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nuclear weapons might cause Islamabad and New Delhi to maintain a limited and covert nuclear weapons capability—including a proven design and a small stockpile of weapons-grade fissile material—without actually building operational weapons or conducting a nuclear test. This is essentially what India has done since 1974. In such a situation, both countries would still retain the option of moving from prototype designs to production of nuclear weapons, but would not do so because of the risk of precipitating a nuclear arms race or a dangerous confrontation. Islamabad may believe that the ambiguity of this approach would make it more likely that Pakistan could retain US economic and military support. India might opt for such a stance in hopes of maintaining the moral high ground it wants for advocating worldwide nuclear disarmament.

19. Pervasive suspicions about each other's nuclear programs work against either country's maintaining a limited nuclear capability, without weapons. Each country already is concerned that the other has begun secretly producing weapons components, which could be assembled on short notice. Each side would suspect the other of trying to mass a large stockpile of weapons-usable uranium or plutonium. Each would see the other's efforts to develop a missile delivery capability as an indication that it planned to build nuclear weapons eventually. Such problems could be overcome by a verification system in which both India and Pakistan had full confidence such as mutual inspection of key nuclear facilities. At the present time, however, neither appears likely to permit such a verification system.

Overt Proliferation

20. There is broad popular support in both countries for nuclear weapons. Some Indians and probably a few Pakistanis favor testing or announcing they have nuclear weapons at the earliest opportunity despite the political and economic costs of doing so. Indian advocates believe that overt proliferation is in New Delhi's interest because it removes ambiguity and clearly establishes India as a nuclear power of which China, the United States, and the USSR must take account. A few Pakistanis would welcome the disruption of relations with the United States and probably also believe a demonstrated or publicly stated nuclear capability would gain Pakistan great prestige and influence as the keeper of the "Islamic Bomb."

21. However, the present governments in New Delhi and especially in Islamabad want to avoid the costs of overt weapons proliferation at this time. Pakistan does

not want to provoke an automatic and immediate suspension of US security assistance that is essential to improving its conventional military capabilities, and we believe the Pakistanis will not test a nuclear device as long as they are receiving significant US military and economic aid.

22. New Delhi believes it has more to lose than to gain by overt proliferation. Besides tarnishing its international image with a new test or by declaring it has nuclear weapons, India does not want to provoke Pakistan into testing or declaring it has nuclear weapons. An unambiguous Pakistani nuclear capability would shatter the Indians' image of their country as superior to Pakistan and leave the government vulnerable to charges that its policies—especially efforts to improve relations with Islamabad—dangerously undermine national security.

23. Both countries also recognize that overt proliferation will dramatically alter their relationship and fundamentally change policy assumptions. We believe that neither India nor Pakistan presently wants overt proliferation because of uncertainties regarding the impact of nuclear weapons on their political and military calculations and likely perceptions that a destabilizing nuclear arms race would result.

Covert Weapons Stockpiling

24. If the Indians and Pakistanis were to decide to move to actual weapons production, they would prefer the ambiguity of covert nuclear weapons stockpiling to the likely costs and uncertainties of overt proliferation. Both countries probably regard covert stockpiles as meeting their requirement for deterrence because each believes the other is at least on the threshold of having nuclear weapons.

25. Covert stockpiling could produce a stable situation for a time, especially if both countries' assumptions remained about where they are now. It would be crucial for both to refrain from provocative military, political, and nuclear-related actions. We believe Pakistani President Zia and Gandhi support reconciliation, despite domestic pressure to go slowly. Significant progress in their bilateral relations—such as signing a friendship treaty or nonaggression pact and increasing economic ties—and in defusing tensions over meddling in each other's ethnic and sectarian problems would greatly enhance the prospects for limiting nuclear weapons.

26. The ambiguity inherent in such a covert nuclear posture could eventually—possibly quickly—cause either or both countries to test or openly declare that

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KEY JUDGMENTS

The key questions at hand in Indo-Pakistani relations are whether a nuclear arms race will develop; and, if so, whether that will be more likely to impose caution or help generate war:

- The possession of nuclear weapons (or the components for them) by both parties within the next 10 years is probable and will certainly introduce a heightened element of risk.
- As for the consequences of proliferation:
 - There are a number of constraints that over the short term—the next few years—would tend to impel India and Pakistan to caution, in both the building of nuclear arsenals and the use of nuclear weapons.
 - Nonetheless, over the longer term, nuclear weapons would exacerbate the enduring historical antagonisms, territorial disputes, and the pervasive mutual suspicions characteristic of their relations, increasing the likelihood of war between India and Pakistan.

In the meantime, neither party will be likely to abandon its nuclear weapons option:

- Pakistan, despite the risks to its strategic relationship with the United States, believes a nuclear weapons capability is imperative to ensure Pakistan's independence and survival against India.
- India believes it must retain a nuclear weapons option to counter a nuclear Pakistan in the short term and to deter a nuclear China in the longer term. Also, some Indians believe nuclear weapons would establish India as a major world power of which China, the United States, and the USSR must take greater account.

At the moment, both sides are at the nuclear weapons threshold:

- Pakistan probably has enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear device and probably could assemble a nuclear device within a few months of a decision to do so. Pakistan could also conduct a nuclear test within this period if such a decision were

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they have nuclear weapons, especially if Indo-Pakistani tensions increase. Without some kind of mutual inspections of at least some nuclear facilities, each would suspect the other of attempting to gain nuclear superiority. Uncertainty about the other's nuclear intentions, capabilities, and potential would provide strong incentive for both countries to accelerate the production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons at some point. In our view, either country would regard operational deployment of nuclear weapons by the other as a destabilizing effort to gain a strategic advantage.

Arms Control

27. Although there is no historical precedent, the Indians in particular may believe that covert nuclear weapons stockpiling—rather than overt proliferation—would improve the chances of India's and Pakistan's reaching an agreement or tacit understanding to restrain the nuclear competition between them. By implicitly accepting that Pakistan has the right to have nuclear weapons, India might hope to limit Islamabad to a small number of "bombs in the basement." The Pakistanis would be very wary of Indian attempts to limit their nuclear weapons capability, but almost certainly would regard restraints on India's significantly greater nuclear weapons potential to be in their interests. We believe that agreement by India and Pakistan to prohibit nuclear weapons entirely is most unlikely.

28. The December 1985 agreement by Gandhi and Zia not to attack each other's nuclear installations was the first attempt by the two countries to deal with the nuclear problem and could, in our view, provide a modest basis for preventing an open-ended nuclear arms race—which neither India nor Pakistan believes is in its interests. The no-attack pledge was initially conceived by Indian strategist K. Subrahmanyam as the first in a series of confidence-building measures that ultimately would lead to assurances that neither India nor Pakistan would test or operationally deploy nuclear weapons, or be the first to use them in war. Subrahmanyam's proposal also envisaged eventually including China in a broader regional agreement to limit nuclear weapons.

29. We do not believe that an agreement or tacit understanding to limit covert nuclear weapons stockpiles would hold for long because neither Pakistan nor India will allow its weapons-related nuclear facilities to be placed under international safeguards or opened for mutual inspections. In the likely atmosphere of enduring political suspicions, some kind of verification

measures in which both sides had high confidence would be essential to ensure that fissile material was not being diverted to weapons use. New Delhi quickly dismissed Zia's proposals last summer that the two countries sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or agree to mutual inspection of their nuclear facilities and declare a regional nuclear-weapons-free zone. The Indians oppose the NPT on principle, refusing to sign a treaty they believe discriminates against nonnuclear weapons states, and they do not believe an agreement to prevent weapons proliferation is verifiable. They argue that Islamabad could easily hide fissile material it has already produced and that there are no established and proven methods for safeguarding a uranium enrichment facility.

