

contributed to the “blurring” of refugee identity, while Thailand has supported resistance movements on both its borders. Such important insights deserve deeper study, as it is clear that the activities of these insurgents are an important component of the conditions causing the displacement of “citizens” (pp. 71, 88, 141, 142).

Finally, *Fear and Sanctuary* provokes a response to the interpretation of Burmese history that was provided. While Burma specialists have demonstrated the minor role of ethnicity as a category in Burmese history, it is apparent that it still influences the way in which the past is read. Specifically, pre-colonial power centres are described by Lang as “Mon, Burman, Shan and Arakanese” (p. 26), while cities of sixteenth century Lower Burma are given an exclusive “Mon” identity (p. 28), when the chronicles refer to them clearly by their place names. The processes of cultural, administrative, and economic integration are portrayed as violent, aggressive, and suppressive, reminding one of similar colonial interpretations of the encounter between Aryans and Dravidians in Ancient India. One must be cautious in rendering the past through a judgment of the present and be wary of assigning “ethnic” perspectives upon studies of historical processes, as Lang suggests of Lieberman’s work (p. 26). Even if ethnicity is read into the past, one should make sure to include the most recent, relevant, and substantiated work in surveys of the historical narrative. Reference to Michael Aung-Thwin’s work on the “Three Shan Brothers” (*Journal of Asian Studies*, 1996) and his subsequent book on the various “myths” in Burmese historiography (*Myth and History in the Historiography of Early Burma: Paradigms, Primary Sources, and Prejudices*, 1998), would arguably have yielded a more accurate perspective from which to engage in a discourse on the history of ethnicity in Burma.

MAITRI AUNG-THWIN
Asia Research Institute
National University of Singapore

***Nuclear India in the Twenty-First Century.* Edited by D.R. Sardesai and Raju G.C. Thomas.** New York, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 312pp.

This book is an attempt to reassess India’s nuclear weapons programme from a strategic, political, technological, and economic perspective.

This reassessment was necessary in view of several factors. First, unlike its “peaceful nuclear explosion” in 1974, the 1998 tests have enabled India to close the gap between its nuclear research programme and a weaponization programme with delivery systems, command and control structures, all woven around a doctrine of credible minimum deterrence. Secondly, there has been a paradigm change in the perceptions of policy-makers, strategic commentators, the research and scientific establishment, and the military about the regional and global balance of power, mainly as a result of increasing unilateralism by the United States, the concept of humanitarian interventions and shifts in threat dynamics following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks that exposed security vulnerabilities of almost every nation in the world. This volume offers arguments about how the focus of nuclear debate concerning India has now shifted from whether the 1998 tests were necessary or justified to one of how to achieve security and stability for India and preserve its independence and sovereignty within affordable means without triggering an arms race in South Asia.

One explanation of nuclear proliferation, in the case of countries such as India, is the search for an “oppositional nationalist” identity — combining a perceived threat from an external enemy and a sense of national pride. Jacques E.C. Hymans found the cases of India and France strikingly similar in this respect. However, Raju G.C. Thomas would like readers to know that the events that followed the 1998 tests soon revealed how such considerations cannot be sufficient to explain New Delhi’s continued search for nuclear weapons capability development. There is now a need to respond to the strategic shifts emerging from a U.S.-led expanded NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) alliance, with “defence capabilities initiative” justifying intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state on humanitarian grounds, including a response to the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction. K. Subrahmanyam describes how such a shift has also brought to the fore the huge asymmetry in weapons capabilities and information technology, as demonstrated by the United States during the Yugoslav campaign in the 1990s. The sense of insecurity and uncertainty is further buttressed by the disproportional economic power of the West *vis-à-vis* the developing world. This asymmetry has been especially threatening to lesser states, thereby justifying their need to acquire and possess nuclear weapons. These perceptions would lead the reader to some of the main arguments of the author: for India, nuclear weapons would remain the strategic backbone of its deterrent posture, regionally against China and Pakistan, and globally against other nuclear weapon states. The perpetuation of what New Delhi perceives to be “nuclear apartheid” by the international nuclear non-

proliferation regime and the lack of a countervailing global conventional military power, would also ensure that nuclear deterrence will retain its attractiveness for India as a long-term strategy against military interventions of any kind. Moreover, India's nuclear doctrine is based on this rationale that aims to retain the capacity of a credible minimum deterrent at affordable costs.

George Perkovich's piece draws from his earlier book, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). Here, Perkovich maintains that the predominance of the scientific establishment in India's nuclear policy-making to the exclusion of its military, can be the reason why India was outpaced in the militarization of its nuclear capacity. The 1998 tests were meant to lead India on a shortcut to catch up with China in the race for an Asian major power status, as the economic route was beginning to appear too long and too distant to great powerdom. The indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the emerging Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) trap provided the immediate provocations. India was all along uncomfortable with what it perceived to be the continued failure of the nuclear weapon states to put value to India's restraint from 1974 to the 1990s. There was also a failure to appreciate that normative commitments for restraint could not foreclose the possibility for New Delhi to take the nuclear route should its expectations to see a world free of nuclear weapons be decisively rejected. India played down the reciprocal nuclear tests by Islamabad on the basis of its argument that nuclear deterrence could now be a stabilizing factor, both for the Indo-Pakistan and Sino-Indian security relationships. To some extent, this was borne out by New Delhi's demonstrated strategic confidence during the Lahore summit with Islamabad. Simultaneously, however, the reader is led to the lessons from the Kargil engagements of 1999 between India and Pakistan. Kargil shattered the myth of "nuclear weapons deterrent" as a factor for stability, and exposed the inherent dangers of unstable regimes having nuclear weapons, with the possibility of recurrent, albeit low intensity conflicts fought under the nuclear threshold. By the end of 1999, under the looming shadow of an expanded NATO, and apprehensive about increasing global unilateralism by the United States, New Delhi appeared to have been sucked into the logic of adversarial nuclear weapons development and deployment — and what could be an arms race trap with Islamabad.

