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Diplomacy and Security in the 21st Century

India, Pakistan, and American Nuclear Diplomacy

WORKING GROUP REPORT, NO. II, JUNE 5, 2007

WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE JOHN D. AND CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

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The Study Group on Security and Diplomacy in the 21st Century held its second meeting on June 5, 2007, to discuss U.S. efforts to dissuade India and Pakistan from acquiring nuclear forces. This meeting is part of a series of four meetings convened by ISD over the coming year. This project is examining the role that the U.S. intelligence and policy communities play in advancing diplomatic initiatives aimed at reducing global and regional security threats, particularly nuclear proliferation. The other cases considered include North Korea, which the Group discussed in February (see full report on the ISD website) and Libya and Iran, to be taken up in the coming months.

The Study Group focused on security in South Asia as a way to examine the dynamics of intelligence and policy processes during two administrations, each of which perceived the problems differently and, as such, pursued distinct strategies. This case provides important insights into the interaction of policy processes, intelligence and regional relations as they affected the design and conduct of American security initiatives in this region over the course of a Democratic and Republican administration.

The meeting began with presentations by three former senior officials, all of whom played significant roles in U.S. efforts to contain the Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons programs. Speakers included Robert Einhorn, who served as Assistant Secretary of State for Nonproliferation from 1999 to 2001, Karl Inderfurth, who held the position of Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs from 1997 to 2001, and Lincoln

India, Pakistan, and American Nuclear Diplomacy

Bloomfield, who was Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs from 2001 to 2005. Former NSC Advisor at the National Security Council Bruce Reidel provided the group with a background paper about key events leading to the testing of nuclear weapons by both India and Pakistan by the end of the 1990s.

The group's discussion in this and subsequent meetings is guided by a set of key questions, including:

1. *The Decision-Making Process*: How were U.S. government decision-making processes organized during the different phases of efforts to stem nuclear programs (e.g., what was the prevailing perception of the threat, where did the primary responsibility for policy design and implementation reside, was there a clear strategy and set of objectives, was there unity or discord among agencies?)

2. *Intelligence*: What kind of intelligence/information did U.S. policy makers have available to them at different stages of their efforts to stop the development of the nuclear program? (Ranging from technical information about the status of the program, potential targeting intelligence in the event that force would be used, to an understanding of the regime's and population's motivations and potential receptivity to alternate instruments of dissuasion.)

3. *Policy Tools*: What were the tools and options available and/or considered to address challenges? Which were selected or rejected at different times, why and to what effect?

4. *Quality of discourse*: Was there wide-ranging and high quality discourse among policy-makers, regional experts, diplomats and intelligence officials?

5. *Regional Implications*: To what extent were regional dynamics important and taken into account in formulating strategy? How did this affect the role of the U.S.?

6. *Net Assessment*: How well did the choice of policies and the overall strategy succeed or fail in achieving U.S. objectives and why?

The following report provides highlights of the Study Group's discussion and presents initial findings from the meeting in June. The report follows the framework provided by the key questions that were posed to the group to guide the four meetings.

Summary of Findings

Policy-making

- I There were significant gaps in the attention given to nuclear developments in South Asia and to the region as a whole over the course of the two administrations discussed in the meeting, especially at senior levels. Critical nonproliferation

India, Pakistan, and American Nuclear Diplomacy

developments and challenges in South Asia typically gained the top-level attention from the president and his principal appointees largely during times of crisis.

- The core conception of the nuclear challenge in South Asia, framed as the need to gain the two states' adherence to the global nuclear non-proliferation norms, may have circumscribed the ability of U.S. policy-makers to better understand and thus influence the governments and populations of India and Pakistan—especially given the blanket opposition of the governments to the international treaty regime as inimical to their national interests and because of the perception of its discriminatory effects.
- U.S. policies focused primarily on the military rivalry between India and Pakistan, overlooking critical regional security dynamics and local threat perceptions—especially with regard to the role of China.
- For various reasons, U.S. policy-makers did not adequately consider the possibility that nuclear restraint might be elicited in the region if such efforts were part of broader security guarantees tailored to the specific cases.
- The assumption for Pakistan that the provision of advanced conventional arms by the U.S. could forestall Pakistan's nuclear aspirations was based on an inaccurate assessment of Pakistan's national security objectives. In part this reflected organizational weaknesses. Formal mechanisms to bring the policy and intelligence communities together were not sufficiently developed to elucidate local security conditions or facilitate the design of an enduring and effective counterproliferation strategy.
- Goals sought by U.S. policy in South Asia varied according to other regional and global priorities, often subordinating non-proliferation concerns to other objectives that were perceived at the time to be more urgent. Policy and intelligence resources devoted to South Asia shifted accordingly, making it difficult for experts and officials seeking nuclear restraint to advance their agendas.
- The regional bureaus for India and Pakistan each struggled to maintain diplomatic relationships with the countries' governments, which, despite efforts to accommodate the objectives of functional bureaus such as non-proliferation, were often out of sync with functional objectives. Time spent waging inter-agency rivalries would have been better utilized devising joint and long-term strategies.
- With a few exceptions, policy deliberations tended to be much better organized at the middle rather than senior levels of government, in coordinating mechanisms

India, Pakistan, and American Nuclear Diplomacy

which brought together capable and experienced individuals from many diverse parts of the U.S. government.

