

**THE ROLE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN
INDO-PAKISTAN SECURITY:
THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**THE ROLE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN INDO-PAKISTAN SECURITY: THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE**" submitted by **NAINA SHAKTAWAT** in partial fulfilment of nine out of twenty four credits for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of this university, is her own work and may be placed before the examiner for evaluation. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for the award of any other degree of this or any other university.

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FOR MY PARENTS
&
RAKESH

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INTRODUCTION

The last decade of the present century began with new hope. The world witnessed the end of the Cold War and the termination of hostilities between the US and the former Soviet Union. And with this the threat of a nuclear conflagration has receded in Central Europe. In the view of those concerned with nuclear matters, war and the possibility of nuclear war in particular, has shifted to various regional theatres including South Asia.¹

India and Pakistan, for these "non-proliferators", represent a classical hostile relationship which, with nuclear capabilities on both sides, could lead to nuclear conflagration.² India and Pakistan have not officially claimed nuclear weapon status, nor have they gone in for overt weaponization, but there is little doubt about their nuclear capability. Both are capable of producing "short order" nuclear weapons, often described as "one-screw-turn away" nuclear powers, with the technical know how plus weapons grade fissile material in reasonable quantity.³

In the five decades since Partition, India and Pakistan have fought three wars and the causes for another conflict abound, be it ethnic, linguistic or territorial disputes, or divergent political aspirations with deep historical roots.⁴ All these

¹ See George Perkovich, "A Nuclear Third Way in South Asia", *Foreign Policy*, no.91, Summer 1993, pp.85-104.

² P.R. Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Stand Off: The Role of the United States* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1995), p.1.

³ Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "Regional Nuclear Proliferation Problems and Prospects", in Kanti P. Bajpai and Stephen P. Cohen. (eds.), *South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspective*, (Boulder, Colo: Westview, 1993), pp.205-216.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.206.

factors have contributed to periodic tensions between the two. Their nuclear capability has added a more threatening dimension to the already conflictual relationship. The 1990 crisis, at the height of insurgency in Kashmir, is the most recent reminder of the possibility of a standoff.⁵

The 1990 crisis was taken very seriously in the Western world. In fact, it was seen as "the closest the world has ever come to an actual nuclear exchange".⁶ This view may be an exaggerated one, but it does convey the rising apprehension of the world community about the nuclear standoff in South Asia. The defiance of the non-proliferation trend by the two, in not being a party to the NPT and the CTBT, has only added to global concern.

The above factors have made the nuclear status of South Asia a topic of heated debate. The key question is: "What role do nuclear weapons play in the security and stability of the region"? This topic has been exhaustively debated in recent years. Much has been voiced and written on this not only by the security analysts in the Subcontinent but also by the Western analysts, primarily by US security specialists. This dissertation takes a closer look at the whole debate. Identifying the divergent viewpoints, it aims at analysing those views in juxtaposition.

Broadly, three positions emerge from these writings. First, there is the view of those who believe in deterrence. These analysts take the position that nuclear weapons can provide stability in the region. At the other extreme is the view of those who advocate the renunciation of these weapons of mass destruction. The third position is that of the status quoists who think ambiguity about the status of nuclear weapons in the region is sufficient for regional stability.

⁵ Amitabh Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Status Quo", *Survival*, vol.38, no.3, Autumn 1996, pp.41-57.

⁶ Seymour Hersh quoted in Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Status Quo", p.42.

These different positions are a corollary of divergent threat perceptions. The region's geo-strategic location, demography, ethnic composition, political relations, historical legacy, weapons capability and force symmetry, all these factors go into the reading of these threat perceptions. Thus, when the weaponizers advocate overt or covert weaponization at a minimalistic level, they cite the Subcontinent's geo-strategic structure as justifying something less than a full fledged C³ I (Command, Control, Communication and Information) system and doctrinal architecture of the US-Soviet kind. The renouncers counter by questioning the economic, diplomatic and geo-strategic viability of nuclear weapons in the Subcontinent. To strengthen their position, they refer to the internal threats of secessionism, terrorism, insurgency and communal conflicts which cannot be dealt with by nuclear weapons. As for the status quoists, their argument is that for a decade deterrence stability has been maintained in the region.

For the sake of clarity and simplicity, the debate is discussed country by country in three chapters viz India, Pakistan and the U.S. In order to understand the varying viewpoints, it is necessary to review the history of the nuclear debate in the Subcontinent.

The Indian Nuclear Debate: The Early Years

The first nuclear debate in the Subcontinent occurred in India. India was the first developing country with a nuclear scientific base of any size and skill. The potential to build nuclear weapons was always recognised. Even Jawaharlal Nehru conceded that India may some day need to have nuclear weapons. After the 1962 war with China, and particularly after Nehru's death, the question of going nuclear or not was openly debated. After independence, for nearly fifteen years, India had a stable and coherent nuclear policy which had its roots in the Gandhian tradition and ideal of

non-violence. In 1948, Prime Minister Nehru, while defining Indian nuclear policy, emphasized that India would develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes but would never go in for nuclear weapons. This decision implied the creation of an autonomous peaceful nuclear capability, a goal that was pursued as long as Nehru lived. India was the first newly independent country to take such a decision.⁷

After the Indian defeat in the Sino-Indian war of 1962 and the rumours of Chinese nuclear developments, a major change in the government's nuclear policy began to unfold. The pressure for this change had started building since 1963 when some opposition members in Parliament began articulating their views in favour of nuclear weapons. Nehru was the sole authority in formulating the country's nuclear policy, holding as he did the dual portfolios of External Affairs and Atomic Energy, he and his preference prevailed. There is no record of a Cabinet or Ministerial level discussion on the issue. Though Homi Bhabha, the architect of India's nuclear programme, seems to have had a dissenting opinion in private discussions with Nehru, publicly a united front was maintained in support of the Prime Minister's nuclear guidelines including the ban on discussing Indian nuclear weapons.⁸ In these early years the bureaucracy, the media, the armed forces and academics were largely silent on the nuclear issue. As a result the Indian public too remained largely uninformed and disengaged.⁹

India's commitment to a diplomacy of peace through disarmament; cordial relations with major powers and neighbouring China; the priority given to economic

⁷ Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Nuclear Weapon: Policy Options for India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1983), p.1.

⁸ Ziba Moshaver, *Nuclear Weapons Proliferation in the Indian Subcontinent* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp.30-31.

⁹ Shyam Bhatia, *India's Nuclear Bomb* (Sahibabad: Vikas Publishers, 1979), pp.114-123.

development and the technically and politically complicated nature of nuclear weapons; all these factors contributed to the general apathy towards the nuclear weapons debate.¹⁰ Nehru's death in May 1964, followed by the first Chinese nuclear test in October 1964, triggered off the first parliamentary debate on going nuclear. The international negotiations on a nuclear non-proliferation treaty also contributed to growing public involvement.

The demand for nuclear weapons came mainly from the ranks of the major opposition political parties and even within the Congress party a section privately favoured nuclear bomb programme.¹¹ The bomb lobbyists stressed the need for early production of the bomb by quoting the remarks of Bhabha on India's capacity and the economic feasibility of such an endeavour.¹² The new Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, though personally in favour of the Nehruvian policy, came under pressure and responded by agreeing to develop the explosion technology, albeit for peaceful and constructive purposes. In early 1965, he followed this by agreeing not to rule out the development of nuclear weapons in the future. Apart from the views expressed in Parliament and the newspapers, opinions gathered from the armed forces through formal and informal means showed that senior officers of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and above opposed the development of nuclear weapons on the reasoning that it would make conventional forces unnecessary and lead to a disastrous diversion of funds from conventional forces.¹³ As for the defence and foreign affairs specialists, there was a near absence of such demands from them.

¹⁰ Ziba Moshaver, *Nuclear Weapons Proliferation in the Indian Subcontinent*, pp.32-33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.38.

¹² Shyam Bhatia, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p.113.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.117.

The lack of interest and inadequate discussion of nuclear issues was mainly due to the lack of hard information that was available to the specialist community. The government maintained a blanket of secrecy around nuclear research activities and it was well nigh impossible to know what the technical capacities of India's scientific community were at this time. In the bureaucracy the atomic energy establishment seemed to be the only section which favoured a weapons programme, at least until Bhabha's death in 1966. The bureaucrats, in general, didn't view the Chinese nuclear test as a threat to India and considered an Indian nuclear weapons programme as a waste of money.¹⁴ Commenting on the first nuclear debate in India, Bhabani Sen Gupta states that, "Infact, the debate in India on going nuclear was triggered off by the Chinese bomb. But the pressure for the Indian bomb was, from the beginning, political rather than strategic; that is, it did not emanate from a widely felt Chinese nuclear threat to India's security. The response to this pressure produced an ambivalent nuclear policy: an unexpressed but implied option to go nuclear with only an insipid political will to do so".¹⁵

This view is vindicated by the fact that rather than going the nuclear weapon way, India first sought nuclear guarantees from Britain in 1963. Failure on that front propelled Shastri to sanction the subterranean nuclear explosion project in 1965. Two years later in 1967 an Indian delegation went to Moscow, Paris, London and Washington seeking a nuclear guarantee, but was again unsuccessful in its mission.¹⁶ This failure led to mounting pressure on Shastri to militarise India's nuclear

¹⁴ Ibid., pp.117-122.

¹⁵ Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Nuclear Weapons: Policy Options for India*, p.2.

¹⁶ K. Subrahmanyam, "Capping, Managing or Eliminating Nuclear Weapons?", in Kanti P. Bajpai and Stephen P. Cohen. (eds.), *South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspectives* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), pp.175-192.

programme. It also provided a strategic rationale for India's refusal to enter the non-proliferation treaty in 1968. The compromise, namely, to retain the nuclear option without exercising it, dampened the debate on the bomb. The death of Shastri at the end of 1965, followed only a few weeks later by Bhabha's death in an air crash in 1966, undoubtedly slowed down the pace of nuclear decision making. From 1968 onwards, there was not much pressure from any front to change India's nuclear policy.

A touch of urgency was again perceived in the 1970s when China launched its first satellite. In the 1970s, the Indian debate became more sophisticated and took a different turn. The dispatch of the nuclear capable aircraft carrier, USS *Enterprise*, to the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict lent urgency to the bomb argument and the victory over Pakistan increased the appetite for the bomb. The Chinese bomb was no longer the main argument for the Indian bomb, perhaps because of the Chinese inability to help Pakistan in the 1971 war and because of Indian initiatives to normalise relations with China. A need to be admitted in the corridors of global power and be a dominant regional power guided pro-bomb arguments. It was also argued that the bomb would proclaim India's independence of the Soviet Union and compel the US to change its attitude of hostility or benign neglect.

The government responded to these demands in the form of the Sarabhai profile, a ten-year nuclear energy programme wedded to a modest space programme to acquire for India a balanced nuclear infrastructure and enable it to emerge as a threshold nuclear power.¹⁷ India's rejection of the NPT, the adoption of the Sarabhai profile, and the decision to carry out one or more 'Peaceful Nuclear Explosions' had a profound impact on the bomb debate. The desire for the bomb was now shared by increasing sections of the elite. The Indian public at large shared this outlook. In a

¹⁷ Bhabani S. Gupta, *Nuclear Weapon Option*, pp.2-4.

public opinion survey in 1970, two out of three people interviewed wanted India to have an independent nuclear deterrent.¹⁸

In 1974, India conducted its underground nuclear test. Initially, the international reaction to the Pokhran test was subdued, with the industrialized countries and the developing world reacting with caution. Canada was the exception in its outright condemnation of India. But in time, a spate of unilateral and multilateral counter-proliferation measures and sanctions began to be applied. The 'trigger list' of the London Supplier's Group was specifically aimed at India. Canada unilaterally terminated all nuclear cooperation agreements with India. Though the US initially tried to help India out of its dilemma, the Carter administration eventually initiated a series of bilateral and multilateral supply restriction measures. In 1978, it unilaterally passed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA) which mandated that all US nuclear imports were subject to the acceptance of full-scope safeguards by the recipient state.

In India, the Janata government under Morarji Desai decided in 1977 to suspend the peaceful nuclear explosion programme in order to save the country's civilian nuclear programme. But with the return to power of the Congress(I) in 1980, India abandoned this posture and announced that it would feel free to conduct nuclear tests. Washington felt it had no choice therefore but to enforce the NNPA. As a result of these sanctions India's nuclear industry suffered fundamental setbacks. Ultimately, India had to bow to tight international safeguards when Moscow supplied heavy water

¹⁸ Ziba Moshaver, *Nuclear Weapons Proliferation in the Indian Subcontinent*, p.52, note 74. She quotes from *Monthly Public Opinion survey*, (September 1970), pp.13-28. According to this survey, support for the nuclear bomb among major political parties was as follows: among Jan Sangh members, 85 per cent favoured nuclear bomb; among Congress-I, nearly three quarters; and three fifths amongst old Congress voters.

to India but only under IAEA safeguards.¹⁹ Though the explosion had triggered high hopes among sections of the elite, the Indian government did not go nuclear. It reiterated its policy to use nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes and stuck to its decision.²⁰ This apparently remains India's policy. The present United Front government has stressed that India would retain the nuclear option until the goal of universal nuclear disarmament was achieved. This is reflected in the statement made by the present Prime Minister: "Our security concerns oblige us to maintain our nuclear option yet, it is a fact that since we demonstrated our capability in 1974, we have exercised unparalleled restraint. We have refrained from carrying out tests and from weaponizing our option. However, we cannot accept constraints on our option as long as nuclear weapon states continue to rely on their nuclear arsenals for their security".²¹

The Pakistani Nuclear Debate: The Early Years

To trace the origin of the concerted search for a nuclear posture in Pakistan it is necessary to go back to the traumatic defeat in the 1971 war with India and the creation of Bangladesh. While India, from the beginning, located its nuclear choices within the framework of its global disarmament concerns, Pakistan was not moved by any such consideration. Very early in its independent existence, Pakistan had come under the US security umbrella and so was not much concerned with the progress of

¹⁹ Ziba Moshaver, *Nuclear Weapons Proliferation* pp.57-58. Ziba writes, "Although the terms of the IAEA agreement with India, like all the Agency agreements, are not disclosed, but it has been strongly suggested that in order to satisfy Moscow, India had to accept the most stringent safeguards it had ever signed".

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Statement by Mr. I.K. Gujral, *World Focus*, vol.18, no.3, p.22.

international nuclear disarmament. Till 1971, the priorities of Pakistan's political and defence planners were focused on internal consolidation and territorial security and building up their conventional forces to deal with these concerns. Nuclear threats were the least of their worries. The Soviet Union was the only nuclear power in the area, and by the time China exploded its bomb in 1964, Pakistan was already its ally.²²

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, who was the only real exception to the general nuclear apathy, mentions that when he sensed India's plans to go nuclear and cautioned his government, the response he got was that, "India was too poor to go nuclear".²³ The then President, Ayub Khan, even said that by the time India had a nuclear device, such weapons would be so common that it would be possible for Pakistan to buy one from the market.²⁴

Debate over nuclear weapons were rare even in the media or academic circles. This was so because of the sensitive nature of the nuclear issue and the restraint on discussion of politico-military matters. Another significant factor in the neglect of the nuclear issue was the absence of an adequate technical base and confidence at the political and scientific level, which in India under the Nehru-Bhabha partnership was successful in building a firm foundation, both in the policy making and technical field.

But all this does not imply that Pakistan made no effort to build a nuclear infrastructural base. As noted above, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was undoubtedly the chief architect of Pakistan's nuclear policy and programme. He himself stated that, "I have been actively associated with the nuclear programme of Pakistan from October 1958

²² Moshaver, *Nuclear Weapons Proliferations*, p.60.

²³ Quoted in Moshaver, *Nuclear Weapons Proliferation*, p.62.

²⁴ Ibid.

to July 1977, a span of 19 years".²⁵ He was successful in negotiating with Canada for the setting up of the 137 MW Karachi nuclear power plant which went critical in 1972. And by 1965, Pakistan also had a US-supplied research reactor.²⁶

One can discern a change in the Pakistani nuclear policy by the mid 1960's which was tied to its concern vis-a-vis India. First, there is the famous remark of Bhutto in 1965 that "If India makes the atom bomb, we will eat grass to get one of our own".²⁷ The Pakistani Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology (PINSTECH) was also established in the same year. And second, in the foreign policy field, Pakistan, who until then had been pressing for an international agreement on non-proliferation, now changed its policy and tied its choices to the Indian stand. Hence, it refused to join the NPT in 1968.

A number of factors led to this enhanced threat perception with respect to India in the 1960s: the death of Nehru, the ardent critic of nuclear weapons; Bhabha's revelations of the Indian capacity to produce a nuclear device; the increasingly vocal bomb lobby in the Indian parliament; the completion of India's indigenously built reprocessing plant; and the critical stance of India in the NPT negotiations.²⁸ But apart from the two above mentioned developments, Pakistan failed to take any significant step in the direction of a viable nuclear option. The internal political problems with the growing unrest in East Pakistan pre-occupied the ruling elite. In

²⁵ P.K.S. Namboodiri, "Pakistani Nuclear Posture", in K. Subrahmanyam, ed., *Nuclear Myths and Realities: India's Dilemma* (New Delhi: ABC Publishing House, 1981; reprint 1984), pp.140-141, note 3.

²⁶ P.R. Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Stand Off: The Role of the United States* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995), p.16.

²⁷ Quoted in Moshaver, *Nuclear Weapons Proliferation*, p.63.

²⁸ Ibid.

addition, Bhutto, the main force behind the country's nuclear option, was out of power in 1966.

The nuclear weapons issue entered the public discourse for the first time in the 1970 national election campaign, with the Pakistan People's Party's (PPP) focus on foreign and defence affairs which forced other parties to follow suit.²⁹ And after the traumatic defeat in 1971, Pakistan's nuclear programme began to be viewed as relevant to national security. In unofficial circles, the idea that nuclear weapons would deter India took a grip. And so when Bhutto assumed power in December 1971, he called a meeting of Pakistani scientists at Multan and by 1973 started negotiating with France for the purchase of a power reactor and a commercial scale reprocessing plant. Scientists were recruited from abroad to work on a fuel fabrication and heavy water plant. At this stage, Abdul Qadir Khan, a Pakistani engineer, managed to obtain the design plan of a gas centrifuge manufacturing facility from Holland which greatly assisted Pakistan's uranium enrichment programme.³⁰

The reprocessing deal with France, however, could not be consummated due to strong American pressure. America also implemented the Symington Amendment to the Foreign Aid Act in August 1976 which involved stopping aid to countries acquiring reprocessing facilities. General Zia-ul-Haq, who succeeded Bhutto in 1977, had no choice but to follow his predecessor's policies, as by then the momentum for the nuclear option had gained considerable strength. As one Pakistani observer noted later: "If Zia announced that Pakistan was giving up its option his government would be overthrown the next day".³¹

²⁹ Ibid., p.65.

³⁰ Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Stand Off*, p.18, note 19.

³¹ Quoted in Moshaver, *Nuclear Weapon Proliferation*, p.37.

