Pakistan tested a series of nuclear devices on May 28 and 30, 1998, signaling the abandonment of its policy of nuclear ambiguity, which it had adopted in the 1980s. Under this policy, Pakistan had neither renounced nor acquired nuclear weapons for overt weaponization. The Pakistani action was motivated primarily by similar tests conducted in India on May 11 and 13, and was taken by Pakistan’s nuclear weapons decisionmaking apparatus, comprising the military and the civil bureaucracy, including nuclear scientists. Despite a rigorous debate on the pros and cons of testing, Pakistan’s political leadership played only a marginal role in determining Islamabad’s response. Following the tests, Pakistan laid claim to the status of a nuclear weapons state, with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif declaring, “No matter we are recognized as a nuclear weapons power or not, we are a nuclear power.”

Pakistan’s decision to test its nuclear capability represents a major turning point in its nuclear program. To date, however, Islamabad has given no indication that it intends to weaponize and deploy its nuclear devices and their delivery systems. Pakistani policymakers have three choices: (1) to adopt an overt nuclear weapons posture, which would involve the development, assembly, and deployment of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems; (2) to maintain the new status quo, that is, to retain an overt nuclear weapons capability without opting for deployment of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems; or (3) to roll back the nuclear weapons program and accept the international nonproliferation regime. The acceptance or rejection of any of these options will be determined, as in the past, by a number of related domestic, regional, and international variables.

Regional factors, especially Pakistan’s relations with India, will continue to play a major role in determining Islamabad’s nuclear course. From its incep-
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Pakistan’s nuclear policy has been India-centric, revolving around perceptions of threat from and hostility toward India. The issue of prestige, evident in Pakistan’s desire to acquire equal standing with India in nuclear weapons development, also looms large. International developments and the role of influential regional and extraregional actors have also helped shape Pakistan’s nuclear policy and will continue to do so. These include Pakistan’s formal and informal alliances with the United States, the unraveling of this alliance relationship, Pakistan’s military links with China, and the impact of the Cold War and post-Cold War environments on South Asia.

Domestic factors will also continue to play a critical role in the adoption or rejection of nuclear options. Direct or indirect authoritarian rule, weak representative governments, and an inept and divided political leadership have combined to perpetuate the military’s control over security policy, including the nuclear weapons program, which the military formulates in line with its perceptions and institutional interests. The military’s security policies are dictated by its traditional hostility toward, and perceptions of threat from, India, as well as its desire to acquire an adequate conventional and nuclear force to counter this threat. This interpretation of security also advances the armed forces’ institutional interests by legitimizing the existence of a large standing military and a constant increase in defense expenditure. Moreover, the partnership between the armed forces and the civil bureaucracy, including its subsidiary nuclear scientific establishment, further marginalizes the role of the political leadership in the nuclear decisionmaking process.

Pakistan’s decision to opt for nuclear tests in May 1998 was determined by its regional environment. This decision was adopted by the military and the civil bureaucracy with the acquiescence of the political leadership. International factors came into play later with the imposition of a sanctions regime that has created an economic crisis of unprecedented dimensions. Collectively, the rise in tensions with India in the wake of the tests, international isolation, a faltering economy, and the internal balance of power will determine Pakistan’s nuclear choices in the post-test South Asian environment.

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This article traces Pakistan's nuclear history and attempts to identify the role of domestic, regional, and international variables in determining Pakistan's nuclear choices. The first four sections highlight key turning points in Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and the motivations behind its nuclear choices from 1947 until 1988. The fifth section examines the impact of a changed domestic and external environment on Pakistan's nuclear weapons program following the restoration of democracy in 1988 after eleven years of military rule. The sixth section examines events immediately leading up to May 1998 and the consequences of Pakistan's nuclear tests. The conclusion offers some observations on the future of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program.

**Pakistan's Nascent Nuclear Policy**

Pakistan's nuclear weapons program can be traced to Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's decision to pursue the nuclear weapons route in 1972 in reaction to a perceived threat from India. The India-centric bias of Pakistan's nuclear weapons policy has a much longer history, however. The events accompanying the partition of Britain's Indian Empire into two independent states in 1947 shaped Pakistan's security environment. The mass migration of Hindus and Muslims across the India-Pakistan border resulted in hundreds of thousands of casualties, differences over divided economic and military assets, and disputes over territory, including armed conflict in 1948 over the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir. Together they sowed the seeds of mistrust and hostility between the two states.5

Independence created a variety of political, economic, and strategic challenges for Pakistan. The policies it adopted to meet these challenges were determined by the composition of the ruling elite. Although the Muslim League had formed a government, it had a limited support base in the areas that now constituted Pakistan. The military-bureaucratic apparatus inherited from the British gained ascendancy over the political leadership as early as 1951. While the bureaucracy governed the state, the military—with the support of the pro-Western, anti-Indian civil bureaucracy—controlled security policy, choosing to rely on external alliances to counter the perceived Indian threat.

5. Pakistan refused to accept the accession of the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir to India, which resulted in armed conflict in 1948. India, however, succeeded in retaining control over most of the princely state's territory. India and Pakistan have since rejected each other's authority over Kashmir, and a Line of Control, instead of an international boundary, divides Indian- and Pakistani-administered Kashmir.
Pakistan’s geostrategic position—contiguous to Communist China and located near the Soviet Union and West Asia—combined with its anticommunist military, made it a natural ally for the United States in its strategy of encircling the Soviet Union in the 1950s. As Pakistan joined a number of U.S.-sponsored alliances, the United States became a reliable source of conventional arms, underwriting the military’s belief that alliance with the West would provide Pakistan the security it needed against perceived Indian threats. U.S. military and economic assistance also allowed for the continuing expansion of the military establishment, further strengthening its standing vis-à-vis rival domestic actors.

In the 1950s, as Pakistan’s leadership consolidated its defense links with the West and continued to build up its conventional forces, there was little evidence of a nuclear weapons program. There was, however, interest in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In 1957 the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) was established to train nuclear scientists and to set up a nuclear research reactor. This marked the beginnings of a nascent indigenous nuclear scientific establishment.

