

# International Response to Nuclear Tests in South Asia: The Need for a New Policy Framework

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## I S S U E S

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**SUMMARY** International response to recent nuclear tests by India and Pakistan have been dominated by two policy frameworks: one rooted in considerations of the non-proliferation regime and the other in the belief that the Indo-Pakistani rivalry is the main determinant of security and stability in South Asia. Neither framework, however, is an adequate basis for long-term policy. The first diverts attention from the more important goals of reducing tensions, averting a nuclear-arms race, minimizing the prospects of accidental war, and ensuring nuclear safety. The second obscures important implications of the tests, especially those for the crucial Sino-Indian security dynamic. A new framework is needed, one whose primary goal is security and stability in South Asia. It would accept the nuclear status of India and Pakistan, view security in South Asia in a broad context, and incorporate arms control measures including non-proliferation. The effective pursuit of policies rooted in this framework requires the engagement of India and Pakistan by the international community, not their isolation through sanctions.

*Security in South Asia cannot be viewed in isolation from the larger region*

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### **Nuclear Tests in South Asia**

Nuclear tests conducted in May 1998 by India and Pakistan have consequences for the security and stability not only of South Asia but also of the broader Asia-Pacific region and the world at large. It is of utmost importance that the situation created by these tests be managed carefully to reduce tensions and advance the cause of peace and security.

Thus far two policy frameworks have dominated international responses to the tests. The first is rooted in the goal of limiting and, ideally, ridding the world of nuclear weapons. This framework assumes additional nuclear tests lead to a chain reaction that would challenge and possibly sound the death knell for the nuclear non-proliferation regime embodied by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

To limit damage to the non-proliferation regime, it is argued that the international community must act decisively to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. India and Pakistan must be sanctioned and international pressure must be brought to bear to halt and eventually roll back their nuclear-weapons programs, and they must be compelled to sign and honor both the NPT and the CTBT.

The second framework assumes the rivalry between India and Pakistan is the subcontinent's primary determinant of security and stability and ignores the influence of outside powers on South Asia.

Analysts deploying this framework contend that nuclear tests and the declared intent of both countries to add nuclear weapons to their arsenals will precipitate an arms race and undermine stability in South Asia. Some even argue that nuclear war between these two countries would be inevitable.

Here again the suggested solution is to halt and roll back the nuclear programs of the two countries.

Neither of these frameworks offers an adequate basis for international policy. Both fail to account for the security concerns driving the nuclear programs of India and Pakistan. These limited frameworks also preclude consideration of the broader implications of the nuclear tests and alternative policy directions.

The non-proliferation framework has run its

course in South Asia without success. Attempts to continue it through sanctions will be of marginal effect and will only divert attention from more pressing concerns. The Indo-Pakistani rivalry framework tells only part of the story. It precludes discussion of the Sino-Indian dimension which largely drives the Indian nuclear program. Understanding the China-India-Pakistan nexus is critical to formulating an effective South Asia policy.

Security in South Asia cannot be viewed in isolation from the rest of Asia-Pacific. A more inclusive and integrated policy framework is required. Such a framework would be rooted in the security and strategic concerns of both India and Pakistan, and accept the nuclear status of these two countries.

It would take into account the role of outside nations, especially China, and recognize the strategic significance of India which is only likely to increase. Non-proliferation concerns would be incorporated into this new policy framework but they would not be its primary driving force. This policy framework would require engagement rather than sanction and isolation. Such a framework avoids the limitations of the two dominant current policy frameworks.

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### **The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Framework: Fundamental Flaws and Limited Utility**

In addressing the present situation in South Asia the non-proliferation policy framework suffers three critical shortcomings.

First, it is a discriminatory regime that has all along been opposed by India. Second, it emphasizes the integrity of a discriminatory regime at the expense of the security concerns of India and Pakistan. And third, it has limited enforcement capability.

Sanctions will further reduce the already minimal influence and role of the international community in South Asia. Instead of attempting to roll back nuclear programs, the international community should focus on reducing tensions and promoting regional stability.

**A discriminatory regime can increase the cost of, and delay, proliferation but will not prevent it.** The discriminatory nature of the non-proliferation regime embodied by the NPT and CTBT is clear.