The late 1970s changed the international political atmosphere to Pakistan's advantage. The Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan renewed America's dependence on Pakistan, and General Zia took full advantage of this opportunity to pursue his nuclear programme without risking much. Reports of Pakistani clandestine enrichment activities kept surfacing in this period, in spite of explicit denials at the highest levels. Yet at the technical level, break throughs were periodically signalled. Dr. A.Q. Khan revealed to an Indian journalist in 1987 that Pakistan had enriched uranium to over 90% for weapons purposes.³² Pakistan's former Army Chief, General Mirza Aslam Beg, has been explicit that Pakistan had acquired nuclear capabilities in 1987, but decided in 1989 to 'freeze' uranium enrichment at 3% which was not useable for weapons purposes.³³

More recently, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif declared that "If India dares to attack Azad Kashmir it will have to face the Pakistani atom bomb. I declare that Pakistan is in possession of an atom bomb."³⁴

India-Pakistan: The Present Nuclear Status

From the above account, it becomes clear that though neither India nor Pakistan has openly deployed nuclear forces, both nations have nuclear programmes and could on short notice assemble nuclear weapons. According to a rough estimate, India could have possessed "approximately 290 kgs of weapons-grade plutonium by the end of 1991, enough for almost 60 weapons".³⁵ For its part, Pakistan, it is

³² Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Stand Off*, p.37.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.37.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ George Perkovich, "A Nuclear Third Way in South Asia", *Foreign Policy*, no.92, Summer 1993, p.86.

estimated, had enough highly enriched uranium at the end of 1991 for "roughly 6-10 nuclear devices".³⁶

Apart from the weapons, both the states have acquired aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons to targets in the other's territories. Also, both have acquired missile capabilities. India has an indigenous missile programme, which has developed the 'Prithvi', a short range battlefield missile and is in the process of developing and testing 'Agni', a nuclear capable intermediate range ballistic missile. Pakistan has developed and tested two kinds of surface-to-surface sort range nuclear missiles, Hatf I and Hatf II. The latter may be a reworked, modified Chinese missile. It is in the process of acquiring the larger payload M-11 missiles from China. Most recently, Pakistan has announced that it has also tested the 800 Km. Hatf III.

On the control side, both countries have at present democratically elected governments, and only a tight circle of people actually have authority over the nuclear weapons establishments. In India, following the tradition established by Nehru, the Prime Minister holds the ultimate authority over decisions to develop, construct, test, deploy, and use nuclear weapons. The scientific directors of the nuclear complex provide the Prime Minister with technical options, and the role of military leadership is at best negligible in nuclear decision making. On the other hand, the Pakistani nuclear weapons programme operates nearly autonomously from the larger political system. Apart from Dr. A.Q. Khan and the technical personnel who actually run the nuclear programme, the decision-making circle does not extend beyond the President and the Army Chief.³⁷ The Prime Minister does not appear to have any say in nuclear decision making. According to some reports: Benazir Bhutto during her first

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

term in office from 1988 to 1990 "never paid a single visit to the sensitive installations (at Kahuta) nor had any control over Dr. A.Q. Khan's project".³⁸

Conclusion:

While Indian security concerns arise from Chinese nuclear capabilities and the reputed Sino-Pakistani nuclear alliance, Pakistan cites India as its main security concern. The end of the Cold War has not changed the specific regional balance and so there is no likelihood of the two governments renouncing their nuclear option. International non-proliferation pressure or domestic political compulsions may tilt the balance in favour of weaponization, but there is no real sign either in the domestic or international environment that the pressure to nuclearise is overweening.

³⁸ Ikram Ullah, "Former COAS Refutes Benazir's Plea of Ignorance", *The News*, 6 December 1992, p.4. Cited in Peter R. Lavoy, "Civil-Military Relations, Strategic Conduct and the Stability of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia", in *Civil-Military Relations and Nuclear Weapons*, ed., Scott D. Segan (Stanford, California: Centre for International Security and Arms Control, Stanford University, June 1994).

CHAPTER I

THE NUCLEAR OPTION DEBATE IN INDIA

The Indian nuclear issue is a non-issue in ordinary times.¹ The months following the Chinese nuclear test in October 1964 were the only times when the Indian nuclear option was really debated. Distinguished economists, political leaders and social activists participated in the discussion. Nuclear policy issues have gained importance only when it is perceived that external pressure is being imposed or if an extraordinary external event takes place that is viewed as threatening national security². The most recent example of heightened public concern came in the wake of renewed US pressure following the extension of the non-proliferation Treaty in May 1995. This was followed by the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations in 1996 where again there was considerable pressure on India to be a party to the treaty. India's refusal to sign either the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) or the CTBT has brought India on to the centre stage of global scrutiny and the non-proliferation pressure on India has increased. Predictably enough, this has revived the debate on India's nuclear policy options within the country.

The Indian official policy since the test explosion in 1974 has been one of "ambiguity". The nuclear option is kept frozen in an ambivalent state, where it is

¹ David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo, eds., *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p.13. According to the editors, nuclear issues in ordinary times rank below issues of communalism, poverty, economic stability, terrorism, the conflict in Kashmir and even GATT. Their conclusion is based on the findings of an elite opinion poll conducted between September and early November 1994.

² Amitabh Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Status Quo", *Survival*, vol.38, no.3 (Autumn 1996), pp.46 and 48.

neither operationalised nor foreclosed.³ India espouses global nuclear disarmament but maintains a de facto capability and keeps the option open. This policy of ambiguity has encompassed a range of active programmes and policies, from maintaining the dual character of its nuclear programme focusing on civilian uses of the technology to simultaneously upgrading military capabilities of weapon production and development.⁴ Ambiguity has meant keeping the weapon option open and sustaining it at progressively higher levels and finally taking care to carry out these efforts not with an arms race mentality, but with restraint keeping in mind international strategic factors.⁵

The present state of India's nuclear capability is best described as 'recessed' or 'non-weaponized capability', where India does not have a declared nuclear weapon programme but nevertheless has a nuclear technology base which is more than adequate to achieve weaponization at short notice.⁶ This policy of ambiguous and recessed deterrence may have stabilized Indo-Pakistan nuclear relations. But the Brasstacks crisis in 1987 and the Kashmir crisis in 1990, where it was alleged that India and Pakistan had come to the brink of a nuclear war cast serious doubts on the stability of this posture. Though there is substantial support for the current official

³ P.R. Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Stand off: The Role of the United States* (New Delhi: Manohar 1995), p.102.

⁴ Achin Vanaik and Praful Bidwai, "India and Pakistan" in Regina Cowen Karp (ed.). *Security With Nuclear Weapon's?: Different Perspectives on National Security* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1991). p.267.

⁵ K. Subrahmanyam, "Capping, Managing or Eliminating Nuclear Weapons?", in Kanti Bajpai and Stephen P. Cohen (eds.), *South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspectives* (Boulder, Colo: Westview, 1993). p.178.

⁶ The notion of "recessed deterrence" has been expounded by Air Commander Jasjit Singh. See Jasjit Singh, "Prospects for Nuclear Proliferations", in *Nuclear Deterrence: Problems and Perspectives in the 1990s*, ed. Serge Sur (New York: United Nations 1993), p.66.

policy of ambiguity while espousing global nuclear disarmament, there is a steadily growing community of strategic analysts who favour weaponization. There is also a minority of public opinion in favour of renouncing the nuclear option.⁷

Broadly speaking, at present there are three policy options which are being currently debated in India. They are:

- a) Maintain the status quo, that is the present posture of nuclear ambiguity. Neither acquire nor renounce nuclear weapons.
- b) Renounce the nuclear option and abstain from any nuclear weapon deployment.
- c) Acquire an overt nuclear weapon capability and proceed with outright weaponization.⁸

Within these broad postures, there are different views. But for the sake of simplicity and clarity, I have clubbed them together.

In Defence of the Official Policy: Maintain the Status Quo

Amitabh Mattoo who has recently published a book on India's nuclear choices makes a case in favour of the current official policy. His views are based on his study of the Indian decision making structure and elite public opinion surveys. Assessing the cost and benefits of weaponization, he comes to the conclusion that unless an external event or international non-proliferation pressure impinges on Indian security

⁷ Cortright and Mattoo, *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options*, p.11. The elite opinion poll conducted by Marketing and Research Group, New Delhi (MARG) found that 57% of those polled favoured New Delhi's current policy, 33% were nuclear advocates favouring weaponization. Only 8% favoured the renunciation of the nuclear weapon option for India.

⁸ Cortright and Mattoo, *India and the Bomb*, p.4.

and forces India to change its option for weaponization or renunciation, New Delhi is unlikely to change its ambiguous posture.

On the basis of his study of nuclear decision making in India, he concludes that the Indian Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) functions autonomously and is zealously pursuing the development of India's nuclear programme unaffected by the turbulence of Indian or international politics. Second, the Ministry of External Affairs is in charge of routine decisions on India's disarmament diplomacy, though final authority on policy decisions is vested in the person and office of the Prime Minister. However, only a strong, decisive and stable Prime Minister would take a decision without the concurrence of the MEA or the AEC. The MEA functions typically as a bureaucracy with fixed ideas, well entrenched positions and conservative and slow decision making. However, a crisis could prompt speedy decisions from the MEA.⁹ His study of the elite opinion poll leads to the conclusion that in ordinary times the nuclear issue does not score high on public priorities. In ordinary circumstances the government has no pressure on it to weaponize. In such times the government can make significant changes in its policy except for outrightly renouncing the option. But external pressure could shift public priorities and public opinion in favour of weaponization.¹⁰ On the nuclear equation between India and Pakistan, his view is that the present nuclear symmetry with Pakistan works marginally in favour of New Delhi simply because India has tested a nuclear device in 1974, and Pakistan has not conducted any test and is unlikely to do so in the near future and risk international opprobrium. But if India goes for another test, it would definitely give Pakistan an excuse to conduct a test. Overt weaponization, moreover, would for sure start an

⁹ Amitabh Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Status Quo", *Survival*, vol. 38, no.3 (Autumn 1996) pp.44 and 45.

¹⁰ Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Status Quo", p.48.

arms race between the two, which would seriously damage their economies and have disastrous consequences for their political stability. India may be able to bear the costs of an arms race, but Pakistan cannot compete for long. If Pakistan persists, it is bound to collapse. And such an imminent collapse could prompt Pakistan to trigger a preemptive nuclear strike as a last resort option. In any event, a Pakistani collapse and disintegration is bound to impinge on Indian stability and may well signal the balkanisation of the Subcontinent.

There is another danger associated with Indian weaponization. It may well cement the Pakistani nuclear relationship with China. So the present status quo with Pakistan works in favour of long term stability.¹¹ India's nuclear equation with China is a different story altogether. Chinese military and political threats are a distinct possibility in the long run. China has been assisting Pakistan in its nuclear programme.¹² It's expansionist designs in Myanmar and Spratley Islands proves wrong the theory that China's action in Tibet in 1950 and in Vietnam in 1979 were aberrations. The next millennium may well witness Sino-Indian rivalry where a military and economic giant like China is unlikely to stand for competition from India. And finally, Chinese deployment of nuclear missiles in Tibet which target India definitely have a potential psychological and political impact which cannot be underestimated.

But a Chinese nuclear threat cannot be countered by India by weaponizing. It would take at least two decades for India to match China's nuclear arsenal even if it was willing to commit huge resources. Even then it would not be easy for India to

¹¹ Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Status Quo", p.49.

¹² Mattoo in "Maintaining the Status Quo" quotes the *Washington Times*, 3 February 1996 report that China supplied Pakistan with around 5000 ring magnets which could be used to enrich uranium in gas centrifuges.

acquire a nuclear deterrent against China. On the other hand, the present policy of opacity and uncertainty offers an "existential" deterrence against China. Just because the Chinese know so little about the exact state of India's nuclear programme, foreign policy makers in Beijing would be unwilling to risk attacking India.

There is another deterrent to weaponization: the economic cost factor. Nuclear weapons by themselves may be cheaper than large conventional forces, but the cost of command, control, communications, computers and intelligence (C⁴I) would not be less burdensome. Added to this is the cost of maintaining highly skilled personnel and extra security and radioactivity checks.¹³ And, most important, nuclear weapons cannot substitute for conventional and paramilitary forces which are needed to deal with India's primary security threats.

There is also a moral cost attached to such a decision. India's moral commitment may have gradually eroded in the turbulent world of anarchic international politics, but there is no doubt that it still continues to influence policy. Active support for the liberal pacifist critique of nuclear weapons is one of the moral stands of India's policy. A dramatic shift from this policy would impose a moral cost and would surely tarnish India's international image.¹⁴

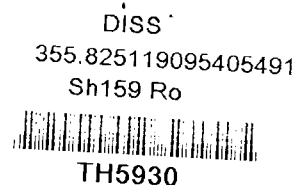
Considering these cost factors, New Delhi will probably not test or deploy nuclear weapons unless Pakistan tests a weapon or international sanctions are imposed against India. New Delhi will continue to make rational nuclear choices in its self interest. Only a worldwide denuclearization treaty would most effectively ensure



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¹³ Mattoo quotes Varun Sahni in Cortright and Mattoo, *India and the Bomb*, p.97.

¹⁴ Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Status Quo", p.55.



India's disarmament. Until such a treaty comes about, the main elements of India's nuclear policy are unlikely to change.¹⁵

Does Ambiguity Deter?

There are several doubts expressed on the efficacy of an ambiguous deterrent posture to maintain stability of nuclear relations between India and Pakistan. P.R. Chari, who has worked on the 1987 Brasstacks crisis¹⁶ and written extensively on the Indo-Pak nuclear standoff,¹⁷ questions the opinion that a non-weaponized deterrence is obtaining between India and Pakistan and is contributing to the stability in their relations. India's nuclear capabilities are "Limited to its possible ability to derive untested, air-deliverable with modified air-craft-fission devices that may, hopefully function in emergency situations".¹⁸ Any nuclear device that India could assemble would remain untested in an international milieu which is hostile to nuclear testing. The need for an experimental field demonstration to gain confidence in the efficacy of a nuclear explosive design and further to ensure 'integrating and optimizing' the nose-cone warhead combination has been stressed by several Indian scientists. A UN study's opinion is that "It may be technically possible for many states to develop unsophisticated fission weapons and to have some confidence in their

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kanti Bajpai, P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Stephen P. Cohen and Sumit Ganguly, *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).

¹⁷ P.R. Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Standoff: The Role of the United States* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).

¹⁸ P.R. Chari, "India's Nuclear Options: Future Directions", in P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Iftekkaruzzaman (eds.), *Nuclear Non-Proliferation in India and Pakistan: South Asian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996) p.65.

reliability without carrying out a test. It is unlikely, however, that states would wish to commit their national security for any length of time to nuclear weapon systems that are untested".¹⁹

It is difficult to say that a state of non-weaponized deterrence exists between the two states. But even if it exists, its viability would rest on an intrusive verification regime to monitor the working of their nuclear facilities, their operation records, material accounts, and so on. But this is politically unacceptable to India and Pakistan as it is considered to be an assault on their sovereignty.²⁰ In such an environment, several inherent dangers arise from the possibility of misperceptions, accidents, miscalculations, leadership inaptitude, or command failures taking place. These dangers would quite naturally exacerbate during emergencies.²¹

There is another question regarding non-weaponized deterrence. What would non-weaponized deterrence deter? After the 1987 and 1990 crisis, Indo-Pak relations, in Kashmir in particular, are under very close international scrutiny. Therefore the probability of Indo-Pak tensions proceeding to conflict is becoming increasingly remote. On the other hand, the real security threats to India arise from a medley of ethno-political, religious, communal and socio-economic causes. Nuclear weapons or non-weaponized deterrence have no bearing on this range of India's real security problems.²²

¹⁹ Chari quotes the UN Centre for Disarmament, Report of the Secretary General, *Comprehensive Study on Nuclear Weapons*, United Nations, New York, 1981, p.34.

²⁰ Chari, *Nuclear Non-Proliferation in India and Pakistan*, p.64.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.120.

²² *Ibid.*, p.66.

The other problems of an ambiguous posture are, first, in the absence of foolproof knowledge about the other side's nuclear status, there is always a tendency to miscalculate and launch a conventional attack thinking that the other side has not weaponized or could not weaponize fast enough.²³

Second, while nuclear ambiguity may be "deterrence-stable" it may not be "crisis stable". In a crisis when decisions have to be taken promptly, the lack of certitudes could prompt a response.²⁴ "If one side or the other calculates that the other side's ambiguity is too ambiguous, it might decide to strike first. At a critical moment, ambiguity may give its possessor a false sense of security and its opponent a false sense of opportunity".²⁵

Third, ambiguity may prompt a silent or opaque nuclear arms race. Miscalculation in assessing the exact state of the other side's nuclear stockpile size or its nuclear doctrine, the two sides are bound to make worst case assumption and increase their stockpile size leading to a silent arms race.²⁶

Fourth, the "neither-confirm-nor-deny" posture is not convincing enough and many in the West assume that India is a defacto nuclear weapon power with an arsenal of "short-order" weapons. Hence, India's declarations for nuclear disarmament are not taken seriously and moreover its perceived defacto nuclear status subjects India

²³ Krishna Swami Sundarji, "Changing Military Equations in Asia: The Relevance of Nuclear Weapons", in Francine R. Frankel (ed.), *Bridging the Non-Proliferation Divide: The US and India* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1995), p.167.

²⁴ Kanti Bajpai, "Abstaining: the Non-Nuclear Option", in Cortright and Mattoo (eds.), *India and the Bomb*, p.43.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Sundarji, "Changing Military Equations in Asia", in Frankel, ed., *Bridging the Non-Proliferation Divide*, p.62.

to intense non-proliferation pressures from major powers. Also, India gets factored into the general deterrence policy of not only China but US and Russia, thereby greatly increasing its strategic risk.²⁷

Fifth, no meaningful steps towards confidence building measures (CBM) can be taken when each side claims that it does not have nuclear weapons.²⁸

Sixth, the secrecy surrounding their weapon programmes increases the risk of unauthorized use and theft by terrorists and subversives, and makes it difficult for both sides to effectively enforce safety measures.²⁹

Seventh, a deterrence posture based on uncertainty has little practical worth against more pressing security threats of subversive activities, covert operations, cross-border insurgency and terrorism faced by the two countries.

Eighth, an ambiguous posture is essentially contrived, and cannot continue adinfinitum. Sooner or later it would transmute into a posture of clarity and certainty under the aggregate weight of accrued evidence or in the course of unfolding events.³⁰

Ninth, India is paying a high price for avoiding a final political decision on its nuclear policy. Ambiguity has strained India's relations with great powers over the nuclear issues, increased the burden of technological sanctions and created instability

²⁷ Bajpai, "Abstaining: The Non-nuclear Option", in Cortright and Mattoo, *India and the Bomb*, p.162.