**Rethinking the Nuclear Weapons Option**

Dissatisfied with its indirect control of the government, the military took power in 1958 with the support of the civil bureaucracy. Army Chief General Mohammad Ayub Khan assumed the dual mantles of field marshal and president, heading his own wing of the ruling party, the Muslim League. Under Khan’s direct rule, the military formulated defense and security policies in accordance with its perceptions and institutional interests. During this period the military believed that conventional weapons were sufficient to safeguard and advance Pakistani security interests vis-à-vis India. Pakistan’s nuclear program, therefore, appeared to be geared solely toward developing peaceful uses for nuclear energy. Its only research reactor, which began operations in 1965, and its natural uranium heavy-water nuclear power plant, the Karachi Nuclear Power Project, were placed under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

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6. Pakistan became a member of a number of U.S. or U.S.-sponsored security alliances in the mid-1950s, including the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and the Baghdad Pact (later renamed the Central Treaty Organization).
Official thinking about Pakistan's nuclear program began to change in the 1960s, as relations with India continued to deteriorate in a pervasive atmosphere of mutual suspicion and contempt. Domestically, the military's authority was questioned, especially in the East Wing and in Sindh, by an assertive opposition angered by the military's continued rule and lopsided economic policies that favored West Pakistani interests, particularly those of the Punjab, the military's and civil bureaucracy's traditional recruiting ground.

In a bid to divert domestic attention, the military in 1965 tried once again to oust India from Kashmir. Domestic unrest heightened, however, when the Pakistani military failed to make any substantive gains in Kashmir. Tensions increased further when it was learned that the ensuing peace treaty with India, the Tashkent agreement of 1966, included no concessions for Pakistan on Kashmir. As the regime's popularity waned, Ayub's foreign minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, launched a bid for political power by publicly adopting a strident anti-India stance. Known for his deep distrust of India, Bhutto in 1958, as minister for fuel and power and minister in charge of atomic energy, had urged Ayub to begin actively exploring the nuclear weapons option. Ayub, however, had rejected Bhutto's advice on the grounds that, if Pakistan needed a nuclear weapons capability, it could buy it "off the shelf" (i.e., from Pakistan's Western allies).

The 1965 war was an important turning point for Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. After the war the conventional weapons disparity between Pakistan and India began to shift in India's favor when the United States, Pakistan's main arms provider, banned the supply of weaponry to both states as punishment for the war. Pakistan's security alliances with the West, in any case, had become a casualty of U.S.-Soviet détente, which had reduced the strategic significance of Cold War allies such as Pakistan for the United States. In the mid-1960s, however, Pakistan developed closer ties with China, which soon became one of its major suppliers of conventional weapons. However, influential segments of the Pakistani military believed that the Chinese arms were neither quantitatively nor qualitatively adequate to counterbalance India's conventional arms superiority.

Foreign Minister Bhutto, rightly concluding that India was well on the road to acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, renewed his bid for a Pakistani

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nuclear weapons capability to counter the perceived Indian threat. In 1966 he declared that if India acquired a nuclear bomb, “even if Pakistanis have to eat grass, we will make the bomb.” Bhutto’s position increased Ayub’s vulnerability to domestic opposition at the same time that support was growing within policymaking circles for a nuclear weapons capability. This was evident, for example, in Pakistan’s refusal to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968, which followed India’s rejection of the treaty on grounds that it was discriminatory. After Pakistan’s defeat in the 1971 India-Pakistan War, the military use of nuclear power became the focal point of Pakistan’s nuclear policy.

Adopting the Nuclear Weapons Option

In December 1971 Pakistan split apart when the East Wing seceded from the federation following a bloody civil conflict and a war in which India supported independence for Bangladesh. Ayub’s presidential successor, Army Chief Yahya Khan, was held responsible for the debacle. He was removed by powerful factions within the military and replaced by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who first became president and chief martial-law administrator and then prime minister. The 1971 war reinforced Pakistan’s hostility toward India and its perceptions of insecurity. The leadership in Islamabad believed that the United States had failed to come to Pakistan’s aid, while India had received both moral and military support from its Soviet allies.

Domestically, Bhutto faced the dual challenges of creating a new identity for a traumatized nation and salvaging the prestige of a defeated yet politically powerful military. Using nationalistic, anti-imperialist, and anti-Indian rhetoric to build popular support, Bhutto embarked on a program of expanding the size of the armed forces. And in March 1972, with the support of the military and the civil bureaucracy, he adopted a nuclear weapons program. Pakistan’s resolve to establish a nuclear weapons infrastructure was reinforced when

10. Bhutto’s army chief, for example, declared that an Indian acquisition of nuclear weapons would mean that “we will have to beg or borrow to develop our own nuclear capability.” Quoted in Leonard S. Spector, Nuclear Proliferation Today (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1984), p. 34.
India detonated a nuclear device in May 1974, another turning point that set Pakistan irrevocably along the nuclear weapons path.

Soon after the 1974 Indian explosion, Pakistan established a nuclear weapons program that was separate from the PAEC. The PAEC and the nuclear weapons program remained close, however. In fact, PAEC-trained scientists staffed the nuclear weapons establishment, and a board of senior bureaucrats coordinated their activities. The new program was headed by a metallurgical engineer, Abdul Qadeer Khan. Bhutto assigned Khan the task of enriching uranium to weapons grade. Khan had allegedly stolen the technology and blueprints for uranium enrichment while working at the Almelo ultracentrifuge uranium enrichment plant in the Netherlands. In addition, the civil bureaucracy and military intelligence set up clandestine networks to acquire the necessary technology and hardware for ultra-high-speed centrifuges from Western European sources.

In 1973, however, even before the Indian nuclear test, Bhutto had opened negotiations with the French to purchase a nuclear reprocessing plant for the enrichment of plutonium, ostensibly for Pakistan's civilian energy program. Signing the deal in 1976, the Pakistani government claimed that it intended to set up a large number of nuclear power plants to help Pakistan meet its energy needs. Pakistan, however, lacked the technological and economic resources to create such a large nuclear infrastructure, making it clear to the United States that the extracted plutonium would be diverted for military purposes.

By the mid-1970s the United States had become concerned about the acquisition of nuclear weapons capabilities by hostile third world states (such as Libya), and began to rethink its approach to the transfer of nuclear technology. U.S. fears of horizontal proliferation were reinforced by India's 1974 nuclear explosion and by the impending sale of a French nuclear reprocessing plant to Pakistan. Reacting to this concern, the U.S. Congress in 1976 passed the Symington amendment to the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act. The amendment denied U.S. military and economic assistance to any country importing unsafeguarded enrichment or reprocessing technology.