Implications of a Nuclear Arms Race

Potential for Overt Proliferation

30. A cutoff in US aid to Pakistan would eliminate Islamabad's most important incentive not to conduct a nuclear test. In the event of a US aid cutoff, many Pakistanis probably would regard a nuclear test as essential to demonstrate Pakistan's defense against India. Nonetheless, Islamabad probably would still be reluctant to test out of concern for provoking other countries to isolate Pakistan politically and economically. A few Pakistanis might argue, however, that a test—by resolving the issue—would remove it as an irritant in relations with the United States and that, in any case, US aid would eventually resume as it has in the past. The Pakistanis would be most concerned that a test would cause India to accelerate its nuclear weapons program and might cause the Indians to launch an airstrike against Pakistan's nuclear facilities to destroy Islamabad's capacity to build a large nuclear weapons stockpile.

31. Even if the Pakistanis did not test, New Delhi would come under increasing pressure to openly declare that it had nuclear weapons if the Indians were convinced that Pakistan was not restraining its nuclear weapons program:

- Expansion of the uranium enrichment facility at Kahuta would cause India to believe Pakistan was trying to gain a nuclear advantage.
- Damaging revelations about the Pakistani nuclear program in the US Congress or media might cause New Delhi to believe that the United States had reliable intelligence that Pakistan was not limiting its covert nuclear stockpile.

Nonetheless, the likely costs of an overt program might still cause New Delhi not to openly declare it had nuclear weapons.

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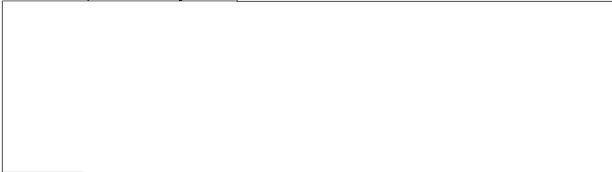
DISCUSSION

1. Nuclear weapons proliferation in South Asia probably cannot be prevented, but we believe that both Pakistan and India—prompted in part by US diplomatic efforts—believe it is in their national interests to restrain the nuclear competition between them. Because of historical antagonisms and mutual suspicions about the other's political, military, and nuclear intentions, neither Pakistan nor India will abandon its nuclear weapons option. 

Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Potential

Nuclear Capabilities

2. We believe that Pakistan can explode a nuclear device within a few months of a decision to do so. Although plagued by early technical problems and the lack of some equipment that delayed the program, the Pakistani enrichment facility at Kahuta probably by now has produced enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear device. 



 It is difficult to predict how soon Pakistan could have a deliverable nuclear weapon, however. 

3. Pakistan's only significant source of plutonium for nuclear weapons is from safeguarded spent fuel from the power reactor at Karachi. But Islamabad currently has no significant capability to reprocess this fuel even if it abrogated safeguards. The Pakistanis may be considering construction of a new reactor for plutonium production that would not be placed under international safeguards. Such a reactor, which would be based on widely available reactor technology, would require five to 10 years to build and could eventually provide the Pakistanis with enough weapons-grade plutonium for at least one or two nuclear weapons per year. Because of the limited capacity of the Pakistani reprocessing facility near Islamabad, a larger reprocessing facility would have to be built as well. 

Delivery Systems

4.  the nuclear weapon being developed by Pakistan is small enough to be carried by either their US F-16 or French Mirage fighters, which have the combat radius to reach many important targets in western India—including Bombay and New Delhi:

— With significantly greater mission radius and more advanced avionics, the F-16 would be by far the best Pakistani aircraft for nuclear missions. 



— Pakistan's Mirage III and Mirage V fighters are possible, but much less likely, aircraft for nuclear missions. 



— Pakistan also has six aging B-57 bombers with much greater range than its F-16s and Mirages, but is unlikely to use them as nuclear-strike aircraft because of their more limited avionics and performance capabilities. 

5. The Pakistanis have a fledgling program to develop a ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. The Pakistani missile program still lacks organizational coherence and almost certainly will face difficulties 



India's Nuclear Weapons Potential

Nuclear Capabilities

6. We believe that India could explode a nuclear device—though not necessarily a fully militarized

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56. It is possible, and very likely in the near term so long as Gandhi and Zia remain in power, that the sobering implications of nuclear weapons will cause New Delhi and Islamabad to invigorate efforts to improve relations and ameliorate tensions—including agreement or tacit understanding to restrain their nuclear competition. Expanding economic and political ties and possibly instituting conventional military confidence-building measures—such as limiting forces and arms buildups—would substantially increase the prospects for long-term peace and stability in South Asia. Even though India and Pakistan are not likely to agree on a political solution for Jammu and Kashmir, they may tacitly accept the cease-fire line as their permanent boundary and refrain from meddling in each other's internal affairs.

57. In the longer term, however, historical antagonisms, territorial disputes, and pervasive mutual suspicions—heightened by nuclear fears—are likely to prevent an enduring reconciliation. Rising tensions over any number or combination of issues could provoke crises that lead, directly or indirectly, to nuclear brinkmanship or to war:

- Jammu and Kashmir remains an important political and moral issue for Pakistan, and Islamabad would face strong pressure to assist a major anti-Indian uprising in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Similarly, Hindu-Muslim communal tensions, resulting in significant anti-Muslim violence and repression, would greatly increase tensions between India and Pakistan.
- An escalation of anti-Indian violence and the growth of militant Sikh separatism in Punjab State, bordering Pakistan, almost certainly would cause New Delhi to intensify its charges of Pakistani complicity and result in significant Indo-Pakistani tensions.
- Major antigovernment violence and secessionist sentiment in Pakistan's Sind Province, bordering India, which includes a substantial Hindu population, probably would cause Islamabad to blame New Delhi and also result in greatly heightened tensions.

58. In a period of rising tensions, the Indians and Pakistanis—thinking that nuclear weapons would deter the other from going to war—might believe their nuclear capabilities gave them more room for policy risks. The Pakistanis in particular might be emboldened to take advantage of turmoil in Jammu and Kashmir to press their claims for the disputed territory. Both countries would be inclined to believe the

other was willing to use the threat of nuclear weapons for intimidation and blackmail in a crisis. With or without nuclear weapons, brinkmanship policies would very greatly increase the chance of war by miscalculation; neither country would back down from a confrontation with the other where it believed its security was directly threatened.

59. Perceptions of the nuclear balance would have a significant effect on policy choices, especially regarding the use or threat of force. The Pakistanis possibly might believe the ambiguity of covert weapons stockpiles or a situation where both sides had approximately equal size nuclear forces would give them more options for provocative policies against India. The Indians might calculate that an eventual overwhelming nuclear superiority, together with a decided conventional military superiority, would give them greater leverage to pressure Pakistan.

60. In the event of war, both countries would be wary of nuclear escalation and might intentionally limit their military objectives. Either side, however, might believe it could press a military advantage without provoking a nuclear response because of the certainty of nuclear retaliation. A Pakistani perception that their much smaller nuclear forces lacked military credibility and were vulnerable to preemption might cause Islamabad to use nuclear weapons early in a conventional war. Once the nuclear threshold has been crossed, the Indians and Pakistanis might not be able to limit further use of nuclear weapons.

61. The period of transition from nonnuclear or undeclared weapons to credible deployed nuclear forces could be particularly dangerous. Although very unlikely, India, recognizing the high stakes and costs of conflict later on, might decide to launch a preemptive war during such a period to destroy Pakistan's capability to produce additional fissile material, decisively defeat Pakistan, and force a resolution of territorial disputes before the Pakistanis built up their nuclear deterrent. The Soviets in the late 1960s apparently gave serious consideration to destroying China's fledgling nuclear forces before they became a strategic threat to the USSR.