- I The design of Executive Branch strategy for South Asia was complicated by frequent intrusions by the legislative branch, typically in the form of binding sanctions that left the U.S. with limited leverage over the governments they were actively seeking to influence.

Intelligence

- I Despite some apparent limitations, the quality of technical intelligence on India and Pakistan in 1998 was described as being “above average” compared to other regions of concern.
- I Human intelligence that could have been critical in helping devise policy and diplomatic instruments based on understanding of the underlying dynamics of each state’s nuclear ambitions, however—about the domestic political situation, the nationalistic appeal of nuclear weapons among specific elites and segments of the population, or the potential societal levers that might be persuaded to recognize and speak out against the costs and risks of nuclear programs—received very little attention.
- I That said, the intelligence community’s failure to predict the exact timing of the Indian nuclear test in 1998, often cited as the most significant intelligence failure in the region, is overshadowed by the decades of quality intelligence about regional nuclear developments that was made available to policy-makers over time. On balance, intelligence about nuclear developments does not reveal significant failures of intelligence as much as a failure of policy officials to pay sustained attention to the facts on the ground in the region.
- I The demands of covert intelligence operations to disrupt terrorism in the region, launched in earnest from the late 1990s and into the post 9/11 era, competed with and sometimes overshadowed the importance of nonproliferation diplomacy.

Policy Tool Box

- I The lynchpin of American non-proliferation policy in South Asia, consisting of diplomatic efforts to persuade India and Pakistan of the benefits they would derive from joining the nuclear restraint regimes (and the costs attendant upon their refusal to do so), for decades dismissed the incompatibility of this objective

India, Pakistan, and American Nuclear Diplomacy

to each state's domestic politics and overall strategic culture, thereby undercutting the likelihood of success. In some cases, such as the high-level U.S. appeal to India to join the Comprehensive Test Ban in 1998, may have had the unintended effect of accelerating the pace of India's nuclear developments.

- I The selective application of non-proliferation standards by the U.S. at different times—most dramatically when the U.S. chose to ignore Pakistani nuclear acquisition and development programs. Beginning during the period that Pakistan was assisting U.S.- backed efforts to arm the mujaheddin battling the Soviets in Afghanistan and again when Pakistan's support was enlisted to combat terrorism in the region, such decisions created critical lapses in the ability of U.S. officials to sustain counterproliferation goals and ultimately contributing to a failure of U.S. strategy in this respect.
- I The heavy use of sanctions against India and Pakistan, especially those imposed by the legislative branch, did not achieve commensurate benefits in persuading these states of the high cost of their nuclear aspirations nor in stemming accelerating investment in nuclear modernization. Sanctions aimed at appeasing domestic U.S. constituencies, in particular, were considered to have done more harm than good—tying the hands of the executive branch to engage diplomatically or impinging on the ability of the intelligence community to conduct operations.
- I Sanctions, according to the Group, can be an effective way to gain leverage if they are sufficiently punitive and/or are applied to buy time to launch new kinds of diplomatic initiatives; not, however, if they are seen as an end in themselves.
- I In the final analysis, there may have been few if any U.S. policy tools that could have halted the nuclear ambitions of these two very determined states, especially in light of their commitment to sovereign goals and the residual distrust between the United States and India/Pakistan.

Discourse

- I Policymakers failed to consistently challenge their own decisions and ideas about priorities for and conditions in India and Pakistan, even when confronted with new intelligence information. This hindered policy-makers' ability to think strategically about the how best to redress the security implications of the emerging nuclear programs in the South Asian continent.
- I On several occasions, the "strategic consensus" in Washington downgraded the

India, Pakistan, and American Nuclear Diplomacy

importance of non-proliferation goals in favor of other security objectives without much deliberation or weighing of the costs and benefits of such a course. .

- I The tensions between “regional” bureaus seeking to accommodate the interests and priorities of the two regional governments and “functional” bureaus seeking to advance the specific goal of nuclear restraint created chronic internal tensions in American policy, making it difficult to send a clear message to the states of concern.

Regional Political Dynamics

- I In formulating policy toward South Asia, the United States focused most of its attention on India and Pakistan, failing to take into consideration external concerns and other regional rivalries. Overlooking the centrality of China to India’s threat perceptions and strategic calculus, the U.S. underplayed the importance for India of key regional dynamics such as the security implications for India of China’s deepening cooperation with Pakistan.
- I The United States undercut its own policies of nuclear cooperation with India in recent years by announcing its concurrent efforts to work with the Chinese government to dampen regional tensions and/or because of the perception that demarches to India were part of a broader strategy aimed at containing China.

