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Different Perceptions, Shared Understandings

Towards a Responsibility-Based Regime to Reduce Nuclear Risks
in the Asia-Pacific: Report of the BASIC-ICCS Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue,
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1. Introduction

On 13-14 March 2022, the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) and the Institute for Conflict, Co-operation and Security (ICCS) at the University of Birmingham facilitated an in-person track 1.5 nuclear responsibilities dialogue in Dubai. This event brought together officials and leading track 2 experts in groups informally representing four parties (three countries and one organisation): Australia, India, Pakistan, and ASEAN.

The purpose of the dialogue was to create a safe space for a meaningful exchange of views on states' nuclear responsibilities in the Asia-Pacific, with the aim of promoting increased mutual understanding and opening up a new form of conversation between the participants – and the parties that they represented – based on the Nuclear Responsibilities Approach. It was hoped that such a dialogue might lead to new shared understandings of responsibilities that could inform new policies and practices of risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific.

This report encapsulates the salient themes of discussion over the two days. Whilst the themes identified engender an accurate representation of the discussion between participants, content has been condensed for simplicity. Similarly, the authors have chosen to avoid being descriptive about the process utilised in the dialogue, and prioritise the discussion between participants. It is hoped that the content of this report will encourage further discussion between actors in Asia-Pacific states and beyond.

2. Methodology and Description of Dialogue

The dialogue, which was held under the Chatham House Rule, took place over two days and consisted of six BASIC-ICCS facilitators and thirteen participants – evenly split into three national (Australia, India, Pakistan) and one organisational group (ASEAN).¹ These parties to the dialogue were selected on the basis that each of them has different perspectives on the legitimacy and utility of nuclear weapons, and each plays important regional roles in the cultivation of the security landscape in the Asia-Pacific.

The dialogue was designed as a *Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue*: the final stage of the three-stage dialogue process as set out in the BASIC-ICCS's recently published *Nuclear Responsibilities Toolkit*.² The facilitators ensured understanding of the Nuclear Responsibilities Approach among participants, promoted adherence to the principles of nuclear responsibilities dialogues as set out in the *Toolkit*, preserved respect between competing perspectives, and channelled the flow of discussion towards constructive outcomes.

Prior to the dialogue, BASIC and ICCS spent eight months preparing the groundwork, which included the fulfilment of a sequence of path dependent activities designed to ensure that participants were fully prepared and confident to engage on a meaningful level with the multi-stakeholder process. The dialogue process imagined by the Nuclear Responsibilities Approach is experimental and innovative, and speaks to an interactive, 'bottom-up', and context-dependent method for engagement. Therefore, it was essential that participants felt comfortable engaging with a 'new style' of dialogue as part of a process that challenged their perceptions in a bid to develop shared understandings.

Participants to the dialogue were selected based upon their level of engagement and understanding of nuclear responsibilities throughout the entire eight-month process. For BASIC and ICCS, engagement constituted attendance in briefings, Familiarisation and Collective Introspection meetings (stages one and two of the three-stage dialogue process set out in the *Toolkit*) – all held between June 2021 and February 2022. However, given work commitments and associated time constraints, not all participants invited to the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue had attended prior meetings. BASIC and ICCS had anticipated the difficulty for participants to attend everything and in such cases – which were few – selected participants based on their receptiveness to the purpose of nuclear responsibilities as a mechanism for advancing dialogue on nuclear issues.

The dialogue comprised a combination of plenary and mixed breakout group sessions, in order to generate new ideas and foster collective learning. During the mixed breakout group sessions, representatives of the different parties to the dialogue were mixed together to work in smaller settings. Each of the two mixed groups consisted of six to seven participants (comprising one or two participants per party), and in addition two facilitators and one rapporteur from BASIC-ICCS.

The dialogue contained a number of broad arcs, which were planned in advance through the design of the agenda. First, while the dialogue began with the parties sitting in and presenting from their own groups, the longer the dialogue went on the more the distinctions between these parties dissolved and gave way to joint thinking and inter-party collaboration. Second, the dialogue began structured, but deliberately became increasingly less structured or planned in order to allow the ideas generated in the

¹ The ASEAN group comprised participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore.

² Sebastian Brixey-Williams, Alice Spilman, and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Nuclear Responsibilities Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Thinking, Talking and Writing* (London: The British American Security Information Council (BASIC, August 2021).

<https://basicint.org/the-nuclear-responsibilities-toolkit-a-practical-guide-for-thinking-talking-and-writing/>

dialogue to chart the course of conversation. Third, while the discussion started with a focus on the *descriptive*, with the parties explaining how things are now from their own perspectives, as the dialogue progressed the discussion became increasingly *normative*, with the parties collectively exploring how things could be in the future. Fourth, while the conversation began at the more-abstract level of responsibilities, as things progressed it became increasingly concerned with the more-concrete level of recommendations for policies and practices.

As a result, Day 1 was primarily concerned with fostering a baseline of mutual understanding of each party's nuclear responsibilities and how they perceive their existing associated policies and practices. Day 2, by contrast, focused more on identifying shared responsibilities – the responsibilities that two or more parties to the dialogue have to one another, or to broader referents such as the international community, the environment, and so on – and thinking about steps that could be taken by the different parties in order to fulfil those responsibilities better.

Preparation

Each party was asked to come to the dialogue having completed preparatory work as a group that would raise the quality of the discussion. In the weeks preceding the dialogue, each party was asked by the facilitators to meet virtually to complete a template of the Responsibilities Framework.³ The Responsibilities Framework is a tool, developed by BASIC-ICCS in the *Toolkit*, designed to structure an actor's thinking about their nuclear responsibilities in relation to others.⁴

The Responsibilities Framework was used as preparatory work in this dialogue to facilitate discussions in each party around some key issues. These were: i) each party's nuclear responsibilities in relation to the other parties to the dialogue; ii) how these responsibilities are currently fulfilled in policies and practices; iii) what might be done differently to fulfil these responsibilities more effectively in the future; iv) whether there were tensions, competition, or conflicts between the fulfilment of different responsibilities, and how these could be managed or resolved; v) how the other parties to the dialogue might perceive and feel about one's own responsibilities and their fulfilment in existing policies and practices; and vi) how to better signal or message what one is doing/will do to fulfil its responsibilities in ways that could reduce conflict dynamics with other parties to the dialogue.

Careful and extensive efforts were undertaken by the Programme team to create a positive working atmosphere – a priority that ran throughout the entire design and facilitation of the event. Indeed, creating a safe facilitated space for dialogue was of paramount importance, given that two of the dialogue parties are nuclear adversaries who have no regular dialogue at the official level. BASIC-ICCS made a number of choices and undertook a number of steps in order to achieve a suitable level of what the conflict researcher Herbert Kelman would call 'working trust', to ensure that participants involved in the process believed that each was sincerely committed to the process of dialogue and that it was in the interest of the other to find points of convergence.⁵

³ BASIC-ICCS facilitators did not attend these meetings, but were available to answer participant questions.

⁴ The Responsibilities Framework is illustrated on p. 25 of the *Toolkit*.

⁵ Working trust is defined by Kelman as 'trust in the other side's seriousness and sincerity in the quest for peace – in its genuine commitment, largely out of its own interest, to finding a mutually acceptable accommodation'. See Herbert Kelman, 'Building Trust Among Enemies: The Central Challenge for International Conflict Resolution', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, no. 6 (2005): 639-650, doi: 10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.07.011

The night before the dialogue, participants convened for a reception and dinner, during which participants were given the opportunity to get to know one another in a more informal capacity. Having got to know one another at the dinner, it was hoped that participants could get to know the human in their interlocutors before even starting the dialogue.

During the first day of dialogue, facilitators organised some icebreaker interactive activities, such as speed networking introductions, to turn must-do things into fun things to do. Then, some dedicated time was set aside to collectively set the expectations for the dialogue in an anonymous and fun way – crumpling up expectations in papers and trying to toss them into a bowl in the middle of the circle, then reading them out in plenary. At the end of Day 1, participants were invited to take some free time to allow people to rest or to make their own informal plans.