Implications for Regional Relationships

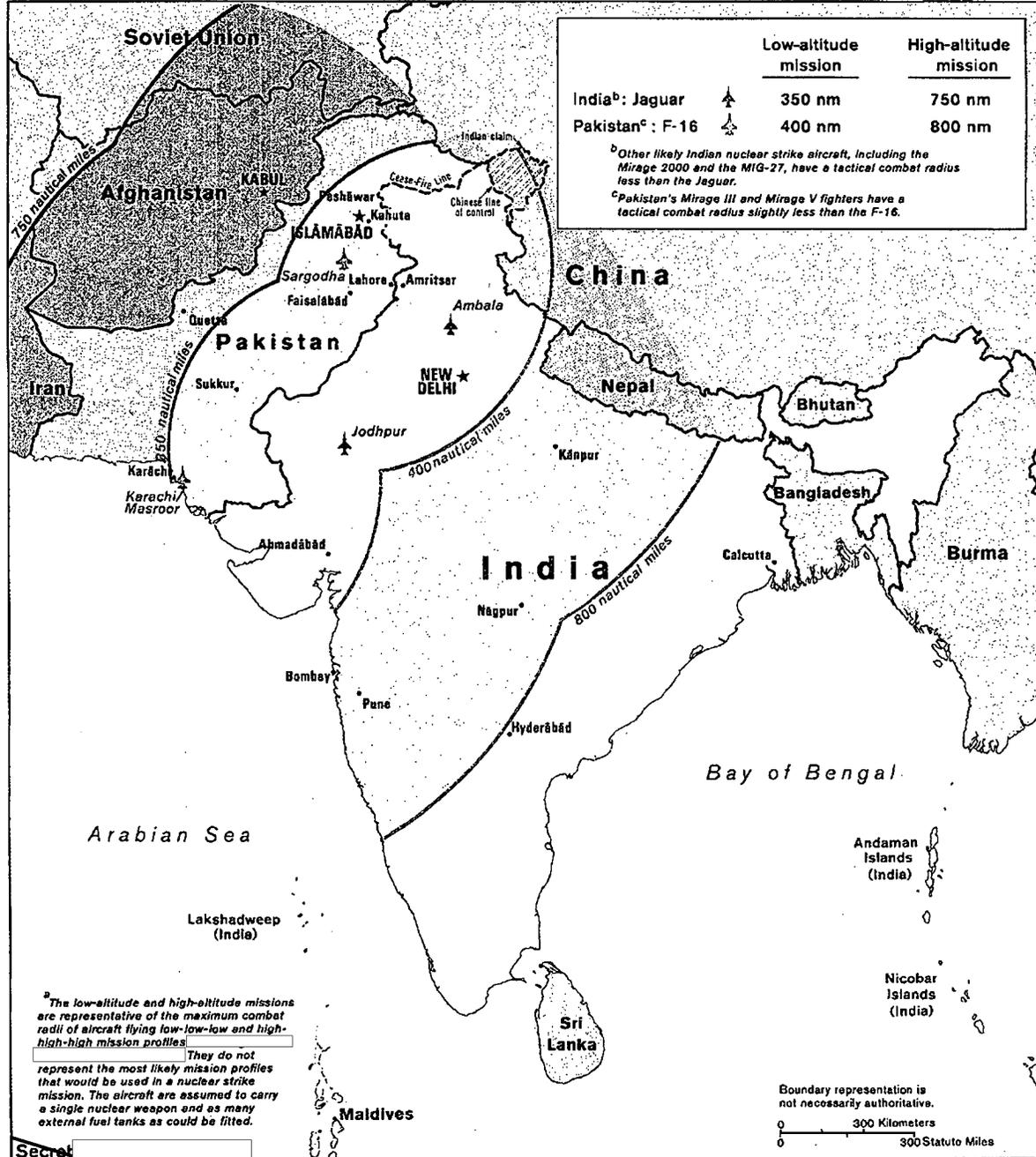
China

62. Although Chinese policy in the past has supported the right of any country to develop nuclear weapons and the Chinese have provided nuclear assistance to the Pakistanis, Beijing would not consider overt nuclear proliferation in South Asia to be in its

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Combat Radii of Likely Nuclear Strike Aircraft From India and Pakistan^a



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Delhi. The destruction of Pakistan's nuclear forces and production capability would be a major Indian military objective:

- Pakistan probably has not developed a comprehensive nuclear strategy or doctrine, but most likely would retain the option for first use of nuclear weapons. A Pakistani perception that their much smaller nuclear forces were vulnerable to preemption might cause Islamabad to use nuclear weapons early in a conventional war.
- India most likely would adopt a strategy that emphasizes no first use of nuclear weapons and—in the event Pakistan used nuclear weapons—measured retaliation in an effort to avert further use.
- Neither Pakistan nor India would initially use nuclear weapons against urban centers. However, once the nuclear threshold has been crossed, the Indians and Pakistanis might not be able to limit further use of nuclear weapons.

China and the USSR probably both are concerned that nuclear proliferation in South Asia would alter regional relationships to their disadvantage. Most likely, however, the key regional relationships with outside powers would not change significantly:

- The Indians probably would not significantly reduce their military dependence on the Soviets—as Moscow would fear—and many of their policies would remain compatible with Soviet interests.
- Beijing would not give Islamabad a nuclear guarantee against India and eventually might be receptive to new Indian initiatives for rapprochement, but would not abandon Pakistan.

Most Islamic countries would feel great pride in Pakistan's "Islamic Bomb," even though the present Pakistani Government would not be likely to share nuclear weapons technology with them. The Israelis might attempt a punitive strike against Pakistan's nuclear facilities if they believed the Pakistanis were giving the Arabs access to nuclear weapons technology, but they would be more likely to strike the Arab recipients of Pakistani nuclear weapons assistance.

Nuclear weapons proliferation in South Asia could severely complicate and harm US interests:

- A cutoff in US security assistance to Pakistan would remove a major disincentive to an overt weapons program and probably cause Islamabad to sharply reduce its support for the Afghan resistance, which would greatly facilitate Soviet efforts to consolidate their hold on Afghanistan.

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Implications for the Nonproliferation Regime

68. Overt weapons proliferation in South Asia probably would badly damage the international nonproliferation regime, especially within the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is central to the system. Other nuclear threshold states would feel much less constrained in developing and possibly even testing nuclear weapons. Covert Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons stockpiles would subvert and seriously damage the nonproliferation regime if they became known or suspected by other threshold countries and caused them to believe they could emulate the pattern of clandestine technology acquisitions without great risks. [redacted]

69. However, increased tensions between India and Pakistan resulting from nuclear proliferation might cause some threshold countries to decide against having nuclear weapons—especially if rising tensions led to nuclear brinkmanship or war. The economic and political costs to threshold countries could become more prohibitive if proliferation in South Asia caused nuclear supplier countries to strengthen the nonproliferation regime by tightening restrictions on sensitive technology transfer. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

70. India, in the near term at least, probably will not test or declare it has nuclear weapons unless Pakistan tests, and Pakistan almost certainly will not test unless its strategic relationship with the United States ruptures. Both countries, however, will pursue a covert nuclear weapons option—probably including some unassembled weapons. [redacted]

71. India and Pakistan probably will remain open to US diplomatic efforts to head off a nuclear arms race. US attempts to promote a nuclear dialogue, backed by continued security assistance for Pakistan and high-technology transfer for India, could encourage New Delhi and Islamabad to undertake a regional nonproliferation initiative of their own. [redacted]

[redacted] uncertainties about the other's nuclear capabilities would remain and eventually probably would undermine the basis for an agreement or tacit understanding to restrain the nuclear competition in South Asia. [redacted]

72. Nuclear weapons proliferation in South Asia—especially if it were overt—could severely harm US regional and nonproliferation interests:

— The suspension of security assistance to Pakistan provoked by a Pakistani nuclear test (or by other developments in the Pakistani nuclear program) would cause Islamabad to sharply reduce its support for US regional policies, including aid to the Afghan resistance. Without US-Pakistani cooperation in aiding the Afghans—or a major increase in Iranian aid to compensate for the loss of Pakistan—the Soviets eventually would crush the resistance and consolidate their control in Afghanistan.

