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## **India-US Nuclear Deal: Exploring the Emerging Dynamics of Regional Security**

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### **Abstract**

India's continuous quest of its nuclear modernization for becoming a global power is unchecked. The impact of the U.S.-India nuclear deal on the regional security dynamics in South Asia needs to be discussed and analyzed. It employs realistic and regime change perspectives to analyze how the deal reshaped the strategic equilibrium in South Asia, and how it influenced India and Pakistan's nuclear deterrence posture. It also examines the strategic interests and policy shifts that prompted the United States to engage in nuclear cooperation with India, and how this affected the regional power structure. Furthermore, it evaluates the broader implications of the deal for nuclear nonproliferation efforts and the stability of the South Asian security architecture. It uses qualitative methods and secondary sources to collect and analyze data. It also evaluates the effects of the deal on Pakistan and its relations with the U.S., India, and China. It concludes that the U.S. needs to recalibrate its approach to key nations, considering their unique contexts and concerns, to achieve foreign policy objectives and maintain regional stability.

**Key Words:** Strategic equilibrium, Nuclear deterrence, Regional security, Nonproliferation, India-US relations, Geopolitics

### **Introduction**

History has witnessed that the end of two devastating world wars brought a nuclear revolution in military affairs, which has challenged the very notion of peace and security in the world successfully. The nuclear revolution after the attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has changed the entire strategic and geopolitical realities of the world. These realities led toward the emergence of new concepts like nuclear deterrence and limited nuclear wars which has forced the states to increase its nuclear capabilities to cope with changing strategic and geopolitical realities which may threaten its very existence. There is no denying of the fact that despite the non-proliferation concerns and implementing coercive diplomacy of military and economic sanctions, it has become indispensable for the states to acquire nuclear

weapons to enhance their national power which reciprocally ensure and can save their national interests at international level (Abdullah, 2015). The India-US Nuclear Deal of 2008 was a watershed moment in South Asian security dynamics. It reversed the US's long-standing policy of non-proliferation in the region and de facto recognized India as a nuclear weapon state. The deal has had a significant impact on the strategic equilibrium in South Asia, influencing India and Pakistan's nuclear deterrence postures and the regional power structure (Bajoria & Pan, 2010).

By strengthening India's nuclear capabilities and stature, the deal has altered the strategic balance, while Pakistan's nuclear programme is still restricted by international law. As a result, India and Pakistan now have a new nuclear deterrent dynamic based on mutual assured destruction (MAD). But because Pakistan might feel pressured to match India's nuclear capabilities, the agreement has also raised the possibility of a nuclear arms race in South Asia. A multitude of strategic considerations, such as containing China's expanding influence in Asia, fortifying its security alliance with India in the context of the worldwide war on terror, and gaining entry to India's quickly expanding economy, drove the United States to cooperate with India on nuclear matters. The agreement has highlighted Pakistan's relative isolation and reliance on China, raised tensions between India and Pakistan, and elevated India's standing as a growing force and important US ally in Asia. These factors have all had an impact on the regional power structure.

The integrity of the South Asian security architecture and nuclear nonproliferation efforts are affected more broadly by the India-US Nuclear Deal. It puts other non-nuclear weapon states at risk of pursuing nuclear weapons and undercuts the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Furthermore, it raises the possibility of nuclear proliferation throughout the Middle East and other areas. It also makes it more challenging to establish confidence between India and Pakistan and to address regional disputes. Generally, the strategic balance and security framework in South Asia have been profoundly and intricately impacted by the US-India nuclear deal. For regional stability and nuclear nonproliferation, it has created new difficulties. Evaluating US nuclear policy towards South Asia and its effects on the region—particularly Pakistan and its relationships with the US, India, and China—is crucial. (Naqvi, 2010).

This article analyses how the agreement changed the strategic balance in South Asia and how India and Pakistan's nuclear deterrent posture were affected by it using realistic and regime change perspectives. It also looks at how the United States' decision to cooperate with India on nuclear matters was influenced by changes in policy and strategic interests, as well as how this affected the balance of power in the region (Carranza, 2007). Furthermore, it assesses the broader implications of the deal for nuclear nonproliferation efforts and the stability of the South Asian security architecture. This study argues that the India-US Nuclear Deal has had a significant and complex impact on the regional security dynamics in South Asia, with both positive and negative implications for nuclear nonproliferation and regional stability.

