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**THE CONCEPT OF NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONES  
IN LATIN AMERICA AND SOUTH ASIA**

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Certificate

Certified that the Dissertation entitled **The Concept of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones in Latin America and South Asia** submitted by **R. Nedunkilli** in partial fulfilment for the award of the Degree of **Master of Philosophy**, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. This is a bonafide work to the best of my knowledge.

I recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Every effort has been made to enhance the quality and accuracy of the work. However, I own the sole responsibility of shortcomings, if any, in the study.

  
R. Nedunkilli

Dedicated to

**My brother, Beloved Parents &  
Respected Professor D.P. Venugopalan**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

## **Introduction**

The end of the Second World War coincided with the emergence of two superpowers, the US and USSR, and was followed by the start of a Cold War. The ideological confrontation, along with breakthroughs in science and technology enabled the two powers to construct their nuclear arsenals with great pace within a very short span of time. The intensely adversarial politics which dominated this era of the Cold War led to the formation of several security arrangements or agreements or military pacts such as the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Warsaw Pact which nuclearised and militarised tensions across the face of the globe.

As the history of the world is replete with ideas offered by nations, big and small, to minimise the possibilities of war and enhance the chances of peace, several initiatives were proposed to avoid the spillover effects of the Cold War into open armed conflicts after the Second World War. Among these was the idea of nuclear weapon free zone and so-called zones of peace. This is the subject of the present study.

## *The Concept of NWFZ*

The absence of a universally valid definition of "nuclear weapon free zone" has been felt in all the attempts to formalise the concept. However, one core element of a NWFZ can be identified in virtually all the proposals and that is the notion of segregating the zone from the influence and conflicts of extra-regional powers and to keep regional states apart from the global arms race in order to maintain peace and stability by resolving disputes within the region.

On 11 December 1975, the United Nation General Assembly framed and adopted the most comprehensive definition which reads: "A nuclear weapon free zone shall, as a general rule, be deemed to be any zone recognized as such by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which any group of states, in free exercise of their sovereignty, has established by virtue of a treaty or convention whereby: (a) The statute of total absence of nuclear weapons to which the zone shall be subject, including the procedure for the delimitation of the zone, is defined; (b) An international system of verification



and control is established to guarantee compliance with obligations deriving from the statute".<sup>1</sup>

The concept was further elaborated and strengthened in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly. It was also discussed in the United Nations Disarmament Commission in the framework of agenda item 4 concerning various aspects of the arms race.

Prior to the formation of the concept by the United Nations several proposals emerged in the international arena. The earliest attempt was made by Poland in 1957 when the Rapacki plan for a nuclear weapon free zone was initiated by it. Later, the desire for establishing such zones was expressed on a number of occasions: for Africa in 1964; a peace zone was proposed for the Indian Ocean in 1971; a NWFZ for the ASEAN region was suggested in 1971; and for Northern Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia, there were proposals in 1974. The Arab states also voiced a demand in 1977, which was later adopted by South Yemen and Ethiopia in 1981 at the United Nations.

This study focuses on the concept of a NWFZ in Latin America and South Asia. The following is a history of

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<sup>1</sup> *General Assembly Office Records*, no.3472 11  
December 1975.

other proposals, which should be kept in mind in assessing the Latin American and South Asia experience.

## **Antarctic Treaty**

The Antarctic Treaty, which entered into force on 23 June 1961, was signed in 1959. It stands as the first post war international agreement for the complete demilitarisation of a region. The treaty was negotiated in 1959 by the 12 countries which had participated in 1958 in the Antarctic talks. The special emphasis of the treaty is the use of Antarctica only for peaceful purposes, which is endorsed by Article 1 of the Treaty. Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Union of South Africa, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States are the 12 countries parity to the treaty.<sup>2</sup>

## **The South Pacific as a Nuclear Free Zone**

Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Nauru, Tuvalu and Western Samoa signed the Treaty of Rarotonga on 6 August 1985. Papua New Guinea

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<sup>2</sup> Anthony Parson, *Antarctic: The Next Decade* (London, 1987).

joined on 16 September, and Vanuatu refused to sign. Nauru joined as the tenth signatory in July 1986.<sup>3</sup>

The core nuclear weapon free zone obligations are contained in articles 3 to 7 of the treaty which enjoins parties to it not to manufacture, acquire, or possess any nuclear device and not to assist or encourage others to acquire nuclear weapons. It also emphasises no dumping of radioactive wastes at sea anywhere in the zone.<sup>4</sup>

China signed Protocols 2 and 3 of the Treaty on 10 February 1987. The USSR committed itself to a no first use of nuclear weapons against any country in the zone. The Treaty of Rarotonga was the first nuclear arms control agreement signed since the 1979 US-Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty II.

### *Africa*

A denuclearisation proposal was put forward in 1960 in the 15th United Nations General Assembly session after the first nuclear test explosion in the Sahara desert by

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<sup>3</sup> Ramesh Thakur, "The Treaty of Rarotonga: The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone" in David Pitt and E. Thomson, eds. *Nuclear Free Zones* (New York, 1987) pp.9-20.

<sup>4</sup> *SIPRI Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmament* (Stockholm, 1986), pp.500-10.

France. Fifteen African countries proposed a resolution for a denuclearised zone in the 16th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) which was approved by it. The UNGA called all the countries to refrain from conducting, testing, storing or transporting nuclear weapons. The U.S.S.R. extended its support to the idea while the U.S. rejected it.

In the First Summit Conference of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1964, the African countries proclaimed their readiness not to manufacture or possess nuclear weapons. In 1965, 28 African countries submitted the proposal for endorsement in the United Nations General Assembly. The UNGA approved the resolution supported by all powers and countries except France.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Central Europe, Balkans, and the Mediterranean***

The creation of a nuclear free zone in Central Europe was put forward by Poland in 1957 through the Rapacki plan with the consent of Czechoslovakia and East Germany. The proposal sought to ban the manufacture, installation and stockpiling of nuclear weapons. The

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<sup>5</sup> *Documents of the Gatherings of Non-aligned Countries 1961-79* (New Delhi, 1981), pp.25-26.

Western Powers opposed this move since it failed to take into consideration conventional forces limitation.<sup>6</sup>

In September 1957, Romania had suggested that a conference be convened with the aim of converting the Balkans into a zone of peace. The Soviet Union supported the proposal. Moscow expressed the hope that Greece would not allow the establishment of NATO nuclear bases on its territory. On 25 June 1959, the proposal was formally conveyed to France, Greece, Italy, Turkey, the UK and the USA by the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup>

In 1963, the Soviet Union expressed the view that the Mediterranean countries should also be included in peace zone and insisted that the participating countries first had to resolve their differences to form a general consensus. The proposal was submitted on 20 May 1963 to the governments of the US, UK and to the respective Mediterranean countries.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A.Y. Yefremov, *Nuclear Disarmament* (Moscow, 1979) , pp.56-64.

<sup>7</sup> William Epstein, *The Last Chance: Nuclear Proliferation and Arms Control* (New York, 1976), p.209.

<sup>8</sup> A.Y. Yefremov, *Nuclear Disarmament* (Moscow, 1979), pp.56-64.

### ***Zone of Peace in the South Atlantic***

Brazil, with the support of Angola, Argentina, Cape Verde, Congo, Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, and Uruguay, proposed a zone of peace and cooperation for the Atlantic Ocean. The resolution, adopted on 27 October 1986 in the UNGA with 124 votes, called upon the militarily significant states particularly to respect the status of the zone through the elimination of their military presence.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Zone of Peace in the Indian Ocean***

The USSR proposed the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean in the early 1960s. This was rejected by the US. Later, a proposal came from Sri Lanka to eliminate the great power presence in the Indian Ocean which also was rejected by the U.S. despite the support of the littoral states.

### ***Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East***

Egypt and Iran initiated the proposal for the creation of a NWFZ in the Middle East under which a draft resolution was adopted by 128 votes with two abstentions

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<sup>9</sup> S. Lodgaard and M. Thee, eds., *Nuclear Disengagement in Europe* (London, 1983), p.55.

(Burma and Israel). The resolution calls upon all parties to refrain from producing or acquiring nuclear weapons and demand that all the Middle Eastern Countries adhere to the treaty.