Rather than moving toward a nuclear-weapons-free world, the net purpose and effect of these treaties has been to simply freeze the status quo regarding nuclear and non-nuclear states. In the 30 years since the NPT was signed no significant progress has been made in implementing its Article VI, which calls for “a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

In fact, for fully a quarter-century the declared nuclear powers moved in a direction opposite from international disarmament. They enhanced their own nuclear arsenals while using the NPT treaty primarily to restrict other nations from acquiring such capability.

More recently there have been efforts by the United States and Russia to cut their strategic arsenals. However, even if the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) is ratified, it still leaves the two countries with enormous nuclear-weapon capabilities. The other nuclear-weapon states have refused to participate even in strategic-arms-reduction talks until American and Russian nuclear arsenals have been reduced to levels comparable to theirs. Such a reduction does not appear imminent.

The existing five nuclear powers still view nuclear weapons as critical to their national security. As recently as the Reagan and Bush administrations, the United States opposed a complete nuclear-test ban on the ground it would have undermined national security and limited the effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Washington has since supported and signed the CTBT (though the U.S. Senate has yet to ratify it) but only after concluding that the safety and reliability of its nuclear arsenal could be maintained through computer-simulated tests.

Although a member of NATO, France has still considered it necessary to maintain an independent nuclear force. China claims it needs a viable nuclear-weapons capability for defense, and that since its intentions are benign its possession of nuclear weapons does not threaten other nations. Both France and China, despite international objections, conducted a series of nuclear tests in 1996 immediately before signing the CTBT. Other advanced industrialized states (Japan and Germany), while not possessing their own nuclear weapons, contribute to

and/or rely on the American nuclear umbrella.

Because of their discriminatory nature and the continued security value attached to nuclear weapons by these major powers, the non-proliferation treaties have been viewed by some as a mask for power play, to freeze the status quo in favor of the haves against the have-nots. India has been among those in the forefront in articulating the double standard inherent in the NPT and CTBT. And Pakistan's position has been that it will not sign the non-proliferation treaties so long as India has not done so. Some may dismiss the Indian position as “non-aligned rhetoric,” but such characterization only serves to undermine the cause of non-proliferation.

A large number of non-nuclear states have indeed accepted the NPT and the CTBT. Some like Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan have agreed to return the Soviet nuclear weapons on their soil to Russia; and others like Brazil, Argentina, and South Africa have voluntarily renounced their nuclear programs. This, however, does not imply that all—especially those that have security concerns and the technical know-how, and who must or choose to rely on themselves for their security—must or will accept it. India, Pakistan, and Israel have all along not signed the NPT.

For an international regime to be accepted and effective—especially in the critical area of security—it must create stakes for the significant states, and provide protection and redress to all. It cannot advantage a few especially when one or more of these states are perceived by non-nuclear states as a source of insecurity.

**Concern over national security will override non-proliferation concerns.** A second shortcoming of the non-proliferation response to the nuclear tests in South Asia is that its starting point is the integrity of the non-proliferation regime and the consequences of proliferation in South Asia for international security. It does not take due account of the security concerns of India and Pakistan, and the perceived relevance of their nuclear programs to these concerns.

Taken to the extreme, the non-proliferation policy confuses means and ends. Non-proliferation is the means and security the end, not vice versa.

*For 25 years the declared nuclear powers have moved in a direction opposite from disarmament*

When states perceive the non-proliferation regime as detrimental to their national security they cannot be expected to comply.

Familiar arguments against nuclear-weapons proliferation—“chain reaction” (competitive acquisition of nuclear capability), “demonstration effect” (that as countries see other countries acquiring nuclear weapons they are more likely to want to acquire) and “the fewer the better” (the fewer countries controlling these weapons, the safer the world is)—have all been voiced regarding the nuclear tests in South Asia.

It has been argued that if India and Pakistan are not stopped and their nuclear-weapons programs rolled back, others—including Iran, Libya, Syria, and North Korea—will follow.

But several key points must be made. First, in the case of South Asia, the chain started when China conducted a nuclear test in 1964. India’s nuclear program was a response to China’s nuclear program, while the Pakistani program is a reaction to the Indian one. The links in this chain were forged by security concerns—India of China and Pakistan of India. As Pakistan does not pose a serious security problem to any country other than India, the competitive acquisition of nuclear capability in this particular chain should end with Pakistan. However, if Pakistan deploys its nuclear capability to further Islamic objectives in Southwest Asia and the Middle East, it could set in train a new chain.

