

Learning to Think the Unthinkable: Lessons from India's Nuclear Tests

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In 1974 India conducted its first nuclear blast at Pokhran in the Thar Desert, a so-called “Peaceful Nuclear Explosion,” sometimes referred to as Pokhran I. This event motivated the United States and the international community to promulgate several regimes to retard India’s weapons development program and to limit further horizontal proliferation.¹ India again startled the world in May 1998 when it renewed testing at Pokhran. New Delhi’s dismantling of an established nuclear status quo discomfited nonproliferation proponents as they anxiously awaited Islamabad’s response.² Oddly, the 1998 blasts were nearly universally characterized as “unexpected.” Yet what is so surprising about New Delhi’s 1998 blasts is that they were indeed so surprising.

Since 1974, nearly every prime minister came under pressure from the so-called “strategic enclave” to resume testing.³ Such episodes are known to have occurred in 1982–83 under Indira Gandhi, in 1995 under P. V. Narasimha Rao, and in 1996 under the 12-day government of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. In 1997, Prime Minister I. K. Gujral too came under pressure from the scientists within the strategic enclave to test. In no case did New Delhi actually test. In several instances, the United States came to know either contemporaneously with the Indian deliberations or relatively soon after the decision had been aborted.

In this essay, I mobilize an argument that has been advanced by writers such as Ashley Tellis and George Perkovich. Because this argumentation is fundamental to this essay, I will detail its components at length here. First, due to inadequacies in the 1974 test, the scientists and others within the strategic enclave increasingly sought approval from the government to resume testing. Until 1998, these entreaties

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were ultimately declined by the civilian leadership – despite several bouts of high degrees of readiness for resumed testing that were often (but not always) observed by the United States. In 1998, the BJP returned to power and fulfilled its often stated intent to resume nuclear tests. Therefore, the 1998 blasts at Pokhran should have been at best a tactical – not strategic – surprise.⁴

A second element of this argument holds that within segments of India's scientific community and within India's policy-making bodies, the understanding of the costs and benefits of testing and not testing were shifting throughout the 1990s. This essay accepts the evidence in the literature that suggests the 1974 tests were inadequate to confer upon India a robust nuclear deterrent. While the 1974 tests bequeathed to India a "proof of concept" status, the results were inadequate for weaponization.⁵ This standing was adequate for India's political leadership, who perceived no compelling reason to resume testing provided that the option to test could be exercised in the future. It is important to understand that many within India's scientific and political communities believed that possessing a robust nuclear capability was required for India to be taken seriously in the international community and possibly even a means by which India could attain a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Thus the foreclosure of this option was not acceptable given India's great power aspirations and the centrality of nuclear capabilities to that objective.⁶ Nonetheless, as long as this option was available there was no compelling reason to test. Further, because the costs that would be imposed by the nonproliferation tools that were instituted after 1974 would be high, the *costs of testing* outweighed the *opportunity costs of not testing*. This condition held throughout the 1980s and much of the 1990s.

Third, this essay accepts Tellis' contentions that by the mid-1990s India's strategic environment and the salience of the nonproliferation regime were changing, when viewed from New Delhi.⁷ The indefinite extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Indian belief that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty would be ratified and implemented as well as a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty suggested to New Delhi a renewed and intensified international resolve to retard its efforts to acquire nuclear capabilities. By the late 1990s, the scientists within the strategic enclave appreciated that in the future it would become increasingly problematical to test in terms of diplomatic and

political as well as economic considerations. Diplomatically and politically, future testing was presumed to be more costly as the global nonproliferation community would be able to isolate India with greater efficacy and unity of purpose. Economically, the impact of future sanctions would be more acute should India's economy continue to expand and become more globally integrated. Arguably, India's economy would be better equipped to deal with sanctions in 1998 than it would at some future point. In other words, the *opportunity costs of not testing* were on the increase. Conversely, the *benefits of not testing* were either static or not increasing with such magnitude as to offset the costs of not testing.

Fourth, with the arrival of the BJP, which was more risk-acceptant than previous governments and which prioritized bequeathing to India a full-fledged nuclear capability, the demands of the strategic enclave and the political leadership coincided, resulting in the May 1998 blasts. Thus, one important empirical question that arises from this analysis is whether or not a Congress-led government in a comparable situation would have decided to resume testing. I would like to introduce the *possibility* that given the numerous perceived structural changes in the nonproliferation world, changes in India's strategic environment, and the evolving discourse in the elite English-based press, it is possible that a non-BJP government would have tested.

Proceeding forward from this point, this essay proffers four main contentions. First, throughout the years following the 1974 test, the United States systematically failed to understand New Delhi's changing cost-benefit calculus with respect to testing, as described above and enumerated within. This was partly due to the increasing US confidence in the efficacy of the extant nonproliferation instruments (e.g. treaties, sanctions, and regimes to deny and retard acquisition of nuclear weapons and their delivery means) and partly due to an overestimation of the utility New Delhi assigned to the varied US engagements.

Second, even if it had been possible to ascertain these shifting perceptions within the Indian strategic establishment, there is little the United States could have done to dissuade India. This is because the US nonproliferation agenda with respect to India was never undiluted; rather, the United States pursued several objectives in its dealings with New Delhi and other regional actors, and India-specific nonproliferation concerns frequently were subordinated or even sublimated to other policy goals.⁸

Third, the one thing that the United States could have done was precisely what it made no effort towards: despite the looming possibility of tests, the United States never considered – much less formulated – a contingency plan to govern engagement with New Delhi should India resume testing. There were neither advance preparations undertaken to guide interactions with Pakistan following an Indian blast nor efforts to develop and pre-position a set of diplomatic tools that could be mobilized to reassure Islamabad and to obviate any Pakistani compulsion for reciprocal tests.

Fourth, this lacuna of policy instruments persists to date despite the potential that at some point in the future India may again feel compelled to test in order to acquire a reliable thermonuclear device. As I explain further in this essay, India's current commitment to a unilateral moratorium on future testing should not preclude such preparations. Moreover, these apprehensions about India are in addition to increasingly imminent concerns about North Korean and Iranian nuclear aspirations and intentions.

After rehearsing a brief history of the 1974 test, this paper exposts why the United States did not apprehend India's increasing interest in resumed testing. This is done by examining the above-noted instances where India weighed the decision to resume testing. Next, evidence is marshaled to buttress the argument that had the United States known of India's intentions, there was little it could have done to dissuade India. Fourth, the article posits some of the things that *could* have been done to formulate an engagement plan in the aftermath of resumed testing. Finally, it concludes with a synthesis of the various lessons learned from this history of US–Indian nuclear relations.

The 1974 “Peaceful Nuclear Explosion” and the Global Response

Despite India's vociferous advocacy of global disarmament under Nehru's leadership, several significant events in the 1960s made it increasingly likely that India would pursue a nuclear weapons capability: China's defeat of India in a 1962 territorial war, China's 1964 nuclear test, the 1965 war with Pakistan, and China's discomfiting support of Pakistan in that conflict.

Declassified documents from the US Department of State indicate that throughout the 1960s, foreign policy analysts considered India likely to develop a nuclear weapons capability and began exploring

ways to prevent India from doing so. As early as 1961, embassies were directed to begin collecting information on India's inclinations both towards its civilian nuclear energy program and a putative nuclear weapons capability. In 1966, Washington sent a cable to the US embassy in New Delhi stating that "Although there is no evidence that India has decided to develop nuclear weapons, a nuclear device could probably be ready for testing within a year following such a decision."⁹ In the aftermath of the Chinese test, several options were followed to dissuade India from pursuing a nuclear weapons program, including: cooperation in peaceful areas of nuclear energy, sharing intelligence about Chinese nuclear tests, and flirtations with security guarantees against Chinese nuclear aggression.¹⁰

Taking the above evidence at face value, it appears that throughout the 1960s the United States knew that India had both the capability and motivation to test. However, throughout the decade, US opposition to the Indian program was not coherent. In the early 1960s, New Delhi's discord with China made India an attractive collaborator to contain China. Consequently, the US exerted brief and limited efforts to improve relations with India. After 1965, South Asia once again became less salient to US interests. It is also useful to note that from the 1950s onward, Pakistan was allied to the United States through two military alliances (the Central Treaty Organization, CENTO, or the Baghdad Pact) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). In addition, by the late 1970s, many within India believed that Pakistan was very near to acquiring a nuclear capability. However, these concerns about Pakistan began to arise in the early and mid-1970s and no doubt exacerbated New Delhi's security perceptions. *Despite the expectation that India had the capability and growing interest in testing, India's 1974 test at Pokhran still took many in the United States and beyond by surprise.*¹¹

By the early 1970s, several global nonproliferation efforts were well underway. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty came into force in 1970. The Zangger Committee came to fruition in 1971 and was intended to comprise a separate mechanism to handle nuclear exports. The Zangger Committee came out of the early efforts of major nuclear suppliers to arrive at consistent understanding on how Article III.2 of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty should be implemented. Following India's 1974 tests, this committee issued a list detailing specific items that trigger safeguards. It also sought to provide operable

guidelines to govern export of such items to non-Nuclear Weapons States (e.g. those states that are not signatories to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty).¹²

