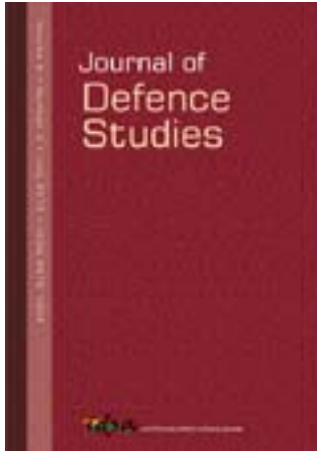


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Restraining Kargil Nuclear Caution in the Shadow of Kashmir

*Brent Thomas Gerchicoff**

The debate surrounding the stability of nuclear weapons has been a critical issue for the last half century. On the one hand, realists like Kenneth Waltz argue that the proliferation of nuclear weapons will foster greater stability due to the intrinsic deterrent logic associated with these weapons. The nuclear pessimists, on the other hand, argue that the accidental use of nuclear weapons and unstable regime types are a greater concern for the outbreak of nuclear war. With no clear consensus in sight, this article argues that the nuclear deterrent logic is the most compelling explanation for the lack of full-scale war. It takes as its case study the 1999 Indo-Pakistani conflict at Dras–Kargil. This crucial case study demonstrates that the caution and, therefore, deterrent effects associated with nuclear weapons in the Indo-Pakistan rivalry confirms that caution and stability result from the introduction of these weapons on the Sub-continent.

INTRODUCTION

Kenneth Waltz has argued that the proliferation of nuclear weapons will be a force for greater stability and, ultimately, peace in the international system.¹ This will be accomplished because of the logic of deterrence—that nuclear weapons raise the costs of war to such a point that victory is not possible, and that nuclear weapons create caution during crises amongst the states that possess these weapons. If nuclear weapons create caution and raise the cost of war to such a point that full-scale conflict is irrational (and, therefore, impossible), then the gradual spread of nuclear weapons is something not to be feared, but accepted. This article argues

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the nuclear deterrent logic and tests the proliferation-optimist views on the Indo-Pakistani conflict at Dras–Kargil, in which case confirming evidence indicates that nuclear weapons induced caution. Furthermore, nuclear weapons and escalating militarization induced caution for Pakistan in a situation which would have otherwise, according to scholars, led to considerable instability due to this regime-type change.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

States exist within an anarchic international system and states behave in an approximately rational fashion, and, as a result, irrational states are selected out over time.² This process trickles down to the national level—leaders are aware of this competitive, anarchic environment, and their foreign policies reflect the push and pull of the international system, and state interactions are largely determined by the relative power rankings.³ Political elites operate cautiously in this environment, and state survival is, ultimately, the most important goal in a state's actions in the international system. It is impossible to understand the deterrence theory without these neo-realist assumptions.

Nuclear proliferation optimism hinges on deterrence theory. The deterrence theory argues that states will not engage in conflict if the deterring state threatens to punish the adversary in ways so terrifying he dares not initiate a challenge, regardless of his ability to actually achieve narrow military objectives.⁴ The logic is that states will not pursue aggressive military policies if the threat of punishment is too high, regardless of their ability to achieve battlefield victory. The communicability of deterrent cost-analysis in the conventional world is often problematic owing to a number of factors, such as first-mover advantage and the probability of battlefield victory. As a result of uncertainty, deterrence may not be obtained at the conventional level. This is not the case, however, when nuclear states engage in security competition. Nuclear weapons create what Joseph Nye calls the 'crystal ball'⁵ effect⁶, whereby the actors know that the use of nuclear weapons will result in catastrophe.⁷ The result is that the deterrence theory becomes especially more pronounced in the nuclear world—since the cost of punishment is raised, the likelihood that states will pursue war-making policies will decrease. There is no military goal so important that a state will risk its own survival to achieve that goal.