Subsequently, the United States called upon Pakistan and France to cancel their nuclear reprocessing plant deal. Pakistan's policymakers, however, were committed to pursuing the nuclear weapons option. To counter the external

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12. Ibid., pp. 75-76.
13. Ibid., p. 79.
pressure, the Pakistanis launched a diplomatic campaign to convince the international community of their country’s peaceful nuclear intentions and to highlight its India-centric threat perceptions. At the same time, Pakistan pledged its support for regional nuclear disarmament in international forums, urging in particular the establishment of a nuclear weapons-free zone in South Asia.

Prime Minister Bhutto’s close links with Libya and his use of anti-imperialist rhetoric to acquire domestic support had not endeared him to policymakers in Washington, who were even more irked by his refusal to abandon the reprocessing plant deal. In August 1976 Henry Kissinger visited Pakistan in an effort to dissuade Bhutto from acquiring the plutonium reprocessing technology. In 1977 the French succumbed to U.S. pressure and agreed to cancel the sale. Bhutto later claimed that Pakistan “was on the threshold of full nuclear capability. All we needed was the nuclear reprocessing plant.”

In July 1977 the military, led by Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq, ousted Prime Minister Bhutto and reimposed martial law. Domestic realities, particularly Bhutto’s disregard for democratic norms, had eroded his popular base and were primarily responsible for the coup d’état. Bhutto’s ouster marked another key turning point for Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program. Imprisoned by Zia, Bhutto accused Kissinger of threatening to have him eliminated if he did not abandon Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program.

For many Pakistanis, U.S. opposition to the reprocessing deal, the military coup, and Bhutto’s subsequent hanging were intrinsically linked. Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program became synonymous with national sovereignty and national prestige, even when it was run by the very military that had eliminated Pakistan’s best-known populist politician.

**Acquiring Nuclear Weapons Capability**

After Bhutto’s execution on April 4, 1979, domestic opposition to martial law increased. The military regime faced the dilemma of retaining its political dominance without further eroding the domestic legitimacy of the armed forces. Consequently, the military high command used the Indian threat and

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the acquisition of a countervailing nuclear weapons capability to generate domestic support.

The nuclear weapons program operated under the absolute control of the armed forces, while the civil bureaucracy played an active role through its subsidiary arm, the nuclear scientific establishment. In an effort to accelerate Pakistan's ability to enrich uranium to weapons-grade levels through centrifuge technology, the Zia regime established an extensive clandestine network in Western Europe. The regime also used existing loopholes in Western European legislation to openly acquire the uranium enrichment technology and equipment it needed from countries such as Germany and the Netherlands.

At this stage in Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, China became a major supplier of nuclear know-how and hardware in a bid to counter India's military capabilities. Chinese assistance included the provision of weapons-grade uranium, technical information on uranium enrichment, and help in setting up the Kahuta ultracentrifuge uranium enrichment plant, which became operational in the mid-1980s. In addition, work began on a second uranium enrichment plant, and a uranium hexafluoride plant was set up at Dera Ghazi Khan in the province of Punjab.

Pakistan continued to mask its nuclear ambitions under the guise of nuclear ambiguity to offset external pressures. During the Carter administration Pakistan's relations with the United States were tense, as Washington applied pressure—including the imposition of military and economic sanctions in September 1977 and again in April 1979—to curb Pakistan's nuclear program. To assuage external, particularly U.S., concerns, and to strengthen Pakistan's claims that its nuclear program was peaceful, the Zia regime proposed a number of regional nonproliferation measures, including simultaneous Indian and Pakistani accession to the NPT and acceptance of IAEA full-scope safeguards. These offers posed little risk to the Pakistani nuclear weapons program, however, because India had linked its nuclear policy to global disarmament and opposed any regional nonproliferation regime that excluded China.

The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1980 proved another crucial turning point for Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. In reaction to the Soviet military intervention, U.S. opposition to the Pakistani program began to ease and then finally disappeared as Washington again focused on Pakistan's strategic significance in the region. Soon the Zia regime was serving U.S. interests in Afghanistan. The United States, especially under the Reagan administration, waived nonproliferation sanctions against Pakistan and began providing massive military and economic assistance. As a consequence, the Pakistani military was able to greatly strengthen its control over domestic opponents.
Unwilling to alienate the Zia regime, the Reagan administration intentionally ignored the rapid growth of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons infrastructure, so that it could claim that Pakistan was abiding by the nonproliferation terms set by Congress. At the same time, the administration justified the extension of military and economic assistance to Pakistan on the grounds that incentives, especially the supply of conventional weaponry, would effectively contain Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program. The U.S. undersecretary of state for security assistance, science, and technology, James Buckley, for example, argued: “In place of the ineffective sanctions on Pakistan’s nuclear program imposed by the past administration, we hope to address, through conventional means, the sources of insecurity that prompt a nation like Pakistan to seek a nuclear capability in the first place.” The Reagan administration even ignored U.S. intelligence reports in 1983 and 1984 that China provided Pakistan the design for a low-yield uranium device, based on data China had obtained during its fourth series of tests in 1964.

The U.S. Congress, however, continued to express concern about the rapid progress in Pakistan’s nuclear weapons capabilities. In 1985 it passed the Pakistan-specific Pressler amendment, which called for the imposition of economic and military sanctions against Pakistan unless the U.S. president could certify that Pakistan neither had nor was attempting to acquire nuclear weapons. In response, President Reagan warned the Zia regime to refrain from crossing the 5-percent uranium enrichment mark. But even after Pakistan had acquired the capability to enrich uranium beyond 5-percent U235, Reagan certified that Pakistan did not have a nuclear weapons program. The U.S. supply of military and economic assistance to Pakistan, therefore, continued. This assistance included the sale of F-16 fighter bombers, a potential delivery system for a future Pakistani nuclear arsenal.