— US-Indian relations initially would be set back by evidence that US aid had failed to prevent or restrain Pakistan's weapons program. The Indians already believe that the United States has closed its eyes to the Pakistani program because of Pakistan's importance as a strategic ally in opposing the Soviets in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the region.

— An end to US high-technology transfers to India, resulting from Indian weapons development would erase an opportunity for improved US-Indian relations. But in the long term, New Delhi's interest in US high technology and desire to avoid dependence on Moscow for new technologies might cause India to again seek improved ties to the United States.

— International perceptions that the United States had failed to prevent or restrain Pakistan's nuclear program—and possibly even had turned a blind eye to the Pakistani program because of Islamabad's strategic importance in supporting the Afghan resistance—would undermine the credibility of the US nonproliferation stance worldwide. [redacted]

73. The potential for nuclear escalation in an Indo-Pakistani war would increase the risks of a US-Soviet confrontation in South Asia. US options for trying to prevent nuclear escalation would be severely limited if the United States had only minimal influence in Islamabad and New Delhi, resulting from a cut back in ties provoked by their weapons programs. Both India and Pakistan, however, likely would welcome US—and Soviet—diplomatic efforts to end the fighting before either side made a decision to use nuclear weapons. [redacted]

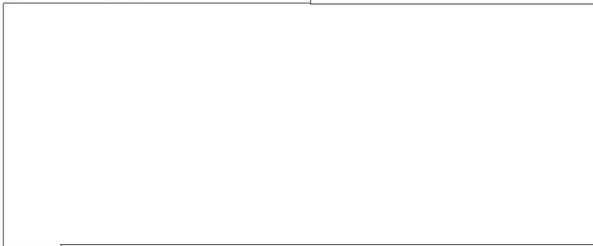
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weapon—at the Thar Desert test site within two or three weeks of a decision to conduct a new test. Another test might not be necessary to validate a primitive weapon design, but testing probably would be required for advanced nuclear weapons. We believe that India has the capability to produce deliverable nuclear weapons within a year.

7. With the exception of enriched uranium production, India has developed a complete nuclear fuel cycle capability. The Indians have several unsafeguarded reactors and two operating facilities for reprocessing spent reactor fuel.



8.

we cannot discount the possibility that India already has a small-scale covert program to fabricate nuclear weapons.



If the Indians have undertaken a small-scale covert program, the decision almost certainly was taken in the context of their estimates of Pakistani nuclear progress and on the assumption that proliferation is inevitable, rather than as a near-term counter to the Chinese nuclear threat.



Delivery Systems

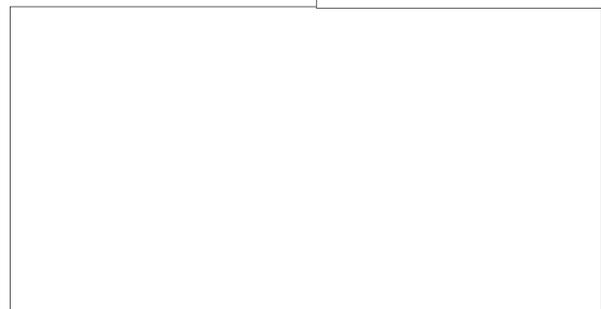
9. Indian military aircraft have the range and capability to bomb all the major cities and important military and economic targets in Pakistan. India's primary nuclear strike aircraft would very likely be its Mirage 2000 or Jaguar fighters, which have greater combat radii and weapons payload capacity than other

¹ The Department of Energy believes that Indian capability to produce unsafeguarded plutonium for use in nuclear weapons is overestimated in the Estimate by about a factor of 2 because the Indians will not be able to operate their facilities at projected capacities.



Indian aircraft. The Mirage 2000 has more advanced systems to enhance its capability to penetrate enemy air defenses. India's Soviet MIG-23s and MIG-27s have significantly less combat radii but could also be used to deliver nuclear weapons.

10. India is well along in developing the technology for long-range ballistic missiles. The Indians have developed rockets for space launches and have completed testing of most of the components that would be needed in a ballistic missile.



Nuclear Weapons Intentions

Pakistan

11. We believe there is a broad popular consensus in Pakistan that supports development of nuclear weapons. Even Pakistani opposition groups that oppose Islamabad's foreign and domestic policies agree that Pakistan should develop nuclear weapons.

12. Most Pakistanis are convinced that nuclear weapons are Pakistan's only credible long-term deterrent to Indian aggression:

- The Pakistanis believe that India's aspirations of unchallengeable regional dominance directly threaten Pakistan's security and perhaps even its survival as an independent state.
- Despite significant improvement in Pakistan's military capabilities with the acquisition of modern US weapons, India's conventional military advantages against Pakistan are increasing as a result of major new arms deals.
- Most Pakistanis regard the United States as an unreliable ally because of the US arms embargoes in two previous wars with India and they do not expect US support for Pakistan in the event of another conflict.

13. In our view, no amount of US security assistance or political pressure will cause Islamabad to forsake its nuclear weapons option. As important as US aid is to

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SCOPE NOTE

The circumstance of two antagonistic neighboring developing countries such as India and Pakistan having nuclear weapons is unprecedented. Previous Estimates have assessed the status and capabilities of the Pakistani and Indian nuclear programs and the policy implications for New Delhi, Islamabad, and Washington. This Estimate will focus on the prospects for political and military stability over the next 10 years in a nuclear South Asia. It addresses the implications of nuclear weapons in South Asia in terms of the following questions:

- What are the nuclear intentions of India and Pakistan?
- What are the prospects for restraint and stability in their nuclear competition?
- Is a nuclear agreement between India and Pakistan possible?
- Have India and Pakistan developed a strategy and doctrine for integrating and using nuclear weapons?
- In light of historical antagonisms, territorial disputes, and enduring suspicions, will nuclear weapons help defuse Indo-Pakistani tensions and make war between them less likely?

[REDACTED] the judgments in this Estimate should not be read as constituting confident predictions of the strategic dynamics of a nuclear South Asia over the next decade.

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
SCOPE NOTE	1
KEY JUDGMENTS	3
DISCUSSION	9
Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Potential	9
Nuclear Capabilities	9
Delivery Systems	9
India's Nuclear Weapons Potential	9
Nuclear Capabilities	9
Delivery Systems	11
Nuclear Weapons Intentions	11
Pakistan	11
India	12
Policy Alternatives and Implications	12
Limited Nuclear Weapons Capability	12
Overt Proliferation	13
Covert Weapons Stockpiling	13
Arms Control	14
Implications of a Nuclear Arms Race	14
Potential for Overt Proliferation	14
Prospects for Stability	15
Military Implications of Nuclear Weapons	17
Command and Control	17
Integrating Nuclear Forces	18
Nuclear Strategy and Doctrine for War	18
Prospects for Stability in Indo-Pakistani Relations	19
Implications for Regional Relationships	20
China	20
USSR	21
Islamic Countries	21
Israel	21
Implications for the Nonproliferation Regime	22
Implications for the United States	22

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SNIE 31/32-86L

IMPLICATIONS OF A
NUCLEAR SOUTH ASIA

Information available as of 17 June 1986 was used
in the preparation of this Estimate, which was
approved by the National Foreign Intelligence
Board on 25 June 1986.