²⁸ Ibid., p.168.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Stand Off*, pp.104-105.

in relations with its neighbours. So long as India fails to come to terms with its nuclear option, the international system will try and roll it back.³¹

Weaponize to Attain Stability

There is a broad range of nuclear weaponizers who advocate options and postures ranging from a minimal, to a triad, even to an all horizons capability. The minimal deterrence posture includes modest proposals for developing nuclear warheads and delivery systems.³² "A triad nuclear capability involves reproducing, even if in miniature, the organizational structure and doctrinal architecture of the US and Russian strategic forces built during the classic period of their confrontation".³³ And an all horizons capability could strike anywhere on the planet.³⁴ The latter two options are not relevant for the Indian nuclear debate. The weaponizers within India are in agreement that whatever India's requirements may be, they certainly do not include a triad or an all horizons capability to deter Pakistan and China, its primary threats.

The two most influential voices for a minimal deterrent posture are those of K. Subrahmanyam, a leading defence analyst, and General K. Sundarji, a former Chief of Army Staff. Subrahmanyam advocates an overtly declared deterrent posture based on a simple deployment pattern, an uncomplicated targeting philosophy and a

³¹ C. Raja Mohan - "India Should Exercise Nuclear Option", *World Focus*, vol.28, no.3, March 1997, p.5.

³² Varun Sahni, "Going Nuclear: Establishing an Overt Nuclear Capability", in Cortright and Mattoo, *India and the Bomb*, pp.93-94.

³³ Varun Sahni, in Cortright and Mattoo, *India and the Bomb*, p.91.

³⁴ Ibid.

relatively primitive command, control, communication and intelligence structure.³⁵ Sundarji on the other hand is of the opinion that "nuclear deterrence in South Asia can be made to stick without weaponization or deployment in the classic sense. This can be achieved provided certain tacit understandings are arrived at regarding the continued maintenance of capped but live capabilities of weaponizing at short notice and having the vectors for effective delivery, but not marrying them with warheads and deploying them in advance".³⁶ Both Subrahmanyam and Sundarji perceive China as the primary nuclear threat to India. Pakistan is a threat only in an asymmetric equation, where India renounces its option and Pakistan retains it. The nuclear threat from China and Pakistan is mainly in the form of a nuclear blackmail, if India renounces its nuclear weapon option. The actual use of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent would be in an extremely rare situation. It is primarily to deter a possible blackmail that India needs to build a minimum deterrent nuclear arsenal.

The Chinese threat goes as far back as the 1962 Chinese aggression. It had a deep impact on the Indian psyche and considerably altered India's world view. The basis of Indian nuclear programme has been the Chinese nuclear threat to India.³⁷

Second, the Chinese nuclear arsenal is of predominantly regional effectiveness. China's retention of tactical weapons and short range missiles, some of which are deployed in Tibet targeting India, belies Chinese proclamation of 'no first use'.

³⁵ K. Subrahmanyam, "Nuclear Force Design and Minimum Deterrence Strategy for India", in *Future Imperilled: India's Security in the 1990s and Beyond*, ed. Bharat Karnad (New Delhi: Viking, 1994) pp.176-95.

³⁶ Sundarji in "Changing Military Equations", in Francine Frankel, *Bridging the Non-Proliferation Divide: The US and India*, p.163.

³⁷ Subrahmanyam, "Capping, Managing, or Eliminating Nuclear Weapons?", in Kanti Bajpai and Stephen, P. Cohen (eds.), *South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspectives* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993) p.178.

Tactical nuclear weapons are normally first use weapons and China is estimated to possess some 300 to 900 of these tactical or intermediate range weapons.³⁸

Third, China is also modernizing its conventional and naval forces. As long as the capabilities remain, a declaration of 'no-first use' can be abandoned at any time.³⁹

Fourth, Chinese assistance to the Pakistani nuclear programme and their nuclear alliance increases the danger of a nuclear threat. China has supplied Pakistan with nuclear weapon designs, highly-enriched uranium and possibly tritium. It has sold M-9 and M-11 missiles to Pakistan and is assisting Pakistan in developing ANZA II surface to air missiles and Hatf I and II surface to surface missiles.⁴⁰

The Pakistani nuclear threat is specifically directed against India. India cannot afford a nuclear asymmetry with Pakistan given the hostile nature of the India-Pakistan relationship. A nuclear asymmetry will nullify any conventional weapon superiority of India vis-a-vis Pakistan. There is also a possibility of Pakistan acquiring fissile material and technological talent from the ex-Soviet republics.⁴¹ Considering these factors, India cannot be complacent about its nuclear preparedness. Subrahmanyam is of the opinion that the threats would be more in the nature of blackmail, so India needs the barest deterrent for its security needs. China is comparatively a weak nuclear power (relative to the U.S. and Russia) and would not favour legitimizing the use of nuclear weapons. Nor would it go for a large-scale first strike and deplete its arsenal and weaken itself vis-a-vis its major rivals. The limitations of the first strike

³⁸ K. Subrahmanyam in *South Asia After the Cold War*, p.177.

³⁹ Sundarji, "Changing Military Equations", p.145.

⁴⁰ Ibid., n.38.

⁴¹ K. Subrahmanyam, "Nuclear Force Design", p.177.

itself enhance the survival probability of any Indian force. Pakistani technology and resource limitations constrain its first strike, and India has strategic depth against any Pakistani strikes.⁴² Subrahmanyam opines that if a doctrine of no first use and a strategy of only counter value retaliatory strikes is adopted, then an arsenal of sixty deliverable warheads could fulfil the basic minimum deterrent need. No further testing would be needed for such an arsenal. And also there is no need for sophistication and categorization of weapons. Such an arsenal would counter the whole range of Chinese nuclear weapons. Keeping these warheads rail or road mobile and dispersed would enhance their survivability. The cost of command, control, communication and intelligence is also reduced "when a country abjures war fighting, does not anticipate high intensity exchange, is pledged to only counter retaliation and has no tactical weapons."⁴³ A highly time-critical retaliation is also not required. That would also save a lot of expenditure involved in command, control, safety and security of the weapons and precautions to avoid unauthorized launches.⁴⁴

Sundarji similarly makes a case for a minimum deterrence for India. Assuming that India has no desire to change the status quo and with only deterrence in mind, Indian policy will be of no first use of nuclear weapons. This would not take away the right to defend oneself with all the means at one's disposal when one's survival is at stake. Only a nuclear war fighting or early first use is denied. Pakistan's nuclear weapons would give it confidence in countering Indian nuclear threats and this would induce national sobriety and would be conducive to regional stability. The danger of an arms race would be controlled because nuclear weapons are only for deterrence,

⁴² Ibid., p.189.

⁴³ Ibid., p.192.

⁴⁴ Sundarji, "Changing Military Equations in Asia", pp.155-156.

more is not better if less is adequate.⁴⁵ He also states that a nuclear test explosion would not be required. Computer testing of the total design coupled with segmented testing of components in a form that does not require a nuclear explosion might be acceptable.⁴⁶ The survivability of nuclear forces could be enhanced by basing land based missiles on a rail and road mobile mode incorporating adequate dummies and stationing the fissile core, the carriers and the landing agencies at different faces.⁴⁷ Such a deployment may not give enough assurance to the Indian planners about the survivability of its arsenal, but no Chinese planners can be certain of a first strike capability which could for certain destroy India's arsenal completely. China would be enormously reluctant to go in for a first strike.⁴⁸

A hair trigger response is also not needed for retaliatory counter strikes. A few hours or even a day could be taken to respond. Such a response would not call for a highly sophisticated, responsive command, control and intelligence system.

Such weapons could be used at the tactical level for deterrence purposes. They could deter an adversary from making first use of tactical weapons in order to gain a battlefield advantage. When that fails, the second strike could be on tactical area targets with 10 to 20 kilotonne yield weapons. Summing up, "Minimum Deterrence has the advantage of making small stockpiles effective, and thus the avoidance of arms racing more likely. Also permitting a more relaxed approach to retaliation, accepting

⁴⁵ Sundarji, "Changing Military Equations in Asia", pp.155-156.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.158.

⁴⁷ Sundarji, *Blind Men of Hindoostan: Indo-Pak Nuclear War*, (New Delhi: UBS Publishers, 1993), p.156.

⁴⁸ Sundarji, "Changing Military Equations in Asia", pp.16, 1-62.

greater time lags between receipt of the first strike and launching of the second strike, dangers of wrong launches due to faulty C³I, etc., can be avoided more easily".⁴⁹

According to Subrahmanyam, there are no penalties involved in India formalising a status already acknowledged by the concerned nations. The US, Pakistan and China already consider India a nuclear weapon state. With an unambiguous nuclear weapon status, India should press for a no first use treaty with Pakistan, and then with China and Russia. Such a treaty would make all of, Asia powers, committed to a no first use and this would enormously add to international pressure to bring the, Western powers into line.⁵⁰

A nuclear India will have better credentials as a permanent member of the Security Council.⁵¹ And if a fissile material cut off treaty comes about, India and Pakistan will be treated as nuclear powers and their stockpile of fissile materials hitherto accumulated will be exempt from safeguards.⁵² Once a minimum deterrent is established India would be in a better position to negotiate with 'China to give up its tactical weapons and short range and medium range nuclear arsenal.'⁵³

India should also continue to develop missiles and abide by the Missile Technology Control Regime regarding transfer to third countries. Within these broad parameters, further action can be taken to build up confidence, stabilize the nuclear situation and promote nuclear restraint.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Sundarji, "Changing Military Equations", p.159.

⁵⁰ K. Subrahmanyam, "India's Nuclear Confusion", *World Focus*, vol.18, no.3, March 1997, p.7.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Sundarji, "Changing Military Equations", p.17.

Apart from a minimum deterrent option, there are other weaponizers who believe that even if India and Pakistan build small nuclear forces, the risks of a Subcontinental war would be manageable. According to Brahma Chellaney, the current Indian research and development drive is aimed at building a minimal but credible nuclear deterrence. Various component programmes are being pursued separately with the intention of later coalescing them into an effective deterrent. Pakistan's nuclear programme is designed to provide a meaningful deterrent to India. They both have aircraft for delivery and targeting of nuclear weapons and are currently engaged in strengthening their missile technology to rival each other's delivery capabilities.⁵⁵

The driving force behind India's nuclear weapon capability is the Chinese nuclear threat and not Pakistan, for which its conventional superiority would act as a deterrent. For Pakistan, India's military dominance in the region is the key propelling factor.

According to Chellaney, it is Chinese actions which strongly influence the South Asian proliferation landscape. China has expanded its nuclear armoury to include MIRVed ground to ground missile capability and conducted successful ballistic missile launches from a nuclear submarine. Also Chinese nuclear deployments in Xinjiang and Tibet affect Indian threat perceptions.⁵⁶

Considering that both Pakistan and India are in possession of weapons-usable fissile material and nuclear delivery capabilities, it may be difficult to reverse the process of nuclearization. According to Chellaney, given that the available evidence

⁵⁵ Brahma Chellaney, "South Asia's Passage to Nuclear Power", *International Security*, Summer 1991 (vol.16, no.), p.54-55.

⁵⁶ Chellaney, "South Asia's Passage to Nuclear Power", p.56. MIRV, Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles, refers to placing multiple warheads on missiles.

suggests that the Subcontinent is on the brink of weaponization, it is not possible to discuss a weapon free regime; only a weapon control regime is possible. In South Asia, the necessary technical and political conditions for a nuclear weapon free regime do not exist. There are no reliable technical means to monitor all aspects of the nuclear programmes accurately and deter cheating. Simply accounting for all the bomb-grade fissile material already produced by the two countries would be a major problem.⁵⁷

That said, there are inbuilt strategic, meteorological, familial and historical factors in the region which constrain the use of nuclear weapons.

There is a problem of nuclear targeting associated with geographical proximity and uncertain meteorological factors. An unfavourable wind direction and velocity could carry the radioactive fall out to the attackers own territory. There would be a problem in targeting urban centres also as there is a concentration of Muslims in Indian cities and the kinship ties between the Indian and Pakistani Muslims would be a deterrent to the use of nuclear weapons.⁵⁸

The conduct of war in the past between India and Pakistan and between India and China has been conservative in the sense that combatants have restricted their air strikes to military targets and avoided largescale civilian and industrial destruction. Despite inflammatory rhetoric, an element of stability has been built in the region because of the continued cooperative bargaining and dialogue between the rivals. The

⁵⁷ Brahma Chellaney, *Regional Security and The Diffusion of Advanced Weapons and Technologies to India, Pakistan and China* (New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research, July 1994), p.28.

⁵⁸ Chellaney, "South Asia's Passage", p.68.

India-Pakistan agreement not to attack each other's nuclear facilities and material storage sites is the result of such bargaining.⁵⁹

Nuclear weapons cannot prevent a conventional war between two adversaries but their possession does not automatically increase the chances of conflict. In fact they help to instil responsibility and caution and decrease the probability of war. Whereas in the first quarter of their independence, India-Pakistan and India-China fought four wars in aggregate, since they acquired a nuclear capability they have not fought a war.⁶⁰

But these constraining factors do not dilute the need for greater political cooperation and nuclear transparency in the region. As mentioned before, at the regional level, only a weapons control regime is possible in South Asia. Apart from advanced notification of troop manoeuvres and movements along the border, other confidence building measures including "hot line" communication links, periodic meetings of the border force commanders and measures to deter air space violations have eased border tensions. With China also, India has made tangible progress in easing border tensions. The September 1993 accord between the two to maintain peace along the disputed Himalayan border is the most important CBM in recent years in Asia.

Further steps towards nuclear transparency by agreeing to extensive and detailed data exchanges, cooperative measures and reciprocal site visits on a periodic or short term basis would make their nuclear activities more open and less

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Brahma Challeney, *US Counter Proliferation Initiative: Issues and Implications* (New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research January 1996), p.32.

threatening. A no-first use pact between India and China and India and Pakistan would be the most important and reassuring confidence building measure.⁶¹

The strongest political incentive for regional nuclear restraint in South Asia can be provided by major arms control agreements between the superpowers designed to take them towards minimum nuclear deterrence. A fissile material cap on the nuclear programmes of the three countries through global non-discriminatory measures would be another restraint measure. This would not stop them from developing their warheads and delivery capabilities but would effectively block India and Pakistan from seeking more than minimum deterrence.⁶²

C. Raja Mohan is another advocate of confidence building measures to manage the nuclear stand-off in South Asia. According to him, for effective confidence building measures, it is very important that India and Pakistan abandon their posture of ambiguity. With ambiguity, there is always a tendency towards offence and preemption. It puts a strain on crisis management and nuclear signalling and is very unstable during a crisis. By avoiding a political decision on its nuclear policy, India has strained its relations with the great powers and is only increasing its economic burden of technological sanctions. So long as India fails to come to terms with its nuclear option, the international system will try to roll it back. India needs to exercise its nuclear option in convincing fashion, because the world will come to accept it sooner or later. Once the nuclear rubicon is crossed, according to him, "a clutch of mobile missiles both short and medium range would constitute a credible nuclear

⁶¹ Chellaney, "Regional Security and the Diffusion of Advanced Weapons", pp.28-30.

⁶² Chellaney, "Regional Security and the Diffusion of Advanced Weapons", p.41.

force". And this minimal deterrent force could be managed with the help of certain confidence building measures and arms control agreements.⁶³

Raja Mohan analyzes the major nuclear risks facing the Subcontinent and concludes that the Western fears of a nuclear conflagration are exaggerated. According to him, the risk of preventive wars have subsided in the Subcontinent as both the sides have already acquired the capability to build weapons and both sides recognise this fact. The 1988 agreement between India and Pakistan not to attack each other's nuclear installations have further lowered the risks of a preventive war.⁶⁴

The probability of preemptive strikes by each side could be reduced by increasing force readiness, dispersing weapon systems and increasing their mobility and protection. Western fears of unauthorized use of these weapons by the armed forces are unfounded. The armed forces of the two countries maintain a strict hierarchy, are highly centralized, and the subordinates are very loyal to the top military leadership. Also, the operational requirements of small, minimal deterrent forces can mitigate the dangers of unauthorized use. Unlike the US and former Soviet Union, India and Pakistan need not place their nuclear weapons under military control during peace time. As crisis evolves, each country should have ample time to prepare for a nuclear exchange. Like Sundarji, he also advocates that the nuclear devices be stored in a disassembled form at civilian laboratories and separate from their delivery systems during peacetime.⁶⁵

⁶³ C. Raja Mohan, "India Should Exercise Nuclear Option", *World Focus*, vol.18, no.3, March 1997, p.5.

⁶⁴ C. Raja Mohan and Peter Lavoy, "Avoiding Nuclear War", in Michael Krepon and Amit Sevak (eds.) *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building and Reconciliation in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996), p.27-28.

⁶⁵ C. Raja Mohan and Peter Lavoy, "Avoiding Nuclear War", pp.30-31.

There is no likelihood of nuclear coercion, Raja Mohan argues, as neither India nor Pakistan has developed nuclear weapons with offensive or coercive military action in mind. There is no cult of the offensive in South Asia. Neither country has significant territorial ambitions except in Kashmir, where the sources of dispute are more political and ideological than territorial. The risk of nuclear escalation can be limited. As seen in the 1987 and 1990 nuclear crises, both sides are conscious that the other cannot be driven to an extent where it contemplates use of nuclear weapons.⁶⁶

The confidence surrounding control and stability of deterrence is not going to be automatic though, and it needs to be generated over time. There are other issues of physical safety of nuclear material and weapons, the prevention of accidental detonation, the creation of reliable operating procedures and the education of political and military leaderships regarding the control of nuclear forces which need to be considered by the strategic elites in the sub continent.

Effective crisis management requires that both acknowledge each other's capabilities and learn to live in a nuclear neighbourhood. Confidence building measures like declarations and pledges for preventing first and early use, periodic visits by joint military commissions to review dangerous military activities and incidents can strengthen stability. In addition, both countries can improve crisis communication channels. They can also establish a crisis management group at the appropriate level to ensure that they bring to notice incidents and accidents which have a potential to escalate and see to it that decisions get made quickly enough to diffuse the situation.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ C. Raja Mohan, "Crisis Management and Confidence Building", in Sumit Ganguly and Ted Greenwood (eds.), *Mending Fences: Confidence and Security*

These views essentially sum up the arguments supporting the weapon option within the country. Now we turn to the non-weaponizers. They provide a critique to the nuclear deterrence argument and propose a South Asian nuclear weapon free zone.⁶⁸ Achin Vanaik and Praful Bidwai make a case for a weapon free South Asian regime while Kanti Bajpai makes a case for unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons.⁶⁹ P.R. Chari also does a cost/benefit analysis of overt weaponization.⁷⁰ All these views are put together under the heading of non-weaponizers.

Security Without Nuclear Weapons: The Non-Nuclear Option

The non-weaponizers consider nuclear weapons as essentially astrategic and nuclear deterrence unreliable and unusable. Their main arguments against nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence are as follows.

First, "Deterrence is an essentially psychological concept, whose continuous efficacy is based on variables of behaviour which cannot be fully nor permanently controlled by deterrers....As long as there are nuclear weapons, there is always a probability of their use. In deterrence war avoidance is tied to war preparation".⁷¹

Building Measures in South Asia (Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1996), pp.195-200.