### ***Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in South East Asia***

On 27 November 1971, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration proposed the establishment of South East Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). The call was issued by the nascent Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), consisting of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The declaration gave great significance to the question of peaceful settlement of disputes and emphasised economic, social, cultural and other forms of progressive cooperation.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Latin America and South Asia***

The concept of NWFZs in two quite different regions, i.e. Latin America and South Asia, has been taken up here. The former has been established with the full support of the regional states and nuclear powers, while the latter has yet to be established. It is interesting

to note that Argentina and Brazil adopted a nuclear weapon policy as one of their national objectives in the 1950s, when India and Pakistan propagated disarmament measures in the international arena. The situation is now reversed, with Argentina and Brazil accepting and adopting regional disarmament measures. By contrast, India conducted a nuclear test in 1974 in the name of peaceful nuclear explosions (PNE) and remained ambiguous in its nuclear policy until it conducted five more nuclear tests in 1998. So also Pakistan has been pursuing a nuclear weapon capability since 1972 and joined India in conducting six nuclear tests in May 1998.

### ***Chapterisation of the Study***

The first chapter of the study deals with the Latin American NWFZ which is the first to be established in the history of NWFZs and serves as an effective means of controlling the presence of nuclear weapons in the region. The chapter reviews the participation of Latin American countries in the regional disarmament negotiations and their role in the establishment of a NWFZ in the region despite the aspirations of Argentina

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<sup>10</sup> S. Bilveer, "Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone in South East Asia - Problems and Prospects", *Asian Defence Journal* (Kuala Lumpur), Vol.11, November 1988, p.22.



and Brazil to venture into the nuclear field. The role of "ABACC" in the bilateral efforts of Argentina and Brazil in the 1990s was a dramatic development and is also dealt with.

The second chapter attempts to explore the initiatives for a NWFZ in South Asia. It looks at why Pakistan proposed a NWFZ and the responses by the great powers and South Asian states to the proposal. The chapter also notes the recent developments in the South Asian region, with the escalating arms race between India and Pakistan and the international pressures to resume bilateral talks to maintain peace and stability in the region.

As the inclusion of the Indian Ocean area in a South Asian NWFZ was emphasised during the discussions for the establishment of the NWFZ, it is vital to assess the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean. This is done in the third chapter. The chapter also deals with Nepal's proposal for a peace zone.

The concluding pages endeavour to analyse the basic factors which made a Latin American NWFZ feasible unlike the South Asian NWFZ idea.

# **CHAPTER I**

## Chapter I

### LATIN AMERICAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE ZONE: THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO

The involvement of Latin America in arms control and disarmament was restricted to occasional appeals to the United States and the Soviet Union to enter into effective negotiations in the 1950s. The nuclear question was primarily visualised as a US-Soviet dialogue in spite of the appointment of Louis Padello Nervo,<sup>1</sup> the Mexican diplomat, in 1951 as President of the VI<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly.

By 1958, several factors encouraged the Latin American countries to play a more significant and active role in arms control negotiations:

1. The acceptance of the widening of disarmament discussions into an Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee (ENDC) from the earlier Ten Power Disarmament Committee (TPDC)
2. The increasing pressure for real achievements in the field of disarmament in the international arena.
3. The shift to regional disarmament from general and complete disarmament, particularly for non-proliferation purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Padello Nervo was the Mexican representative to the United Nations Preparatory Commission.

Latin American initiatives took two different routes, one within the region, principally in the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the other within the General Assembly and Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee (ENDC).

### ***Regional Initiatives***

The Argentine nuclear programme aimed at the achievement of a strong military capability and was initiated as early as 1950 by President Juan Peron.<sup>2</sup> The signing of agreements with the US under the "Atoms for Peace" programme accelerated Argentina's nuclear programme by providing access to scientific information and the training of nuclear scientists. The interest and concerns of the Brazilian government were awakened by the incursion of Argentina into the nuclear field. Brazil had initiated its studies on nuclear fission as early as 1930s. The uranium deposits and abundance of monazite sand was found in the state of Espirito Santo in Brazil. The National Research Council, which was established in 1951 in Brazil, together with the General Staff of the

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<sup>2</sup> Margaret K. Luddeman, 'Nuclear Power in Latin America: An Overview of its Present Status', *Journal of Interamerican and World Affairs*, vol.25, no.3 (1983), p.380.

Armed Forces and the National Security Council, coordinated and controlled uranium exports.<sup>3</sup> The new approach to nuclear energy issues enabled the Brazilian National Security Council to establish an independent nuclear capability as a permanent national objective. When Argentina inaugurated its operation of the first chemical processing plant for "reclaiming plutonium from spent reactor fuel" in 1968, Brazil decided to build a nuclear power plant in Angra dos Reis in cooperation with Electrobras.<sup>4</sup>

The Argentine and Brazilian nuclear energy programmes provided the grounds for bilateral competition. As a result, Costa Rica put forward a plan in 1958 which was intended to restrict the nuclear rivalry between the Latin American giants at the initial stage. The Costa Rican plan sought to impose an obligation on all Latin American states neither to manufacture nor to acquire nuclear weapons. However, the plan failed to deny the US the right to deploy nuclear weapons in the region if they were considered essential for hemispheric security. Under the plan, the US would

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<sup>3</sup> Ronald M. Schneider, *Brazil : Foreign Policy of a Future World Power* (Boulder, 1976), p.48.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Krasno, 'Brazil's Secret Nuclear Program', *Orbis*, vol.38 (Summer, 1994), p.429.

commit itself not to sell or transfer nuclear weapons to Latin America.<sup>5</sup>

In November 1959, an arms limitation proposal was put forward by Chilean President Alessandri in the United Nations. Chile called for a specialized conference in the same year on regional arms limitation. His proposal was accepted by all the countries in the region. Under the arms limitation proposal, reduction in military expenditure to levels required by national and hemispheric defence was requested by the United States during a meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the region in 1959.

The fall of Rojas Pinilla's dictatorship in Colombia, of Peres Jimenez in Venezuela in 1958, the process of disintegration of Batista's rule in Cuba, and the resignation of General Manuel Odria in Peru due to the emergence of a wave of democratic reformism, all these led to the emergence of a Latin American front against military regimes which in turn made feasible the Treaty of Tlatelolco at a later period.

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<sup>5</sup> Monica Serrano, *Common Security in Latin America* (London, 1992), p.12.

### *Initiatives in the U.N.*

The Mexican Ambassador, Padillo Nervo, elected President of the Disarmament Commission, attended the 1959 inaugural session of the newly created Ten Power Disarmament Committee (TPDC). The environmental effects of nuclear tests, the use of other nations for nuclear testing by the superpowers, and the increasing concerns of international opinion were reflected in the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The demands of non-nuclear weapon states to participate in disarmament negotiations and the increasing pressure on the superpowers to initiate efforts for serious disarmament helped to expand the TPDC.<sup>6</sup> The Ten Power Disarmament Committee, which was expanded into the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee, started its work in 1962.

On 20 September 1962, Melo Franco, the Brazilian representative, raised the possibility of a Latin American nuclear free zone for the first time in the UN General Assembly. Melo Franco affirmed that as long as nuclear free zones remained independent of Cold War rivalries, Brazil supported it. Franco concluded by

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<sup>6</sup> *SIPRI Year Book of World Armaments and Disarmament* (New Delhi, 1969/70), p.570

suggesting that Latin America could constitute one such zone. Responding to the idea, Ambassador Padillo Nervo stated that denuclearisation should be a free and unilateral decision of individual states and so nuclear free zones could only be regarded as transitory and partial measures.

### *The Effect of the Cuban Missile Crisis*

The first resolution proposed by the US for a blockade of Cuba was unanimously accepted and adopted by all members of the Organisation of American States (OAS) in 1962. Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay abstained from portions of the resolution and had reservations. That the American resolution expanded the constitutional authority of the executive within the OAS in dispatching armed forces without the previous consent of their respective legislatures made Mexico doubt the full legality of the blockade.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Mexico did go along with the resolution. Nevertheless, the US resolution and the situation in Cuba jolted the region into thinking about the need for regional limitations on nuclear weapons.

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<sup>7</sup> Abram Chayes, *The Cuban Missile Crisis* (London, 1974), p.53.