Net Assessment

- I U.S. policies and objectives in South Asia have varied; some of these policies have had moderate success (nonproliferation in the 1970s and 1980s, counterterrorism in recent years) and some have failed (halting or limiting of the Indian and Pakistani nuclear programs).
- I The policy process and quality of discourse between policy and intelligence about South Asia were sufficiently flawed to undercut the prospects for effective diplomatic operations in the region. That said, successful initiatives to coordinate U.S. management of regional engagement, such as former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott’s efforts after the 1998 tests, demonstrate that bringing the policy and intelligence communities to work together, while a welcome step, does not guarantee success absent a strong and widely shared strategic vision for the long-term.

Background

India's nuclear tests at Pokhran on May 11, 1998, stunned the world—including American intelligence and policy officials. Pakistan's response, five nuclear weapons detonated in the Baluchistan desert, confirmed officially that the two military rivals were now also nuclear powers. In one of the most populous regions of the world, bitter adversaries in the midst of along-standing and hot war over Kashmir each achieved proven destructive power reaching well beyond their contiguous territories or the region as a whole. . . .

How do we account for the sobering reality that nuclear tests conducted on the Indian subcontinent in mid-May 1998 were neither predicted nor prevented by U.S. policy-makers or intelligence officials? The specifics of the tests aside, the India-Pakistan case is instructive as an example of the failure of the instruments of U.S. statecraft to dissuade states from acquiring active nuclear forces. It also is a microcosm of the growing complexity of U.S. regional relations which will require far more nuanced and sophisticated forms of diplomatic and intelligence operations reaching well beyond engagement only of governments or heads of state.

Unlike the other cases examined in the course of the Study Group's project (North Korea, Iran, and Libya), the United States was intricately involved in discussions with the governments of both India and Pakistan at the time of the nuclear tests and had for decades been seeking nuclear restraint from both parties, using a mixture of carrots and sticks. That such efforts failed to alter nuclear ambitions significantly, including reaching any agreement to postpone or certainly to abandon plans to conduct tests, speaks to possible misjudgments made by both the U.S. policy and intelligence communities about how the U.S. could best wield influence in the region. At the same time, the case puts into question whether the U.S. ever had the influence it thought it had to persuade states that had repeatedly expressed the conviction that nuclear capabilities were vital to their national interest and the willingness, at least rhetorically, to do so regardless of the costs.

Does this mean that the various U.S. attempts to halt nuclearization in the region were largely quixotic? A key difficulty of assessing the impact of U.S. nonproliferation policy on South Asia is that the objectives sought by policymakers changed repeatedly over time. To understand whether U.S. nonproliferation policies succeeded or failed in South Asia, it is important to recognize that these policies have not been fixed and constant over the years.

In his introductory remarks to the Study Group, a lead speaker described four stages of U.S. nonproliferation efforts in South Asia, and each of these stages had different goals and different policies. In the first stage (1970s-1980s), U.S. policy was focused on persuading countries not to seek nuclear weapons and on getting them to sign onto the

NPT. In many ways, the United States succeeded during this stage, despite the fact that India and Pakistan never signed the treaty. After India's initial test in 1974, it never publicly declared itself a nuclear weapons state: as an undeclared power, it achieved its desired security objective while preserving the global nuclear regime. Study Group participants noted that nonproliferation policies worked for 24 years thereafter—not a small achievement. These policies limited nuclear escalation on the Indian subcontinent, and they may have contributed to ensuring the credibility of the NPT. As one senior official put it, “In 1974 there were key countries like Japan, many advanced countries, that had really not yet decided whether to have nuclear weapons or to join the NPT. I think that if at that time India and Pakistan had pursued active, overt nuclear weapons programs, it would have been very, very difficult to persuade a lot of these countries to join the NPT.”

During the second stage (1990s–1998), according to this expert, “we had realized that it was simply unrealistic to expect to roll back these capabilities.” The policy goal of this period was to try to convince the Indians and Pakistanis to be satisfied with untested, undeclared nuclear capability. Einhorn added that in private discussions, U.S. officials had stopped pressing India to join the NPT. Clearly, for many of the reasons described above, however, U.S. policies failed to prevent India and Pakistan from testing nuclear weapons. In the face of a perceived existential threat, both India and Pakistan defied world opinion, forming, along with Israel and now North Korea, a special category of non-NPT-sanctioned nuclear weapons states. Given the conditions that compelled India and Pakistan to test, many have suggested that nuclearization was inevitable or at least unpreventable. Regardless of whether it could have been prevented in theory, it seems clear that, with the policy tools and bureaucratic conditions available to the United States at the time, an outcome of failure was understandable.

The third period of American policy began with the tests in May 1998 and lasted until 9/11. After the 1998 tests, the policy goal of the United States was to persuade India and Pakistan to accept limitations on their programs. While a concerted effort was launched under Strobe Talbott at the end of the Clinton administration to convince India to agree to limitations, the timing of these efforts was ill-fated. As one senior official in the Study Group noted, events—including the Kargil episode, the plane hijacking to Kandahar, the Musharraf coup, and the fall of the BJP government—made the prospect of nuclear limitations very unlikely.