While these regimes were underway before 1974, Pokhran I derailed these multilateral efforts. The Nuclear Suppliers' Group, for instance, was formed specifically in response to India's 1974 test, which convinced many observers that while nuclear technology had been exported with peaceful intentions, it had been explicitly employed for non-peaceful ends. The Nuclear Suppliers' Group first met in 1975, with a mandate to ensure nuclear cooperation without contributing to nuclear proliferation, and thus sought to alter the conditions of nuclear supply. This group produced a new set of guidelines that built on the work of the Zangger Committee and published this list in 1978.¹³

US Efforts to Engage and Restrain India

Indo-US Engagement: 1974–90

The United States struggled to formulate its own policy toward India following Pokhran I, apart from the various multilateral instruments described above. The US Congress wanted to apply sanctions to India; however, the administration was ambivalent about this option, principally because it took the position that no American materials were used in the 1974 test. This claim was difficult to sustain given the well-established assistance provided by the United States to enable India to acquire its first nuclear power reactor at Tarapur and utility of those materials in the 1974 blast.¹⁴

Within five years of Pokhran I, the United States passed several laws that restricted exports of high-technology goods to countries engaging in proliferation-related activities. Below is given an inventory of the significant US nonproliferation efforts that resulted from the 1974 Pokhran test.

- *The Glenn and Symington Amendments to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*: The Glenn Amendment (adopted in 1977) prohibits aid to countries seeking capabilities to reprocess plutonium from spent reactor fuel and requires aid cessation to any country that attempts to obtain or transfer a nuclear device. These restrictions cannot be waived without an act of Congress. The Symington

Amendment (adopted in 1976) prohibits aid to any non-nuclear weapon state not under the International Atomic Energy safeguards that either tries to import uranium or acquire uranium enrichment capabilities.¹⁵

- *The Nuclear Nonproliferation Act of 1978*: This act established international controls on the transfer and use of materials, technology, and nuclear materials for peaceful uses to prevent proliferation. It called for the establishment of common international sanctions and a framework for international cooperation on peaceful uses of nuclear energy and authorized the US to license the export of nuclear fuel to those countries adhering to nonproliferation policies.¹⁶
- *The Arms Export Control Act of 1979*: This authorizes the US to make military exports, sales, loans, transfers, and grants to other countries and determines their eligibility for such programs and requires that these actions accord with other policy concerns (e.g. nonproliferation). The president may unilaterally waive any or all of the restrictions he determines and reports to Congress that they are detrimental to national security.¹⁷
- *The Export Administration Act of 1979*: This act authorized all commercial exports, loans, sales, transfers, and grants to other countries, coordinated these actions with other policy concerns (e.g. nonproliferation) and set forth the eligibility requirements for recipients.¹⁸

In some sense perhaps, there were few immediate consequences faced by New Delhi as a result of the 1974 test since these pieces of legislation were enacted after Pokhran I. However, in the years following, a global sea-change of attitude transpired that gave rise to several regimes (enumerated above) that explicitly aimed to slow the pace of Indian developments and to make acquisition of nuclear capabilities by other states substantially more difficult. These diplomatic tools were intended to impose costs upon India should it again exercise its option to test.

Not surprisingly, India and the United States faced persistent challenges to developing robust bilateral ties since India's independence in

1947.¹⁹ Despite clear sources of difference, the United States made episodic efforts at rapprochement with various degrees of enduring success. One such bout of renewed efforts took place in the 1980s under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and Ronald Reagan. Following the amicable 1982 meeting between Prime Minister Gandhi and President Reagan in Washington, DC, they co-signed the “Science and Technology Initiative,” which paved the way for the “Memorandum of Understanding on Sensitive Technologies, Commodities and Information” signed in 1984 by Rajiv Gandhi.²⁰ While the impacts of these two initiatives were short-lived, they formed an important platform that fostered a series of engagements that came to fruition in the early and mid-1990s.

Indira Gandhi Disappoints the Scientists: 1982–83

Even while the United States and India were trying to forge a new phase in their history of bilateral relations, Indira Gandhi gave permission to scientists working on nuclear technology to conduct further tests. The exact date of this decision is not known, but it is believed that it took place in 1982 or 1983. What is known is that she changed her mind within twenty-four hours and called off the preparations. Unfortunately, none of the surviving parties to the decision have offered any substantive clarification of the historical record.²¹

Indian scientists were motivated to renew testing due to Pakistan’s interest in pursuing a nuclear capability. The scientists also understood that they would have to improve upon the rudimentary weapon tested in 1974 because those familiar with those results knew full well that many of the initial claims about the successes of the 1974 test were unfounded. Additional experiments were required if the scientists and others within the strategic enclave were to provide India with a reliable counterstrike capability.²² Within this enclave was Raja Ramanna, the director of Bhaba Atomic Research Centre, and V. S. Arunachalam, the head of the Defence Research and Development Organization, both of whom were crucial personalities who urged the prime minister to consider resuming nuclear tests. Sometime in late 1982 or early 1983, Ramanna and Arunachalam presented their position to Gandhi.²³ She, along with her top advisers, entertained their arguments for testing. The scientists characterized their interest in doing so as another “experiment” for data collection: They did not cast the renewal of testing as a formal commencement of a nuclear

weapons acquisition program.²⁴ Ramanna and Arunachalam, consistent with their core competencies, made no efforts to exposit the various and potential international and domestic ramifications of such a decision. At the meeting's end, Gandhi tentatively gave her permission for another nuclear test.²⁵ However, within twenty-four hours, Gandhi changed her mind. Her defense minister, R. Venkataraman, was tasked to convey this *volte face* to the pair.²⁶

There is no evidence that this author has garnered that suggests that the United States knew about Gandhi's brief acquiescence to the strategic enclave. Perkovich further notes that not only was her decision unknown to the United States, it was also unknown to all but a few Indian officials. No public record exists about the various deliberations undertaken and none of the surviving persons has offered any insights as to what may have happened and why.²⁷ The then-ambassador, Harry G. Barnes, professes that he was never asked to address the issue at that time. He has also expressed the view that it was very unlikely that the United States would have been able to exert pressure on India during that twenty-four hour period even if it had known of the tentative decision to resume testing.²⁸ Some analysts have speculated that Gandhi aborted the tests fearing US reprisal, given that at that time India was still heavily reliant upon foreign aid and loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The country was also struggling with a dire food shortage and the fiscal consequences of the global oil shortage and concomitant price increases.²⁹ Unfortunately, few sources of data illuminate Gandhi's assessment of the situation and the factors that ultimately guided her decision-making process. However, one high-ranking participant in those deliberations maintained that Gandhi never again entertained a meeting on the subject.³⁰

In light of the revelations of this 1982/83 episode and Washington's apparent ignorance, one may query why it was that Washington remained unaware of New Delhi's considerations. One possibility that I would like to offer is that the United States may have been overly assured that the then-extant round of rapprochement, described briefly above, would *increase the costs of testing* (through forgoing the putative benefits of Indo-US engagement) while *holding constant the benefits of testing*. On balance, US policymakers likely concluded that New Delhi would see testing as less attractive relative to not testing.

In the final analysis, this calculus of the impact of US dissuasion³¹ efforts may have been correct, as Indira Gandhi ultimately retracted authority to test. American confidence that India would not test presumed that India was optimistic about its potential gains from rapprochement with the US. India *was* anxious to diminish its military, economic, and political dependence upon the Soviet Union, which was India's biggest military supplier from the 1960s until its dissolution. India also sought to modernize its economy, expand trade, and acquire high-technology and financial help, all of which could be achieved through US support and assistance.

Politically, India was growing impatient with Moscow over its invasion of Afghanistan. Despite New Delhi's public reticence on this issue in multilateral forums, it was disquieted by Russia's actions that brought the Cold War to India's non-aligned doorstep. Both Indira Gandhi and her son and successor Rajiv Gandhi sought to distance India from the Soviet Union. Further, both Indira and Rajiv Gandhi were personally cool toward Moscow while being warmly disposed toward Washington. Improved relations were pursued even as India, under Indira Gandhi, prepared to conduct further tests in 1982 (or 1983).³²

The Indian motivation to distance itself from Moscow coincided with Washington's own intention to make an "opening" to India, a phrase attributed to mid- and high-level policymakers in Washington.³³ The Reagan administration recognized the changes signaled by New Delhi and acted upon them. The US understood the possibilities of this changing attitude in New Delhi for all three of its major regional foci: (1) containing the Soviets; (2) promoting India's strategic independence from the Soviets, and (3) advancing nuclear nonproliferation objectives.³⁴

As these three aims indicate, US interests toward India were not singularly focused on nonproliferation; rather, nonproliferation interests were subordinated to other strategic concerns. The Reagan administration increasingly emphasized the importance of India to the region as well as the administration's understanding and acceptance of India's position within the non-aligned movement. India, in some ways, benefited from the increased emphasis on other US regional security goals rather than nonproliferation concerns. The administration sought to contextualize nonproliferation within the landscape of other US foreign policy objectives. The willingness of the US to render nonproliferation objectives subsidiary to other foreign policy concerns stands in contrast to India's willingness to endure continued isolation from the

international community to pursue its own nuclear agenda. This willingness of the United States to subordinate its nonproliferation aims to other regional interests suggests that there was also considerable difference in the urgency of US and Indian objectives. In other words, while the United States was comparatively less interested in prosecuting its nonproliferation agenda with respect to India, India *was* increasingly intent on maintaining its nuclear options.