During the dialogue, facilitators used a flexible, ‘bottom-up’ approach. The agenda was reworked more than once across the two days of dialogue to be adapted to participants’ needs and to take into account the points of talks and issues that emerged during the dialogue. Moreover, facilitators called plenty of snack and coffee breaks to ensure that everyone felt energised and to facilitate informal conversations. At the end of the dialogue, a dinner was organised in a relaxed, informal location to cement relationships.

Feedback collected from the participants after the event demonstrated that all these actions and interventions succeeded in creating a positive, safe, and professional working atmosphere. Participants overwhelmingly felt that the dialogue created a safe space for a respectful exchange of ideas and perspectives, and that the parties to the dialogue were interested in working together to develop mutual understanding, articulate shared responsibilities, and ascertain areas of policy convergence and improvement.

‘The design of the conference, the participants, and the facilitators engaging all of us in mixed breakout groups sessions were wonderful as it all allowed us to develop a comfort zone in which to be respectful of the other’s point of view.’ (Participant)

Day 1

During the first day of the dialogue, participants convened in plenary to deliver a short presentation of each party’s Responsibilities Framework. Each presentation was followed by a short Q&A session, where participants from the other parties had an opportunity to ask clarificatory questions about each of the Frameworks presented. The content of the plenary discussion is described in detail in Section 3 of this report.

After the plenary, participants re-convened in their national/organisational groups to reflect upon the Frameworks of the other parties, highlighting points they shared and agreed with, and areas that they found challenging. These reflections were then shared with other participants in the first mixed breakout group session of Day 1.

Building on the ‘interactive problem solving’ workshop method developed by Herbert Kelman,⁶ the purpose of the mixed breakout groups was to encourage participants to make a jump into ‘joint thinking’, whereby the question of how to conceive of nuclear responsibilities could begin to be approached from a

⁶ Kelman, ‘Building Trust Among Enemies’.

shared rather than purely a national perspective. Facilitators invited participants from each party to report back to the mixed group on what they discussed in their national/organisational groups. Specifically, facilitators asked how each party felt about the other parties' presentations, and whether there was any responsibility or policy which made them feel uncomfortable, was unexpected, or just very differently perceived.

During the second mixed breakout group session of Day 1, facilitators asked participants to brainstorm to identify any *shared responsibilities*, or the responsibilities that two or more parties to the dialogue have to one another, or to broader referents such as the international community or the environment.

Day 2

Participants continued the conversation on shared responsibilities on Day 2 in the same mixed breakout groups. After having identified a number of shared responsibilities, the groups were invited to pick eight responsibilities in total – one per party in each group – and think about how these responsibilities were being fulfilled in current policies and practices and how they might be better fulfilled, both individually and collaboratively in the future. Since both breakout groups picked the same shared responsibility in one case, that produced the list of seven presented in this report in Section 4.

Having done so, participants were invited to share their reflections in an informal plenary session. After the plenary session, the same mixed breakout groups re-convened to engage in a 'reality testing' session: a conflict resolution tool developed by Herbert Kelman to help identify the specific material and ideational constraints that might prevent the realisation of specific policies and practices.⁷ The reality testing session was split into two parts. First, each group identified one policy proposal for further discussion, focusing on the constraints and barriers that might stand in the way of implementing the chosen proposal, and how to overcome these. Then, the two groups swapped responsibilities and policy proposals, and facilitators asked participants to either reality-test the policy proposal already chosen and tested by the other group, or to pick and reality-test a different responsibility with its related policy and practices identified by the other group.

In the end, as a result of the reality-testing sessions, the parties came up with three policy proposals:

- Establishing a new, multilateral nuclear security summit process
- Establish a common lexicon and terminology around missile ranges and definitions
- Ensuring improved communications during India-Pakistan bilateral crises

These three policy proposals were further discussed in the final plenary sessions of the dialogue, which also explored ways to take the dialogue forward. The proposals are described in detail in Section 5 of this report.

⁷ Kelman, 'Building Trust Among Enemies'.

3. The Parties Exchange their Perceptions of their Nuclear Responsibilities

‘Prior to this workshop, my understanding of the ASEAN group and Australia was weak, but now I have an understanding of the shared responsibilities in the region and beyond.’ (Participant)

On Day 1, the four dialogue parties presented to each other on how they understood their governments’ (or, in the case of ASEAN, their organisation’s) responsibilities in relation to the other three parties. These presentations were based on the Responsibilities Frameworks that had been completed by each party in preparation for the dialogue. This section describes these presentations and any relevant questions that emerged during the plenary discussion.

ASEAN’s Nuclear Responsibilities to Australia, India and Pakistan

During plenary, the ASEAN group stressed the difficulty of reporting on the policy positions of an organisation that comprises ten sovereign countries and does not have a common strategy and foreign policy.

To start off, the ASEAN participants agreed that all ASEAN countries have responsibilities in relation to The Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (also known as the SEANWFZ Treaty or the Bangkok Treaty).⁸ The Treaty obliges member states not to develop, manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons. In addition, it prohibits the possession, stationing and transport of nuclear weapons on the territories of its member states and outlaws nuclear testing. The treaty also includes provisions relating to environmental obligations, namely not to discharge or dump radioactive waste into the sea or atmosphere.

Besides the SEANWFZ Treaty, the ASEAN group struggled to draw out many specific nuclear responsibilities that the organisation has towards Australia, India, and Pakistan. Nevertheless, some responsibilities were highlighted and discussed, and the plenary session represented an unprecedented and unique opportunity for all participants to hear and discuss ASEAN’s nuclear responsibilities.

In relation to Australia, ASEAN participants mentioned that the organisation has a responsibility to maintain dialogue and cooperation with the Australian Government as Canberra has been an ASEAN Dialogue Partner since 1974 and Strategic Partner since 2014.⁹ It was stressed that ASEAN and the Australian Government should cooperate to address shared challenges, such as climate change and the target of net zero emissions by 2050 and maritime security in the Asia-Pacific.

The ASEAN group considered that, since Australia was a non-nuclear weapons state (NNWS), there was a responsibility towards the country to cooperate to maintain a nuclear-weapon-free Asia-Pacific. Relatedly, ASEAN participants identified a responsibility to demonstrate more empathy in ASEAN state

⁸ASEAN, ‘Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone,’

<https://asean.org/treaty-on-the-southeast-asia-nuclear-weapon-free-zone/> (accessed 30 March 2022)

⁹ ASEAN Secretariat’s Information Paper, *Overview ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations*, 5 November 2015.

https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/2015/November/ASEAN-Australia/Overview%20of%20ASEAN-Australia%20DR_as%20of%205%20Nov%202015%20-%20Clean.pdf (accessed 25 March 2022).

policies and practices in relation to Canberra's strategic alliance with the US, and the broader strategic partnership with India, Japan and the US within the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). Participants stressed that ASEAN countries have a responsibility to ensure that the QUAD keeps 'the strategic sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any military threats' that might arise due to the presence of 'rising powers' in the region.

On the other hand, ASEAN participants identified a responsibility for the Australian Government to ensure that its partnerships – the QUAD and AUKUS – and its military posture are in compliance with the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). As a state party of the NPT, Australia should uphold the treaty commitments and assist ASEAN countries to promote the implementation of an NPT rule-based order within the Asia-Pacific.

With regard to India and Pakistan, ASEAN participants identified the same set of responsibilities by virtue of the fact that both are nuclear possessor states and neither is a signatory of the NPT nor the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The responsibilities identified were: i) to ensure diplomatic dialogue with the two countries, and ii) to be more empathetic towards India and Pakistan's strategic needs in the region, while also being clear and communicative about ASEAN's own policy positions, such as pushing for the two countries to sign the NPT and CTBT and to revive negotiations for the Fissile Material (Cut-Off) Treaty or FM(C)T. ASEAN participants explained that, while the Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) under the NPT have already committed not to produce fissile material for weapons, the FM(C)T would primarily impose restrictions on the five declared Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) under the NPT and crucially on the four countries that are currently outside of the Treaty, such as India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea.¹⁰

The ASEAN group also stressed that the organisation has a responsibility to preserve neutrality on contentious issues in South Asia, including the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan.