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Pervasive suspicions about each other's nuclear programs work against either country's maintaining a limited nuclear capability, without weapons. If the Indians and Pakistanis were to decide to move to actual weapons production, they would prefer the ambiguity of covert nuclear weapons stockpiling to the likely costs and uncertainties of overt proliferation.

Pakistan and India probably would keep nuclear weapons disassembled until there was an imminent military threat. In addition, Pakistan might believe that keeping weapons disassembled would have the advantage of not jeopardizing US security assistance.

Expanding political and economic ties and defusing tensions over perceived meddling in each other's domestic problems would be important confidence-building measures for dealing with the nuclear issue. India and Pakistan probably would be open to US diplomatic efforts to head off an open-ended nuclear arms race in South Asia:

- US attempts to promote a nuclear dialogue might encourage New Delhi and Islamabad to undertake a new regional initiative to prevent overt proliferation.
- Continued US security assistance to Pakistan and technology transfer to India could provide strong incentive for Islamabad and New Delhi to avoid the costs of open nuclear proliferation.

A verification system in which both India and Pakistan had full confidence would also go far to ensure mutual restraint. Neither country, however, would be likely to agree to prohibit nuclear weapons entirely or adhere to international safeguards or allow the necessary inspections of weapons-related facilities to verify they are not expanding their covert stockpiles. Without adequate verification, the uncertainty of each other's nuclear capabilities would severely limit the prospects for mutual restraint in their covert stockpiles and over time would almost certainly result in a nuclear arms race.

With the potential to produce 10 times as many nuclear weapons as Pakistan, India would soon establish superiority in any nuclear arms race. The Indians are also far more advanced in ballistic missile development. New Delhi, however, most likely would not calculate that its nuclear superiority would deter Pakistan from using nuclear weapons or enable India to "win" a nuclear war.

The use of nuclear weapons in an Indo-Pakistani war would be most likely in the event Pakistan were faced with an imminent, catastrophic defeat—the destruction of the Pakistani Army and Air Force, Indian occupation, and a new government imposed by New

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- Evidence that US aid had failed to prevent or restrain Pakistan's weapons program, or an end to US high-technology transfers to India resulting from Indian weapons developments, initially would cause a major setback in US-Indian relations. It might also undermine the credibility of Washington's nonproliferation stance worldwide.
- In any event, overt proliferation would badly damage the international nonproliferation regime, and even covert weapons stockpiling by India and Pakistan could seriously subvert the regime.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Treasury, and Energy.

Also Participating:

- The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army
- The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy
- The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force
- The Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps

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DISSEMINATION CONTROL ABBREVIATIONS

- NOFORN- Not Releasable to Foreign Nationals
- NOCONTRACT- Not Releasable to Contractors or Contractor/Consultants
- PROPI- Caution—Proprietary Information Involved
- ORCON- Dissemination and Extraction of Information Controlled by Originator
- REL...- This Information Has Been Authorized for Release to...





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Intelligence

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Implications of a Nuclear South Asia

Special National Intelligence Estimate

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SNIE 31/32-86L
June 1986

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interests. Beijing would be most concerned that a nuclear India would draw closer to Moscow, that the United States would withdraw or substantially reduce its support for a nuclear Pakistan, and that Pakistan—a key strategic ally—would become more vulnerable to Indian and Soviet pressure. From the Chinese perspective, such developments could lead to a tightening of the Soviets' strategic encirclement of China. For these reasons, China probably would encourage Pakistani restraint to avoid provoking India into testing and deploying nuclear weapons. The Chinese would support Indo-Pakistani efforts to reach agreement to prevent a nuclear arms race, but would not agree to join a regional framework that limited Chinese nuclear forces. []

63. Indian fears that China might join with a nuclear-armed Pakistan to limit India's political and military options almost certainly are unfounded. Beijing would retain close strategic ties to Islamabad, but would not risk provoking a Soviet nuclear threat in support of New Delhi by extending a nuclear guarantee to Pakistan against India. An overt Indian nuclear weapons capability initially probably would halt progress toward Sino-Indian reconciliation, but China might eventually be receptive to new Indian initiatives for rapprochement if New Delhi loosened its close ties to Moscow. []

USSR

64. The Soviets oppose nuclear proliferation and especially do not want nuclear weapons states on their southern periphery that could threaten Soviet Central Asia. In addition, the Soviets might be concerned that Indian and Pakistani nuclear capabilities weaken their regional position:

- Nuclear weapons could reduce India's dependence on Soviet aid and political backing and cause New Delhi to pursue policies—such as opposition to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan or rapprochement with China—that are inimical to Moscow's strategic interests.
- Moscow might be less likely to risk a major military confrontation with the Pakistanis over Afghanistan because of the danger it might escalate into a wider conflict. []

65. In the near term at least, however, India probably would retain close ties to Moscow because of the political and military uncertainties that would result from proliferation. In any case, Indian policies are likely to remain compatible with Soviet interests. New

Delhi might also hope to gain access to Soviet systems and technologies necessary for developing modern nuclear forces. Moscow almost certainly would be extremely reluctant to assist India in this cause because of concern a nuclear India might some day turn on the Soviets as the Chinese did. The Soviets probably would try to improve relations with Pakistan if nuclear developments provoked a cutoff in US aid, but not at the expense of their more important ties to India. The Soviets would not assist Pakistan in developing its nuclear program. []

Islamic Countries

66. Pakistan publicly has stated its willingness to share nuclear technology for peaceful purposes with other Islamic countries, but the present government almost certainly will not provide any other Islamic state access to Pakistani nuclear weapons or weapons technology. Many Islamic countries support the right of Pakistan to have a nuclear weapons option—especially because they believe Israel has nuclear weapons—and would feel great pride in an "Islamic Bomb," even if Pakistan does not share nuclear technology. On the other hand, they would be concerned about the prospects of an Indian or Israeli strike against Pakistani nuclear facilities and the future possibility of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan. Moderate Arab countries probably would worry about the possibility that political instability in Pakistan might lead to a radical or fanatic Pakistani government that would give Iran, Libya, or Syria access to nuclear weapons. []

Israel

67. The Israelis view Pakistan's nuclear weapons option as a direct threat to their security and probably would take action if they concluded Islamabad was sharing nuclear weapons technology with the Arabs. Israel, however, is too far from Pakistan to launch a surgical airstrike against Pakistani nuclear facilities—as the Israelis did against Iraq in 1981. []

[] we believe it more likely that Israel instead would try to strike at the Arab recipients of any Pakistani nuclear weapons assistance. []

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in our view, would be reluctant to use them and almost certainly would use them only in the face of catastrophic defeat and the destruction of Pakistan.

49. A nuclear strategy of targeting the civilian population would make the most of the deterrent value of only a few nuclear weapons. It is also consonant with nuclear forces that are not maintained at high readiness and do not have a first-strike capability. Nuclear bombing attacks against cities would not require the timing, accuracy, and close and reliable coordination between air and ground forces—which is poor in the Pakistani military—that would be necessary in the tactical use of nuclear weapons against enemy forces.

50. The Pakistanis' first use of nuclear weapons, however, might be in a remote area in order to demonstrate its resolve to fight to the death, but also to limit the Indian response and to provoke international efforts to end the fighting without Pakistani political or territorial concessions. If that failed to stop the Indians from pressing for a decisive military victory, the Pakistanis—if they had more than two or three weapons—probably would next use nuclear weapons against Indian military forces still in India. Failure to use nuclear weapons tactically before Pakistani defenses collapsed and the Army was routed would leave Islamabad with the alternatives of accepting defeat and surrender, using nuclear weapons against Indian forces on Pakistani soil, or lashing out with nuclear strikes on Indian cities despite the risk of Indian nuclear retaliation.

