
15. Russia's security and the geopolitical situation in South Asia

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1. Introduction

Russia's interest in the regional problems of South Asia—a vast region to its south—is fully understandable and is explained by a variety of reasons. The need to ensure its national security ranks high on the list of those reasons.

The Russian National Security Concept¹ and Military Doctrine² both point out that, given the profound changes in the character of Russia's relations with the leading world powers, 'the threat of large-scale aggression against Russia is practically absent in the foreseeable future'.³ In other words, the main threats to Russia's national security today are of a non-military character, but threats do still persist in the field of defence.

The most tangible defence threat is the existing and potential hotbeds of local wars and conflicts close to the state borders of Russia and the other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) member countries. Assisting the settlement of regional and local conflicts, primarily by political and diplomatic, international legal, economic and other non-military means, including peacekeeping, is therefore an important direction of Russia's policy in ensuring its national security.

The second potential threat to Russian national interests is the possibility of the proliferation and use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, of the technologies for making them and of their means of delivery, primarily in the countries adjoining Russia or in the regions close to it. The nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan in May 1998 marked the beginning of a new, nuclear phase in the evolution of the regional situation, while the world order that had existed for decades, in which five recognized great powers possessed nuclear weapons and were permanent members of the UN Security Council, was upset at a global level. It confirmed the view developed earlier that South Asia, where more than 20 per cent of the world's population lives, can be regarded as the world's most explosive region today. This danger is aggravated by the refusal of India and Pakistan to accede to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), although immediately after the tests India stated its readiness to

¹ 'Kontseptsiya natsionalnoy bezopasnosti Rossii' [The Russian national security concept], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 26 Dec. 1997, pp. 4–5.

² *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 Nov. 1993. A summary in English was published in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Special Report, Jan. 1994.

³ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 Nov. 1993, p. 4.

consider joining the latter and Pakistan confirmed its willingness to join both agreements after India does.

The most important task for Russia in this respect is thus participation in the negotiating process for the reduction of nuclear and conventional weapons and for control over the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

To this list of the real and potential threats to Russia's national security could be added the steep increase in international terrorism, possibly using nuclear and other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, the continued existence of, and continuing appearance of new, groupings of armed forces in the regions adjoining Russia's territory, and so on. A serious threat to the national interests may arise at a time when the country is deprived of the possibility of delivering weapons and *matériel*, military technologies and military research know-how to foreign countries, providing technical assistance, and so on. Amid the profound political, social and economic crisis in Russia, the supply of weapons and military *matériel* remains almost the only source available to Russia of hard currency for government needs—for the conversion of the defence industries to peaceful uses, for developing the research, technological and experimental basis of the defence industries, and to solve the country's staggering social problems.

II. Sources of instability

As a Eurasian power, Russia has interests not in Europe alone but in the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and the Asia–Pacific region as well.

If only for purely geographical reasons, there has never been and cannot be a direct military confrontation between the USSR/Russia and South Asia.

The break-up of the Soviet Union and the formation of new states in Central Asia might seem to have cut Russia off from the South Asian region and its complex problems and conflicts. However, Russia and South Asia still remain in a single geopolitical area. Moreover, recent changes have not freed Russia from apprehensions that under certain circumstances it is exactly there that damage to its national interests, in the first place its defence interests, may be caused. The question is what damage and under what circumstances this can happen.

It should not be forgotten that South Asia adjoins the southern borders of the CIS and that the Afghan–Tajik segment of those borders, which is defended by Russian border guards, is one of the trouble-spots of the Central Asian region. The continued tensions here, entailing also the deaths of Russian border guards, are, although indirectly, connected with the involvement of a South Asian state—Pakistan—in the internal Afghan strife.

The end of the cold war has not brought any positive changes in the South Asian region⁴ which, even before India and Pakistan made public that they

⁴ See, e.g., Bajpai, K. and Cohen, S. (eds), *South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspectives* (Westview Press: Boulder, Colo., 1993).

possessed nuclear weapons, was an enormous area of instability. Acute interstate and domestic problems remain unsolved and armed conflicts are in progress,⁵ defined not so much by external as by internal factors. The core of instability of the system of interstate relations in South Asia is still the confrontation between India and Pakistan, the best evidence of which is the conflict over Kashmir.⁶ Anxiety is growing that the conflict between them could become nuclear.⁷

The South Asian region is marked by ethno-national and religious diversity, with the same ethno-confessional groups belonging to different state entities. While a particular ethnic group in one state may be small in terms of numbers, it may constitute a substantial force, and sometimes a majority of the population, in the neighbouring country (Hindus and Muslims in Pakistan and India, respectively, the Tamils in Sri Lanka and India, and so on). This correlation of ethno-religious forces increases the danger of separatism and religious extremism and creates the conditions for domestic conflicts to have a damaging effect on interstate relations in the region. The civil war in Sri Lanka and armed insurgencies in the north-east of India and in the region of tribal settlement on the territory of Bangladesh are still going on.⁸

Conflicts based on religion are extensive and acute in India and Pakistan. In Pakistan they have been raging inside a single confession, Islam, between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. Ethnic armed struggle in the Pakistani province of Sind has made it a zone of continued hostilities. At the same time, difficulties in relations between the South Asian states themselves are having an extremely negative influence on their internal inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations.

The countries of South Asia, despite fairly substantial economic progress since independence, are faced with severe socio-economic problems, primarily those of having to provide for their rapidly growing populations. In terms of per capita income they belong to the group of low-income countries (\$725 per year and less).⁹ By the mid-1990s annual per capita income was \$220 in Bangladesh, \$310 in India and \$410 in Pakistan.¹⁰ According to a more general indicator, 'socio-economic conditions' (per capita income plus educational and health care indexes, including the provision of water, number of doctors, calorie intake and others), Pakistan ranked 124th, India 125th and Bangladesh 145th among 160 countries sampled.¹¹ In India 48 per cent and in Bangladesh and Pakistan

⁵ Sollenberg, M., Wallensteen, P., and Jato, A., 'Major armed conflicts', *SIPRI Yearbook 1999: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1999), pp. 15–16, 29.