⁶⁸ See Achin Vanaik and Praful Bidwai, "India and Pakistan", in Regina Cowen Karp ed., *Security with Nuclear Weapons?* pp.259-268. Achin Vanaik, *Problem Old and New: The Nuclear Question in India in a Changing World: Tracts for the Times*, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1995), pp.68-102.

⁶⁹ Kanti Bajpai, "Abstaining: The Non-Nuclear Option" in Cortright and Mattoo.

⁷⁰ Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Stand Off: The Role of the United States* (New Delhi, Manohar 1995), and P.R. Chari, "Indian Defence and Security: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Nuclear Proliferation", in Kathleen C. Barley, ed., *Weapons of Mass Destruction: Costs Versus Benefits* (Manohar, 1994), pp.83-100.

⁷¹ Achin Vanaik, *India in a Changing World*, p.71.

Second, the credibility of deterrence depends on a continuous assertion of capability and will to use these weapons and constant upgradation of technology. Technological momentum has an arms race logic built into it and that undermines any notion of a 'stable' or 'minimum' deterrence. The case of the US and former Soviet Union proves the point. Where initially a few bombs did the deterring in the 1940s and 1950s, by the late 1980's, thousands of warheads were needed for the same purpose.⁷²

Third, nuclear weapons produce insecurity. Nuclear deterrence strives for security through the threat creation which further induces hostility and thus only worsens the situation. With nuclear weapons, every conflict has the probability of escalation to a nuclear confrontation. There would be a danger of triggering a nuclear exchange by accident, miscalculation, misperception, or because of leadership irrationality.⁷³

Fourth, nuclear weapons may deter but never certainly nor permanently. Generally, deterrence is unstable and prone to failure.⁷⁴ Military strategists do not always make rational calculations of "unacceptable damage by the adversaries. There have been scores of information failures and false alerts which could have started nuclear wars - with unspeakable consequences.⁷⁵ There is a fatal flaw in deterrence: something will inevitably go wrong.⁷⁶

⁷² Ibid., pp.71-72.

⁷³ P.R. Chari, "Indian Defence and Security", p.92.

⁷⁴ Vanaik, *India in a Changing World*, p.72.

⁷⁵ Praful Bidwai, "Drifting into Deterrence: Levels of Nuclear Populism", *Times of India*, July 4, 1996.

⁷⁶ Bajpai, "Abstaining: The Non-Nuclear Option", p.43.

Fifth, nuclear weapons once produced and deployed shift the terrain of nuclear diplomacy decisively from nuclear disarmament to nuclear arms control. Neither nuclear weapons nor deterrence can bring about disarmament. In the case of the US and former Soviet Union, it was the easing of political tensions and improved political relations which brought about disarmament and made deterrence irrelevant. Deterrence freezes bilateral relations into permanent hostility.⁷⁷

Sixth, it is an exaggerated notion that nuclear weapons enhance a country's status. China's stature today can be more rightly attributed to the size of its economy, early success in implementing speedy reforms and fulfilling basic needs, conventional military strength, its independent foreign policy, willingness to use force, and recent high growth rates rather than nuclear weapons.⁷⁸ Moreover, Britain is a nuclear power but is also the "sick man of Europe", Japan and Germany did not need nuclear weapons to carve out a niche for themselves. The USSR could not ensure its survival despite nuclear weapons.⁷⁹

Seventh, going overtly nuclear to gain international prestige is an exaggerated fallacy. Considerable opprobrium is attached to the possession as well as threat or use of nuclear weapons in the world community today. Also, the prestige associated with these weapons has eroded, now that at least eight nations possess nuclear weapons and many of them have the technological capability to obtain them at will. Nuclear

⁷⁷ Vanaik, *India in a Changing World*, p.76.

⁷⁸ Praful Bidwai, "Delegitimising Nuclear Weapons: Middle Ground Must Assert Itself", *Times of India*, August 26, 1996 and Kanti Bajpai, "Abstaining: The Non-Nuclear Option", p.35.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

weapons may be considered a currency of power but today they are enormously devalued currency.⁸⁰

Eighth, the domestic prestige and political advantages associated with overt weaponization are illusory and fleeting. Within a year of the Pokharan explosion, Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, had to impose the Emergency, and within three years. She had decisively lost power.⁸¹

Ninth, the cost effectiveness of nuclear weapons is doubtful. The costs of nuclearisation are unconscionably high. A nuclear arms race will ensure that they spiral. Nuclear weapons can only supplement never substitute for conventional weapons. The more evident security threats facing India and Pakistan are terrorism and insurgency. Nuclear deterrence has no relevance to either preventing or mitigating these tensions and instabilities.

Tenth, the indirect costs of political isolation, soured external relations, losses in investment, multilateral loans and trade have to be computed in the costs of nuclear force requirements. Given the present state of India's economic reforms, its critical dependence on exports and high-tech imports, these external constraints would severely affect their progress.⁸²

Finally, the social and political costs in the form of distorted development priorities, militarism, jingoism and worse are no less grim.⁸³

⁸⁰ Chari, "Indian Defence and Security", p.93.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Chari, "Indian Defence and Security", p.92.

⁸³ Praful Bidwai, "Delegitimising Nuclear Weapons", *Times of India*, August 26, 1996.

See also Bajpai, "Abstaining: The Non-Nuclear Options", pp.44-45.

P.R. Chari differs from the non-weaponizers in one respect. He sees China as a nuclear threat to India for the very same reasons as given by the weaponizers. However, he does not go beyond proposing to keep the nuclear option open, while rejecting overt weaponization.⁸⁴ The other three non-weaponizers argue against the Chinese threat as a justification for keeping the option open or establishing a credible minimum deterrence.

Vanaik argues that India has lived with the Chinese bomb for years, and there has never been a hint of blackmail. The issue of a counter threat to China is not immediately pressing, but it is used to justify India's current status which is perceived as a regional power 'coming of age' with nuclear weapons.⁸⁵ Bajpai suggests that on the border issue, China is a satisfied power. It has achieved its aim of securing a route from Xinkiang to Tibet. Therefore it is difficult to see why China should be a threat to India, especially a nuclear threat.⁸⁶

New Delhi's insistence on bringing China within its regional security interests is also one sided. China does not perceive India as a nuclear threat. The fundamental and sharp asymmetry in their nuclear status and strength robs India of any leverage or capacity to influence China in any serious way. There is no nuclear equation relevant for serious diplomatic purposes at least between India and China. Vanaik suggests that New Delhi perhaps realizes this and hence is reluctant to officially postulate that China constitutes a serious nuclear security risk.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ P.R. Chari, "India's Nuclear Option: Future Directions" in P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Iftekharuzzuman, eds., *Nuclear Proliferation in India and Pakistan: South Asian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1996), pp. 66-70.

⁸⁵ Vanaik, "India in a Changing World", p.83.

⁸⁶ Bajpai, "Abstaining: The Non-Nuclear Option", p.35-36.

⁸⁷ Vanaik, *India in a Changing World*, p.86-87.

Finally, a nuclear India would still be unable to match China's status and influence unless it makes up economically, socially and politically. The real race with China, Bajpai notes, is "civic" not "military".⁸⁸

Stability in the Subcontinent, some weaponizers argue, can be achieved by the creation of a South Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone.⁸⁹ Vanaik, it is possible for two threshold powers to eliminate their nuclear arsenals, especially when India can and does talk about an eventual nuclear weapon free world. Regional disarmament would be the first step towards such a goal, and South Asia could lead the world to eventual global disarmament. Countries like South Africa, Brazil and Argentina have resiled from threshold status, and it is not "impossible" as the proponents of weaponization contend to make South Asia nuclear free. A non-nuclear India would have more credibility in persuading the world to disarm.

There would be problems of verification within a nuclear weapon free zone. There do not presently exist adequate verification facilities to monitor a SANWFZ. In addition, there is a lack of trust between India and Pakistan. Confidence building measures by themselves have very little value, if there is strong hostility and a presumption of guilt with respect to the other side. Thus, one does not expect an immediate transition to a nuclear free zone. Transitional and complementary measures to promote nuclear restraint need to be institutionalized. Measures like bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan and India and China not to deploy missiles against each other irrespective of nuclear or conventional payload and a common commitment by India and Pakistan to no first use of nuclear weapons, and regular visits by scientific personnel to each other's 'sensitive' nuclear installations.

⁸⁸ Ibid., n.86.

⁸⁹ Vanaik, *India in a Changing World*, pp.93-100.

Temporary shutdown of plants which produce weapon grade material are vital in the interim. Talks on moving towards a common system of nuclear accounting and control, and finally agreement between India and Pakistan to cap their fissile material production would also prepare the ground for a NWFZ.⁹⁰

India cannot go about seriously deterring China. For that, it would need a credible minimum deterrent to match China's nuclear arsenal of ICBMs, IRBMs, SLBMs, and a total warhead strength between 700 to 1800 in 1991. Such a step would initiate two arms races for India, the primary one with China which would target India in its new strategic calculations. Third, regional neighbours would be greatly disturbed and would search for external counter alliances. Fourth, there would be a greater likelihood of a China-Pakistan political and nuclear axis. Fifth, even the US and Russia would not welcome the advent of two nuclear powers in the Subcontinent. Sixth, a new nuclear risk would be added to the already strained India-Pakistan relationship. Finally, India would have no answer to Chinese blackmail in the process of feverish preparations to build a credible minimum deterrent.⁹¹

Kanti Bajpai, while acknowledging that abstinence is the least favoured option among the Indian elite (with only about 8% in its favour) makes a case for a unilateral abstinence. Nuclear abstinence would mean "public announcement of the "decision not to produce weapons now or in the foreseeable future; that, to the extent it has the resources and capabilities to produce weapons, it discloses them, opens them to inspection, and then verifiably divest itself of them; and that it permits ongoing inspections as a reassurance that nuclear weapons will not be produced

⁹⁰ Vanaik, *India in Changing World*, pp.93-97.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.97.

clandestinely.⁹² Bajpai does not consider China as a nuclear threat for three reasons. First, China is the satisfied party on the border issue. Second, It does not even consider India as a rival. It far outpaces India in its population size, military strength and economic size and growth. Third, the argument that China may threaten India to raise the bogey of external threat in order to divert attention from internal instabilities is also not credible, because India is not seen as a significant threat, one that is salient enough to be conjured up as an enemy to paper over Chinese internal quarrels.⁹³

That leaves only Pakistan. Granted that in a nuclear asymmetric equation, advantage of military initiative, concentration of military force and military superiority would reside with Pakistan. In such a situation, Pakistan might be encouraged to launch an attack to gain territorial advantage. But a Pakistani nuclear threat could be matched by the threat of massive conventional retaliation. Modern conventional weapons nearly match nuclear weapons in their destructive potential. While it is true that Pakistan would achieve as much damage with its nuclear strikes, it would be horribly maimed itself. A massive conventional retaliation strategy large enough to counter Pakistani first strike would admittedly be expensive, Bajpai concedes. But the cost of nuclear weapons, he argues, also is not modest and considering the fact that nuclear weapons do not substitute but only supplement conventional forces, the costs of large conventional retaliatory forces -- aircraft, missiles -- should be acceptable. It can be argued that if conventional retaliation is massive then India might as well go nuclear. Bajpai argues though that the obverse is also correct: neither side needs to go nuclear to achieve mutual terror and mutual deterrence if that is the objective.⁹⁴

⁹² Bajpai, "Abstaining: The Non-Nuclear Options", p.23.

⁹³ Bajpai, Letter to the Editor, *Times of India*, January 24, 1996.

⁹⁴ Bajpai, "Abstaining...", pp.36-49.

Once India unconditionally and verifiably renounces nuclear weapons, Bajpai suggests that, Pakistan will find it extremely difficult to retain its nuclear option. International pressure would be increased on Pakistan to follow India's path. This could be achieved by promising Pakistan enough conventional arms to deter India from conventional attack. Or both countries could level down their conventional forces so as to have enough for defence against each other as well as against third parties but not enough to threaten each other with conquest.

Even if Pakistan retains the nuclear option, it would be extremely difficult for it to threaten blackmail or to actually use nuclear weapons to occupy Kashmir. Other countries are bound to intervene if the taboo against nuclear threat or use is violated. The US and Russia would surely intervene to maintain their standing as global powers. In any case, the efficacy of nuclear blackmail is not credibly established. Nixon's "Madman" threat to Ho Chi Minh failed to force the Vietnamese to relent. In cases where there is no strategic danger, the credibility of such threats is often doubtful. A major deterrent to Pakistani blackmail is the widespread public revulsion and international distaste against the first use. Neither the US nor the Soviets have celebrated the occasions on which they had to threaten nuclear use⁹⁵.

To make the abstinence option feasible, an effective coalition of a strong and able leadership, one or more major political parties, an influential section of the press, an intellectual class and NGOs, particularly pressure or interest groups, could articulate the costs and benefits of the move from ambiguity to abstinence and publicize the calculus widely.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Bajpai, n.92, p.46.

Arguments Against Non-Weaponizers

We have already seen that the Chinese threat is the basis of the arguments of the weaponizers for not giving up the nuclear weapon option. According to them, first, the Chinese threat is deeprooted in the Indian psyche. And the contention that India has lived with the Chinese bomb for years is not correct. After the Indian defeat in the Sino-Indian war of 1962 and the Chinese nuclear explosion in 1964, all Indian efforts were directed towards seeking counter guarantees against the Chinese nuclear threat. The sanctioning of the subterranean nuclear explosion project in 1965, refusal to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty of 1971 and the 1974 underground explosion at Pokhran were subsequent efforts made by India after it failed to get nuclear guarantees from the four nuclear powers.⁹⁷ Second, India has conventional superiority over Pakistan. It does not need nuclear weapons to counter the Pakistani threat. China is the primary nuclear threat and Pakistan is a secondary one.⁹⁸ And the Sino-Pakistani nuclear partnership aggravates these threatening perceptions.

Third, the status quoists argue that ambiguity has deterred China and Pakistan for nearly a quarter century. The mere fact that there have been no wars between India and China and India and Pakistan point to the stabilizing impact of nuclear weapons.

Fourth, the triangular nature of the nuclear relationship makes it impossible to work out a regional deal in a bilateral India-Pakistan framework. China does not agree that it should be involved in a regional deal with India and Pakistan. Moreover,

⁹⁷ Subrahmanyam, "Capping, Managing, or Eliminating Nuclear Weapons?" in Kanti Bajpai and Stephen P. Cohen (eds.), *South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspectives*, p.178.

⁹⁸ Chellaney, "South Asia's Passage to Nuclear Power", p.48.

although both the US and Russia have renounced their tactical weapons China continues to maintain them in its nuclear arsenal which is primarily of regional significance. Its deployment of these weapons in Tibet targeting India has a psychological impact on Indian threat perception which cannot be undermined.

Fifth, as for a situation of nuclear asymmetry with Pakistan, once again the psychological impact of a nuclear threat cannot be neglected. The terror of nuclear weapons cannot be calmed by massive conventional retaliation. The civilian population would be most affected by such a threat. In case Pakistan does issue a nuclear threat, there would be widespread terror and mass migration of population from the cities, which would hamper the armed forces efforts of conventional retaliation.⁹⁹

Sixth, moreover once Pakistan takes the initiative and launches a first strike and occupies some territory, it can give a call for a ceasefire. In the light of historical experiences, one cannot see the possibility of the international community inflicting punishment on a power which has already used the weapons and then calls for a ceasefire.

Seventh, Pakistan could use these weapons in such a way that it makes a nuclear attack on the Indian force in its own territory which is sparsely populated. This would invite even less opprobrium.¹⁰⁰ Thus Subrahmanyam writes: "The asymmetric possession of nuclear weapons removes all uncertainty from the outcome of limited conventional war and makes victory certain for the possessor of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons can be deterred only by nuclear weapons".¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Subrahmanyam, "Implications of Nuclear Asymmetry", in *Nuclear Myths and Realities: India's Dilemma*, (New Delhi: ABC Publishing House, 1981, p.206.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.207.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.209.

Conclusion

Let us sum up the various positions for and against the retention of the nuclear weapon option. Amitabh Mattoo speaks in defence of the official policy of 'no confirmation no denial' of India's nuclear weapon capability. According to him, unless an external event takes place which would affect India's security scenario, there is no likelihood of change in the present official stance on nuclear weapons. Public opinion also favours keeping the option open and external pressure would only serve to change the opinion in favour of overt weaponization. Ambiguity has served in deterring China for so long and would do so in future. Overt weaponization would only increase India's security risks vis-a-vis China, and India would have to seriously set about building an arsenal to match China's IRBMs, ICBMs, SLBMs which would take nearly two decades. This would severely cripple India's economy. Overt weaponization would mitigate India's conventional military advantage over Pakistan. India would be involved in two arms races, one with China and the other with Pakistan. The latter's instabilities would only impinge on India and destabilize the Subcontinent. Hence, an ambiguous posture would serve India's security well.

K. Subrahmanyam and Gen. K. Sundarji are critical of the official posture and advocate building up a minimal nuclear deterrent enough for deterring China and Pakistan, either overtly or covertly. According to them, China on its own poses a major nuclear threat to India and its nuclear assistance to Pakistan only serves to aggravate Indian threat perceptions. The destructive potential of nuclear weapons is unmatched and this deters a potential first strike. Around sixty warheads, kept in a rail or road mobile mode and dispersed, would increase their survivability. Even keeping them in a non-weaponized state at different stations, ready to be mated with their carriers in case of a nuclear threat, would suffice. A minimal deterrent with a no first use doctrine and only a counter retaliatory strategy on area targets would save a lot

of command, control, communication and intelligence costs and do away with a launch on warning strategy. India's move from a de facto nuclear status to a de jure nuclear status would not invite international displeasure. And if Pakistan also adopts such a strategy the Subcontinent could learn to live with nuclear weapons.

Brahma Chellaney recognizes India's and Pakistan's defacto nuclear status and proposes arms control and regional restraint measures to manage the nuclear stand off between India, Pakistan and China. According to him, as long as nuclear weapons have their political utility and are retained by the nuclear five, India and Pakistan cannot be expected to give up their weapon option. According to him, the nuclear risks in the Subcontinent are manageable and strategic, meteorological, geographical and kinship factors only add to the regional restraint in the use of nuclear weapons in South Asia. A no first use pact with Pakistan and China would go a long way in building confidence among the three countries. Also a cap on fissile material production would prevent India and Pakistan from acquiring more than a minimal deterrent.

C. Raja Mohan is critical of India's ambiguity and is of the opinion that so long as India delays taking a decision on its nuclear status, the international non-proliferation regime will try and roll it back. An overt nuclear weapon status could be managed with the help of certain confidence building measures. He is of the view that though there is some risk of a nuclear war in the Subcontinent, most of the fears are exaggerated and with adequate command and control of nuclear programmes, greater transparency, technical assistance from the West to manage nuclear crises, and more interaction between India and Pakistan to periodically review each others nuclear installations, and establishing joint crisis management committees, all these would go a long way in managing the nuclear risks in the Subcontinent. Eventually, India and Pakistan would learn to live as nuclear neighbours.