Australia's Nuclear Responsibilities to ASEAN, India and Pakistan

The Australian group identified a plethora of nuclear responsibilities that differed from the nuclear possessor state parties to the dialogue, which implied a different set of priorities explained by its non-possession of nuclear weapons. In particular, the Australian group identified a tension with Australia's decision to have a bilateral Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) with India. This 2014 cooperation with India was viewed by the Australian group as a sensitive issue because, notwithstanding India has concluded safeguards agreements with the IAEA, including the Additional Protocol¹¹ and the range of conditions and requirements stipulated in the Australia-India Nuclear Cooperation Agreement¹² on the transferred material, India is a non-signatory to the NPT.

The Australian group also identified a responsibility to be sensitive to India's and Pakistan's interests and objectives, such as aspirations for full membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Sensitivity to acknowledging and listening to India and Pakistan's concerns around civil nuclear expansion also engenders a particular tension. This is because the group felt that Australia has a responsibility to uphold the legal and normative obligations of signed treaties. In this context, the Australian group expressed a

¹⁰ For more information on the FMCT negotiations, see Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), *Proposed Fissile Material (Cut-off) Treaty (FMCT)*. <https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/proposed-fissile-material-cut-off-treaty/> (accessed 30 March 2022).

¹¹ IAEA, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/indias-additional-protocol-enters-force> (accessed 31 March 2022)

¹² Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of India on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/ATS/2015/9.pdf> (accessed 31 March 2022)

belief that India and Pakistan might feel that Australia's longstanding support for the NPT helps to uphold a discriminatory non-proliferation regime.

The potential challenge posed by the recent Australia, United Kingdom and United States Trilateral Security Pact (AUKUS) arrangement, and specifically the question around the proliferation risks in the proposed acquisition of submarines, potentially using Highly-Enriched Uranium (HEU), was also raised as a potential contradictory policy and practice. The Australian group felt that as a state party of the NPT, Australia possesses a responsibility to assuage the concerns of the international community, and in particular Asia-Pacific states, that it does not seek to open a Pandora's box of proliferation in the region. Australian participants noted that, rather than benefiting from a potential loophole in the NPT, this acquisition would close it by creating a strong safeguarding culture and process under IAEA safeguards that could be applied to others in the future. Furthermore, the group noted that there could be non-proliferation advantages by acquiring submarines using HEU, as they would not need to be refuelled.

In this context, it was raised that there might be tensions between non-proliferation commitments and the optics around the AUKUS arrangement. It was therefore suggested that Australia has a responsibility to find a better confluence between upholding existing treaty commitments and safeguarding its maritime security interests. With regards to AUKUS, the Australian group also considered that the Government of Australia had the responsibility to listen to ASEAN countries, and to take their concerns seriously. Whilst their concerns might be difficult to reconcile with current Australian policy, they stressed that it was important to not dismiss them.

The Australian group also felt that as a 'middle power,' the Government of Australia has a role and responsibility to articulate more succinctly its responsibilities to India and Pakistan, but struggled to identify exactly what more they could do to ease tensions between the two over Kashmir. In terms of responsibilities towards ASEAN, the Australian group identified a responsibility to engage in good faith in negotiations at multilateral forums such as the Conference on Disarmament (CD), NPT Review Conferences (RevCons) etc. However, this belief was linked to an acknowledgment that Australia's support for P5 initiatives and positions is a preferred practice, and feels more comfortable doing this than joining criticisms of other groupings that may involve ASEAN members.

India's Nuclear Responsibilities to ASEAN, Australia and Pakistan

The Indian group communicated the belief that identifying responsibilities around nuclear weapons and responsible behaviours are not the same, and that differentiating between responsibilities to the 'self' (i.e. India) and to 'others' (i.e. other actors) is important. This need to clearly demarcate between responsibilities to the self and responsibilities to the other stood out as a core belief of the group that underscored the idea that responsibilities to the 'self' are not necessarily universal and applicable to others, and therefore are context dependent. In particular, the group identified India's publication of its nuclear doctrine in 2003 as an example of India satisfying 'moral leadership' around increased transparency, but also recognising that it is difficult for other states to display a similar level of transparency because maintaining deterrence engenders different requirements depending on the security context.

The group felt quite strongly that India's publication of its nuclear doctrine was a good example of India satisfying a responsibility around transparency, 'without being asked to do so,' meaning that India has displayed leadership in recognising limitations to what it can and cannot do. The group was therefore united in their belief that the Government of India acts independently from the other nuclear possessors, and is also guided by its moral conviction.

During plenary, this idea that India could differentiate between responsibilities to the self and others was challenged. In particular, the question was asked, 'if there is a conflict between responsibilities and national priorities, how are the two are reconciled.' The Indian group responded with a recognition that for India there is a slight tension between the two, although there is also a degree of compatibility and the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. To illustrate this, India's nuclear No-First Use (NFU) pledge against non-nuclear countries party to the dialogue (Australia and ASEAN states) was cited as an example of a compatible responsibility and priority. However, the Indian group also identified that maintaining a credible minimum deterrence against China and Pakistan and on-going force posture expansion has created a 'perception' that there is a distortion between India's declared responsibilities and competing priorities. This prompted a clarificatory question from the Pakistani group that asked whether there is a conflict between how India strives to frame its nuclear responsibilities and compatibility with its existing nuclear doctrine? The Indian group responded that the two are compatible and that tension resides in how India has communicated its intentions, which underscored the belief that the Government of India has a responsibility to communicate more succinctly and clearly with the Government of Pakistan.

The Indian group was also united in the belief that as a nuclear possessor and non-signatory to the NPT, India possesses a degree of 'exceptionalism' that places a responsibility on India to maintain a spirit of non-proliferation. Whilst India is not a formal partner to international arms control accords, the Government of India adheres to 'instruments it has signed and / or is part of.' Thus, the Indian group expressed the view that the other states represented at the dialogue acknowledge India's good record of compliance with its commitments and obligations. But they also appreciated that the 2005 US 'Civil Nuclear Agreement' with the Government of India and the 2008 partial NSG waiver that granted exemption from the NSG's export control guidelines had bestowed an advantage on India vis-a-vis Pakistan.

Nevertheless, the Indian group also felt that their exemplary 'non-proliferation record' had afforded opportunities to India that remain unavailable to others.¹³ Grounded in this context, the group felt that the proof was in the pudding — India's track record as a recognised 'responsible' nuclear possessor state is exemplary and demonstrated through its treatment by allies. This belief expressed by the Indian group was tempered with an understanding that 'statements are often made for personal gain' and that alluding to oneself as responsible is not conducive to advancing a dialogue on this issue. The tension between India being seen not to describe itself as 'responsible,' and acknowledging the advantages of being labelled as such, was considered by the group as problematic in fostering good regional relationships.

During plenary, the Indian group also identified that India's responsibilities to the other parties represented at the dialogue were 'the same' as each of the other groups and in particular, regional security featured as a salient responsibility. The Indian group conveyed the belief that there is very little scope for conflict with Australia and the ASEAN states. Rather, the group believed that India has a responsibility to ensure that both understand their nuclear doctrine.

As one of three nuclear possessor states in the region, the group acknowledged that the onus to ensure nuclear risks are mitigated lay on the possessor's shoulders. The other nuclear possessor state party to the dialogue also shared this sentiment, and considered better communication between India and Pakistan as a responsibility. This also implied a recognition and shared understanding between the Indian

¹³ In the India-US Joint Statement of 18 July 2005, which argued that as a responsible nuclear power India should acquire the same benefits and advantages as the other nuclear states. For further details, see: Chaitanya Ravi, *A Debate to Remember: The US-India Nuclear Deal* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2018), pp. 138-139

and Pakistani groups of special responsibilities they shared that are distinct from the responsibilities of non-possessors. The Indian group claimed that the 2003 India nuclear doctrine speaks to this as it is non-escalatory by design and intended to reassure the international community. On this basis, the Indian group acknowledged that the Government of India has a responsibility to ensure that all regional states (and adversaries) understand the retaliatory orientation of its nuclear doctrine. However, it was also acknowledged that conflict between India and Australia is significantly less likely than with Pakistan. Therefore, the group felt that there exists a special responsibility to ensure that the other regional nuclear possessors are deterred by India's deterrent capabilities.