There may be some merit to the “demonstration effect” argument, but the acquisition of nuclear weapons by other states will be determined by each nation’s security situation and technical capability. Given the resources required and the penalties presently involved (while not sufficient to deter the determined, as we have seen, the sanctions are significant), other nations will not casually acquire nuclear weapons simply because India or Pakistan has done so.

There is also little logic in expecting countries to forego a security option they consider vital simply because other nations may follow suit. Each nation will address its situation on its own merits.

The “the fewer the better argument,” usually advanced as “common sense,” does not bear scru-

tiny. Fewer may indeed be better for existing nuclear powers. It simplifies their calculations, simplifies their national-security strategies, and eases their collective management of international security. Still, one would be hard pressed to argue this oft-cited dictum serves independent non-nuclear states whose security fears concern a nuclear power.

There is also the associated argument that an increase in the number of countries possessing nuclear arms increases the probability of such weapons being acquired by terrorist groups. Terrorist organizations seeking nuclear weapons will acquire them whenever the opportunity presents itself. Their intent is not altered by the possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan. The critical consideration here is the safeguards to prevent terrorist acquisition.

In any case these arguments—concern for the sustainability of international non-proliferation regimes (in which India and Pakistan have little or no stake), “chain reaction,” “demonstration effect,” and “the fewer the better”—are not the basis on which national policy makers in these states provide for their present and future security needs. Certainly these arguments have not directed the United States and the other earlier nuclear powers in their own actions.

**Lack of enforcement capability.** Neither the NPT nor the CTBT (which has yet to enter into force) has any real enforcement mechanism. Only Article V in the CTBT deals with compliance. This article “empowers the Conference to revoke a State’s right under the Treaty, to recommend to States parties collective measures in conformity with international law, or, alternatively, if the case is urgent, to bring the issue to the attention of the United Nations.”

States may act individually or coordinate their response to a violation. The primary instruments available to states are political condemnation, diplomatic isolation, and economic sanctions. If the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) judges the event to be a threat to international peace and security, it can take collective measures under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, including the use of force.

Following the recent nuclear tests there has been

*Other nations will not casually acquire nuclear weapons simply because India or Pakistan has done so*

*Sanctions are unlikely to force the rolling back of nuclear programs in either country*

a nearly universal public condemnation of both India and Pakistan. Beyond this vocal condemnation, there has not been a concerted international response. Economic sanctions, however, have been imposed by the United States but, for various reasons, other members of the UNSC have not followed suit.

Non-humanitarian assistance has been reduced or, in some cases, terminated. The United States, Japan, and several other industrialized countries have delayed World Bank loans to India. They will presumably do the same when loans to Pakistan come up for consideration.

On June 5, the UNSC declared the nuclear tests as a threat to international peace and security, and endorsed the statement issued by the five permanent members after their June 4 meeting in Geneva. Refusing to recognize the nuclear status of India and Pakistan, that statement called upon the two countries to refrain from weaponization, refrain from testing and deployment of missiles, and stop further production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. It also called on India and Pakistan to sign the CTBT and refrain from exporting nuclear and missile technology. The UNSC, however, did not decide on any collective measures under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. It is difficult to imagine the UNSC authorizing the use of force against major countries like India and Pakistan. Collective diplomatic and economic sanctions are more germane and remain a possibility.

**Limited utility of economic sanctions.** Although economic sanctions will undoubtedly impose costs, they are unlikely to force the rolling back of the nuclear programs of India and Pakistan. India is a huge country with a relatively large economy that is only now beginning to open up. Although not insignificant, India's dependence on the global economy is not substantial. Thus, while the sanctions will hurt, and likely much more than projected by the government, it is unlikely they will inflict costs unacceptable to the Indian government.

To offset the cost of sanctions and avert the expected domestic criticism that is likely to follow, as well as to improve its prospects in future elections,

the Bharatya Janata Party (BJP) government may seek to grow the Indian economy. This may prove difficult, however, in the absence of foreign investments and lacking access to foreign markets. Increased allocations for defense will also burden the economy.

International economic sanctions will likely inflict greater damage on Pakistan—although this may be partially offset by increased assistance from sympathetic Islamic states and China. Compared to India, Pakistan's economy is in bad shape. International loans and assistance have accounted for a substantial portion of the government's budget.