⁶ See section VI in this chapter.

⁷ For further detail, see *South Asia and the United States After the Cold War: A Study Mission* (Asia Society: New York, 1994).

⁸ The agreement to stop the long-standing military confrontation signed by the Bangladesh Government and the rebel leaders in Dec. 1997 came into force in May 1998. *The News* (Islamabad/Rawalpindi), 26 May 1998, p. 1.

⁹ *World Development Report 1996* (World Bank and Oxford University Press: Washington, DC and New York, 1996), p. 181.

¹⁰ Sivard, R. L., *World Military and Social Expenditures 1996*, 16th edn (World Priorities: Washington, DC, 1996), p. 50.

¹¹ *World Military and Social Expenditures* (note 10), p. 50.

62 per cent of the population were illiterate.¹² Hunger and disease, unemployment, lack of proper housing, lack of drinking water—all these things aggravate social tensions and promote the growth of extremist, separatist, chauvinist and militarist sentiment, damaging the domestic stability and foreign policies of the South Asian states.

Their economic development, especially that of Bangladesh and Pakistan, less so India's, is connected with foreign aid, which results in rising costs of servicing external debt and a greater dependence on external sources of financing. Thus, the external debt of Pakistan amounted to more 40 per cent of gross national product (GNP) in the 1990s.¹³ Soon after the international sanctions imposed in the wake of the nuclear tests began to work, the Pakistani economy, despite stringent government measures, was suffering severely. The sanctions imposed on India, less dependent on outside aid, had practically no such severe repercussions.

The arms race is a burden for the economies of the South Asian states. Their military expenditures in absolute terms are constantly rising and amount to a considerable share of their GNPs.¹⁴ The military expenditures of India and Pakistan, which are in sharp confrontation, are especially high. In absolute terms India's is far greater than Pakistan's,¹⁵ but Pakistan spends per capita three and a half times as much as India.¹⁶ The effect on social provision is ruinous: in India per capita military expenditure is approximately equal to that on education and almost three times as much as that on health care; in Pakistan, expenditure on education and health care is one-third of military expenditure.¹⁷ India and Pakistan are also arms exporters.¹⁸

After the end of the cold war, the arms race between the two leading countries of South Asia has continued. Both have spent enormous sums for military needs and have increasingly purchased newer kinds of conventional weapons.¹⁹ Research on military nuclear programmes has proceeded apace, with nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery being developed.²⁰ Although both countries have signed the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and

¹² *World Development Report 1996* (note 9), p. 188.

¹³ *World Development Report 1996* (note 9), p. 192.

¹⁴ Sköns, E. *et al.*, 'Military expenditure and arms production', *SIPRI Yearbook 1999* (note 5), p. 319.

¹⁵ Sköns *et al.* (note 14), p. 313.

¹⁶ *World Military and Social Expenditures 1996* (note 10), p. 50.

¹⁷ *World Military and Social Expenditures 1996* (note 10), p. 50.

¹⁸ *World Military and Social Expenditures 1996* (note 10), p. 46.

¹⁹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1997/98* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997), pp. 147, 148, 150, 153–56, 159–61, 266; and Arnett, E. (ed.), *SIPRI, Military Capacity and the Risk of War: China, India, Pakistan and Iran* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997), pp. 25, 37–38, 84–194, 243–45.

²⁰ Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki Rossiyskoy Federatsii [Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation], *Novy Vyzov Posle 'Kholodnoy Voyny': Rasprostraneniye Oruzhiya Massovogo Unichtozheniya* [The new challenge after the cold war: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction] (Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki Rossiyskoy Federatsii: Moscow, 1993), pp. 81–84, 98–102; and Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, *Dogovor o Nerasprostraneniye Yadernogo Oruzhiya: Problemy Prodleniya* [The Non-Proliferation Treaty: problems of its extension] (Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki Rossiyskoy Federatsii: Moscow, 1995), pp. 47–48, 59–60.

the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, information about chemical and biological weapon programmes is difficult to come by.²¹

Integration processes in South Asia have not gained any real momentum. The regional organization that has existed since 1985, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC),²² cannot boast of any great success. According to recent data, trade between the SAARC member states amounts to less than 5 per cent of their total external trade.²³ So far cooperation has involved such fields as communications, meteorology, environmental protection, the fight against drugs and terrorism and so on. The main reasons for the low level of integration in South Asia are political problems, above all the confrontation between India and Pakistan. Moreover, small countries fear, with good reason, that India's interests will prevail in any form of cooperation, while India, for its part, fears that small countries will rally against it among themselves or with powers outside the region.

III. Russia and South Asia: geopolitical aspects

Russian policy in the South Asian region has traditionally been based on friendly relations with India, the biggest country in the region and regarded by the State Duma (the lower house of the Russian Parliament) as Russia's strategic ally.²⁴ A Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation is planned to be signed by the two countries' presidents at their next summit meeting.²⁵ Indo-Soviet/Russian relations have for decades been based on nationwide consensus in both countries;²⁶ trade and economic relations have been mutually beneficial and cooperation in the field of defence has suited the national interests of both the USSR/Russia (including its military-industrial complex) and India. The USSR traditionally supported India's position on Kashmir and displayed delicacy and understanding when dealing with Indian nuclear research and development and with its position on the NPT and the CTBT, which the USSR/Russia could not support but did not criticize explicitly.

National consensus on the necessity of a special relationship with India was cast into some doubt following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when Russia adopted an obvious tilt toward the United States and Western countries. Russia's relations with the two leading countries of South Asia, India and Pakistan, was widely discussed on different levels in the mass media and academic circles. On at least three occasions South Asia policy was debated at special hearings in the Commission on International Affairs of the Supreme

²¹ Arnett (note 19), p. 273.

²² For the membership of SAARC, see appendix 1 in this volume.

²³ *Asian Affairs* (London and New Delhi), Aug. 1998, p. 14.

²⁴ Hearings of the Commission on International Affairs of the State Duma, Oct. 1994, Feb. 1997.

²⁵ Indo-Russian press statement on the official visit to India of the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation. 'India, Russia signed defense pact', *Hindustan Times*, 22 Dec. 1998, p. 1.