By the mid-1980s Pakistan, secure in its belief that U.S. patronage would continue, abandoned the earlier claim that its nuclear program was solely for peaceful purposes. Domestically, Pakistan’s official acknowledgment that it

18. Pakistan’s KANUPP plant did not require uranium enriched beyond 3 to 5 percent U235.
20. In an interview with an Urdu-language newspaper, Nawai-i-Waqt, in 1984, Abdul Qadeer Khan declared that Pakistan could “efficiently enrich (weapons-grade) uranium.” This represented the
had a nuclear weapons program was used with some success to legitimize the military's interventionist role as the guardian of Pakistan's national sovereignty. In its relations with India, the Zia regime attempted to use nuclear ambiguity to deter any potential Indian threat by claiming that Pakistan had acquired a nuclear deterrent. For example, when war almost broke out in 1987 in the wake of a large-scale Indian military exercise (known as "Brasstacks") near the Pakistani border, which was followed by retaliatory Pakistani military maneuvers, Pakistani policymakers used a two-pronged strategy. Islamabad and New Delhi held high-level diplomatic talks to diffuse tensions, and Pakistan publicly disclosed its nuclear weapons capability. By the time of General Zia's assassination in a midair explosion in August 1988, Pakistan had achieved the status of a nuclear-threshold state.

Nuclear Continuity and Domestic Change

Zia's assassination and the subsequent restoration of democracy in 1988 had little impact on Pakistani decisionmaking and control over nuclear policy, because the military retained control over defense and security policymaking. Under the military's guidance and with the support of the civil bureaucracy, the nuclear weapons program continued to advance rapidly. According to Army Chief General Mirza Aslam Beg, Pakistan had acquired the ability to assemble a nuclear device by 1988. After 1988 Pakistan's ballistic missile program began to expand, with Chinese assistance, in response to India's acquisition of short-range and intermediate-range nuclear-capable missiles. In 1989 Pakistan tested its short-range, nuclear-capable Hatf-I and Hatf-II ballistic missiles, with a range of 80 kilometers and 180 kilometers, respectively.

Changes in the international environment, however, placed new constraints on Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. The post–Cold War environment

22. In an interview with an Indian journalist, Kuldip Nayyar, Abdul Qadeer Khan disclosed that Pakistan had the ability to assemble a nuclear weapon. Nayyar, "Pakistan Has the Bomb," Tribune, March 1, 1987.
reduced Pakistan's strategic significance for the United States once again. This in turn led Washington to rethink its policy of deliberately ignoring Pakistan's nuclear ambitions. Initially reluctant to use coercive means that could destabilize Pakistan's fragile democracy, the United States merely issued warnings to Pakistan to cap its production of weapons-grade uranium. In addition, presidential certifications were provided for another two years. Pakistani policymakers, unwilling to jeopardize U.S. economic assistance and military supplies, appeared to give in to U.S. pressure. In 1989 Army Chief General Beg and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, a former bureaucrat, decided to halt the enrichment of uranium to 5-percent U235. Pakistani policymakers, however, had no intention of maintaining the freeze, because the military considered the benefits of its nuclear weapons capability to far outweigh its costs.26

Impatient with civilian control, General Beg used the nuclear program to adopt a more assertive profile. Publicly supporting overt weaponization, Beg accelerated the pace of the program, abandoning even the facade of consulting with the political leadership. During a visit to the United States in June 1989, for example, Zia's successor, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, claimed that Pakistan had restrained its nuclear weapons program and expressed shock when U.S. sources painted a different picture of the state of Pakistan's nuclear development.27

In August 1989 Beg dismissed Bhutto and set up a shadow military government. In 1990 general elections were held, and Nawaz Sharif became prime minister. The military, however, retained control over the nuclear program and discovered new uses for its nuclear weapons capability, including the use of nuclear diplomacy. Under the Zia regime, Pakistan had adopted a strategy of undermining Indian security through a war by proxy in Indian-administered Kashmir. By 1990 Kashmiri alienation was at its peak, and Pakistan's relations with India had deteriorated to the brink of open conflict. Pakistan, implicitly threatening to use nuclear weapons if India intervened militarily across the Line of Control in Kashmir, persuaded the United States to act as an intermediary.28 Although it is unlikely that Pakistan would have seriously contemplated using nuclear weapons, the success of the nuclear bluff reinforced the

leadership’s belief in the value of nuclear weapons both as a deterrent and as a tool of diplomatic bargaining.29

After 1990, and again at the military’s behest, Pakistan’s cap on the enrichment of uranium to weapons-grade levels was removed, and its nuclear production capability was further enhanced. President George Bush responded in mid-1990 by refusing to certify that Pakistan did not possess nuclear weapons. The United States then imposed sanctions under the Pressler amendment, halting all U.S. military and economic assistance. U.S. sanctions, however, had little effect on Pakistani policymaking for several reasons. First, the military realized that the supply of preferential U.S. military and economic assistance was bound to dry up in the post–Cold War environment. Second, the Pakistanis did not believe that their economy would be seriously affected, because U.S. sanctions did not extend to loans and grants provided by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank. Third, in the absence of an international consensus on South Asian nuclear proliferation, Pakistan could approach other advanced industrialized countries for soft loans and grants as well as for the purchase of advanced weapons systems.

As Pakistan’s nuclear production capabilities grew apace,30 its nuclear rhetoric changed. Islamabad began to acknowledge publicly its ability to assemble nuclear weapons. In January 1992 Foreign Secretary Shahryar Khan declared in an interview with the Washington Post that Pakistan possessed “all the elements which, if hooked together, would become a (nuclear) device.”31 This statement was meant to send a message to external actors, particularly the United States, to reaffirm Pakistan’s commitment to its nuclear weapons program. Domestically, the military ensured that the elected political leadership did not challenge its nuclear preferences. In 1991 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif favored a freeze on the enrichment of uranium in return for concessions from the United States. Sharif, however, admitted in an interview with New York

29. According to Pervez Hoodbhoy, although “the facts seem to indicate that the alleged reports of nuclear movements (in 1990) were false, the belief that Pakistan’s threat of nuclear devastation stopped Indian aggression dead in its tracks has become enshrined as an article of faith.” Hoodbhoy, “Pakistan’s Nuclear Future,” in Ahmed and Cortright, Pakistan and the Bomb, p. 71.
30. Pakistan’s nuclear infrastructure now included a plutonium production reactor and a reprocessing facility at Khushab, both under construction with Chinese assistance.
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Times correspondent Barbara Crossette that he could not cap the nuclear program without the military’s assent.32

Sharif’s dependence on the continued goodwill of the military for his very survival was clearly demonstrated when he was abruptly removed in 1993 and Benazir Bhutto was put in charge of forming a new government. Thereafter, conscious of their vulnerability, all elected governments and their political opponents supported the military's preferences in all sensitive areas, including the nuclear weapons program. Given the entire political leadership’s support of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons policy, it was inevitable that the Pakistani public would internalize this official position.