### **Research Question**

1. In what ways has the India-US Nuclear Deal reshaped the strategic equilibrium in South Asia, and how has it influenced India and Pakistan's nuclear deterrence posture?

2. What strategic interests and policy shifts prompted the United States to engage in nuclear cooperation with India, and how has this affected the regional power structure?
3. Considering the India-US Nuclear Deal, what are the broader implications for nuclear nonproliferation efforts and the stability of the South Asian security architecture?

### **Literature Review**

The literature has explored a change in nuclear policies at regional and international level, which has changed the entire scenario in South Asia especially impact on South Asia security by US nuclear policy (Mehdi, 2017). In an essay “Nuclear Strategy and Regional Stability in Southern Asia” successfully explained the complex interconnection between domestic politics, nuclear strategy and international politics of India, Pakistan and China. This essay criticizes the America for using cold war experience to understand the regional powers nuclear strategy of three Southern Asian countries, strategic competition among them and impacts of this competition on nuclear position of the world. It is rightly explained in the essay that the nature of competition among China, Pakistan and India getting complex year by year which would have catastrophic impacts on the stability of the region as well as on the stability of adjacent regions like West Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia. China is increasing and modernizing its conventional and nuclear capabilities in order to balance destructive capabilities of America. China is increasing its defense budget which is directly putting pressure on the India, and India also started to enhance its defense system and conventional military services, which is putting pressure on Pakistan because Pakistan is seeing it as threat to the status of balance of power in the region. This work will be clearly helpful in further research because it is very helpful in explaining the US policy towards South Asia.

(Bhatia, 2012) in his doctoral dissertation on ‘change in the US nuclear nonproliferation policy toward India’ explains that America has prohibited the transfer of advance nuclear technologies to India because it was not the signatory of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). He successfully explains the journey of America from sanctions on India after 1998 nuclear explosion to the full civil nuclear cooperation with India by Bush administration. By utilizing regime theory Bhatia explain that to what extent India US deal undermines the nonproliferation regimes, and failure of America to prevent India nuclear breakout in 1998. Bhatia explains that India US nuclear deal did not provide unlimited technological access to India but this deal is against the true sense of NPT.

(W. Khan, Ahmad, & Ali, 2014) examine the regional impacts of the India-US nuclear deal. They argue that by raising tensions between China and India as well as between India and Pakistan, the deal jeopardised the stability of South Asia. They claim that a nuclear arms race broke out in the region as a result of the US favoring India in the nuclear supplier group. Additionally, they raise the possibility that the agreement would encourage other nations, like North Korea and Iran, to pursue nuclear weapons. They caution that the agreement may be detrimental to US-Pakistan relations and their joint efforts in Afghanistan. This source examines the triangle of deterrence between China, Pakistan, and India and talks about how the

US-India nuclear agreement raised tensions in the area. It is essential to comprehending the deal's implications for regional security.

Hussain (2017) illustrates how China and Pakistan reacted to the perceived threat posed by the nuclear deal using Walt's balance of threat theory. He discovers that China bolstered Pakistan in the UN and on the Kashmir issue, and that China and Pakistan stepped up their military and nuclear cooperation. He contends that although the nuclear agreement tipped the scales in favour of India, deterrence was preserved because of China's influence. This source highlights China's role and the shifting dynamics in South Asia. It is pertinent to comprehending the more general regional dynamics.

Jaspal (2009) examines the paradox of deterrence in India-Pakistan strategic relations. He argues that the presence of nuclear weapons has increased the risk and expense of conflict in South Asia and that using force to further political objectives is not rational. He demonstrates how limited, conventional conflicts like the Kargil War, the 2001 standoff, and the tensions in 2019 have not been prevented by nuclear deterrence. He also recognizes certain benefits of deterrence, such as the steps taken by the two nuclear powers to reduce risk and foster mutual confidence. He contends that regional, global, and national factors all have an impact on deterrence in South Asia. The limitations and difficulties of deterrence in the context of South Asia are examined.

Z. Khan (2012) argues that Pakistan has valid reasons not to sign the NPT, which has many flaws and biases. According to him, Pakistan originally supported the NPT and disarmament, but it changed its mind because of unfavourable circumstances, like the nuclear agreement between the US and India and the absence of guarantees for regional and global security. In the absence of a resolution to its concerns, he concludes that Pakistan will persist in its pursuit of nuclear development for self-defense. This source offers insights into Pakistan's position on nonproliferation and discusses Pakistan's worries and commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It's important to comprehend Pakistan's nuclear strategy.