On 29 October 1962, just days after the Cuban Missile Crisis, Brazil presented its resolution in the United Nations General Assembly for a Latin American nuclear weapon free zone in order to offer a solution to the crisis and to prevent future situations like the missile crisis. It emphasised that "the development and evolution of the current international situation seem to favour the proliferation of nuclear weapons to new geographical areas". It tendered an appeal for the creation of nuclear free zones among Latin American and African nations and asked the nuclear powers to abstain from using the territorial seas of Latin American and African countries to test, stockpile or transport nuclear weapons or nuclear delivery vehicles or systems.<sup>8</sup>

In January 1963, the Mexican government took up the initiative. In a letter to the Mexican ambassador in Brazil, Alfonso Garcia Robles, the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs Manuel Tello sent his instructions for the negotiation of a joint declaration by Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador to declare Latin America a nuclear free zone. The letter was sent to Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador. It urged the states to make a joint declaration and to sign a multilateral agreement to

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<sup>8</sup> Monica Serrano, *Common Security in Latin America* (London, 1992), pp.24-25.

commit themselves not to acquire nuclear weapons and not to install launching bases within their national territories. On 27 November 1963, the UN General Assembly finally adopted resolution 1911 (XVIII) on "Latin American Denuclearisation" with 91 votes in favour and no votes against the resolution. There were, however, 15 abstentions, including Cuba and Venezuela.

### *The Treaty of Tlatelolco*



The treaty comprises a preface, 32 articles and two additional protocols. The preface refers to the United Nations General Assembly resolution as leading to the negotiation of an agreement.

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General Assembly Resolution (GAR) 1911 (VIII) refers to Latin American denuclearization. GAR 2028 (XX) emphasized the need for a fair distribution of responsibilities between nuclear and non-nuclear states which is embodied in Protocol II of the treaty.

Article 1 of the treaty ensures the total prohibition of nuclear weapons within the region by describing the basic obligations of the parties.

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Articles 2-5 deal with the definition of concepts in the treaty, such as contracting parties, territories, zone of application and nuclear weapons. The territory of the parties are defined in article 3.

Article 5 defines the concept of nuclear weapon as a device capable of producing nuclear energy in an uncontrolled manner which can be used for warlike purposes.

Articles 7-11 establish the organizational and procedural status of the Latin American agency and specify the functions and powers of its principal organs.

Article 12 defines the scope of verification which includes verification of devices capable of producing nuclear weapons.

Article 18 embodies permission to conduct peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs).

Article 30 deals with the duration of the treaty and withdrawal of the parties. This article also specifies that the treaty shall be of a permanent nature and shall remain in force indefinitely.

The significance of the treaty as a step towards ensuring the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is emphasized in the preamble of both the protocols.

The parties are only obliged to agree to bilateral agreements with the IAEA for the system of controls as envisaged in Protocol I.

Protocol II requests the nuclear powers to respect the denuclearized status of Latin America and not to contribute in any way to activities against article 1 and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against those who are party to the treaty.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Responses of the Nuclear Weapon States***

Within the territorial limits of the Latin American NWFZ, the US, UK, and France held territories. For example, the US had Puerto Rico. The US also held 28,000 acres at Guantanamo Bay which was leased from Cuba in 1903. The UK had the Falklands. France had colonial affiliations with many small countries in the region. Clearly, therefore, the Tlatelolco treaty had to cover the activities of these powers. In addition, the Soviet

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<sup>9</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol.12, (New York, 1987), p.210.

Union was in the region as part of the balance of power after the Second World War, especially after Cuba became a Communist country. The presence of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba in the 1960s caused the Latin American countries to propose a nuclear weapon free zone in the region.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco is the first treaty which elaborately explains the objectives of nuclear weapons free zone. It frames the scope of the treaty by explaining the following: obligations of the contracting parties; zone of application; definition of nuclear weapons; and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted two basic resolutions. The first resolution defined the term "denuclearisation" specifying that it should mean solely "the absence of nuclear weapons". The second resolution established the Preparatory Commission for the Denuclearisation of Latin America (COPREDAL) and instructed the Commission to prepare a draft treaty on the subject.

The Additional Protocol I of the Tlatelolco treaty was signed by the US in 1977 and ratified in 1981. Washington also signed the Additional Protocol II in 1968 and ratified it in 1971. According to Additional Protocol

I, the US should not test, use, manufacture, produce or acquire by any means whatsoever any nuclear weapons in its territory, Puerto Rico, which is included in the zone. Also, Protocol I prohibits "the receipt, storage, installation, deployment and any form of possession of any nuclear weapons directly or indirectly in Puerto Rico."

The US refused to agree to Protocol I in the beginning because it argued that Protocol I prevents freedom of movement in its territory, Puerto Rico. At the initiative of Mexico, the Latin American countries, however, suggested that the US could be granted transport privileges. In light of this, the US signed Protocol I in 1977. But the Soviet Union objected to it, and in May 1978 it stated that "permission for transit rights of nuclear weapons in any form would contradict the goals of the treaty and would be incompatible with the non-nuclear status of the contracting parties".<sup>10</sup> The Soviet Union particularly showed its dissatisfaction over the special consideration given by the Latin American countries to the US. The US argued against the Soviet interpretation of Protocol I and stated that the main responsibility lies on the zonal countries and therefore a strict

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<sup>10</sup> *SIPRI Year Book of World Armaments and Disarmament* (New Delhi, 1969/70), p.570

measure against the states party to the additional protocols would go against the interests of a nuclear weapon free zone in Latin America.<sup>11</sup>

The treaty's momentum was slowed down due to the failure of the US to ratify Protocol II. The Latin American states raised questions regarding US commitment to non-proliferation in the region. In February 1980, the Secretary General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (OPANAL), Gros Espiell, informed the US State Department that the failure of the US to ratify Additional Protocol II, almost three years after its signature, deeply preoccupied the Latin American countries to the Tlatelolco treaty. This lack of ratification appeared to demonstrate little interest in the question of the denuclearisation of Latin America. Such an action by the US was clearly incompatible with the repeated declarations of President Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, of full and total support for the Tlatelolco treaty. It also affected negatively negotiations to obtain the signatures and ratification of those states

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<sup>11</sup> Josef Goldblat and Regnhild Ferm, "Arms Control Agreements" in *SIPRI Yearbook 1984, World Armament and Disarmament* (London, 1984), pp.670-71.

which were not full party to the Tlatelolco treaty (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba and Guyana).<sup>12</sup>

The US gave in response its understanding of why it signed and ratified Protocol I in 1981. According to the US view, the treaty does not affect the exclusive power and legal competence under international law of a state adhering to Protocol I to grant or deny transit and transport privileges to its own or any other vessels or aircraft irrespective of cargo or armaments. Also Protocol I, according to the US, does not affect the rights under international law of a state party to Protocol I "regarding the exercise of the freedom of the seas or regarding passage through or over waters subject to the sovereignty of the state".<sup>13</sup>

The US signed and ratified Protocol II in connection with Article 3 of the treaty, which defines the term territory as including the territorial sea, airspace and any other space over which the state exercises sovereignty in accordance with its own legislation: "the US ratification of the Protocol could not be regarded as

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<sup>12</sup> Memorandum by OPANAL Secretary General Gros Espiell to the US Department of State, 7 February 1980, reprinted in *International Herald Tribune*, 10 February 1980.

<sup>13</sup> Josef Goldblat and Ragnhild Ferm, n.10, p.671.



implying recognition of any legislation which did not, in its view, comply with the relevant rules of international law. Each of the parties retains exclusive power and legal competence unaffected by the terms of the treaty, to grant or deny non parties transit and transport privileges."<sup>14</sup>

In connection with the undertaking not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the contracting parties of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the US stated that it would consider that an armed attack by a party which was assisted by a nuclear weapon state would be incompatible with the party's obligations under Article 1 of the treaty. Regarding Articles 1, 5 and 18 it noted that the definition contained in article 5 is understood as encompassing all nuclear explosive devices. Article 18, paragraph 4 and US adherence to Protocol II permits the US to collaborate with the parties to the treaty for the purpose of carrying out explosions of nuclear devices for peaceful purposes in a manner consistent with a policy of not contributing to the proliferation of nuclear capabilities. Thus, the US has kept open the option to continue certain kinds of nuclear activities in a crisis period.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

The first country to sign the additional protocols of the treaty in 1967 was the UK. It ratified both the additional protocols in 1969. The UK expressed the view later that it did not regard its signing and ratification of the protocols as implying recognition of any legislation which does not, in its view, comply with the relevant rules of international law.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the UK, like the US, refused to agree with article 3 of the treaty which defines territory as territorial sea, airspace, and any other space over which the state exercises sovereignty. Also, the UK stated that "the treaty does not permit the parties to carry out explosions of nuclear devices for peaceful purposes, unless and until advances in technology have made possible the development of devices for such explosions which are not capable of being used for weapon purposes".<sup>16</sup> Britain also argued that its nuclear powered submarines did not fall within the definition of a nuclear weapon contained in article 5 of the treaty, namely, a "device which is capable of releasing nuclear energy in an uncontrolled manner".<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

British ships were reported to have carried nuclear weapons on board in the Falklands conflict. However, it should be noted that the UK did not accept the report of Argentina in this matter. The UK was also reported to have carried in its ships the Polaris nuclear missile. This change too was rejected by the UK which claimed that in any case Argentina has not ratified the Tlatelolco treaty.