In the conventional world, deterrence is more difficult to obtain. As John Mearsheimer writes, 'deterrence...is most likely to obtain when an attacker believes that his probability of success is low and that the

attendant costs will be high.⁸ Deterrence is likely to fail, conversely, when the attacker believes that success is likely and that the costs will be low, or acceptable, in relation to the target objective. Furthermore, Mearsheimer argues that certainty invites the calculation that victory is possible, while cost uncertainty enhances deterrence: ‘...for the purposes of securing deterrence...a potential attacker should ideally be able to foresee that the costs of military action will be great.’⁹

Proliferation optimists argue that the requirements of nuclear deterrence are not very high. The threat of reprisal must be credible, reliable, and survivable.¹⁰ Firstly, State A must believe that State B *may* launch a retaliatory strike in response to State A’s provocation—the possibility may exist that State A may not be acting with impunity. The credibility threshold is low and uncertainty is all that is needed. Schelling refers to this as ‘the threat that leaves something to chance.’¹¹ Secondly, the reliability of command-and-control must be maintained. Deterrence fails if State A can launch a decapitation attack that makes State B’s retaliatory strike impossible. The reliability of command-and-control is necessary to ensure accidental launches will not occur. This issue is more difficult to negotiate, but is most easily managed in small and decentralized (that is, where the warheads and delivery mechanisms are not at the same location) nuclear arsenals.¹² Waltz lists this issue as a requirement; but I would argue that it is more a safety mechanism than a requirement for deterrence. Thirdly, nuclear forces must be survivable so that pre-emptive or preventive attacks are not possible. This is not difficult to accomplish and, contrary to American or Soviet logic during the Cold War, survivability does not require large arsenals. If State A cannot *guarantee* (beyond any shadow of doubt) that every nuclear weapon State B possesses will be destroyed, State A will be deterred from launching a pre-emptive or preventive strike. Because such an action requires 100 per cent success guarantees, second-strike capability is fairly easily achieved. Because of the absolute nature of nuclear weapons, if one nuclear weapon is survivable, the entire nuclear arsenal is survivable.¹³

Preventive and pre-emptive strikes are unlikely against nuclearizing states. Preventive actions against a state attempting to develop a nuclear weapon is difficult because, as Waltz argues, ‘if the blow struck is less than devastating, one must be prepared either to repeat it or to occupy and control the country.’¹⁴ A preventive strike is wasted unless the infrastructure is eliminated; otherwise the preventing state will continue launching strikes, or must be prepared to invade. Pre-emption is also difficult because the level of nuclearization must be guaranteed. There is a limited window

in which a pre-emptive strike against a nuclearizing state is effective—the programme of weaponizing must be in its infancy; once the nuclearizing state *may* have a nuclear weapon, pre-emption is very dangerous, and may result in the use of a nuclear weapon against the state that attempted the pre-emption.¹⁵

Proliferation-optimists argue that full-scale war between a nuclear dyad is not possible. Conflict between states will only occur over peripheral issues, where one side may back down because the contested issue is not sufficiently salient to be worth the risk. Conflict will occur over peripheral issues (symbolic territory, some resources, etc.), but will not erupt into full-scale war because, for example and as Waltz argues, Egypt was not willing to fight a full-scale war over the West Bank against a nuclear armed (although ambiguously) Israel.¹⁶ While Waltz's example does not illustrate a dyadic nuclear rivalry, it does indicate caution and the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons in an intense rivalry.

Unless the contested issue is over something of paramount strategic importance, or over a core issue (territory, resources that cannot be procured elsewhere, etc.) a nuclear dyad will not allow escalation to full-scale war. An example of this is the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962: nuclear weapons on the island of Cuba presented a strategic threat to the United States, while their removal from Cuba presented a loss of prestige for Khrushchev's Soviet Union. While the conflict involved a testing of wills, Kennedy's game of chicken led to the only possible conclusion with reference to the imbalance of stakes and gains in the scenario: Khrushchev gave up prestige to avoid escalating the crisis into a war that had the potential to go nuclear. In other words, states become more cautious with nuclear weapons.

To expand the classic counterfactual example: imagine if no nuclear weapons existed and the Soviet Union built an army barracks, naval base, or conventional rockets in Cuba. The result would, most likely, have been far different. Khrushchev may have won the conventional exchange, or may have lost an attack, but the level of uncertainty may have been sufficient to take a chance on expanding the Soviet sphere of influence into the Western hemisphere. It would be difficult to argue that a loss in this conflict would have had catastrophic repercussions upon Soviet society. Moreover, if the conventional counterfactual had been allowed to run its escalatory course, Nye's 'crystal ball effect' would be cloudy. It is hard to determine just how devastating a NATO–USSR conflict would have been without nuclear weapons—a Soviet blitzkrieg offensive through Germany may have yielded a short and decisive victory. With the injection of nuclear weapons into

the equation, however, we may infer that escalation to full-scale conflict would produce catastrophic results in which recovery would be dubious, thus indicating that nuclear weapons produce caution in leaders and crises.