²⁶ On India, see, e.g., Government of India, 'Evolution of India's nuclear policy', Paper laid on the table of the Lower House of the Parliament of India, 27 May 1998.

Soviet and the State Duma.²⁷ During hearings which took place before President Yeltsin's visit to India in January 1993, the representative of the Foreign Ministry, at that time headed by Andrey Kozyrev, expressed doubts about the need to preserve Russia's special relationship with India and suggested a principle of 'equidistance' in dealings with India and Pakistan. He explained that this might enable Russia to get Pakistan's help in addressing the problem of Afghanistan. However, the majority of participants in the hearings did not support this point of view. The members of the commission, Supreme Soviet deputies, representatives of GlavKosmos (the Russian space agency), foreign trade operatives, military experts, scientists and others insisted on the need to maintain the traditional relationship with India. At the same time they pointed out that this relationship should pose no obstacle to Russia's reaching understanding with Pakistan.

Later hearings in the Commission on International Affairs of the Duma on the problems of relations with India, which took place in October 1994 and February 1997, were much less controversial. The idea of preserving special relations with India was supported by virtually all participants. Moreover, during the 1994 hearings the formula of 'strategic partnership' between Russia and India was put forward, and this idea was included in the commission's report of February 1997. At the same time the need to develop a normal, businesslike relationship with Pakistan was supported by the majority of speakers.

The reduction in global confrontation with the end of the cold war has not much improved the traditionally difficult, sometimes very strained, relations between Russia and Pakistan, although some possibilities for improvement have undoubtedly appeared as a result of the rapprochement between the views of the great powers on the problem of Indo-Pakistani relations, the relaxation of the formerly rigid system of relations between the South Asian states and the great powers, and so on.

At the beginning of the 1990s steps were taken towards expanding relations between Russia and Pakistan, especially in the political sphere. Former Russian Vice-President Alexander Rutskoy visited Pakistan in December 1991, and the Pakistani and Russian foreign ministers exchanged visits. Agreement in principle was reached on a visit to Russia by the Pakistani Prime Minister and draft agreements were prepared on cooperation, principles of relations, and trade, economic, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation. Contacts in the field of peaceful use of space technologies were established and made some headway, and foreign trade operations between Russia and Pakistan started in the Pakistani fiscal year 1992/93.²⁸

These positive moves were not followed up: the visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister was postponed, the draft agreements remained on paper, political contacts after 1994 were limited and irregular, and economic and trade cooperation has registered practically no progress. However, since mid-1997 there has been

²⁷ One of the authors of this chapter—Tatiana Shaumian—participated personally.

²⁸ Government of Pakistan, *Economic Survey 1996/97, Statistical Appendix* (Corporation of Pakistan Press: Islamabad, 1997), p. 173.

a certain revival of political relations: high-ranking officials of the two foreign ministries have exchanged visits during which concrete problems of bilateral cooperation in the field of construction and finance have been discussed,²⁹ and a consular convention and an agreement on cooperation in the field of culture and education have been signed. In the spring of 1998 parliamentary delegations exchanged visits. The parties discussed proposals on the development of cooperation between Russia's regions and the Pakistani provinces, and the Pakistani members of parliament confirmed the recognition of Russia as a major world power and expressly stated their recognition of Chechnya as an integral part of the Russian Federation.³⁰ In April 1999 then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif finally made an official visit to Moscow.

One important circumstance should be noted. The Pakistani side was calling on Russia to play the role of an intermediary in the process of normalizing relations between India and Pakistan, including the settlement of the Kashmir issue. Russia explained for its part that such mediation was possible only on condition that both sides requested it. India, however, categorically objects to any participation of external forces in the settlement of relations.

Thus, even today, when the cold war has become or is becoming a thing of the past, Russia's South Asian policy still retains the Soviet-era principle of a 'zero-sum game' which even in the past was followed only by the Soviet Union. The USA, on the other hand, while helping Pakistan to stand its ground against India and play the role of a bridgehead against Afghanistan, has demonstrated in every possible way an interest in India as well, that is, it has reserved a much greater freedom of choice for itself. Even China is displaying the readiness and ability to manoeuvre in its relations with India and Pakistan, offering mediation in the settlement of South Asian conflicts.³¹

In general, the threats to Soviet/Russian security from the South Asian direction were never direct, even during the cold war period, because of the alliance relationships of India and Pakistan with the two superpowers. Even with the continued and escalating tension in the region and during armed conflict between India and Pakistan, before the disintegration of USSR, when the Soviet border was separated from Kashmir only by 40 km of the Vakhan Corridor, there was no direct military threat to Soviet national security.

The relationship between China, Pakistan and the USA in the military-strategic area had its limitations. While supporting Pakistan against India, the aim of China and the USA was only to keep a definite, existing military-strategic balance in the region, thus enabling Pakistan to survive and to demonstrate to India that there was something to counter India's close cooperation with the USSR. That said, the USA recognized Indian authority and influence

²⁹ Moskalenko, V. N., 'Problemy vneshney politiki Pakistana' [Problems of Pakistan's foreign policy], *Vostok i Rossiya na Rubezhe 21-ogo Veka* [The East and Russia on the eve of the 21st century] (Institute of Oriental Studies: Moscow, 1998), p. 228.

³⁰ 'Pakistan vidit v Rossii posrednika v spore o Kashmire' [Pakistan sees in Russia a mediator in the Kashmir controversy], *Izvestiya*, 18 Mar. 1998, p. 3; and 'Rossiya dolzhna pomirit Indiyu i Pakistan' [Russia must reconcile India and Pakistan], *Kommersant Daily*, 17 Mar. 1998, p. 2.

³¹ Vohra, S., 'Pakistan 1994', *Strategic Analyses* (New Delhi), vol. 18, no. 2 (May 1995), p. 247.

among the Third World countries and showed an understanding that it is impossible to ignore such a country as India, nor does it make sense to do so.