P.R. Chari takes a middle of the road position where he is critical of the official ambiguity on nuclear weapons, but foresees no risk of an India-Pakistan war escalating into a nuclear confrontation as the two countries are under intense international scrutiny after the 1987 and 1990 nuclear crisis. And external intervention is bound to deescalate any conflict. Though he does recognize the Chinese nuclear threat to India, he does a cost/benefit analysis of an overt weaponization posture and concludes that India would not gain any security, financial, status, or diplomatic advantage by overt weaponization. He is in favour of keeping the option open to counter a Chinese nuclear threat but does not see any utility of nuclear weapons in countering the more tangible security threats facing India, namely, insurgency, terrorism, social and political upheaval, and economic problems.

Achin Vanaik and Praful Bidwai take a 'dovish' position and propose a nuclear weapon free zone in South Asia. They are extremely critical of "deterrence stability" and hold the opinion that sooner or later deterrence is bound to crumble. Moreover, deterrence freezes the bilateral relations into permanent hostility. China does not pose any nuclear threat to India, and India has lived with the Chinese bomb for more than three decades without a hint of a blackmail. Even if India thinks of deterring China, it would not be able to match Chinese capabilities in the near or distant future. It would be trapped in a nuclear race with China and would bear the risk of being factored into Chinese strategic calculations. As for a nuclear weapon free zone, it is very much possible. Countries like South Africa and Ukraine have given up their arsenals and India and Pakistan can surely do so. The lack of foolproof verification of a nuclear-free regime should not stop the two countries. Political will from both sides would pave the way for mutual trust and confidence building measures.

Finally, Kanti Bajpai argues for unilateral abstinence even in a domestic environment which is hostile to the idea of nuclear renunciation. His basic contention

is that if India gives up nuclear weapons, Pakistan will be forced to do so. Even if it does not, it is unlikely that it could use the bomb to blackmail India. China, furthermore, is not a nuclear threat to India because in its quarrel with India it has got what it wants. He suggests that public opinion could be altered if there was the political will to do so and if an effective coalition of India's elite and press could make a rational cost/benefit analysis of the nuclear option. With wide publicity and firm decisions, leaders could change public perceptions and move India from ambiguity to abstinence.

For the present, there is considerable domestic support for retaining the nuclear option. This support could tilt in favour of weaponization, should an external event impinge on India's security. There is very little domestic support for renouncing the nuclear option. In the absence of any external threat the official position is unlikely to change in the near future.

CHAPTER II

THE NUCLEAR OPTION DEBATE IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan's nuclear doctrine and policy are the direct product of its antagonistic relations with India. The question of having or not having the bomb in Pakistan is tied to its security against India. The gradual shift in India's nuclear programme had a direct bearing on Pakistan's nuclear policy.¹ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had remarked way back in 1965 that: "If India developed an atomic bomb, we too will develop one, even if we have to eat grass or leaves or remain hungry, because there is no conventional alternative to the atomic bomb".²

Bhutto's remark sums up the Pakistani threat perceptions vis-a-vis a nuclear India. The Pakistani defeat in the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971, which led to its dismemberment, had a traumatic effect on Pakistan. It galvanized Pakistan to acquire comparable nuclear capabilities. Its nuclear programme acquired a security dimension with the Indian nuclear test explosion in 1974. This sense of insecurity was accentuated when no credible international guarantee was offered to Pakistan against

¹ Hasan Askari Rizvi, "Regional Nuclear Proliferation: Problems and Prospects", in Kanti Bajpai and Stephen P. Cohen (eds.), *South Asia After the Cold War: International Perspectives* (Boulder, Colo: Westview, 1993), p. 207.

² Quoted by Zafar Iqbal Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies: Attitudes and Posture", in P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Iftekharuzzaman (eds.), *Nuclear Non-Proliferation in India and Pakistan: South Asian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996), p. 105.

the Indian nuclear threat and when Indian conventional superiority by itself was a cause for concern.³

Pakistan responded to this threat by launching an ambitious programme for the acquisition of nuclear technology to exercise its weapon option, whenever the need arose. In 1976, Pakistan made a deal with France to acquire a plutonium reprocessing plant, but this was thwarted by American non-proliferation pressure.⁴ Since then the Pakistani nuclear programme has been under constant American scrutiny. US non-proliferation pressure has varied in intensity over the years. The periodic imposition or threat of imposition of sanctions against Pakistan is viewed by Pakistan as selective and discriminatory. It is seen as denying the right of a developing country to acquire modern technology.

Despite close US scrutiny of its nuclear programme Pakistan was successful in acquiring nuclear weapon making capability by 1987. This was confirmed by General Zia Ul Haq in an interview where he stated that: "Pakistan has the capability of building the bomb. You can write today that Pakistan can build a bomb whenever it wishes". All the same, he added that Pakistan had no intention of making nuclear weapons.⁵

Pakistan's nuclear effort, in contrast to India, clearly rest on military motives. The lack of an atomic energy programme that could justify its massive infrastructure for uranium enrichment or for reprocessing of plutonium attests to this.⁶ Even so

³ Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "Pakistani Threat Perception", in W. Thomas Wander, Eric H. Arnett and Paul Bracken (eds.), *The Diffusion of Advanced Weaponry: Technologies, Regional Implications, and Responses* (Washington: American Association for the Advancement of Science Publication, 1994), p.105.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Quoted in Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p. 114.

⁶ P.R. Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Stand Off* (Washington: 1994), p.6.

Pakistan, like India, has maintained a policy of deliberate ambiguity about its nuclear weapon status. It has not carried out a nuclear test explosion and successive governments have been persistent about the peaceful purposes of its nuclear programme. Some deliberate "leaks" about the nuclear programme being weapon oriented have created the desired ambiguity.⁷

As things stand, there is considerable domestic support for nuclear weapons in Pakistan. Many Pakistanis believe that it was the threat of massive nuclear retaliation that defused the 1990 crisis. There is wide public support among important segments of the political elite, bureaucracy, the opposition, the press, intellectuals and the people at large to develop a credible response to the nuclear threat from India.⁸ The pro-bombs lobby argues that only Pakistan's ability to build such a deterrent can neutralize India's broad regional dominance and conventional military superiority.⁹ There is also a minority of public opinion, mainly that of the intelligentsia, which believes that nuclear weapons by themselves cannot guarantee the security of Pakistan which is faced by internal threats that cannot be countered by nuclear weapons. Moreover, Pakistani nuclear capability would trigger off an unprecedented arms race in the region, which would be too expensive for a 'poverty stricken' country like Pakistan. Also, a nuclear weapon programme will expose Pakistan to international sanctions.¹⁰

Thus, in Pakistan, the nuclear debate centres on three options. They are:

- (a) Maintain the present official status of deliberate ambiguity;

⁷ Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p. 118.

⁸ Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.122.

⁹ Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.120.

¹⁰ Ibid.

- (b) Build the bomb to counter the Indian nuclear threat; and
- (c) Give up the nuclear option.

We now turn to an analysis of these views. While there is a relative paucity of sources, compared to the Indian case, it is possible to reconstruct the broad outlines of the Pakistani debate by viewing the arguments of key writers and commentators.

The Ambiguity Option

The likelihood of the continuance of the present policy of ambiguity is stressed by Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema. According to Cheema, India and Pakistan have moved from a greater ambiguity to one of lesser ambiguity, that is, to a strategy of deterrence based on "non-weaponized" capability where both acknowledge the other's ability to build nuclear weapons.¹¹

Ambiguity about their nuclear status had enabled both countries to strengthen their scientific base and confidence in the inability to produce and deliver nuclear weapons. At the same time, both claim they are against outright weaponization. Pakistan's quest for nuclear weapons capability has mainly been reactive to India's nuclear developments and its nuclear options is a direct product of its hostile relations with India. So Pakistan is not likely to give up its nuclear option as long as India retains its nuclear option and maintains a conventional force superiority. There are two important constraints against Pakistan's renunciation of its nuclear option. First, there is India's unwillingness to hold meaningful negotiations on the Kashmir issue. Second, the US's country-specific Pressler Amendment which has severely impaired Pakistan's conventional capabilities and has pushed Pakistan to rely on a nuclear

¹¹ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Nuclear Developments in Pakistan: Future Directions" in Chari, Cheema, and Iftekharuzzaman, (eds.), *Nuclear Non-Proliferation*, p.145.

capability. Given Indian conventional superiority and the nature of Indo-Pakistani hostilities, Pakistan's nuclear option becomes the only 'credible' deterrent against "political and military bullying by India".¹²

There has been a consistent increase in domestic support for the nuclear option in Pakistan over the years. Almost all parties and a vast majority of the public favour the retention of the nuclear option and the acquisition of nuclear weapons if India does so. While the Indian explosion was the propelling factor for Pakistan's nuclear efforts, Western non-proliferation pressures on Pakistan have only strengthened the will and determination of Pakistan to go nuclear.¹³

But despite the continuous improvements in India's and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities, they have attempted to restrain their competition. Both countries have been periodically advancing proposals for nuclear arms control in the region. Also, they have introduced several confidence building measures to diffuse the charged atmosphere and to avoid accidental wars. The 1988 'Agreement not to Attack Each Other's Nuclear Installations and Facilities' is a significant bilateral achievement. Several other measures and agreements like the Hotline between the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMO's) of the two countries, advance notification of military exercises, manoeuvres and troop movement agreement of 1991, agreement to prevent air space violations, an overflight and landing by military aircraft agreement, and a joint declaration on prohibition of chemical weapons in 1992, all these reflect the bilateral restraint of the two countries.¹⁴

¹² P.I. Cheema quotes an Asia Society Report in his Nuclear Developments in Pakistan", p.134.

¹³ Ibid., p.136.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.146

Despite Western scepticism, India and Pakistan have maintained stability in the region in the face of dangerous crises in 1984, 1987 and 1990. India and Pakistan cannot be pressurized to adhere to international non-proliferation norms because of the existing regional security situations and complex linkages of regional nuclear programmes with global nuclear-related developments. The ground realities are that the nuclear programmes and policies of Pakistan, India, China, Russia and the US are linked together in a classic chain reaction of insecurity right up the nuclear hierarchy. Just as India is unwilling to delink its nuclear policies from Chinese capabilities and policies, it would be unrealistic to expect Pakistan to do so with regard to Indian nuclear capabilities and policies.¹⁵

Instead of trying to enforce global norms against proliferation, Cheema argues, it would be better to correct the imbalance in terms of conventional capabilities. Unless the gap between conventional capabilities is reduced Pakistan's insecurity cannot be removed and Pakistan's reliance on the nuclear card would only increase. In addition, the resolution of the Kashmir dispute would drastically reduce Pakistani insecurity and the consequent need for maintaining a large military establishment in the future.

According to Cheema, the future behavioural pattern of India and Pakistan with regard to their nuclear policies would depend on four factors. First, both countries are on the path of economic reform and have invited considerable investment in the region. Once the benefits of these reforms trickle down to the people, the decision makers will be further constrained from opting for any irresponsible measures which may cause instability. Second, the younger generation is less passionate about the past sources of tension. Once they are at the helm of decision making, they are likely to

¹⁵ P.I. Cheema, quotes Sandy Gordon, in "Nuclear Developments in Pakistan", p.142.

take a fresh look at the region's underlying problems and take the necessary steps to resolve outstanding disputes. This would certainly improve the regional stability.

Third, international non-proliferation efforts like indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), and the strengthening of positive and negative guarantees can help make nuclear weapons irrelevant.

Finally, domestic factors will play an important role in decision making. Public opinion in Pakistan is a lot less inclined to acquire nuclear weapons, if India also does not acquire them. In comparison to India, Pakistan has demonstrated a relatively high level of responsible behaviour by refraining from carrying out a nuclear explosion or transferring nuclear technology. According to Cheema, it has also advanced many proposals to resolve the nuclear issue in South Asia. Pakistan needs to retain the nuclear option to cope with any future nuclear blackmail. Unless the nuclear weapon states provide positive guarantees and a nuclear umbrella to the non-nuclear weapon states, Pakistan cannot abandon the nuclear option.¹⁶

Keeping these factors in mind and the present constraints against either going nuclear or renouncing the option, Cheema concludes that the prevailing status of rudimentary non-weaponized deterrence is unlikely to change.¹⁷

The Pro Bomb Arguments

Domestic support for nuclear weapons has grown in Pakistan since the 1980s. There is a strong nationalistic support in the elite in favour of the acquisition of weapons capability. Even the public, which is largely illiterate and has little

¹⁶ P.I. Cheema, "Nuclear Developments in Pakistan", pp.141-145.

¹⁷ Ibid.

understanding of the nuclear issue, supports Pakistan's pursuit of a nuclear weapon programme to counter the Indian threat. The Indian threat makes the public feel highly insecure. For the public, a bomb by itself is enough for Pakistan's security. The bomb is synonymous with national sovereignty and integrity.¹⁸ An editorial by Mushahid Hussain, a leading journalist, reflects one such sentiment: "Anybody opposed to the Kahuta Enrichment plant must be treated as a traitor of Pakistan. The national consensus in favour of Kahuta is irrevocable and irreversible and no referendum is needed to ascertain it".¹⁹

Dr. A.Q. Khan, the chief architect of Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability, highlight the Indian nuclear threat. In his opinion:

Pakistan's future policy is to remain closely tied to Indian actions. If India openly starts a weapons programme, the deep-rooted Pakistani fears of India, especially after its active role in the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971, would put tremendous pressure on Pakistan to take appropriate measures to avoid a nuclear Munich at India's hands in the event of an actual conflict, which many Pakistani's think very real.²⁰

The advocates of the bomb range from those who argue for outright manufacture of nuclear weapons to those who advocate the production of nuclear weapons only if India does so and who ask that in the meantime Pakistan strengthen its nuclear research programme to achieve self-sufficiency in the nuclear fuel cycle. Those who call for outright weaponization assume that India has already produced and stockpiled nuclear weapons and that therefore Pakistan should renounce its nuclear ambiguity and start producing nuclear weapons.²¹ This will deter India from

¹⁸ Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies" pp.121-122.

¹⁹ Quoted in Z.I. Cheema "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies, p.118.

²⁰ Quoted in Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.118.

²¹ Hazan-Askari Rizvi, "Regional Nuclear Proliferation", p.206.

launching a conventional or nuclear attack on Pakistan and give Pakistan "respectability" in the world. There are other bomb advocates, like Hasan-Asiari Rizvi, who argue that Pakistan should start nuclear weapons production only when India does so. The majority however argues for retaining the nuclear option as long as India retains the option or until a regional or bilateral solution is found to reduce Pakistani insecurity vis-a-vis India.²²

According to Shireen Mazari, the Indo-Pakistani relationship has been marked by persistent hostility and periodic conflicts. This hostility-conflict relationship has been one of the major causes of instability in South Asia. The two states have fought three wars and are at loggerheads over Kashmir and the Siachin Glacier. Both problems which have defied bilateral solution.²³ Another source of insecurity stems from the recent Sino-Indian rapprochement. This makes Pakistanis insecure as they feel that their diplomatic manoeuvrability could erode, if and when the stipulated sino-Indian accords are realized.²⁴ In such a hostile and insecure environment, the pro-bomb advocates highlight the threat of Indian conventional force superiority which is bolstered by India's advanced nuclear programme. According to bomb advocates, only a nuclear deterrent will allow Pakistan to make up for India's conventional force superiority and deter the Indian nuclear threat. Thus, General Aslam Beg, one of the chief exponents of a nuclear weapons capability, argues that "both the nuclear options

²² Ibid.

²³ Shireen M. Mazari, "The Case of South Asia: A Pakistani Perspective" in Wander-Arnett, and Bracken, (eds.), *The Diffusion of Advanced Weaponry*, pp.183-185.

²⁴ Z.I. Cheema, "India's Nuclear Policy", P.120.

and the missiles that Pakistan is developing act as a deterrent, which in turn contributes to the total fighting ability of the army".²⁵

Similarly, Shireen Mazari argues that within the framework of the Indo-Pakistani relationship, the nuclear factor has in fact tended to act as a factor of stability in the region. And the development of missiles by the two states, which seems rational only within a nuclear context, can lend stability to the threat environment within the region. Nuclear weapons capability and missile development have reduced Pakistan's insecurity. Pakistan with nuclear capability does not seem to be driven by the same urgency in establishing a conventional arms equation with India. The present status of its nuclear capability and limited delivery system has provided Pakistan with the opportunity to rationalise its strategic doctrine with a mix of counter force and counter value options.²⁶ Mazari argues that, in the summer of 1990, at the height of the Kashmir insurgency, war between India and Pakistan was averted after Pakistan informed India of its nuclear capability. The 1990 crisis implies that the nuclear factor has and will continue to limit local conflicts.²⁷ General Arif reinforces Mazari's argument by stating that "Let India and Pakistan both become nuclear weapons states openly and without reservations. They are both mature nations and need no counselling on their international responsibilities and conduct". Nuclearization will freeze the status quo through the existence of a credible and stable mutual deterrent.²⁸

²⁵ Quoted in Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.123.

²⁶ Mazari, "The Case of South Asia", p.185.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Quoted in Pervez Hoodbhoy, "Nuclear Myths and Realities", in Zia Mian, ed., *Pakistani's Atomic Bomb and The Search for Security*, (Lahore: Gautam Publishers, 1995), p.12.

As in the case of Indian weaponizers, even in Pakistan there is a consensus on the level of nuclear forces to be maintained as a deterrent. The pro-bomb advocates argue that even a few Pakistan bombs can constitute a "minimal deterrence" which will cause military competition to vanish. According to General Beg, "the balance of terror starts the moment the adversary realises there is a threat from the other direction". Furthermore: "In the case of weapons of mass destruction, it is not the numbers that matter, but the destruction that can be caused by even a few. The strategy of terror starts working from the first notion that there is retaliation. The fear of retaliation lessens the likelihood of a full-fledged war between India and Pakistan".²⁹ Abdul Sattar, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, agrees with General Beg that by limiting the number of nuclear weapons, the two countries could reduce the risks inherent in nuclearization and yet retain the advantage of effective deterrent.³⁰ According to him "more is unnecessary where little is enough".³¹

Another argument put forward for the development of nuclear forces is that it allows India and Pakistan to cut down their huge conventional force budgets and direct scarce resources to development, thereby easing internal problems. According to Mazari, the cost of a credible nuclear deterrent is affordable.³²

The pro-bomb advocates bolster their arguments by citing the historical record of India-Pakistan hostile engagements. They argue that all past attempts of Pakistan to provide for its security and preserve its territorial integrity through conventional

²⁹ Quoted in Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.123.

³⁰ Quoted in Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.123.

³¹ Mazari, "The Case of Pakistan", p.185.

³² Mazari, "Conflict Between Pakistan and India: A View from Islamabad" in Sumit Ganguly and Ted Greenwood (eds.), *Mending Fences: Confidence and Security - Building Measures in South Asia*, (Boulder: WestView Press, 1996), p.151.

military means as well as alliances, UN diplomacy and friendship with China and the Arab world have failed.³³ The historical record of Pakistan's alliances shows that the US and the West were unwilling to become embroiled militarily in the Indo-Pakistani wars. This confirms the belief that no state will safeguard Pakistan's security in a confrontation with India.³⁴ Hence a nuclear deterrent is the only viable option for Pakistan in countering the Indian threat. The limited nature of the 1984, 1987 and the 1990 crises highlights the efficacy of such a deterrent posture.