In the final and most recent period (from 9/11 to the present), the U.S. agenda was refocused on preventing terrorists from acquiring access to nuclear weapons. This new focus allowed the United States to make a distinction between India, which had been a responsible caretaker of its nuclear capability, and Pakistan, which had been a major proliferator, not least as a result of the A.Q. Khan nuclear supply network, two of whose retired scientists reportedly met with Osama bin Laden. In addition, U.S. policy in South

Asia emphasized avoiding regional conflict and on installing protections on nuclear facilities and materials. Aside from the 10-month conflict between India and Pakistan in late 2001 and early 2002, these two objectives have so far been successful.

I. The Decision-Making Process

In any given period, certain incompatibilities, if not outright contradictions, have arisen among the goals the U.S. sought in South Asia. For example, during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and again after the Taliban seized power in the 1990s and began harboring Al Qaeda terrorists, the American preoccupation with Pakistan shifted squarely from nonproliferation to combating terrorism. During the Reagan administration, for example, State Department officials were called upon each year to testify in Congress that, against all evidence and available intelligence, Pakistan could be “certified” to not be engaged in certain proscribed nuclear weapons activities so as to avoid triggering congressionally-mandated sanctions.

Shifting preoccupations were accompanied by commensurate shifts in the level and type of policy and intelligence resources devoted to the region, elevating some officials and agencies while subordinating others at different times. On the whole, however, it was the consensus of the study group that nonproliferation objectives were repeatedly overtaken by other priorities, first in Pakistan and later in India. Combined with the free-wheeling use of sanctions imposed by both the Executive and Legislative branches, such policies were often perceived by the respective regimes as ill-conceived and high handed. Sanctions, in particular, seem to have impinged on critical leverage the U.S. needed to sustain an effective strategy to stem regional nuclearization.

The insufficiency of high-level policy attention accorded the region or to the internal dynamics of each state compounded the likelihood that American diplomacy would fail. As one Study Group participant noted, South Asian proliferation issues typically garnered the attention of Principals only in conjunction with more pressing high-level events, such as a state visit to Washington or a major flashpoint like Kargil. This was not because concerns about proliferation in South Asia remained within the purview of a few policy or intelligence specialists, as might have been the case in other, more remote areas of the world. To the contrary, developments on the subcontinent involved key players across several government agencies, including the National Security Council, the State Department, and the intelligence community; only the Defense Department remained a second-tier player.

The tension in the U.S. government between regional bureaus and functional bureaus which had an interest in South Asian nuclearization was a common feature of policy deliberations, as is typically the case with issues that cut cross traditional bureau-

cratic alignments. South Asia was dubbed by one Study Group member as the “theme park for the functional bureaus.” Two participants argued that regional experts who see themselves as responsible for maintaining the overall relationship of the U.S. with key states are likely to be better equipped to manage the inevitably competing priorities which can arise in diplomatic and security affairs. This is not so for functionalists, who, some argued, pursue singular agendas can prove costly to other urgent objectives and the larger relationship. Thus, it was argued, while regional bureaus can be informed by functional specialists, regional specialists are an inherently better choice to manage the complexities of diplomatic and security relationships.

This view invited strong opposition, especially from a veteran non-proliferation diplomat who countered that it is essential and indeed routine for functional specialists to work closely with and learn from regional experts. The idea that there is an inherent dichotomy between the two is not just patently false but a hindrance to effective policy-making. Several participants noted, in turn, that it is the skill and attention of senior officials—undersecretaries and above—that is essential in balancing vital interests while preventing unnecessary internecine domestic rivalries.

Participants identified additional institutional alignments in the decision-making process that affected the design and choice of U.S.-South Asia policy options. The realignment of military commands that led to splitting India into the Pacific Command while leaving Pakistan in Central Command, it was argued, complicated efforts to sustain an accurate strategic vision which could take the entire region and its complex interests into account. On the policy side, the decision to move Afghanistan and the rest of South Asia from its traditional Near East/South Asia office in the National Security Council into the East Asia office in 2001 also was said to prompt confusion over portfolios and bureaucratic alignments in a way that may have interfered with policy-formulation—especially with respect to Afghanistan, but also in the region as a whole.

Study Group participants generally agreed that the team that was pulled together by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott to work toward nuclear limitations in South Asia after the 1998 tests serves as a good example of team work and trans-agency cooperation that is needed to tackle such inherently interdisciplinary challenges. Talbott’s group included individuals from the intelligence community, State, Defense, Treasury, and other agencies. It was, remarked one former intelligence official, “an example of [an] informal mechanism that was not part of the national security apparatus that played a very important role.” In addition, meetings convened by Assistant Secretary Inderfurth during the Kargil Crisis also were said to have brought the intelligence and policy communities together in a productive way. Study Group members noted that both of these instances were the result the thoughtful planning by certain individuals, however, and not standard or enduring organizational procedure.