US Engagement and Dissuasion Efforts in the 1990s

During the 1990s, South Asia underwent significant changes in its extended neighborhood. The collapse of the Soviet Union posed a number of challenges to India regarding its longtime weapons supplier and proven source of diplomatic and political support. With its collapse, Central Asia became open and susceptible to the interests of many states in the region, including India, Iran, Pakistan, China, and Russia. The Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan and the United States made its exit from the region as well. Pakistan was a key state from which the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other foreign states staged several interventions in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the immediate years following its withdrawal. As history has shown, this intervention rendered both Afghanistan and Pakistan permanently altered. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan became the source of countless militants who were capable of operating throughout the region – especially in Indian-administered Kashmir following the sanguineous insurgency that erupted there in 1989.

By the end of the 1980s, the 1984 memorandum of understanding proved to be largely defunct, at least to most US observers. This was due in part to the increasing American and international efforts to retard missile proliferation (at least by states other than the US). In 1987 the Missile Technology Control Regime was formed, comprised initially of the United States and members of the G-7 countries (Canada, West Germany, Italy, Japan, France, and the United Kingdom).³⁵ In 1990, the US incorporated Missile Technology Control Regime guidelines into the Arms Export Control Act and Export Administration Act of 1979. This nascent focus on missile proliferation and India's test launches of the *Agni* and *Prithvi* missile systems in 1989, rendered technology-sharing – as envisioned by the 1984 memorandum – particularly difficult.³⁶

Despite disappointment in 1980s, the United States and India continued to see the value of robust bilateral relations and undertook

several initiatives to advance these objectives in the 1990s.³⁷ In the early 1990s, the United States declared India to be an “emerging market” and targeted it for US foreign direct investment and expanded commercial contacts. The Indian defense bureaucracies began to formalize inter-service cooperation in 1991 through the Kicklighter Proposals. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission also wanted to engage India in a nuclear safety dialogue due to, *inter alia*, concerns about the safety of India’s nuclear facilities and because India had developed its nuclear infrastructure isolated from the rest of the world for two decades. Dialogue began in 1994, and lumbered along until April 1998.

In January 1995, William J. Perry was the first American secretary of defense to visit India in seven years. During this trip, he and Indian Minister of Defense Mallikarjun signed the “Agreed Minute on Defense Relations between the United States and India.”³⁸ The Agreed Minute called for a new strategic relationship and specified a tripartite structure within which such relations would develop.³⁹

Another important initiative undertaken to improve ties with New Delhi was the Department of State-launched “Strategic Dialogue” of October 1997, which entailed a series of cabinet-level visits that began in October 1997. Each visit was used to focus on possible areas of cooperation, particularly in various secretaries’ areas of expertise. All of this was in expectation of a visit to India by the secretary of state in November of 1997, to be followed by a presidential visit in 1998. This dialogue persisted up until the weeks before the May 1998 test.

Amid this period of rapprochement, the US Congress enacted new nonproliferation legislation in 1994: the Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act to ensure that the present state of law “reflects growing concerns about nuclear proliferation.”⁴⁰ Much of the 1994 legislation simply re-enacted previous legislation such as the Glenn and Symington Amendment provisions. The only significant difference lay in the fact that the 1994 legislation significantly constrained the US president’s ability to waive sanctions.⁴¹ This was the last significant piece of pertinent legislation passed prior to India’s May 1998 test.

As the foregoing discussion suggests, throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, US objectives with respect to both India and the region were diverse. While missile proliferation became a major concern after 1987 and 1990, nuclear nonproliferation goals were situated within the generic landscape of American foreign policy interests. This signaled

an important asymmetry in the salience of American objectives relative to Indian objectives. Whereas the US was willing to pursue relations broadly in the hope of eventually being in a position to favorably influence India's program, India specifically advanced its nuclear (and missile) program and defended its nuclear option.

However, as Tellis has argued, due to the results of the 1974 test, key elements of the strategic enclave understood that *at some point* India must test again to ensure a credible set of designs. This need became more acute given several developments: (1) the demise of its most important ally, the Soviet Union; (2) the acquisition of nuclear weapons by its nemesis, Pakistan; (3) the new expanding economic and military capabilities of its future rival, China; as well as (4) the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in 1995 and the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1997. Over time, this realization exacerbated the perceived exigencies of resumed testing. In other words, given the perceived need to resume testing, India's changing security environment, and the then seeming strength of the nonproliferation regimes, the opportunity costs of not testing appeared to be on the rise. Simultaneously, the direct and opportunity costs of testing seemed less significant in magnitude.

If one concurs with the logic mapped out above, arguably India's cost-benefit assessment with respect to testing continued to shift despite the positive developments in the Indo-US relationship. India seriously contemplated testing no fewer than three times before May 1998. Data obtained from interviewing US officials and analysts in early 1999 suggest that the United States remained largely confident that the nonproliferation regime made the costs of testing greater than any benefits that would be derived – be they political, diplomatic, or scientific. Further, the various US overtures toward India, from Washington's vantage point, created the illusion that India simply had too much to lose from a resumption of nuclear testing.

As time marched on, the United States remained oblivious to India's rapidly evolving cost-benefit calculus with respect to testing. *From India's perspective*, the permanent renewal of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and possible ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by the US Congress (which at that time seemed a certitude in India) as well as the looming Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty suggested to India that the *opportunity costs* of not testing today may be greater than the economic, political, and diplomatic costs of testing

today.⁴² In other words, key individuals within the strategic enclave and their supporting decisionmakers understood that India would likely have to test again in the future to ensure a reliable deterrent *and* that testing would be more difficult and costly at a later time. Arguably, as long as India perceived that it could resume testing at will, there was no need to redress the inadequacies of the 1974 test results. As the 1990s progressed, the nonproliferation regime ostensibly tightened. It increasingly appeared that “maintaining the option” would be less feasible in the future, absent geometric computational and modeling advances to demonstrate robust deterrent capabilities *en lieu* of nuclear test blasts.

Given that I am essentially making a structural argument for the requirement for additional testing, to what extent was the return of the BJP a critical factor in India’s decision to resume testing? There is little doubt that the BJP was more risk-acceptant than past governments. My argument suggests that there is a possibility that a government *other than* the BJP may have come to a similar conclusion based upon the changing dynamics of India’s cost–benefit calculus with respect to testing *and* given presumed ability of nuclear weapons to confer great-power status upon India.

Whether or not the BJP was the catalytic factor or the single most important factor does not affect my primary concern that the United States did not appear to perceive this major shift in India’s decision-making process and adjust its strategy concordantly. Rather than thinking through the implications of an Indian nuclear test and conceptualizing the kinds of tools that would be needed to mitigate the consequences of such a test with respect to Pakistan and other states, the US increasingly concluded that India remained dissuaded or dissuadable.

Rao, Too, Disappoints the Scientists

In 1995, it came to light that then-prime minister Narasimha Rao had contemplated testing, nearly concurrently with momentous openings of Indo-US relations. By all reports, Prime Minister Rao and his Congress Party were politically fragile by the latter months of 1995, at least in part because Rao and his party became enmeshed in various scandals. Despite impressive economic successes, they were widely seen as dilatory in making much-needed infrastructure upgrades. These varied tensions and strains disposed the Congress Party toward fractiousness.

The Congress Party's main rival for power at the national level was the BJP. The BJP, distinguished by its Hindu nationalist agenda, was willing to forgo some of its Hindu nationalist rhetoric to sell itself as a party for change, anticorruption, and stability. Notably, nuclearization became a serious electoral issue for the BJP as it chastised Rao and Congress for being pusillanimous, and for retarding India's ability to acquire nuclear capabilities and national strength. The BJP contended that if elected it would decisively act to demonstrate India's national strength and scientific capabilities.

Despite the high visibility that the nuclear question enjoyed, the issue of overt nuclearization was not rigorously and analytically situated as an element of national security strategy. It was, in the BJP narrative, merely a symbol to be manipulated for electoral gains. Nonetheless, Rao was under pressure to adopt a strong pro-nuclear posture to co-opt the BJP's pro-weaponization position. This was so at least in part because nuclear testing enjoyed high degrees of support from broad swathes of the public as well as among the various personalities within the strategic enclave and the military. It was in this political context that Narasimha Rao came under pressure to resume nuclear testing.⁴³ These preparations were detected by the United States, which put Rao under considerable strain to retreat from testing. These efforts were successful and brought a brief respite from the specter of resumed nuclear blasts.