Pakistan's foreign-exchange reserve is low and its foreign debt is estimated at \$36 billion, 72 percent of its GDP. Islamabad has had to borrow from international institutions to service its commercial loans. This fragile economic situation was reflected in the declaration of emergency Pakistan issued following its nuclear tests to prevent runs on its banks and currency.

These economic concerns underscore the opposition to the testing by some segments of Pakistan's economic community. Furthermore, for security and other reasons, Islamabad has always devoted a relatively higher percentage of its national income and budget for defense than has India. This burden will continue and possibly increase.

Despite the high cost of international economic sanctions, Pakistan is not likely to succumb to international pressures. A nuclear capability is viewed as vital for national security. The influential military views such weapons as the means to equalize Pakistan's imbalance with India in conventional forces. Islamabad has invested heavily to acquire this capability, and the program enjoys broad political support.

India also views nuclear-weapons capability as critical to its security and long-range strategic interests. An India which for 30 years refused to sign the NPT and which, similarly at great cost, developed an indigenous nuclear-weapons capability is unlikely to give it up. Despite differences over some issues, including the decision to conduct the nuclear tests, a broad spectrum of the Indian political leadership, its strategic community, and the public are convinced

that a nuclear-weapons program is essential to the security and prestige of India.

International (Western) sanctions are likely only to fuel anti-Western nationalism in both India and Pakistan, with that in Pakistan assuming an Islamic coloration as well. Though Western economic sanctions are unlikely to reverse the present nuclear situation, if used selectively they may temper—if not prevent—further development and escalation.

**Goal should be to prevent escalation, not attempt rollback, of nuclear programs.** The issue in so far as South Asia is concerned is no longer non-proliferation in the sense of crossing the nuclear threshold. For all intents and purposes that threshold has long been crossed albeit in a covert manner. All that the tests do is to make public the capabilities that have been quite well known. As the probability of rolling back the relatively well-developed nuclear programs of India and Pakistan are slim to nil, the focus of the international community should shift to the next stage: the transition from demonstrating a capability to developing a nuclear force posture. Trying to roll back the nuclear program through sanctions will in fact divert attention from this more important goal.

The arming and deployment of missiles and aircraft with nuclear warheads; the development of associated command, control, communications, and intelligence systems; and the articulation of relevant doctrines and strategies, and the accompanying public euphoria and political rhetoric are likely, at least in the short-to-medium term, to create tension and instability. In the absence of secure second-strike capabilities there may also be a temptation to make a preemptive strike. The potential for an arms race, with all the attendant risks, is clear.

Conflict between India and Pakistan, however, is not new. They have a reasonably good, though tortured, record of managing bilateral tensions. The key issues dividing these two countries—which center on conflicting political identities and the dispute over Kashmir—may be traced back to the partition of British India, and each country's national self-conceptions and aspirations. While India and Pakistan have fought three wars, the key issues remain

unresolved. Yet despite the persistent disputes, frequent interference in each other's internal conflicts, periodic severe accusations of each other (on occasions accompanied by force mobilizations), and the covert possession of missile and nuclear capabilities, the two countries have not actually gone to war with each other since 1971.

Neither India nor Pakistan has attempted preemptive destruction of the other's nuclear facilities. In fact in 1991 they concluded an agreement not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. Overt declaration of nuclear status and induction of nuclear weapons are unlikely to dramatically alter the established pattern of bilateral interaction and behavior of these two states.

With time the public euphoria and political rhetoric will die down, though not altogether disappear. The dangers and responsibilities that go with nuclear weapons, as well as the negative economic consequences and the domestic political fallout which will surely follow, will become apparent. This should lead to more sober assessments and postures.

In some ways this is already evident. Both states have shown a willingness to engage in bilateral dialogue and to consider signing the CTBT. The international community should build on this record of bilateral agreements and the two states' willingness to engage in dialogue. Economic assistance should be tied to the promotion of confidence and security-building measures.

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### **The Indo-Pakistani Rivalry Framework: Only Part of the Story**

This second framework accords higher priority to security concerns, but remains inadequate for two reasons. First, it frames security and stability in South Asia only in terms of the Indo-Pakistani conflict. But, security in South Asia is affected by extra-regional actors as well—especially China. Second, it underplays the strategic concerns and significance of India by positing equality between India and Pakistan.