The group also addressed the role of the ambassadors to Delhi and Islamabad in advancing American interests in the region, particularly after the 1998 tests. During the early Bush 2 Administration, for example, one participant remarked that “the tail of events was wagging the dog of the bureaucracy.” Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin, while serving in Pakistan after 9/11, was perceived by one observer as having to spend too much time pitted in competition with her counterpart in India, Ambassador Robert Blackwill, to get the attention of senior decision-makers. Blackwill and his aide, Ashley Tellis, participants agreed, were strong advocates of an improved U.S.-India relationship and made a very strong case to this effect. Indeed, the decision to appoint such powerful bureaucratic players both signaled and in turn strengthened the growing bond between the United States and India in recent years. The competition of ambassadors for attention in Washington both reflects the relative scarcity of interest in these countries as well as a failure to engage in efforts based on a genuine strategic consensus.

2. The Quality of Intelligence

What kind of intelligence or information did U.S. policymakers have available to them at different stages of the development of nuclear programs in each case? With some notable exceptions, the quality of technical intelligence on India and Pakistan in 1998 was considered to be above average. Some Members of the Study Group recalled the quality of technical intelligence in India and Pakistan at the time of testing in 1998 as “excellent” compared with the level of information on Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. One participant noted that the United States had “a much better handle . . . on Indian and Pakistani nuclear and missile programs than each of the two had against each other.” The conventional wisdom about South Asia posits the 1998 nuclear tests as the sine qua non of the overall failure of intelligence to track and predict nuclear events in the region accurately, notwithstanding intelligence reports which had been tracking nuclear advancements in India and Pakistan for decades.

With respect to the tests specifically, participants variously acknowledged that:

1. Some US officials dismissed BJP statements about pursuing a nuclear deterrent as campaign rhetoric;
2. Most policy makers bought senior-level Indian assurances that testing would not occur;
3. The Intelligence Community gave little weight to a Sikh newsletter in Canada that claimed it had evidence of test preparations; and

India, Pakistan, and American Nuclear Diplomacy

4. Intelligence did not detect most of the physical preparations at the Indian test site at Pokhran.

U.S. intelligence clearly lacked information about the nuclear plans and intentions of the Indian government elected in early 1998. The lesson drawn from this observation was that “in democratic countries we should start making sure we have the human assets in the opposition party early on, long before they get to power.” Most importantly, some participants noted that, while technical intelligence in the region was strong, there was insufficient attention to the domestic political drivers for India’s proliferation behavior. A final problem in the India case was the difficulty, absent reliable information about the intentions of the new leadership, of having to “infer intentions from observables,” which was compared with difficulties faced in the North Korea case.

The group also addressed some apparent blind spots in the U.S. government when it came to India. In particular, one participant noted that “we have a low appreciation for the power of nationalism,” and an intelligence official added that “we need to find ways of better dealing with the affective and emotional sides of . . . issues.” Similarly, in Pakistan, American policymakers failed to grasp the significance on “the streets” in Pakistan of its decisions first to approve (and contract) the sale of F-16 fighters and only later to delay their transfer as part of a punitive policy. This issue, among others, highlighted the concern that the United States may be insufficiently attuned to the effects of demographic and generational change and to the impact of the information and communications revolutions on local public awareness.

One participant noted that while the 1998 Indian tests were clearly an intelligence failure, they were also a policy failure: “there were things out there if we would have been inclined to . . . dig a bit.” At the same time, many members of the group felt that even if the United States had detected the upcoming test, it would not have been able to prevent it: “[T]hey were bound and determined they were going to [test]. They weren’t going to get pushed around. They were going to conduct this test. [T]hey would defy the U.S. and the entire international community if necessary.”

However, many aspects of the domestic context that required human intelligence—such as political dynamics in the new coalition government, public sentiment and the appeal of nationalism which emphasized the “status’ accorded by nuclear weapons among the Indian and Pakistani populace, or the possibility that influential domestic interests might possibly have been encouraged to oppose nuclear programs on grounds of their political and economic costs—were given insufficient weight. Policymakers at times failed to challenge their own decisions and ideas, even when confronted with new intelligence information. Restrictions placed on intelligence may have limited the information available to policymakers and hindered their ability to consider alternative

approaches, even if on the whole it appears that the range of issues that policy-makers thought important rarely exceeded the intelligence that was readily available.

3. The Policy Tool Box

What policy tools and options do policymakers have available and/or consider addressing the potential challenges posed by incipient nuclear programs? Which are selected or rejected? Why? The topic of policy tools was one of great interest among members of the Study Group. A common theme was that “the U.S. ability to use incentives and disincentives flexibly to encourage changes in behavior in South Asia . . . was heavily constrained by certain pieces of legislation.” Sanctions legislation was given particular attention, and participants noted that neither carrots nor sticks had any significant effect.