The US Department of State became aware of the developments at Pokhran and began using diplomatic channels to persuade India to desist. Amid the flurry of State Department activity and Indian test site preparations, journalist Tim Weiner brought the alleged test preparations to light in the *New York Times*. Weiner wrote that US intelligence satellites detected enhanced activities at the Pokhran test site, suggestive of Indian test preparations.⁴⁴ The state department was concerned about any leakage to the press because it believed that such publicity would make it very difficult for Rao to back down. Ambassador Frank G. Wisner returned to New Delhi only a few hours before the story went to press and impressed upon Rao the difficulties that such a test would cause.⁴⁵

Shortly after the story broke, President Bill Clinton telephoned Narasimha Rao and urged him to desist from testing. Rao gave no firm commitment to either course of action, but US officials were hopeful that he would not press ahead. The coverage of the story in

the Indian press undoubtedly made Rao's decision very difficult. The Indian press clamored for Rao to resist US pressure and argued that a fresh round of tests would make him a national hero with a favorable electoral outlook. The BJP, the papers opined, would never be inhibited by the United States and pushed for him to redress the BJP's demand for acquiring nuclear weapons.⁴⁶

The exit strategy that Rao ostensibly devised was to have his foreign minister, Pranab Mukherjee, categorically deny that India had intended to or prepared for a nuclear test. Washington, according to Perkovich, understood this step in the following way: India probably knew that American intelligence would detect further activity, therefore Mukherjee's statement in all likelihood signaled a genuine decision – as continuing ahead with testing after such a statement would seriously degrade the credibility of the Rao government both at home and abroad.⁴⁷

A reading of this event suggests that US interventions were effective. However, among US analytical circles there appears to have been too little attention paid to the emerging debate about India's nuclear program occasioned by the incident and the winds of political change that were stirring. Within the Indian polity, there appeared to be a rather clear mandate to continue hashing out the issue publicly. Most ominously, the BJP's Jaswant Singh chastised Rao and the Congress by critically asserting that silence, ambiguity and denial were no substitutes for policy. He also lamented the fact that national security was simply not a subject that entertained the attention of either policy-makers or the polity, and articulated the objective to change this when the BJP's turn came to form a government.⁴⁸

The BJP Comes To Power and Attempts Testing in May 1996

As discussed above, in December of 1995, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was preparing the Pokhran test site for further testing as a run-up to the April–May elections of 1996. The main parties contesting the election were the Congress Party, the BJP, and a coalition of parties called the National Front–Left Front Alliance. Both Congress and the coalition front downplayed national security issues and focused on domestic concerns. The BJP carved a very different political niche. While it still claimed to prefer a nuclear-free world, it stated that it would not tolerate a nuclear apartheid regime (e.g. that established by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty). It boldly claimed that it would

re-evaluate India's nuclear policies and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.

During those elections, the BJP won the largest number of seats and was given the opportunity to form a government within fifteen days. Atal Behari Vajpayee was sworn in as prime minister while his party tried to cobble together enough supporters to form a government. One of the first things Vajpayee did as prime minister was to grant key scientists the go-ahead to proceed with nuclear tests. In the end, Vajpayee would also disappoint the scientists of the strategic enclave. Vajpayee understood that should he elect to test and his government could not be formed, the successor government would have to perforce countenance the ensuing consequences. He revoked the decision to test pending the outcome of the vote of confidence. After just twelve days in power, the BJP lost a vote of confidence and the tests did not occur.⁴⁹

Reportedly, US intelligence detected increased activity at the Pokhran site in the spring of 1996. This prompted the Clinton administration to once again urge New Delhi not to test.⁵⁰ However, Perkovich brought to light one serious development that escaped the US intelligence detection: the Indian team emplaced at least one nuclear explosive in a test shaft. Apparently, the scientists had hoped to seize expediently the opportunity to test, and they reportedly were making test preparations even while the BJP was trying to form a government. Unfortunately, data are not available as to how many devices were pre-positioned in the shaft and the technical briefing that may have been given to Vajpayee.⁵¹

Gujral's Tryst with Testing

As has been argued, many in the strategic enclave were coming to understand that their window of opportunity to test was quickly slamming shut.⁵² They reasoned that with the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the emerging Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, testing later rather than sooner would become more costly. The increasing resolve and ostensible effectiveness of the nonproliferation regime suggested that testing in the future would be more difficult diplomatically and economically.⁵³ That is, the costs of maintaining its traditional posture of ambiguity (that is, the opportunity costs of not testing) were increasing relative to the costs of testing.

These concerns became more acute as India anxiously witnessed the missile and nuclear cooperation between Pakistan and China and the lackadaisical response of the United States. Quite apart from these strategic and international concerns, the strategic enclave was coming under threat domestically. Some vocal critics maintained that India's entire nuclear program should be gutted because it used more resources than it merited, given the low return to the public from these outlays. Key scientists lobbied to keep India out of the traps of "technology colonialism" and persisted in their design work on a hydrogen bomb and other experimental weapons. In October 1997, the scientists reportedly prepared nuclear devices for testing and awaited permission from Gujral's government.⁵⁴

Gujral, perhaps unlike his predecessors, had fewer difficulties defying the scientists' demands. Gujral reasoned that India's objectives should primarily focus on raising India's national and global status and testing would be diametrically opposed to those goals. It is not clear at what point the United States came to know of this request emanating from the strategic enclave. In the end, any pressure from the United States would have been superfluous given Gujral's own preferences and considerations.

Analysis of the 1995, 1996, and 1997 Incidents: What Did the United States Learn?

As the above discussion suggests, India's various dalliances with nuclear testing were likely *occasioned* by the exertions of global non-proliferation regimes. One writer argued in 1996 that both the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty likely reinforced India's position against denuclearization and had the potential to *incite* India to break out of the status quo.⁵⁵ Another analyst similarly argued that from India's viewpoint the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty signaled that the nuclear clout of the nuclear weapons states will endure and that the nuclear regime (often called "nuclear apartheid" within India) will continue to deny India what it seeks and deserves. In this way, the author wrote that India came to see the 1999 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty review conference as a door that was about to slam shut on its nuclear option. Prior to these developments, Indian policymakers assumed that that they could ensure national security by maintaining the N-option and simultaneously pursuing global disarmament.⁵⁶ India

understood both the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to have the potential to render this policy obsolete and irrelevant.

By May 1995, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty had been indefinitely extended. On December 12, 1995, the UN General Assembly resolved by consensus that, by its 51st session, the UN Conference on Disarmament should conclude the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to enable opening for signatures. The global nonproliferation regime was closing in on India, and various constituencies advocating the need for further testing were gaining credibility as a result of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. One analyst wrote of this trend-line that "the intensification of international measures against nuclear weapons [had] paradoxically led to the intensification of political support for nuclear weapons within India."⁵⁷ Another writer cites an in *India Today*-MARG poll from December of 1995. While limited in utility, this poll result indicated that a majority of Indians approved of nuclear testing at the time of the survey. Of those that approved, over half favored developing nuclear capabilities despite sanctions, and over half felt that India should not forgo its nuclear option unless all other nations did. Unfortunately, he does not present data for other years to contextualize these findings.⁵⁸

One could conclude from the above narrative that the scientists were the likely force driving the compulsion to test. The 1995 and 1996 test preparations should have telegraphed India's discomfort arising from its perceptions that its nuclear options would not remain available. In 1996, one observer presciently determined that "Any change in the nuclear status quo is likely to be initiated by India, which perceives itself to be under pressure to test before the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty enters into force [in September 1999]."⁵⁹ It appears as if the United States did not take seriously India's conception of a September 1999 deadline. US analysts and officials interviewed by the author acknowledged retrospectively that New Delhi was agitated by the proposed review conference. Nonetheless every interviewee downplayed India's alarm. Efforts taken by the United States to assure India that there was nothing to fear were either insufficient or not credible. The 1995 and 1996 testing episodes should have occasioned US reflection on Indian perceptions of its options and invigorated initiatives to the forging of innovative means to ameliorate India's concerns. There is no evidence that this occurred. Instead, the

US seems to have concluded that India either was dissuaded or remained dissuadable.

The 1998 Tests

In January 1998, the Indian Election Commission declared that the 1998 Lok Sabha elections would be conducted in four phases between February 6 and March 7. During the election, the BJP sought to expand upon its 1996 gains and obtain sufficient seats to form the government on its own. In addition to the usual domestic and political issues that form the mainstay of electoral contests in India, the BJP sought to raise nuclear policy as an issue to distinguish it from the other contenders. On domestic issues, the BJP walked a tight line. To win over moderates who were leery of the BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda, it downplayed the communal dimensions in many forums while simultaneously engaging the Hindu hardliners, who have formed the traditional ballast of BJP political support, in other arenas. This left both domestic and international observers of the BJP uncertain which was the "real" face of the BJP.

