

Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

607 South Mathews Street Urbana IL 61801 217/333-7086

Reprint

**Security, Peace and Stability
in South Asia:
An American Perspective**

Stephen Philip Cohen

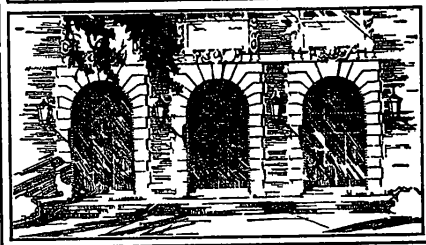
Director

Regional Security Project

Summer 1987

LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

NOTICE According to Sec 19
(a) of the University *Statutes*
all books and other library
materials acquired in any man-
ner by the University belong to
the University Library When
this item is no longer needed
by the department it should
be returned to the Acquisition
Department University Library



SECURITY, PEACE AND STABILITY IN SOUTH ASIA
AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Stephen Philip Cohen

**A Lecture presented to
the University of Allahabad, India
February 20, 1987**

(Stephen P. Cohen is Professor of Political Science at the University of Illinois Urbana. When this speech was delivered he was a member of the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of State. The views and opinions presented are those of Professor Cohen and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the United States government.)

Introduction

I am deeply honored to have been invited to address the community of scholars at the University of Allahabad during its centenary celebration. Americans and Indians share an interesting past—we were both subject to British rule. This left us with many shared institutions—my own university celebrated its centenary several years ago and I am pleased that we have been able to establish direct links between Illinois and Allahabad (and other South Asian universities) over the past thirty years.

While we are members of different countries we have a common commitment to scholarship and the search for truth. It is in the voice of a scholar that I will speak today, not that of a government official. One peculiar feature of the American system is that it encourages in and outers such as myself. This arrangement sometimes leads to confusion, but I want to make it clear that today I am speaking purely as a scholar, not as a government official.

Let me also emphasize that I believe that one can speak as a friend of India and as a friend of Pakistan. What I will say here today could just as easily be addressed to a Pakistani audience. Not only can an American view both countries in a positive light, but to do otherwise—to choose between one or the other—does a disservice to both and to important American interests. There is a deep common interest between India and Pakistan; a close U.S. relationship with one does not exclude a close relationship with the other.

Today I want to address several issues of regional peace and security in the spirit of the great son of Allahabad Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru is today criticized in India as having been unrealistic and lacking tough-mindedness. I think this is wrong. Nehru himself addressed the issue in a parliamentary debate.

What exactly is idealism? Idealism is the realism of tomorrow. It is the capacity to know what is good for the day after tomorrow or for the next year, and to fashion yourself accordingly. The practical person, the realist, looks at the tip of his nose and sees little beyond, the result is that he is stumbling all the time.

I agree with Nehru that the true pragmatist is also an idealist. (This was also the position of one of my teachers at the University of Chicago, Hans Morgenthau, who is wrongly thought of as an amoral realist.) Nehru will be recalled as a great world figure because he combined both elements. Nehru was an idealist and a realist and gave eloquent voice to this world view. If he was sometimes a contradictory figure it was because he reflected deep divisions within Indian society—for example, the different disciplines of Mahatma Gandhi on the one hand and Subhas Bose on the other—divisions which have their counterpart in my own and other democratic societies.

South Asia Regional Dynamics

All students of foreign policy face two occupational hazards. First, they invariably tend to view the world through nationalist eyes, exaggerating the importance of their own country. This is true even of those who hate their own nation (for example, those Americans who think that the U.S. can do nothing right). More often, nationalism corrodes scholarship by encouraging the belief that one's country can do no wrong.

The second occupational hazard is more subtle. It is that scholars often come to identify with the foreign nation they come to know first and best. American Asian specialists do tend to become boosters of the Asian country they encounter first. They tend to view the world through its eyes; they come to learn about its neighbors through its books and scholars. This academic clientitis is not all bad. Indian scholars must learn how Americans think, how we view the world, in order to make informed guesses as to how we will behave in a particular situation. We must be able to put ourselves in your shoes as we estimate the direction of Indian foreign policy.