Pakistan's Nuclear Responsibilities to ASEAN, Australia and India

During plenary, the Pakistani group explained that the Government of Pakistan has one primary responsibility towards India: to ensure that deterrence will not break down leading to the use of nuclear weapons. This is fulfilled by the Government through the pursuit of full-spectrum deterrence. The group made clear that Pakistan wants to uphold the norm of non-use, even against India, and that therefore, deterrence must never break down between the two states. As the group noted, the responsibility that deterrence will not break down is the first and perhaps the most crucial nuclear responsibility that the Government of Pakistan has and it does not conflict with any other responsibility.

The Pakistani group suggested that, in order to better fulfil this responsibility, the Government of Pakistan should continue to push for a resolution of the Kashmir conflict. Pakistani participants emphasised that, instead of testing each other's thresholds, any space for crisis instability between India and Pakistan must be plugged – dialogue on Kashmir must resume, but for that India must reinstate Kashmir's statehood as a precondition.

The Pakistani group also noted that the Government of India might perceive Pakistan's undeclared doctrine of keeping open the possibility of using nuclear weapons in the event that deterrence fails as destabilising. They recognised that the Government of India might perceive any future No-First Use (NFU) commitment from Pakistan, complimenting India's, as a strong signal that Pakistan is serious about its responsibility of ensuring deterrence will not fail between the two states.

The Pakistani group went on to explain that the Government of Pakistan has two main responsibilities in relation to ASEAN, Australia, and India. These are: i) 'to maintain the taboo on nuclear use', and ii) 'to ensure the safety and security of its nuclear facilities and weapons'

As regards the first responsibility, the group noted a potential conflict between the responsibility to protect sovereignty through nuclear use (which will have to be prioritised in case a nuclear attack is instigated against Pakistan by India) and the responsibility to maintain the 'nuclear taboo',¹⁴ a normative prohibition of nuclear use developed in international politics from 1945 onwards.

In order to overcome such potential conflict of responsibilities, the group suggested that the Government of Pakistan could reiterate the need for nuclear restraint measures in South Asia in the form of nuclear Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) and offer more nuclear CBMs to its adversary (India). Moreover, specifically towards India, the group stressed that the Government of Pakistan could increase its interdependence with the country in terms of economic and geo-political incentives to decrease the

¹⁴ Nina Tannenwald, 'The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use.' *International Organization* 53, no. 3 (1999): 433–68. doi:10.1162/002081899550959.

incentives for nuclear use, referring to the recent foreign policy geo-economic shift in Pakistan's National Security Policy (NSP).¹⁵

When talking about the Government of Pakistan's responsibility to ensure safety and security of nuclear facilities and weapons, the group did not state any potential issues or conflicts of responsibilities. However, the group mentioned that the Government could strengthen nuclear safety and security by ratifying the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2007), which would obligate Pakistan to adopt further legislative and technical measures to protect nuclear materials, installation, and devices from access by third parties.

Moreover, the Pakistani group recommended that the Government of Pakistan could establish a dialogue channel to exchange best practices with Australia, as Pakistan was rated 'most improved' and Australia was ranked 'first' in the theft ranking of countries with weapons-usable nuclear materials.¹⁶ It was also stressed that the Government of Pakistan could initiate a dialogue with ASEAN countries on mutual concerns related to nuclear safety and security in South Asia and how this might impact the ASEAN countries. In relation to India, the group noted that the Government of Pakistan may be willing to discuss safety and security concerns with the country and even offer a bilateral summit on nuclear security with India.

The Pakistani group explained that the Government of Pakistan has one responsibility in relation to ASEAN and Australia, which is not shared with India: to ensure that its nuclear weapons will not be used against Australia or ASEAN member states. The group explained that this responsibility is fulfilled by the Government of Pakistan through doctrinal pronouncements that clarify that the *raison d'être* of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program is to deter war with India and therefore excludes its use against any other state. However, the group noted an inherent tension between such pronouncements and the possibility of deterrence breaking down between India and Pakistan, with a consequent use of nuclear weapons, which would have an impact on other countries around the globe, including Australia or ASEAN nations, as well as Australian or ASEAN nation citizens inside Pakistan or India at the time.

In order to mitigate such tensions, the group noted that the Government of Pakistan could: i) publish its nuclear doctrine in a single, dedicated document; ii) have a broader nuclear dialogue with ASEAN countries on nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament; and iii) offer wider nuclear dialogue with Australia on the better coordination and cooperation on mutual nuclear concerns.

Moreover, the group emphasised that the Government of Pakistan could seek multilateral support from Australia and ASEAN countries in resolving the outstanding India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir. This could be a step towards ensuring that deterrence does not break down between India and Pakistan, as the territory will continue to be an arena that could generate crises between the two sides with the potential for escalation ever-present. In this regard, the group stressed that Australia's 2016 Defence White Paper recognised India-Pakistan tensions as a potential threat to its security.¹⁷ To assuage Australia's concerns, the group felt that the Government of Pakistan could offer a 'conditional' Negative Security Assurance (NSA) to the Australian Government whilst sharing its concerns about Canberra's

¹⁵ National Security Division, *National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026* (2022). <https://static.theprint.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NSP.pdf> (accessed 28 March 2022).

¹⁶ NTI Nuclear Security Index, 'Australia Ranks 1st, Pakistan Is Most Improved', <https://www.ntiindex.org/news/australia-ranks-1st-pakistan-is-most-improved/> (accessed 29 March 2022).

¹⁷ Australia Government, Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (25 February 2016). <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/publications/2016-defence-white-paper> (accessed 25 March 2022).

supply of uranium ore to India, its support for India's bid for Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) membership, and the potential of QUAD deterrent patrols in the wider Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

4. Identifying Shared Responsibilities and their Related Policies and Practices

During the mixed breakout groups sessions at the end of Day 1 and start of Day 2, facilitators invited participants to ask further questions about each party's perceptions of their responsibilities as a means of exploring possibilities to develop new shared understandings. The mixed breakout groups enabled these conversations to take place in smaller settings and gave the participants the opportunity to ask whether there were responsibilities, policies, or practices mentioned by others which made them, as participants, feel uncomfortable or insecure.

Following this, participants were invited by facilitators to discuss whether there were any shared responsibilities that could be identified between the parties. These were defined as responsibilities that two or more parties to the dialogue recognise towards one another or to broader referents such as the international community, environment etc. The focus on shared responsibilities was set to encourage participants to put aside outstanding disputes and major differences, and to instead engage in joint thinking around common areas for policy improvement, with the aim of reaching tangible and shared policy outcomes.

After having identified several shared responsibilities, participants were invited by facilitators to pick four responsibilities per group (one per party), and think about how these specific responsibilities i) are currently fulfilled in individual and/or collective policies and practices, and ii) might be more effectively fulfilled in future individual/collective policies and practices.

This section is divided into two parts. The first part summarises conversations in mixed breakout groups focused on mutual understanding and the potential for new shared responsibilities, whilst the second part focuses on the specific shared responsibilities that were chosen by the two groups for further discussion.

4.1 The Mixed Breakout Groups Conversations on Mutual Understanding and Shared Responsibilities

India-Pakistan Conversations on Kashmir

During the mixed breakout groups sessions, Indian and Pakistan participants were positively surprised to notice that there was no misperception in relation to each other's Responsibilities Framework. In other words, each side understood the other's nuclear responsibilities and their related policies and practices, and raised no points of concern in relation to those.

All parties had identified maintaining deterrence stability and the reduction of nuclear risks as a shared responsibility in their frameworks. Facilitators in Group 1 then invited participants to explore how this responsibility might be satisfied, both individually and collectively. Not surprisingly, the ASEAN and Australian participants looked to Indian and Pakistani interlocutors to identify risk reduction possibilities here.