Although Pakistani policymakers had no intention of abandoning the nuclear weapons option, they were conscious of the need to placate international opinion. They sought to do this by pledging their support for nonproliferation measures, conditional on the removal of the Indian nuclear threat. Thus Pakistan linked its approval of the NPT’s indefinite extension in 1995 to India’s acceptance of the treaty. In 1996 Pakistan declared that it would sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) if India also acceded. Pakistan’s use of the Indian threat heightened tensions between the two countries. In addition, the maneuverability of Pakistani policymakers was adversely affected because their declaratory nuclear policy became dependent on India’s nuclear choices.

The Pakistani leadership, however, was less concerned about the negative impact of its nuclear rhetoric on India and much more concerned about persuading the United States to remove the Pressler sanctions. Pakistani officials claimed that Pakistan’s legitimate security needs demanded the retention of its nuclear capability and that these discriminatory sanctions had served only to reduce Washington’s leverage in its dealings with Islamabad. These arguments had some effect on U.S. thinking. The Clinton administration, for example, adopted a more flexible approach, emphasizing positive engagement and incentives to persuade both Pakistan and India to freeze their nuclear weapons programs. The new U.S. emphasis on engagement in South Asia represented another turning point in Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program.

Recognizing the central role of the military in the formulation of Pakistan’s nuclear policy, the Clinton administration held negotiations with the Pakistani political leadership and the military high command, offering them both military and economic incentives. In 1993 U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South

Asian Affairs Robin Raphel visited Pakistan. Under a onetime waiver of the Pressler amendment and in return for a cap on uranium enrichment, Raphel, on behalf of the United States, offered to deliver the twenty-eight F-16s that Pakistan had purchased before the embargo and to sell the Pakistanis military hardware.33

Despite Pakistan's reluctance to compromise, the United States continued to negotiate with the Pakistani military.34 Under the Brown amendment to the 1996 Foreign Assistance Act, a onetime waiver of the Pressler amendment, the United States agreed to sell $368 million worth of military hardware to Pakistan.35 U.S. concessions and President Bill Clinton's flexible approach were seen by Pakistani policymakers as the unraveling of U.S. resolve to halt South Asian nuclear proliferation and the acceptance of Pakistan's and India's de facto nuclear status. At a time when South Asian leaders were receiving mixed signals from the United States on horizontal proliferation, the regional nuclear equation changed drastically when India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) abandoned nuclear ambiguity for a policy of overt weaponization.

**The May 1998 Nuclear Tests and Their Consequences**

Pakistan's relations with India improved considerably after a meeting between Prime Ministers I.K. Gujral and Nawaz Sharif at the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit in Male in May 1997, in which they agreed to open a dialogue. As foreign minister, Gujral in March 1997 had adopted a policy of improving India's relations with its neighbors. Sharif, who had been a businessman before entering politics, also believed that improved relations, especially closer trade links, would benefit both India and Pakistan. He declared at one point that "we must come out of the atmosphere of confrontation, we should learn lessons from the past."36 Subsequently, the two states agreed to hold foreign secretary-level talks in mid-1997 on a range of contentious issues, including Kashmir.

33. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott made a similar offer the same year.
35. The Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, however, refused to make another concession to the Pakistani military. Specifically, it would not resume military-to-military links under the International Military and Education Training program, proposed in the Harkin-Warner amendment to the Foreign Operation Appropriations Act in mid-1997.
The dialogue process came to a halt, however, after the BJP’s electoral victory in April 1998. The BJP’s aversion to any compromise on the Kashmir issue and its threats to opt for an overt nuclear weapons policy were partly responsible for the deterioration in Indo-Pakistani relations. In its election manifesto, for example, the BJP had promised to “reevaluate” the nuclear policy and to “exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.” Pakistan’s foreign office bureaucrats, however, by insisting on the centrality of the Kashmir dispute in any future resolution of Pakistan’s differences with India, were equally responsible for derailing the talks even before the dismissal of the Gujral government. Furthermore, the Pakistani military did not approve of Sharif’s attempts to open negotiations with India, and the perfect opportunity to stall the dialogue was presented as the BJP, a party that is perceived in Pakistan as an anti-Muslim, Hindu-extremist organization, formed a government in New Delhi.

In April 1998 Pakistan’s military high command raised the stakes in its nuclear and missile arms race with India by testing the Ghauri ballistic missile, which it claimed was nuclear-capable and had a reach of 1,500 kilometers. Pakistani policymakers declared that the threat posed by India’s short-range and intermediate-range missiles had been equalized now that Pakistan had the ability to strike any major Indian city. Even as the international community focused its attention on preventing a destabilizing ballistic missile race in South Asia, the BJP government decided to honor its election pledge by testing a series of nuclear devices.

India’s nuclear tests surprised the international community, particularly the United States, which had not expected the BJP to follow through on its threat of overt weaponization. Following the Indian tests, the United States attempted to ward off a retaliatory Pakistani response. For their part, Pakistani policymakers initially adopted a wait-and-see attitude to have time to assess the international community’s response to the Indian tests. At the same time,

38. The Pakistani government has repeatedly refuted media reports that the Ghauri was developed with technology acquired from North Korea.
39. As a result of assurances given by India during high-level meetings between Indian and U.S. officials, the United States believed that India would continue to exercise nuclear restraint. These meetings included Indian Foreign Secretary K. Ragunath’s visit to the United States on April 2 and presidential envoy Bill Richardson’s visit to India in early May. Jyothi Malhotra, “Days of Dialogue,” *Indian Express*, May 1, 1998.
however, they were making preparations for a retaliatory test at a site in Baluchistan.

Within Pakistani policymaking circles, the tussle between supporters of overt weaponization and proponents of the official policy of nuclear ambiguity began in earnest, with both sides attempting to gain public support by using the broadcast and print media. Prime Minister Sharif, aware of Pakistan's vulnerability to economic sanctions, hesitated in opting for a retaliatory test. His cabinet, however, was divided between those who opposed nuclear tests and long-standing supporters of weaponization. Proponents included Information Minister Mushahid Hussain, who controlled the broadcast media, a powerful avenue for influencing public opinion in a country with a largely illiterate population. Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub, General Ayub Khan's son, whose resignation had been submitted but not formally accepted just weeks before the Indian nuclear tests, became the most ardent official supporter of overt weaponization, often contradicting Sharif's more cautious posture. Ayub's support for overt weaponization reflected the thinking of the armed forces, which were still in charge of the overall direction of Pakistan’s nuclear policy, and where the predominant belief was that Pakistan had no choice but to test. In the words of one senior officer: “We will never be able to remove the nuclear imbalance if we do not follow suit with our own explosion.” Hence a tit-for-tat response was almost inevitable.