In terms of sticks, the United States by the late 1990s had become, as one participant put it, “obsessed with sanctions.” Many participants were critical of so-called automatic sanctions—sanctions legislated by Congress that left the President with no option but to implement them. Not only did the sanctions—such as the Nuclear Nonproliferation Act of 1978, the Pressler Amendment of 1985, and the Glenn Amendment of 1994—fail to coerce India and Pakistan into behaving as the United States wished, but they may have actually been provocative. Strobe Talbott suggests this in his book *Engaging India*: “Not only were they [India and Pakistan] undeterred, they tested largely to demonstrate that they rejected American and international admonitions and that they were confident they could survive the consequences.” As one participant summarized, “Automatic sanctions work as a threat, not as an actual tool.” If the targeted states see through the threat, then the sanctions will be meaningless.

Not only are automatic sanctions difficult for a President who is bound by their limitations, but they also can make the job of the intelligence community harder, another participant noted. The sanctions “put the administration in the understandable position of trying to discredit the intelligence information.” Another participant had a different perspective on the impact of automatic sanctions within the U.S. government: “Congress resorts to automatic sanctions legislation out of frustration with an executive branch that has already lied to it so many times that they just get desperate.”

As it happens, one of the most prominent set of sanctions passed—under the Pressler amendment—came about in a very idiosyncratic, as a senior congressional staff member explained. A more stringent bill had been proposed in 1984 by Senator Cranston—a bill that would have cut off aid to Pakistan immediately—and the Pressler bill was offered as an alternative that would “buy time for the administration to address the Pakistanis on the nonproliferation issue.” Instead, the executive branch failed to act decisively in mounting new diplomatic operations. By 1990, nuclear activity in Pakistan

could no longer be easily glossed over, leading to the charade of annual State Department testimony to “certify”, against all available evidence, that Pakistan was not involved in proscribed nuclear activities.

Defenders of sanctions suggested that sanctions can slow down nuclear proliferation. Sanctions could be credited with the 24-year gap between India’s initial testing in 1974 and its full-fledged test at Pokhran in 1997, for example, a reflection of the higher costs and greater difficulties which sanctions impose on states seeking technical advancement. Critics of sanctions, remarked one participant, are frequently members of the executive branch who have been “traumatized by what they see as their failures.”

Carrots also proved less than effective. Residual distrust, left over from the Cold War, has lingered in the relationship between India and the United States, and it seemed for years that there was little that the United States could credibly offer India. In the case of Pakistan, legislative restrictions left the United States with very few carrots, aside from rather ill-conceived effort such as offering the Pakistanis the F-16s that they had already purchased in 1990 that had not yet been delivered. A former official, discussing the negotiations on preventing the Pakistani test, recalled that when presented with this unappealing offer, Pakistani General Wahid snarled, “We choke on your carrots.” In short, neither the carrots nor the sticks offered by the United States to elicit nuclear restraint proved particularly attractive, leaving Indian and Pakistani determination to develop nuclear forces largely intact.

For reasons of geopolitics and national pride, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and associated such agreements represented a form of post-colonial discrimination that did not sit well with the polities of either state. As one participant noted, discussions of the PPT or the CTB were unproductive: “The Indians felt immediately [like] second-class citizens.” Why, India asked, should the door be slammed shut on their right to possess nuclear weapons based on the arbitrary cut-off date of 1967? “Why should India be in the doghouse and China a respected player at the table?” was a typical lament. As Jaswant Singh put it only slightly differently in a *Foreign Affairs* article published in September/October 1997, “If the permanent five’s possession of nuclear weapons increases security, why would India’s possession of nuclear weapons be dangerous? If deterrence works in the west as it so obviously appears to since western nations insist on continuing to possess nuclear weapons, by what reasoning will it not work in India?” As a result of these basic incompatibilities, according to one expert, diplomatic exchanges with Delhi more often than not meant that “We (the U.S) were (always) lecturing; while the Indians were moralizing.”

As a former senior official noted in the Study Group, “I’m of the view that the reason that we were not more successful over the years in actually finding a way to deal with India was because we never answered any of those questions.” Neither the United States

nor India went out of its way to allay fears harboured by the other. The Indians have long expressed the view that issues inherent to their national interest were being dictated to them by an upstart and perhaps even a lesser power. This response, in turn, left Americans with the notion that India was trampling on global regimes that are supported by a wide majority of nations without concern for the potential damage this could do to international stability.

4. The Nature of Discourse

A problematic relationship between the intelligence and policymaking communities involved in South Asia was frequently addressed over the course of the meeting. There was broad consensus that while Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott's frequent gathering of experts was a good example of how the policy and intelligence communities could be brought together, this mechanism was temporary and ad hoc. An important question, raised several times, was whether policymakers have ever been sufficiently attuned to strategic intelligence ("the big picture") in South Asia. One former intelligence official suggested that because "U.S. policymakers have resisted looking at alternative outcomes . . . [and] are not doing a mid- course reality check", the risk of continuing to misjudge the evolving motives and behavior of the two states will continue to be high.