Discussion between Indian and Pakistani participants centred on whether any strengthening of nuclear CBMs between the two states required the Government of India to first reinstate the autonomous status of Kashmir that was revoked by the government of Narendra Modi in 2019. Indian and Pakistani participants explained that the two issues of Kashmir and nuclear CBMs are deeply intertwined. It was

noted that agreement on both issues is most likely to happen during bilateral crises, as the Governments of India and Pakistan tend to work most effectively and sort out deals when the prospects of a conventional conflict escalating to the nuclear level are higher.

However, it was also raised by some participants (but crucially, not everybody agreed) that thinking that there is no political space to talk outside crises could be a dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy, and that the two countries could thus increase economic interdependence and decouple the Kashmir issue from nuclear CBMs to ensure more peaceful relations.

Reassessing Australia's Responsibilities and its Role in the Security Architecture of the Asia-Pacific

Conversations between Australian and Pakistani participants paved the way for a deeper understanding of the consequences of Canberra's actions in the Asia-Pacific and a re-assessment of responsibilities on the part of Australian participants. Participants pointed out that seeing itself as a 'middle power'¹⁸ in the international system, the Government of Australia tends to think that its own actions do not have a strong influence on the security architecture of the region, with one participant stating 'I'm surprised that you think Australia can play a more significant role'. Therefore, Australian participants were positively surprised by Pakistan's bid for support from Australia on a resolution of the outstanding India-Pakistan dispute of Kashmir.

Moreover, Australian participants developed a stronger awareness of Pakistan's concerns in relation to the Government of Australia's support for India's NSG membership,¹⁹ its Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement with India,²⁰ and its strategic security dialogue partnership with India within the QUAD. It was noted that Australia tends to prioritise its relationship with India before Pakistan to assuage its own security concerns in relation to the rise of China in the Asia-Pacific. However, it was recognised that this can in turn exacerbate Pakistan's security issues and the Government of Australia should take this into account. A similar conversation took place in Group 2, with the suggestion made by the Australian participant that the Government of Australia could create a checklist of requirements for the Government of Pakistan to fulfil to gain their confidence in supporting their application for NSG membership, which was received well by all participants as a future policy possibility.

Reassessing ASEAN's Responsibilities and its Role in the Security Architecture of the Asia-Pacific

Participants noted that the dialogue gave a unique opportunity to representatives of some of the ASEAN countries to explain and clarify the organisation's role and position with respect to nuclear responsibilities and the wider security issues in the Asia-Pacific. The two groups, however, expressed different views on the role that ASEAN can play in shaping the global nuclear order

¹⁸ Andrew Carr, 'Is Australia a Middle Power?', *Australian Institute of International Affairs*.

<https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/is-australia-a-middle-power/> (accessed 25 March 2022).

¹⁹ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Joint Statement on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Republic of India and Australia (4 June 2020). <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/india/joint-statement-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-between-republic-india-and-australia> (accessed 25 March 2022).

²⁰ Kanchi Mathur, 'The India-Australia Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement: Future Challenges and Current Scenarios' (6 January 2020), *Australian Institute of International Affairs*. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-india-australia-civil-nuclear-cooperation-agreement-future-challenges-and-current-scenarios/> (accessed 25 March 2022).

Participants in Group 2 raised doubts over the role that ASEAN can play in nuclear security issues, especially in relation to India-Pakistan relations and outstanding territorial disputes. In particular, one participant stated that they were not convinced that 'ASEAN is the best broker between India and Pakistan' and that 'ASEAN has a strategic blindspot when it comes to the two.' One ASEAN participant noted that ASEAN expertise mostly resided in trade issues. Similarly, another participant noted that ASEAN states are able to develop a unified view – 'a common position in a polite ASEAN way' – but that such a view may be lowest common denominator in nature. However, ASEAN members of Group 2 also expressed concern that nuclear use between India and Pakistan would have wider implications for all ASEAN states and focussed their interventions around sustaining accepted normative behaviour and observance to existing treaties.

Conversely, participants in Group 1 were surprised to see how much the ASEAN group was interested in discussing nuclear responsibilities, and, more widely, nuclear security issues. ASEAN participants stressed that, although all ASEAN countries are nuclear non-possessor states, there are three nuclear possessor states in the Asia-Pacific, some of which (i.e. China) are actively involved in maritime disputes with ASEAN countries in the South China Sea. ASEAN participants emphasised that nuclear risks in the Asia-Pacific could have dangerous spillover effects for the maritime security of ASEAN countries, especially in relation to the impact of nuclear accidents and nuclear tests, and disastrous consequences for the environment, the South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean, whose biodiversity protection is of paramount economic importance for all ASEAN countries.

Nuclear Education, Social Media and 'Jingoism'

During the mixed breakout session, participants discussed the importance of nuclear education and ensuring that the role of nuclear weapons as instruments for deterrence are understood by publics. It was agreed that governments possessed a strong incentive to ensure that citizens understood why the path to nuclear weapons possession had been taken by India and Pakistan, but recognised that competing narratives could skew perceptions and distort understanding between citizens. One perspective stood out because a participant felt that nuclear knowledge should not be shared with wider publics as ultimately decision-making resided with those charged with discharging specific duties.

Another shared responsibility discussed in this context was the idea of developing a translation of nuclear lexicon into Hindi and Urdu. Indian and Pakistani participants expressed the belief that the West has failed to understand the nuclear dynamics of South Asia and always fear nuclear escalation because they apply Western nuclear understandings / vocabulary as an explanatory lens to try and understand South Asia nuclear dynamics. Thus, one participant noted that 'Herman Kahn's escalation ladder does not even apply to South Asia, which would be very different.' However, another participant felt that India and Pakistan had failed to develop a South Asia centric discourse and lexicon around nuclear weapons, which had contributed to western misinterpretation. To overcome the issue of correct interpretation and understanding, Pakistani participants felt that developing a South Asia centric lexicon and common set of vocabulary could alleviate this problem and create greater understanding between the two hemispheres.

Participants also developed a shared understanding around the media's responsibility to avoid sensationalism, which could 'fan the flames' and distort realities. In particular, India's recent anti-satellite tests were identified as an example that biased the public into conflating hard power with prestige. Similarly, participants developed a shared understanding of the media's role in conflict prevention between India and Pakistan. However, given the unregulated nature of social media (e.g. Twitter) it was

felt that this platform could inadvertently fuel escalatory dynamics during a crisis.²¹ Social media was specifically identified as the source of 'loose nuclear talk' during and after the 2019 Balakot crisis. All participants agreed that a trade-off between open and democratic speech and curtailing 'fake news' was in the interest of both India and Pakistan, but were unable to identify specific ways to achieve this.

Nuclear jingoism also featured as a point of discussion between all participants, who all shared an understanding that extreme nationalism could bias citizens into developing a false understanding of nuclear weapons as instruments for warfare. Participants thus developed a shared understanding that the risk of nuclear jingoism is present in South Asia but also felt that education around nuclear issues could curtail it.

Responsibility to Prevent Horizontal Nuclear Proliferation

Participants developed a shared understanding around the need to prevent non-nuclear weapon states from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, a shared understanding on this issue did not extend to encompass agreement on restraints on vertical proliferation. Notwithstanding their non-membership of the NPT, all participants were unanimous in their belief that the non-proliferation provisions contained within the NPT are clear and that the governments of India and Pakistan had taken concerted efforts to ensure that no illicit transfer of nuclear materials happens.

Whilst the group were able to reach a shared understanding around the need to curtail horizontal proliferation, they were unable to develop an agreement on restraining vertical proliferation. In addition to the AUKUS trilateral security pact arrangement, the FM(C)T became a contested issue, except where a majority of participants shared the belief that the CD is moribund and unable to exercise its mandate. Ultimately, participants in Group 2 were unable to develop a shared understanding on this issue but recognised the need to curtail an arms race between India and Pakistan. All participants shared a concern that arms race dynamics could spiral but that policies of minimum deterrence precluded force expansion beyond stated purpose and doctrine.

