

Conflict & Security

Shadow over the Subcontinent

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In May 1998, India officially proclaimed itself a nuclear power by conducting a series of underground tests at Pokharan. The question in the minds of many strategic analysts at the time was whether, as a result of these tests, New Delhi would incur international political and economic costs that would outweigh gains on the domestic front. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, it seems reasonable to argue that the coalition government has been vindicated if its goal was indeed to enhance India's strategic clout with a nuclear arsenal. The tests certainly have not diminished India's influence, and they might even have enhanced it. Indian policymakers, heartened by the Clinton administration's conciliatory stance, will be further encouraged by the attitude of the Bush administration. Secretary of State Colin Powell has acknowledged the "crucial importance of India" to the United States and New Delhi's "potential to keep the peace in the vast Indian Ocean area and its periphery."¹

It is clear, from the Pokharan nuclear tests as well as follow-up measures taken to integrate weapons with delivery systems and command and control capabilities, that India aims to develop its nuclear arsenal into a viable instrument of state power. The Pokharan tests were also the culmination of a decades-long effort to acquire nuclear capability as part of the doctrine of "recessed deterrence," in which nuclear weapons can be rapidly deployed if required.² Persistent Indian defiance in the face of pressure by the United States and other

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developed industrial states to conform with the global non-proliferation regime demonstrates the importance New Delhi attaches to its nuclear program.¹ While India's nuclear tests have exacerbated tensions with Pakistan and China and complicated its nascent relationship with East and Southeast Asia, they have also enhanced India's negotiating power with the United States.

At the outset, it may be noted that both the structure of and rationale for India's nuclear weapons program distinguish India from other developing states aspiring to acquire nuclear weapons. One characteristic feature of these states has been the conspicuous role played by the military establishment. Many of these states are more concerned with obtaining nuclear status within the international community than acquiring a viable military instrument. India was also unique in the degree of restraint it exercised following its initial nuclear test in 1974. Despite the need for further experimentation, India refrained from doing so until 1998, when it staged the Pokharan tests. This hiatus was due, in part, to the marginal role of the Indian military establishment in policymaking.²

The Nuclear Rationale. An examination of India's security environment suggests possible grounds for developing nuclear weapons to address regional security concerns. New Delhi promoted its nuclear weapons program in response to factors such as the rise of Chinese economic and military capabilities, the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missile systems in the region, and general uncertainty over the post-Cold War regional security environment.³

India was particularly worried by the perceived security threat from China and

Pakistan. China and India have competed with each other for influence at the regional level. India's nuclear weapons program was initiated, at least in part, as a response to the Sino-Indian war of 1962—in which India suffered territorial losses—and China's own successful nuclear test of 1964. China accuses India of striving for regional hegemony and provides diplomatic and military support to Pakistan. In recent years, developments such as expanding Chinese influence in Myanmar, the deployment of Chinese naval forces to the Indian Ocean, and revelations of China's assistance to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program have heightened Indian concerns. It is in this context that, immediately prior to the Pokharan tests, Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes described China as the "major threat" to his country.⁴

Despite the absence of a long-term Indian strategy to counter Chinese influence, India has undertaken a number of measures with the Chinese threat in mind. Development of the nuclear-capable Agni II intermediate-range ballistic missile, first successfully tested in April 1999, was explained by Brahma Chellaney of India's National Security Advisory Board as the "missing link" in India's nuclear deterrent against China, providing it with "the ability to strike the Chinese heartland."⁵ The very fact that a second test of the Agni II (which has a range of 2,500 kilometers and can carry a one-ton nuclear warhead) coincided with the visit of the Chinese Premier Li Peng to India in January 2000 emphasizes India's need for self-assertion. As the *Times of India* phrased it: "The timing [of the missile test] may be purely coincidental, though it may also send a message to Beijing which refers to India as a 'major nation' in the South