Many proliferation-pessimists argue that militarizing regimes (such as that in Pakistan) may be more likely to use nuclear weapons. The argument is that advances in weapons technology may tempt militaries to pursue objectives that were hitherto not feasible. This argument holds true only in the conventional world, where military professionals have organizational biases that are war-prone.¹⁷ This logic does not carry over into the nuclear world, as the military understands the inherent danger and uncertainty about what a nuclear battlefield will look like. For all the reasons that underlie deterrence theory vis-à-vis uncertainty, military decision-makers are unlikely to engage in a nuclear conflagration. Although the military strives to accumulate power in a budget-maximization sense (for example, procurement of government resources from the federal budget), it does not seek to use these nuclear resources on the battlefield. As is often said, generals like big armies but do not like to use them for fear of breaking them. This mindset should be expected because military professionals have an organizational bias to *prepare* for war, which does not necessarily correlate to actual engagement. The philosophy of *si vis pacem, para bellum* is the key mindset of most security policy.

Proliferation-pessimists argue that nuclear weapon dyads will produce a stability–instability paradox, where fighting at a low level is acceptable because there is an impossibility that nuclear weapons will be used—that escalation will be impossible. This is true: nuclear weapons do not make conflict impossible; rather, they make *full-scale war* impossible. Fighting at low levels, such as skirmishes in Kashmir or along the Sino-Russian border for small gains, is not precluded by nuclear deterrence because it does not satisfy credibility: it is not believable that China will launch a counter-value attack for incursions across the border at the Argun River; but if Russian forces march on Manchuria, the threat becomes credible and deterrence is obtained.

Jervis' stability-instability paradox makes low-level fighting over minimal gains possible because of the calculation that the adversary will not fire nuclear weapons as the gains-loses of the scenario are minimal.¹⁸ This is logical: would China launch a counter-value strike on St. Petersburg, killing hundreds of thousands over a small border river with no intrinsic strategic value? The probability of this type of behaviour is negligible. The stability-instability paradox underlines nuclear deterrence: because nuclear

weapons make full scale war irrational and sufficiently costly, states can only engage in low-level conflict about issues that are not central to state survival.

Proliferation-pessimists argue that the stability-instability paradox will cause leaders to calculate that (in a nuclear dyad) they can fight at low levels for minimal gains, but the conflict will spiral out of control producing a full scale war that will include nuclear strikes. Leaders may seek to test the resolve of their adversaries, or take advantage of nuclear weapons being unusable (thus risking low conflict to achieve minimal gains), and, will not allow escalation to occur during a crisis, as full-scale war is inherently so costly as to induce caution and act as a crisis dampening variable during conflict. Resolve testing behaviour should not be confused with a willingness to accept the possibilities of nuclear war. It comes in many forms, such as military exercises near a rival state's borders, and low-level border skirmishes may be similarly viewed. Firstly, leaders can still back down if an escalation spiral appears likely to end in cataclysmic nuclear war. Khrushchev did this in 1962, which effectively ended his political career—but then, surely nuclear war would have done this anyway. In this case, a leader was willing to effectively end his political career as a result of pushing too hard—adding further evidence to the assertion that leaders will not risk crossing the nuclear threshold. Secondly, nuclear weapons induce caution. Threats of nuclear use act as a signal to an adversary of the seriousness of the situation, and the need to come back to the negotiating table.¹⁹ Thirdly, because of the possibility of conflicts crossing borders (conflicts begin regionally and expand, also extended or existential deterrence makes this a possibility), and the seriousness that a nuclear war would entail, makes third party involvement a possibility. If a nuclear dyad escalated out of control (although this is unlikely), there would be a very serious attempt on the part of the international community to scale down the conflict, and strike a diplomatic solution long before nuclear war was likely. Fourthly, nuclear war is unwinnable; the only victory possible is a pyrrhic one. While one cannot say with certitude that escalation will not lead to war, the structure of interactions (such as the stability-instability paradox) demonstrates that escalation leading to war is more unlikely between nuclear rivals.²⁰