51. *India.* Indian strategic and military thinkers have written extensively on deterrence and nuclear strategy, mostly in debating whether India should have a nuclear weapons program. The Indians have a sophisticated understanding of the premises and strategic calculations of Western and Soviet nuclear doctrine—both strategic and tactical—but do not appear to have fashioned their own nuclear strategy. We believe this is because of New Delhi's ambivalence about deploying nuclear weapons.

52. Although the Pakistanis view nuclear weapons as a deterrent to Indian aggression, the Indian strategic and military writers regard them as essential to deter Pakistani threats or use of nuclear weapons in a conventional war. Consequently, they often focus on questions of nuclear stability, including nuclear force requirements for deterrence and the strategic and tactical implications of nuclear force disparities. The Indians are assuming that Pakistan's first use of nuclear

weapons will be against Indian military forces—whether to prevent an Indian breakthrough on Pakistani territory or to force negotiations while Pakistani forces still occupied Indian territory. There remains, however, popular concern that cities would be the first targets.

53. Indian writings strongly suggest that Indian nuclear doctrine will attempt to integrate the strategic requirement of deterrence with a tactical requirement—once escalation has occurred—of using nuclear weapons to attain military objectives. We expect the Indians will adopt a strategy that emphasizes no first use of nuclear weapons and—in the event Pakistan used nuclear weapons—measured retaliation in an effort to avert further use. India's targeting doctrine almost certainly would give highest priority to Pakistani nuclear facilities—such as Kahuta—and nuclear forces. (These would be high-priority targets for conventional attacks as well.) The destruction of Pakistani airbases would be especially important to cripple Islamabad's retaliatory capability—which will rely on nuclear strike aircraft through the end of the century. We believe, however, that New Delhi would respond to a nuclear attack on an Indian city with a nuclear strike on a Pakistani city.

54. Indian nuclear strategy and doctrine against China probably will emphasize deterrence and defense, rather than deterrence and offense as against Pakistan. The Indians at present probably give less urgency to achieving deterrence against China because they doubt the Chinese would initiate the use of nuclear weapons in a border war in the mountains with India. New Delhi almost certainly would worry, however, that the lack of a credible nuclear deterrent against China—which would require an accurate long-range ballistic missile system—would limit India's nuclear options in a war with a nuclear-armed Pakistan, especially because China and Pakistan have been strategic allies for a long time.

Prospects for Stability in Indo-Pakistani Relations

55. Nuclear weapons will dramatically increase political and military tensions that could lead to war, either deliberately or by miscalculation. Whether nuclear weapons proliferation is overt or undeclared, both countries might see their policy options as being sharply curtailed by uncertainties regarding the other's reactions, intentions, and vulnerabilities. Even if India and Pakistan act with greater restraint and reach a political rapprochement, they are likely to view their relationship as considerably more dangerous.

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43. Gandhi's commitment to improve planning and command and control in the Indian military will enhance India's ability to plan for and integrate nuclear forces and to formulate a coherent nuclear strategy and doctrine. His planned reforms include providing the military greater representation and influence in policy counsels. The establishment of a Joint Chiefs of Staff organization—which is under study in India—would improve interservice planning and coordination, which would be essential in a military conflict that might involve nuclear weapons. []

Integrating Nuclear Forces

44. Nuclear weapons could have a major impact on the military balance in which India has conventional military superiority and Pakistan has little strategic depth:

- The destructive potential of nuclear weapons might cause India and Pakistan to expand and accelerate their costly conventional arms buildup to reduce the chances of the enemy's achieving a quick and decisive breakthrough that might force an early decision to use nuclear weapons. Both countries might invest heavily in strategic early warning and air defense systems to defend against nuclear strike aircraft.
- Less likely, India or Pakistan might believe nuclear weapons so increased the destructiveness of war that they could avoid the costs of strengthening their conventional defenses. Pakistan might no longer be able to afford building up conventional forces strong enough to establish a credible forward defense, particularly if it was cut off from US arms supplies. In the event Pakistan neglects its conventional forces while India continues its conventional arms buildup, the Pakistanis may feel compelled to use nuclear weapons earlier in a war if they faced catastrophic defeat—the destruction of the Pakistani Army, Indian occupation of Pakistani territory, and a new government imposed by New Delhi.

In any case, neither the Indian nor Pakistani militaries will be prepared in structure, tactics, training, or equipment to face a nuclear threat for many years. []

45. The Pakistanis believe nuclear weapons will constrain Indian military options, but probably have given no systematic thought to the military use of

nuclear weapons. Questions about the implications of the perception or reality of nuclear force asymmetries, the impact of nuclear forces on the conventional military balance, secure and reliable command and control, the political and military utility of nuclear arms, when to use nuclear weapons in war, or even what constitutes deterrence are rarely—and then only superficially—addressed. []

46. The Indian military is particularly concerned about how to integrate nuclear weapons into their strategy and doctrine—including what changes are necessary in conventional force structure and tactics—and with how to ensure a successful and stable transition from a nonnuclear to a nuclear force structure. Both the previous and the new Indian Army Chief of Staff have emphasized the importance of being able to fight in a nuclear environment. Many Indian officers believe the Pakistani nuclear threat will preclude India from massing forces and firepower on the battlefield to defend against a Pakistani assault or to go on the offensive, and they worry that Pakistani tactical use of nuclear weapons will destroy unit cohesion and disrupt operational command and control. []

Nuclear Strategy and Doctrine for War

47. *Pakistan.* There is no evidence that the Pakistanis have systematically thought about nuclear strategy and doctrine beyond having weapons for strategic deterrence. It is very likely, however, that, as the Pakistanis integrate nuclear weapons into their forces, they will []

[] develop a greater appreciation of the risks involved in nuclear warfare. Pakistani decisions on nuclear weapons currently are confined to very few decisionmakers and scientists []

48. Pakistani motives for developing a nuclear weapons capability—to deter India—suggest that Pakistan's strategy will be to hold Indian cities hostage to nuclear retaliation in the event of a major conflict. Such a strategy also is consistent with the concept of "striking terror" into the hearts of the enemy that has been identified with Islam in some Pakistani military writings. Many of these writings on Islamic doctrine, however, deny that a strategy of nuclear terror implies that nuclear weapons would be used irresponsibly. They say that such weapons would be used only when necessary to weaken the enemy's will to fight. Recognizing the destructive potential of nuclear weapons—and the certainty of Indian retaliation—the Pakistanis,

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made. They have a workable design for a nuclear device that may not need to be verified by a test. We believe the uranium enrichment plant at Kahuta could produce enough highly enriched uranium to make two or more nuclear weapons per year.

- India probably could produce deliverable nuclear weapons on short notice. The Indians, who already tested a nuclear device in 1974, probably could explode another device within two or three weeks of a decision to conduct a new test. We estimate that India presently has the capability to produce enough plutonium for 20 or more nuclear bombs annually.

Neither India nor Pakistan at this time believes that conducting a nuclear test or declaring possession of nuclear weapons is in its interests:

- Pakistan most likely will not test as long as it is receiving US aid that is essential to improving its conventional military capabilities. Even if US aid were terminated, fear that India would accelerate its nuclear weapons program would be a strong disincentive to a Pakistani test.
- India, at least until it has the technological capability to build credible nuclear forces against China, probably will not test again or declare it has nuclear weapons unless Pakistan does. India also does not want to jeopardize its access to US high technology or undermine the credibility of its foreign policy and nonaligned stance of advocating global nuclear disarmament.
- For both parties, the political and military uncertainties and potential economic costs of overt proliferation also argue for not wanting to test, operationally deploy, or officially proclaim they have nuclear weapons at this time.