4.2 The Seven Shared Responsibilities and their Related Policies and Practices

After having identified a number of shared responsibilities in mixed breakout groups, participants were invited to continue the group activity and pick eight specific responsibilities in total – one per party in each group – for further discussion. Then, participants were asked to think about how these responsibilities were being fulfilled in current policies and practices and how they might be better fulfilled, both individually and collaboratively in the future.

This section outlines seven responsibilities – instead of eight – because both groups identified and discussed a shared responsibility to adhere to international legal commitments. It should be noted that

²¹ For further discussion on nuclear escalation and social media, see Heather Williams and Alexi Drew, *Escalation by Tweet: Managing the new nuclear diplomacy* (King's College London, Centre for Science and Security Studies, 2020), <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/csas/assets/escalation-by-tweet-managing-the-new-nuclear-diplomacy-2020.pdf>. (accessed 30/03/22).

some responsibilities (such as the responsibility to pursue Global No First Use) were raised by some participants as shared, but were ultimately not agreed upon by all participants.

(I) Shared Responsibility to Maintain Nuclear Safety and Security

Pakistani participants in Group 1 selected the responsibility to maintain nuclear safety and security as a shared responsibility for further discussion, which the rest of the group agreed could be considered a shared responsibility to all the parties to the dialogue. Facilitators asked participants what more could be done, in terms of individual and/or collective policies and practices, to fulfil this responsibility.

Pakistani participants suggested the implementation of further nuclear CBMs between India and Pakistan, or trilateral CBMs involving China, but Indian participants expressed some resistance in relation to this policy proposal which was therefore dismissed by the group.

It was then suggested that a better collective policy to maintain nuclear safety and security could be to establish a new series of summits dedicated to nuclear security that would improve upon the original Obama-era Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) process by widening participation and broadening the ownership of the series.²² The group felt strongly that the further sharing of best practices and learning lessons from other countries (or even other regions) at a new, multilateral nuclear security summit process could strengthen global nuclear safety and security. This policy proposal was agreed by all parties and is discussed in detail in Section 5 of this report.

(II) Shared Responsibility to Protect the Environment

ASEAN participants in Group 1 emphasised the importance of fulfilling the shared responsibility to protect the environment, linking this back to the previously discussed responsibility to maintain nuclear safety and security.

ASEAN participants suggested that these responsibilities could be fulfilled by ensuring more transparency on the impact of nuclear accidents and nuclear tests, and sharing knowledge and best practices on these matters. The importance of this policy was also recognised by the rest of the group and participants agreed to include this recommendation within the NSS policy proposal. ASEAN participants also put forward other policy proposals to fulfil the responsibility to protect the environment, such as adopting measures to avoid incidents at sea, protecting the South China Sea biodiversity against accidents, and implementing CBMs that could mitigate the risks of accidents especially between SSBNs and nuclear-armed SSNs.

(III) Shared Responsibility to Pursue Global No-First Use/Maintain the Nuclear Taboo Norm

Indian participants in Group 1 argued that a global pledge of No-First Use (NFU), or a global commitment to never use nuclear weapons first under any circumstances, should be considered as a shared responsibility to all the parties involved in the dialogue. However, other participants in the group did not agree with this view and felt that NFU can be considered a policy to fulfil a more general responsibility to

²² The Nuclear Security Summit is a multilateral initiative, launched by the United States in 2009, to take collective steps to strengthen global nuclear safety and security. There have been four summits in total, the last of which was held in 2016. See Kelsey Davenport, 'Nuclear Security Summit at a Glance,' *Director for Nonproliferation Policy* 202 (June 2018): 463-8270, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/NuclearSecuritySummit> (accessed 30 March 2022)

maintain the nuclear taboo norm. Participants could not reconcile their views around which of these two could be considered as a shared responsibility, but the group ultimately agreed that the non-use of nuclear weapons could be considered a shared practice (one that is or should be fulfilled by all the parties to the dialogue) to uphold the nuclear taboo norm.

(IV) Shared Responsibility to Uphold the Letter and Spirit of Treaties

Groups 1 and 2 both identified a shared responsibility to adhere to international legal commitments, meaning that this section serves as two of the eight total responsibilities identified. This responsibility, however, is necessarily broad in scope, so – in order to move the conversation towards policies and practices that could fulfil it – the breakout groups were encouraged to consider specific ways it could be operationalised.

In Group 1, the shared responsibility to uphold the letter and spirit of treaties was raised by Australian participants and was agreed by all parties. To this end, some participants suggested implementing a regional Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, but the policy was not favourably received by everybody in the group. Alternatively, ASEAN participants proposed to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Indian Ocean (Indian Ocean NWFZ), a proposal that was initially welcomed and discussed by the group. However, after brainstorming about how an Indian Ocean NWFZ could be implemented, the group quickly identified some major hurdles and decided to set aside the proposal. The main obstacle identified by participants to the implementation of the policy proposal was a multifaceted ‘definitional challenge’. The challenge lay in the difficulty of marking out the definitional boundaries of the Indian Ocean region and, more importantly, in the realisation that nuclear possessor states could not be part of the NWFZ, and this automatically excluded Pakistan and India.

In stark difference to the conversation in Group 1, participants in Group 2 were keen to explore whether stronger mechanisms could be developed that make it difficult to abrogate existing treaty commitments. North Korea’s departure from the NPT in 2003 was identified as an example that had caused significant disruption to the international non-proliferation framework which participants felt had negatively impacted the international status quo because it undermined the accepted international norm of non-proliferation. Similarly, the US decision under President Trump to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was also viewed as a lost opportunity that had been corrupted by short-term political objectives. Maintaining continuity of commitments to non-proliferation norms, rules, and institutions was identified as a key policy that could strengthen the global nuclear order.

Participants all felt that non-proliferation is a sacrosanct responsibility and a collective endeavour that transcends individual nation state priorities. With this shared understanding, participants were keen to explore whether there are steps that could be taken that would ensure that actors adhere to obligations once signed, with no route to exiting them. Nevertheless, participants struggled to agree on how such an obligation would be implemented and by whom. The most promising discussion here was around whether the global sanctions regime could be democratised, such that power is more evenly distributed between states, making it harder for the most powerful actors to act with impunity.

The group also considered whether the nuclear possessor states outside the NPT could make voluntary national implementation reports to the NPT, which would note progress in implementing the 2010 NPT action plan. Currently, although India and Pakistan have stated their adherence to NPT principles, as non-signatories they do not produce national implementation reports. Participants felt that introducing a practice of this kind could signal seriousness by the nuclear possessor states that they voluntarily recognise their responsibilities, notwithstanding their non-membership of the NPT.

In addition to this, the group formed a consensus around developing a regular 'Rev Con' process around the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and its Amendment.

(V) Shared Responsibility to Maintain Deterrence

Group 2 considered that where two or more actors maintain a mutual deterrence relationship, the responsibility to maintain stable deterrence could be considered a shared one. This conversation had a special resonance during the week of the dialogue, following the accidental launch of a nuclear-capable cruise missile (it was armed at the time with a conventional warhead) by India that flew 100km over the border into Pakistan.²³

To fulfil this responsibility, the parties identified three associated policies and practices: i) refraining from making explosive or jingoistic statements; ii) expanding existing CBM frameworks such as missile launch notification agreements (to include cruise missiles, in the South Asian context); and iii) ensuring robust command-and-control and early warning systems and protocols. Group 2 focused their discussion around the idea of developing a mechanism between India and Pakistan for 'notification of accidents between India and Pakistan' to ensure that misperceptions do not lead to inadvertent escalation during times of crisis. This policy spurred a discussion around maintaining the balance between deterrence and co-operation which participants all felt relied upon improving trust between the two nuclear competitors.

(VI) Shared Responsibility to Refrain from Arms Racing

Group 2 identified a shared responsibility to refrain from arms racing, although they had some difficulty defining an 'arms race' as compared to, say, a defensive arms build-up. Without having fully resolved these conceptual difficulties, the group identified two associated policies and practices that included: i) curtailing development of new and emerging technologies and ii) strengthening the public discussion and education on the costs (financial and environmental) of weapons development.