## **Historical Background**

### **Origin of Indian-US Nuclear Relations**

The origins of nuclear cooperation between India and the United States can be traced back to the Atoms for Peace program. However, the Atoms for Peace speech was not well-received by India, as it was seen as a thinly veiled attempt to promote nuclear proliferation under the guise of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. India and the United States discussed whether or not nuclear energy could be used to generate electricity in the 1950s. US companies and the Indian government struck an agreement to build Tarapur's 200 MWe twin power reactors in the early 1960s. Additionally, the US committed to provide highly enriched uranium (HEU) fuel to the plant. In 1969, the Tarapur plant commenced its operations. The controversial Tarapur agreement did, however, pave the way for future US-India nuclear cooperation. But the agreement also brought up a lot of issues, both nationally and internationally. India's choice to construct a uranium-fueled power plant in spite of its plentiful thorium resources and long-term objective of nuclear energy self-sufficiency was one of the primary causes for concern. Another concern was India's

reliance on the US for HEU fuel, which made it vulnerable to supply disruptions (Abraham, 1998).

The 2008 India-US Nuclear Deal was a historic accord that fundamentally changed the two nations' relationship and profoundly affected South Asia's regional security dynamics. As a non-nuclear weapon state, the agreement gave India access to international nuclear fuel and technology by waiving its membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Other benefits of the agreement for India included access to US nuclear research and development cooperation (Pant, 2007). The US wanted to counter China's increasing influence in Asia, gain access to India's rapidly expanding economy, and fortify its strategic partnership with India in the context of the global war on terror. These were some of the driving forces behind the India-US Nuclear Deal. The nuclear establishment in India, which viewed it as win-win agreement and a chance to improve India's nuclear status and capabilities.

The nuclear agreement between India and the United States has sparked quite the debate. Proponents of the deal claim that it has improved regional stability, strengthened ties between the US and India, and assisted India in meeting its expanding energy needs. The deal has been criticized for raising the possibility of a nuclear arms race in South Asia, weakening the global non-proliferation regime and increasing India's reliance on the US. The India-US Nuclear Deal, in spite of the controversy surrounding it, is considered as a turning point in the history of India-US relations and has had a substantial influence on South Asia's regional security dynamics.

#### The Road towards the Deal: 123 Agreement, NSG, and Safeguards Agreement

The United States and India have a bilateral agreement known as the 123 Agreement that defines the terms of their civil nuclear cooperation. 123 Agreements facilitate nuclear cooperation agreement for significant transfers of nuclear material, equipment, or components.

According to US Atomic Energy Act of 1954, Section 123, it is necessary for any nation that wants to import nuclear technology or fuel from the US. 2008 saw the negotiation and signature of the 123 Agreement, and 2009 saw US Congress approve it (*123 Agreements for Peaceful Cooperation*, 2022). The agreement has significantly changed South Asia's regional security dynamics as well as US-Indian relations. It has aided in fostering regional stability and fortified the strategic alliance between the US and India. Additionally, it has also given India access to nuclear fuel and technology that India would never be able to obtain.

One of the key provisions of the 123 Agreement is that India must separate its civilian and military nuclear programs. As a result, India needs to give the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards over its civilian nuclear programme. India used to have a policy of nuclear ambiguity, so this is a major concession on its part. Another significant provision in the 123 Agreement is the requirement that India adhere to the Nuclear Suppliers Group's (NSG) export guidelines for nuclear material. This suggests that without the NSG's approval, India cannot export nuclear technology or fuel to other countries. This drastically curtails India's nuclear sovereignty, but it's an essential trade-off to secure US nuclear technology.

The 123 Agreement sparked debate in both India and the United States. Some opponents of the agreement in the United States claimed that it would jeopardize the international non-proliferation regime and raise the possibility of a nuclear arms race in South Asia. Similarly, critics in India contended that the agreement might compromise their nation's sovereignty and create dependence on US nuclear technology and fuel. Despite all this, the 123 Agreement has proven successful. It played a role in enhancing the US-India relationship and contributing to India's responsible nuclear status. Additionally, it played a part in fostering stability in the South Asian region (Jaspal, 2014).