The discriminatory and selective U.S. non-proliferation pressures on Pakistan is another reason for pushing Pakistan to the brink of weaponization. According to Hasan Askari Rizvi, the discriminatory pressure on Pakistan has only served to engender nationalist fervour on the nuclear question which is now viewed as a symbol of national pride and sovereignty.³⁵ Mazari is of the opinion that the US discrimination towards Pakistani's nuclear programme has politicized the issue. The negative political interventionism, whether in the form of isolation or deprivation of technology and aid, has made it difficult for the government of Pakistan to renounce the acquisition of nuclear weapons, because of the anticipated domestic fall out.³⁶

As for the international repercussions of Pakistan's disclosure of atomic weapons, the Western world which is currently threatening to apply sanctions to Pakistan will have no option but to accept the fait accompli of a nuclearized Pakistan.³⁷ A declared nuclear status would be a better option as Pakistan would then

³³ Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.120.

³⁴ Mazari, "Conflict Between Pakistan and India", p.51.

³⁵ Rizvi, "Regional Nuclear Proliferation", p.206.

³⁶ Mazari, "Conflict Between Pakistan and India", p.51.

³⁷ Rizvi, "Regional Nuclear Proliferation" p.206.

be treated at par with India and peace will be ensured by a regional balance of terror.³⁸

Pro-bomb lobbyists argue that Pakistan's nuclear programme is undoubtedly the country's one genuine scientific and technological achievement and that it has managed to provide Pakistan with an element of security by deterring external aggression.³⁹ Also, nuclear weapons can give Pakistan "respectability" and due weightage in world affairs.⁴⁰ Mazari argues that even if Pakistan opts for non-proliferation in the long run, acquiring a weapons capability will offer it a bargaining chip in seeking a suitable non-proliferation arrangement with India.⁴¹ According to Mazari, at present Pakistan sees its relationship with India as a major security concern, in which the U.S. has created an increasing disadvantage for Pakistan. For any long-term improvement in the Indo-Pakistani conflict relationship the security concerns of Pakistan must primarily be addressed. The resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiris would be a key factor in stabilizing the relationship.⁴² Discriminatory policies aimed only at Pakistan will continue to hinder non-proliferation efforts in the region.

Rizvi concurs with Mazari and points out that any non-proliferation policy for South Asia must meet two major conditions. First, it must apply equally to Pakistan and India, who should both be made to realize that they have a joint responsibility to keep South Asia free of nuclear weapons. And, second, it must take into account

³⁸ Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.120.

³⁹ Ibid., p.120.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.120.

⁴¹ Mazari, "Conflict Between Pakistan and India", p.52.

⁴² Ibid.

Pakistan's security predicament and India's ambition to play a commanding role in the region. Currently, Pakistan perceives a need to maintain a nuclear deterrent, regardless of what India decides, as long as conflictual issues remain unresolved.⁴³

Mazari proposes a regional framework for non-proliferation in South Asia on the lines of the Latin American Tlatelolco Treaty which establishes a nuclear-weapons free zone in the continent. The Tlatelolco Treaty, unlike the NPT, places no time limit on its definition of a nuclear weapon state. It also makes a distinction between nuclear weapon and peaceful nuclear explosions, thereby allowing states the economic benefits of the latter. The Treaty has an answer to India's concerns relating to China and other nuclear weapon states. This treaty requires signed and ratified commitments by external states with territorial interests in the region "to undertake to apply the statute of denuclearization in respect of warlike purposes" in these territories and also "undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons" against parties to the treaty. Once China undertakes such a commitment, India would have no rational basis to justify its nuclear option.⁴⁴ Similarly, Rizvi argues that a region-based arrangement supported by the international community can promote confidence and trust between the two countries, thereby reducing contradiction between their aspirations.

Both Rizvi and Mazari stress the need for more transparency and confidence building measures to increase stability in the region. Also, regional arms control measures relating to nuclear and chemical weapons and missile development need to be undertaken from within the region. Nuclear cooperation in the energy field and

⁴³ Rizvi, "Regional Nuclear Proliferation", p.210-214.

⁴⁴ Mazari, "The Case of Pakistan", pp.188-189.

multinational fuel centres would promote a more cooperative socio-economic environment which would in turn allow a reduction of defence budgets.⁴⁵

Rizvi suggests frequent and multilevel talks between the two governments and encouragement of unofficial group's support for non-proliferation on both sides. In addition, Rizvi points out that Pakistan has proposed various measures for establishing a non-proliferation regime in South Asia, including designating South Asia as a nuclear weapon free zone, simultaneous accession to the NPT, simultaneous acceptance of full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, mutual inspection of one another's nuclear installations, and joint renunciation of the nuclear weapons option by the states of South Asia. But India has rejected all these proposals and refuses to accept any limits on its nuclear programme except as a part of global denuclearization. At the same time, it wants Pakistan to unilaterally cut back on its nuclear programme. Unless iron clad guarantees are offered to Pakistan, or the power ambition of India is checked, The Pakistani threat perception and insecurity vis-a-vis India's conventional superiority and nuclear weapons capability will not be reduced. And until then, Pakistan cannot give up its nuclear option.⁴⁶

Giving up the Bomb

The anti-bomb lobby in Pakistan, as in India, is still in a minority. It mainly comprises the intelligentsia which is now openly opposed to Pakistan exercising its nuclear option.

The anti-bomb lobby argues that Pakistan should remain geared to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and, instead of a nuclear deterrent option, Pakistan could

⁴⁵ Rizvi, "Regional Nuclear Proliferation", pp.210-214.

⁴⁶ Rizvi, "Regional Nuclear Proliferation", pp.206-207.

sufficiently enhance its conventional military capabilities to deal with any future security threat. According to the abstainers, a nuclear weapons programme is too expensive to be pursued by Pakistan and it exposes Pakistan to international sanctions.⁴⁷

The anti-bomb advocates put forward many arguments against the call for weaponization.

First, Pervez Hoodbhoy points out that, by going overtly nuclear, Pakistan would commit the ultimate folly. It would provide India with the excuse for which it is waiting. New Delhi would immediately weaponize and accelerate its nuclear weapons programme. A Pakistani declaration would start a no-holds barred game, with India enjoying all the advantages. Pakistan would trigger an arms race which it cannot hope to win.⁴⁸

Second, the argument for 'minimal deterrence' is highly suspect. According to Hoodbhoy, the superpower example provides the counter argument to minimal deterrence. From the day the first bomb was tested in 1945 by the US, the nuclear story has been one of constant escalation wherein each new development pioneered by the US was followed a few years later by the Soviets until the collapse of the Soviet Union from sheer exhaustion in 1991.⁴⁹ Zia Mian adds that the wild arms race and consequent increase in "insecurity" is not a specifically superpower experience. One needs an explanation why Britain, France and China did not stop their weapons programmes when they had built a few atomic bombs. Rather, all these nuclear weapon states went on to build hydrogen bomb, missiles, submarines, and so

⁴⁷ Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.120.

⁴⁸ Hoodbhoy, "Nuclear Myths and Realities", p.28.

⁴⁹ Pervez Hoodbhoy, "What Declaring the Bomb Would Really Mean: Overt Better than Covert?" in *The News*, March 18, 1993.

on. And now that India and Pakistan are developing missiles and buying submarines, clearly they are not immune to the escalation that comes from the logic of "deterrence".⁵⁰ Moreover, possession of a few atomic bombs does not ensure Pakistani security. Even such technology would need constant upgrading of the delivery system, continuous dealing with the enemy's new counter measures, developing even more sophisticated surveillance systems, and modernizing the nuclear command and control system. In the later stages, the nuclear arsenal will have to be greatly increased and sophisticated to compensate for the fewer chances of penetrating the enemy's defence. Therefore, what may start out as "minimal" is likely to become anything but that with the passage of a few years.⁵¹

Third, it is pointed out that Pakistan's acquisition of a few bombs is not likely to reduce the disparity between the nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan which already works to the advantage of India.⁵² India will always have an edge in any confrontation in South Asia, according to Akhtar Ali, as it has the ability to absorb a Pakistani nuclear attack and retaliate because the nuclear installations in India are scattered all over its vast areas and the industrial population centres are well dispersed. As for Pakistan, even at its nuclear best, it does not possess the second strike capability and pushing the nuclear button will only spell disaster. Moreover, the possession of a couple of nuclear weapons without adequate delivery vehicles, and command, control and communication systems only increases Pakistan's vulnerability.⁵³

⁵⁰ Zia Mian, "The Costs of Nuclear Security", p.51.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Hoodbhoy, "Overt Better than Covert?", *The News*, March 18, 1993.

⁵³ Quoted in Z.I. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", pp.123-124.

Fourth, In nuclear deterrence, stability is crucial, but it is not automatic. The superpowers during the cold war had employed a massive ground and space based early system to detect missile launches. Even with a flight time of 20-25 minutes, their systems remained severely strained and are known to have generated false messages of attack. In the India-Pakistan case, with contiguous borders, a flight time of 5-7 minutes and no space-based early warning systems available and much less data available to make reasoned judgements, the temptation in Pakistan would be to adopt a launch on warning strategy, which would make the Indians nervous. In a crisis, mutual nervousness would increase the chances of preemptive strikes.⁵⁴ Also, there is no guarantee that nuclear weapons will prevent even conventional wars. If a major crisis does take place there is no certain predictability of the emotional response of the leaders. Deterrence presupposes rational behaviour of the decision makers, but, in reality, this is not always so. Saddam Hussain's scud attack on Israel was made in the full knowledge that Israel could make Iraq a radioactive wasteland in a matter of hours.

Fifth, it is not true that nuclear weapons allow a country to reduce its conventional forces. Despite thirty years of reliance on nuclear weapons, with incredible increases in the lethality of their weapon systems, the nuclear powers did not substantially reduce their conventional forces.⁵⁵ In the case of India and Pakistan, they share a long border and cannot reduce their conventional weaponry even after acquiring nuclear weapons. Their militaries are heavily involved in internal security matters and border skirmishes which require viable demonstrations of military might.

⁵⁴ Hoodbhoy, "Nuclear Myths and Realities", p.14-15.

⁵⁵ Zia Mian, "The Costs of Nuclear Security", p.51.

Nuclear weapons will be an additional, not a substitute, security arrangement that means an extra burden on already high defense budgets.⁵⁶

Sixth, Hoodbhoy analyses the implications of the 1990 nuclear crisis where, according to the weaponizers, Pakistan had successfully conveyed a threat of nuclear retaliation which had defused the crisis. Hoodbhoy gives counter arguments to this "stabilizing theory" of nuclear weapons. According to him, if in the 1990 crisis a nuclear threat was actually conveyed, then that reveals weaponization in Pakistan. And so Pakistan would automatically lay itself open to the application of the Pressler Amendment against it. In addition, there is a strong possibility that the next Indo-Pakistani war would not go through the phase of a conventional war. "If our nuclear hawks are correct in saying that Pakistan suddenly brandished the bombs in May 1990 before a single shot had been fired, then the next war may begin and end with a horrific nuclear exchange, which would destroy tens of millions of lives in both countries".⁵⁷ Hoodbhoy also argues that the crisis reinforces Western prejudice against Third World nations as trigger-happy nuclear nations and their leaders as irresponsible, playing with the nuclear button even when their country's existence is not mortally threatened. To make matters worse, Pakistan's future security may be seriously compromised in the wake of 1990, because the very fear of a nuclear retaliatory threat by Pakistan may inspire a preemptive attack by India in the future.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Rizvi, "Regional Nuclear Proliferation", p.207.

⁵⁷ Pervez Hoodbhoy, "Nuclear Deterrence - An Article of Faith: The Possible Consequence of the May 1990 Event for Pakistan's Security", *The News*, March 17, 1993.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Seventh, nuclear weapons are not likely to increase the 'prestige' of Pakistan in the international community. According to Hoodbhoy, designing nuclear weapons has become old hat. More than a dozen Third World countries, with quite marginal technological infrastructure and no standing in the world of high science, can develop the rudiments of a nuclear weapons programme. Nuclear weapons have lost their old political clout for good and have been stripped of much of their mystique.⁵⁹

Eighth, Zia Mian has examined in detail the cost of nuclear security. He quotes a UN study report which states that as far as the superpowers were concerned having nuclear weapons "had not made it possible for either to reduce their military expenditure in general or to neglect the effectiveness of their conventional armoury in particular". They noted that this also applied to Britain and France.⁶⁰

Moreover, according to Zia, while computing the costs of nuclear security, the bomb advocates fail to include the hidden social and human costs of the lost opportunities for building schools, hospitals, water and sewage systems, and so on, nor the long term effects of exposing people and their environment to radioactive materials.⁶¹ The setting up of the huge infrastructure needed for the research and development of nuclear weapons itself will cost billions.⁶² Also, if India and Pakistan cannot address their acute socio-economic problems, especially poverty,

⁵⁹ Pervez Hoodbhoy, "Is the Bomb Really a Big Deal?: Power, Prestige, Politics and Nuclear Weapons", *The News*, 20 March 1993.

⁶⁰ Zia quotes from the *Basic Problems of Disarmament*, Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations, 1970, in "The Cost of Nuclear Security", p.60.

⁶¹ Zia, "The Cost of Nuclear Security", p.61.

⁶² Hoodbhoy, "Overt Better than Covert"? *The News*, March 18, 1993.

underdevelopment and political instability, nuclear weapons would not ensure their territorial integrity.⁶³

Considering all the above factors which would constrain Pakistan's choice for overt weaponization, Pervez Hoodbhoy suggests that, as the international environment is hostile to nuclear weapons in general and fearful of a South Asian conflagration in particular, Pakistan must once again seize the diplomatic initiative. Islamabad has to show the international community that it is sincere in working towards nuclear accommodation with India. Pakistan needs to take some meaningful unilateral actions, like a declaration to freeze the production of enriched uranium for a period of eighteen months and to refrain from conducting a nuclear test in this period. If India respond positively then the freeze can be extended, or else Pakistan has the choice to revert to its former position.⁶⁴ Pakistan could also agree to inspection of all its nuclear weapons related sites and data, thereby showing its concern for the spread of nuclear weapons.

Its security interests would not be harmed by these declarations. India's positive response by a cut in plutonium production could pave the way for the further denuclearization of South Asia. Even if India does not respond because of its security imperatives and its grand vision of itself in the world community, Pakistan would gain in diplomatic and political terms. The economic, political and military pressure on Pakistan would be substantially lessened. India, on the other hand, would either stand isolated as a rejectionist or would be forced to the bargaining table.⁶⁵ A freeze for eighteen months would not harm Pakistan's security in relation to India since, given

⁶³ Z.I. Cheema refers to this anti-bomb argument in his "Pakistan's Nuclear Policies", p.121.

⁶⁴ Hoodbhoy, "Pakistan's Nuclear Choices", *The News*, March 22, 1993.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

existing stockpiles, the nuclear asymmetry would not be greatly enhanced beyond what it is at present. Moreover, at least at the present time, the two deter each other by some diffuse meaning of "nuclear capability" where the real numbers are not the major issue.⁶⁶

Conclusion

In Pakistan, the bomb issue was really debated only after the Indian nuclear test explosion of 1974. Pakistan's quest for acquiring a nuclear weapon capability is directly linked to India's nuclear programme. Pakistan has consistently maintained that its bomb option is tied to India's option and it is willing to conclude a bilateral or multilateral regional solution with India. As is the case with India, there is strong nationalist support for the bomb capability which symbolizes Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity. The nuclear "threat" conveyed by Pakistan in the 1990 crisis has strengthened the pro-bomb lobby in Pakistan.

Our review of the Pakistani debate shows that one stream of thought is that India and Pakistan are likely to maintain stable deterrence with their non-weaponized, capability. Factors like economic reforms, control of decision making by a less hostile younger generation which is not so attached to the past, and an international environment which is increasingly hostile to proliferation would definitely constrain the two governments in going overtly nuclear.

On the other hand, Pakistan cannot give up its weapon option unless India does so. Or else, the nuclear powers must be willing to provide positive guarantees and a nuclear umbrella to Pakistan. Since this is not likely, the present state of non-weaponized deterrence is likely to continue. The Western alarm over South Asian

⁶⁶ Ibid.

nuclear relations is exaggerated. Both India and Pakistan's nuclear quest is restrained. The two countries have proposed many global and regional measures to contain nuclear proliferation. Also, the leaders of the two countries are not likely to take any irresponsible decisions which would jeopardize their economics which are on the path of reform. The pro-bomb arguments in Pakistan have an advantage because the Indian conventional and nuclear threat is ingrained in the thinking of the common man in Pakistan. Those who argue for the bomb also claim the moral high ground by suggesting that Pakistan has advanced many reasonable proposals for containing the nuclear situation in South Asia all of which India has rejected. Proponents of the bomb option like General Arif, Shireen Mazari, General Aslam Beg, and Mushahid Hussain cite the preponderant Indian conventional threat has been compounded by which the Indian nuclear capability. As long as the Kashmir dispute remains unresolved and the West spearheaded by the US continues to discriminately pressurize and impose sanctions on Pakistan, it would be unrealistic for Pakistan to role back its nuclear programme.

The pro-bomb advocates also cite the experience of the 1984, 1987 and 1990 crises which they claim were stabilized by the Pakistani nuclear retaliatory threat. According to them, the nuclear factor has reduced the insecurities of Pakistan vis-a-vis the Indian conventional threat and has maintained stability in the region.

There are some bomb advocates who feel that the possession of nuclear weapons would increase the "prestige" of Pakistan and give it greater weight in the international community. According to them, nuclear weapon status will be a fait accompli which the world will accept sooner or later. Mazari even argues that nuclear weapons help in reducing conventional forces and diverting resources to development purposes.

These arguments are countered by the anti-bomb advocates like Pervez Hoodbhoy, Zia Mian, Zubaida Mustafa and Akhtar Ali. According to them, India already has a conventional force advantage over Pakistan and it does not need nuclear weapons to threaten Pakistan. Pakistan should instead deter the Indian threat by upgrading its conventional capabilities. Pakistan cannot deter India by a few atomic bombs, nor does its retaliatory threat argument hold much weight as Indian nuclear installations and major population centres are scattered over its vast territory and would suffer little damage.

Hoodbhoy is critical of the 'minimal deterrent' posture which according to him cannot stay at a minimal level as time passes because of technological, security, and political imperatives. Hoodbhoy and Zia Mian argue that the stability factor is very crucial in a nuclear deterrent posture, and Pakistan, with the adoption of a hair trigger retaliatory strategy, would only increase the risk of preemptive strikes by India. While the pro-bomb groups argue that the 1990 crisis was diffused because of a nuclear retaliatory threat by Pakistan, Hoodbhoy sees a more sinister aspect of such a threat. According to him, any further crises will not go through the conventional escalation ladder. Rather, it will now be a direct nuclear confrontation. The economic, social, human and security cost factor of a nuclear programme are stressed by Zia Mian. According to him, nuclear weapons only increase insecurity in terms of neglected social development, accidents and radioactive hazards to the domestic population, as also the impossibility of a stable nuclear deterrent and the ever increasing costs of maintaining a nuclear establishment and a credible nuclear force.