It is extremely important to bear in mind that in South Asia neither the USA nor the USSR pushed its ally against the other; rather their allies in the region seemed to pull the two great powers to the different sides of the barricade. Neither the USA nor the USSR nor China was interested in the further spread of the South Asian armed conflict (although they had axes to grind in the military and political confrontation there). This coincidence of the positions of the USA and the USSR also applied to the urgent international problem of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. However bad Soviet–US relations may have been, even in the worst periods of the cold war, the USA and the USSR maintained the same view on this problem, including its South Asian variant.

However, the interference of external forces in Indo-Pakistani relations, particularly in the cold war period, and the unconditional support of the two super-powers for their strategic allies' positions did widen the gulf between India and Pakistan, affirming each side in its rightness and making it impossible to seek a mutually acceptable solution to the problems. Even after the end of the cold war, when relations between the USA and Pakistan on the one hand and between Russia and India on the other underwent serious changes, with the two great powers calling directly on the conflicting parties to find a bilateral solution,³² India and Pakistan have still not managed to come to an agreement.

It should also be remembered that the struggle over Kashmir, although it would seem to touch upon Russia's interests only indirectly, kindles passions among Islamic extremists in the neighbouring countries, and this cannot but worry Russia with its multimillion-strong Muslim population.

IV. The conflict potential of South Asia and Russia's security

Under what circumstances can the march of events in South Asia cause direct damage to the national interests and security of Russia?

Further aggravation of the confrontation between India and Pakistan can be a serious cause for concern for Russia. What in particular could cause a further deterioration of their relations, tense as they already are?

The most likely factor would be the condition of the Muslim minority in India. The coming to power in March 1998 of a coalition headed by the nationalist Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by definition caused anxiety for the Muslim minority in the country and the Muslim majority in the neighbouring states.

The second factor would be the situation in and around Kashmir, including the problem of protecting human rights and guaranteeing freedom of choice to the people of Kashmir. The idea of cancelling Article 370 of the Indian Constitution on the special status of Kashmir, as proposed in the BJP election manifesto for the February 1998 general elections, could cause discontent in the

³² Vohra (note 31).

state, while Pakistan, the international Muslim organizations and others would have new grounds for accusing India of infringing human rights in Kashmir and refusing to give its people the right to decide whether to stay as part of India, form their own state or join Pakistan.

Third and most important is the new tendencies in the sphere of defence and the attitude of the BJP-led Government to the problem of nuclear weapons. It took the major political decision to sanction the crossing of the nuclear threshold and stated that India reserves the right to manufacture nuclear weapons and to equip the Indian Army with them.³³ One view holds that it was the precarious position of the new coalition government that prompted it to carry out nuclear tests with a view to consolidating its position in the country. The results of a poll taken on 26–27 May 1998 showed that more than 80 per cent of respondents welcomed the decision but only 65 per cent agreed that the tests were in the national interests of India: almost 35 per cent held that the government had been guided by the wish to derive political advantage.³⁴ It should also be noted that the euphoria and rejoicing in the streets of Indian cities gave way rather quickly to a more sober analysis of what had happened, and many analysts are weighing the pros and cons of the tests and coming to the conclusion that from the standpoint of internal socio-economic problems the cons tend to outweigh the pros. A similar situation has developed in Pakistan.³⁵

The tests by India and Pakistan, which marked their transition to the rank of effective nuclear weapon states, have aggravated the situation in South Asia substantially. Relations between them worsened; contacts, limited as they had been, were broken off. Both were trying to prove that their transition to nuclear status was in some way ‘forced’ and pin the blame on outside forces—India to pin the blame on China, and Pakistan on India. The war of words was followed by armed clashes on the Line of Control in Kashmir³⁶ and by the stepping up of armed struggle in Kashmir itself.³⁷

An increase in the military expenditure of the two countries—by 14 per cent in India and 8.2 per cent in Pakistan³⁸—has become the material basis for dangerous political tendencies. After the May tests (only two of which had any considerable yield—43 and 30–35 kt, respectively),³⁹ statements on the mounting of nuclear charges on the missiles and aircraft available have appeared in certain circles in the two countries.⁴⁰ Since there is already a certain number of

³³ ‘Why India loves the bomb’, *The Economist*, 16 May 1998, p. 67.

³⁴ *Sunday Times of India*, 31 May 1998, p. 1.

³⁵ Readers’ letters, *The Herald* (Karachi), vol. 29, no. 6 (June 1998), p. 11.

³⁶ The ceasefire line delineated after the end of the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War in the 1972 Agreement on Bilateral Relations between the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan (the Simla Agreement). The Line of Control was slightly altered by mutual agreement in 1982. See, e.g., Smith, C., *SIPRI, India’s Ad Hoc Arsenal: Direction or Drift in Defence Policy?* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1994), pp. 15–17.

³⁷ On the nuclear tests, see section V in this chapter. On the conflict in Kashmir, see section VI.

³⁸ *Pakistan Observer*, 27 June 1998, p. 11; and *Segodnya*, 11 June 1998, p. 2.

³⁹ Ferm, R., ‘Nuclear explosions, 1945–98’, *SIPRI Yearbook 1999* (note 5), pp. 556–57.

⁴⁰ ‘Fernandes supports N-weaponisation’, *Hindustan Times*, 27 May 1998, p. 1; Burns, J. F., ‘In nuclear India, small stash does not an arsenal make’, *New York Times*, 26 July 1998; and Moskalenko, V., ‘Indo-

tactical and operational tactical missiles in the region—India's short-range (250 km) Prithvi missile and Pakistan's Hatf I (100 km) and Hatf II (280 km)⁴¹—greater attention has begun to be paid to the problem of ballistic missiles of longer range. Work is under way in Pakistan to improve the medium-range Hatf V (Ghauri) missile which can carry a conventional or nuclear warhead weighing up to 700 kg and was tested in April 1998 to 1100 km. Falling within its range are Delhi, Bombay and India's major nuclear centres. India resumed testing (suspended in 1994) of the medium-range (tested to 1500 km) Agni ballistic missile with a payload of 1000 kg.⁴² Virtually the entire Pakistani territory, part of China and other territories fall within its range.

