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# NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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## **Nuclear Nonproliferation: Policy Implications**

The rhetoric concerning nuclear energy and the threat of nuclear weapons has been mounting in recent months, leading up to the U.S. move last week to impose financial sanctions on Iran amidst lack of consensus at the United Nations. Following Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent visit to Tehran, President George W. Bush remarked that he had told world leaders Iran must be prevented from achieving nuclear capability "if you're interested in avoiding World War III." Meanwhile Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has maintained that Iran will not retreat "one iota" from its nuclear program. President Bush laid out his concerns about Iran in his speech to the American Legion on August 28 in Reno, Nevada: "Iran's active pursuit of technology that could lead to nuclear weapons threatens to put a region already known for instability and violence under the shadow of a nuclear holocaust. Iran's actions threaten the security of nations everywhere," he said. "We will confront this danger before it is too late."

In India, concerns within the Parliament raised by the left and opposition parties over the U.S.-India Nuclear Agreement, approved by Bush in 2006, could topple the coalition government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Both parties indicated they would withdraw their support of the coalition government if the bilateral agreement were to proceed, and they would force early elections. Singh sees the agreement as critical to satisfying India's future energy needs. Today, India is the world's sixth largest consumer of energy, and its energy requirements are expected to double in the next two decades. The agreement with the United States provides India access to valuable nuclear technology and fuel sources that will provide nuclear energy to help satisfy future energy needs. The left and opposition parties within the coalition government feel the agreement compromises India's sovereignty because it includes a condition that all but requires the government to cooperate in U.S. foreign policy matters. Furthermore, they also feel the agreement precludes India from conducting further nuclear tests. During a recent teleconference, Singh told Bush that "certain difficulties" had arisen with the agreement. Singh's admission to Bush has been interpreted to indicate Singh may be unwilling to risk bringing down the government before scheduled elections in 2008.

It is important to note that the current U.S. administration has chosen to address nonproliferation concerns very differently in the cases of India and Iran. Since so much of nonproliferation policy depends upon consistency and creating as broad a diplomatic coalition as possible, it would not

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be wise for the United States to break with this long-standing tradition. As the administration forms agreements with nations such as India, a nation that has not signed the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the United States must be sensitive to the tradition of consensus and coalition. There is a fear that the United States is signaling that international rules like the NPT are standards that can be waived in some cases, while they are vigorously applied in others.

The nuclear agreement with North Korea is progressing but has yet to be finalized. And as nations of the underdeveloped world and others look to satisfy their future energy needs with nuclear energy, similar issues and concerns – such as those that have already arisen with the U.S.-India Agreement and the difficulties experienced with Iran and North Korea – could well arise. The United States has made a commitment to minimizing the number of nuclear weapons and weapon-capable states while ensuring that the benefits of nuclear power are spread as widely as possible. For example, the administration has supported Egyptian President Mubarak's recent statement that Egypt is to build a number of nuclear power stations to generate electricity because energy security was such an important factor in Egypt's development. Furthering nonproliferation and satisfying the energy needs of the underdeveloped world and other nations has become a daunting challenge. But the goal is an important and a critical one, critical to the future stability of the world.

The Baker Institute's planned "Nuclear Nonproliferation Workshop: Policy Implications of Managing or Preventing Proliferation" November 9-11 is consequently a very timely meeting. The involvement of a number of participants who attended an April 1982 conference on "Strategies for Managing Nuclear Proliferation: Economic and Political Issues," held at Tulane University, provides an opportunity to review the validity of the recommendations, expectations and forecasts of 1982 in light of the events of these past 25 years. The 1982 conference looked at managing proliferation in a world dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. The November workshop will address the possibilities and opportunities for nonproliferation in today's world.

If the United States is going to be successful in meeting its commitment to minimize the number of nuclear weapons and weapon-capable states, while also ensuring that the benefits of nuclear

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power are spread as widely as possible, it must rely on international cooperation and consensus. U.S.-Russian cooperation provides the foundation for that consensus and for the international coalition. The findings of the workshop will be published as a set of policy recommendations and will receive a wide distribution to policymakers for their consideration.