In the case of many American scholars, our contact with South Asia was abruptly cut when the Government of India decided (after 1972) to restrict our entry. We wound up in many other places—I spent a year in East Asia learning about China and Japan. Later in the

70s I had the opportunity to conduct research in Pakistan (even when U S -Pakistan relations were very hostile) and have taught a number of students from Pakistan Nepal and Bangladesh as well as India And of course nearly two years experience in the U S Government has taught me something about the way in which Indian and Pakistani foreign policy is conducted

All this is by way of preface to my own imperfect understanding of South Asian regional security issues I think there are two central features of the region worth special emphasis the issue of national identity and the changing relationship of South Asia to its international environment

National Identity

In his book on the Kashmir problem (still the finest writing on the subject) the late Sisir Gupta offered the insight that the major elements in this conflict are the images that India and Pakistan had created of themselves on the eve of Partition Sisir Babu noted that the differences between Islamic Pakistan and secular India went beyond the fate of minorities in the two countries and affected the entire span of their relations indeed how they came to see each other ultimately affected how they saw themselves and their relations with third states

There is no escaping the fact that the identities of India and Pakistan confront each other The very existence of Pakistan an Islamic state seems to challenge the notion that Indian Muslims can live in peace and harmony in secular India that the Muslims of India remain loyal to their (secular) government seems to challenge the existence of Pakistan itself Thus these two states merely have to be themselves to cause strain and suspicion in their relationship As Sisir used to argue it might be best for India if Pakistan did pursue its Gulf and Middle Eastern ties this would lessen its obsession with India His advice generally went unheeded as most Indians ridiculed and feared Pakistan's efforts to build ties with its Islamic neighbors to the west In an attempt to undercut these ties (but also to meet the concerns of its substantial Muslim population) India has of course pursued its own West Asian strategy

There are those in India Pakistan and elsewhere who argue that because of this fundamental clash of identities India and Pakistan cannot become friends that they are doomed to conflict I disagree on both counts

First relations between great states should not be based merely on friendship Friendship is a rare commodity in international politics Indeed as Hans Morgenthau used to say nations have interests not friendships Close and friendly relations evolve out of

common interests and trust develops when two states work to pursue those common interests especially when they see such interests extending into the distant future All the rest is propaganda

Second nothing is inevitable Relations between France and Germany (and earlier between France and Britain) were once as hostile as vicious as filled with hatred as one encounters among the worst India-baiters in Islamabad and Pakistan-haters in Delhi The fact that this fear and hatred exists is an objective reality and should not be underestimated but its continuation at very high levels for the indefinite future is not inevitable Indeed in the twenty five years I have been visiting South Asia I notice a marked change in the kinds of regional passions that stir Indians and Pakistanis

Let us try to take an objective measure of the state of Indo-Pakistani relations Let us grant that the very identities of the two states clash Let us also grant that the two states have other conflicting interests such as the dispute over Kashmir suspicions about support of ethnic linguistic or religious minorities and so forth What does this add up to?

It means that there will for the foreseeable future be an upper limit to relations between India and Pakistan It means that we should not lightly use the term friendship to describe this relationship There are ties between you that repel that create fear and hostility But we should not necessarily assume that these will inevitably lead to war or that they will prevent cooperation on a whole range of common interests between you

For just as there is an upper limit to Indo-Pakistani relations a ceiling on cooperation there is also a lower limit—a floor—below which relations are unlikely to fall You and the Pakistanis breathe the same air drink the same water share a goodly portion of your cultures are highly complex multi-ethnic societies and historically experienced the blessings and curse of having been ruled by the British India and Pakistan therefore share certain values ideas and ideals on managing internal and external affairs You also have similar economies and belong to the non-aligned movement and thus have similar views on how the global political economy should be organized