It is premature, in our judgment, to conclude that India and Pakistan are on the verge of a nuclear arms race. For political reasons, Islamabad and New Delhi might maintain a limited and covert nuclear weapons capability—including a proven design and a small stockpile of weapons-grade fissile material—without actually building operational nuclear weapons. This is essentially what India has done since 1974. Both countries would retain the option of moving from prototype designs to production of nuclear weapons, but would not do so because of the risk of precipitating a nuclear arms race or a dangerous confrontation. Islamabad may believe that the ambiguity of this approach would make it more likely that Pakistan could retain US economic and military support. India might opt for such a stance in hopes of maintaining the moral high ground it wants for advocating worldwide nuclear disarmament.

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Pakistan's security, Islamabad regards a nuclear capability as a strategic imperative for dealing with India. We do not believe that the Pakistanis would abandon their efforts to develop nuclear weapons even if the United States explicitly guaranteed Pakistan's security against India. [redacted]

India

14. India's nuclear explosives program began in response to the strategic threat posed by a nuclear-armed China—with whom India fought a war in 1962 and shares a long-disputed frontier—but Pakistan's nuclear capability is the major consideration. [redacted]

Earlier Estimates concluded that India's most likely response to Pakistan's nuclear program would be either to launch an airstrike to destroy Pakistani nuclear facilities and thereby preempt Pakistan's weapons option, or to undertake a nuclear weapons program of its own.⁹ We believe the Indians have concluded they can no longer prevent Pakistan from developing nuclear weapons and believe they must maintain their own weapons option. [redacted]

15. Some Indians still argue that New Delhi should not acquire nuclear weapons until it has a strategic military capability to deter China—including accurate, long-range ballistic missiles—but concerns about China have long since been overshadowed by the near-term threat of a nuclear-armed Pakistan. [redacted]

16. Indian Prime Minister Gandhi, however, believes there are substantial risks and drawbacks to India's acquisition of nuclear weapons and, we believe, would prefer not to undertake a major weapons development and production program:

⁹ See SNIE 31/32-84 [redacted] 13 August 1984, *India-Pakistan: Prospects for Hostilities*. [redacted]

— Gandhi almost certainly calculates that a concerted nuclear weapons program would jeopardize Indian access to US high technology and weapons and seriously curtail scientific and technical exchanges with the United States—the principal motivations for better relations with the United States.

— Disclosure of a nuclear weapons program would severely undermine the credibility of India's stance advocating global nuclear disarmament, which is a hallmark of Indian foreign policy and a priority of Gandhi's in his role as chairman of the Nonaligned Movement and as a sponsor of the Six-Nation Disarmament Initiative.

— Indian efforts to improve relations with the smaller South Asian countries would be set back if they became knowledgeable about India's nuclear program, and it might even cause them to seek military relationships with outside protecting powers.

— New Delhi's relations with Moscow would be strained because of the Soviets' opposition to a nuclear-armed India, but the Soviets would be unlikely to cut off their aid. [redacted]

17. Some Indian strategic and military analysts believe the costs of building modern nuclear forces—which would be necessary for India to compete with China and gain US and Soviet respect as a nuclear power—are prohibitive. Modern nuclear forces that included long-range ballistic missiles and possibly even ballistic missile submarines would be very costly and would divert significant capital resources Gandhi would prefer to spend on economic development—a high priority of his to bring India into the 21st century. Such an effort probably also would require significant access to foreign technologies, and New Delhi would be reluctant to become dependent on foreign suppliers to build up a modern nuclear force. In addition, the Indians almost certainly would want to acquire costly systems or technology for the improved command and control, reliable communications, strategic and tactical reconnaissance, early warning, and even sophisticated battle management that are part of modern nuclear forces. [redacted]

Policy Alternatives and Implications

Limited Nuclear Weapons Capability

18. The political costs and potential for provoking greater regional tensions resulting from possession of

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38. For their part, the Pakistanis may not be deterred from using nuclear weapons by the prospects of an even more devastating Indian retaliation if they believed the survival of their country was at stake. Because India has a decided conventional military superiority, Pakistan would retain the option of first use of nuclear weapons to prevent the collapse of Pakistani defenses and a decisive Indian victory.

Military Implications of Nuclear Weapons

Command and Control

39. Both Pakistan and India would be likely initially to keep their few nuclear weapons unassembled in order to ensure reliable political control and prevent accidents and unauthorized use. However, keeping nuclear weapons unassembled could reduce the readiness and potentially the deterrent value of nuclear forces.

40. *Pakistan.* Unlike the existing nuclear weapons states wherein political power is undivided and there is a clearly established and reliable chain of command with the military subordinate to the civilian leadership, the Pakistani military would retain control of nuclear weapons and be the final arbiter in a decision to use them even under a civilian government. The Pakistani Army sees itself as responsible for protecting the security and political stability of Pakistan and frequently has been the decisive player in defining Pakistani interests and in determining who rules the country. Pakistani military leaders probably also would fear that a strong populist civilian leader or a fundamentalist Islamic regime that had broad popular backing might act irresponsibly in a foreign policy or domestic crisis.

41. The potential for political instability and coup plotting probably would cause the Pakistani military to prevent any one service or group of officers from having exclusive control of use of nuclear weapons. Keeping nuclear weapons control divided would ensure a consensus decision of Pakistan's most senior military leaders before the weapons could be deployed and used. Although this would substantially reduce the risk that political divisions within the military would result in any one faction's gaining control of nuclear weapons, Pakistan's nuclear posture against India in a foreign or domestic crisis could be undermined if differences within the senior Pakistani leadership prevented a decision to deploy nuclear weapons.

Historic Relationships Between Antagonistic Nuclear Weapon States

The question must be asked as to whether the circumstances—and constraints—of the US-USSR nuclear competition to date represent a relevant precedent for the Indian-Pakistani case. Some scholars and analysts believe that nuclear weapons would make another major war between India and Pakistan very unlikely. US-Soviet relations—and Sino-Soviet relations—indicate that nuclear weapons tend to make major conventional conflicts between rival powers significantly less likely, the destructive potential of nuclear weapons causing the nuclear powers to avoid direct military confrontations that could escalate into nuclear wars.

We are not confident, however, that any such analogy to the Indian-Pakistani situation is valid. Major differences in the two cases exist:

- Unlike the United States and the USSR, India and Pakistan share a long common border and have conflicting territorial claims. The USSR and China also have a long border with disputed territory, but disputed areas along the Sino-Soviet border are remote and largely unpopulated, whereas disputed areas on the Indo-Pakistani frontier are agriculturally productive, more densely populated, close to major urban areas, and result from arbitrary—and subsequently bloody—colonial partition.
- India and Pakistan have fought three major wars since 1948. The United States and the USSR have never gone to war with each other, and the USSR and China have not had a major conflict since the 1930s, although they had some serious border skirmishes in the late 1960s.
- The Indo-Pakistani rivalry at its core is about national integrity and survival. Many Pakistanis believe that some Indians are still not reconciled to Pakistanis existence, and many Indians believe the Pakistanis are encouraging secessionist movements in western India. The US-Soviet and Sino-Soviet rivalries principally concern ideology and competition for global position and influence.

42. *India.* The principle of military subordination to the civilian leadership is well established in India, and the civilian leadership would retain command authority regarding the operational deployment and use of nuclear weapons. Gandhi will insist on ensured secure and reliable civilian decisionmaking control that cannot be circumvented.

