

Assessing Threats and Priorities in Nuclear South Asia: A View from Washington

Toby Dalton, June 2016

Nuclear developments in South Asia since 1998, when India and Pakistan both conducted nuclear explosive tests and declared themselves to be states possessing nuclear weapons, present increasingly complex policy challenges to the United States. Fissile material stockpiles and nuclear arsenals are growing. Evolving nuclear and conventional military strategies and postures pose greater escalation risks. And violent non-state actors target state and military facilities, raising nuclear terrorism fears.

The policy challenge for the United States posed by these inter-related developments derives from how India and Pakistan are situated in the nested baskets of American bilateral, regional, and global interests, as well as from tensions that inhere in various means employed to address competing priorities. The next U.S. administration will inherit a portfolio that defies tidy strategizing and simple policy agendas. Risk management is likely to be the default approach, for risk mitigation and more optimistic objectives would require an investment of political capital that seems unlikely in the context of the many challenges awaiting the next president.

This essay posits and analyzes four U.S. policy priorities involving the South Asian nuclear powers. It then describes some of the tensions between these priorities before concluding with some ideas on policy approaches and tactics. Underlying this discussion are two assumptions about how American policymakers view South Asia. First, a coherent *regional* strategy will remain elusive, and thus the essence of U.S. policy will be in the realm of bilateral relationship management tactics. And second, unlike many South Asian officials and experts who proffer faith that nuclear weapons will prevent conflict, U.S. experts tend to find solid analytical grounds for pessimism about deterrence. This indicates substantial risks of inadvertent or unintended nuclear use and resultant escalation, and thus potentially a U.S. crisis intervention role in the region.

Four Nuclear Priorities

Over the last two decades, U.S. concerns about nuclear weapons in South Asia have spanned four distinct priorities: strengthening nuclear security, preventing nuclear use during a crisis, mitigating arms racing, and promoting Indian and Pakistani adoption and implementation of global nonproliferation norms and behaviors. (A fifth concern – proliferation to third countries, including through non-state networks – has largely receded, so it is not included here.) These priorities are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they can't all be worked with equal vigor and attention. Indeed, interrelationships among priorities ensure tension in the U.S. policy

approach to the region. Of course, these priorities do not exist in isolation and must be weighed against other U.S. global, regional, and bilateral priorities, which include: managing an orderly withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan while sustaining the counter-terrorism cooperation of both Afghanistan and Pakistan; supporting democratic governance and civil society development in Pakistan; and building a strategic partnership with India, to include defense trade and military cooperation.

Nuclear Security

The specter of nuclear terrorism has weighed heavily on U.S. policymakers since concerns emerged in the early 1990s about smuggling of loose nuclear materials from the former Soviet Union. The September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington underscored both the vulnerability of the United States and the desire and organizational capacity of terrorist groups to attack the American homeland directly. The potential for future such attacks involving nuclear or radiological materials motivated the Obama administration to launch a Nuclear Security Summit process to raise the profile of this threat and spur preventative action.

South Asia is a primary locus of nuclear terrorism concern, primarily due to the co-location of growing nuclear arsenals and a number of terrorist groups that have carried out attacks on government facilities and professed interest in nuclear weapons. In addition, both Pakistan and India are assessed to have comparatively weak governance institutions and widespread corruption. For these reasons, both states have scored consistently near the bottom of the biennial NTI (Nuclear Threat Initiative) nuclear security index.¹

Pakistan is often seen as the poster child for nuclear terrorism fears, particularly due to a pervasive but largely incorrect western media narrative about terrorist attacks on Pakistani nuclear facilities and fears that the military would provide nuclear weapons to such groups.² Pakistan's nuclear security practices are better than the credit given, which is not to say the threat is not profound. Conversely, India's nuclear security practices receive far less scrutiny, despite a number of incidents that highlight vulnerabilities in India's system.³ The probability of theft or diversion of a nuclear weapon, or the use of an improvised explosive device, remains low in both countries, but with growing nuclear arsenals and stockpiles of fissile material, the potential for a security failure will increase over time. The consequences of a nuclear terrorist incident would of

¹ NTI Nuclear Security Index Report, January 2016, available at: <http://www.ntiindex.org/>.