In short while it is easy to stress the inevitability of Indo-Pakistan conflict a balanced view will note that you and the Pakistanis have an incentive not to let relations between you deteriorate below a certain point I think that much of this was codified in the Simla summit relations between you and the Pakistanis have objectively improved since the early 1970s despite all that has happened within each country

There is a floor and there is a ceiling Indo-Pak relations are not merely 'better' or worse but they oscillate between these boundaries In my view the task of statesmanship is to raise upward both the floor and the ceiling Since the ceiling is composed in part of the images and stereotypes of the past it can be raised by expanded contacts between you and the Pakistanis There is much that each of you will dislike in the other but it is better to function on the basis of a true (even if negative) appreciation of the other side than on the basis of false images

You can also raise the floor of your relationship by seeking out those economic and strategic interests you do have in common with Pakistan The most important of these interests is that you can damage each other India of course is the region's dominant military power but in any serious armed clash with Pakistan both would be grievously hurt You also share with Pakistan a vital interest in keeping outside powers out of the Subcontinent Ayub Khan made a strategic mistake in downgrading the importance of the Chinese penetration of NEFA in 1962 the occupation of a good portion of South Asia by a superpower in 1987 does not seem to be fully understood in India nor do you seem to be willing to acknowledge let alone sympathize with what Pakistan has done I was a supporter of India in the 1971 conflict but it is now Pakistan that bears the brunt of nearly three million refugees and the military and political harassment of a superpower Where are the Indian ideas on removing this alien presence from what is here at least termed the Indian Subcontinent?

The Pentagon of Power

Let me turn now from the realm of Indo-Pakistan relations (which will always remain at the core of South Asian security matters) to a somewhat broader context which I have termed the pentagon of power My allusion is to the conjunction of five major military powers in South Asia Four of these are physically present a nuclear China and a nuclear Soviet Union plus the near nuclears India and Pakistan My own country is physically distant but we do have important regional interests and have become a reluctant participant in this pentagonal system

This pentagonal system evolved over a number of years In the 1950s and 1960s the Sino-Soviet split led to active Soviet-Chinese competition in South Asia and intermittently brought the U S to the region in support of first Pakistan and then India against these two outside powers Nehru was prophetic—and wise—in his judgement that China was an independent power The Sino-Indian war was a tragedy for him and for India but China's present moderation can be seen as the ultimate vindication of Nehru's vision

Three recent developments are relevant to this pentagon of power and could conceivably transform it

- The first is the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. With the preoccupation of Iran with its own conflict in the Gulf, Pakistan has become strategically critical for a number of countries. It is supported again not only by the U.S. but also by the Chinese, the Saudis, the Iranians, and many other states worried about the fate of the Afghan people and the extension of Soviet military power into South Asia and the Gulf.
- Second, both India and Pakistan have an advanced but uninspected nuclear competence. Both are potential military nuclear powers, and no one knows if and when their nuclear potential will be realized, although there is a general assumption that if one goes nuclear, the other will soon follow. This development not only affects regional relations but has global implications for the U.S. and other powers worried about the horizontal as well as vertical spread of nuclear weapons.
- Finally, Pakistan has more than survived the forcible partition of 1971. This is partly due to the support it has received from outside powers but more fundamentally to the good sense and skill of Pakistani leaders, civilian and military. This development might be something of a disappointment to those Indians who expected Pakistan to collapse in the post-Bhutto years. I know I was greeted with disbelief when I returned from Islamabad with rather optimistic views about how martial law would wind up (and many Pakistanis thought I was wrong also). Pakistan is not yet a fully democratic state and it continues its search for the right mix of participation and compulsion, but it must be respected as a major regional power. Its special security dilemma arises from the fact that as large and powerful as it is, Pakistan has as neighbors the world's three largest countries: a fourth which is in revolutionary fervor and a fifth under alien occupation. I suspect that few Indian generals would trade batons with their Pakistani counterparts.