Participants shared an understanding that deterrence between India and Pakistan is situated within an action-reaction dynamic in which any increase in any kind of strategic weapons stimulates countervailing responses on the part of the other.²⁴ Participants from Pakistan were keen to impress that Pakistan's nuclear build-up is 'not an arms race' with India, but rather 'the bare minimum to keep up with India' in order to 'reduce imbalance and maintain the status quo'. Another Pakistani participant conceded that for those outside, 'just matching capabilities can be perceived as an arms race'. However, participants all agreed on the need for India and Pakistan to reduce their respective military budgets to the lowest possible levels. Ultimately, participants in Group 2 recognised the inherent dangers of arms racing, but felt that deterrence is context dependent and engenders competing requirements that are difficult to reconcile.

(VII) Shared Responsibility to Maintain and Develop Consistent and Clear Channels of Communications

Group 2 selected a responsibility to maintain and develop consistent and clear channels of communication and identified reviving a direct communications link between the foreign secretaries of

²³ Christopher Clary, 'The Curious Case of the Accidental Indian Missile Launch' (17 March 2022), *War on the Rocks*.

<https://warontherocks.com/2022/03/the-curious-case-of-the-accidental-indian-missile-launch/> (accessed 30 March 2022)

²⁴ For further reading on action-reaction dynamics, see George Rathjens, 'The dynamics of the arms race', (1969) pp.33 - 43 in *Progress in Arms Control: Scientific American*, (1979), United States of America.

the Governments of India and Pakistan. The Indian group felt that the benefit of a hotline is that it 'does not need anyone to mediate, the other party only needs to pick up the phone.' Whilst all participants developed a shared understanding that 'hotlines' engendered utility during a crisis, the group felt that developing a direct communications link between their respective nuclear apparatuses was not needed, implying that it is beyond what the current mutual relationship can tolerate. Thus, the Indian group noted that 'for India right now, Pakistan is not important, China is the focus.'

All members of Group 2 developed a shared understanding that during a crisis, the ability of parties to communicate clearly is a shared responsibility that 'requires an effort to keep talking to each other.' Another shared agreement between participants in the group was the idea that the media could play a pivotal role, as they might be the only source of information during a crisis and that during this period, 'the media can become the voice of government.' The role of the media during crises was further discussed by participants in relation to the policy proposal of ensuring improved communication during India-Pakistan bilateral crises.

5. The Three Key Policy Proposals

Conversations around shared responsibilities in mixed breakout groups led participants to identify and agree on three main policy proposals. The proposals were 'tested against reality' separately by the two groups in order to determine their plausibility, with facilitators asking participants to identify any specific material and ideational constraints that might prevent the realisation of the identified policies. This section outlines the three policy proposals and the constraints and possible solutions identified by participants.

Establishing a New, Multilateral Nuclear Security Summit Process

All parties expressed an interest in revitalising a nuclear security summit process, as an effective policy to collectively fulfil the shared responsibility to maintain global nuclear safety and security. While participants used the same language as a shorthand, it was felt that this process should learn from, but ultimately go beyond the Obama-era Nuclear Security Summits by being more globally-inclusive, more institutionalised, and having a broader mandate.

During the reality testing session, participants in Group 1 identified the following potential obstacles to this policy: i) identifying who is taking a leadership role in convening the summit; ii) deciding at what level (bilateral, regional, or multilateral) the summit should be held; iii) deciding whether to include 'outlier' states, such as North Korea; and iv) deciding what incentives could be provided to encourage participation in the summit. Participants in Group 2 also identified hurdles to implementing this idea. These included; i) exorbitant fiscal costs; ii) competing priorities for countries as they may have more urgent issues to address; and iii) initiative fatigue, as there is a plethora of other initiatives currently in operation.

On deciding at what level the summit should be convened, participants agreed that the summit should be revived as a multilateral initiative by both nuclear possessor and non-possessor states. This was agreed after some discussion as Indian and Pakistani participants were pushing for a summit led by nuclear possessor states while ASEAN participants stressed the importance to also include non-possessor states to ensure a multilateral approach to nuclear safety and security. Participants all agreed that the summit would only work if it engendered inclusivity and was open to all states, hence truly global. This underscored a belief that wider participation and inclusivity could redress the issue around gendered male-dominated terminology and lexicon in nuclear issues, which participants all noticed needed a re-examination. Australian participants highlighted that it was important that First Nations people were also included in the dialogue.

On the incentives issue, participants agreed that the summit should be promoted and incentivised by referring to the 'nuclear responsibilities language', leveraging the collective responsibility on the part of nuclear possessor and non-possessor states to strengthen nuclear safety and security in global nuclear politics. Given current doubts around nuclear security and safety, participants felt that the summit would be an ideal platform for states to reassure the international community and discuss some outstanding issues, such as the AUKUS arrangement between the United States, United Kingdom and Australia.

On the other hand, Group 1 and Group 2 expressed slightly different perspectives about who would be best placed to take the leadership role in convening such a summit. While Group 2 identified the IAEA as the ideal convenor of a new and multilateral summit, Group 1 feared that giving such a prominent role to the IAEA would jeopardise North Korea's participation in the summit, if so desired. Ultimately, participants noted that the IAEA would provide a greater guarantee of neutrality and continuity, and that 'outlier' countries such as North Korea could be invited as 'special invitees'.

Whilst participants were unable to settle on the participation groups for the summit, they all agreed that collective responsibility between all actors is the guiding ethos. In the end, participants felt that the policy proposal of establishing a new, multilateral nuclear security summit is feasible and needed; the hurdles were viewed as issues that could be easily overcome when implementing the proposal. Participants developed a shared understanding that the goal of the summit should be to build trust and share best practices between all states. While participants were keen that the summit process become a regular occurrence (e.g. every two years), they suggested pilot testing the approach with a one-off event.

UN Group of Governmental Experts on Missile Ranges and Terminology Definitions

As a solution to reduce arms racing as a long-term goal, participants reflected on what could be the lowest hanging fruit and the first step that states could take that would not get too much push-back internationally. All participants acknowledged that incentivising nuclear adversaries to pursue arms control is extremely difficult and infused with complex issues around trust and verification. The Australian group had identified that at present, there is no legally-binding multilateral instrument that deals with the issue of missile definitions and ranges, which was viewed by Group 2 as problematic as it creates issues around treaty compliance. Participants noted that whilst they saw value in having a regional dialogue on arms control, it was not realistic, and states should have more realistic objectives to advance arms control in the region.

As a potential first step to incentivise states to seek progress, the Australian group suggested reaching for the low-hanging fruit, which they felt would not encounter innumerable obstacles. Participants felt that it was difficult to talk about missiles because there are no common definitions and that new or emerging technologies blur the lines for distinction, making it extremely difficult for any meaningful dialogue. The group felt that before being capable of making any progress on regional arms control and curbing missile development, states would first need to agree on a shared lexicon around missile ranges and terminology. Participants all agreed that this common lexicon for missiles and ranges needed to be non-US centric and inclusive, meaning participation and contributions from a wider set of actors within the international community. This, participants felt, would enable stakeholders to lay foundations to facilitate future dialogue on these issues. Thus, agreeing a common lexicon of missiles was viewed by participants as a 'tiny step' that could: i) circumvent continued reliance on using the US definition of range and ii) open opportunities for including regional dialogues on emerging weapons and / or missiles.