² This narrative featured heavily in reporting on Pakistan in 2011 and 2012. See, for example, Mark Benjamin, "The Politics of Nukes and Why the U.S. Can't Dump Pakistan," *Time*, May 10, 2011, available at: <http://nation.time.com/2011/05/10/the-politics-of-nukes-and-why-the-u-s-cant-dump-pakistan/>.

³ See Adrian Levy and R. Jeffrey Smith, "India's nuclear explosive materials are vulnerable to theft, U.S. officials and experts say," *Center for Public Integrity*, December 17, 2015, available at: <https://www.publicintegrity.org/2015/12/17/18922/india-s-nuclear-explosive-materials-are-vulnerable-theft-us-officials-and-experts>.

course be severe in terms of both the local and global commons effects, with the added concern that in South Asia terrorists might use nuclear weapons to precipitate war.

Nuclear security will remain a top U.S. policy priority in South Asia given the specific concern that nuclear weapons or material from the region might be exploded by terrorists on U.S. soil. Greater priority attends nuclear security in Pakistan given the terrorist groups that operate from there. Pakistani officials understand these global concerns and have welcomed international cooperation to strengthen and legitimize its nuclear security practices. Nuclear security has been a lower priority agenda item with India, primarily because India has spurned most U.S. and international cooperative overtures.

Nuclear Crisis Escalation

In spring 1999, less than a year removed from the nuclear explosive tests that shocked the world, India and Pakistan went to war over the disputed territory of Kashmir, in the process becoming the first states with nuclear weapons to fight a military conflict since the Sino-Soviet border skirmish in 1969. The Kargil War, so named after the sector of Kashmir in which the 1999 battle took place, proved rather conclusively that nuclear weapons would not prevent direct military conflict in South Asia, though they might prevent conflict from escalating to full-scale war. In the ensuing decade, Pakistan and India experienced two additional crises (a militarized one in 2001–02 and a political one in 2008), catalyzed by terrorist attacks in India by groups originating in Pakistan. Though neither the Kargil War nor the crises of 2001–02 and 2008 came close to escalating to nuclear use, the fear of that possibility was felt keenly in capitals well beyond South Asia. And this fear continues to grow as the nuclear arsenals by both states expand, particularly with the development and induction of new capabilities such as tactical nuclear weapons that raise critical questions about deterrence stability and crisis escalation.

The political barriers to using nuclear weapons are supremely high given the potential devastation at hand. Yet the requirement to signal willingness to use nuclear weapons for deterrence to operate means that escalation is always possible. Credible deterrence also requires the formation and communication or demonstration of capabilities, doctrines, policies, and contingency plans for their use. In this regard, it is apparent that Indian and Pakistani officials and military officers hold quite divergent views about the utility of nuclear weapons and what is needed for deterrence. Indian civilian leaders tend to think of nuclear weapons in largely political terms, as a tool to be used in international politics, not on the battlefield. Pakistan's military leaders, who hold the reins to the nuclear program to the near exclusion of civilian planning and oversight, tend to view nuclear weapons more in terms of military utility. That deterrence has prevented crisis escalation despite these profound differences in nuclear thinking is an interesting and surprising result, which only reinforces the deterrence optimism of most South Asian strategic analysts.

Ironically, due perhaps to mirror-imaging, or perhaps to the inherent challenge of formulating a logically-consistent nuclear doctrine, Indian and Pakistani officials and experts do not find each other's doctrine believable. Pakistanis (and many Indians, too) believe that India's declared doctrine of massive retaliation is insufficient to deter lower-order nuclear use and sets too high a political bar for a decision to retaliate with nuclear weapons. And Indians (and at least some Pakistanis) find Pakistan's full-spectrum deterrence posture, with the potential for use of tactical nuclear weapons against a limited Indian Army incursion on Pakistani territory, not a credible threat, given the asymmetry in the levels of warfare. Amidst these credibility doubts, there is no apparent shared sense of where nuclear red lines in the region might be drawn. The chances of miscalculation or misperception in a crisis are high, as is the possibility of inadvertent escalation in the fog and friction of military confrontation.