Ostensibly, developments in Pakistan were lending greater salience to the BJP's national security agenda. In January, Indian analysts began to appreciate the significance of a US intelligence report on Pakistan's ballistic missile, the Ghauri. Indian analysts were taken off-guard by its putative ability to deliver a nuclear warhead against countervalue targets.⁶⁰ In addition to nuclear and missile developments, internally Pakistan was on a path of Islamic obscurantism that had had consequences for its external policies in Afghanistan and in Indian-administered Kashmir. While India felt as if the global nonproliferation noose was tightening around it, the Brown Amendment, passed in September 1995 appeared instead to reward Pakistan for its proliferation efforts.⁶¹ Further, the nuclear cooperation between China and Pakistan as well as China's own nuclear and missile capabilities created an environment that was highly favorable for testing – *whether Congress or BJP came to power*.

By the conclusion of the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP and its allies won 250 seats – only twenty-two shy of a majority. Given the first opportunity to form a government, the BJP formed a majority coalition and Vajpayee was again sworn in as prime minister on March 19, 1998. While campaigning, at times Vajpayee appeared to backtrack on the BJP's commitment to exercise the nuclear option by explaining

that they would not act rashly and would await the outcome of a strategic defense review. Despite this public face, he met with senior scientist A. P. J. Abdul Kalam days before he was sworn in, and the day after he became prime minister Vajpayee met with another senior scientist, Rajagopala Chidambaram.

While it is not unusual that a new prime minister would have such meetings, given Vajpayee's course of action in 1996 it was not inappropriate to question whether or not Vajpayee was again contemplating testing. Thus, while the public face of Vajpayee was one of "nuclear moderation," behind the scenes he had given the go-ahead to resume testing contingent upon the BJP-led coalition prevailing in the March 28 confidence vote. It did – albeit by a narrow margin. We now know that the decision to test was taken on April 8, 1998, only two days after Pakistan's April 6 successful test-launch of its Ghauri missile.⁶²

Perceptions of the United States

A perusal of the American popular and academic press suggested a strong desire to see the BJP as a more moderate and friendlier version of its old self with a less proactive approach to nuclear issues.⁶³ This desire was abetted by India's own perception management efforts and it was also aided by the confidence that the US had in its latest round of engagement with New Delhi – the aforementioned Strategic Dialogue of 1997. As noted, this engagement was to conclude with a presidential visit in spring 1998 and was supposed to augur a new phase in Indo-US relations.

Consistent with Clinton's belief in the importance of US-Indian relations, on March 20, 1998 (the second day of the BJP administration) Clinton phoned Vajpayee and proposed "a relationship for the 21st century." This likely ensued from the 1997 Strategic Dialogue. Clinton reportedly asked for restraint with respect nuclear testing and explained "my man, Bill Richardson" would come to Delhi to discuss the matter. Richardson asked Vajpayee for a "strategic pause" in testing. Vajpayee reassured Richardson with New Delhi's plan to conduct a "strategic review" and set up a national security council. Vajpayee told Richardson that there was no need for worry, according to US officials.⁶⁴

The Indian Home Minister L. K. Advani similarly cajoled Richardson by explaining that the BJP knew the difference between "campaign

rhetoric and the pragmatic demands of governing.”⁶⁵ Richardson stressed Indian restraint in the face of Pakistan’s provocative test of the medium-range Ghauri missile. Richardson reportedly said privately to Jaswant Singh: “For God’s sake, let’s not do anything to screw up the president’s visit.” Jaswant Singh reassured him that there was no cause for concern.⁶⁶ Regarding this exchange, officials interviewed in the Department of State, Department of Defense, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Department of State all maintained the view that the BJP government deliberately misled the United States.

Consistent with this public–private split on representation of nuclear concerns, on April 10, 1998 Vajpayee formed a three-person task force to begin a comprehensive strategic review – one of his campaign pledges. They were tasked with the evaluation of constituting a National Security Council and with the conduct of a strategic defense review, another electoral promise of the BJP. Observers fretting about a new round of tests took comfort that Vajpayee would not act without a strategic defense review. They were further comforted that in India this sort of process could take years to execute. Thus many believed the official Indian statements and presumed that Vajpayee was trying to create an exit strategy enabling him to move away from the nuclear position of the BJP, consistent with a moderate BJP committed to financially fortifying the Indian state and engaging the international community.

While India’s political and diplomatic misrepresentation misled US policymakers into believing that the nuclear threat had abated, US intelligence provided no countervailing data. Had the intelligence agencies been able to observe heightened activities, the political and diplomatic circles may have been less inclined to take New Delhi’s reassurances at face value. However, as we now know, this was a fairly large intelligence failure – albeit with a number of mitigating factors. For instance, Indian scientists timed their activities to coincide with satellite blind spots and effectively used deception and concealment methods to frustrate US technical surveillance aimed to detect activity at the Pokhran test site. Moreover, because activity at Pokhran had been fairly intense in the period leading up to the decision to resume testing, it was difficult to detect the marginally increased movement at the test site.

The question should be asked as to why the United States was so willing to understand the BJP in terms other than the BJP’s own

history and intent. Arguably, any emergent answers may illuminate US interpretative histories of other aspiring proliferators. Despite a demonstrable interest in testing and concerted willingness to do so, when the BJP came to power again, few actually believed that they would test. As Richard Haass, then-director of foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution, quipped: "Sometimes, people actually do what they say they are going to do."⁶⁷

Could the United States Have Stopped India from Testing?

As the foregoing section argued, India was quickly drawing a number of conclusions. First, the strategic enclave understood that resumed testing was necessary. Second, the scientists and politicians understood that, at least for India, the nonproliferation environment was becoming increasingly difficult and would be more so after the September 1999 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty review conference. This implied that testing *before* 1999 would impose fewer costs on India than testing *after* 1999. Third, India understood from observing the US response to Pakistani and Chinese behavior that US proliferation objectives were not pure and were subject to the vicissitudes of other regional and country-specific aims. These analytical shifts within the strategic enclave were occurring in concert with the developments of the strategic relationship between China and Pakistan and the lack of concern this relationship generated in the US and elsewhere (e.g. 1991 reports that Pakistan acquired M-11 missiles and the 1996 purchase of 5,000 ring magnets).

Given India's fundamental miscalculation that its window to test would be slammed shut in September 1999 and given New Delhi's growing security concerns with respect to its two strategic competitors, the strategic enclave likely adjudged that the opportunity costs of delaying nuclear tests were on the rise.⁶⁸ Though the United States sought to vastly improve US-Indian bilateral ties, it fundamentally failed to recognize that the global nonproliferation regime was creating the perception of opportunity costs to New Delhi's steady decision to defer testing.

Data obtained during 1999 interviews with American officials in the Department of State, Department of Defense, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Department of State illuminates some reasons as to why the United States completely missed these developments. These interlocutors provided

several reasons why the BJP was able to take the United States by surprise. One official from the Department of State clearly understood that this surprise was “tactical, but not strategic.” This individual also recalled that there was a sense that time was running out with respect to India. He further claimed that many US officials within Department of State and Department of Defense understood that India clearly had the capability and many within the United States knew that the Pokhran test site was maintained in a high state of readiness from 1995 – if not earlier.⁶⁹ Judging from above-noted interlocutor’s comments, it appears clear that some US government officials knew that India had the preparations in place and that such preparations were logical signals of intent to resume testing.

However, other individuals within the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of State and Department of Defense explained that no one *believed* that the Indians had an *incentive to test*. Even though India articulated considerable concern about the changes in the global nuclear regime, the United States neither took these concerns seriously nor perceived such apprehensions as motivating a resumption of testing. Several individuals interviewed by the author noted that many within the United States believed that India was already compelled not to test. These persons argued that the United States had simply grown confident of its mix of punitive measures and incentives, particularly in light of the successful US intervention in 1995.

Thus, while agencies in the United States felt that the nuclear issue was not an immediate concern, New Delhi’s other activities attracted considerable attention. Several officials noted that India’s endeavors to develop ballistic missiles were the object of American nonproliferation efforts. These issues were considered more realistic targets of American political and diplomatic resources as India was not perceived as “already compelled” in this arena. India was testing, producing, and deploying missiles. Therefore, these US officials suggested that the missile nonproliferation seemed more pressing than nuclear nonproliferation.

Individuals within the Department of State indicated a sense of extreme confidence in the Strategic Dialogue and the promise of enhanced commercial and economic relations. Such interviewees argued that India was being treated as an up-and-coming power, and that this fulfilled New Delhi’s demands for status. One individual, *still*

unable to understand India's motivations to test well into 1999, declared "Looking back ... we can't figure out why in the hell they would jeopardize all of this that we were promising."⁶⁹

Of course, this view was not shared by New Delhi. New Delhi was not impressed with the potential or future access to US technology, and for this reason enhanced relations with the United States did not seem indispensable to India. Oddly, some subset of well-positioned individuals within Department of State had the misguided belief that the Strategic Dialogue could substitute for technology access. In retrospect, several interviewed officials at Department of State intuited that the BJP may have considered this high-level engagement to be too little and too late.