It should be noted that the crossing of the 'nuclear Rubicon' by India and Pakistan has renewed the somewhat flagging interest of the great powers and the international community in a region where the problems at issue could seemingly be resolved by the protagonists themselves. However, their acquisition of nuclear weapons has given South Asian problems so dangerous a character that the proponents of a resolution with the help of third parties have seen their case reinvigorated. Pakistan actively upholds this idea, whereas India categorically insists on a bilateral settlement of disputes on the basis of the 1972 Simla Agreement.⁴³ Russia has often confirmed its support for the principle of a bilateral solution on the basis of the Simla Agreement.⁴⁴

V. Nuclear weapon proliferation

After the Indian nuclear tests Russia, a member of the 'nuclear club' and one of the sponsors of the NPT and CTBT, could not but denounce the appearance of new pretenders for membership. In this respect its position does not differ from that of the other four recognized nuclear powers. At the same time, Russia did not wish to join the sanctions imposed by Canada, Japan and the USA against India and then against Pakistan, deeming them to be counter-productive.

The tests carried out by India ran counter to Russia's national interests, as they were clearly in breach of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It was clear that the nuclear arms race in South Asia would not stop at that, and the nuclear tests in Pakistan two weeks after the Indian tests confirmed these apprehensions. The chain reaction might continue and involve other potential nuclear weapon states, such as Iran, Iraq, Israel and Libya, which are dangerously close to the borders of the CIS member states.

Many specialists believe that in the event of a nuclear clash between India and Pakistan the ecological consequences could be extremely dangerous:

Pakistanskiy yaderny marafon' [Indo-Pakistani nuclear marathon], *Moscow News*, no. 21 (May/June 1998), pp. 4, 6.

⁴¹ *The Military Balance 1997/98* (note 19), pp. 153–55, 159–60.

⁴² Arnett (note 19), p. 128.

⁴³ See note 36.

⁴⁴ The joint Indo-Russian statement emerging from the visit to India by Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov on 20–22 Dec. 1998 states directly that 'the Russian side . . . reaffirmed its support for India's efforts to normalize relations with Pakistan on the basis of the 1972 Simla Agreement'.

depending on the season, temperature, direction and force of the wind, and so on, the background radiation in the southern CIS republics and even Russia could be affected.

The situation for Russia was deteriorating in view of yet another factor—the position of its strategic partner in Asia, China. Despite earlier positive changes in Indo-Chinese relations, India's Defence Minister George Fernandes deemed it necessary and opportune immediately after the tests to make a public report on 'India's security perspectives' in which he explicitly declared that it was not only and not so much Pakistan that was at issue: 'China is India's potential enemy number one', the greatest danger from Sino-Pakistani military cooperation being the transfer of missile and nuclear weapon technologies by China to Pakistan.⁴⁵

China issued a strong condemnation of India's tests, calling its use of a Chinese nuclear threat to justify them 'groundless'. In reality, China believes, the tests were aimed at securing India's dominance in South Asia.⁴⁶ At the same time, the Chinese leadership persistently sought to refute the assertions that it was China that had supplied Pakistan with missile and nuclear technology, components and materials.

Russia's attitude to this problem should be considered in the context of its general approach to the export of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Russia belongs to the NPT and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) of 1987 and sticks to both very strictly both in letter and in spirit. A report by the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) in Moscow analyses the dangers for Russia of the appearance on its borders of new possessors of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.⁴⁷ There was therefore a positive reaction in Russia when China took steps towards the nuclear weapon and missile technology non-proliferation regimes. For example, China undertook in 1994 to follow the main principles and recommendations of the MTCR and promised in May 1996 to abstain from supplying Pakistan with materials and technologies involved with producing weapons of mass destruction.⁴⁸ It is in Russia's interest for China to join the MTCR, for the MTCR to be strengthened, and for an international organization like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be set up to supervise compliance with it.

On the whole, China's condemnation of the Indian tests was harsher than its condemnation of Pakistan's, India being dubbed the 'instigator' of the nuclear

⁴⁵ 'Peace at N-point', *Hindustan Times*, 14 May 1998, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Associated Press, 'China says Indian nuclear tests aimed at dominance in South Asia', 14 May 1998, 1.45 a.m., quoted by CNN World News, URL <<http://www.cnn.com>>, version current on 20 Sep. 1998.

⁴⁷ Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), *Razoruzheniye i Bezopasnost 1997–1998: Rossiya i Mezhdunarodnaya Sistema Kontrolya nad Vooruzheniyami. Razvitiye ili Raspad* [Disarmament and security 1997–98: Russian and the international arms control system: development or disintegration?] (Nauka: Moscow, 1997), p. 149.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Anthony, A. and Zanders, J. P., 'Multilateral security-related export controls', *SIPRI Yearbook 1998: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998), pp. 394–95.

weapon race in the region. In China's opinion, Pakistan had been 'forced' to give an adequate response.⁴⁹

The significance of the 'Chinese factor' in the evolution of the regional situation in South Asia was explicitly or implicitly corroborated by the actions of Russia and the USA, which hastened to enlist China's support in condemning the tests. US President Bill Clinton, on an official visit to Peking, repeatedly voiced criticism of them. China and the USA adopted a joint statement on South Asia denouncing the tests and agreed on joint steps to prevent the intensification of the missile and nuclear arms race in South Asia. They reiterated their proposals for assistance to India and Pakistan in settling the complex and long-standing differences on a number of questions, including that of Kashmir, and expressed their willingness to take necessary measures immediately.⁵⁰

A month after Clinton's visit, on 24 July 1998 in Peking, then Foreign Minister of Russia Yevgeny Primakov and his Chinese counterpart Tang Jiaxuan in a joint statement condemned the actions of India and Pakistan and the missile and nuclear arms race in the region, and called on both countries to accede unconditionally to the NPT and the CTBT. The ministers reaffirmed the decisions adopted earlier not to recognize India and Pakistan officially as nuclear weapon states.⁵¹

Thus the nuclear tests in South Asia have fostered Sino-US and Sino-Russian rapprochement. In the new conditions, at a time when India openly stated its intention to 'contain' China,⁵² the Chinese leadership in fact expressed its readiness to monitor and 'manage' the competition between India and Pakistan in the nuclear field jointly with the USA.