Pakistan, however, had made the decision to respond to an Indian nuclear test with a test of its own as early as 1995, when the government of Narasimha Rao decided to test India’s nuclear devices. U.S. intelligence detected the Indian preparations, however, and the government, under U.S. pressure, opted not to test. In 1996, after India's intentions to test were made public, Pakistan completed its preparations for a retaliatory test at a site in the Chagai district of southwestern Baluchistan, bordering on Iran and Afghanistan.

Following India's May 1998 tests, the United States sent Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott to ask the Pakistanis to exercise restraint. In negotiations with Islamabad, Washington offered a series of economic and military incentives, including repeal of the Pressler amendment. At the same time, U.S. officials warned Pakistan that economic sanctions would be imposed if it tested a nuclear device.

41. According to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's preparations for test explosion were meant to deter India and to warn the West “that they had better do something to stop the Indians.” Quoted in Zahid Hussain, “Laying the Groundwork,” Newsline (June 1998), p. 24.
In a telephone conversation with President Clinton, Prime Minister Sharif stressed that, given the extreme pressure he was under, his options were limited. According to Sharif, the decision “was out of my hands,” implying that the final decision lay with the military high command. The only way Sharif could have successfully lobbied the armed forces against overt weaponization would have been to provide tangible proof that testing would gravely harm Pakistani interests. The muted international reaction to the Indian tests, however, undermined Sharif’s stand. Although the United States did impose economic and military sanctions against India under the Glenn amendment, other UN Security Council members and the Group of Eight (G-8) merely condemned the Indian tests, refusing to follow the U.S. example of punitive action.

The absence of a concerted international response tilted the internal balance in Pakistan in favor of a retaliatory test. Pakistani policymakers believed that the costs of testing would be bearable in both political and economic terms. Furthermore, they feared that a failure to test could undermine other vital Pakistani interests, particularly in Kashmir. In the wake of the Indian tests, BJP Interior Minister Lal Krishna Advani warned Pakistan that it would be “costly” and “futile” if Pakistan did not end its intervention in Kashmir, adding that India’s nuclear tests had brought about a “qualitatively new stage in Indo-Pakistan relations.” A final factor in favor of testing was the question of prestige. Following the Indian tests, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee called upon the international community to admit India into the exclusive nuclear weapons club. For Pakistani policymakers, particularly the military, a nuclear stature less than India’s was unacceptable.

Thus hostility toward India was rife in Pakistan, and public opinion was manipulated in favor of testing. On May 28 and 30, Pakistan tested its nuclear devices at Chagai and later declared that the success of the tests demonstrated its nuclear weapons capability. Addressing jubilant Pakistanis, Prime Minister Sharif announced, “Today we have settled scores with India by detonating five nuclear devices of our own.” He added, “We have paid them back.”

Concerned about the possibility of an adverse international response, Pakistani government officials asked important foreign actors, particularly the United States, to understand Pakistan’s security needs. They stressed that Pakistan had been forced to test simply to counterbalance the new threat India posed to its security. Hoping to defuse international pressure and, even opti-

44. Quoted in Hussain, “The Bomb and After,” p. 22.
mistically, to gain some diplomatic leverage over India on the Kashmir dispute, the Pakistani government also stressed that Pakistan’s and India’s overt nuclear weapons status had increased the chances of an outbreak of conflict, which now could have a nuclear dimension.45

Pakistan’s retaliatory response, however, increased international concern about the dangers posed by an overt nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. On June 6 the UN Security Council passed a U.S.-sponsored resolution deploiring the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests. The foreign ministers of the permanent five members of the council (P-5) in Geneva unanimously condemned the nuclear tests and urged both states to exercise restraint and refrain from assembling and deploying their nuclear weapons and further developing their missile delivery systems. In addition, the P-5, the G-8, and the European Union asked Pakistan and India to join the international non-proliferation regime as nonnuclear weapons states, to sign the NPT and the CTBT without conditions, and to participate actively in negotiations on a fissile material cutoff agreement in the Conference on Disarmament.

Pakistan dismissed the international condemnation as discriminatory and unfair. Nonetheless, it faced a formidable challenge in the form of economic sanctions that were imposed in response to its tests. The immediate goal of Pakistani policymakers, therefore, was to minimize the negative impact of sanctions on their weak economy in a way that would not jeopardize Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program. The Pakistani decision to test had been made in the belief that U.S. bilateral sanctions would have little adverse effect on the Pakistani economy in the absence of an international consensus for punitive action.46 It had also been assumed that Pakistan’s allies, including China and the Islamic Middle Eastern states, would help Pakistan withstand diplomatic isolation and economic pressure. Sanctions, however, seriously destabilized the fragile Pakistani economy, already in dire straits as a result of decades of mismanagement and political instability.

U.S. sanctions imposed under the Glenn amendment included opposition to nonhumanitarian credits and loans to Pakistan from international financial

45. Urging the international community to find a solution to the Kashmir dispute, Foreign Minister Ayub warned that “with the situation so volatile and in the presence of mistrust and suspicion... a nuclear conflict could erupt.” Quoted in Anwar Iqbal, “Pakistan Yet to React to U.S. Sanctions,” News, June 20, 1998.

46. The decision to test was influenced by the Pakistani belief that sanctions would not last long. This was reflected in the 1998 budget, in which estimates were based on projected foreign assistance inflows of 152 billion rupees for 1998, an increase over similar inflows of 141 billion rupees in 1997. See “IMF Puts Loans to Pakistan on Hold,” Dawn, June 17, 1998; and “Economic Experts’ Views: Budget Lacks Steps to Offset Effects of Cuts,” Dawn, June 22, 1998.
Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Program

Institutions including the World Bank, the IMF, and the Asian Development Bank. Japan, Pakistan’s largest aid donor and a major trading partner, also imposed economic sanctions. Under U.S. sponsorship and with Japanese support, a coordinated international strategy of punitive action emerged. On June 12, 1998, the G-8 decided to defer other than humanitarian loans from these financial institutions to both Pakistan and India. In addition, European Union foreign ministers recommended a delay of nonhumanitarian loans to India and Pakistan, warning that an even harsher punitive approach could be adopted if Pakistan and India failed to demonstrate progress toward restraining their nuclear arms competition.