HYPOTHESES

My first hypothesis is that bilateral/multilateral nuclear proliferation will make full-scale war impossible because it raises the costs too high. This hypothesis depends on successfully articulated deterrence between the

parties in conflict. To test this hypothesis, I am using the case study of the Dras–Kargil dispute. This is an appropriate case because a territorial dispute arose along a contiguous border, conventional forces were mobilized by both sides, but the conflict did not escalate to full-scale war once nuclear escalation was signalled by the dyad (diplomatic solutions were pursued). Disconfirming evidence of this hypothesis would be valid if, once nuclear escalation was signalled, one or both sides continued to push for a military victory (it would have to be determined, furthermore, that this push was not brinkmanship or a test of resolve).

This is a crucial case because proliferation-pessimist literature would indicate an expectation of escalation to nuclear war in this case because of Pakistan's militarizing regime, both states are new nuclear powers (and therefore unlikely to have evolved safeguards, nuclear-world leadership selection, etc.), and both states are not part of the developed First World. If there was a region that could indicate that bilateral nuclear proliferation would lead to nuclear war, pessimists would point to South Asia. Furthermore, this case was selected because it would be an easy case for the nuclear-pessimists to illustrate that nuclear proliferation is likely to lead to instability and nuclear war, based on history and militarizing regime-type.

Pakistan could be classified as a 'militarizing regime' at the time of the Kargil Crisis in 1999. While it is true that Nawaz Sharif was democratically elected prior to the conflict, it was then Army Chief General Pervez Musharraf who orchestrated much of Pakistan's actions leading up to and during the crisis in Kargil. While this was going on, it is difficult and problematic to classify Pakistan as democratic; and equally difficult to argue that it was a direct militarized regime. As will be argued during the next section of this article, Pakistan was a *militarizing* regime; it was neither 'democratic' nor 'militarized' at the time. And, given the fact that General Musharraf used the Kargil Crisis as a catalyst to orchestrate the coup d'état, Pakistan falls closer to a militarizing regime in many respects.

Bilateral/Multilateral Nuclear Proliferation (IV) → Articulated Deterrence (IVV) → No/Limited War (DV)

Proliferation-pessimists argue that militarizing regimes have certain organizational biases that will lead to the use of nuclear weapons, either tactically or strategically (for example, counter-force or counter-value). My belief is that this is wrong, and that the military understands the destructive power of nuclear weapons, the uncertainty of what a nuclear battlefield would look like as well as deterrent signals well enough to make nuclear

war highly unlikely in militarized states. Dras–Kargil is an important test for this argument because Pakistan was a militarizing regime that did not make use of its nuclear ability against India, a rival country with which it had a history of escalation. If the conventional logic were true, I would expect to find evidence that the Pakistani military regime advocated the operational use of nuclear weapons during the crisis (to benefit from the first-strike advantage).

Militarizing Regimes (IV) → Likely to Engage in Nuclear War (DV)

Conventional theories state that if more countries have access to nuclear weapons, there is a greater likelihood that a technical error will occur, leading to inadvertent nuclear war. I disagree with this logic. Conventional hypothesis is that N-state nuclear weapons powers (for example, nuclear powers that have weaponized after the original proliferators—United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain, France) will be likely to engage in inadvertent nuclear war. I expect this hypothesis to be falsified because the lessons learned from the original nuclear powers; furthermore, because India and Pakistan have fewer nuclear weapons, it would be in their interest to guard their limited arsenals more than much more closely. If this hypothesis is correct, I would expect to find evidence that more restrictions and increased security was placed on nuclear weapons sites.

N-state Nuclear Actors (IV) → Technical Errors Leading to Nuclear War (DV)

The the third item of conventional logic revolving around nuclear proliferation is that the fact that nuclear technology is increasing and being obtained by more states will lead to a greater possibility of nuclear war, because of the lower technical threshold necessary to achieve a nuclear weapons capability and less stringent leadership selection leading to instability. This argument is inherently biased. It is based on ethnicity, in that it is believed that emerging nuclear powers are non-European; and it is assumed that these new nuclear powers will not have learnt from mistakes made by the original nuclear powers; and that their leadership lacks foresight and understanding in grasping deterrence principles. Arguments that a lower leadership threshold and a lower technological threshold will lead to the irresponsible use of nuclear weapons are based on faulty logic. If such conventional hypothesis is correct, I would expect to find more evidence that either Pakistani or Indian (or both) leadership advocated a general nuclear war.

