

“Nuclear South Asia: A Guide to India, Pakistan, and the Bomb”

Video Transcripts

Chapter 1: Introduction to Nuclear South Asia

1.1: “Introduction to Nuclear South Asia”

Michael Krepon: 00:10 I'm Michael Krepon. I'm the Co-Founder of the Stimson Center; I'm the co-instructor of this course. I had been working on nuclear issues since the mid-1970s, Capitol Hill in the Carter Administration and in non-governmental organizations. Started out doing U.S.-Soviet arms control; after the Cold War ended, I wandered into South Asia in the early 1990s, and I've been interested and engaged ever since.

Sameer Lalwani: 00:52 Hi, I'm Sameer Lalwani, and I am a Senior Associate and Deputy Director of the South Asia Program at the Stimson Center, a non-partisan policy research center based in Washington, D.C. At the South Asia Program, we analyze national security behavior, deterrence challenges, crisis dynamics, arms racing, and strategic competition on the Subcontinent. Stimson's Co-Founder Michael Krepon and I are co-teaching “Nuclear South Asia,” a free open online course produced by Stimson in order to engage an emerging generation of strategic analysts working on nuclear challenges on the Subcontinent. We've created this course because there are few issues in the world, more consequential than nuclear weapons and nuclear competition between India and Pakistan. Nuclear dangers in the region are growing. Diplomacy is falling behind. Deterrence stability cannot be assumed. A crisis between these rivals could escalate into a nuclear exchange with devastating consequences for South Asia and the world. We all have a stake in preventing this outcome.

Sameer Lalwani: 02:00 “Nuclear South Asia” is the most comprehensive and diverse collection of perspectives regarding India and Pakistan's nuclear trajectories that's available online. We've interviewed dozens of practitioners and scholars from India, Pakistan, and the United States, including former senior diplomats and military officers, and made their expertise available to students everywhere, free of charge. Each chapter of “Nuclear South Asia” addresses a major theme with respect to nuclear weapons on the Subcontinent. Students will learn about South Asia’s nuclear history, nuclear doctrines and postures, the global nuclear order, nuclear crises, confidence-building measures, and South Asia's nuclear future. Each chapter includes video lessons, downloadable resources, a recommended reading list, and a quiz. The course concludes with a pass-fail final exam. We

estimate that the course will take about eight to ten hours of sustained effort to complete. You should therefore take the course at your own pace. The video lessons are generally under 10 minutes, which allows you to integrate the course with your busy schedule and make gradual progress towards your learning goals.

Sameer Lalwani:

03:13

Upon completing this course, you should be able to do the following: first, understand the factors motivating India and Pakistan's nuclear programs, doctrines and postures; then assess the impact of emerging policies and capabilities on deterrence stability; describe India and Pakistan's positions vis-a-vis the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and other elements of the global nuclear order; analyze crisis episodes, management challenges, and confidence-building efforts on the Subcontinent; and even potentially propose your own innovative solutions to reduce nuclear dangers in South Asia. Students of "Nuclear South Asia" have access to several benefits in addition to the course content. First and foremost, you're now a member of a vibrant intellectual community that includes your peers, as well as the foremost experts in the field. Second, you'll receive regular updates from us featuring exclusive videos, contents, the latest Stimson analysis, and invitations to participate in special online events. Third, you have the option of earning a Stimson-issued certificate of course completion, an important credential as you advance in your professional and academic life. To earn the certificate, all you need to do is watch the entirety of the video lessons, complete the quizzes and all the other course content, and then finally pass a final exam. We encourage you to be an active participant in the course and take advantage of every opportunity to engage with Stimson staff and the "Nuclear South Asia" community. If you find the course to be useful, please remember to leave us a review, and encourage your colleagues and friends to sign up for the course at nuclearlearning.org.

