

main argument. It does not reflect the reality of book content well. Instead, I understand this book discusses a type of Japanese ‘volunteerism’ from an American lens.

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S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia*, Stanford University Press, 2007, ISBN-10: 080-475-549-3, \$65.00 hbk; ISBN-10: 080-475-550-7, \$24.95 pbk
doi:10.1017/S146810990700285X

Regardless of their differences, leaders of India and Pakistan believe and tell their people that nuclear weapons are vital to the well-being of their respective countries and that the threat of massive destruction these weapons represent is a force for good. Indian President Abdul Kalam, for instance, has claimed that nuclear weapons are ‘truly weapons of peace’. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, told parliament that India’s nuclear weapons and related facilities were ‘a sacred trust to protect succeeding generations from a nuclear threat and we shall uphold this trust’. In Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf has declared that his country’s nuclear weapons are as critical and important as national security and the economy. His chosen Prime Minister, former Citibank vice-president Shaukat Aziz, has argued that, ‘Pakistan’s strategic capabilities as a nuclear and missile power are an important factor that not only ensures its security and sovereignty but also progress.’

The two countries even seem to agree that the nuclear weapons of the other contribute to peace and security in the region. A joint statement released after the meeting of officials from the two countries in June 2004 declared that the basis of their agreement was: ‘Recognising that the nuclear capabilities of each other, which are based on their national security imperatives, constitute a factor for stability.’ This was repeated by the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan a few weeks later.

S. Paul Kapur’s important new book *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* sets out to challenge the idea that nuclear weapons are a ‘factor for stability’ in South Asia and to show how it flies in the face of both reason and experience.

Kapur’s thesis may seem obvious. The Cold War proved to many that the pursuit of nuclear weapons brought nothing but a competition in destructive capabilities and crisis after crisis. But this lesson has been lost to the scholars who argue for nuclear deterrence, appearing to believe that the ‘deterrent’ character of a nuclear weapon arsenal is somehow intrinsic to it. They argue that it is possible for nuclear weapons proliferation to bring stability, if not peace. This argument has been adopted by every state once it acquires nuclear weapons – even though it may have seen these weapons as a dangerous and unacceptable threat up to that point – and is clearly used by those who rule in India and Pakistan. Kapur also seeks to go beyond the standard arguments of scholars who consider the spread of nuclear weapons to be a danger principally because of the intrinsic character and limitations of the politics, technology, and organizations associated with these weapons.

Dangerous Deterrent uses a quantitative analysis of three decades (1972–2002) of militarized disputes and conflicts and the relative military balance between India and Pakistan, interviews

with key policy makers and participants in these disputes, and a close reading of the security studies literature to make the case that the coming of nuclear weapons to South Asia has brought both greater instability and more serious conflict. He considers the first stage (1972–1989) as a non-nuclear period, for most of which India had a nuclear weapon capability and Pakistan was developing it. The subsequent decade (roughly 1990–1998) was he suggests a *de facto* nuclear period, where both countries had an undeclared nuclear weapons capability. The most recent years, following the May 1998 nuclear tests by both countries up to 2002, is dubbed the overt nuclear period.

Kapur suggests that Pakistan as a relatively conventionally weak (compared to India) state that also seeks to end India's six decades of control over the disputed territory and people of Kashmir, has sought to develop and use its nuclear weapons as a shield behind which it can confront India. Pakistan also sought to use its weapons as a way to incite international attention and intervention in the Kashmir dispute, in effect to force India to negotiate with Pakistan. India has sought to respond to a more confident nuclear-armed Pakistan by seeking to restore the status quo. India has been developing a policy and capability to fight and win a conventional war against Pakistan that it believes would remain under the threshold that could trigger the use of nuclear weapons. He presents as evidence a careful examination of the 1999 Kargil war, in which Pakistan sent troops and Islamist militant fighters into Indian controlled Kashmir and triggered a war, and the long crisis of 2001–2002 during which the two countries mobilized their armies, hurled nuclear threats and almost went to war.

He concludes more broadly that 'nuclear proliferation can ... create powerful military and diplomatic incentives for weak, revisionist states to engage in conventionally aggressive behaviour ... [and] this will require strong states to engage in brinkmanship of their own, retaliating against weak states up to the edge of nuclear confrontation to make the actual or potential costs of conventional aggression too high for their weaker adversaries.' This, as Kapur notes, 'feeds the ongoing cycle of violence and pushes both sides closer to potential disaster'. It is an important conclusion for the future of South Asia and more broadly.

The logic that Kapur has focused on was recognized a long time ago. One of the earliest studies about how the coming of the atomic bomb might affect international relations argued that nuclear weapons were a grave danger to the United States, not just because 'regular rivals on the same level' might acquire these 'absolute weapons' (as the Soviet Union and Britain had already done by then) but that 'possibly some of the nations lower down in the power scale might get hold of atomic weapons and change the whole relationship of great and small states'.¹ Robert Gilpin emphasized this dynamic in his classic 'War and Change in World Politics'.

This fear haunts current US leaders. Speaking at West Point in 2002, President Bush said 'When the spread of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missile technology – when that occurs, even weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations ... They want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends – and we will oppose them with all our power.' Left unsaid here is that some 'great nations', most notably the United States, have long had the 'catastrophic power' to destroy weak nations, and the goal is to keep things that way.

¹ Frederick S. Dunn, Bernard Brodie, Arnold Wolfers, Percy E. Corbett, and William T.R. Fox, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956, p. 5.

The problem that Kapur is pointing to is that nuclear weapons come into a deeply unequal and unjust world that is torn between nation-states, most of whose leaders see competition and conflict, and war, as inherent. Nuclear weapons offer a way for powerful states to maintain and even strengthen their position, and for weaker states they offer a means to increase their clout and standing. Down this path may lie disaster.

Dr Mohamed El-Baradei, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has warned that there are another 20 or 30 'virtual nuclear weapons states' that have the capacity to develop nuclear weapons in a very short time span. For these countries, among them one must count Japan, it may take a threat from an existing nuclear-armed state, a change in leadership, a newfound desire for national power and prestige, a resourceful scientist or unexpected access to technology to tip the balance.

The answer may lie in the United Nations. The UN charter requires that 'all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state'. Holding all states, especially the most powerful, to this basic commitment may eventually prove to be the key to the rest.

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