I do not know of a period in history when such large and powerful states have interacted in the way these five powers meet in South Asia. The closest approximation is the 19th century balance of power system that kept the peace in Europe for nearly a hundred years (although it did not prevent the ravishing of much of the rest of the world nor did it prevent the calamities of World War I and II). The present system is somewhat different: three of its members are nuclear weapons states but have no alliance relationship with each

other (the way France and Britain have an alliance relationship with the U S in NATO) Two are potential nuclear states calculating whether going nuclear would enhance their security or lessen it Since we are still uncertain about the political impact of nuclearization this calculation is certain to be difficult to get right In the meantime both India and Pakistan play the game of nuclear ambiguity increasing the risk of miscalculation and error

The full implications of this pentagon of power have yet to emerge Certainly it has affected the way in which all five powers relate to each other Although there is much talk in India of a Sino-Pak-U S alliance vs a Soviet-Indian entente the fact of the matter is that the U S has more realistically sought to improve its relations with India just as it entered a new assistance relationship with Pakistan and the Soviet Union has recognized that Pakistan is critically important as far as its own Vietnam is concerned The question in Indian minds must be whether Pakistan is more important to the Soviets vis a vis Afghanistan than India is to the Soviets vis a vis China I think we can expect such calculations to dominate relations between these five states for the indefinite future perhaps even after the Soviets withdraw from Afghanistan

As I noted the revival of Pakistani military power and its internationally recognized diplomatic importance must come as a disappointment to some in this audience After 1971 it appeared that India would be not only the dominant power in South Asia but the sole military power of any consequence Since none of the other South Asian states touch each other (but they all touch India) New Delhi could afford to deal with each of them on a purely bilateral basis with overwhelming military superiority in each case Now India faces a revived Pakistan (with nuclear potential) and sees other regional states actively pursuing outside contacts with the superpowers and China Even more astonishing these smaller states have managed to bring forth a regional organization the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) does this imply a further diminution of Indian power?

I do not think so Neither Pakistan's revival nor the evolution of SAARC are harmful to vital Indian interests In some ways they enhance those interests

First it has been Pakistan not India that has had to cope with the burden of three million refugees and Soviet pressure A weak Pakistan would have long ago made its own peace with the Soviets and the DRA regime ratifying the presence in South Asia of a superpower that has recently demonstrated its expansionist and interventionist mood Ultimately such a Pakistan would have fallen under Soviet influence since there would be no other way to deal with the genuine war of national liberation in Afghanistan

Second SAARC may turn out to be a tremendous asset to Indian diplomacy. Nations are generally known by the enemies they keep. The perception of the outside world is that India has occasionally taken on such fierce foes as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, as well as the more substantial Pakistan, in its search for regional dominance. This may be a false perception, but SAARC—by encouraging cooperation between India and its much smaller and weaker neighbors—has had the consequence of enhancing India's status. India is not the kind of country that can bully its neighbors without inviting scorn, but it is the kind of country that can gain new respect by a positive regional leadership role, a role that cannot be played without the active participation of those smaller neighbors. SAARC provides the mechanism by which that role can be played, and will in the long run enhance India's status as a great power. Of course, it also serves several important common interests: besides various economic, ecological, and cultural projects, it facilitates cooperation against the twin scourges of terrorism and narcotics, and gives South Asia a regional voice in UN and NAM fora. Truly, SAARC is an idea whose time should have come many years ago, but I believe that it was changes in South Asia's strategic and geopolitical situation after December 1979 that brought it into existence. It is tragic, but probably true, that the temporary destruction of the sovereignty of one South Asian country has led the others to enhanced cooperation.