The anti-bomb advocates argue that the advantages of Pakistan seizing the diplomatic initiative to contain nuclear proliferation in the region are important. A unilateral freeze on enriched uranium production for a specific time period, conditional on the Indian response and opening up nuclear related facilities for

inspection would certainly ease the economic, diplomatic and political pressures on Pakistan.

The pro and anti-bomb arguments by the Pakistani analysts run on similar lines to the Indian nuclear weapon debate. Whereas the Indian pro-bomb advocates cite the Chinese threat to justify the weapon option, the Pakistani pro-bomb analysts are concerned over the Indian threat. As in India, public opinion is more in favour of retaining the option and the anti-bomb lobby in Pakistan is also in a minority. Though public opinion is not in favour of outright weaponization, a crisis situation between India and Pakistan could tilt the balance in favour of weaponization. There is however agreement among security analysts in Pakistan that a nuclear guarantee by the nuclear powers and the resolution of the Kashmir dispute would definitely reduce Pakistani insecurity and the need for a nuclear deterrent. And finally, Pakistan's nuclear choices are tied to the Indian option. An Indian decision to give up its nuclear option would definitely prompt a similar decision by Pakistan.

CHAPTER III

SOUTH ASIAN NUCLEAR ISSUES: U.S. PERSPECTIVES

The US interest in non-proliferation in South Asia dates back to the 1950s when it made attempts to dissuade India and Pakistan from acquiring nuclear weapons through its Atoms for Peace programme. The US provided India and Pakistan civilian nuclear technology and power and research reactors in the hope that progress in mastering the non-military applications of nuclear power would dampen the two countries' desire for nuclear weapons.¹

In the 1960s the US shifted its policy when it realized that there were insufficient buffers between civilian nuclear research and development and the spread of nuclear weapons. Keeping in mind, the dual use of nuclear technology, the US directed its efforts to securing a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which came into force in 1970. The NPT was strengthened by a system of IAEA safeguards which made the transfer of civilian nuclear technology by the nuclear weapon states to the non-nuclear weapon states contingent on evidence that such technology is not being diverted to military applications.²

¹ Stephen P. Cohen, "Controlling Weapons of Mass Destruction in South Asia: An American Perspective" in Shelly A. Stahl and Geoffrey Kemp (eds.), *Arms Control and Weapons Proliferation in the Middle East and South Asia*, (New York: St. Martin's Press in association with The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1992), p.210.

² *Preventing Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia* (New York: A Study Group sponsored by the Asia Society, 1995), pp.22-24.

India and Pakistan stayed out of the NPT and refused to accept fullscope IAEA safeguards. So the US in the 1970s further intensified its non-proliferation efforts in the region through a number of supply side restrictions. The US multilateral initiatives in this direction led to the formation of the Zangger Committee and the Nuclear Supplier Group which restricted export of nuclear materials with potential military applications contingent on IAEA safeguards. The US also initiated a unilateral restraint measure in the form of the US Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA) in 1977 which required countries receiving US nuclear exports to accept full scope safeguards. Then, in 1987, the US formed the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) with its G-7 partners to stem the transfer of technology that could contribute to nuclear capable missiles.³ Apart from these restraints, the US tried to enhance the security of Pakistan, its regional ally, by providing advanced conventional weaponry to strengthen Pakistan's defenses, thereby making Islamabad less anxious to develop nuclear weapons. But this policy could not be continued for long as Pakistan had embarked on an ambitious programme for the acquisition of nuclear technology after the Indian nuclear test explosion of 1974. The US thwarted Pakistani attempts to acquire a reprocessing plant from France by pressurizing Paris to cancel the deal.

Since then, various US administrations have resorted to punitive measures to deter the Pakistani quest for nuclear weapons capability. The Glenn and Symington amendments were passed in the US Congress which suspended US economic and military aid to Pakistan. During the Afghan crisis though, the US granted Pakistan a waiver from these nuclear related sanctions in order to secure Pakistani cooperation. These sanctions were reimposed in 1990 in the form of the Pressler amendment which

³ Ibid.

requires US Presidential certification annually to the effect that Pakistan "does not possess a nuclear explosion device". Though the Pressler Amendment was passed in 1985, it was only in October 1990 that the American officials finally determined that certification was no longer possible and all forms of US military assistance was cut off and new economic aid was prohibited. Most recently, in January 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Brown Amendment which eased Pressler Amendment sanctions on Pakistan.⁴ The US has imposed MTCR sanctions against Moscow and New Delhi for Russian exports to India. Russia abrogated the cryogenic engine deal under US pressure.⁵ Coupled with these sanctions there has been renewed US pressure on India and Pakistan to be a part of the global non-proliferation regime including the NPT and the CTBT.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, many in the US view the "arms race" between India and Pakistan as representing the "most probable prospect" for the future use of nuclear weapons.⁶ According to George Perkovich, "the chance of local nuclear conflict among undeclared nuclear weapons has grown and the danger is especially acute in South Asia".⁷ The history of strained relations between India and Pakistan who have fought three wars since 1947 and miscalculations or misunderstandings between the two, leading to the crises of 1987 and 1990, have

⁴ *A New US Policy Toward India and Pakistan* (New York: Task Force Report Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, 1997), pp.11-12.

⁵ *Preventing Nuclear Proliferation*, p.25.

⁶ Mitchell Reiss, "Safeguarding the Nuclear Peace in South Asia", Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington D.C., 1994, p.1.

⁷ George Perkovich, "A Nuclear Third Way in South Asia", *Foreign Policy*, no.91, Summer 1993.

contributed to this alarming assessment.⁸ Moreover, neither of the two states is a party to the NPT or the CTBT. Nor do they accept international safe-guards over their nuclear facilities. Both are actively engaged in enhancing their ballistic missile delivery capabilities. According to the CIA Director, James Woolsey, "Now that each of these country has the ability to assemble nuclear devices 'on short notice' the next crisis could very possibly escalate to the nuclear level with devastating consequences for millions of people in South Asia".⁹

These concerns have generated considerable debate within the US strategic community over the future of a nuclear South Asia. The majority view in the US is those of the non-proliferators who view the spread of nuclear weapons as dangerous to the stability of South Asia and the international order and who support US official policy which aims "first to cap, then over time reduce, and finally eliminate the possession of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery".¹⁰ There is a dissenting view put forth by "deterrent optimists"¹¹ who see the advent of military nuclear capability in South Asia as a stabilizing factor. A third view is propounded by George Perkovich according to whom a "non-proliferation deterrence"¹² regime can be institutionalized in South Asia to secure the stability of the region.

⁸ Reiss, "Safeguarding the Nuclear Peace", p.1.

⁹ Ibid., p.1.

¹⁰ Mitchell Reiss, "Safeguards the Nuclear Peace", p.22.

¹¹ Peter Lavoy, "The Strategic Consequence of Nuclear Proliferation: A Review Essay", *Security Studies*, no.4 (Summer 1995), p.700.

¹² Perkovich, "A Nuclear Third Way in South Asia", p.85.

This chapter discusses the three broad policy options which are currently being debated in America. The first is the view that the time has come for the US to rethink its non-proliferation policies with regard to South Asia. The second option is presented by Peter Lavoy. Lavoy suggests that arms control and confidence building measures can stabilize the nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan. The third option is non-weaponized deterrence, best represented by the views of George Perkovich.

Proliferation in South Asia: Prevention or Management

The advocates of non-proliferation in the US realize that the US efforts to prevent the development of nuclear weapons capabilities through technology denials, sanctions and the NPT have failed. India and Pakistan have the capability and sufficient fissile material stock to make nuclear weapons. The domestic constraints within their country and the substantial support for retaining the nuclear option make it very difficult for the US to convince the respective governments to give up the nuclear option. And so, the non-proliferators argue that in the short term a freeze on India's and Pakistan's fissile material production coupled with a bilateral or regional agreement against test explosions would to a great extent stabilize the regional situation. Here, I present the views of Stephen P. Cohen, Kathleen Bailey, Mitchell Reiss and Selig Harrison. I also incorporate the conclusions of official and non-official study groups who have made a study of US policies in South Asia.

The non-proliferator or "proliferation pessimist"¹³ cites many factors which impinge on the stability of Indo-Pakistani relations and which could lead to a nuclear confrontation in South Asia. According to Mitchell Reiss, a combination of internal

¹³ Peter Lavoy, "The Strategic Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation, p.708.

and transborder difficulties, traditional mistrust and suspicion, unarticulated nuclear doctrines and rudimentary command and control structures could precipitate a fourth round of violence between India and Pakistan. The risk of inadvertent or accidental nuclear war is now a permanent feature of the South Asian landscape.¹⁴

Second, it is argued that the continued development of Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons capabilities could soon lead to a nuclear arms race which would be inherently unstable.¹⁵

Third, an overt arms race would drain valuable resources including highly trained scientists and engineers away from urgent economic and development tasks.¹⁶ Stephen Cohen adds that nuclear proliferation would not decrease the need for conventional weapons in the region. In the absence of an agreement, regional nuclear proliferation is most likely to lead to a major overall increase in defence spending. And if one computes the ancillary costs of nuclear weapons - the command and control systems, delivery systems, continued testing and development of new designs - it would far exceed the simple cost of fabricating fissile material into explosive devices.¹⁷

Fourth, maintaining the nuclear "option" let alone assembling, testing or deploying nuclear weapons in South Asia will create serious problems for regional

¹⁴ Mithcell Reiss, "Safeguarding the Nuclear Peace", p.3.

¹⁵ *Preventing Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia*, p.31.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Stephen P. Cohen, (ed.), *The Security of South Asia: American and Asian Perspectives*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), pp.236-237.

states and others.¹⁸ According to Kathleen Bailey, the new nuclear weapon states do not have the technical capacity, motivation and financial wherewithall to ensure the safety and security of these weapons increasing the risk of their thefts by terrorists by organizations.¹⁹

Fifth, the deployment of regional nuclear forces would only exacerbate the Cold War mentality in both countries. Their mutual distrust has increased over the past decade, and when the world is moving towards detente and normalization, it would be tragic if South Asia moved in the opposite direction.²⁰

Finally, deployment of nuclear weapons in South Asia remains unnecessary as the legitimate security interests of India and Pakistan can be assured without the acquisition of nuclear weapons.²¹

These six factors make it imperative, the non-proliferators argue, to either prevent or at least manage the nuclear programmes in the two states.

The non-proliferators agree that any efforts to dissuade India and Pakistan from going nuclear or stabilizing their nuclear programme must take into account regional interests. According to Stephen Cohen, these efforts must first and foremost address the ambitions and concerns of India and Pakistan together and separately. In the case of Pakistan, Washington should restore its earlier policy of proportionate incentives and disincentives in its relationship with Islamabad. The US should make provisions

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kathleen C. Bailey, *Doomsday Weapons in the Hands of the Many: The Arms Control Challenge of the 1990s*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 2-3.

²⁰ Preventing Proliferation, pp.3-4.

²¹ Ibid.

to enhance the conventional capabilities of Pakistan so as to increase its overall sense of security and thus make nuclear weapons less attractive. Also, Pakistan should be rewarded if there is hard evidence of a standstill in its nuclear programme. In the case of India, outside powers should link strategic accommodation to its continued non-nuclear status. Also, they should not challenge or contain New Delhi's aspirations for great power status. New Delhi does not have provocatively hegemonic ambitions, and it is in the interest of outside power to see a newly powerful India emerge as a responsible leader.²² Selig Harrison and Geoffrey Kemp in a report on changing Indo-US relations argue that focusing on India to give up its nuclear option would prove both ineffective and counter productive to American interest. So the US policy focus should shift away from regional non-proliferation to a policy which brings regional restraint in the region.²³ Currently, it is extremely unlikely that the US can persuade or pressurize India and Pakistan to reverse their de facto nuclear weapons status. Both countries leaders face domestic pressure to maintain and enhance rather than reduce their nuclear postures.²⁴

Cohen and Harrison and Kemp are in agreement when they argue that the US should discourage India and Pakistan from the production and deployment of these nuclear weapons, seek a freeze on the stockpiling of fissile material production, discourage them from production and deployment of nuclear weapons and draw them

²² Cohen, "Controlling Weapons of Mass Destructions", p.213.

²³ Selig S. Harrison and Geoffrey Kemp, *India and American After the Cold War*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993), p.36.

²⁴ *A New U.S. Policy Towards India and Pakistan: A Report*, p.26.

into global agreements banning testing and production.²⁵ According to Cohen, this freeze could be publicly monitored and verified by the US and other interested governments who could also invite India and Pakistan to initiate discussion on levelling off their nuclear programmes.²⁶ India and Pakistan should be encouraged to join or at least confirm to the MTCR guidelines by refraining from missile related exports.²⁷

Kathleen Bailey suggests a number of policy options to control and prevent nuclear proliferation in South Asia. First, the US should seek a bilateral or regional ban agreement on intermediate range missiles modelled on the US-Russia Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty. This treaty eliminates a complete class of missiles from the super power arsenals. Second, the US should engage in regional talks with the decision makers in both countries to convince them that nuclear weapons increase rather than counter a military threat. According to her, the pro bomb arguments in the two countries fail to take into account the fact that the superpowers are reducing their nuclear arsenals and that Europe is being denuclearized. Also ignored is the tremendous security danger that nuclear weapons would bring to India.²⁸

Third, the US could formalise an extensive security pact with Islamabad to counter any nuclear threat against Pakistan. In return, Pakistan would have to place its uranium enrichment facilities, under safeguards, forswear development of nuclear

²⁵ Cohen, "Controlling Weaponization", pp.211-212, and Harrison and Kemp, *India and America After the Cold War*, p.36.

²⁶ Cohen, "Controlling Weaponization", p.213.

²⁷ *A New US Policy Towards India and Pakistan*, p.37.

²⁸ Bailey, *Doomsday Weapons in the Hands of the Many*, pp.44-45.

weapons, agree to onsite inspections of suspect facilities and agree not to transfer its nuclear materials or know how to other countries.

Fourth, the financial implications of nuclear weapons should become a part of the internal as well as bilateral dialogue in the two countries.

Fifth, both countries could be offered power and prestige in the form of a greater role in international arms control efforts, UN activities, and international fora in exchange for their renouncing nuclear weapons. Bailey concludes that the international community should make a conscious effort to examine Pakistan's and India's motivations for developing nuclear weapons and try to counter them.²⁹

Mitchell Reiss proposes a new approach "whose central bargain involves acceptance of a regional full-scope safeguards regime in return for lifting the Pressler Amendment ban on U.S. assistance to Pakistan and ensuring access to civilian nuclear technology".³⁰ Reiss also suggests encouraging various arms control, and confidence building measures between India and Pakistan for a variety of military and economic benefits from the United States.³¹ India and Pakistan need only to accept full-scope IAEA safeguards to all nuclear activities without joining the NPT. This would be entirely consistent with the preservation of India's and Pakistan's nuclear option. They would not have to destroy their existing stockpiles of nuclear material, but merely place them under safeguards.³² The use of the IAEA as an independent umpire, moreover, would provide certainty to both Delhi and Islamabad that during a crisis

²⁹ Ibid., pp.45-46.

³⁰ Reiss, "Safeguarding the Nuclear Peace", p.4.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., pp.16-20.

the other party was not contemplating the use of nuclear weapons. To induce Indian and Pakistani acceptance of these measures, however, Washington would have to offer concrete incentives like safety assistance for civilian nuclear power facilities, expanded military and scientific exchanges and technical cooperation and the selective relaxation of currently controlled dual-use technologies.³³

Mitchell accepts that a fullscope safeguards regime will not solve all the region's problems, as it would not constrain further development and deployment of ballistic missiles by India and Pakistan, nor would it assuage New Delhi's fears about Beijing's nuclear arsenal. There cannot be any certainty about the perfect operation of such a regime, but in the two countries' prevailing democratic environment, with growing Political accountability, the price of deceiving the IAEA would be too high. Moreover, with time, bureaucracies will be created in both the countries that will have a professional and personal interest in the success of the regime. So, there is every reason to believe that this regime will improve with age. Mitchell concludes by stating that although not a panacea, a fullscope safeguards regime would offer real hope of capping and potentially reversing the nuclear arms race in the Subcontinent.³⁴

The Pro-Proliferation Arguments

The pro-proliferationists in the US who make a case for South Asian stability through nuclear deterrence follow the Waltzian dictum of "More May be Better". Waltz's main argument is that the mere possibility of nuclear use causes extreme

³³ Ibid., p.24.

³⁴ Ibid., pp.32-33.

caution all round. Therefore, the likelihood of war decreases as more countries acquire nuclear weapons.³⁵ War becomes less likely as the costs of war rise in relation to possible gains. In order to avoid potential mutual annihilation, no country is likely to deliberately press another to the point where nuclear weapons might be involved. Finally, Waltz argues that nuclear weapons, whose very existence works strongly against their use, induce greater rationality and restraint in the behaviour of states, thereby reinforcing international stability and promoting peace.³⁶

American observers who are optimistic about deterrence stability in a nuclear South Asia include Peter Lavoy and Devin, Hagerty. For simplicity, I shall deal with the views of Lavoy regarding South Asian nuclear stability.

Lavoy's main argument is that, though the risks of a nuclear confrontation in South Asia may be significant, with the application of effective arms control, nuclear deterrence can be stabilised in South Asia. The nuclear concerns of the non-proliferationists regarding nuclear stability in South Asia are exaggerated and can be addressed.

Taking the first concern, that of preventive attack on incomplete nuclear systems, Lavoy argues that in the Indo-Pakistani case this does not apply any longer.

³⁵ Jrn Gjelstad, "The Last Waltz: Time to Halt the Nuclear Spread?", in Jrn Gjelstad and Olav Njlstad, (eds), *Nuclear Rivalry and International Order* (London: Sage Publication and International Peace Research Institute, 1996), p.107.

³⁶ Lavoy, "The Strategic Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation", pp.723-724.

There is a realization on both sides that the other country is capable of using at least several nuclear weapons at short notice. In fact, India and Pakistan have signed and implemented a formal pact outlawing this form of military prevention. The 1988 agreement not to attack each other's nuclear installations and facilities is that pact. So, it is too late to arrest the development of nuclear capabilities through preventive attack, as military attack now carries a high risk of nuclear retaliation.³⁷

The second concern of non-proliferationist is that vulnerable nuclear forces invite preemptive military attack. Lavoy offers a solution to this problem. According to him, protection and dispersal of nuclear forces make them a lot less vulnerable. According to him, considering the vast Indian territory and large distance of many Indian military bases and airfields from Pakistan, force dispersal will not be a problem for New Delhi. And though Pakistan does not enjoy these advantages, it has already adopted techniques of dispersal for air bases and aircraft for reasons of conventional survivability which could be adopted for nuclear forces as well.³⁸

The third concern is about the risks of nuclear accidents. In the India-Pakistan case, Lavoy states that neither country is understood to have deployed or even assembled nuclear weapons. A state of non-weaponized deterrence exist between the two, where there is a mutual realisation that the other side could easily assemble and deploy nuclear weapons and even be prepared to use them in war. Lavoy though

³⁷ Ibid, p.727.