1.2: “India, Pakistan, and Nuclear Deterrence”

- Michael Krepon: 00:05 Nuclear weapons are supposed to deter conflict between adversaries, and they deter by being extremely dangerous. They deter because the prospects of escalation control are remote. Brainy people try to come up with concepts of escalation control once the nuclear threshold has been passed, but nobody has come up with a plausible explanation of how escalation can be controlled when mushroom clouds start to appear. So, this construct of deterrence through extreme danger naturally draws attention of outsiders as well as insiders when the conditions for conflict are present. We don't care about nuclear deterrence between Great Britain and France. They're not going to fight a war. They don't have border issues. They don't have concerns about sub-conventional warfare. Those circumstances are not present, so it's not really a deterrent relationship even though they have weapons. But South Asia's different. The conditions for stable deterrence are absent, even with nuclear weapons on both sides in three-digit sized arsenals. Stability hasn't grown with the size of nuclear stockpiles. It never does. Security grows when relations between adversaries smooth out. When causes for warfare are remote, then the size of the arsenal doesn't matter, and indeed it becomes easier to reduce. These conditions are not in place on the Subcontinent. We not only pay attention to South Asia; people are paying a lot of attention between U.S. and Russian forces and nuclear capabilities because there's friction now between the United States and Russia. There's friction now between the United States and China, and there's huge concern about the Korean Peninsula. So people aren't picking on India and Pakistan. The concerns are growing across the spectrum.
- Michael Krepon: 03:34 Circumstances of growing danger are not unique to the Subcontinent. They exist elsewhere, but this provides no comfort for leaders and people who live in India and Pakistan because the danger resides close at hand. And this course is designed to help people think through these dangers. What could be done to reduce them? This course is for anybody who has an interest. Everybody is welcome. That's what this course is about. We want to invite you in, listen from people who have thought about this problem – people from India, people from Pakistan, people from the United States – we all have messages to convey. We may not all agree with each other, which is fine. It's up to you to come to your own conclusions. This class, so to speak, is not scripted in terms of having you arrive at the same answers, to having you arrive at the same talking points. We're not interested in that. We're interested in helping your powers

of analysis and helping your power to think through these problems on your own. So enjoy the class, and let us know how we could do better, or maybe let us know that you think we're doing a good job. Thank you.

1.3: “Why Does the International Community Care About ‘Nuclear South Asia?’”

- James Acton: 00:05 I think the international community cares about “nuclear South Asia” for the same reason that the international community cares about all countries with nuclear weapons and their potential adversaries; for the same reason that he cares about Russia and NATO; for the same reason it cares about the United States and China. It's because if deterrent were to break down any of those conflicts or in any of those frozen conflicts whether in South Asia or elsewhere, and if conventional military operations were to get started and get out of hand and nuclear weapons would be used, that would be catastrophic for everyone in the region and it would be catastrophic for the world as a whole. And so I think it's the risk of deterrence breaking down and nuclear weapons being used amongst any of the states that have them, not just South Asian but including South Asia, is ought to be a significant source of concern for everyone.
- Moeed Yusuf: 01:03 The basic point is that this argument that nuclear weapons and a nuclear exchange anywhere in the world today can be contained is essentially a myth. There are now studies out there that show exactly what kind of fallout an India, Pakistan nuclear exchange, even at the very sort of minimal level, will have, not only for the region, but for the world per say. First of all, very specifically, you're talking about American citizens, any number of American citizens in South Asia. Second, you're then talking about the environmental decline, the climatic effects, the health effects, etc. And everything I've looked at tells me that the world cannot be the same place after an India-Pakistan nuclear exchange has taken place.
- Toby Dalton: 01:50 India and Pakistan have different beliefs about nuclear weapons and how they deter, such that the chances of a misperception or poor decision-making in a crisis led by misperceptions is a real possibility. I think that is backed in turn by a sense in Washington held by most thinkers on nuclear weapons that hues more towards pessimism about deterrence and the high likelihood that deterrence fails for a wide variety of reasons having to do with breakdowns in systems, human error, technical errors, the difficulty of maintaining command and control and the chain of command during crises, etc. – a lot of which were born out by the U.S. experience in the Cold War. I think in South Asia, on the other hand, you tend to find more strategic thinkers and policymakers who hue more towards deterrence optimism, and that is that essentially the power of nuclear weapons to deter is far greater than the pessimists tend

to assume, and that there doesn't need be a very high alert level or ready force posture in order to affect deterrence. And therefore the kinds of accidents or misadventures that deterrence pessimists tend to worry about tend to be discounted by deterrence optimists. So I think that difference in perceptions in the likelihood here that that people tend more to believe in deterrence pessimism is another contributing factor to the concerns about nuclear use in South Asia.