Substantial frustration was expressed that the policy community was never ". . . asking the right questions . . . [and] not going beyond the sort of quotidian next step of its bureaucratic plan to do something that really embraces a long term vision of security." In addition, as another participant noted, the psychology of decision-making plays out when policymakers are confronted with information that directly contradicts their ideas or policies: "The literature says that very, very frequently, they set aside information that increases their level of discomfort with their own decision, and then they . . . cherry-pick . . . what they really want to hear."

A participant highlighted the frustration shared by many intelligence analysts that they seldom have a chance to hear what the policymakers actually do with the intelligence that is produced. During the Kargil Crisis, however, it was noted that intelligence officials were invited to meetings at the State Department, thereby allowing them to get immediate feedback about how the intelligence was received by the policymakers. On the other side, frustration was expressed by a congressional committee staff member that much intelligence was "so sensitive that it might not have gotten to the policymakers who really had to read it." Without exposure to this intelligence—not just the general conclusions but also the facts to back them up—it is difficult for policymakers or members of Congress to cultivate a larger strategic vision.

The Study Group cited the increasingly powerful Indian-American community as a substantial domestic (U.S.) factor affecting policy toward South Asia. One participant

remarked that “Next to the Israelis now. Indian Americans are the most important ethnic lobby in the United States.” In addition, “Indians per capita are the wealthiest minority group we have in this country.” As a domestic political factor, the influence of the Indian-American community may be partially credited with President Clinton’s swift turnaround on India after the tests: his visit to India in March 2000 (not even two years after the tests) signalled the beginning of a strong push by the United States—continuing to this day—to improve relations with an India that is rapidly gaining economic and geopolitical clout on the world stage.

5. Regional Political Dynamics

In a part of the world as charged as South Asia, regional political dynamics inevitably affect the impact and efficacy of U.S. strategies. For one, the sheer differential in power and size between India and Pakistan ensured that India would be the “independent variable” in any strategic equation, leaving Pakistan as the dependent variable. U.S. strategy was designed around this dynamic, with the most effort being spent to woo Delhi. The group pointed out, however, that the United States largely failed to account for India’s broader strategic horizon. As mentioned above, U.S. policymakers did not fully appreciate that China loomed very large in India’s nuclear calculation. American officials typically failed to demonstrate that they understood India’s legitimate concerns about Chinese nuclear assistance to Pakistan. Unable to acknowledge India’s security concerns regarding China, one participant remarked, Washington made matters worse by issuing a statement with the Chinese in 2001 which essentially stated “We’re going to work together to deal with the Indians.”

Another participant added that divisions within the bureaucracy prevented the U.S. intelligence and policy communities from fully appreciating the implications of alternative strategic groupings—for example, groupings including China, Iran, or Southeast Asia. By defining South Asia by the India-Pakistan conflict, the United States may be missing other important relationships and developments in the region. Nonetheless, more recent revisions to this system intended to avoid such narrow regional analysis—such as the grouping of India with PACOM and Pakistan within CENTCOM—may complicate the U.S. reaction in the event of further outbreaks of violence between India and Pakistan.

6. Net Assessment: Success or Failure?

U.S. discourse with India and Pakistan, as well as domestic discourse about the region as it figured in the U.S. strategic calculus, traditionally has been sporadic and relatively

shallow. The level of official attention paid to the region drops routinely absent an immediate crisis demanding a prompt U.S. response. The lack of sustained, high-level engagement has hindered the development of trust in bilateral relationships and undercut U.S. credibility as a broker for peace and military restraint in the region as a whole.

For the Pakistani regime, in particular, U.S. engagement and aid is widely perceived as opportunistic and fleeting, not as building blocks for an enduring relationship or genuine alliance. Attention paid to Pakistan is far too often not about Pakistan's direct concerns but aimed instead at furthering other U.S. interests in the region, such as combating global terrorism. The decision by the U.S. to let the Pakistani government make its own decisions about how to deal with A.Q. Khan and thereby avoid penalizing him too severely for running a global proliferation network is one such bargain, Faustian or otherwise.

The official discourse between the United States and India before the 1998 tests also has been hindered by sporadic engagement, following years of outright isolation during the Cold War when India was perceived as little more than a Soviet puppet state. A number of Study Group participants judged that U.S. policy was in some measure fundamentally flawed, marked by the chronic failure to understand Indian perspectives on a host of topics, its domestic security perceptions in particular. "One of the things I think we tend to miss," remarked a military official, "is the slow accretion of frustration that can occur, the U.S. ignoring . . . Chinese proliferation." Until Delhi's so-called security compulsions were addressed, said one participant, "we were never going to have a meeting of the minds, much less any kind of agreements with them."