France is a signatory of both the Tlatelolco Protocols. According to France, the Treaty of Tlatelolco does not affect the right of self-defence. For self-defence, therefore, it reserved the right of transiting with nuclear weapons and related materials across the territories of the French Republic which are situated in the zone of the treaty. Also, France stated that "it was prepared to consider its obligations under Protocol II as applying only to the signatories for which the statute of denuclearization was in force in conformity with Article I of Protocol II".<sup>18</sup> Thus, Protocol II also, according to France, becomes invalid in case the zonal countries go against the statute of denuclearisation.

The Soviet Union signed the treaty in 1978 and ratified it in 1979. After signing the treaty it stated

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<sup>18</sup> Josef Goldblat and Regnhild Ferm, no.10, p.670.

that "the effect of article 1 of the treaty extends, as specified in article 5 of the treaty, to any nuclear explosive device and that, accordingly the carrying out, by any party to the treaty, of explosions of nuclear devices for peaceful purposes would be a violation of its obligations under article 1 and would be incompatible with its non-nuclear status".<sup>19</sup> It further stated that the parties can follow the instructions of the IAEA if they are interested in Peaceful Nuclear Explosions (PNE). Regarding transport and transit problems, it mentioned that permitting the transit of nuclear weapons in any form would be contrary to the objectives of the treaty, especially to their obligations as laid down in article 1. The Soviet Union noted with the concern that it would reconsider its obligations under Protocol II of the treaty, if the non-nuclear status of the treaty was not maintained by any party of the treaty.<sup>20</sup>

It should be added that China, as a nuclear weapon state, also policy has signed and ratified the treaty. After signing and ratifying Protocol II of the treaty in 1973 and 1974 respectively, it issued a statement: "China will never use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against

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<sup>19</sup> Josef Goldblat and Regnhild Ferm, n.10, p.670.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

non-nuclear Latin American countries and the Latin American NWFZ; nor will China test, manufacture, produce, stockpile, install or deploy nuclear weapons in these countries or in this zone".<sup>21</sup> However, China expressed its reservation on the superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. It insisted that both should implement their undertakings. They should dismantle all foreign military bases in Latin America, refrain from establishing new bases, and prohibit the passage of nuclear weapons through Latin American territory, territorial seas, or airspace. Although these have not been implemented by both the US and the Soviet Union/Russia, China has not changed its position on Tlatelolco.

### ***Responses of the Small States***

Chile's ratification of the treaty is conditional in that the treaty will not come into force for its territory until all appropriate Latin American states have ratified it and until the relevant Protocols are ratified by the states with territorial interests in Latin America. The first condition of the treaty was not met as Argentina had not ratified the treaty. Chile's

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

second condition was also not met as Protocol I was not ratified by France.

It should be noted that because of the Cuban missile crisis in 1961-62, the idea of a NWFZ in Latin America was proposed by the Latin American countries. In May 1961, the Chairman of the US Foreign Relations Committee Senator William Fulbright mentioned the possibility of Soviet missile bases and air bases in Cuba:

I suppose we would all be less comfortable if the Soviets did install missile bases in Cuba, but I am not sure that our national existence would be in substantially greater danger than is the case today.<sup>22</sup>

On 23 October 1962, the Council of the Organisation of American States (OAS) adopted a resolution for the removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. The ensuing US blockade proved successful.

Not surprisingly, Cuba was reluctant to sign the treaty. It stated that it would become a party to the treaty only when Guantanamo Bay ceased to be under foreign control. In 1903, a site covering 28,000 acres at Guantanamo Bay was leased to the US as a naval station by the Cuban government. The lease was renewed in 1934. After 1960, the Castro government had refused to accept

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<sup>22</sup> Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston, 1971), p.231.

the token \$5000 annual rent and insisted on the surrender of the base. Guantanamo Bay is used as a military base by the US. Cuban reluctance to sign the treaty can also be traced to its nuclear ambitions and the presence of Soviet nuclear infrastructure on its soil. Thus, it has VVER-440 power reactors under construction which were being helped by the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. Cuba was host to nuclear infrastructure belonging to the Soviet Union. This included two airfields, San Antonio de Los Banos and Jose Marti airport, which were bases for the Bear-D reconnaissance plane and for the nuclear capable Bear-F. In addition, Cinefuegos and Havana were used by Soviet naval forces as major satellite ground-stations and Soviet intelligence gathering facilities.<sup>23</sup>

Nicaragua, Venezuela, Peru and Colombia are small but significant countries in Latin America which are parties to the treaty. Nicaragua stated, on signing the treaty in 1967, that it reserved the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, such as, for the removal of earth, for the construction of canals, irrigation works and power plants. It also stated that it reserved the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

right to allow the transit of atomic material through its territory.<sup>24</sup>

Venezuela too had reservations about the Treaty. It stated that article 25, paragraph 2 of the treaty should apply to Guyana. Article 25, paragraph 2 of the treaty provides that no political entity should be admitted, part or all, whose territory is the subject of a dispute or claim between an extra-continental country and one or more Latin American states, so long as the dispute has not been settled by peaceful means.<sup>25</sup> This kind of dispute exists between Venezuela on the one hand and Guyana on the other. It should be noted that Venezuela had some nuclear capability. It had a research reactor manufactured by International General Electric (IGE) with a power capacity of 3 MW. It also had one other research reactor, RVI, located in Altos de Pipe, with a capacity of 3 MW.<sup>26</sup>

Peru signed the Tlatelolco treaty in 1967 and ratified it in 1969. It waived the entry-into force provision, article 28, in the same year. Peru also has a

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<sup>24</sup> Josef Goldblat and Regnhild Ferm, n.10, p.669.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Poneman, n.26, pp.41-42.



research reactor, RP-D, located in Lima.<sup>27</sup> Otherwise, Peru has shown little interest in nuclear technology.

Colombia signed the treaty in 1967, but, unlike Peru, it ratified the Treaty in 1972. On signing the treaty, Colombia made a declaration similar to the statement made by Nicaragua. It indicated its interest in peaceful nuclear energy for the removal of earth, the construction of canals, irrigation works and power plants. It also claimed that it had the right to allow the transit of atomic materials through its territory. Like some of the other small states, Colombia too had nuclear capability of a very modest kind. In 1962, it had a power reactor with a capacity of 10 KW. Apart from this, it had the IAN-RD research reactor located in Bogota, with a capacity of 0.02 MW.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the Latin American countries overwhelmingly signed and ratified the treaty despite their reservations.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

### *The Argentina-Brazil Agreement of the 1990s*

The Argentine and Brazilian nuclear energy programmes led to a degree of competition between them. However, bilateral relations improved eventually as a result of the convergence of attitudes on ideological and security issues. This caused their nuclear competition to be replaced by cooperation.