Fears that a nuclear conflict will entail unprecedented human suffering and material losses in that overpopulated region are producing an effect of universal fear which must make the weapons of mass destruction unacceptable in the region and create a certain parity of mutual containment and deterrence.⁵³ There is even an opinion that the nuclear thunder over South Asia has stimulated efforts by the proponents of nuclear disarmament and restored that problem to a position of priority on the international agenda at a time when the struggle for the liquidation of nuclear arsenals and the termination of tests had seriously slowed down. The view is also being expressed that in the new conditions a rejuvenation of the non-aligned movement is possible and that India and Pakistan must take a joint initiative in this sense. Finally, if the NPT is

⁴⁹ Eckholm, E., 'China, with restraint, condemns India's nuclear tests', *New York Times*, 13 May 1998; and Bakshi, J., 'Russia's post-Pokharan balancing act', *Mainstream* (New Delhi), vol. 36, no. 32 (1 Aug. 1998).

⁵⁰ Sheridan, M. and Allen-Mills, T., 'Scandals rob Clinton of China summit triumph', *Sunday Times*, 21 June 1998; Fenby, J., 'Clinton seals latest world order with shark's fin soup, lobster and Chablis', *The Observer*, 5 July 1998; and Singh, S., 'Anatomy of Sino-US summit: expectations versus achievements', *Mainstream* (New Delhi), vol. 36, no. 30 (July 1998), pp. 15-16, 32.

⁵¹ 'China, Russia stress accord on S. Asia, Kosovo', Reuters, 24 July 1998, 2.51 p.m.

⁵² Singh, S., 'Pokharan-II: implications for Sino-Indian ties', *Mainstream*, vol. 36, no. 23 (30 May 1998), pp. 34-35.

⁵³ Rabbani, A., Lt-Col (Ret'd), 'Can we defeat India?', *Pakistan Observer*, 23 June 1998, p. 7; and Subrahmaniam, K., 'Peace and n-point', *Sunday Times of India*, 31 May 1998, p. 19.

modernized and its discriminatory character corrected, India and Pakistan might sign it. Even such serious problems as Kashmir, which cannot be postponed, must not stand in the way of the practical implementation of disarmament in the region and in the world arena at large.

It should be pointed out that, after a noticeable worsening of Indo-Pakistani relations immediately after the nuclear tests, the negotiating process began to be re-established. At the end of June 1998, at a meeting of heads of state and government of SAARC in Colombo, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Sharif agreed to resume dialogue at foreign secretary level and sessions of working groups on individual disputed issues. India proposed to Pakistan a pact on no-first-use of nuclear weapons, while Pakistan put forward the idea of a non-aggression pact. Of great importance was the summit meeting of Vajpayee and Sharif in Lahore in February 1999. Prime Minister Vajpayee travelled there by bus, thus opening a regular land transport link between India and Pakistan. At the meeting the two leaders confirmed their determination to obey the letter and spirit of the Simla Agreement, to take additional measures to work out their differences and to intensify the negotiation process in order to achieve the fastest possible results. They reached agreement on starting bilateral consultations on matters of national security, nuclear doctrine, confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the fields of nuclear and conventional armaments, and mutual advance notification of ballistic missile test flights. Prime Minister Vajpayee stated that 'A strong and stable Pakistan is in India's interests'.⁵⁴

The Lahore meeting and its results were very favourably appraised in India and Pakistan and around the world. One important Russian daily wrote that the meeting 'has demonstrated that these two south Asian neighbours have sufficient reserves of state wisdom to seek and reach important decisions in the course of bilateral negotiations'.⁵⁵

VI. The Kashmir problem⁵⁶

The nuclear tests by India and Pakistan have further aggravated their mutual relations and produced a new round of confrontation over Kashmir. In the opinion of the majority of observers, it is the Kashmir problem in the changed regional situation that may provoke a new armed conflict, this time possibly involving the use of nuclear weapons.

This point of view is shared by Pakistani experts. The former Chairman of Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission, Munir Ahmad Khan, wrote that: 'The ominous development has turned this conflict-ridden region into the most dangerous in the world, where conventional hostilities could early escalate into

⁵⁴ Zefia, N., 'Decoding the summit', *The News* (Islamabad/Rawalpindi), 24 Feb. 1999, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Tamilin, A., 'Lahore enters history', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 24 Feb. 1999, p. 2.

⁵⁶ For details, see Belokrenitsky, V., Moskalenko, V. and Shaumian, T., 'Is there light at the end of tunnel?', *Asia and Africa Today* (Moscow), no. 3 (1998), pp. 26–31; Lamb, A., *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy. 1846–1990* (Roxford Books: Hertingfordbury, 1991); Lamb, A., *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947* (Roxford Books: Hertingfordbury, 1994); and Jha, P. S., *Kashmir, 1947: Rival Versions of History* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1996).

nuclear confrontation'.⁵⁷ Indian Defence Minister Fernandes took a different view. In an interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, he said that he did not believe that India and Pakistan were going towards nuclear war or that Kashmir was a flashpoint that could trigger a nuclear war.⁵⁸

The threat may become a reality if India and Pakistan do not confine themselves to conducting tests but start equipping their armed forces with nuclear weapons in earnest. Experts on the cold war period see a whole panoply of reasons why the nuclear deterrence that ultimately kept the USA and the USSR from engagement in a nuclear conflict will not work in the context of South Asia.⁵⁹ Particular attention is focused on the element of chance or accident that could lead to tragic consequences.⁶⁰

A different view is that, since South Asia will never again be nuclear-free, the task of regional leaders is to turn it into a region free from wars and conflicts. India and Pakistan must begin a constructive dialogue that will reduce the nuclear threat for the region and, as the well-known Indian analyst Raja Mohan believes, must 'find ways for peaceful nuclear co-existence'.⁶¹

The Kashmir problem stands in the way of stabilization of the situation in South Asia. Its basis is the incompatibility of approaches to the fate of Kashmir on the part of secularist India and Islamic Pakistan. This essentially ideological conflict has turned into a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan over the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The parties base their positions on divergent basic premises: India considers Kashmir an inalienable part of its territory and the Kashmir problem to have been settled; Pakistan considers it unsettled and demands the holding of a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir under international supervision to decide its fate. At present the situation is aggravated by the fact that a movement for independence is growing in Kashmir itself, with the assistance of the Kashmiri diaspora in the West. Pakistan's position has been unchanged for 50 years and is based on United Nations resolutions.⁶²

Different solutions can be envisaged. It seems that there must be a compromise in the form of recognition of the long-standing status quo, under which, although neither side stands to gain, neither will lose anything. In other words, the most probable solution to the problem is the recognition of the Line of Control in Kashmir as the international border between India and Pakistan.

