau, too, accepted the revolutionary character of nuclear weapons without revising his theory of power. Waltz, as noted above, has applied his elegant logic in completely opposite ways, apparently without realising the contradiction.

The central point is that nuclear weapons seriously erode the realist enterprise because they eradicate the balance of power as a useful analytical device to explain the behaviour of nuclear-armed states. This does not mean that all realist thought is irrelevant. Power still matters in important ways. First, the power to deter conferred by nuclear weapons is clearly immense. That a small number of them can equalize an otherwise unequal military-strategic relationship is important for conceptualizing the place of power in a nuclear environment. Second, between possessors of nuclear weapons, as we have also seen, subconventional capabilities acquire a new relevance, though strategies to employ them are often dangerous. Third, the distribution of military power is trivial between nuclear-armed states, but not in other state-to-state relationships, where it may still be usable. Fourth, economic power, which realist thinkers tend to neglect, remains a key source of influence between and among states. It certainly played a significant role in ending the US–Soviet cold war and appears to have been a significant factor in motivating North Korea to wind down its nuclear programme. Realism must take these qualifications into account if it is to remain intellectually interesting. Mere repetition of old shibboleths will not be helpful.

### ***Liberalism***

The liberal approach is valuable in important ways. As a starting point in the understanding of contemporary inter-state politics, it presents the conditions in which power politics is eroded and overridden. When states are in a relationship of economic interdependence, or when they are liberal democracies, they are unlikely to fight. We have seen that there is an additional and relatively neglected category of interdependence that rules out war between states: the strategic interdependence created by the presence of nuclear weapons. This work further refines strategic interdependence by drawing a critical distinction between general and immediate interdependence. The first sets definite and drastic limits to the exercise of military power, yet allows states to behave in many ways as if power counts in the old way. This symbolic form of behaviour is sustainable so long as risk remains relatively

low. It is at best unproductive and at worst risk-laden. Immediate interdependence, on the other hand, is much more compelling in inducing tacit cooperation in the form of war avoidance and encouraging explicit efforts to stabilize a relationship that tends towards conflict.

The distinction between general and immediate interdependence and the variation in behaviour associated with them may be usefully applied to other kinds of relationships as well.<sup>47</sup> It can be argued that among economically interdependent states, similar variations are visible. For instance, states compete intensely for markets, a form of conflict behaviour in which the distribution of power matters, but they cooperate to ensure that the system of interaction does not break down. As the prospect of breakdown approaches, immediate interdependence compels them to cooperate regardless of their conflicting interests. The same phenomenon might appear as environmental crisis approaches. Liberal theory would benefit significantly by incorporating a deeper and wider understanding of interdependence in these respects.

### *Constructivism*

The constructivist enterprise has gained considerable influence in the post-Cold War era. It has brought much-needed attention to issues of identity, culture, and norms. Identities are central to conflict and yet are constructed rather than given, as noted in Chapter 1. It follows that they can be reconstructed given appropriate conditions. However, the question of the relative weight of ideational and material factors in inducing change remains. Constructivism has tended to emphasize the autonomy of ideational sources of change. This book reveals a more complex picture. The discussion on the ending of the cold wars in Chapter 5 brings out the importance of material conditions conducive to the resolution of the conflict, the crucial importance of ideas in giving direction to change, and the central role of political capacity at the state level in producing actual change.

The book also demonstrates the power of ideational structures. Decision makers and scholars persist in symbolic conventionalized thinking in the nuclear age, when a sensible response would be to retune their thoughts to new frequencies. This is by no means a new insight, but it is one which helps to explain the hitherto unexplained gap between behaviours under general interdependence and immediate interdependence in a world of nuclear weapons. A more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which ideas change also comes from the recognition that nuclear weapons have a powerful and autonomous but not entirely deterministic influence on inter-state relationships. The gulf between constructivism and realism is being narrowed by the recognition among some constructivists that material factors do count for quite a lot.<sup>48</sup> In these pages, we have seen one important aspect of this: the role of nuclear weapons in inducing (but not necessitating) fundamental ideational change that brought the end of two cold wars and is conceivably facilitating the end of two more. Constructivists would do well to recognize the complexity of the relationship between material and ideational factors in inducing change.

This book has attempted to elucidate the India–Pakistan cold war by showing how nuclear weapons produce a complex set of behaviours and create both risks and opportunities for positive change in a relationship that has seemed intractable and has confounded resolution over a long period of time. It has used a body of historical evidence to underscore its argument. Its starting point is the critical importance of ideational factors and the end it points to is a resolution of the same ideational factors. The process it encompasses is characterized by the interplay of the ideational and the material, with nuclear weapons playing a central role. Overall, it is optimistic, driven by a sense that learning from the process ought to be of benefit to thinkers as well as practitioners. The hope that it expresses is that, with sufficient learning, we might truly find ourselves in a post-cold war era.

# Notes

## Chapter 1

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## Chapter 2

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### Chapter 3

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## Chapter 6

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