**N-state Nuclear Actors (IV) → Lower Technological Threshold
(IVV1) → Lower Leadership Threshold (IVV2) → Nuclear War (DV)**

Case Study

In the spring of 1999, approximately 800–1,000 Pakistani forces (with *Mujahideen* groups supplementing) crossed the Line of Control (LoC), and occupied strategic heights along the ride-line of the Dras–Kargil border.²¹ This began the most dangerous crisis between a nuclear dyad since the end of the Cold War, and the first between non-European states and new nuclear powers (with a militarizing regime-type, in addition).²² The Dras–Kargil area was strategic for the Indian Government because a military incursion would threaten a main highway artery connecting the Kashmir valley to Ladakh.²³ The Indian Army responded by launching air strikes against Pakistani units.²⁴ In addition to the mobilization of the Air Force and Army, the Indian Navy moved into an ‘offensive posture’ off the Pakistani coast.²⁵

Although the conflict was ‘hot’, both sides remained in control via diplomatic back channels and regular telephone contact.²⁶ The Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee told Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on 24 May 1999 that ‘all possible steps’ would be used to expel the Kargil incursion.²⁷ This indicates a well-articulated deterrent capability on behalf of the Indian leadership. The communicability of the retaliation requirement satisfied the Pakistanis at the very outset of the crisis. Although Pakistan signalled resolve by issuing warnings of ‘irreparable losses’²⁸, there is evidence that Sharif proceeded with caution during the conflict, taking care not to escalate past the nuclear threshold.

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF)...refrained from crossing the LoC and did not engage the IAF aircraft, even from a distance, while they were attacking Pakistani troops. Had the PAF done so, the IAF may have responded with strikes beyond the LoC, thereby escalating the conflict beyond the Kargil region, and bringing it closer to the nuclear threshold: a scenario that Islamabad appeared unwilling to entertain.²⁹

There is also evidence that Indian forces operated with restraint despite being confronted with a military incursion across the LoC, and with a strategic threat to Kashmir and the Siachen glacier³⁰, an area that is heavily disputed by both sides. The Indian Army suffered heavy losses at the outset of the crisis, and was caught completely unawares³¹, but the political leadership did not escalate the crisis (even though there was internal pressure on the Indian Prime Minister to escalate).³² Instead, the communication of

a nuclear threat to Pakistan was used, so confirming the deterrence theory.³³ This illustrates that, by articulating the threat, the Indian Prime Minister was communicating deterrence rather than escalation. Furthermore, the use of the nuclear threat served another purpose beyond the aforementioned signaling requirement in Schelling's logic of deterrence³⁴: it also put international pressure on the Pakistani leadership to back down from the conflict. In the shadow of the nuclear threats made, great power diplomacy from Washington and Beijing pressured both India and Pakistan for a peaceful resolution.³⁵ In this sense, nuclear threat rhetoric served a pacific purpose, not an inflammatory one.

Escalation was risked at the low levels of conflict; but it was avoided at the high level—indicating that Pakistan operated with a high degree of caution although pursuing a somewhat adventurous military incursion. Here we see Jervis' stability-instability paradox at work. Although Pakistani forces were willing to risk low level violence to (possibly) incur small, limited gains, they were unwilling to pursue an option that would risk nuclear conflagration. The Pakistani strategy should be regarded as testing the newly created nuclear dyad—Pakistan's nuclear status was about a year old—to see if their relationship with India had altered. Once the Indian Government expressed that it was unwilling to concede territory when pushed, the Pakistani Government retreated back across the LoC. In the Kargil conflict, resolve testing did not signal a willingness to escalate. Pakistan is duly aware of the potential suicidal implications of allowing an escalating conflict in the nuclear error being unchecked. It was former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in an August 2004 interview, who stated that