The Practical Idealist

One of the occupational diseases of academics is telling other people how to run their affairs. My brief contact with government has taught me how difficult it is for outsiders to offer constructive ideas. But it has also taught me how reluctant governments are to think of such ideas themselves. Too often, for too many countries, diplomacy means simply doing tomorrow what you did today, and doing today what you did yesterday. The status quo is often the best course to follow, but not always: governments are fallible, and when they make serious mistakes, the lives of millions of innocents can be put at risk.

Some of you may believe that it is impertinent for a foreigner to make observations about your own and regional affairs, especially when his own country may be vulnerable to criticism. That would be a fair comment in most cases, but not in this. First (as I used to argue with Indian diplomats during your unlamented Emergency) offering advice to others is a sincere compliment. One does not offer advice when the situation is hopeless, or when there is no moral reciprocity involved. I welcome your comments and criticisms of American policy (and I have never known Indians or Pakistanis to be shy about offering it); in turn, my comments on regional matters are offered in a constructive spirit.

There is another reason why Americans are concerned about South Asia. India and its neighbors constitute a quarter of mankind share many values with us and your decisions especially on nuclear matters will affect our own security interests. What follows therefore are some ideas about regional peace and security. They might seem to be idealistic to some but then I hope they will be in the Nehruvian tradition of idealism.

i See Things for Yourself

South Asians are great travelers. It is possible for almost any of you to go tomorrow from New Delhi to New York and back for very little less if you know the right travel agent. But one cannot go from Hyderabad India to Hyderabad Pakistan for legitimate academic purposes. It is very difficult for you to meet other South Asian scholars in your own country except under contrived or government-sponsored circumstances. It is parenthetically increasingly difficult for American scholars to come to India but that is a separate issue.

As a scholar I am a great believer in seeing things for myself. Despite my formal training and access to several great libraries I was deeply surprised by India when I first came here in 1963 much the same thing occurred when I first went to Pakistan in 1978 despite several years intensive study of that country. I think that your scholars are handicapped unfairly when it comes to regional issues. Few Indians have visited let alone studied in Pakistan, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka you have very few opportunities for straightforward discussions of regional security issues. Some of these have to occur in third countries—the U S or Great Britain—a bizarre situation.

I agree with Andrei Sakharov who recently said that a country that allows its people to travel abroad will be a better country out of necessity. He was referring to the Soviet Union but in a lesser way this applies to India and Pakistan. In the interest of fairness I would also note that it once applied to the U S in a limited way—which once (but no longer) restricted citizen travel for political reasons. Scholars should be the first to press for the right of foreign travel and nowhere more than in South Asia would such travel be a useful corrective to the stereotypes of the past or the disinformation of today. Of course it is not merely a question of your government allowing you to leave but of other governments allowing you to arrive. Hopefully SAARC will facilitate the movement of journalists, scholars and other private citizens who wish to see for themselves what their neighbors are like.

ii A Balanced Imbalance?

K Subrahmanyam is correct when he states that defense expenditures in South Asia are not out of line. India claims to spend just over 4% of its GNP on defense and Pakistan (which also has a two-front problem) spends about 8%. By international standards neither is excessive. India and Pakistan must have at least some advanced equipment if they are to maintain professional armies. While I believe that deliberate planned war between India and Pakistan is very unlikely for the foreseeable future, it would be foolish for either government to neglect its defenses. In any case, a reasonably equipped professional military establishment is less of a threat to civilian rule than an army that feels neglected and ignored.

The issue therefore is not whether India and Pakistan should maintain large modern military forces. The issue we should be debating and discussing is the composition and disposition of those forces, an issue too important to be left to either the politicians or the generals. South Asian armies must not only be able to defend their countries against external threats, they must not (by their make-up and location) actually increase such threats. Thus the central strategic dilemma that faces all would-be peacemakers in South Asia

- By its legitimate preparation against a hypothetical two-front conflict with China and Pakistan, India has acquired the capability of defeating Pakistan.
- By its attempt to deal with its own two-front threat, Pakistan has greatly increased its defensive capabilities vis à vis India, making an Indian victory more problematic or at least more costly.