Asia region, while China considers itself to be a global power."¹¹

India's relationship with Pakistan, though less asymmetrical than that with China, is no less worrisome. The ongoing territorial dispute over Kashmir and Pakistani support for insurgent movements within India are fueling a rivalry between the two threshold nuclear powers. It is noteworthy that the Pokharan tests were preceded by warnings to Pakistan to "roll back its anti-India policy, especially with regard to Kashmir" and were quickly followed by the declaration of a "proactive" Kashmir policy that was targeted specifically at Pakistan.¹²

India's Nuclear Doctrine. While it is not clear what nuclear developmental path India will ultimately pursue, current plans call for the establishment of a "Minimum Nuclear Deterrent" (MND).¹³ This entails a "triad" of air-, sea-, and land-based launch platforms along the lines of the model provided by the nuclear superpowers. This is considered necessary for India's objective of developing a second-strike capable nuclear force.¹⁴ To this end, India has devoted considerable resources to the development of ballistic missiles, such as the *Agni* noted above. India is also negotiating the purchase of a number of *Mirage 2000D* strike aircraft from France to serve as delivery platforms.¹⁵ India recently claimed to be capable of producing neutron bombs.¹⁶ Since at least 1997, India has also been exploring command and control systems for nuclear weapons.¹⁷

The actual utility of India's emergent nuclear arsenal is a separate consideration. Significant differences of opinion on questions related to the development of a nuclear capability and nuclear doc-

trine exist within the Indian policy community. These center around the issues of the size and structure of the nuclear arsenal, the level of alertness to be maintained, and participation in multilateral arms control arrangements such as the Conventional Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty. It is possible to distinguish between "moderates" and "hard-liners" on these issues. The former support the development of a limited nuclear deterrent sufficient to counter China and Pakistan, while the latter argue for the eventual development of a global capability that will enable India to strike at targets in the United States. Moderates envision a potential arsenal of sixty to 150 weapons, as opposed to the figure of upwards of 350 to 400 advocated by the hard-liners.¹⁸

For the present, India maintains a "no first-use" doctrine.¹⁹ Furthermore, India has proclaimed that it intends to conduct no further tests and will be satisfied with a limited nuclear arsenal for deterrence purposes.²⁰ However, it now seems clear that India has thrown off all pretensions and has started to assert its nuclear capability in the open. Indian Atomic Energy Commission Chairman R. Chidambaram told a meeting of scientists at the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC) that "India is now a nuclear weapon state... [The] completely successful nuclear weapon tests at Pokharan on May 11 and 13, 1998... gave us the capability to design and fabricate weapons ranging from low yield to around 200 kilotons." After taking office, the Indian Chief of Army Staff General S. Padmanabhan remarked that it is his responsibility to "fine tune" India's nuclear strategy, doctrine, and tactics. According to Padmanabhan, "India's military is finally realizing the urgency to place firm

nuclear weapon controls in place." However, there remain considerable uncertainties in India's nuclear posture over key issues such as employment strategy and the escalation dynamics of a pre-emptive strike.³²

Limits and Costs of Nuclear Ambition.

India's emergence as a nuclear power has led to increased concern over the proliferation of nuclear weapons and greater recognition of India's importance within the Asia-Pacific security environment.³³ Efforts to develop an extra-regional nuclear capability constitute a potentially destabilizing factor in the Asia-Pacific region, and fuel concerns about a South Asian nuclear arms race. Contrary to the claims of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, doubts remain as to the true extent of India's nuclear capabilities. There have been reports that the 1998 tests involved weapon "devices," not fully-assembled operational weapon systems. There is uncertainty as to whether India has indeed acquired thermonuclear capabilities; the device supposedly tested in 1998 was a boosted fission device that did not achieve a thermonuclear burn. India does not appear to have the necessary infrastructure to conduct a sub-critical test. All that the country has managed to construct is an inertial confinement facility with one laser, which is not sufficient for producing the high temperature required for the purposes of conducting a sub-critical test. Nor can it afford to spend the \$6 billion or so required to build one. The nuclear tests also did not generate enough data to facilitate computer simulation exercises as claimed, and thus may not have been sufficient to ensure a workable nuclear deterrent.