³⁸ Ibid., pp.725-728.

agrees that once the two countries perfect and deploy their nuclear capable ballistic missiles, this would induce the assembly of nuclear weapons and possibly the resort to launch on warning strategies. Such a development surely would heighten the risks of nuclear accidents and loss of control over nuclear weapons. In the absence of ballistic missiles, India and Pakistan could continue to keep their nuclear weapons components stored in a disassembled condition at civilian laboratories and separate from their delivery systems. According to him, the success in controlling their nuclear forces would depend primarily on the specific choices India and Pakistan make about their nuclear force postures, controls, and strategies.³⁹

Fourth, there is the concern about a nuclear arms race and a nuclear war in the Subcontinent. Lavoy argues that India and Pakistan are believed to possess the fissile materials and warhead components for several nuclear weapons. The two countries have not opted for large arsenals. This reflects technical and financial constraints, or a conscious policy decision by the decision makers in the two countries to have a minimal deterrent force or perhaps the fear of further sanctions from the US. In the absence of a definite explanation, it is not possible to make a conclusive evaluation of the risks and implications of nuclear arms racing in the Subcontinent.⁴⁰ Lavoy argues that although India and Pakistan regularly engage in low intensity warfare and do face tense situations between them, neither side appears willing to risk a nuclear

³⁹ Ibid., pp.735-736.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.744.

war to settle any of their many political and territorial disputes. The advent of nuclear capabilities may not have prevented low-level armed clashes between India and Pakistan, but it has provided a powerful incentive for these countries to abandon notions of military victory and to run smaller risks. And, finally, India and Pakistan have not developed nuclear weapons with offensive or coercive military action in mind. Lavoy quotes Stephen Cohen to say that nuclear weapons "are seen as defensive in character" in the context of Indian or Pakistani possession.⁴¹

While India and Pakistan have managed a stable deterrent relationship, Lavoy recognises that a durable nuclear peace in South Asia rests on the ability of these adversaries to overcome a formidable array of political, psychological, and bureaucratic obstacles to establish an effective nuclear arms control regime in the region.⁴²

Arms control and confidence building measures would avoid an unwanted war, minimize the costs and risks of arms competition and limit the scope and violence of conflict should it occur in South Asia. But, according to Lavoy, there are five obstacles to developing the institutions and attitudes required for nuclear stability. These are, first, the diplomatic difficulties of having even a modest but sensible set of nuclear restraint measures. While India focuses on global denuclearization, Pakistan

⁴¹ Peter R. Lavoy, "Nuclear Arms Control in South Asia", in Jeffrey A. Larsen and Gregory I. Rattray (eds.), *Arms Control Toward the Twenty-first Century* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), p.272.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.272-281.

is preoccupied by the idea of regional disarmament. In fact, US officials have come to accept that nuclear disarmament may not be a sensible goal for the region and hence is gradually pushing India and Pakistan to practice arms control. While it is true that, after the 1990 crisis, New Delhi and Islamabad have negotiated and implemented several confidence building measures, clearly they are not enough.

Second, there is a reluctance to acknowledge the military purposes of India's and Pakistan's nuclear programmes. This has precluded a realistic debate about reasonable limits on nuclear forces and strategies and poses two problems for regional security. One of these problems is the strategic instabilities arising out of covert nuclear forces. The other problem is that nuclear opacity impedes Indian and Pakistani efforts to openly propose, negotiate and accept nuclear arms control agreements.

Third, there is an unwillingness on the part of either state to perceive arms control as a vital source of national security. The past and existing treaties and confidence building measures (CBMs) may have reduced tensions and resolved some disputes, but they have not significantly altered the source of military rivalry or constrained the strategic behaviour of either country. Neither country has accepted limits on military activities that either country realistically might wish to pursue.

Fourth, India and Pakistan have been unable to bargain explicitly to de-escalate a crisis situation. The effectiveness of tacit bargaining depends on the current state of relations between India and Pakistan and on the strength of each side's political leaders. Unfortunately, both have had short and unstable governments for several

years. While unilateral restraint and tacit CBMs are important, arms control must be formally negotiated and ratified if it is to garner widespread domestic support and survive sudden changes in political leadership, popular sentiment, and international events.

The final barrier according to Lavoy, is the persistence of resentment and defiance among India, Pakistan, and the US. Apart from specific conflicts which confound amicable relations among these countries, each state often acts with moralism and hypocrisy. Moreover, because of the lack of trust and understanding, neither side is willing to initiate a reciprocal relationship of good gestures. Also, US non-proliferation pressures inhibit open discussions between India and Pakistan on regional nuclear security issue. Much of Indian and Pakistani energy goes in diverting US pressure, rather than thinking about and propagating creative ideas to promote regional nuclear security. Lavoy concludes that it was only after several dangerous episodes that Washington and Moscow learned to manage their nuclear relations. India and Pakistan are now on the verge of undergoing a similar learning process and with effective application arms control measures, the emerging nuclear deterrence in the Subcontinent can be stabilised.⁴³

⁴³ Ibid.

Non-Weaponized Deterrence

George Perkovich and Susan Burns propose a novel way out of the nuclear stalemate in South Asia, one which builds on the unlikelihood of eliminating the nuclear capability of India and Pakistan. They argue that the fact that neither India nor Pakistan has chosen to build nuclear weapons suggests that one can frame near-term policies which would encourage both sides to refrain from overt weaponization and this could be done in such a way that neither country would have to surrender anything of value. "The two countries" according to Perkovich, "could thus negotiate a detailed largely verifiable settlement based on "non-weaponized deterrence" in which deterrence derives from the power of each to construct nuclear weapons quickly. Such a regime would require that India and Pakistan take a demanding set of CBMs to assure each other and the international community that they have not built weapons.⁴⁴ Susan Burns argues that "a mutual commitment to keep warheads separate from delivery vehicles may be a way around the covert/overt dilemma. Such an arrangement could preserve the real and perceived benefits of nuclear ambiguity for India and Pakistan provided effective verification ensured each country's non-weaponization".⁴⁵ Such a regime would have three components. First, there would be an agreement between India and Pakistan on measures to verify that the nuclear

⁴⁴ Perkovich, "A Nuclear Third Way", p.88.

⁴⁵ Susan Burns, "Non-Weaponized Deterrence: Symbolic or Verifiable?", ACDIS, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, 1994.

Pakistan could be included in the meetings of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and other export control forums. This would increase transparency in their nuclear programmes.

The US could support this non-weaponized deterrence regime by offering to assist with monitoring and verification requirements. Also, it could offer modest technical assistance to the troubled civilian nuclear programme in India, even if that required waiving or amending the Nuclear Non-proliferation Act of 1978. Perkovich argues that "agreed a non-weaponized deterrence regime falls short of complete denuclearization, it would still be better than the current situation of unchecked nuclear programmes in India and Pakistan. And the prospects for the global non-proliferation would greatly improve, if the nuclear powers also agreed to move towards such a non-weaponized regime".

Perkovich's views are also supported by a study group which has analyzed the various options available to prevent nuclear proliferation in South Asia. According to this group, "Institutionalizing a non-weaponized deterrence regime would mitigate the worst potential effects of proliferation while still satisfying important political constituencies in the three most relevant capitals-Islamabad, New Delhi and Washington".⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Perkovich, "A Nuclear Third Way", pp.85-104.

Conclusion

Over the years, the US has taken a keen interest in the India-Pakistan nuclear programmes and policies. US interest has been mainly devoted to dissuading India and Pakistan from their nuclear weapon quest. In this endeavour, US non-proliferation policies have changed from assistance in civilian nuclear programmes to denial of key nuclear technology, to sanctions against the Indian and Pakistan nuclear programmes. In recent years, in the aftermath of the Cold War, the US has been putting pressure on India and Pakistan to join the global non-proliferation regime India and Pakistan have managed to resist US pressures and carry on with the development of their nuclear capability and delivery systems.

These developments have prompted a debate in the US, mainly to rethink US policy towards a nuclear South Asia. There are three main positions taken by analysts in the US with regard to American policy options. There are those who toe the official line of rollback, cap and finally eliminate the nuclear weapons programme in South Asia. Towards this end, they cite various policy options. These analysts are now in agreement that something more needs to be done apart from denials, sanctions and pressures to cap the two countries nuclear programmes.

Stephen Cohen, Selig Harrison and Geoffrey Kemp argue for a freeze on India and Pakistan fissile material production, a pledge of no first use of nuclear weapons by the two countries, and a commitment against any nuclear test explosions by them. According to them, these agreements should be the basis of a US policy of incentives

and disincentives in South Asia. Kathleen Bailey proposes a US-Pakistan nuclear security pact to divert Pakistani interest in a nuclear weapons programme. She also proposes educating the decision makers of the two countries about the dangerous aspects of nuclear security and a greater role for the two countries in global arms control talks and in other international fora like the UN. Mitchell Reiss comes up with a different solution. According to him, acceptance of full scope IAEA safeguards by the two countries without acceding to the NPT would bring about greater transparency in their nuclear activities, reduce their mutual insecurities, and pave the way for further arms control and confidence building measures.

The second position is taken by the "deterrent optimists" like Peter Lavoy and Devin Hagerty who argue that the advent of nuclear weapons in the Subcontinent has only stabilized Indo-Pakistani relations. Lavoy counters the various non-proliferationist arguments about the dangers of a nuclear war in the Subcontinent and concludes that though nuclear weapons do pose a danger, the non-proliferationist fears are simply exaggerated. And with effective arms control and confidence building measures between India and Pakistan the dangers can be controlled. One common line of various thought runs through the various analyses, namely, that the US has failed to prevent the emergence of India and Pakistan as nuclear weapon capable states. And it is nearly impossible in the short term to induce or pressurize the two in to giving up their nuclear options. In such a setting, the only possible alternative before the US is to manage the nuclear stalemate in South Asia with the more distant aim of eventually eliminating nuclear weapons from South Asia.

CONCLUSION

The nuclear option debates in India and Pakistan run largely on parallel lines. The "weaponizers" and "renouncers" in India and Pakistan give similar arguments to justify their respective stands. Even the "status-quoists" in both countries cite nearly similar domestic and international imperatives which constrain their governments' nuclear choices. In America, the nuclear option debate is mainly between the "proliferators" and the "non-proliferators" with the exception of analysts like George Perkovich and Susan Burns who defend the ambiguity option in India and Pakistan and propose a verifiable and negotiable "non-weaponized deterrence regime" for South Asia.

To get a broad view of the 'pro-bomb' and 'anti-bomb' arguments in India and Pakistan, I have summarized them in juxtaposition. First, the Indian weaponizers cite the Chinese nuclear threat to justify a nuclear deterrent, while in Pakistan the pro-bomb advocates press for a nuclear deterrent to counter the Indian threat. The argument of the renouncers in India is that a few Indian bombs cannot deter China and there is no conflict serious enough between India and China to fear a Chinese nuclear attack. A similar argument is put forward by Pakistani anti-bomb advocates. They argue that Pakistan's rudimentary nuclear capabilities cannot bridge the conventional and nuclear asymmetry with India, who will always have an edge in any confrontation in South Asia. Without adequate delivery vehicles and command, control, communication and intelligence (C³I) systems, a few nuclear weapons would only increase Pakistan's vulnerability.

Second, the Indian and Pakistani weaponizers argue that keeping a minimal nuclear force would reduce the spending in conventional defence and the resources saved could be diverted towards development programmes. The renouncers disagree.

According to them, the nature of internal and transborder security threats faced by the two countries preclude any serious conventional force reductions. Nuclear weapons can only supplement, but never substitute for conventional forces in the Subcontinent. Moreover, the cost of nuclear weapons along with their C³I systems, frequent tests of their delivery vehicles, and their research and development infrastructure is hardly cost effective vis-a-vis conventional forces. Also neglected is the hidden social and human costs of lost opportunities for development.

Third, the weaponizers argue that India and Pakistan need the barest minimum deterrent against each other or a third party. The renouncers point out that the imperatives of deterrence demand constant technological upgradation of the existing arsenal in order to match the adversary's expected progress. They cite the superpower experience where at the end of five decades, the superpower arsenal was anything but 'minimal'. An arms race is sure to take place between India and Pakistan, if they decide to weaponize.

Fourth, the weaponizers cite the relative peace in the Subcontinent for the last two decades to emphasize the stability of a nuclear deterrent. According to them, fear of a nuclear escalation defused the 1987 and 1990 crises. The renouncers disagree. According to them, nuclear deterrence is unstable and prone to failure. Military strategists don't always make rational calculations of "unacceptable" damage by the adversaries. The superpower case shows that many false alerts and information failures could have triggered a nuclear war. Also, the defusion of the 1990 crisis through the threats of nuclear retaliation bodes ill for future crises in the Subcontinent where it would be a direct nuclear confrontation without conventional escalation.

Fifth, weaponizers emphasize the power and prestige dimension of nuclear weapons. The five permanent Security Council members possess nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons would give 'respectability' and 'weightage' to India and Pakistan in

the international community. In the opinion of anti-bomb advocates, nuclear weapons are no longer a currency of power. The global trend towards non-proliferation has isolated India and Pakistan. A unilateral or bilateral renunciation of the nuclear option would enhance the moral prestige and international standing of the two countries. It would also give weight to their advocacy of global and regional disarmament.

Sixth, the weaponizers argue that their countries should declare their nuclear weapons status. This would stop the Western non-proliferation pressure, as the West would in time accept the *fait accompli* of a nuclear South Asia. The renouncers are not so optimistic. According to them, an overt declaration of nuclear weapons would invite severe sanctions from the West. Also, the global non-proliferation trend would preclude any test explosions. This itself would circumscribe the reliability of India's and Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

Seventh, the weaponizers suggest that once deterrence is achieved both countries will be more secure and confident and that the basis for long term stability and eventually peace will be laid. The renouncers, on the other hand, argue that nuclear weapons will freeze bilateral relations into permanent hostility and that stability and peace will be postponed not hastened.

The arguments presented by the "status quoists" for the continuance of an ambiguous nuclear status are also similar in the two countries. According to these analysts on both sides, the mere fact that stability has been maintained between India and Pakistan and between India and China shows that ambiguity has served as a deterrent for the three countries. There is considerable domestic support for the present policy and opposition to renouncing the option. In addition there is considerable global opposition to nuclear testing and overt deployment. The internal and external pressures compel the two governments to continue with the ambiguous posture.

In America, the debate is between the non-proliferators and the pro-proliferators. The non-proliferators take sides with the official position of "capping, rollback and eliminating" nuclear weapons in South Asia. According to them, nuclear weapons give a more threatening dimension to the already hostile and conflictual relationship between India and Pakistan. The two countries do not have adequate C³I systems and nuclear safety techniques to prevent accidents and thefts. Misperceptions and suspicions mark their relationship which could precipitate a crisis. Such a crisis is bound to escalate to a nuclear level which would be catastrophic for the Subcontinent and the international system. And hence, US policy should be to prevent such an eventuality. To this end, the earlier US policy of technology denials, sanctions, and pressures is not enough. The Subcontinent has gone nuclear, and it is nearly impossible to reverse the process in the short term. So the US should concentrate on managing a nuclear Subcontinent. Its efforts should be directed at obtaining a bilateral or regional freeze on nuclear weapons, a mutual commitment by India and Pakistan to no-first use of nuclear weapons, and a commitment against nuclear test explosions. Acceptance of full-scope IAEA safeguards by the two countries and a confirmation of the MTCR guidelines by refraining from exporting dual use technologies could further bring transparency and stability in their relations. The US could convince India and Pakistan to agree to these proposals through a combination of incentives and disincentives. Incentives would include military cooperation, technological aid in India's civil nuclear programme, conventional military aid to Pakistan to reduce its insecurities vis-a-vis India, and a more active role for India and Pakistan in the various regional and international foras. There is increasing realization among the non-proliferators that any regional non-proliferation policy must take into account the interests of the two states. Any regional non-

proliferation or restraint measure has to take into account India's threat perception vis-a-vis a nuclear China and Pakistan's threat perception vis-a-vis India.

The pro-proliferators counter the non-proliferation arguments. According to them, the non-proliferator's fears about a South Asian nuclear conflagration are exaggerated. Nuclear weapons do increase the costs and risks of war, but this very fear induces caution and rationality among the decision makers who try to avoid war at all costs. In South Asia also, nuclear weapons have brought about stability in the region, with the absence of any major war in the Subcontinent for the last two decades. A more durable peace and stability can be institutionalized through regional arms control and confidence building measures.

The third option of 'non-weaponized deterrence' is attractive, according to George Perkovich, as it does not require India and Pakistan to give up their nuclear option. It aims at institutionalizing transparency and confidence building measures (CBMs) through negotiations, which could bring stability in their nuclear deterrence.

Analyzing the various arguments and policy options for stabilizing the nuclear stalemate in South Asia, I make a few general comments.

First, one can link the nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan right up the nuclear hierarchy. That is, Pakistan's nuclear programmes and policies are linked with India, India's are linked with China, and China's in turn are linked with Russia and the U.S. Any efforts to secure a restraint or non-proliferation regime must take this linkage into account.

Second, India's and Pakistan's nuclear programmes have emerged as a reaction to specific threat perceptions in combination with other factors. Unless effective security guarantees are given to India against China and to Pakistan against India, it

would be extremely difficult for the two governments to convince domestic opinion in favour of renunciation of the nuclear option.

Third, India and Pakistan both espouse disarmament goals. India espouses global disarmament as a condition for restraint, and Pakistan proposes regional disarmament as a condition for giving up its nuclear option. One gets the feeling that both are at least ambivalent in their commitments. Pakistan knows that its regional disarmament proposals will not be accepted by India and hence there is no cost attached in espousing them. India's linking its nuclear choices with global disarmament is similarly dubious. The nuclear powers will not accept it and so India can continue with its nuclear and missile development programmes.

Fourth, US non-proliferation policy is now more cognizant of regional nuclear imperatives. There is an acknowledgement in US official circles that the Chinese nuclear presence looms large in the Indo-Pakistani equation.

Finally, arms control measures, multilevel talks, and confidence building measures can succeed only if there is the requisite political will among the leaders of India, Pakistan, and the US.

Virtually everyone is agreed the world over that nuclear weapons are supremely dangerous in the long haul of history and that they should be abolished. The question is: When should they be abolished and exactly how. South Asia is and has to be part of the debate on this most challenging and vital matter. The debate over nuclear weapons in South Asia is finally being recognized everywhere as being crucial to the larger debate over the future of nuclear weapons. This is good for the region

but also for the international system. The contributions of Indian, Pakistani and U.S. analysts, as reviewed in this study, have played their part in an emerging globalized debate on nuclear weapons and security.

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