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32. India instead might wait until it had the capability to deploy nuclear-armed ballistic missiles that could reach China before deciding to declare it has nuclear weapons or conduct a weapons test. A nuclear test could be important for India to ensure the reliability of warheads for ballistic missiles. If India tested, Pakistan almost certainly would come under strong pressure to test its own device, but the Pakistani response most likely would depend on Islamabad's view of the regional security environment at the time—including the US and Chinese reactions. Strong reaffirmations of US and Chinese support for Pakistan and condemnation of the Indian test might dissuade Islamabad from testing or openly declaring it has nuclear weapons. []

33. The intensified mutual suspicions and very likely increased political and military tensions that would result from either country's testing or declaring it has nuclear weapons probably would severely limit the chances of preventing an open-ended nuclear arms race. Either country would prudently assume that an overt weapons capability by the other indicated an intention both to use nuclear weapons for political leverage and to have a viable option for using the weapons in wartime, not just for strategic deterrence. []

Prospects for Stability

34. If there were no longer ambiguity about Pakistani nuclear capabilities, India might at first respond with a measured nuclear arms buildup proportionate to Pakistan's. Eventually, however, the Indians probably would feel compelled to establish their nuclear superiority in order to deter Pakistani nuclear brinkmanship or use of the weapons in war. The Indians also would feel pressure to build up their nuclear weapons capability to take account of the Chinese nuclear threat. The Pakistanis would try to maintain the credibility of their nuclear deterrent by improving and enlarging their weapons stockpile. []

35. An unrestrained nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan would result in gross asymmetries in force size, sophistication, and vulnerability that would overwhelmingly favor India:

- With the potential capability to produce 10 times as many nuclear weapons annually as Pakistan, India could quickly build a first-strike capability that the Pakistanis could not match. Against such odds, Pakistan would be unable to ensure itself of a retaliatory capability.

- The Indians' eventual ballistic missile capability would further enhance their first-strike potential by increasing the survivability and flexibility of India's nuclear forces. Missile sites would be harder for the Pakistanis to target than airfields, and Pakistani air defenses would be useless against ballistic missiles.

- Even without ballistic missiles, Indian nuclear strike aircraft could reach all of Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistani air defenses are limited, have problems of coordination, and would be relatively easy for Indian aircraft to penetrate with few losses. A large number of strategic Indian targets—including likely nuclear force deployments—would be beyond the reach of Pakistan's most likely nuclear strike aircraft.

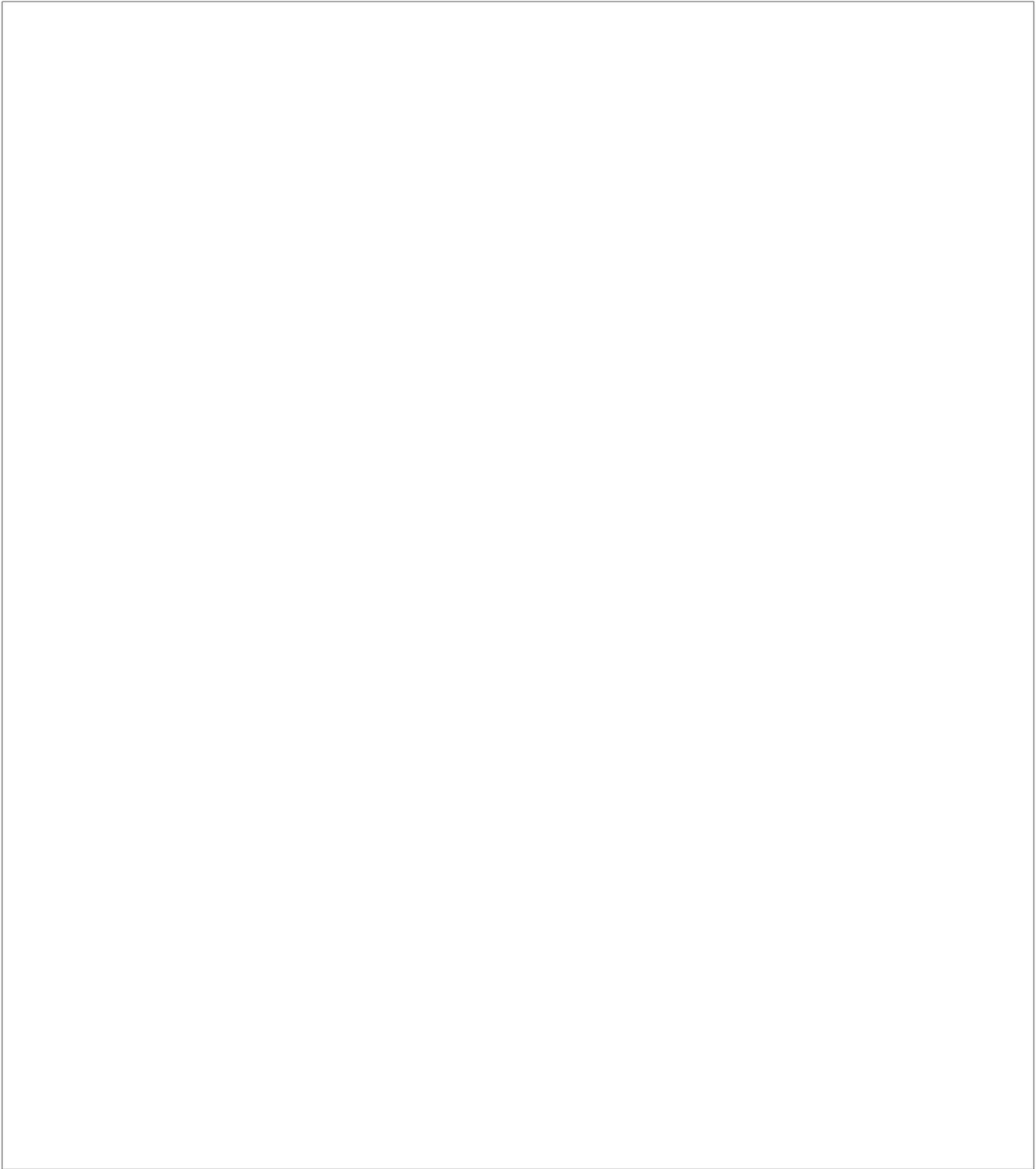
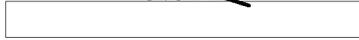
India's significant nuclear advantages would be reinforced by its conventional military superiority and the disparities in size between the two countries. []

36. In these circumstances, some analysts believe Pakistan's nuclear deterrent would lack credibility. Against an overwhelming Indian nuclear superiority, Pakistani nuclear forces would be unable to strike a major blow against India and could be too small and vulnerable to deter New Delhi from starting a conventional war it judged to be necessary. Islamabad could be deterred from using nuclear weapons against India—even if catastrophic defeat was imminent—by the prospect of far more devastating nuclear retaliation by India's significantly larger nuclear forces. []

37. Other analysts believe, however, that, even if India had a significant nuclear superiority, Pakistan could still have a credible nuclear deterrent against India. Pakistan's much smaller and more vulnerable nuclear force would be sufficient to deter India from starting a war if the Indians believed—as we think they would—that Pakistani nuclear retaliation would be against New Delhi, Bombay, or any other city within range of the Pakistani Air Force. New Delhi would regard a nuclear attack on any Indian city as catastrophic, and the fact that India could inflict proportionately much greater damage on Pakistan in a nuclear exchange would not cause the Indians to calculate they could deter the Pakistanis from using nuclear weapons, or that they could "win" a nuclear war. Even with an overwhelming nuclear superiority, the Indian military could not assure the political leadership that it could locate, target, and destroy all of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, and Indian air defenses—though more dense and formidable than Pakistan's—could not prevent all nuclear strike aircraft from getting through. []

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