India's nuclear status carries large human and economic costs. For India to obtain second-strike capability, a reallocation of budgetary funds at the expense of other desperately-needed social programs is required. Environmentalist Darryl Monte argues that, "to brandish nuclear weapons and missiles [in India] smacks of self-delusion of the worst kind."³⁴ Similarly, critics question whether going nuclear is the best way to realize India's stated objective of a more equitable world order. To quote Professor Amartya Sen, India's Nobel laureate in economics, "Resenting the obtuseness of the established nuclear powers is not a good ground for shooting oneself in the foot." He argues that "abstinence in making and deploying nuclear weapons strengthens rather than weakens India's voice." Sen adds that "to demand that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty be redefined to include a dated program of de-nuclearisation may well be among the discussible alternatives. But making nuclear bombs, not to mention deploying them, and spending scarce resources on missiles and what is euphemistically called 'delivery,' can hardly be seen as sensible policy."³⁵

Here to Stay. Ultimately, India may find its nuclear ambitions constrained more by economic realities than by external actors. With an estimated total price tag of \$176 billion at current prices, India may be unable to afford an arsenal of 350 to 400 weapons.³⁶ At the same time, India has demonstrated its capacity to weather U.S.-led economic sanctions and suspension of foreign aid. According to the Indian Foreign Office, "Many of the legislated sanctions in the United States pertain to the export of dual-use

The absence of fully institutionalized doctrines and the uncertain command structures add considerably to the strategic volatility of South Asia.

technology, most of which is denied to India in any case."³³ Nonetheless, India has sought to minimize the negative impact of its nuclear program on its relations with the United States. It appears that India hopes to receive acknowledgement of its nuclear status by convincing the major powers of its intention to not conduct any further nuclear tests and to only use nuclear weapons defensively.³⁴

Pakistan's response to India's nuclear program is predictably negative. Former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif laid on India "the responsibility for delivering a death blow to efforts at global non-proliferation."³⁵ He further indicated that Pakistan would take steps to "contend with new realities, heightened dangers, and an imminent threat to our security."³⁶ This was manifested in Pakistan's own nuclear tests shortly thereafter. The successor Pakistani military regime under General Pervez Musharraf maintains the same hostile stance towards India. With three wars since independence in 1947 and ongoing conflict in Kashmir, new offensives between India and Pakistan involving nuclear weapons have become real cause for concern.

The international community remains wary of the low nuclear threshold in the region. Additionally, Pakistan faces the danger of becoming a "failed state" in the pursuit of nuclear symmetry with India. The absence of fully institutionalized doctrines and the uncertain command structures add considerably to the strate-

gic volatility of South Asia, making the region a dangerous flash point.

While nuclear weapons and missiles are now a part of regional reality in South Asia, they need not be combined. The genuine security concerns of India and Pakistan can be met without overt deployment. Having carried out the tests, India need no longer have security worries about signing the CTBT. Washington and the international community should work to ensure that non-negotiable ultimatums by India and Pakistan be replaced by a genuine effort to understand each other's concerns regarding national security, regional proliferation, and global disarmament. Only such efforts can pull South Asia back from the nuclear brink.

India's security policy continues to be officially described as "defensive deterrence" or "reactive defense." But if India is to gain international acceptance of its nuclear status, signing the CTBT will boost India's credibility abroad and put a major arms control treaty back on track. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has told Europe's political leaders that a nuclear India can be a vital player, not a troublemaker, in the global power balance. The country's nuclear capability is geared toward building a multipolar world. To this end, India has sought U.S. recognition of New Delhi's strategic vision, an act that could make New Delhi more receptive to U.S. diplo-

matic efforts to stabilize the volatile strategic situation in South Asia.

India has considered signing the CTBT by raising it in the Parliament as part of an effort to build national consensus. During his meeting with former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Warsaw in June 2000, Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh reiterated India's "obligation" to obtain "political consensus" on the CTBT issue and assured her that India will be "moving toward it now."¹¹ Considering the European Union's (EU) criticism of India's nuclear tests two years ago, it is significant that the EU-India Joint Declaration on sensitive nuclear-related issues states that the "EU welcomes India's current vol-

untary nuclear moratorium on nuclear explosive testing and its willingness to move towards a *de jure* formalisation of this obligation of the CTBT."