Among the four challenges discussed here, this one is probably the hardest for U.S. policymakers to address, primarily due to the extensive, time-consuming and difficult diplomatic work that would be required. India has not welcomed outside interventions, except when they have come with the promise of coercing Pakistan. As the instigator of past crises, Pakistan has often sought to catalyze the involvement of the United States and others as a way to pressure India on Kashmir. U.S. officials did intervene in crises in 1990–91, 2001–02, and 2008, and in the Kargil War in 1999, but always on a reactive basis. Outside of these crises, senior U.S. officials have not invested consistent time and energy in proactive crisis management mechanisms. This is not for lack of desire to do so, presumably, rather the difficulty of making progress in bridging differences between long-time antagonists and the opportunity costs involved.

Arms Racing

Predictions of an India-Pakistan arms competition are probably as old as the countries themselves. In the nuclear era, there is little evidence to indicate a classically-defined arms race, with reciprocal increases in warheads and missiles.⁴ However, it is clear that the two countries are engaged in a security competition abetted by ever more precise and lethal technologies. An important complication is that while Pakistan's development of conventional military and nuclear weaponry is very much tied to developments by India, India's outlook is driven not just by the Pakistan threat, but also by China and by the desire to aggregate and project power beyond the region. This makes discerning particular patterns of the competition and assessing their implications a more speculative exercise.

One clear direction in Indian nuclear capability is the shoring up of an assured retaliation capability through the long-planned build-out to a triad of delivery vehicles. The final piece of this – ballistic missiles based on nuclear-powered submarines – was delivered in 2016 with the entry into service of the *INS Arihant*. A second element of this strategy, albeit well behind the

⁴ Toby Dalton and Jaclyn Tandler, "Understanding the Arms 'Race' in South Asia," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 13, 2002, available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/09/13/understanding-arms-race-in-south-asia-pub-49361>.

first, is the development of a ballistic missile defense system that at some point in the future could protect Indian command and control systems. For its part, Pakistan has tested a short-range battlefield nuclear missile, the *Nasr*, to augment its deterrence against India's offensive conventional military doctrine – often called a proactive strategy or Cold Start. In addition, Pakistan also tested in 2015 the *Shaheen-III*, a medium-range ballistic missile that can reach as far as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where India may base nuclear-armed submarines. These capabilities portend a counterforce targeting strategy, with resultant increases in arsenal size to cover a larger number of targets, as well as greater concerns about crisis stability and use-or-lose pressures on nuclear command and control systems.

These developments are viewed in Washington with varying degrees of alarm and frustration. India's fielding of additional nuclear capabilities for assured retaliation, while not necessarily welcome because the weapons deepen the security competition, is seen from the standpoint of western deterrence theory as largely stabilizing. (It is quite clear that Pakistani strategists do not view Indian capabilities in the same light.⁵) India's proactive military strategy invites considerable skepticism in the West, but also concern about its cascading negative effects on Pakistan's nuclear strategy. These effects include Pakistan's embrace of tactical nuclear weapons, which raise alarms about crisis stability, command and control, and nuclear security. Surprisingly, President Obama publicly expressed frustration with these developments (and alluded to the potential for arms racing) in April 2016, stating, "The other area where I think we'd need to see progress is Pakistan and India, that subcontinent, making sure that as they develop military doctrines, that they are not continually moving in the wrong direction."⁶ Such public and unusually direct criticism is unusual from U.S. officials, and resulted in shock and indignation in the region, particularly in India.

What has received less critical attention in Washington is the extent to which the United States may be both contributing to the deepening security competition and losing leverage to disrupt it. It was inevitable that both countries would build out their nuclear deterrent capabilities following the 1998 tests. But the U.S. "dehyphenation" of the India-Pakistan relationship in the early 2000s in order to develop independent relationships with both countries has had disparate and unintended effects. After the dehyphenation, ties with Delhi began to blossom, marked by arms sales and a cornerstone nuclear deal that promised to bring India into the "mainstream" of the nuclear order. Necessarily, Washington has shelved any more coercive efforts to limit India's nuclear weapons program in order to nurture the bloom. Meanwhile, the long U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and the reliance on the partnership with Pakistan for counter-terrorism has resulted in a more contentious symbiosis, which places limitations on U.S. efforts to retard Pakistan's nuclear developments. This is not to question the rationale for Washington's

⁵ Mateen Haider, "Indian tests of nuclear missiles disturb strategic balance: Foreign Office," *Dawn*, April 21, 2016, available at: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1253504>.