⁵⁷ Khan, M. A., 'Nuclearisation of South Asia and its regional and global implications', *Focus on Regional Issues* (Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad), vol. xvii, nos 1-2 (1998).

⁵⁸ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, no. 29 (16 July 1998), p. 20.

⁵⁹ Erlanger, S., 'The new cold war in South Asia?', *International Herald Tribune* (International edn), 13 July 1998.

⁶⁰ Erlanger (note 59); and Thakur, R., 'Next to subcontinent face-off, the cold war looks safe', *International Herald Tribune* (Paris edn), 20 July 1998.

⁶¹ Mohan, C. R., 'Challenge of peaceful nuclear co-existence', *Mainstream* (New Delhi), vol. 36, no. 24 (6 June 1998), pp. 9-10.

⁶² UN Security Council resolutions S/726 (21 Apr. 1948) and 995 (13 Aug. 1948); and a resolution of the UN Commission for India and Pakistan of 5 Jan. 1949 referred to in *United Nations Yearbook 1948/49* (UN and Columbia University Press: New York, 1950), pp. 280-81.

The realists and the pragmatists in both Delhi and Islamabad are tacitly preparing public opinion for the need to accept this.⁶³ However, the implementation of this variant will require time and joint effort by the two sides, a solution to the problems of socio-economic development of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the formation of the political structure, demilitarization and CBMs at the border, the development of regional cooperation in South Asia and even the establishment of bilateral relations between the parts of divided Kashmir. The international community might lend assistance to this evolution of affairs. Russia at a minimum has to abstain from supporting one side or the other in order to help prevent the militarization of both sides of Kashmir and the activities of the insurgents. The settlement of the situation in Afghanistan and the end of infiltration into Kashmir by Taleban Islamic militants could also play a positive role.⁶⁴

VII. Conclusions

Analysis of the geopolitical situation in South Asia shows that certain challenges to Russia's national security stem from that region. They are caused by internal socio-economic and political factors, as well as by the character of relations between the states of the region.

Some arise from the general instability in a vast region located close to the boundaries of Russia and several CIS states, from heightened religious and ethnic extremism, separatism, mounting terrorism and crime and expanding drug trafficking.⁶⁵ The situation in and around Afghanistan and the threat of the establishment there of an Islamic fundamentalist regime are serious factors for destabilization. Another hitherto latent danger is uncontrolled migration from the countries of South Asia with their massive poverty and disease, population growth, ecological problems and so on.⁶⁶

It is clear that the security of Russia and the other CIS countries cannot be ensured solely by fortifying their southern borders, although this, too, is of crucial importance. The realities of today's life in Russia do not give it suffi-

⁶³ At an international seminar in Moscow in Oct. 1995, with the participation of experts from the Institute of Strategic Research of Islamabad and in which the authors of this chapter took part, representatives of different social groups of both India and Pakistan were prepared to discuss this variant. See also, e.g., Asia Society, 'Report of a Joint Russian-American study mission', New York, 1993.

⁶⁴ In May 1999 heavy fighting broke out in the Kargil sector of Jammu and Kashmir, continuing for two and a half months, between Indian forces, on the one side, and Islamic militants together with members of Pakistan's regular army, who violated the Line of Control, on the other. These events had an extremely adverse impact on international relations at various levels. Relations between India and Pakistan were badly damaged and the process of bilateral negotiations dramatically set back. The military conflict in Kashmir between the 2 long-standing rivals who already possessed nuclear weapons dealt a serious blow to global security and created a potentially explosive situation near the CIS southern borders, threatening Russia's own security as well.

⁶⁵ For details, see Chufirin, G. (ed.), *Narkobiznes: Novaya Ugroza Rossii s Vostoka* [Drug dealing: a new threat to Russia from the East] (Institute of Oriental Studies: Moscow, 1996), pp. 31–45, translated as 'The drug trade: a new security threat to Russia from the East', Paper presented at the Third Meeting of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) Working Group on Transnational Crime, Manila, 23–24 May 1998.

⁶⁶ *South Asia and the United States After the Cold War* (note 7), p. xii.

cient material possibilities to assist positive socio-economic and political processes in South Asia. One—perhaps the most promising—way to improve the situation in South Asia lies in the relaxation of tensions in relations between the regional states, the settlement of contentious issues between them by peaceful means and the stopping of the arms race.

The appearance of two new possessors of nuclear arms in South Asia is a serious challenge to Russia's national security. Although their potential cannot be compared in quantitative terms with that of the 'nuclear five', it is known that India has at its disposal 50–60 nuclear warheads and Pakistan 15–24.⁶⁷ The explicit danger to Russia is the threat of the armed forces of India and Pakistan being equipped with missiles and nuclear weapons. This is associated with the slackening of the international regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the aggravation of the situation in the region. In the process, irretrievable damage may be caused to the non-proliferation regime and the main instruments for its enforcement, the NPT and the CTBT.

For India and Pakistan themselves the nuclear arms race may have truly catastrophic consequences. Huge additional expenditure will make the existing socio-economic conflicts more acute. For the Pakistani economy, which has in recent years been in a state of chronic crisis, the consequences may be dire. The risk of nuclear confrontation, including an accidental one, has also increased sharply. Only a general reduction of global tension, scrupulous fulfilment by the nuclear powers of existing international agreements and treaties, CBMs, the activation of special measures of mutual control, respect for the Indo-Pakistani agreement not to attack each other's nuclear installations, and the continuation of bilateral negotiations on all disputes can reduce the risk of nuclear confrontation in South Asia.