For the United States, dealing with the nuclear aspirations of India is a major challenge. The United States needs to address its non-proliferation concerns, which would be to ensure that both India and Pakistan accept a moratorium on producing and testing nuclear weapons, make them agree to a verifiable and transparent monitoring system, and end clandestine technology transfers. Achieving these results will pose a severe test for the Bush administration, which has pledged to "deal more wisely with the world's largest democracy, soon to be the most populous country in the world."¹²

NOTE 5

1 "India 'of crucial importance'," *The Bangkok Post* 29 January 2001: 12.

2 M. Eshan Ahnari, "Growing Strong: The Nuclear Genie in South Asia," *Security Dialogue* 30.4 (1999): 436.

3 Samir K. Sen, "He Who Rides a Tiger: The Rationale of India's Nuclear Tests," *Comparative Society* 18.2 (1999): 131.

4 Sen 132.

5 Address of Jaswant Singh, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, United Nations Headquarters, New York. Reprinted in *The Indian Express* 10 June 1998.

6 Ahnari 436.

7 Sadanand Dhume and Prmit Mitra, "Show of Strength," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 162.18 (22 April 1999): 16.

8 "Standing up to China," *The Bangkok Post* 29 January 2001: 10.

9 Ahmed Rashid and Shiraz Sidha, "Might and Menace," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 161.23 (4 June 1998): 28, and Napan Chanda et al., "The Race Is On," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 161.24 (11 June 1998): 21.

10 The Indian government is yet to formalize a competent command and control structure for its nuclear arsenal. "Overall ignorance" of nuclear issues underscored by "bureaucratic battles" between the bureaucracy, scientific establishment, and the military had so far prevented a "clear out-encasement" of nuclear command authority. "India's nuclear progress remains on paper, official rhetoric." Rahul

Bedi, *The Asian Age* 8 November 2000: 3.

11 Sadanand Dhume, "Choosing the Target," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 162.37 (26 September 1999): 30.

12 Rahul Bedi, "Indian Ties With France Will Soar With Missile Buy," *Jour's Defence Weekly* 32.9 (6 September 1999): 13.

13 Rahul Bedi, "Risks Claim Bardfield Nuclear Capability," *Jour's Defence Weekly* 32.9 (1 September 1999): 5.

14 Sen 133.

15 Dhume 30.

16 Bedi, "Risks Claim Bardfield Nuclear Capability," 5.

17 Sen 134.

18 Sen 134.

19 See Kusuma Smitiyongse, "Geopolitics and Security in Southeast Asia and the Challenges of Globalisation," presented to the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Thirtieth Anniversary Conference, Singapore, 30 July to 25 August, 2000.

20 Daniel D. Monte, "After the Hangover," *The Indian Express* 30 May 1998.

21 *The Times of India* 13 August 2000.

22 Dhume 30.

23 *The Indian Express* 13 May 1998.

24 Rashid and Sidha 28.

25 *The Indian Express* 14 May 1998.

26 Quoted in Rashid and Sidha 27.

27 *The Indian Express* 28 June 2000.

28 "India 'of crucial importance'," *The Bangkok Post* 29 January 2001: 12.

bind me up, tie me down

Order,
U.S. Power,
& World Institutions

The *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* has the good fortune of residing in a tiny office amidst some of the biggest minds in international relations. One such neighbor, the highly creative thinker G. John Ikenberry, took the time to speak with the *Journal* about some of the major themes of his most recent book, *After Victory*, the status of security in Asia, and emerging threats to the *Pax Americana*.

G. John Ikenberry is Professor of Government and International Affairs at Georgetown University and a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. He is also author of *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

***** In *After Victory*, you write of victorious nations in hegemonic competition changing the international system to perpetuate their predominant positions. What do you think is the most remarkable way in which the United States is attempting to do this after the Cold War?

***** I think the United States is continuing to pursue the same kind of strategy it did during the Cold War and even before the Cold War. It is attempting to build an international environment that reflects its values and supports its interests. At the end of

attempted to create after successfully defeating their rivals?