⁶ Press Conference by President Obama, April 1, 2016, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/01/press-conference-president-obama-412016>.

differentiated approach to these countries; rather, it is to point out that it has come with some cost to U.S. leverage to affect the nuclear picture in South Asia.

Global Nonproliferation Norms

Immediately following the 1998 nuclear tests, U.S. officials undertook a focused effort to convince India and Pakistan to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, to negotiate a fissile material cutoff treaty, and to eventually cap and rollback their nuclear programs.⁷ The objective of this effort was to entice both states to join and thereby reinforce global nonproliferation regimes, despite the fact that India and Pakistan had never joined the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and had been the target of multilateral efforts to deny them nuclear technology. This approach was an extension of U.S. policy to promote universal membership in nonproliferation regimes, as well as the past U.S. regional approach that offered both countries similar treatment. In fairly short order, however, it became clear that neither country was keen to restrain or relinquish a capability deemed critical to national security, especially after the arduous path both had taken to develop nuclear weapons.

Universality continues to be a stated U.S. ambition, but increasingly it has turned to state-specific policies that are in conflict with universal membership in nonproliferation regimes. The most obvious example of this trend is the 2005 Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, which overturned established law and practice that the United States (and all other members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group) would not engage in nuclear commerce with states not implementing full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. In return for enabling nuclear trade with India, U.S. officials secured promises from New Delhi to adopt mainstream practices with regard to its nuclear program, such as implementing safeguards on civil nuclear facilities and maintaining a moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. These commitments approximate some global nonproliferation norms, albeit outside the formal regimes and without the same legal basis.

State-specific approaches like this (and perhaps one reportedly contemplated for Pakistan in fall 2015)⁸ can incentivize and potentially result in stronger nonproliferation measures implemented by that state. However, creating parallel structures to established regimes, particularly to the extent they are perceived as rewarding states that eschewed global standards, has obvious effects on the legitimacy and fairness of the nuclear order. As the U.S. considers means to incentivize strengthened nonproliferation standards in South Asia, it will have to weigh the extent to which exceptional approaches for one country may have detriments on broader nonproliferation objectives to achieve universality and to strengthen core institutions and practices.

⁷ Recounted in Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2006).

⁸ Felicia Schwartz, "U.S., Pakistan Discuss Nuclear Weapons Program," *Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 2015, available at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-pakistan-discuss-nuclear-weapons-program-1444973113>.

Priorities in Tension

Though not mutually exclusive, these various priorities are sufficiently diverse that achieving balance between them is impossible. This is the case primarily because of tensions between the means involved in working toward different objectives. The result is a requirement to prioritize, recognizing that focus on one priority necessarily complicates (and probably diminishes the chances of success for) progress on another. At least four tensions are apparent between these priorities.

First, focusing on nuclear security, which arguably has been the predominant objective of the Obama administration's nuclear policy in South Asia, in many ways precludes direct efforts beyond polite diplomacy to address other nuclear threats. It takes time to build the trust necessary to collaborate on, for example, protecting sensitive nuclear facilities, which can be disrupted if other aspects of the relationship are not aligned. Yet, nuclear security becomes harder as nuclear arsenals grow in size and mobility, and as greater amounts of fissile material are produced, stockpiled, and transported. Indeed, concerns about nuclear terrorism are increasingly symptomatic of the security competition between Pakistan and India. However, focusing on the causes of the security competition – and more pointedly, potentially employing coercive measures as part of a strategy to mitigate that competition – would likely undermine the relationships and trust necessary to facilitate the sensitive cooperative work to improve nuclear security practices.

Second, as regards Pakistan, there seems to be a pernicious relationship between the rhetorical focus of U.S. government concerns about nuclear dangers and the value given to nuclear weapons by Pakistani leaders. Stated more baldly, the more U.S. officials raise fears about Pakistan's tactical or medium-range nuclear weapons, the more Pakistanis tend to interpret U.S. concerns as validating the deterrence value of those weapons. Furthermore, the greater the prominence given to nuclear weapons in U.S.-Pakistan official discourse, the more it reinforces the Pakistan armed forces' dominance in domestic discussions about the role of nuclear weapons in Pakistan's national security. Thus, instead of devaluing or spurring critical analysis about nuclear deterrence, U.S. handwringing seems to inflate its importance in Pakistani discourse.