For years, Argentina came under constant pressure from the US to adhere to the NPT and the Tlatelolco treaty, especially after the diversion of 50 kg of plutonium from the Atucha reactor in 1975. This ended when Argentina and Brazil finally resolved their bilateral differences in the late 1980s as both countries democratised. Initially, Argentina and Brazil joined hands to resist US opposition to the construction of enrichment plants. Later, as the two countries came closer to each other, the US helped to guide their nuclear rapprochement which found expression in the ABACC agreement. A sequence of important decisions offered clear indication of the strength of Argentina's and Brazil's commitment to non-nuclear defence. These included:

1. Joint appointment of representatives to the IAEA

2. Their intention to reach an agreement to renounce all military uses of nuclear energy
3. Their participation as observers for the first time during the 1990 NPT Review Conference.
4. Their public declarations renouncing the military option.
5. The adoption of measures conducive to adherence to the Treaty of Tlatelolco in their 1990 nuclear policy declaration.
6. The signing of safeguard agreements with the IAEA in 1991.<sup>29</sup>

The initial cooperative advances made by Presidents Raul Alfonsin and Jose Sarney included a series of joint visits by the heads of state to unsafeguarded nuclear facilities in Argentina and Brazil in 1987-88. These set the stage for the formalisation of confidence building efforts. Subsequently, Presidents Fernando Collor de Mello and Carlos Saul Menem adopted the "Declaration on Common Nuclear Policy" at Fos do Iguacu (1990) and signed a nuclear safeguards agreement (Quadripartite Agreement) with the IAEA in 1991, also called the Guadalajara Treaty. This created "ABACC" for the purpose of

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<sup>29</sup> Charles N. Van Doren and George Bunn, "Progress and Peril at the Fourth NPT Review Conference", *Arms Control Today*, October 1990, p.18.

administering and applying the Joint System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (SCCC).<sup>30</sup>

ABACC, comprising a governing or directive body, a Commission and a Secretariat, provided a new impetus to the Latin American nuclear free zone. The major objectives of Argentina and Brazil were now national economic development and regional economic integration. Both countries realised that they could not afford a costly arms race. With their economic hardships, soaring inflation, and debt crisis in the "lost decade" of the 1980s, the two governments understood the need for reconciliation and cooperation. Both felt that nuclear suspicions had to be overcome in order to move forward together on economic issues. Their motives were to confront external pressures rather than to pursue confrontational paths. Bilateral scientific discussions and consultations among the scientific community brought the subject to public attention and produced government action. The shift in the political systems contributed significantly to the process of nuclear rapprochement. "The decision by Argentina and Brazil to forgo the production of nuclear weapons is closely linked to the

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<sup>30</sup> Jill R. Jurnola and Michael Krepon, eds., *Regional Confidence Building in 1995: South Asia, the Middle East and Latin America*, Henry L. Stimson Center, Report No.20, December 1995, pp.39-42.

return of democratic rule in both countries after decades of military governments".<sup>31</sup> As part of the new cooperative mood in the region, Brazilian President Collor de Mello revealed Brazil's secret nuclear programme and determined that the Brazilian nuclear programme should be transparent and subject to civilian supervision.

The post Cold War perceptions influenced the move towards bilateral nuclear controls. Neither country wanted to be perceived as a 'rogue' state in the new world order. To acquire advanced technology and to receive economic assistance, Argentina and Brazil viewed full scope safeguards as essential for gaining the confidence of the international community.

This realisation led to the emergence of ABACC which provides transparency for both Argentina and Brazil and enables them to work together on a daily basis. Inspectors from each country now visit the nuclear facilities of the other country on a regular basis. In the technical field, exchanges and training take place between the national facilities and ABACC and between the national laboratories and ABACC.

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<sup>31</sup> Jose Goldenberg and Harold A. Feiveson, "Denuclearisation in Argentina and Brazil", *Arms Control Today* 24, no.2 (March 1994), p.12.

ABACC provides verification of Argentina's and Brazil's commitment in maintaining transparent and peaceful nuclear programmes. Bilateral safeguards and technical cooperation have significantly improved bilateral trust. The subsequent progress between Argentina and Brazil brought the Tlatelolco treaty into force for both holdouts. The accession to Tlatelolco was the major objective of the Guadalajara Agreement of 1990.<sup>32</sup> Cuba signed the Tlatelolco Treaty in 1995 as a result of Argentina's and Brazil's accession to the treaty.

ABACC helped establish international confidence in Argentina's and Brazil's peaceful nuclear intentions. Withdrawal from ABACC will prove costly for both parties.<sup>33</sup> A withdrawal would result in regional disapproval, including serious ramifications within the OAS. It would provoke international outrage, blocking access to technology and financial assistance. Domestic criticism would also be heavy, especially from the

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<sup>32</sup> For details, see *SIPRI Yearbook 1994 : World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford, 1994), pp.670-71 and 762.

<sup>33</sup> John R. Redick, "Nuclear Confidence Building in Latin America", in *Verification Report 1993, Yearbook on Arms Control and Environmental Agreements* (London), January 1993, p.14.

concerned scientific community, foreign ministry and ministers of Parliament and the academic community.

Thus, ABACC as an institution played a prominent role in brokering the differences between Argentina and Brazil and thus provided a breakthrough to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

### *Conclusion*

As U Thant, late UN Secretary General, long ago put it:

In a world that all too often seems dark and foreboding, the treaty of Tlatelolco will shine as a beacon light.<sup>34</sup>

U Thant's prediction has become true, as Tlatelolco turned thirty in 1997. As E. Roman-Morey, head of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) said in presenting an overview at the IAEA Symposium on International Safeguards:

After thirty years we have learned that confidence building measures, and as a consequence NWFZs, are very important tools to help dissipate insecurity and to improve the political environment. Thus they facilitate

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<sup>34</sup> Cited in *SIPRI Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford, 1969/70), p.573.

larger, bigger and strong agreements related to international security and cooperation.<sup>35</sup>

The importance of Tlatelolco is that it was the first international disarmament agreement which involved in its legal framework not only its member states but the recognised nuclear weapon states. In this way, the Treaty of Tlatelolco stands unique among the disarmament treaties.

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<sup>35</sup> "Tlatelolco Turns Thirty", Cited in Website <http://193.135.136.30/genet/disarm/43.htm>, downloaded on 11 May 1998.



## **CHAPTER II**

## Chapter II

### A SOUTH ASIAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE ZONE ?

The idea of a nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ) has been pleaded by many countries as a partial disarmament measure to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. The Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly stated that the establishment of NWFZs on the basis of arrangements arrived at among the states in a region constituted an important disarmament measure and that the process of establishing such zones in different parts of the world should be encouraged with the ultimate objective of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup>

In 1974, after India's first nuclear test, Pakistan proposed that a South Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone should be instituted. Islamabad argued that this was a practicable step. The alternative was a regional arms race which would be costly to both countries.

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<sup>1</sup> The General Assembly Official Records, Tenth Special Session, Supplement No.4 (A/S 10/4), Section III, paragraphs 60 and 61.

***Regional Insecurity and a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone  
in South Asia***

Pakistan proposed the establishment of a NWFZ in South Asia on 28 October 1974 in the First Committee of the 29<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).<sup>2</sup> Speaking in favour of resolution 3265B (XXIX), the Pakistani representative said that his country's prime concern at that juncture was, first, to ensure the security of the non-nuclear states viewed in the context of spiralling nuclear proliferation by the nuclear weapon states (NWSs) and by countries which had just joined the nuclear club, and, second, to strengthen the security prospects of non-nuclear states.<sup>3</sup>

Ever since independence, Pakistan has been consistently struggling to project an image of parity with India. India's resources, area, population industrial and technological development being much larger, Pakistan joined the Southeast Asian Treaty

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<sup>2</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol.2 (New York, 1977), pp.19-21.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly, First Committee Report, 29<sup>th</sup> Session, A/C, 1/P, vol.2002, p.41.

Organisation (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) to seek military parity with India.<sup>4</sup>

India's superiority was increased after the 1971 war with Pakistan. India's peaceful nuclear explosion of 1974 further widened the gulf between the two countries. Pakistan failed to accept India's claim that the explosion was 'peaceful' and equated it with a weapon programme. To quote Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Prime Minister of Pakistan:

It is not only a question of intention but of capabilities. It is well established that the testing of a nuclear device is no different from the detonation of a nuclear bomb. Given this indisputable fact, how is it possible for our fears to be assuaged by assurances, which may in any case be ignored in subsequent years. But the acquisition of capability which has direct and immediate military consequences becomes a permanent factor to be reckoned with<sup>5</sup>.

Further, Bhutto declared that if

India manufactures the bomb we will eat leaves and grass, even go hungry, but we will have to get a bomb of our own.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Betts, "Nuclear Incentives: India, Pakistan and Iran", *Asian Survey* (Berkeley), vol.10, no.11 (November 1979), p.

<sup>5</sup> P.S. Jayaramu, "Nuclear Weapon Free Zones: Non-Proliferation Treaty and South Asia" in K. Subrahmanyam, ed., *Nuclear Myths and Realities* (New Delhi, 1981), p.81.

<sup>6</sup> D.K. Palit, and P.K.S. Namboodri, *Pakistan's Islamic Bomb* (New Delhi, 1979), p.6.