By conducting the nuclear weapons tests in 1998, India not only challenged the non-proliferation regime, but also exposed its weakness in terms of its inability to constrain nuclear proliferation. K. Subrahmanyam holds the view that the systemic inequity inherent

in the non-proliferation regime has made it difficult to prevent the passing of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) know-how into the hands of terrorists and rogue elements, thus increasing the possibility of the use of WMD by these desperate entities. Significantly, as argued by T.V. Paul, the regime was a static one, with no room to account for possible power transitions and the rise of new great powers. With a huge population, advancing technological prowess, and economic potential, India found the doors to great power status closed and therefore sought the nuclear route, which it thought could give it protection against large-scale overt military intervention, help maintain the territorial *status quo*, and provide a hedge against major technological breakthroughs in conventional capabilities. Despite the international outcry, the Indian nuclear capability has now become a *fait accompli*, which New Delhi is unlikely to give up without a substantial global move towards disarmament, and steps taken to safeguard its perceived security interests.

Bharat Karnad also treats the reader to the same line of argument. He finds in India's nuclear doctrine a case for a flexible deterrent capability, "to be able to face any contingency in a strategic environment which is fluid". The nature and type of nuclear weapons systems are based on India's security needs that provide strategic independence and constitute a diplomatic shield behind which it can pursue its national interests more effectively. As the arguments remain mired around "quality versus quantity", Bharat Karnad finds it prudent for India to keep its range of options open for its nuclear policy and force structure, and to obtain for itself at least a notional parity with three second-tier nuclear weapon states — the United Kingdom, France, and China. This imperative makes a case for India to have a full and versatile nuclear and thermonuclear deterrent with lethal and credible delivery systems. India's international bargaining position can be strengthened by not being seen as too eager for a settlement of proliferation issues other than on its own terms. The hitherto propensity for moderation and morality, which compromises New Delhi's right to thermonuclear security, can be counterproductive in the long run, argues Karnad.

Others like Siddharth Varadarajan do not find this line of argument very persuasive. What, for instance, is the international legitimacy of a nuclear capability, particularly in view of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution urging both India and Pakistan to integrate into the non-proliferation regime? What is its worth in view of the development of missile defence systems by the United States? Nuclear weapons, argues Varadarajan, neither provide credible deterrence nor

confer great power status. Given the increasing international aversion to interventionist nuclear armed states, India can hope to have its presence marked and win respect by making a clean break with this big power mindset and by working to reorder the world system to one of increasing democratic equity. Similarly, according to Rajendra Raja, going nuclear did not make India safer, rather it added to the instability in the region and heightened the risk of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of extremist groups, especially after the events of 11 September 2001. Moreover, the impact of economic sanctions were severe, as were Washington's moves to restrict Indian scientists from research and other facilities in the United States, at places such as the Fermilab. Ben Sheppard would like the reader to know how the introduction of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles on a significant scale has undermined the conventional balance-of-power between New Delhi and Islamabad and added to the negative variables that collectively raise the risks of an inadvertent nuclear war for the region.

The book has also made some attempts to enable one to put a price-tag on the nuclear weapons programme and assess the burden of nuclear defence. This, of course, is not an easy task, given, as Deepak Lal tells us, the veil of secrecy maintained around such development programmes. Besides, estimation needs also to take into account the costs of weapons delivery systems, trade-offs between nuclear defence and conventional defence, the opportunity costs of a nuclear defence programme on the civilian development programme, and tangible and perceived value outcomes. Arguably, maintains Devesh Kapur, the negative consequences of the sanctions imposed by the U.S.-led international community were minimal for India. However, the cognitive impact of the sanctions was more significant in the short run, especially on the Indian scientific community. The possibility of New Delhi achieving sophistication in nuclear weapons technology also remains remote, given India's internal economic, institutional, and technological constraints. Moreover, according to Raju G.C. Thomas, the international technological and economic sanctions that followed the 1998 tests severely undermined the development of India's nuclear energy programme. By maintaining an overt nuclear weapons capability, India will continue to be denied access to advanced technology from the West in the field of nuclear power plants.

Most significantly, Peter R. Lavoy believes that the race for a credible nuclear deterrence in South Asia might drive both India and Pakistan to political and social bankruptcy. As the threshold for conventional war decreases, the consequent breakdown of domestic order could ward off incentives for critically needed foreign investment

to spur economic growth and development. This makes a very strong case for both India and Pakistan to pursue non-nuclear sources of security.

George H. Quester sums up succinctly the arguments in the book. With the 1998 tests, South Asia seems to have shifted from a pattern of “mutual deterrence of nuclear weapons acquisition” to “mutual deterrence of use”. The theory that nuclear proliferation reduces the incidence of conventional wars has been put to repeated tests by events after 1998, as was the legitimacy of the claim regarding great power status. Any further erosion of the non-proliferation regime triggered by policies of other threshold nuclear proliferants (such as North Korea) can only be arrested by great power diplomacy and strategy aimed at convincing these states that there has been more loss than gain for India and Pakistan, so that the paths followed by New Delhi and Islamabad are not worth emulating.

In all, the edited volume has put together a wide spectrum of issues encompassing the nuclear proliferation debate concerning India. It makes a major contribution to the understanding of contemporary nuclear dynamics in the still-operative state-centric structure of international politics.

ARABINDA ACHARYA
Centre for Peace and Development Studies
Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India