Third, there are direct and indirect relationships between Indo-Pakistan arms racing and crisis escalation concerns on the one hand, and U.S. bilateral objectives with each country on the other. U.S. defense sales to India bolster a perception of Indian conventional military might that exacerbates concerns about the Indian threat in Pakistan, while also diminishing Pakistan's trust in the United States as an honest broker in a future crisis. This has provided some justification (perhaps post-hoc) for Pakistan's nuclear build-up. Similarly, U.S.-Pakistan counter-terrorism cooperation, which has primarily targeted the Pakistani Taliban and not groups that attack India, vexes Indian officials, who tend to view U.S. policy either as blind or perfidious to the extent it

facilitates Pakistan's "double game" while restraining Indian punitive actions.⁹ If the U.S. won't take action against these groups, some Indians seem to suggest, then Indian policy should be more aggressive following the next such attack. Though U.S. cooperation with each country clearly is not directly responsible for some of the steps perceived to be most dangerous, such as Pakistan's development of tactical nuclear weapons or India's Cold Start doctrine, it may exacerbate arms racing and crisis escalation tendencies.

Finally, at various points the United States has offered incentives to entice India and Pakistan toward the nonproliferation mainstream, primarily through state-specific policies. These incentives could result in better nuclear security, export control, or nonproliferation practices, but as described above, these incentives also undercut broader efforts to promote and strengthen universal nonproliferation instruments. And these offers contribute to perceptions that the U.S. gives exceptional treatment to its friends, making the nuclear order seem increasingly unfair and unjust for the majority of states that abide by their nonproliferation commitments without similar rewards.

Policy Approaches

In assessing the four priorities listed above and the inherent tensions between them, it is necessary to make some judgment about which challenge has the greatest potential consequence and which is the most likely to occur. Over the last decade, concerns about nuclear terrorism have topped the list. While that threat has not been fully mitigated, progress on both nuclear security and counter-terrorism has probably reduced the probability of a terrorist group in South Asia acquiring nuclear weapons or materials. (This is certainly a contestable assessment.¹⁰) At the same time, the deepening India-Pakistan security competition has increased the probability of an escalating crisis that could result in nuclear use. This argues for greater prioritization of crisis mitigation policies.

Following the attack on the Indian Air Force base at Pathankot in January 2016, Pakistan and India haltingly carried out a joint investigation of the attack, while Pakistan took tentative steps to rein in Jaish-e-Mohammad, the perpetrating group. Using counter-terrorism and law enforcement mechanisms to build in more firebreaks – like joint investigations – could help head off or at least slow crisis escalation. This could include facilitating modes of communication between the governments, intelligence services, and militaries which would diminish the likelihood of an Indian military response after another future attack. Standing up a permanent

⁹ See Brahma Chellaney, "Obama has Mised Modi on Pakistan and Made Him a Paper Tiger," *Hindustan Times*, March 11, 2016, available at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/obama-has-mised-modi-on-pakistan-and-made-him-a-paper-tiger/story-8pU6NWCj8Uc55qCzIPOZNL.html>.

¹⁰ For a nuanced assessment, see Matthew Bunn, William Tobey, Martin Malin, and Nicholas Roth, "Preventing Nuclear Terrorism: Continuous Improvement or Dangerous Decline?" Harvard Belfer Center, March 21, 2016, available at: http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/26400/preventing_nuclear_terrorism.html.

joint investigative body, conducting bilateral or multilateral training on forensics best practices, and ensuring that evidence collected in third countries is admissible in both legal systems are possible outcomes of such work.

Diminishing the potential for escalation also requires structured analysis of how technology developments are contributing to the security competition. Growth in nuclear arsenals in both states, and the evolution of deterrence doctrines toward counterforce targeting, are both drivers and derivatives of technology evolution. U.S. policy could address this problem through both bilateral and regional efforts. With Pakistan, the United States can continue to search for incentives or disincentives that can encourage restraint in arsenal growth and the development of more expansive deterrence concepts. With India, the United States is now in a position to lean harder on nuclear security in public, while privately raising more critical questions about India's nuclear doctrine, force posture, and arsenal size. Regionally, the United States (working with other international partners and multilateral institutions) could focus on implementing border security technologies and approaches that could diminish the possibility that a nuclear security incident could spark crisis escalation.