While all interlocutors expressed concern over the BJP's nuclear posture and explained that "There was never a sense when the BJP came in that we could hold them off from testing. Over time, their policy was clearly to become a nuclear weapons state and to test."⁷⁰ One person within Department of Defense even indicated that they were warned by Richard F. Celeste, US ambassador to India from 1997 to 2001, that there was perhaps a year before India would resume testing. Yet, as described above, the agencies made an effort to downplay the significance of the BJP and testing. They had expectations of how a rational political party would behave and the BJP actively encouraged these expectations through alleged acts of deception. Several interlocutors commented that the fault of the United States was principally in its willingness to believe the BJP.

On all of these accounts, US policymakers missed their mark. An analyst within the Defense Intelligence Agency commented that "there wasn't a stated goal of keeping them from testing. It was part of the overall package. Of course you don't want them to test. It wasn't in the United States' mind that India would test ... People weren't out there making policy to preclude tests. People were more concerned about the missile deployments."⁷¹

However, numerous individuals interviewed by the author in 1999 maintained that even if the United States *expected* the BJP to test and *attempted* to dissuade it from testing, it would not have been successful. It was their view that the United States simply had too little leverage over New Delhi and too few instruments of effective suasion at its disposal. One of these interlocutors was a well-placed diplomat with the benefit of many years working in South Asia. This person

contended that India's desire to test was fundamentally strategic and the United States could never ameliorate these perceptions. This person asked rhetorically in 1999 whether the United States would have preferred an India with nuclear weapons or an India with a seat on the UN Security Council.

Second, this person argued that other US strategic interests would have precluded Washington from addressing India's fundamental strategic concerns. Would the United States have been willing to oppose more robustly Chinese assistance to Pakistan's nuclear program to allay Indian fears? Would the United States have been willing to hold China more responsible for the security environment in the South Asian subcontinent? The United States did not seem remotely interested in showing a genuine willingness to dismantle its own nuclear arsenal, which would have gone far to address India's historic and credible counter-proliferation policy positions. This interviewee did not believe that the US needed to do anything with the arsenal, but simply should have been talking about such intentions. Finally, this same official pointedly commented that the United States really has not justified why nuclear weapons are necessary for US security but not for Indian security. In other words, the United States could not marshal any legitimizing rationale for a regime that India has historically called "nuclear apartheid."

Post-Nuclear Use Engagement Plan

As this essay maintains, some US officials understood that India would test – probably sooner rather than later. Others, lulled into confidence over the efficacy of the positive and negative nonproliferation incentives created by the United States, did not consider it worthwhile to think about the unthinkable. Given the sort of inevitability of resumed testing, evinced by the demonstrable intent to do so, the United States would have been wise to consider what a post-nuclear test engagement plan would look like. For instance, how would the United States herd the international community to respond? What instruments could be drafted and deployed to punish New Delhi for testing while providing meaningful inducements to roll back the nuclear clock (however chimerical such a goal may have been)? At a minimum, such a plan would have been useful to devise strategies and tools that could have been used to manage Pakistan's response. The ad hoc nature of US engagements toward Pakistan in the wake of

Pokhran II demonstrates the consequences of this failure of policy and planning.⁷²

Remarkably, while numerous gaming exercises have been executed to posit some of the various Indo-Pakistan conflict escalation scenarios, interviews with a number of well-placed US officials indicate that there were no similar games executed to determine a course of action in the event of resumed testing. Despite India's well-established intention to recommence experiments at the Pokhran test site, the possibility that India would actually test was never considered according to the persons interviewed by this author at the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Defense University, the United States Army and the United States Department of State.⁷³ Furthermore, despite the persistence of a number of proliferation hotspots throughout the world and the belief that even India may test again to acquire a reliable thermonuclear device, no efforts have been undertaken to determine how the United States should react in such a contingency. This state of affairs is disconcerting: what would the United States do if Iran or North Korea were to conduct a series of nuclear tests tomorrow? How would the United States manage the regional and global consequences of such an event?

Amidst the confusion, chaos, and disbelief that permeated Washington decision-making in the wake of the 1998 tests, one interesting opportunity was seized. Following the tests, a series of sustained strategic dialogues ensued between the United States and India. Strobe Talbott, US deputy secretary of state, and Jaswant Singh, India's foreign minister, met nearly one dozen times in the year and a half following the 1998 blasts. As time has shown, these numerous rounds of bilateral meetings enabled the BJP to fashion a new foreign policy for India that jettisoned the Non-Aligned Movement and embraced the notion of a strategic relationship with the United States. This relationship began to take shape under the Clinton administration, beginning with the president's visit to India in March 2000. The contours of this *détente*, which arose in great measure from the Talbott-Singh talks, were laid out in the Joint India-US Statement co-signed by Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Bill Clinton, titled "India-US Relations: A Vision for the 21st Century."

In this document, both leaders proclaimed that:

In the new century, India and the United States will be partners in peace, with a common interest in and complementary responsibility

for ensuring regional and international security. We will engage in regular consultations on, and work together for, strategic stability in Asia and beyond. We will bolster joint efforts to counter terrorism and meet other challenges to regional peace. We will strengthen the international security system, including in the United Nations, and support the United Nations in its peacekeeping efforts.⁷⁴

This development in the bilateral relationship, in retrospect, was not expected given President Clinton's staunch nonproliferation positions.

With the Bush administration's initial enthusiasm for reconsidering well-worn US positions on international commitments (e.g. the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty), India saw even greater opportunities for robust relations with the United States. President Bush, recognizing its strategic value, was also quick to woo India early in his presidency. The Bush administration was eager to draw India into confidence over the US intent to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and seek a space-based defense system. (Certainly, this was in part because the Bush administration was desperately seeking some bastion of support for this policy.) India, in muted, well-articulated tones, evinced support for this position and tremendous satisfaction as being a state on President Bush's "to call" list while undertaking such deliberations. India's support was a notable departure from its historical stance on this and related issues and, in the view of this author, signaled a willingness to explore new proliferation-related regimes in which India could be a founding member. The Indo-US strategic relationship, particularly after the events of 9/11, has grown in depth and breadth at a pace that few India watchers would have imagined possible.

Thus, in some sense, the fact that the United States had so completely misunderstood India before and immediately after the tests of 1998 created an unexpected window of opportunity that afforded both states a newfound occasion to dispose of ossified and nonproductive past positions.

What is perhaps most notable about the current Indo-US relationship is that a new nuclear status quo has yet to emerge, and apparently this has not been a major impediment to the *détente*. Despite its strategic distraction in Iraq, the Bush administration still evinces a willingness

to find ways of building new nonproliferation regimes wherein India is a founding partner.⁷⁵ In fact, in January of 2004, President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee issued a statement entitled the "Next Steps in the Strategic Partnership" that reiterated their commitment to strengthen cooperation in four new areas (the so-called "Quartet"). These include: civilian nuclear activities; space programs; "dual use" goods and technologies; and expanded dialogue on missile defense. This progress is quite remarkable given the reviled position that India found itself in after it let the "nuclear genie out of the bottle" in 1998.

Conclusions

This essay contends that India's nuclear tests should have been at best a tactical surprise. While this is certainly true of the 1998 test, evidence discussed herein also suggests that this assertion holds for the 1974 blasts as well. There are several conclusions that this paper draws from analyses of the various instances when India conducted tests or considered doing so. First, the periods during which India considered testing were roughly concurrent with episodes of relatively significant Indo-US rapprochement. This timing is significant because analyses of these cases suggest that during these engagements US nonproliferation objectives became subordinated to other regional concerns.

Second, India's repeated efforts to resume testing should have signaled to the United States New Delhi's shifting cost-benefit analysis of the same. However, this analysis suggests that the United States fundamentally and consistently failed to properly apprehend New Delhi's strategic calculus. Instead, the United States appeared to have concluded that India was dissuaded and that it remained dissuadable. One possible reason for this cognitive failure was the general US confidence that India valued engagement with the US and the ensuing benefits more than the benefits conferred by testing. This assumes a general level of confidence in the extant nonproliferation regime and its ability to impose steep costs on those breaking nonproliferation norms.

Third, while over-evaluating India's expected utility from the Indo-US relationship and the penalties imposed by the nonproliferation regime, the United States also failed to appreciate that from India's perspective the opportunity costs of not testing were precipitously increasing. This stems from the basic understanding that India

perceived the nonproliferation noose to be tightening quickly. Testing in 1998 would be far less costly than testing after September 1999, when India believed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty would come into force. While the BJP coalition may have been more risk-averse than others, it is entirely possible that any other party would have come to the same decision for largely the same reasons.

While these explanations may go some distance in understanding why the United States was taken off guard by the tests, there are few cogent explanations for the US failure to formulate and propound a contingency plan that would guide engagement with India should it test again. This policy inattention persisted in the face of various analysts' views that India would be the one to break the nuclear status quo. Not only did Washington fail to formulate a plan of action to manage New Delhi, but it also gave similar inattention to how Islamabad could be handled after an Indian test.

The past absence of such a policy is puzzling, as is the persistent inattention to this issue. This is certainly relevant to the South Asian subcontinent, as many analysts believe that India will again resume testing at some point in the future to ensure a thermonuclear capability. Taken to its logical conclusion, this argument suggests that India's unilateral moratorium on such testing *should not* preclude evaluation of what would happen if India did resume testing. In other words, Washington should game through the consequences of such an outcome – even if is judged to be unlikely. Given that several other countries are emerging as sources of nonproliferation anxiety, the argument is applicable more generally.