India and Pakistan therefore find themselves driven into an arms race with each other. India's greater size, wealth, and superior logistics systems would seem to ensure its strategic advantage, but it is not only racing against Pakistan, but against those states who are legitimately concerned about Pakistan's integrity. Since India itself is one of those states (a weak Pakistan would be as dangerous to India as a too-powerful Pakistan), India is, in a sense, racing against itself, just as Pakistan faces a hopeless task in trying to keep up with India, gun for gun, plane for plane.

One solution to this strategic dilemma is easy to propose but difficult to achieve. It would involve bargaining—perhaps tacit bargaining—between India and Pakistan on the levels and specific types of weapons and on their routine disposition. Some systems might be excluded altogether by mutual consent. For example, neither side would import or build force multipliers such as AWACS or airborne refueling systems, and other weapons might have specific

ceilings India and Pakistan could agree to a certain number of deep penetration aircraft or bombers or tanks and over the years modernize these forces within the agreed upon ceilings

Of course the numbers involved would not be the same for India and Pakistan if such a bilateral arms agreement were reached India has always maintained substantial superiority in aircraft and armor over Pakistan that superiority could be codified Pakistanis including the military freely acknowledge India's military superiority already The result of further analysis discussion and negotiation could be a stable regional military situation--what I have termed a balanced-imbalance Pakistan's forces would be adequate to protect it against an Indian attack but not so large or so modern that they threatened India By and large the two countries have reached such a balanced-imbalance it could be further codified and perhaps some agreement reached on lowering overall levels of specific types

I believe that such an agreement would lessen the threat to India and Pakistan from other directions Concrete signs of Indo-Pak cooperation on such vital matters is bound to impress other states that press upon South Asia It would be more difficult for such states to play you and the Pakistanis off against each other and could thus lessen the two-front security problem for both of you

There are other ways of solving the regional strategic dilemma It might be easier in the South Asian context to reach an agreement on limits on defense expenditures as a percentage of GNP Another path would be to agree on limits to real growth in defense spending Either approach would encourage each country to maximize the efficiency of defense expenditure and perhaps would force a real rethinking of defense postures One clear advantage that India and Pakistan would have if they chose the budgetary route to regional arms control is that you have plenty of world-class economists to guide you

Since Operation Brass Tacks has been in the headlines recently I need say very little about agreed restrictions on military deployment Such operations may improve the quality of the Indian armed forces but they have frightened the Pakistanis (that may have been one objective) actually strengthening Pakistan's case in Washington In the future such exercises could force a weak or nervous Pakistan government to react leading to an Indian counter-reaction triggering off a useless arms race or confrontation that no one wanted

I would be the first to acknowledge that all of these proposals added together would not shorten the border between India and Pakistan by one kilometer But the real border between such distant neighbors as you and Pakistan is in the political realm You are separate and distinct nations you must keep some distance between

you—but there are steps you can each take to ensure that your collective security is enhanced making more secure the lives of nearly a quarter of the human race

iii Your Nuclear Dilemma—and Ours

However we might like to the U S cannot unilaterally stop the Pakistani nuclear program We did not force the Pakistanis to build a nuclear industry we did not threaten Pakistani security we have done our best to warn the Pakistanis of the political and security consequences of a military nuclear program Indeed if the U S had not reestablished a security relationship with Pakistan in 1981 it is possible that the Pakistanis would have by now produced a nuclear device The American connection may have deferred a Pakistani bomb but in the last analysis Pakistan s nuclear decisions will be made in Islamabad and based upon Pakistani assessments of their regional security environment In 1978 the Pakistanis were obsessed with their isolated position in South Asia their military establishment was entirely made up of obsolete Chinese and French weapons and India showed no signs (even under Janata) of reducing the pace of its arms purchases It made sense for Pakistan to consider the nuclear option although it makes little sense for them to exercise it Some Indian strategists would like to see Pakistan go nuclear (this would justify a much larger Indian nuclear program) but I think there is a more favorable future in store for you and for Pakistan