### **Evolving Rationales for the Deal**

The rationales for the U.S.-India nuclear cooperation pact have evolved over time, reflecting changes in the geopolitical context. The principal aim of the agreement was to strengthen the strategic partnership between the United States and India, with a particular emphasis on addressing India's increasing energy needs and reducing the consequences of climate change. Advocates emphasized the inclusion of measures that subject some nuclear reactors in India to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, with the aim of bolstering non-proliferation efforts. Over the course of time, there has been a change in emphasis towards the integration of India into the global nuclear mainstream, with a particular focus on encouraging responsible nuclear practices and economic advantages for the United States. These evolving justifications aimed to address non-proliferation concerns while fostering closer U.S.-India relation (Hersh, 1993).

### **Impact on Strategic Equilibrium**

The India-US Nuclear Deal has the potential to significantly alter the strategic equilibrium in South Asia, with potentially negative consequences for Pakistan's security and regional stability. As Dr. Sameer Patil of the Observer Research Foundation has pointed out, the deal could enhance India's military capabilities and alter the balance between offensive and defensive capabilities, increasing Pakistan's feeling of being threatened. Furthermore, India's participation in the governance of strategic technology has been reinforced by its inclusion in major strategic export control regimes, which may tip the regional balance in India's favor. Last but not least, the agreement might shift US foreign policy focus from Pakistan to India, further jeopardizing Pakistan's security.

The recent defense agreement between the US and India has unfortunately exacerbated tensions between India and Pakistan. Pakistan feels its security has been undermined, prompting increases in military spending on both sides. This risks further militarization and conflict in the region. Additionally, Pakistan seems to have lost its strategic importance to the US as a counterterrorism partner. This perceived shift in US relations away from Pakistan and towards India has led to sentiments of betrayal. The India-US Nuclear Deal is a complex issue with far-reaching implications for the strategic equilibrium in South Asia. It is crucial to thoroughly consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of the deal before passing a judgment. However, it is clear that the deal has already had a number of negative consequences for Pakistan, and it is important to be aware of these risks.

### **Indian-US Nuclear Deal and China Factor**

The relationship between China, India, and the US has been significantly impacted by the nuclear deal between the two countries. China has expressed concerns about how the agreement might impact its own security interests, and some have seen the agreement as an attempt by the US to limit China's growing influence. Despite these concerns, India has informed China that the pact is not intended to be directed at it and that it is still committed to maintaining friendly relations with its neighbor. Nonetheless, both India and the US will be closely observing each other's actions in the region, and the China factor is perhaps going to remain important in the relationship.

### **China's Role in Deterrence Stability in South Asia**

There are several other ways in which the deal has impacted the China factor. For instance, it has led to increased US-Indian military and security cooperation. China is now concerned that this could lead to India becoming an ally of the US in the region. Generally, the US-India nuclear agreement has had a complex and dynamic effect on the China factor. The pact has presented opportunities as well as obstacles to the three participating nations; it is unclear how these relationships will evolve over time.

In order to keep Pakistan and India strategically stable, China is not directly involved. However, China's standing in the region has evolved over time, and it is now a major player in South Asian affairs. In the early years of the People's Republic of China, China's approach in South Asia was to avoid getting involved in the Indian-Pakistani dispute. But as India grew more powerful and determined to confront China, China's position changed. In an attempt to hold India in check, China started giving Pakistan financial and military support.

China has supported Pakistan ever since the end of the Cold War, but it has also worked to strengthen ties with India. China's complex and frequently conflicting interests in the area are reflected in this delicate balancing act. China seeks, on the one hand, to keep India from growing too strong and undermining its hegemony in the region. However, China also desires to keep cordial ties with India, a significant trading partner (Gen, 2014).

China faces a more challenging balancing act in the years to come. India and China will probably compete with one another for hegemony in South Asia as they both grow and develop further. China might be required to take a more active part in crisis management if tensions between the two nations rise as a result of this competition. China's complex relations with both India and Pakistan mean that it will probably be challenging for China to act as a mediator between India and Pakistan dispute. However, China's growing influence in the region means that it is likely to play an important role in any future crisis management efforts.