According to Pakistan’s finance minister, Ishaq Dar, sanctions would cost Pakistan $1.5 billion annually in preferential loans and aid and $2.5 billion in foreign investment and remittances. The impact of sanctions was far more severe, however. On the first day of trading after the Pakistani tests, the Karachi stock market crashed and has since lost more than $4 billion in value. Domestic and external investment continues to decline, and the Pakistani rupee has weakened considerably. Inflation is rampant as the government attempts to deal with the widening gap in its domestic and foreign deficit by increasing the price of fuel and imposing additional direct and indirect taxes. The freezing of foreign currency accounts to prevent capital outflow has further eroded market confidence, resulting in a sharp decline in foreign remittances.

Since the 1980s Pakistan has used foreign currency inflows, including credits and loans from multilateral agencies, to finance current account deficits, which in turn has resulted in a growing external debt. To service this debt and to purchase essential commodities such as fuel and food, Pakistan has become heavily dependent on credits and loans from international financial institutions. Hence the IMF decision to defer the disbursement of payments under a $1.6 billion extended structural adjustment facility greatly aggravated Pakistan’s balance-of-payments deficit. As of November 1998 Pakistan had approximately $500 million in foreign exchange reserves to service $32 billion of debt.47

In an attempt to divert domestic attention away from the adverse economic consequences of nuclear testing, the government has emphasized the need for national cohesion in the face of multiple external threats and pressures. It has thus condemned the international sanctions regime as a bid to undermine Pakistani sovereignty.48 Appeals have been made to help the government resist

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external pressures by supporting revenue-raising schemes such as the National Self-Reliance Fund. The importance of Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability in neutralizing the Indian threat has been highlighted against the backdrop of increased tensions, including clashes along the Line of Control in Kashmir. These diversionary tactics, however, have failed to counter rising socioeconomic tensions in a deteriorating economic climate. As a result, political divisions along regional and ethnic lines have continued to widen.

The manner in which the May 1998 nuclear tests were conducted has contributed to increased ethnoregional tensions and schisms. Prior to the tests, an internal consensus of sorts existed on Pakistan's need for a nuclear weapons capability to counter the perceived Indian threat. The Pakistani nuclear tests and the imposition of U.S. sanctions did initially result in a rally-round-the-flag response. The immediate deterioration of the economy as a result of sanctions, however, has led to unprecedented internal debate among segments of Pakistan's civil society on the pros and cons of its overt nuclear weapons status. This debate also marks an overwhelming rejection of the government's attempt to silence dissenting views with the imposition of a state of emergency (i.e., civil martial law) following the nuclear tests, effectively depriving Pakistani citizens of their constitutionally guaranteed civil rights. The Supreme Court later upheld the state of emergency but removed all restrictions on fundamental rights.

The declaration of a state of emergency has taken the domestic debate beyond Pakistan's nuclear choices to questions of the very nature of the state. In Baluchistan, where the Pakistani nuclear tests were conducted, the ruling party, the Baluchistan National Party (BNP), and its student wing, the Baluchistan Students' Organization, have criticized Pakistan's nuclear weapons policy on the grounds that scarce resources are being diverted from developmental purposes to defense. In July 1998 the BNP government, despite an alliance with Prime Minister Sharif's Muslim League, was dismissed after losing its parliamentary majority following internal defections. BNP Chief Minister Sardar Akhtar Mengal accused the center and its intelligence agencies of having contrived his dismissal to punish his party for its opposition to Pakistan's nuclear weapons policy and, specifically, to the tests on Baluch soil.\footnote{The Muslim League's parliamentary secretary in the National Assembly, Syed Zafar Ali Shah, claimed that Mengal's government could have arrested the scientists involved in the nuclear explosions had a state of emergency not been imposed, a charge later refuted by his own government. "Mengal Denies PML Leader's Charges," \emph{Dawn}, June 11, 1998.} In Sindh and the North West Frontier Province, the state of emergency is seen as yet
another encroachment by the Punjabi-dominated central government on provincial autonomy. Their grievances against the center have led to the forging of an alliance among the political leaderships of Sindh, the North West Frontier Province, and Baluchistan, posing a further challenge to a besieged central government presiding over an economic collapse.

**Conclusion**

Less concerned about the adverse domestic repercussions of testing than about the strain on the economy as a result of sanctions, and conscious of the dangers of default should the United States continue to block multilateral funding, Pakistan's leadership has begun to reevaluate its nuclear options. Despite its unwillingness to roll back the nuclear program, the military high command is also aware that Pakistan lacks the economic and technological means for full-scale weaponization and deployment. Both would require additional expenditures—for example, for the establishment of an adequate command, control, and communications infrastructure—which the country's strained economy could not possibly sustain.

Technological and material assistance from China could have helped counter some of the economic constraints on Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, but, contrary to expectations, China has not helped Pakistan break its diplomatic isolation. The Chinese have been far more critical of the Indian decision to test than that of their regional ally. However, for the Chinese, an overt nuclear arms race between two mutually hostile states in its immediate neighborhood is cause for concern. Thus China has fully supported the UN Security Council resolution condemning the Pakistani and Indian nuclear tests. In a joint statement with Russia, India's ally, China has called upon both India and Pakistan to join the NPT and the CTBT unconditionally as nonnuclear weapons powers. In a joint statement issued after summit talks, Presidents Jiang Zemin and Bill Clinton declared their resolve to work together "within the P-5, the Security Council, and other international forums to prevent an accelerating nuclear and missile arms race in South Asia and strengthen international nonproliferation efforts and the peaceful resolution of differences between India and Pakistan."^50 Chinese pledges to support efforts to restrain Pakistan's nuclear weap-

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Recognizing the serious nature of the economic crisis, however, the United States has offered Pakistan certain incentives in return for progress toward nonproliferation. Thus, in its negotiations with Pakistan, Washington has offered to remove its objections to IMF loans in return for Pakistani nonproliferation pledges, including Pakistani guarantees of nondeployment of nuclear weapons and their missile delivery systems as well as nontransfer of nuclear weapons and weapons-related technology. The United States has also specifically called for Pakistan's accession to the CTBT.