All of this suggests that the time is well overdue for the United States to put into place a contingency plan to deal with states breaking nonproliferation norms and a master plan that would orchestrate political and diplomatic sequelae to such action. Now is the time to begin formulating policy instruments that allow the United States and its partners to begin thinking about the unthinkable and plan accordingly.

However, the Indian case shows the potential for positive results. With the nuclear status quo effectively dismantled by New Delhi's tests and given the lack of traction that the United States had on New Delhi's strategic calculations, both states were unshackled from their previous positions. This allowed both states to explore new possible *modus vivendi* and arguably laid the foundation for what has become a significant strategic relationship.

NOTES

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1. There are at least three kinds of proliferation that can be defined. "Horizontal proliferation" refers to the increase in the number of states that have acquired nuclear weapons. Horizontal proliferation can be distinguished from "vertical proliferation," which refers to a quantitative increase in nuclear warheads or a qualitative improvement of existing inventories. A third form can be designated as "sub-national proliferation," which describes the risk that sub-national entities will acquire nuclear weapons. Within the framework of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, horizontal and vertical proliferation are clearly delineated. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty differentiates between the five acknowledged Nuclear Weapon States on the one hand, and the Non-Nuclear Weapon States on the other. Thus within the specific context of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, horizontal proliferation pertains to non-nuclear weapons states acquiring nuclear weapons and vertical proliferation references qualitative or quantitative enhancements of arsenals among nuclear weapons states. See Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).
2. As one reviewer noted, an argument can be made that the status quo was changed because it rested on ambiguity. My concern is not the grounds upon which the status quo rested. Rather, my concern is the perception of nonproliferation proponents who understood India's actions to be a major blow to the status quo – however tentative it may have been.
3. According to Itty Abraham,

The guided missile and nuclear programs in India ... constitute a "strategic enclave." [It] is defined as a subset of the Indian military-security complex – specifically, the set of research establishments and production facilities that are responsible for the development of these new programs. It is "strategic" because the end product of the efforts forms the most advanced technological means toward the goal of national security and represents the currency of international prestige and power today. It is an "enclave" because institutionally, spatially, and legally, the high-technology sectors of space and nuclear energy are distinct and different from the existing structure of the Indian military-security complex.

- See Itty Abraham, "India's 'Strategic Enclave': Civilian Scientists and Military Technologies," *Armed Forces and Society* Vol. 18, No. 2 (Winter 1992), p. 233. For a detailed description of these various organizations, their equities, and their expected positions, see Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), pp. 90–101.
4. One of the best expositions of this evolution of thought is George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact of Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 354–404.
 5. See Amitabh Mattoo, "Enough Scientific Reasons Seen for Conducting Tests," *India Abroad*, May 15, 1998, p. 10; T. V. Paul, "The Systemic Bases of India's Challenge to the Global Nuclear Order," *The Nonproliferation Review* (Fall 1998); Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*. See also the extensive discussion about the dubiety surrounding the results of 1974 experiments in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 181–83.
 6. This argument is laid out in George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, and in C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

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7. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*.
8. This point was developed during numerous conversations with Ashley Tellis on this subject, most recently in the spring of 2004.
9. "Possible Indian Nuclear Weapons Development," National Security Archives, March 29, 1966, www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv.
10. See State Department Telegram, November 25, 1964, and Embassy, New Delhi Telegram: "Conversation with Senior GOI Nuclear Official," May 7, 1968. Subject-Numeric File, 1967-69; Central Files of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives, Washington, DC, www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv. See also Jocelyn M. Boyczja *et al.*, "Cultural and Strategic Factors in South Asian Nuclear Arms Control," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* Vol. 25 (Winter 1997), pp. 290-91.
11. As one reviewer correctly noted, there were several other countries that were also interested in acquiring nuclear weapons in this period (e.g. Israel, South Africa, Brazil, Taiwan, etc.). However, none of these countries actually tested, even though at least one (apart from India) likely had the capability to do so. This factor may have contributed to the US assessment that India (like these others) would not test. However, *unlike* Israel, South Africa, Brazil, and Taiwan, India believed that nuclear capabilities were an important means by which India could attain the status that it desired (*inter alia*, a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council). This calculus with respect to attaining the status of global power was also not appreciated by the United States government. For more exposition on this point, see Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, and Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*.
12. "The Zangger Committee: A History 1971-90" (INFCIRC/209/Rev.1 Annex), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, November 1990, www.projects.sipri.se.
13. "The Zangger Committee," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.
14. The United States aided India to acquire its first nuclear power reactor at Tarapur (near Bombay). For details, see Satu Limaye, *US-India Relations: The Pursuit of Accommodation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*; Itty Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998).
15. The 1961 Foreign Assistance Act governed American assistance to other nations, be it military, economic, or humanitarian. Several amendments to the 1961 FAA have attempted to link assistance to nuclear nonproliferation objectives. In the late 1970s, there were two such amendments that have come to be known as the Symington Amendment (Section 669) passed in 1976 and the Glenn Amendment (Section 670) passed in 1977. For an excellent history of the Glenn Amendment, see Randy J. Rydell, "Giving Nonproliferation Norms Teeth: Sanctions and the NPPA," *The Nonproliferation Review* Vol. 6 (Winter 1999). See also US Department of Commerce, "India and Pakistan Sanctions Center," www.mac.doc.gov/sanctions/.
16. Coordinated by Richard P. Cronin, "India-Pakistan Nuclear and Missile Proliferation: Background, Status, and Issues for US Policy" (CRS Report 97-23 F), Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, December 16, 1996, pp. 56-57.
17. Cronin, "India-Pakistan Nuclear and Missile Proliferation," p. 49-50.
18. Cronin, "India-Pakistan Nuclear and Missile Proliferation," p. 53.
19. See Dennis Kux, *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies 1941-1991* (Washington, DC: The National Defense University Press, 1993).
20. See Limaye, *US-Indian Relations*, p. 27, and Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, "Enhancing Indo-US Strategic Cooperation," *Adelphi Paper No. 313* (London: IISS, 1997), p. 40.
21. See Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 242-44.
22. On this point, see Mattoo, "Enough Scientific Reasons Seen for Conducting Tests"; Paul, "The Systemic Bases of India's Challenge to the Global Nuclear Order"; Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*. See also the extensive discussion about the dubiety surrounding the results of 1974 experiments in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 181-83.
23. According to a report for Sandia National Laboratories by Vipin Gupta and Frank Pabian, there is evidence from four different sources that suggest that in the early 1980s

- shafts were constructed for two additional tests. See Vipin Gupta and Frank Pabian "Investigating the Allegations of Indian Nuclear Test Preparation in the Rajasthan Desert: A CTB Verification Exercise Using Commercial Satellite Imagery," *Science & Global Security* Vol. 6, No. 2 (1997), pp. 101–88, www.ca.sandia.gov/casite/gupta.
24. See Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 242–44.
 25. See W. P. S. Sidhu, "The Development of an Indian Nuclear Doctrine Since 1980," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge, February 1997, p. 129, cited by Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 243.
 26. See Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 242–44.
 27. See Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 243.
 28. See Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 243.
 29. See Raj Chengappa and Manoj Joshi, "Future Fire," *India Today*, May 25, 1998, pp.22–24.
 30. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 244.
 31. Compellence and deterrence are both forms of coercion, however they are usually considered to be distinct from one another in theory. "Deterrence" is portrayed as preventing an action from occurring (e.g. convincing country X from not invading country Y). "Compellence" usually refers to efforts undertaken to reverse an action that has been executed (convincing country X to withdraw from country Y once it has invaded). Compellence can also imply dissuading an adversary from taking an action that it has decided to prosecute (e.g. not to conduct nuclear tests once it has decided to do so). In other words, the compeller is dissuading the adversary to rescind a decision already taken. Obviously, the distinction between compellence and deterrence hinges on information about the intent of the adversary and the interpretation of that information. For this reasons, it is difficult to distinguish between these forms of coercion in practice. With respect to India, the case can be made that efforts to dissuade India from testing comprised a compellence campaign from as early as 1965 when Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri approved proposals for the subterranean nuclear explosion project (SNEP). This interpretation hinges on US beliefs about India's intent at that time. I take 1974 to be the point when India's intentions to test become manifest. Therefore, from 1974 onwards, one could argue that US efforts to coerce India could be called a compellence campaign. To avoid a distracting debate about the nuance of using the term deterrence or compellence, I will generally use the term "dissuasion" to describe US nonproliferation efforts with respect to India. For further discussion about these distinctions, see Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966); Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Alexander George and William E. Simons, eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); and Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 15–16. For an applied case, see Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *Confronting Iraq: U.S. Policy and the Use of Force since the Gulf War* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000), pp. 5–12.
 32. In the 1980s, both India and the US attempted to establish better bilateral ties. One of the first official manifestations of India's intent was Prime Minister Gandhi's request to have a private meeting with President Reagan in Cancun at the North–South Economic Summit. As a result of that very amicable meeting, later in 1982, Prime Minister Gandhi went to Washington. During this visit, she and President Reagan signed the "Science and Technology Initiative" (STI). See, *inter alia*, Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 238–39; Limaye, *US–Indian Relations*, p. 27; and Sidhu, "Enhancing Indo-US Strategic Cooperation," p. 40. Also see Chengappa and Joshi, "Future Fire."
 33. Sidhu, "Enhancing Indo-US Strategic Cooperation."
 34. Sidhu, "Enhancing Indo-US Strategic Cooperation."
 35. See the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, "The Missile Technology Control Regime," September 15, 1997, dosfan.lib.uic.edu/acda/factshee/exptcon/mtrc96.htm.
 36. India, in response to these attempts to restrict access to desirable technologies, stepped up its efforts at indigenous sourcing and production. This was particularly important to India's ballistic missile program. While India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme was launched in 1983, several years before the Missile Technology Control