### **Nuclear Conflict in South Asia & Role of the United States**

The NSG and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty forbid the development of nuclear technology and the use of nuclear weapons. However, the two plans differ in features, size, and legality. While the NSG is based on unofficial agreements and lacks a mechanism to ensure that members abide by the rules, the NPT is regarded

as a formal treaty with legal obligations. One of the most important requirements for joining the NSG is being able to provide specialized nuclear technologies and materials. People think that the NPT helps spread the worldwide NPR, which is a set of global principles for keeping nuclear weapons from spreading (Mohan, 2006).

The criteria-based approach to NSG membership may also help NPR and give states more chances to help improve NPR's reputation. Under this idea, every country that wants to join the NSG will have the same chance to apply, and those that meet the requirements will be accepted. Due to a technical problem with the NPT's idea of a cutoff date of January 1, 1967, non-NPT countries can no longer meet the NSG criteria (Clarke et al., 2013). Pakistan and India can't join the NPT because they are Nuclear Weapon States (NWS), and they won't give up their nuclear activities on their own. So, joining the NSG could help students learn the basics of NPR and satisfy their interest in peaceful energy at the same time. Now, the NSG restrictions are the hardest to get around because they stop governments that haven't signed the NPT from joining. When India was given an NSG exemption, this rule was changed. The United States' strategic engagement with India is driven by India's growing economy and increasing importance in Asia-Pacific affairs (Yusuf & Kirk, 2016).

The bilateral agreements and national strategic goals shouldn't have any effect on the rules that govern international regimes and agreements. The international community didn't care that India had used its nuclear programme for military purposes in the past. So, letting India join the NSG while keeping Pakistan out would weaken the normative basis of the NPR and call into question the rules and norms that have been built up over decades to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

### **Repercussions of US-India Nuclear Deal and NSG Waiver to India**

The US-India nuclear agreement of 2005 resulted in India receiving an NSG waiver, granting access to peaceful nuclear technology despite not being a party to the NPT. This waiver defied NSG rules, eroding the organization's organizational structure and legitimacy. Dr. Adil Sultan and Dr. Salma Malik express concerns about the deal's impact on global nuclear nonproliferation norms. The special treatment accorded to India was seen as undermining non-NPT nuclear-armed states' faith in the nonproliferation regime, sparking resentment among these states (Prashad, 2011).

### **Regional Implications**

The US-India nuclear deal exacerbated regional tensions, particularly between India and Pakistan, two countries with a history of conflict. Pakistan perceived the agreement as potentially enhancing India's nuclear capabilities. Despite IAEA oversight, India's ability to utilize imported materials to boost its nuclear program could lead to an arms race and security concerns in the region.

Additionally, Pakistan's concerns stem from India's failure to specify the use of eight reactors, potentially blurring the line between civilian and military facilities. This uncertainty contributes to Pakistan's apprehensions about India's nuclear intentions.

Furthermore, the deal's selective transformation of the nonproliferation regime has led to concerns about consistency in international standards, which is vital for the regime's effectiveness.

### **Strategic Interests and Policy Shifts**

The United States' decision to pursue civil nuclear cooperation with India was driven by a confluence of geostrategic, security, and economic factors. Geostrategically, India's rising prominence as an Asian power neighboring China made it an attractive counterweight for the US to offset China's growing influence. The post-9/11 security landscape led the US to cultivate closer defense and intelligence collaboration with India as a vital partner in the global war on terror. Providing India civil nuclear technology helped cement this budding security alliance. Rapid growth in US-India economic ties also created incentives for Washington to support India's nuclear power goals for energy security. Expanding US-India trade and the vast potential of India's market drove private sector enthusiasm. Meanwhile, India's vibrant democracy and strategic location aligned with the US's broader foreign policy tilt toward democratic partners. The convergence of these geostrategic, security, and economic motivations led the US to undertake a major reversal in nonproliferation policy to advance nuclear cooperation with India. This reshaped regional dynamic by signaling India's growing power and centrality for American interests in Asia. However, it also posed dilemmas for US nuclear firms and created inconsistencies in dealing with other non-NPT nuclear powers like Pakistan and China.

These strategic interests reshaped the regional power structure by elevating India's role as a significant US partner in Asia. The US shifted its approach to South Asia, emphasizing cooperation with India over other countries in the region. The US-India nuclear pact posed challenges for US nuclear companies, leading to concerns about the US-India framework's development and its implications for dealing with other non-NPT nuclear-armed states. China's stance, favoring similar exemptions for Pakistan, adds complexity to the situation. The US-India nuclear deal's repercussions are multifaceted, impacting both global nonproliferation norms and regional dynamics. Understanding the interplay between strategic interests and policy shifts is crucial to comprehending the deal's implications for regional and global security.