...having [a] nuclear capability would ensure that India could not launch a conventional war, knowing that if it did, it would turn nuclear, and that hundreds of millions would die...It would have meant suicide not just for one, but for both nations.³⁶

Furthermore, there is strong evidence confirming that Indian and Pakistani leaders worked behind the scenes to de-escalate the conflict, despite heavy domestic pressure to engage in more hostilities during the conflict. Several domestic groups, including both armies and various domestic political parties and factions, such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, called for what would be aggressive and, ultimately, provocative escalatory measures.³⁷ In fact, the BJP was in Government at the time (as part of a coalition), and there was much internal pressure upon

the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to increase an offensive against Pakistani forces.³⁸ Despite this heavy domestic pressure, Vajpayee and Sharif worked behind the scenes to de-escalate the conflict through diplomatic interludes via telephone during the height of the crisis. This demonstrates a measure of caution and sensitivity to the nuclear dimension and its potential destruction that flavoured the conflict. Additionally, Islamabad took important steps to de-escalate the conflict, as it did not deploy reserve troops to reinforce positions; nor did the Pakistan Air Force engage across the LoC or bomb India's artillery units.³⁹

Before proceeding to the discussion of the second hypothesis, it would be pertinent to digress into a discussion on regime type. The typology of regime-type, placed on a continuum, ranges from direct militarizing regimes (at its ideal type) to elite-militarization, hybrid militarization (for example, civil-military hybrid regime), civilian militarization, and with non-militarization at the opposite end of the scale. The level of militarization tends to produce six effects on decision-making: capability analysis, windows of opportunity, rapid escalation, territorial objectives, marginalization of foreign affairs and dyadic enduring rivalry, and general policy effects of weapons.⁴⁰

Pakistan (circa 1999) may best be classified as a civilian militarizing regime-type. The Pakistan Muslim League (PML) was elected in 1997, and Nawaz Sharif became Prime Minister. The combination of an extremely influential military, with a recent history of dyadic conflict with India categorizes the Sharif regime as 'civilian militarization'—as opposed to a non-militarized regime where 'governments have effectively excluded military influence'. Civilian militarized regime-type states with a non-militarized regime begin to 'internalize the military's orientative policy biases'⁴¹ through a sequence of military disputes and strategic threats. The literature also notes that this may be possible in instances where the political authorities are especially weak and the military is stronger.⁴² The literature also notes that this may be possible in instances where political authority is especially weak, and the military is stronger.⁴³ An implication inferred from this is that although there is (at least, structurally) a civilian leadership, it is unable to resist policy inputs promulgated by the disproportionately powerful military, with policy beginning to revolve around capability assessment.

There is evidence that, while there was civilian militarization at the time of the Dras–Kargil crisis, the regime was heading towards direct militarization on the continuum. The stable right-of-centre PML party

was viewed as a threat by the Army Chief, General Pervez Musharraf.⁴⁴ The military coup shortly after the Dras–Kargil conflict, and the two assassination attempts on Prime Minister Sharif (linked to members of the military), illustrate the discord between the civilian arm of the government and the military.⁴⁵ There is also evidence that General Musharraf orchestrated the crisis to undermine Sharif, and take political advantage of increased tensions between Pakistan and India in the months leading up to the military coup in which he assumed the presidency.⁴⁶ Although civilian militarization was the regime-type at the time of the crisis, the spectrum was in the process of moving towards direct militarization.

As we have seen, while there is civilian militarization, there is also an element of usurpation by the army en route to direct militarization. General Musharraf orchestrated the conflict to undermine the democratically elected Prime Minister Sharif's civilian government, using the LoC as a symbolic gesture to mobilize Islamist elements (in addition, framing the issue in these terms by utilizing *Mujahideen* militants in the operation) away from the PML. The tension between direct militarization and civilian militarization was prominent in this crisis; but Musharraf achieved his objective of undermining Sharif, as Dras–Kargil served as the focusing event that established direct militarization within a few months. Although this conflict was inherently dangerous, it was unlikely that escalation into nuclear war was really possible given the probability of international intervention—especially from great power mediators from Washington and Beijing—to scale down the conflict before a nuclear conflagration. Neither Pakistan nor India would have been willing to risk full-scale nuclear war over a symbolic issue such as Kargil, even if it represented an important strategic location. Pakistani forces pushed into Kargil because they thought they could do so with impunity, given that Islamabad's newly-acquired nuclear weapons would give them a covering effect, and assumed that India would be hesitant to engage in a military response. Finding that nuclear weapons did not give them cover and *carte blanche* to act with impunity, they retreated into Pakistan proper, after illustrating considerable restraint⁴⁷, and de-escalating the conflict.