The South Asian experience tells us that if we want to shape nuclear weapons-related behavior in the future, we need to anticipate how pertinent countries might evolve over time relative to US interests—that is, to plan policy based in part on the analysis of alternative scenarios about the future. Time after time, South Asian issues have been trumped by competing demands on the attention of American policymakers. Nonproliferation goals in the region, in particular, have been repeatedly subjugated to other priorities, such as driving the Soviets out of Afghanistan, bringing down the Taliban and fighting al Qaeda, and fortifying the U.S.-India bilateral relationship. The regularity with which nonproliferation has been downgraded as a goal in South Asia has instilled a strong message that Washington will not sustain focus on this objective if it does not comport with current conceptions of *realpolitik*.

In South Asia, the United States has traditionally focused on addressing the symptoms of the conflict (i.e., nuclear weapons) rather than the conflict's root cause. However, one participant reminded the group that "the major reason for proliferation is insecurity," and, unfortunately, insecurity has been an enduring feature of the South Asian strategic landscape since 1947. A former senior official noted that, while the

Talbott negotiations concentrated on four nonproliferation benchmarks, a fifth benchmark—resolving the dispute between the two countries—did indeed exist. There was an active debate within the administration about whether this benchmark should be tackled first (as the “trunk of the elephant”) or last (as the “tail of the elephant”). In the end, the challenging task of addressing the underlying security situation in South Asia was set aside in the hope of achieving quick wins on the other benchmarks. Given the many other obligations of the United States around the globe at the time (including Kosovo and Iraq), to say nothing of the Lewinsky scandal at home, this decision might be seen as realistic and understandable. However, in view of the grave threat of a nuclear exchange between the two South Asian enemies, the decision might also be viewed as short-sighted. Throughout the evening’s discussion, it was stressed that, going forward, more U.S. attention would need to go toward preventing the use of nuclear weapons, rather than de-nuclearization, to include stepped-up educational campaigns about the risks of maintaining a deployed nuclear weapons force, the inherent vulnerabilities and uncertainties of command and control, and the high risk of even inadvertent escalation in the event of regional tensions.

A major question raised during the meeting goes to the essence of American policy formulation: “how can we tell when our policies are not aligned with strategic realities?” If, as some participants suggested, the nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998 could not be stopped with the policies the U.S. attempted, was there enough policy momentum and intelligence to allow for the strategic goals of the United States vis-à-vis South Asia to be re-evaluated and adapted accordingly? Should the United States have stepped back and asked, “Are we advancing the ability of the United States to secure its interests and those of its allies with the non-proliferation strategy being employed at different times?” Or is it possible that U.S. policymakers were so fixated on a few specific objectives that they were unable to take into account the two governments’ strategic priorities, tailoring policies accordingly?

Beginning with the success of President Clinton’s visit to India in March 2000—an event that marked a turning point in U.S.-India relations but with barely a mention of the nuclear issues dividing Washington and Delhi – a new strategic vision for India was introduced and has been sustained and even expanded in the Bush administration. The U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement signals a new strategic relationship between the United States and India as well as a turning point in the U.S. approach to global non-proliferation.

Most members of the group generally looked positively on the new level of strategic engagement with South Asia, but, as one former official expressed it, recent agreements heighten concern about the implications of U.S. Indian nuclear cooperation for both regional and global nonproliferation goals. As one expert put it, “I think one of the down-

sides of the India civil nuclear deal is that countries around the world will get the impression that we're a good guy, a friend of the U.S., we can do this and we're not going to pay a cost." Another participant expressed doubt about the direction of India's future: "Our definition in the ten years ahead of what our national interests are may really . . . turn out to be very much at odds with those of India."

In conclusion, the India-Pakistan case raised three important lessons for the intelligence and policy communities. First, the U.S. government needs to drastically improve its ability to understand (through intelligence) and affect (through policy) public opinion on the streets of the countries of South Asia. Second, insecurity is a driver of proliferation, and therefore the U.S. government should work to address the scourge of insecurity as well as the symptom of proliferation. Finally, bringing the intelligence and policy communities together contributes to the development of a coordinated "big picture" strategic framework, but as the failures in South Asia show, it will not guarantee success, particularly in the absence of sustained high-level commitment and engagement.

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With generous support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy has launched this study to identify systemic weaknesses in the way the U.S. government integrates intelligence support, diplomacy, and policy implementation in the management of international security problems. An experienced group of former policymakers and specialists, chaired by Janne Nolan, is drawing lessons from recent historical cases of regional nuclear proliferation. The objective is to produce recommendations for improving the way intelligence informs policy choices to help sustain effective initiatives aimed at achieving desired security outcomes in the 21st century.

The study is examining four cases of governmental efforts to address the rising threat of nuclear proliferation, including North Korea, South Asia (with the study of India and Pakistan combined in one case), Libya and Iran. By examining the relative strengths and weaknesses of U.S. nonproliferation strategies as they applied in these cases, this inquiry will help policy-makers to identify improvements in policy and intelligence processes that may be needed to support successful American initiatives to counter complex regional and global security threats, currently and in the future.

This work was made possible through a grant by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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