Jack Gill: 03:28

The U.S. government writ large, whether it's the State Department or the Defense Department or any other department, the White House, cares about nuclear stability in South Asia for a number of reasons. In the first place, an unstable region is not good for the United States, nor is it good for the, local populations. Whether there's actual nuclear use or not, the instability inherent in the possession of nuclear weapons by both sides is troubling. I'm personally not one who believes that nuclear weapons contribute dramatically to stability. There's a lively scholarly debate on that. Secondly, I think the key driver is the potential for vast harm. That's not only the breaking of the nuclear taboo that, thank God, has been in existence since 1945, which could then lead to other places of nuclear use, but the enormous amount of damage that can be inflicted on millions of human beings is absolutely devastating to think about. So I think those are reasons why the United States government and the people of the United States concern themselves when nuclear flags seem to be raised on either side of the India-Pakistan border.

Ashley Tellis: 04:46

Well, nuclear weapons anywhere in the world, you know, represent a particularly difficult challenge to manage, and the U.S. cares about nuclear weapons in South Asia for multiple reasons. First, India and Pakistan, and China as well, are relatively new nuclear powers. They have not developed the kinds of sophisticated control systems that the U.S. and the Soviet Union did during the high tide of the Cold War. So there's always a fear that you could have mishaps in the management of these nuclear weapons, and were such a mishap to occur, obviously there'd be global consequences. So that's one reason. The second reason is that relations between all the players in this triangle are fraught. There are tensions, there are periodic crises, especially between India and Pakistan. And there is a concern that these crises could, you know, on occasion, lead to escalation of different kind, possibly even nuclear escalation, and the last thing the United States wants to see is a crisis that goes nuclear.

Dan Markey: 06:03 I think you can easily consider three: One, I would begin with a question of onward proliferation. That is, that the nuclear weapons that are currently in South Asia have the potential to travel elsewhere, whether it's concerns about possible Pakistani nuclear transfer to Saudi Arabia, or the illicit transfer of weapons or technologies to other countries further afield. Onward proliferation is something that we worry about. The second issue, a related one in some ways, would be the problem of the potential of nuclear terrorism. That is the concern that various militant armed groups, particularly in Pakistan but perhaps elsewhere, could somehow get their hands on some or a larger part of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, and do great harm either inside of Pakistan or further afield. And the last issue has to do with regional stability. The United States has an interest in a peaceful India-Pakistan relationship. There's the humanitarian aspect. There's the more strategic component of it that we'd like to enjoy positive relationships with both countries, and a nuclear war between them would be incredibly costly, both in terms of human losses, but also economic losses and the potential losses of the attention and partnership of two important countries.

Robert Einhorn: 07:24 The United States cares about nuclear developments in South Asia for a number of reasons. First, developments in South Asia might set precedents for developments elsewhere. And if there's a lot of nuclear activity, nuclear testing, acquisition of nuclear-armed missiles, and so forth, this could lead to proliferation elsewhere. A second reason is that India and Pakistan are two friends of the United States. We don't want nuclear developments in South Asia to lead to instability and perhaps even military confrontation between two good friends of the United States. And third, nuclear weapons and nuclear materials security in South Asia are both very, very important to the United States. If nuclear materials or nuclear weapons should fall into the hands of terrorists, this would pose not just a threat to South Asia, but conceivably outside of South Asia, and even in the United States.

Robin Raphel: 08:33 We began to be concerned about terrorist groups in Pakistan particularly having the ability to get a hold of nuclear weapons, should there be any. So that was – this whole concern with what were called "loose nukes," began to figure in. We were concerned overall about the ability of both India and Pakistan to be able to secure any nuclear materials and potential weapons. And of course, we had a fear of further proliferation. If India or particularly Pakistan happened to get this capability, would they be content to keep it for themselves, or would they share it with others? And here's where the idea of the quote-unquote

"Islamic bomb" figured in. People were concerned that perhaps if Pakistan, as an Islamic state, got a bomb that they'd be willing to share it with other Muslim countries. And then finally, both India and Pakistan were and still are relatively poor countries still developing. They have millions, tens of millions of people below the poverty line. And it was our view that since other countries were helping to support their economic development, they shouldn't be spending their money on weapons which we believe they didn't need and would ultimately be destabilizing.