**Security in South Asia cannot be viewed in isolation.** Pakistan's security concerns are without doubt

*Neither country has attempted preemptive destruction of the other's nuclear facilities*

*National security and equality with India are the key reasons for Pakistan's nuclear program*

focused on India, and Islamabad certainly wants to compete with that country and be treated as an equal. Yet while Pakistan is an important security concern for India, it is not the only concern. Indian security concerns are broader and focus on China, Central Asia, and the Indian Ocean. India sees itself as a major power with broader security interests and an international role that are quite independent of its conflicts with Pakistan.

In the view of New Delhi, Pakistan became threatening only because of Washington's backing for Islamabad during the Cold War and Chinese backing since the mid-1960s. Thus India must look beyond South Asia even to address its security concerns focused on Pakistan.

National security and equality with India are the two key considerations underlying Pakistan's nuclear program. Pakistan's deep distrust and hatred of India can be traced to the bitterness characterizing the formative era of Pakistan and the continuing dispute over Kashmir.

Pakistan's concern with India became even more acute after 1971, when Indian military intervention played a critical role in the final stage of the revolution in East Pakistan (leading to the formation of Bangladesh), and again after 1974, when India carried out a nuclear test. An India possessing nuclear weapons increases the vulnerability and fear of a Pakistan lacking such weapons.

Even more than their Indian counterparts, the Pakistani strategic community supports the nuclear program. Nuclear weapons are seen as a strategic equalizer—especially as Pakistan can no longer count on American assistance in the post-Cold-War era and India's strategic capability may temper the Chinese support for Pakistan.

Pakistan's concern with India, national pride, and domestic political and public pressures overrode the international calls for restraint. Pakistan chose to forego the opportunity to forge better relations with the West (and take advantage of India's being "in the dog house" of world politics) and reap political, diplomatic, and economic benefits. Because of the difficult economic circumstances of Pakistan, these gains would not have been inconsequential. But national security and domestic politics took higher priority.

National security and long-term strategic considerations, largely (though not exclusively) focused on China, appear to be the key factors driving the Indian nuclear program. If Pakistan were India's only, or even its principal, security concern, it would have been to India's advantage to remain non-nuclear—since India has a substantial advantage over Pakistan in conventional military capability.

India's nuclear-weapon-related program commenced in the mid-1960s. Significantly, it conducted its first nuclear-weapons test in 1974 not out of fear of Pakistan but after it had defeated that country in the 1971 war. Still, possession of nuclear weapons and medium-range missiles by Pakistan makes India militarily vulnerable. New Delhi appears to have accepted this vulnerability as inevitable.

India's move to acquire nuclear-weapons capability reflects its belief that its strategic concerns are much wider. It is important to recall that India suffered a stunning defeat in the border war it fought with China in 1962. This defeat, the subsequent Chinese nuclear test, and the threat, in 1965, of a simultaneous second-front war while India was fighting Pakistan, all impressed upon New Delhi the weakness of its position vis-a-vis China.

Disillusioned with the failure of its India-China friendship policy of the 1950s, and recognizing the inability of its existing military capability to back its goal of a non-aligned policy, India strengthened relations with the Soviet Union. Considerable effort was concurrently devoted to enhancing India's own defense capability, including the development of nuclear-weapons capability.

Since the 1960s, suspicion of China has penetrated deep into the Indian national psyche. While relations between the two countries have improved in the last decade, and they are now better than at any other time over the past three decades, the underlying concern with China remains. To dismiss this concern is to miss a crucial security dynamic affecting South Asia and Asia more broadly.

The unresolved border dispute, China's dramatic growth in both conventional- and nuclear-weapons capabilities, China's permanent seat on the UN Security Council, Chinese assistance to Pakistan in the development of its missile and nuclear capabilities,

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and Chinese influence in Burma are all constant reminders to India of its relative weakness and its vulnerability to China.

India's concern is not of an immediate military threat, but that the strategic gap with China will widen. This would increase the vulnerability of a non-nuclear India and constrain its strategic freedom and policy options. While desirous of good relations with China, New Delhi believes that such relations must be built on the basis of strength and equality with respect for India as a major power.