***** What sets the United States apart from other great powers is its use of institutions to build order after World War II. This differs from most great powers after wars. There is something really quite remarkable about the way that, between 1944 and 1952, the United States went about building order through multilateral, bilateral, global, regional, security, political, and economic institutions. Examples include the United Nations (UN), NATO, the

Institutions have both expanded U.S. influence and made U.S. power less worrisome to other states, and this is unique in history.

World War II, this involved establishing cooperative security pacts with other countries, building international institutions to facilitate joint management of economic and political problems, and promoting in various ways the transformation of national regimes towards liberal democratic systems. After the Cold War, the United States followed the same game plan by offering support for regional trade agreements such as APEC and NAFTA, and advocating NATO enlargement and the creation of the WTO. The United States continues to use its clout, this time somewhat less enthusiastically and with perhaps less domestic support, to build a framework of liberal democratic cooperation after the Cold War.

***** How is the current U.S.-led order different from the post-conflict orders that other great powers in history

GATT, and others that have sprung up more recently, such as NAFTA. Ultimately, institutions have both expanded U.S. influence and made U.S. power less worrisome to other states, and this is unique in history.

This is where you might interject with, "Professor Ikenberry, 'Why does the United States do things differently?'" In the U.S. tradition, domestic institutions are created based on constitutional principles. As a republican political tradition, these institutions are seen to integrate peoples, regulate conflict, and divide and limit power. The United States has externalized these ideas into the world at large. At the heart of the U.S. secret to order-building is its democratic tradition. This provides the basis for its democratic institutions to secure credible commitments and restraints, which in turn allow its institutionalized order to operate.

***** You say the international order that the United States is trying to create is fundamentally benign and suggest that it is a relatively successful endeavor, but there appears to be increasing dissatisfaction over U.S. domination in India, China, Russia, and, as some argue, Europe. Do you think that such developments represent deep underlying suspicions that other nations have about the intentions behind U.S. institution-building?

***** Yes, I agree that they do. Today, one can see examples of backlash against U.S. power, and it is not surprising given the extraordinary asymmetry of power in security, economic, political, technological, and even cultural areas. This is something that is worrisome and is a development that U.S. policymakers should care about. In my view, U.S. policymakers should look back to the 1940s on how to pursue U.S. foreign policy goals in ways that can overcome some of these worries and strategic dilemmas that emerge from radical asymmetries of power.

***** What steps do you suggest the United States take to face such backlashes?

***** Well, in addition to paying the UN its dues, I think the United States should step up and sign the array of international agreements and conventions that are out there. If not sign them as they are currently written, the United States should attempt to constructively rewrite them in a way that will allow it to sign on the dotted line—whether it is the Landmines Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, or perhaps even the Statute of the International Criminal Court. While one can debate the specifics of each of these agreements,

I argue that there are larger world order issues at stake in how the United States thinks about international agreements and rules. My message is that building a rule-based order is allowing the United States to stabilize world politics, preserve U.S. influence, and prevent what would be the worst development of all—a strategic backlash that will actively put countries, friend and foe, in a position of trying to undermine the United States by building countervailing coalitions. That is not in our interest. More generally, I do not think it is in the interest of global peace and security. What I am saying is that as the United States debates whether to sign the array of international agreements that have emerged in the post-Cold War era and that will emerge in the future, order and the character of order in international politics should be weighed in the balance.

***** Counter-balancing coalitions aside, what are other major threats that may undermine the current U.S.-dominated order?

***** I think the current global system has utterly no clue about how to deal with major problems of the twenty-first century: population growth, poverty, and environmental catastrophe. More active imagination needs to be devoted to determining how existing institutions can be re-developed and redeployed to deal with these issues. It is very difficult for U.S. foreign policy to really come to grips with those kinds of problems and make them a high priority because they are more hidden and less strategic.

***** Do you see current institutions, as opposed to new initiatives, as the primary tools to deal with the more

hidden, less strategic problems facing the world?

***** I think that what should not change is the search for rule-based institutional cooperation. That logic should remain, even though the issues change. Different states as well as the array of non-governmental actors must be integrated into the various institutional complexes. In that sense it is adaptation, but it does require states to think more creatively about what kind of partnerships they will form.