He announced that Pakistan would seek assurances from various quarters to ward-off any nuclear threat from India.<sup>7</sup>

The efforts to develop nuclear energy in Pakistan began during Ayub's regime but picked up momentum with the advent of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.<sup>8</sup> Bhutto had been a staunch advocate of the nuclear bomb for Pakistan.<sup>9</sup> He initiated an elaborate and comprehensive plan to bolster a nuclear technology development programme which envisaged the commissioning of twenty nuclear reactors with a total generating capacity of 9600 MW accounting for sixty per cent of all new power stations to be built in Pakistan during the 1980s and 1990s. The development in the nuclear field progressed rapidly under him and is still continuing at a rapid pace. As General Zia stated, "no power can keep Pakistan deprived of its right to acquire nuclear technology. Our determination indicates our national aspiration".<sup>10</sup> This commitment has remained.

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<sup>7</sup> D. Mukherjee, "India's Nuclear Test and Pakistan", *India Quarterly* (New Delhi), vol.30, July 1974, p.262.

<sup>8</sup> S.B. Guha, 'Pakistan's Atomic Energy Programme', *IDSA Journal*, vol.3, no.1, July 1970.

<sup>9</sup> P.B. Sinha and R.R. Subramanian, *Nuclear Pakistan: Atomic Threat to South Asia* (Delhi, 1980).

<sup>10</sup> *Times of India*, 9 December 1979.

Pakistan publicly stated that it needed nuclear power for its growing economic needs, since the country lacked any substantial fossil fuel resource. Pakistani leaders recognised that the nuclear energy programme would also bring the country close to nuclear weapons capability.

Pakistan's nuclear policy seems to have been formulated as a response to India's nuclear programme. Islamabad pleaded for keeping the option open due to India's opposition to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). It refused to sign the NPT as long as India refused to sign it.

There were three possible objectives behind Pakistan's NWFZ proposal. First, it wanted to seek the support of neighbouring countries by injecting a sense of fear into their minds by projecting the idea that India's nuclear experiment would trigger off a nuclear arms race in the Subcontinent and endanger their security.<sup>11</sup> The second aim of Pakistan was to plead before the nation's assisting India's economic development to re-examine the premises on which aid was being offered. Thirdly, it aimed at bringing pressure on India to put its nuclear

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<sup>11</sup> "Bhutto: We Will Not Go Nuclear", *Times of India* (New Delhi), 31 May 1974.

installations under international safeguards such as those of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).<sup>12</sup> Both Pakistan and India had taken similar stands on the question of progressive denuclearisation of various other regions. Both advocated the creation of such zones, provided that political and security conditions permitted.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Pakistan's Proposal at the UN***

In August 1974, the proposal for the establishment of a nuclear free zone in South Asia was put forward by Pakistan in the United Nations. The United Nations General Assembly's Steering Committee formally approved its inclusion on the agenda of the 29<sup>th</sup> session of the Assembly on 19 September 1974.<sup>14</sup> In the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on 28 October 1974, Pakistan introduced a resolution which sought to endorse the proposal in principle.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> J.D. Singh, "Face Uncertain Prospects", *Times of India* (New Delhi) 6 December 1974.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Document 35/10, Annex-IV, Report of Committee II, Item 12, p.17.

<sup>14</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol.12 (New York, 1987), p.203.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Resolution A/3265 (XXIX).

India argued that the initiative for a NWFZ should evolve from among the states within the region after prior consultations and agreements. On this ground, India voted against the Pakistani resolution. The Indian resolution obtained ninety votes in favour while Pakistan secured eighty-six.<sup>16</sup> China voted in favour of the Pakistani proposal whereas the USSR voted for India's proposal, and the other nuclear powers abstained.

In the United Nations, Pakistan argued that a regional approach was the best and most effective means of preventing proliferation in Africa, Middle East and South Asia, mainly because of the lack of universal support for the NPT. Since the countries of South Asia are inter-related and had formally at least renounced the acquisition of nuclear weapons, all that Pakistan was proposing, Islamabad argued, was to give a binding multilateral form to those declarations. Finally, Pakistan noted that all five nuclear weapon states were favourably inclined to undertake the obligations entailed by the creation of a NWFZ in South Asia.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol.2 (New York, 1977), p.23.

<sup>17</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol.10 (New York, 1985), p.570.



Pakistan told the Political and Security Committee of the United Nations that a treaty to ban the use of force could be effective only if safeguards were provided against the resort to force by large and more powerful states. On 12 December 1977, the United Nations General Assembly marked its approval of two resolutions initiated by Pakistan concerning the establishment of a NWFZ in South Asia and the security of the non-nuclear weapon states against the threat or use of nuclear weapons. This offered scope to its Western allies to legitimise the existence of their armed forces in the Indian Ocean area since the South Asian NWFZ proposal exempts the Indian Ocean area.

The consultations with South Asian states had divulged differences of a fundamental nature that remained to be resolved before the NWFZ proposal could be implemented. This was admitted by Pakistan's representative in the United Nations. Pakistan failed to get India to accept the establishment of such a zone based on the collective security system and total renunciation of nuclear weapons. The Pakistani draft urged the states of South Asia to promote the effort to create a nuclear weapon free zone. The Indian draft

emphasised the creation of such a zone only after it was accepted by the countries of the region.<sup>18</sup>

In the session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1986, India stated, in voting against the draft, that any such zone must be conceived as part of a global nuclear disarmament programme and so it should emanate voluntarily from all the states of the region. It concluded that for the South Asian states to obtain a credible and reliable security guarantee through a NWFZ area would be unrealistic in the prevailing security environment.<sup>19</sup>

Two additional pre-ambular paragraphs appeared in the 1987 resolution for the creation of a NWFZ in South Asia. One paragraph welcomed the proposal for the conclusion of a bilateral or regional nuclear test ban agreement in the region and the other took note of the proposal to convene a conference on nuclear non-proliferation as soon as possible under the auspices of the United Nations.<sup>20</sup> These two proposals were put

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<sup>18</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution No.3265 A (XXIX), 1974.

<sup>19</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol.12 (New York, 1987), p.673.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

forward by Pakistan to achieve the creation of a NWFZ by resolving all issues bilaterally with regional support.

In 1989, a resolution adopted by the Political Committee reaffirmed its endorsement of a NWFZ in South Asia and urged the states in this region to continue with their efforts to attain the objective. India, Bhutan and Mauritius opposed it, but 102 votes were in favour of the resolution. Thirty countries abstained, including the Afghanistan, Cuba, France, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia.<sup>21</sup>

The Indian representative to the UN argued that security could not be attained through the establishment of NWFZs as such a zone only served to legitimise the possession of nuclear weapons by a few states outside those zones. The Indian representative diverted attention from the NWFZ and focussed instead on the existence of naval military capability in the hands of the external powers in the Indian Ocean which endangered South Asia.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *SIPRI Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmaments, 1990* (Stockholm, 1990), p.470.

<sup>22</sup> "No Support to Pak Move for N-free Zone", *Times of India* (New Delhi), 13 November 1974.

### ***Pakistani Efforts Outside the United Nations***

Pakistan did not confine its efforts for the creation of a NWFZ to the United Nations. In May 1976, it urged the forty-two member Organization of Islamic Conference to call for the early establishment of a nuclear free zone in South Asia. And the proposal was formally put on the agenda of the Conference.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, in order to get the support of the great powers, sent his Foreign Secretary to China to persuade the Chinese leadership to denounce India's peaceful nuclear explosion of 1974. Later, the Pakistan Foreign Office declared that China's assurance "approximated to the Chinese nuclear umbrella to Pakistan".<sup>23</sup> The Chinese declared their support to Pakistan and other countries, in their "just struggle" to safeguard national independence and state sovereignty against external intervention including nuclear threats. Later in the United Nations, Bhutto declared that China had given staunch support to the Pakistani proposal for

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<sup>23</sup> "Bhutto: We Will Not go Nuclear", *Times of India* (New Delhi), 31 May 1974.

the creation of a NWFZ in South Asia after his visit to China.<sup>24</sup>

Pakistan also raised the issue of a nuclear weapon free zone in the Nonaligned meetings and at the Law of the Sea Conference.<sup>25</sup> As Pakistan raised the issue in the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Nonaligned meetings, and the Law of Sea Conference, India insisted that such initiatives were to be discussed at the bilateral or regional level because otherwise it gave the big powers scope for manipulation.