### **Implications for Nuclear Nonproliferation**

In the broader context the agreement between India and the US has far-reaching effects on regional conflicts, trust-building between India and Pakistan, and nuclear nonproliferation. The resolution of regional conflicts and efforts to foster trust in South Asia could be greatly impacted by this agreement.

Particularly for Pakistan, the strategic ramifications of the nuclear agreement between the United States and India have raised concerns. The deal, which gives India access to cutting-edge technology and US nuclear cooperation, disturbs the balance of power in the region. Both India and Pakistan are nuclear-armed state, so this could create tensions between them worse. The agreement could heighten the likelihood of a full-scale conflict in South Asia in addition to igniting an arms race. Pakistan may feel obliged to expand its own nuclear arsenal in order to preserve deterrence because it is legitimately concerned about India's increasing capabilities (Krepon, 2006).

Politically, the alliance between the US and India calls into question Pakistan's role in the region. Pakistan regards the alliance between the United States and India as a

calculated step to limit China's power. Pakistan might feel isolated and marginalized in the changing dynamics of the region as a result (Rizvi, 2000). Furthermore, Pakistan has long backed the United States in the war against terrorism, but this support has not been reciprocated. Pakistan's international relations may be strained as a result of the nuclear agreement, which has left it more open to criticism and intimidation from other nations.

Economically, Pakistan's economy is impacted by the US-India alliance. Due to India's access to cutting-edge technology, the region is experiencing an arms race and increased military spending, which could take money away from Pakistan's vital social infrastructure and services. Moreover, India may benefit significantly from different rates of economic growth from the United States and other countries as a result of their strengthened economic ties. Pakistan's reputation in the area may be further impacted by this economic inequality (Fani, 2009).

In terms of nuclear nonproliferation, the deal between India and the United States could create challenges. Pakistan may feel compelled to expedite its nuclear development and enhance its nuclear deterrent in response to India's growing capabilities. This, in turn, may undermine international efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. With India's unique membership status in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which Pakistan lacks, there is a potential for further regional instability (Squassoni, 2010). If India were to join the NSG, Pakistan's prospects for NSG membership become complicated due to the consensus-based decision-making process. This underscores Pakistan's call for equal treatment in matters related to NSG membership.

In conclusion, the India-US nuclear deal has broad implications for regional conflicts, trust-building, and nuclear nonproliferation in South Asia. It disrupts the regional balance of power, potentially isolates Pakistan politically, has economic consequences, and poses challenges to nonproliferation efforts. These implications underscore the complex dynamics at play in the region, with lasting consequences for India, Pakistan, and their relations with the United States and the wider international community.

### **Conclusion**

The US assistance to India is leading towards a non-ending arms competition between India and Pakistan. The India-US Nuclear Deal has had profound and multifaceted impacts on the strategic equilibrium and security architecture in South Asia. By granting India access to advanced nuclear technology and fuel despite its status outside the NPT, the deal enhanced India's power projection capabilities while constraining Pakistan's nuclear program. This reshaped the nuclear deterrence dynamics between India and Pakistan, based on assured destruction rather than minimum deterrence. The US was motivated to engage with India by a range of strategic interests, including countering China's influence, strengthening counterterrorism cooperation, and accessing India's market. This elevated India's status as a major power while undermining Pakistan's strategic significance for the US. The deal affected the delicate regional power balance and heightened tensions between India and Pakistan.

The India-US nuclear cooperation has challenged nonproliferation norms and reduced incentives for universal disarmament. It has made progress on regional

conflicts more difficult by increasing mistrust between India and Pakistan. While the deal has brought economic and technological benefits to India, it has done so at the cost of compromising principles of nonproliferation. Going forward, the US needs to balance its strategic interests in South Asia with commitments to nonproliferation. Moderating the intense security dilemma between India and Pakistan is vital for regional stability. The US should pursue closer ties with India without alienating Pakistan or sacrificing foundational norms of disarmament. A nuanced re-calibration of relationships, considering the unique context and equities of all states, can help achieve an optimal outcome.

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