Another way to address the concern about crisis escalation and the security competition is through a more instrumental approach to using membership in nonproliferation regimes to incentivize practices that diminish threats. To date, the United States has favored exceptional approaches for India that have forsaken the potential of benchmarks. Specifically, the United States has sought to secure India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) on political grounds, rather than objective membership criteria. Though there are good reasons for India to be included in the NSG, this approach (and any similar political one that might be considered for Pakistan) unnecessarily harms broader nonproliferation interests. Instead, the United States would be wise to work with NSG partners to devise practices that India (or other non-NPT states) could take to reassure the international community about nuclear dangers in the region.

Considering Tactics

Good strategy is crucial to successful policy outcomes, of course, but tactics are nearly as important. In this regard, the U.S. government has scored some own goals in recent years whose lessons should inform future approaches.

For one, there is a tendency for foreign powers to venue shop in Washington, seeking divisions and wedges in order to play agencies, as well as the Executive and Legislative branches, off each other. This is a recipe for policy stasis. To avoid this tendency, the next administration will need to develop and enforce a coherent policy that accounts for both bilateral and regional priorities across multiple agencies. An important contributor to such coherence would be an assessment of

how U.S. actions in the region over the last decade have impacted the security environment and what that implies for the conditions under which U.S. policies can be successful.

Related to this point, Congress is an important actor that, if not kept appropriately in the loop, can undermine policy coherence. Congress can usefully be employed in both “good cop” and “bad cop” roles, but those require a level of coordination that has become understandably difficult in Washington’s partisan political environment. Ultimately, the Executive branch is responsible for executing foreign policy, but it needs Congress on board.

There exists space for more innovative and aggressive work to develop restraint mechanisms in the region in both official and unofficial channels. U.S. officials could speak frankly (and more publicly) about the need for India and Pakistan to move on from long-standing proposals, namely Pakistan’s “strategic restraint regime” and India’s mutual no-first-use pledge initiative. Using all available means, and in coordination with other governments, the next administration could push for new and creative restraints on fissile material production and on avoiding dangerous nuclear postures.

Finally, in thinking through messaging in and to the region, U.S. officials will want to consider carefully the tone and substance of the messages. For instance, the substance of President Obama’s statement about Indian and Pakistani military doctrines moving in the wrong direction was no doubt an accurate reflection of his concerns, but the venue and timing probably diminished the significance of that message to Indian and Pakistani audiences. Indeed, in India it sparked a backlash among experts complaining that the United States simply does not understand India’s security concerns.¹¹ In the future, strategic messaging along these lines should be carefully targeted and amplified for maximum impact.

Conclusion

U.S. policymaking on South Asia has grown increasingly complicated over the last two decades. The myriad challenges are symptomatic of a complex security environment; the security dilemma between Pakistan and India, and between those states and other neighbors, is real. The addition of nuclear weapons, the evolution of deterrence, and the growing prominence of militant groups that project cross-border violence makes an exit from the security dilemma more difficult and unlikely in the near term. Few levers or means of sufficient influence are available to outside powers to fundamentally change the picture, while powerful actors in these states press agendas that diminish prospects for stability, let alone peace. It is not an encouraging picture.

¹¹ Ankit Panda, “Why India’s Upset About Obama’s Post-Nuclear Security Summit Remarks,” *The Diplomat*, April 5, 2016, available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/04/why-indias-upset-about-obamas-post-nuclear-security-summit-remarks/>.

Officials who answer the call to serve the next U.S. administration face an unbelievably complicated task in sorting through competing interests to devise anything resembling a coherent approach. The nuclearized security environment means that any policy action must be weighed for its possible positive and negative effects on the four priorities analyzed here: improving nuclear security, avoiding crisis escalation, mitigating an arms race, and strengthening global nonproliferation norms. The potential for catastrophic consequences of policy failure should help sharpen the focus of U.S. decisionmaking. Progress will be hard to come by, but it deserves a full effort.

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