### *Initial Responses and Strategies*

The question of creating a nuclear weapon free zone in South Asia was complicated by linking it two major international issues: first, the creation of a nuclear weapon free zone in a non-nuclear region as part of general disarmament; second, the linking of a peace zone in the Indian Ocean to the establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone in the South Asian region. Pakistan argued that only if the littoral states of the Indian Ocean give up their nuclear option by setting up an

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<sup>24</sup> R.K. Jain, *China and South Asian Relations: 1947-80* (New Delhi, 1981), vol.2, p.158.

<sup>25</sup> *Times of India* (New Delhi), 17 August 1976.

appropriate regime to guarantee it could the external powers be pressurised to vacate the Indian Ocean area.<sup>26</sup>

Pakistan made stringent efforts to gain the support of the South Asian states which was an essential prerequisite for the establishment of a NWFZ in the region. It was supported enthusiastically by Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, and the Maldives took part in amending the proposal. There was a positive response from all the states to the United Nations Secretary General's move to ascertain the views of the regional states. The report of the Secretary General was included in the provisional agenda of the Forty-second session (1987) in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 41/49 of the previous year.<sup>27</sup>

Bhutan expressed serious concern over the prospects of nuclear weapons development in South Asia. Describing it as an ominous trend, it was of the view that the nuclear powers could hardly be asked to curtail their nuclear weapons programmes if the region itself was not prepared to prevent nuclearisation locally. It also said

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<sup>26</sup> K.R. Singh, "Nuclear Weapon Free Zones in South Asia", *India Quarterly*, vol.32, no.3, July-September 1976, pp.290-301.

<sup>27</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol.12 (New York, 1987), p.215.

that the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) could provide a meaningful venue for dialogue.<sup>28</sup>

Bangladesh argued that the establishment of a NWFZ in South Asia would contribute effectively to nuclear disarmament in general and regional disarmament in particular. The overlapping aspects of eradicating the existence of external powers and the maintenance of security among the regional states should be taken into account.<sup>29</sup>

Pakistan declared that the establishment of a NWFZ would enhance peace and cooperation among the South Asian states. It argued that it was achievable in three ways: through a regional agreement; by adhering to the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT); and via binding declarations by the regional or zonal states and endorsed by the Security Council. Islamabad proposed the creation of a control system for bilateral verification and inspection or acceptance of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards by the regional states on all nuclear facilities and fissionable materials. Finally, the

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<sup>28</sup> SAARC, *SAARC Summits* (Kathmandu, 1990), p.116, 171.

<sup>29</sup> Report of the Secretary General, Forty-Second Session, United Nations, "Establishment of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in South Asia", United Nations General Assembly Document, A/42/452, 11 August 1987, p.3.

nuclear weapon states should provide an assurance against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against the states of a South Asian NWFZ.

Sri Lanka felt that a nuclear weapon free zone should evolve after prior consultations leading to a convergence of views and after taking into consideration the special characteristics of the states of the region. Such a process should take into account the principles of sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs and peaceful settlement of disputes and other relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter. It also urged that bilateral and other confidence building measures within the region could provide an impetus to this process.<sup>30</sup>

### *The Responses of the Great Powers*

China had proposed a NWFZ for South Asia and the Pacific as early as 1963. This was a diplomatic strategy because China detonated a nuclear device in 1964.<sup>31</sup> China's major objective was to isolate American nuclear weapon carriers from South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>31</sup> B.M. Jain, *South Asian Security: Problems and Prospects* (New Delhi, 1985), p.61.



Philippines and the Pacific islands and also to ensure that Soviet forces would not be armed with nuclear weapons.

In the 1960s, China wanted nuclear weapon free zones that covered the territories of its principal adversaries. On this basis, it was willing to bring itself into the schemes. Later, China extended its support for the creation of a South Asian NWFZ that exempted its territory.

The United States supported the Pakistan proposal for the first time in 1977 in order to inhibit proliferation in South Asia and also to divert the attention from the great power naval presence in the Indian Ocean. The US proposed its own version of a nuclear weapon free zone for South Asia in 1979. The objective was to get India and Pakistan to permit international inspections of their nuclear installations.

The US backed the concept of a nuclear weapon free zone as a non-proliferation measure at a United Nations General Assembly discussion on a NWFZ in South Asia in 1985 if the following criteria were met:

- a) the initiative for the establishment of the zone should emerge from the states in the region concerned;

- b) all states whose participation was deemed important should participate in the zone;
- c) zonal arrangements should provide for adequate verification and compliance;
- d) establishment of the zone should not disturb existing security arrangements to the detriment of regional and international security;
- e) zonal arrangements should effectively prohibit parties from developing any nuclear explosive device for whatever purpose;
- f) zonal arrangements should not seek to impose restrictions on the exercise of rights recognised under international law; and
- g) the creation of a zone should not affect the existing rights of the parties under international law to grant or deny transit privileges.<sup>32</sup>

The creation of a NWFZ in South Asia would, in Washington's view, check the nuclear ambitions of India and Pakistan who refused to accede to the NPT.

By signing the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship in 1971, the USSR undergirded its bilateral relationship formally with India in various fields of development. The USSR supported the Indian stand in the United Nations on the NWFZ proposal. Moscow declared that the initiative should emerge from among the zonal parties after consultations between them. It also said that the proposal has exempted the Indian Ocean Zone which was of

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<sup>32</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Year Book*, vol.10 (New York, 1985), p.518.

greater importance in the region.<sup>33</sup> The USSR also rejected the US proposal of 1979 stating that the initiative should evolve from among the states within the region rather than from the external powers.

### *India's Concerns*

India's objections to the NWFZ rested on several arguments. First, India argued, the proposal for a NWFZ should be initiated by the states concerned in the region. The Pakistani proposal violated principle three of the United Nations Study Report which explicitly refers to the need for obtaining a regional consensus before such proposals are brought before the United Nations. India's representative to the United Nations declared: "We have supported such zones whenever it has been demonstrated that there is an agreement in regard to them in particular regions. This has meant prior consultations and agreement among the states of the region".<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "No Support to Pak Move for N-Free Zone", *Times of India* (New Delhi), 13 November 1974.

<sup>34</sup> United Nations General Assembly First Committee Report, 29<sup>th</sup> Session, A/C, 1/P, V.2002, p.76.

Secondly, India argued that South Asia is unique geostrategically. The military alliances of some regional states with nuclear weapon powers and the existence of foreign military bases have to be taken into account in the examination of any such proposal.<sup>35</sup>

Thirdly, India concluded that in the context of the spiralling or escalating arms race, the initiatives for the establishment of NWFZs were unrealistic.<sup>36</sup> India felt that by halting horizontal proliferation the nuclear powers were entrenching their nuclear power status. Pakistan's South Asian NWFZ proposal was seen by India as a tactic to enhance the interests of its Western allies in the Indian Ocean and the South Asian region.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, Pakistan's proposal exempted China from the definitional ambit of South Asia. This was perceived once again by India as an instance of Pakistani collaboration with a nuclear great power in order to countervail India.

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<sup>35</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol.2 (New York, 1977), pp.19-21.

<sup>36</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol.10 (New York, 1985), p.518.

<sup>37</sup> P.S. Jayaramu, n.5, p.83.

### *Recent Developments in South Asia*

By signing a confidence building measures (CBM) package on 29 May 1990, India and Pakistan seemed to be coming out of the culture of adversarial politics. The proposed measures of this package were:

- a) Sharing of information regarding military exercises
- b) Communications between military commanders
- c) Joint border patrolling
- d) Conclusion of a memorandum of understanding for preventing airspace violations by military aircraft.
- e) Exchanges of delegations between the armed forces
- f) Prevention of pernicious acts which endanger peaceful and harmonious relations and non-interference in each other's internal affairs
- g) Reiteration of the common resolve to abide by the Simla agreement (1972).<sup>38</sup>

Though both the countries agreed on the sharing of information, communication, and air space violations, there was not agreement on much else. Prior to this bilateral arrangement, the initial step for nuclear arms control in South Asia was made in 1988 when Rajiv Gandhi

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<sup>38</sup> Ashok Kapur, "South Asian Regional Proliferation and Non-Proliferation Dynamics" in Tariq Rauf, ed., *Regional Approaches to Curbing Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East and South Asia*, Canadian Centre for Global Security, Ottawa, Ontario, 1994.

and Benazir Bhutto signed an agreement in Islamabad under which neither would attack the other's nuclear installations.<sup>39</sup>

These bilateral efforts gained momentum once again in 1997 when India and Pakistan decided to work bilaterally and sign an agreement on 23 June 1997.<sup>40</sup> The agreement focussed on the following issues:

- i. Peace and security, including confidence building measures
- ii. Jammu and Kashmir
- iii. Siachen Glacier
- iv. Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project
- v. Terrorism and drug trafficking
- vi. Economic and commercial cooperation
- vii. Promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields.<sup>41</sup>

Within days of signing the agreement, differences arose between both the countries. For instance, Pakistan insisted on giving the Kashmir issue a high profile. These differences were seemingly overcome when Nawaz Sharif accepted the suggestion put forward by I.K.