Participants then discussed how such a lexicon should be agreed, and raised the idea of assembling a UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to develop a multilateral instrument focussed on how to categorise missiles and describe ranges. The GGE would also develop a common terminology and definitions which participants considered would serve as a valued resource for governments. The benefit of such a proposal is that it could not be vetoed, and that if states could find a consensus, the process would be the outcome. One participant identified that despite only one of the three previous GEE initiatives on missiles – in 2002, 2004 and 2008 – having come to an agreement, they were all valuable to advance discussion in the international fora.²⁵

Participants debated the ideal state, or group of states, to put forward the proposal to establish a GGE. Whilst Iran was mentioned, participants did not entertain this idea for long as they felt that political obstacles to achieve this could not be easily overcome. The presence of Singaporean and Australian participants around the table led participants to propose that sponsorship by both countries could be a

²⁵ For further information on prior UN initiatives on missiles, see: United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, *Missiles* (2022). <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/missiles/>. (accessed 30 March 2022).

great idea. The capacity burden for any state choosing to lead such an endeavour and the hurdle this would represent was also discussed. The same hurdle was voiced by the Singaporean participant. Regardless of which state or group of states might sponsor this idea, discussion between participants shifted towards the need for lobbying and developing back channels as a prerequisite. Participants felt that this is needed as no country would put the proposal forward if there were prospects of not securing the vote.

Participants also identified transparency around intentions and hard power capabilities as a significant obstacle when reality testing this initiative. In particular, participants felt that China would be reluctant to discuss their missile technology in detail as they might worry that this would expose them militarily in the event of hostilities. Whilst participants were unable to agree on an approach that might reassure China, they all considered that the other nuclear possessor states could be convinced to participate in this initiative.

Ensuring Improved Communication During India-Pakistan Bilateral Crises

Participants expressed an interest in discussing how to ensure improved communication during India-Pakistan bilateral crises. Such a topic was deemed as particularly relevant given the accidental launch of an Indian nuclear-capable cruise missile into Pakistan territory just a few days before the dialogue.²⁶

Participants identified 'nuclear jingoism' in social media and the mass media as a major impediment to bilateral communications during India-Pakistan crises, taking the recent 2019 Balakot air strikes as a case point. Pakistani and Indian participants noted that, during the crisis, the media in both countries depicted the adversary as an arch-enemy and distorted reality on the ground, exaggerating risks and exacerbating the risks of inadvertent escalation.

Participants agreed that India and Pakistan should prioritise nuclear education during peacetime to maintain bilateral channels of communications open during crises. It was mentioned that both countries should make efforts to familiarise their citizens with nuclear issues and, in particular, with the potential disastrous effects of nuclear incidents during crises. Participants also agreed that journalists should be made aware of the perils of fuelling the fire of nuclear use with jingoism, loose nuclear talk, and sensationalism during bilateral crises. With this in mind, participants suggested running the Responsibilities Framework with media representatives in both India and Pakistan in future 'Collective Introspection' meetings, to help journalists to look at the dangers of using inflammatory language during crises through the lens of nuclear responsibilities.

Participants then moved on to discuss the dangers associated with a general lack of diplomatic talks at the bilateral level during India-Pakistan crises. The two countries established a hotline between their Foreign Secretaries in 2005 (which replicated a similar communication channel that already existed between the Director General of Military Operations – DGMOs – in both countries). However, this has remained mostly dormant over the past couple of decades, and was not used during the Balakot crisis.²⁷ Participants noticed that India and Pakistan should improve existing bilateral communication mechanisms by i) reviving the use of the existing hotline and ii) re-engaging in backchannel diplomacy in relation to Kashmir. The latter can be an important catalyst for more substantive high-level political talks on contentious issues between conflicting parties. India and Pakistan have already engaged in

²⁶ Clary, 'The Curious Case of the Accidental Indian Missile Launch'.

²⁷ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 'Hotline Activated' (August 09, 2005). <https://mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/15127/activated> (accessed 30 March 2022).

backchannel negotiations over Kashmir between 2004 and 2007, and there have been speculations that the February 2021 ceasefire agreement along the Line-of-Actual-Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir could be related to a revival of backchannel diplomacy.²⁸

‘I believe that such dialogues between different groups which include nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states is an enriching exercise that would lead to developing a just and global nuclear order.’ (Participant)

²⁸ Riya Sinha, ‘The Kashmir Back Channel 2004-2007: Prospects for India-Pakistan Negotiations’, *Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)* (17 November 2019). <https://csep.org/blog/the-kashmir-back-channel-2004-2007-prospects-for-india-pakistan-negotiations/> (accessed 31 March 2022).

6. Feedback and Next Steps

The results of the post-dialogue survey indicated that participants felt that the unique methodology used for the dialogue had created a safe space for a respectful exchange of ideas and perspectives. This resulted in an increased mutual understanding across the parties around the nuclear responsibilities and the associated policies and practices of the states and organisations involved in the dialogue.

The steps taken by BASIC-ICCS to enable the participants to develop a suitable level of ‘working trust’ proved to be effective – the survey results show that participants felt that all parties to the dialogue were interested in working together to explore the possibilities for new shared responsibilities and ascertain areas of policy convergence and improvement.

Feedback received after the dialogue also highlighted that all participants would like to be involved in future dialogues on nuclear responsibilities. When suggesting ways to take such dialogues forward, several participants agreed that including China as a party to the dialogue could ensure a deeper understanding of nuclear security issues in the Asia-Pacific. Important themes raised by participants to be discussed at future nuclear responsibilities dialogues in the Asia-Pacific included: i) assessing the impact of emerging technologies on deterrence and crisis stability, ii) evaluating the impact of cyber threats to nuclear security, and iii) ensuring improved and trusted lines of communication during crises. Some participants suggested engaging in role-play activities and crisis simulation exercises to develop greater crisis prevention and crisis management capacities among policy-makers, officials, and other practitioner communities (especially the media, both print and online).

It was also suggested that future dialogues could go beyond the Asia-Pacific to encompass conversations between Nuclear Weapons States parties to the NPT and state parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Conversations of this kind could explore the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons or ways to make progress on disarmament.

‘The dialogue stimulated our thoughts towards a new way of thinking and looking at things. I certainly have gained new perspectives on traditional nuclear-related issues and I think the innovative framework of the dialogue is fully responsible for stimulating my thought process.’ (Participant)

7. Conclusion

The BASIC-ICCS dialogue, 'Different Perceptions, Shared Understandings: Towards a Responsibility-Based Regime to Reduce Nuclear Risks in the Asia-Pacific' was an unprecedented initiative that brought together officials and leading track 2 experts from a selection of four parties: Australia, India, Pakistan, and ASEAN. The dialogue encouraged and achieved an increased understanding by all the parties as to how they were perceived by the others and what responsibilities each party felt it owed to the others present. Put differently, the dialogue provided an opportunity for each party to see their nuclear responsibilities through the eyes of the others present.

As this report has shown, the result was a rich discussion on nuclear security issues in the Asia-Pacific. The dialogue generated novel and empathic conversations around responsibilities that all the parties identified as shared, and produced an important convergence of thinking around the three key policy proposals set out above. The mutual focus on shared responsibilities and the multilateral character of the dialogue led participants to focus on areas of commonality rather than division. The parties did this in ways that remained true to core security interests and without ignoring points of conflict and division. But it was testimony to the third-party facilitated dialogical method that BASIC-ICCS employed that outstanding disputes, especially between India and Pakistan, did not shipwreck the promise of the dialogue.

The three key policy proposals identified by participants are evidence of the type of tangible outputs that can be collectively reached when thinking about shared nuclear responsibilities. Two of them - reimagining the nuclear security summit process and developing a UN GGE on missile ranges and terminology definitions - are fundamental multilateral risk reduction proposals formulated at a time where nuclear diplomacy is seriously challenged by the growing distrust between East and the West in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis and by the postponement of the Tenth RevCon following the Covid-19 pandemic.

As participants noted during the final plenary sessions, the focus on nuclear responsibilities opens up a real space for dialogue, offering a dynamic framework to look at 'the same old problems' from a different angle, agree upon broader goals, and think collectively about ways to overcome obstacles to reach those goals. In the end, different perceptions of nuclear responsibilities do not stand in the way of mutual understanding and the possibility of interpersonal and working trust that was so crucial to the success of the dialogue. Indeed, it is from a position of mutual understanding of nuclear responsibilities that the nuclear possessor and non-possessor states can collectively shape a responsibility-based regime to reduce nuclear risks in the Asia-Pacific.

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