With the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India's former ally, and the subsequent changes in major-power relations, India has had to reassess its strategic interests and policy directions. Although improvement of bilateral relations with the United States, China, Japan, and European nations is viewed as important, India appears to have concluded it cannot rely on other states for its security.

This conclusion, along with India's desire to take its "rightful place in the family of nations," appears to have convinced Indian decision makers that a nuclear-weapons capability is needed.

**India is a major power in the making.** The underappreciation of India by positing it as an equal of Pakistan is a second limitation of the Indo-Pakistani rivalry framework. Though still quite common, this is a distortion of reality. By any measure of power—territory, population, size of economy, scientific and technological know-how, political institutions—India outstrips Pakistan. The disparity became even more pronounced with the truncation of Pakistan in 1971, when the eastern half of that country became independent Bangladesh.

Economic reforms instituted by India about a decade ago, while fluctuating in pace and content, have provided new momentum to the previously stifled Indian economy. Over time these reforms will increase India's economic power. Nuclear weapons will offer Pakistan deterrence against India, but beyond this their utility is limited. They do not alter the attributes of broad-based power.

India, like China, sees itself as a big country with a long history and a distinctive civilization which has

influenced many parts of Asia. It feels deserving of the major-powers status it has been denied. Among the issues that rankle Indian decision makers are comparisons of India with Pakistan (as opposed to with China), exclusion from Asia-Pacific forums such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and, more generally, the little regard the major powers have shown for the concerns of India while accommodating those of China.

In condemning the Indian tests, President Clinton stated that India is a much under-appreciated country and that India and the United States must forge a partnership as they move into the twenty-first century. Although New Delhi's relations with Washington have improved, from the Indian perspective treatment of India by the United States still leaves much to be desired.

Washington, for example, backed the applications of Germany and Japan for permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council but refused to back that of India. Washington also objected to India's membership in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and opposes India's membership in APEC.

Some Indian decision makers, particularly (but not limited to) those in the BJP government, appear to have concluded that what matters to the United States and others is power and strategic considerations. India has to demonstrate its power and claim its rightful position. These Indian decision makers view nuclear-weapons capability as an essential ingredient, though insufficient on its own.

More rapid economic growth and improved diplomatic relations with key countries are also viewed as critical. Accepting that the recent nuclear tests could temporarily derail these two objectives, India, its leaders argue, should pay the price now. They believe it would only become more difficult and costly to gain such capability later—especially in light of the adoption by the UN of the CTBT.

Signed in 1996, the CTBT states that the treaty will enter into force once all 44 states of the Conference on Disarmament, including India and Pakistan, have signed and ratified it. In the event the requisite number of ratifications are not forthcoming, the treaty provides for a conference in 1999 for those



states who have ratified to decide on measures to accelerate ratification by the hold-outs.

Such efforts would result in increased pressures on India and entrap it permanently in the category of non-nuclear state. Many in the Indian strategic community have warned of this danger. While it is unclear how other Indian governments would have reacted to this imperative, it clearly galvanized the Hindu-nationalist BJP. Declaration of nuclear status was one of the key pillars of its policy platform. The BJP also sought to strengthen its domestic political position through the tests.

The fact that the tests were conducted by a religious-nationalist minority government, however, should not obscure the broad national public support for India's nuclear program and tests. The nuclear program was first instituted by the secular Indian National Congress Party which, with a strong mandate, governed India for more than three decades. The actual decision to test may yet become a controversial domestic political issue, but future governments of India are unlikely to roll back the program without a real movement toward complete world disarmament.

**Strategic implications of the nuclear tests.** Viewing the recent tests through the Indo-Pakistani rivalry framework alerts us to the potential for a qualitative move up the "ladder of violence" and the attendant risks. The induction of nuclear weapons into each nation's force posture is a critical development that can make for tension and instability in the short-to-medium term.

Clearly, relations between the two states have been set back. Normalization of bilateral relations will take, at a minimum, a few years. Chinese support for Pakistan can be expected to continue, although it could be tempered by several considerations, including the growing strategic reach of India. The nature of the Indo-Pakistani conflict, the issues in contention, and the structure and pattern of relations pertaining to the conflict, however, have not been altered in any fundamental manner.

Other strategic consequences are discernible only when these tests are viewed through a broader framework. One such consequence involves Sino-

Indian relations, which, until now, have received only passing attention. Previously India had been more concerned about China than vice versa. Chinese concerns with India have centered on their border dispute, the asylum that India provides for the Dalai Lama, and India's potential to exacerbate China's Tibet problem.