Regime came into force, there had been signs that such a regime would crystallize after India's program became public (Sidhu, "Enhancing Indo-US Strategic Cooperation," p. 59). In addition, India noted that US nonproliferation objectives with respect to Pakistan were also negotiable. Though in 1990 the United States was no longer willing to certify Pakistan free of nuclear weapons under the Pressler Amendment, Sino-Pakistani collaboration persisted without an apparent aggressive American response. India increasingly came to view the differential employment of the nonproliferation apparatus as "singling out" India.

37. See Kux, *India and the United States*; Limaye, *US-India Relations*; Sidhu, "Enhancing Indo-US Strategic Cooperation."
38. William J. Perry, "US Perceptions of Global Security," speech delivered to the United Service Institution, New Delhi. January 12, 1995.
39. "Agreed Minute on Defense Relations between the United States and India," January 12, 1995.
40. Cronin, "India-Pakistan Nuclear and Missile Proliferation," p.57. See also Jeanne J. Grimmett, "Nuclear Sanctions: Section 102(b) of the Arms Export Control Act and Its Application to India and Pakistan," CRS Report for Congress, Report number 98-486 A. Updated October 20, 1998. The most recent version of this document available was updated October 5, 2001 by the same author.
41. Amitabh Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Status Quo," *Survival* Vol. 38, No. 3 (Autumn 1996), p. 54.
42. In retrospect, this may seem like an odd assertion given that within the United States Congress (particularly in the senate), there was vocal opposition to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. However, President Clinton was strongly advocating its ratification. As has often been the case with Indo-US relations, both sides have frequently not appreciated the internal governmental dynamics of the other. Within India, the case can be made that President Clinton's assurances on the instrument carried more weight than vocal opposition by key congressional personalities. Satu Limaye discusses at length the various problems that India has had understanding the multi-vocal nature of the US government (Limaye, *US-Indian Relations*).
43. Andrew Koch, "Report: Nuclear Testing in South Asia and the CTBT," *The Nonproliferation Review* (Spring-Summer 1996), p. 100.
44. Tim Weiner, "US Suspects India Prepares to Conduct Tests," *New York Times*, December 15, 1995, p. 1.
45. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 368.
46. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 368-71.
47. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 368-71.
48. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 371.
49. Mark Hibbs, "Indians Deny New Regime Will Lead to Bomb Test, Access Freeze," *Nucleonics Week*, December 4, 1997, p. 10; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 374..
50. Hibbs, "Indians Deny New Regime Will Lead to Bomb Test, Access Freeze"; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 374.
51. Hibbs, "Indians Deny New Regime Will Lead to Bomb Test, Access Freeze"; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 374.
52. See Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*, and Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*.
53. While one could argue that the form of sanctions that would be levied would not change in the future, one could argue that their impacts could have been more significant given India's trajectory of economic growth.
54. Hibbs, "Indians Deny New Regime Will Lead to Bomb Test, Access Freeze"; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 399.
55. William Walker, "India's Nuclear Labyrinth," *The Nonproliferation Review* (Fall 1996), p. 66.
56. Manoj Joshi, "Two Steps Forward 1 Step Back," *India Today*, September 1998, www.india-today.com/today/250598/cover.html.
57. Walker, "India's Nuclear Labyrinth," p. 66.
58. Andrew Koch, "Report: Nuclear Testing in South Asia and the CTBT," p. 100.

59. Koch, "Report: Nuclear Testing in South Asia and the CTBT," p. 103.
60. "Countervalue targets" are population centers whereas "counterforce targets" are enemy nuclear and other military assets. Given the high circular-error probabilities (CEPs), neither India nor Pakistan is thought to have reliable counterforce capabilities. CEP is a measure of a weapon system's precision and is defined as the radius of a circle into which a bomb, projectile, missile will land at least 50% of the time. The smaller the CEP, the more precise the weapon.
61. The Brown amendment was seen this way because it signed into law specifically to relieve some of the consequences of the Pressler Sanctions, which had particularly acute effects on Pakistan's military and the air force in particular. The Brown amendment permitted \$370 million-worth of previously embargoed arms and spare parts to be delivered to Pakistan. It also allowed limited military assistance, which was principally targeted for counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, anti-narcotics efforts, and some military training. The Brown amendment was not incorrectly seen as directly mitigating the affects of sanctions imposed upon Pakistan since 1990 and specifically rewarded the military. Obviously, this amendment was undertaken because it advanced US interests in Pakistan. Recall that Pakistan has been a key state in US counter-narcotics efforts and has played important peacekeeping roles in Haiti and Somalia, among other locations.
62. Manoj Joshi, "Nuclear Shock Wave," *India Today*, May 1998, www.indiatoday.com/itoday/25051998/cover.html.
63. As an example, see Marshall M. Bouton, "India's Problem is Not Politics," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 1998), pp. 80–93.
64. John Barry, Tony Clifton, Sudip Mazumdar, and Russel Watson: "Why Only a Bomb Would Do," *Newsweek*, October 19, 1998, pp. 24–27.
65. Barry *et al.*, "Why Only a Bomb Would Do," pp. 24–27.
66. Barry *et al.*, "Why Only a Bomb Would Do," pp. 24–27.
67. "Don't Blame the CIA," *The Economist*, US Edition, May 23, 1998.
68. Key individuals advocating testing in 1998 included the Atomic Energy Commission Chairman, R. Chidambaram, and the head of India's Integrated Missile Development Program, Abdul Kalam. Key political personalities included Vajpayee, Jaswant Singh, Brajesh Mishra, and possibly L. K. Advani. For a thorough account of the scientists who were involved, see Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 409.
69. Interview at Department of State, February 1999.
70. Interview at Department of State, February 1999.
71. Interview at Defense Intelligence Agency, February 1999.
72. Interview with an individual close to this process in the Department of Defense in 1999. On May 14, 1998 Deputy Secretary of State Talbott and Commander US Central Command General Anthony Zinni traveled to Islamabad "empty-handed." Rather than offering any positive inducements, they were only able to remind Pakistan of the imminent sanctions that would follow. Recall that Pakistan was *already* under Pressler Amendment sanctions. For various Pakistani assessments of this trip, see Nasim Zehra, "Pakistan Nuclear Explosion: Decision Time for Nawaz"; Lt. Gen (Retd) M. Asad Durrani, "It's Pay Time Again"; Mir Jamil-ur-Rahman, "A Terrible Mistake"; Dr. Mohammad Zubair Khan, "Should Pakistan Also Test a Nuclear Device?" and Munir Ahmad Khan, "It Takes More than Sanctions to Salvage Nonproliferation." The dates are not available, www.jang.com.pk/thenews/spedition/nuclear/opinion4.htm#4. See also "US Urges Pakistan to not go Nuclear," BBC Online, May 14, 1998, news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/1998/05/98/india_nuclear_testing/93291.stm. See also Department of Defense News Briefing, May 28, 1998, defenselink.mil/transcripts/1998/t05281998_t0528asd.html.
73. These interviews were conducted in 1999 and in the spring of 2004. These interviews were held at the open-source level. Obviously if there are countervailing data from other restricted sources, this author would not have access to it.
74. See "India-US Relations: A Vision for the 21st Century," March 21, 2000, pib.nic.in/archive/indous/indouspr1.html.

75. See Christina B. Rocca (Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs), "Transforming US-India Relations," Remarks to the Confederation of Indian Industry, New Delhi on May 14, 2002, www.state.gov/p/sa/rls/rm/10173.htm. It is also important to note that there are real barriers to such cooperation – not the least of which is the US commitments under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. However, many within the United States perceive this as a "technical issue" to be resolved – however difficult it may be – rather than a permanent and binding hindrance that will continue to preclude such a relationship. For more information see C. Christine Fair, *The Counterterrorism Coalitions: Cooperation with India and Pakistan* (Santa Monica: RAND, December 2004); and C. Christine Fair, "India-US Security Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges," in James Mulvenon, ed., *The USAF and Security Cooperation in Asia: Basing, Access, Logistics, Interoperability and Intelligence-Sharing* (Santa Monica: RAND, forthcoming in 2005).