Because a default on its external debt liabilities could cut off Pakistan from all sources of external finance—its credit rating has already sunk to the lowest level possible—its leaders have pledged that they would neither deploy nor transfer nuclear weapons. They have not, however, agreed to a verifiable cap. More substantive pledges have been made on the CTBT, as Pakistan has declared its willingness to sign the treaty even without Indian accession. Initially, in the post-test period Pakistan declared a moratorium on nuclear testing but warned that it could reverse its position if India took the lead in the nuclear arms race. According to an official spokesperson, "There are a number of factors which need to be analyzed, including the results of India's nuclear tests and its potential weapons capability." Since then Pakistan, in parliament and in its negotiations with the United States and the UN General Assembly, has proclaimed its acceptance of the CTBT, conditional upon the easing of sanctions by the United States and other concerned international actors.

On November 7, 1998, President Clinton decided on a partial lifting of sanctions against Pakistan and India, using the one-year waiver authority provided by the India-Pakistan Relief Act (also known as the Brownback amendment), which Congress passed on October 22. According to a U.S. official, sanctions have been eased because of the "concrete steps" Pakistan and India have taken "to address our nonproliferation concerns." This action includes U.S. support for IMF assistance to Pakistan as a one-time exception to

55. In his address to the UN General Assembly on September 22, Sharif declared that Pakistan would sign the CTBT before September 1999 (the first meeting of CTBT state members) "only in conditions free from coercion and pressure." Quoted in Masood Hyder, "PM Seeks Parity with India on CTBT Issue," Dawn, September 24, 1998; and Raja Zulfiqar, "Pakistan Ready to Adhere to the CTBT," News, September 24, 1998.
56. Quoted in "U.S. Partially Lifts Curbs against Pakistan, India," News, November 8, 1998. U.S. Export-Import Bank lending and access to loans from the Trade and Development Agency, Overseas Private Investment Corporation risk insurance cover, and international military education training have been restored to both Pakistan and India.
the sanctions still in place. Thus the Pakistani government hopes to receive between $3.5 and $4 billion in loans from multilateral institutions and narrowly avert the danger of default in 1998–99.57 Because sanctions on multilateral lending will otherwise remain in place, pressure on the Pakistani economy will continue to mount.58 Pakistani decisionmakers, therefore, might be forced to consider other nonproliferation measures. The military, however, will oppose a more substantive rollback as long as it considers the nuclear weapons program essential for reasons of security and prestige.59

The Muslim League government, facing a resurgent opposition, unable to resolve Pakistan's pressing political and economic problems, and conscious of the high command's dismissals of previous governments, is unlikely to challenge the military's preferences. The government, for example, has rejected external pressures for reconciliation with India, using the Kashmir issue to block any progress toward a substantial dialogue, knowing that the military would oppose such a policy. Thus Prime Minister Sharif continues to stress that improved relations with India are conditional on a resolution of the Kashmir dispute, which remains the "sole root-cause of the problems and tensions in the region."60 Ongoing secretary-level negotiations in Islamabad and New Delhi on a number of contentious issues have failed to make any progress, as Pakistani officials accuse India of attempting to "vitiating the atmosphere" by maintaining an unfair position that "grossly" damages the cause of peace in South Asia.61

The internal contradictions in Pakistan's power structure, therefore, continue to be primarily responsible for its nuclear choices. Should the economic crisis spiral out of control, the military could remove the Muslim League government from power by making Prime Minister Sharif the scapegoat for the adverse domestic and international repercussions of testing. In such an eventuality, the military would continue to dominate the nuclear decisionmaking process, weakening domestic constituencies who favor nuclear restraint through coer-

58. According to IMF sources, Pakistan's existing annual funding gap is more than $5 billion.
cion and the manipulation of public opinion. Domestic imperatives will inevitably play a major role in determining the direction of Pakistan's nuclear policy. Therefore they cannot be ignored in any future international efforts to contain, let alone reverse, Pakistani nuclear proliferation. At the same time, the policies of influential actors such as the United States must also demonstrate a clear resolve to roll back and ultimately eliminate South Asian nuclear proliferation so as to avoid giving mixed signals to Pakistani policymakers.

Bilateral and multilateral economic sanctions, because they have been accompanied by tangible incentives (i.e., the resumption of multilateral lending) have succeeded in forcing an economically vulnerable Pakistan to reluctantly express its willingness to accept the CTBT. A mix of incentives and sanctions could prove equally effective in persuading Pakistan to make further nonproliferation concessions, but only if they are targeted, flexible, and multilateral. Moreover, nonproliferation strategies must be formulated in a way that both influences public opinion and persuades Pakistani officials to accept nuclear restraint.

An effective nonproliferation policy should make a clear distinction between the general public and decisionmakers, because sanctions that affect the weaker segments of society without influencing the behavior of governments are countereffective in the long run. In the Pakistani context, sanctions and incentives should be used to target those institutions and officials who support a nuclear weapons option, with the aim of influencing their behavior. For example, multilateral curbs on the sale of conventional armaments could be used to target Pakistan's military establishment, which, facing economic constraints and a widening arms disparity vis-à-vis India, could begin to rethink its nuclear ambitions. At the same time, targeted incentives could include a partial forgiveness of Pakistan's mounting external debt in return for tangible progress toward nonproliferation, provided the rewards were specifically allocated to developmental activities and could not be diverted to military use. Such steps would go a long way toward strengthening domestic constituencies for peace.

A nonproliferation policy that is based on targeted sanctions and incentives needs a gestation period to affect domestic behavior. Therefore care should be taken to ensure that such policies are not changed in midstream. In the past, U.S. policies toward Pakistan failed because of tactical compromises or impa-

tience with the lack of immediate results. According to a U.S. official, there is little doubt that Washington’s concern about a potential Pakistani economic meltdown was responsible for President Clinton’s decision to ease sanctions “in a very limited, targeted way” in November 1998.63 The United States, however, must take care that the flexibility provided by the Brownback amendment is wisely used and that the international consensus on horizontal proliferation in South Asia remains intact. In the post-test nuclear environment, when one obstacle to full-scale weaponization has already been removed, there is urgent need for consistency and patience. Should the international community ignore the penultimate goal of eliminating nuclear proliferation in South Asia, the arms race will continue unabated, threatening regional security and the lives of more than a billion people.

63. “U.S. Partially Lifts Curbs against Pakistan, India.”