While it is not widely known in India a great deal of work has been done to develop the methodology and technology of verifying nuclear agreements Much of this work has been done under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency which is responsible for verifying states commitments not to divert nuclear material from peaceful nuclear facilities for non-peaceful purposes More than one hundred states belong to the IAEA, and many of them have nuclear facilities subject to IAEA inspection In thirty years of operations the IAEA has provided assurances to all member states that none of the other member states is diverting nuclear material from peaceful to non-peaceful uses Moreover it has done so without ever compromising any member s proprietary information about operations of nuclear facilities

Thus while verification can never be perfect there are well-established means of verification that would provide both India and Pakistan high confidence that the other side is not cheating on a nuclear agreement without compromising either side s industrial secrets The obstacles to such an agreement are political not technical

While it would probably enhance your security and that of Pakistan neither country appears ready to sign the NPT or agree to full-scope safeguards. However in the short run there are less dramatic steps that could be quite useful.

The technical means now exist for verification of a number of possible Indo-Pakistani nuclear agreements. Compliance with such agreements could be verified by an international agency such as the IAEA or you could request the good offices of a third party (the Swedes and the Swiss have considerable experience in this field) or there could be a bilateral Indo-Pak agreement involving your own experts. There could be an agreement to freeze the production or stockpiling of fissile material to ban the development of trigger technologies or to restrict the development of delivery vehicles.

Such an agreement need not involve a permanent commitment. It could be for a limited number of years. The remainder of Rajiv's and Zia's terms of office suggests itself just as Morarji pledged that India would not work on a nuclear device while he was prime minister. That pledge was credible because of Morarji's known aversion to nuclear weapons. A Rajiv-Zia agreement could rest upon enough verification to ensure that neither side feared cheating by the other.

A time-bound agreement now would give both sides time to breathe and consider the future. Frankly while going nuclear is very popular in Pakistan and reasonably so here I don't think it is in the long-term strategic interest of either country to become a nuclear weapons power if there are other ways of ensuring national security and national greatness.

Regional nuclearization certainly would not be in the interests of the smaller states of South Asia—Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka—nor could the superpowers help but be disturbed. Nuclear proliferation could not be contained in South Asia; it would greatly enhance the risk of accidental nuclear war; it would stimulate the construction of SDI-type defensive systems (and these would undercut the prestige of those states that had acquired nuclear weapons) and proliferation would interact with the superpowers' own delicate nuclear balance. That balance was once very unstable—when both sides had a few vulnerable nuclear weapons. The U.S. and the Soviet Union then acquired vast numbers of very powerful weapons but have since at great cost begun to figure out technical and political ways of stabilizing and reducing their nuclear arsenals. A great danger of regional proliferation would be that it would reverse this historic process now underway of superpower reduction of nuclear weapons and total megatonnage.

Conclusion

I hope I have not offended you by my frankness. I have tried to follow the advice of ancient Indian scripture **Speak the Truth but not that which is unpleasant, speak the pleasant but not that which is untrue**. The search for peace, stability, and security in South Asia is a subject of global importance in our interdependent world. The decisions that are made in Delhi and Islamabad will affect more than your quarter of the world. They are your decisions and will be made in reference to your own interests. But I believe that we have learned a great deal about living with hostile states in an imperfect world. We have made mistakes, but Europe has been free of warfare for over forty years and no nuclear weapon has been dropped in anger since 1945. This has involved a degree of luck, but also a lot more hard thought and planning. It has also at times required a degree of vision—looking beyond the immediate issues that we confront on a day-to-day basis to see where we are heading. Nehru had this wisdom and vision; we need look no further for inspiration.