Like the other parties involved, Russia could act vigorously in the UN, consistently fulfil the recommendations of the meetings of leaders and foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and the Group of Seven industrialized countries (the G7) aimed at consolidating the non-proliferation regime, peace and stability in South Asia, and take part in the working group set up to analyse the nuclear problem of India and Pakistan.⁶⁸ It is also necessary to devise measures to prevent the export from India and Pakistan of materials and technologies for the production of weapons of mass destruction and missile systems, as well as their export to India and Pakistan from other countries. Certain guarantees could be provided by imposing IAEA control over the nuclear installations of India and Pakistan, which, not being signatories to the NPT, do not have full-scope safeguards. The participation of the South Asian countries in the international non-proliferation regime could be facilitated by their accession to the CTBT and by their joining the talks concerning the Fissile Material Treaty (FMT), all the more so as after the tests

⁶⁷ Subrahmaniam (note 53); and Burns, J. F., 'India carries out nuclear tests in defiance of international treaty', *New York Times*, 12 May 1998.

⁶⁸ Kvok, B., 'Yadernye ispytaniya v Indii i Pakistane' [The nuclear tests in India and Pakistan], *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn*, no. 8 (1998), pp. 37–38.

in May 1998 both India and Pakistan pledged not to resume them in the future. The observance of commitments for a substantial reduction of Russian and US nuclear weapons, followed by the other nuclear weapon states, might provide a favourable background for all these actions.

The Duma has not yet ratified the 1993 Russian–US START II Treaty (Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Nuclear Arms), which was ratified by the US Senate in January 1996. Russian parliamentarians once again postponed this matter in December 1998. The division of political forces in the Duma regarding START II is as follows. In favour of ratification are Our Home Is Russia, Yabloko and Rossiyskiye Regiony (Russian Regions). Opposed is the Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. The treaty's fate therefore depends on the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and its allies, who have not yet determined their attitude to it.⁶⁹ The executive branch and the military are in favour of ratification. It should be kept in mind that the missile attacks by the UK and the USA on Iraq in December 1998 have greatly complicated the situation with the START II Treaty, not only in the Duma but also in Russian society. Many think that Russia is not insured against such attacks, and therefore the movement toward disarmament is ill-timed. Duma deputies were given a wonderful opportunity, without aggravating their relations with the government and prime minister, to put START II on the back burner for the foreseeable future.⁷⁰

Finally, a positive role might be played by the establishment of equal and fair relations between powers outside the region and the South Asian countries, and by the elimination of asymmetry and imbalance in their relations with India and Pakistan. One-sided support to one of the parties to any dispute sustains and freezes the state of tension, whereas cooperation with both sides in the conflict may create conditions for a constructive dialogue with the protagonists.

As is known, in South Asia Russia has traditionally relied on joint action with India. Even after India carried out its nuclear explosions, the implementation of the Integrated Long-Term Programme of Cooperation in Science and Technology, to the total amount of \$8–10 billion, is continuing; an understanding has been reached on supplying the Su-30MK and Su-30MKI fighters;⁷¹ and an agreement has been signed on the construction of an atomic power station in Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu with two reactors from Russia.⁷² These were contracted for previously and Russia badly needs the income from them if it is to escape from the dire financial and economic crisis which at present constitutes

⁶⁹ Yuriy Maslyukov, former member of the Communist fraction in the Duma and First Deputy Prime Minister in the Primakov Government, showed himself to be a pragmatic supporter of START II. He argued that the treaty is necessary for Russia and lamented the danger of postponing its ratification. Maslyukov, M., 'Dogovor SNV-2 i sudba strategicheskikh yadernykh sil Rossii' [The START II Treaty and the fate of Russia's strategic nuclear forces], *Izvestiya*, 16 Dec. 1998, p. 1.

⁷⁰ Korsunskaya, D., 'Udary po Iraku razrushili SNV-2' [Strikes against Iraq have wrecked START II], *Vremya-MN*, 18 Dec. 1998, p. 1.

⁷¹ 'Indian official discusses fighter contract in Moscow', Interfax, Moscow, 17 June 1998; and 'Russia, India push defence ties', Reuters, Moscow, 18 June 1998.

⁷² 'India, Russia sign Koodankulam deal', Bhaarith ek khoj: Discover India, News Headlines, 22 June 1998, URL <<http://www.mahesh.com/india/>>.

the main menace to its national security. During Prime Minister Primakov's visit to India on 20–22 December 1998 a long-term Agreement on Military–Technical Cooperation up to 2010 was signed, which provides for India to buy high-technology weaponry from Russia worth \$16 billion over the next decade. Primakov told reporters that ‘a lot in the region depends on the policies pursued by China, Russia and India. If we succeed in establishing a strategic triangle, it will be very good’.⁷³ He added that the proposal was made within a framework of partnership between the three countries to bring about greater stability in the world and was not just a formal initiative.

At the same time, an improvement of Russia's relations with Pakistan as the second party to the South Asian confrontation seems possible and must run in parallel to the further expansion and strengthening of relations with India. The task is to gain a new partner without spoiling relations with the old one, given the tensions between them. The expansion of Russia's ties with Pakistan may contribute to the creation of a favourable external environment for settling the major points at issue in the Indo-Pakistani relationship and may enhance Russia's leverage in Afghanistan with a view to the speediest possible settlement of the situation there. This will not only eliminate the challenges for Russia which the conflict in Afghanistan presents but also diminish the danger from South Asia as a whole. Besides, the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan and the expansion of ties with Pakistan would enable the Central Asian states to establish the advantageous shortest arterial roads to the Indian Ocean, to which Russia, too, would have access.

All these measures would help to neutralize the negative consequences of the emergence of India and Pakistan as nuclear weapon states, maintain and consolidate the non-proliferation regime, and reduce the challenges to Russia coming from South Asia.

⁷³ *Times of India*, 22 Dec. 1998, p. 1.