Despite these concerns, and although it has always been cautious about its second-largest neighbor, China has, for a number of reasons, downplayed India as a strategic rival. Relations between the PRC and independent India have been filled with suspicion and tension, with Beijing providing strategic assistance to Islamabad.

With the Indian tests and its claim of thermo-nuclear and Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) capability, however, Chinese attention can be expected to increase. Development of an Indian nuclear arsenal, especially if it includes Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) capability, will intensify China's strategic concerns in the south. Beijing has recently indicated it may review its commitment to the CTBT and China may also be less willing to engage in and abide by other arms-control regimes.

While arousing concern, Indian nuclear tests need not necessarily lead to increased tension, rivalry, and conflict between China and India. Both countries may still feel it is in their best interests to persist in the improvement in their bilateral relations that has been underway for the last decade. Should, however, relations between these two large countries take a downward turn, the consequences would not be limited to the two states but would clearly affect neighboring states and the broader region.

The Sino-Indian dynamic is likely to assume greater significance in considerations of security and stability throughout Asia. India's growing strategic reach will also affect security and stability in the Indian Ocean, including maritime Southeast Asia. In sum, as its power grows and its strategic reach increases, India will increasingly affect the configuration of power and the dynamics of strategic interaction in the Asia-Pacific region.

A second broader consequence of the nuclear tests relates to the Middle East. The impact here

*The Sino-Indian dynamic is likely to assume greater significance in security and stability throughout Asia*

depends on whether Pakistan's nuclear capability is deployed solely for protection and advancement of its own national interests in the Indo-Pakistani context or more broadly in the interest of Islam. If the latter proves to be the case it will certainly affect the strategic situation in the Middle East. Security in the Middle East and South Asia will be enjoined. Right now the probability of such a deployment appears slim, but the possibility is there.

Finally, the nuclear tests in South Asia, together with the economic and political crises presently rocking several East and Southeast Asian states, challenge some of the assumptions, concepts, frameworks, and policies that inform the ongoing construction of the post-Cold-War order in the Asia-Pacific region and more generally in the world. While not discussed in detail, related considerations are embedded in the following discussion of a new policy framework.

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#### **A New, More Integrated, Policy Framework for Stability in South Asia**

The security rationales and domestic support for the nuclear programs in India and Pakistan are strong. The new framework must acknowledge and build on this fact with the promotion of security and stability in South Asia as its core goal. Non-proliferation concerns and more broadly arms control measures must be incorporated into the framework but concerns of non-proliferation must not override that of security and stability in South Asia.

**The necessary components.** However distasteful, a new framework must accept the nuclear status of India and Pakistan, frame security and stability in South Asia in a larger regional context, deploy arms control measures (including non-proliferation) to prevent a nuclear-arms race, and avert preemptive and accidental wars. The proposed framework has seven key components.

*First, it is essential to develop bilateral arms-control measures to ease tensions and prevent the outbreak of accidental wars and reduce the temptation to preempt.* Some such measures, e.g. "hot line" communications and the agreement not to attack each other's nuclear facilities, are already in place.

Others still need to be negotiated. This component is of the utmost importance and the international community should accord it the highest priority.

International assistance must also be provided to ensure nuclear safety in India and Pakistan. As their nuclear programs have been developed in a covert manner the safety standards of these programs are likely to be below comparable international standards. It is important to avoid a Chernobyl-like or even more serious incident.

*Second, India and Pakistan should be urged to sign the CTBT and actively participate in the Conference on Disarmament for a Fissile Material Cutoff Convention with a view to reaching an early agreement.* They must also be urged to conform to the spirit, if not the letter, of other related regimes including the Missile Technology Control Regime.

*The third component seeks to slow and regulate the weaponization and the deployment of nuclear-armed missiles by these two states.* The ideal, from the perspective of the international community, would be to stop this process altogether. However, in light of the security dynamics driving the nuclear and missile programs of these two states, and the relatively advanced stage of these programs, this is not a realistic goal.