During the crisis situation, India ordered its nuclear forces to be on alert, and command was decentralized to guard against decapitation attacks. Proliferation-pessimists would argue that this behaviour weakens command-and-control; but optimist literature indicates that the mobilization of nuclear launch vehicles decreases the likelihood of an effective decapitation attack, thus making deterrence more powerful because of second strike

survivability. Command-and-control is heightened by the 'disaggregated condition'⁴⁸ of delivery vehicles, and, as Basrur argues, that the 'preference for control over command' already exists in South Asia, thus demonstrating a 'high degree of nuclear stability'⁴⁹ on the Sub-continent.

The final hypothesis in this case study is that neither side advocated a general or limited nuclear war. This indicates that the lower leadership threshold, because of lower technological requirements to achieve nuclear weapons, is without merit. We have indications that India articulated that it would make use of any available means to halt Pakistan from encroaching the LoC; but this was likely a signal gesture to articulate the communication requirement. India was playing a game of chicken with Pakistan, demonstrating resolve in order to bring their adversarial partner to the table. This is equivalent to the proverbial tying the hands to the wheel to demonstrate resolve, as in the game of chicken narrative, thus, signalling that it is the adversary who must back down. Signalling should not be mistaken for the spiral of escalation; what matters is intent and the signal is meant to de-escalate the crisis. This provides confirming evidence that the leadership in India and Pakistan, despite lower technological requirements than seen in the US–Soviet rivalry, has obtained sophistication, and has learnt from history (the communicative signalling by India is reminiscent of Kennedy's signalling Khrushchev by installing quarantine during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962). This sophistication is evidenced by the tacit understanding of the signalling requirement in the game of chicken as well as the communicative requirement of deterrence.

CONCLUSION

My research found confirming evidence that nuclear weapons constitute a stabilizing force, and should not be looked upon as the worst possible outcome in the international system. Nuclear weapons created caution in the Indian–Pakistani security rivalry in South Asia by emphasizing the costs of war through the 'crystal ball', which eliminated the fog of war and made the cost-benefit calculus far simpler. The Dras–Kargil episode illustrated how nuclear weapons make full-scale war impossible; however, the stability-instability paradox makes conflict at a low level tempting. Resolve testing and the utilization of conflict for domestic purposes remains a possibility even a world replete with N-state nuclear possessors, but nuclear rivalries are still not likely to spiral past the point of no return. States with highly influential militaries and militarized states are pointed to by nuclear pessimists, but the Dras–Kargil case study has illustrated a

state that is a direct militarizing regime (expected to be highly unstable and war-prone) did not push confrontations between nuclear dyads in full scale war; Pakistan's militarizing regime under Musharraf demonstrated a great deal of caution. Although the Pakistani leadership was a civilian militarizing regime, we find no evidence that militarization is likely to lead to anything but pushing for military options at low levels (usually symbolic) to achieve legitimacy in a legitimacy vacuum. Dras–Kargil, for all its perceived dangers, was a low level incursion by 800–1000 infantry units (supported by guerrilla fighters and a very limited air engagement).

NOTES

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11. Schelling, Thomas C., *The Strategy of Conflict*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. 187–203.
12. There are further steps that may be taken to ensure command-and-control reliability: PALs, multi-level authorization (President may order an attack, with concordance of the Vice-President, Joint-Chief of Staff, etc., multiple succession authority, etc.).

13. Waltz and Sagan, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed*, n. 6, p. 25.
14. Ibid., p. 19.
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16. Ibid., pp. 14, 28.
17. There are six effects that lead to this assumption (biases towards capability-based assessment, sensitivity to windows of opportunity, a tendency to rapidly escalate the use of force, inclination to define victory in terms of the capture of territory, marginalization of diplomatic/foreign policy agencies, and a strategy designed around the type of weapons that are available) and these are delineated in Julian Schofield, *Militarization and War*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.15–32.
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