***** The world order you describe is essentially state- and institution-based. Can this type of order be extended to parts of Asia where institutions are weak, or places in Africa where states are ineffective?

***** Well, that is a challenge. I think that different regions will develop different institutions and governance mechanisms. East Asia does have some examples—ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and APEC are regional prototypes that are potentially quite useful for tackling issues of economic and security regulation and integration. In that sense, we are likely to see in Asia a repeat of the European experience. However, traditions are so different between these areas and the West that non-Western types of institutional arrangements have emerged and will continue to do so.

***** How about areas where states are too feeble to form functioning national institutions or implement domestic policies, much less participate effectively in an institutionalized, rule-based international order?

***** That is a very difficult problem. In parts of the world, the problem is not moving beyond the state, the problem is getting to the state and building legitimate governance within countries. That in itself is a global issue. Through existing multilateral institutions and the foreign policy of major states, state-building needs to be encouraged, and forms of stable, legitimate rule—hopefully democratic—are necessary and are, in a sense, a prerequisite for building order at the regional and international levels. Only then can effective mechanisms for cooperation on economic, security, and social issues develop.

***** How can the United States and the West as a whole avoid charges of cultural imperialism in their attempts at state-building?

***** State-building is not necessarily Western imperialism. Effective governance is something that nations and peoples universally seek and appreciate. I do not think that state-building is where the West is overbearing. When it comes to specific economic and social institutions, that is where we meet the rub and where the West needs to be engaged in a dialogue over governance.

***** With your institution-based world order, there is a need for strong states to lead the move towards order and rule of law. Going back to East Asia, the main U.S. ally in the region, Japan, has been weakening over the past decade, while China, the potential irredentist state, unhappy with the current U.S.-led order, appears to be growing in strength. How can the United States advance its institutional order in this context?

***** The U.S. presence in East Asia through its bilateral alliances with Japan and South Korea continues to be a source of stability. This is something obviously appreciated by U.S. allies, but to some extent, also by those who are not allies. There are alternatives to U.S. security leadership in East Asia that will not necessarily be outcomes that any state will favor—the re-ignition of security dilemmas, arms races, and unstable politics. It seems to me that the real key is to adapt the current system and to try to build more cooperative security beyond the alliances. That will take a lot of time. In the final analysis, I think it

threats, while others present opportunities. However, emerging threats will not be addressed and opportunities will not be realized without U.S. leadership. Furthermore, U.S. goals will never be achieved without effective partnerships with other states and groups. The good news is that the United States does have practices and instincts in favor of partnerships; these need to be encouraged and even institutionalized.

***** Finally, when people talk about international organizations, images of resentment arise—Seattle, Washington, DC, and more recently,

Democratic accountability is the insurance policy for the legitimacy of institutions.

will take political change in China before one can imagine a more stable, cooperative, integrated security order. In the meantime, the balancing effect that the hegemonic role of the United States creates should be maintained.

***** Against the backdrop of the current state- and institution-based world order, there is also the rise of what Thomas Friedman calls “super-empowered individuals”—the George Soros and Osama bin Ladens—NGOs, and international criminal organizations that operate outside of the realm of states and institutions. How can the current liberal institutional world order address the challenges such actors bring?

***** It seems to me that the basic principle is that new issues and actors constantly emerge. Some present

Porto Alegre-Davos. There are many who are unhappy with the lack of accountability, transparency, democratic due process, and consideration for the interests of the underprivileged in international organizations that constitute the institutionalized world order you envision. How can international institutions respond to such criticisms?

***** There is no question that the United States needs to think about how institutions that have worked so well over fifty years can be opened to new actors and issues. The principle that can guide the search for new mechanisms is that of democratic accountability and community, which resonate deeply within our own political tradition. Democratic accountability is the insurance policy for the legitimacy of institutions. Institutions need to

reflect underlying values and interests.	exercised that stabilize world politics.
Democratic community can provide	Democracy is the watchword for devel-
shared faith and expectations about	oping today's institutions for tomor-
how decisions are made and power is	row's problems.