It has been reported that the United States is considering offering security assurances to India and Pakistan if they will give up weaponization and deployment of missiles. Such assurances, however, are unlikely to be sufficient or acceptable, especially to India. India's security concerns relate to a nuclear-armed neighbor and India has a penchant for independent foreign policy. Even if India and Pakistan were to formally accept such U.S. assurances, it would be almost certain that their covert programs would continue—subjecting the world to another rude awakening some years down the road.

Covert development and deployment of these weapons will be more destabilizing. Though unpalatable, accepting the nuclear status of these two states and attempting to influence their overt development and deployment of nuclear weapons may better serve the interest of world security and stability.

*The fourth component requires encouraging political dialogue between India and Pakistan.* This

*However distasteful, a new framework must accept the nuclear status of India and Pakistan*

*Many aspects of the new policy framework run counter to conventional tenets*

should address all significant bilateral issues, including Kashmir. Previously, Nawaz Shariff (current prime minister of Pakistan) and Inder Kumar Gujral (prime minister of India before the BJP government) had committed to such a dialogue. The new Indian premier, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, is willing to follow through with a dialogue.

The issues of contention between these two states, however, are intricate and bitter and go to the heart of their political identities. Quick progress is unlikely and should not be expected. Persistence on the part of the international community, always in short supply, will be required.

*Political and security dialogue between India and China constitutes the fifth component of this framework.* Security issues here are more tractable—though still difficult. This dialogue should cover the broader strategic interests and concerns of the two states as well. Considerable progress has, in fact, already been made over the last decade. This effort must be expanded and not be allowed to fall by the wayside.

*The sixth component relates to the acceptance of India as a major power.* India is already critical to security and stability in South Asia and the Indian Ocean and its political and strategic significance to the broader Asia-Pacific will only grow. While India has not enjoyed the dramatic economic growth of the East and Southeast Asian countries in the 1980s and early 1990s, its economy is in early stages of reform. Recently India's economy has been growing faster than the 3 to 4 percent rate of increase experienced during the first several decades after independence.

Accepting India as a major power must not be read as accepting Indian hegemony in South Asia or abandonment of Pakistan. The U.S.-China strategic partnership, for example, has not meant the downgrading of the U.S. relationship with Japan or the abandoning of Taiwan. Improvement in U.S. relations with India need not and should not be at the expense of U.S. relations with China. The two should go in tandem and the Clinton administration has already moved in this direction. The Indian nuclear tests should not be allowed to derail this policy.

*Finally, security in the subcontinent must be viewed in a broader context.* For several reasons, there has been a tendency to exclude South Asia from the general conceptualization of the Asia-Pacific. In the domain of security, a more useful conceptualization of Asia and the Pacific would center on China as the core that links Northeast, Southeast, South, and Central Asia with the United States and Russia as the other critical players. In this conceptualization, the regional overlay is primarily determined by the interaction of the United States, China, Japan, Russia, and India. This overlay influences and is influenced by the indigenous dynamics of the four subregions—Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia. In addition to including South Asia in the general conceptualization of the Asia-Pacific, such a conceptualization would ensure that security issues affecting all of Asia are addressed in their fullness and with due recognition of the interconnecting dynamics.

To reiterate, a policy framework based on this conceptualization will highlight the broader motives and consequences of the nuclear programs and missile tests in South Asia and make for more effective analysis and policy.

The pursuit of policies based on such a framework requires the United States and the other major countries to engage India and Pakistan, not to isolate them through sanctions. Though perhaps difficult to accept, the United States should consider minimizing the effects of sanctions and eventually lifting them. Other nations that have not imposed sanctions should not do so. While understandable as a knee-jerk reaction and as a first response to indicate disapproval and to deter would-be followers, sanctions are not conducive to a successful long-range policy.

**The need for an alternative approach.** Several components of the policy framework suggested here run counter to conventional tenets. These conventional tenets not only inform the current policy responses to the nuclear tests in South Asia, they also direct the discourse on post-Cold-War security, the construction of the regional-security order for the Asia-Pacific, and the construction of a new world order. These components

*The challenge is  
to think anew*

may, therefore, be especially controversial for policy makers set in their agendas and ways.

Because it advocates the acceptance of India and Pakistan as nuclear states, and because it does not place non-proliferation concerns in the center, some may view this new policy framework as condoning

nuclear weapons. But this is not the intent. The new framework seeks to address a complex problem that can simply no longer be managed through the more common existing frameworks. The challenge is to think anew and advance alternative directions.

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