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<sup>39</sup> Bhabani Sen Gupta, "South Asia" in Jayantha Dhanapala, ed., *Regional Approaches to Disarmament: Security and Stability* (New Delhi, 1986), p.70.

<sup>40</sup> K.K. Katyal, "India Suggests June 22 for Talks With Pak", *Hindu* (New Delhi), 13 June 1998.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Gujral, Prime Minister of India, in the Tripartite Summit at Dhaka in January 1998, to the effect that all the issues would be taken up simultaneously, at the same venue and on the same dates.<sup>42</sup>

The shift in the political scenario of India in March 1998 after the general elections disrupted the bilateral process. India's BJP-led government took India out of "nuclear ambiguity" by conducting five nuclear tests on 11 and 13 May 1998.

Pakistan's NWFZ proposal seems to have been a cover for its clandestine nuclear weapon programme. Knowing that India would not agree to the NWFZ, it has been able to pretend that it is interested in a regional nuclear deal while continuing to build up its nuclear and missile capabilities. Thus Islamabad was able to test the Ghauri missile in April 1998 and conduct 6 nuclear tests in May 1998.<sup>43</sup> After the test of the Ghauri missile by Pakistan, Jasjit Singh, Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), said in an interview on All India Radio on 7 April 1998 that "It is an attempt to

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> "Pak Tests Ghauri Missile", *The Hindu* (New Delhi), 8 April 1998.

raise Pakistan to the level of India in the subcontinent".<sup>44</sup>

As attention focussed on Pakistan after the test of the Ghauri missile in April 1998, India carried out three underground nuclear tests on 11 May 1998 and two more tests on 13 May 1998.<sup>45</sup> In reaction, Pakistan claimed that it conducted five nuclear tests on 28 May. The escalation of the nuclear arms race in South Asia led the international community to demand that India and Pakistan resolve all issues bilaterally to reduce tensions and enhance the security and stability of South Asia as also to cap global proliferation.

Thus, on 2 June 1998, forty-six nations demanded that India and Pakistan cease testing nuclear arms and join in the global move to eradicate nuclear weapons. A joint statement from the members of the Conference on Disarmament indicated that "The testing of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan is totally irreconcilable

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<sup>44</sup> Interview on All India Radio with Jasjit Singh, Director of the IDSA, 7 April 1998.

<sup>45</sup> "India Conducts Two More Tests", *Hindu* (New Delhi), 14 May 1998.



with claims by both countries that they are committed to nuclear disarmament".<sup>46</sup>

On 4 June 1998, in Geneva, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council urged both India and Pakistan to adhere to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) unconditionally and participate in the negotiations for a treaty to end the production of fissile materials,<sup>47</sup> but India rejected the demand stating that unconditional adherence would legitimise nuclear weapons for a few countries.<sup>48</sup>

The Foreign Ministers of the group of industrialised countries (G-8) gave a call to India and Pakistan to begin dialogue on all issues that divide them including "threatening military movements, cross border violations, including infiltration or hot pursuit" to reduce tensions in the Sub-continent.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "46-Nation Call to India, Pak", *Hindu* (New Delhi), 3 June 1998.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Abraham, 'India, Pakistan Urged to Sign N-Arms Control Pacts', *Hindu* (New Delhi), 5 June 1998.

<sup>48</sup> K.K. Katyal, "India Rejects Outside Involvement", *Hindu* (New Delhi), 6 June 1998.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Abraham, "G-8 Wants Indo-Pak Talks on all Issues", *Hindu* (New Delhi), 13 June 1998.

The European Parliament asked European member states to stop the export of atomic arms technology to India and Pakistan and also asked India and Pakistan to initiate talks with China to reduce instability in South Asia since India claimed that China was a key factor in its nuclear tests. The European Union called upon both the countries to sign the CTBT and actively contribute in negotiations to end the production of fissile materials.<sup>50</sup> The United States took the lead against proliferation by slapping a range of sanctions on India and Pakistan. These sanctions included an end to bilateral aid grants, a cutoff of loan guarantees by the US government to American Companies investing in India, stoppage of all defence and dual technologies cooperation and trade not covered by the MCTR, London suppliers Group and other anti-proliferation agreements, and, possibly, U.S. opposition to multilateral loans to India and Pakistan through the IMF and World Bank.

As the international pressures on India and Pakistan to initiate bilateral talks grew, India offered to resume talks in Delhi on 22 June 1998, but this was rejected by Pakistan which proposed that the two meet on 20 June 1998

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<sup>50</sup> "Halt N-Tech to India, Pak", *Hindu* (New Delhi), 19 June 1998.

in Islamabad.<sup>51</sup> India in turn rejected the Pakistani proposal. The two Prime Ministers are due to meet at the SAARC Summit in Colombo on 29 July 1998.

### ***Conclusion***

Achieving complete disarmament through regional arrangements or agreements, though attainable as in the case of Latin America, is not an easy task in a region like South Asia which has several contradictions.

These contradictions will most likely have to be resolved bilaterally. Both India and Pakistan should move towards a policy of transparency which Argentina and Brazil adopted in the early 1990s. Whether this will take the form of a NWFZ is not known, but given India's steadfast opposition to it all these years this is unlikely. In any case, now that both states are nucleoside, a NWFZ strictly speaking is irrelevant.

If India and Pakistan can build a transparent posture, they should be able to move towards talks on how to avoid unwanted conflicts and escalation of the arms rivalry in the future.

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<sup>51</sup> Amit Baruah, "Pak for Say to World Community", *Hindu* (New Delhi), 13 June 1998.

## **CHAPTER III**

## **Chapter III**

### **STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AND NEPAL AS A ZONE OF PEACE**

The proposal for the creation of a NWFZ in South Asia can hardly be divorced from the dynamics of the Indian Ocean. Therefore, it is vital to analyse the diplomatic and strategic significance of this region. In other words, we need first to understand the interests of the external powers in the Indian Ocean, which eventually combined to block the idea of the Indian Ocean as a peace zone. Even as the South Asian proposal and the Indian Ocean proposal were under discussion, Nepal proposed a peace zone which would cover its own territory. This chapter looks at how and why these alternative schemes also failed to take off.

#### **Sri Lanka's Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace Proposal**

The proposal for the Indian Ocean goes back to 1964 when the Soviet Union proposed it in the United Nations. This was rejected by the US despite the support of the littoral states. The USSR proposed it due to its meagre naval capability in the Indian Ocean. Later, when its naval capabilities had grown sizeably, it had a different view of the peace zone idea. In 1971, when Sri Lanka

proposed that the Ocean be turned into a zone of peace, the Soviets rejected the idea on grounds rather similar to the US. Finally, in 1976, the Soviets changed their minds and accepted the zone of peace formulation.

The presence of the external powers, especially the US and USSR, in the Indian Ocean posed a serious threat to the littoral states of the region. Hence regional states protested against the maintenance and establishment of military bases by the external powers in the Indian Ocean. The Non-aligned Conference held at Cairo from 5-10 October 1964 concerned the big powers increasing naval presence in the Indian Ocean.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of the establishment of a base at Diego Garcia, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, put forward a plan for a peace zone at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting held at Singapore. In September 1971, the Foreign Ministers of 54 Nonaligned nations agreed to take steps at the next General Assembly session to get the Indian Ocean declared a zone of peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Harish Kapur, "The Great Powers and the Indian Ocean: A Non-aligned Perspective", *The Round Table* (London), vol.29, 7 January 1986, p.50.

On 16 December 1971, the United Nations General Assembly called upon the great powers to halt further expansion of naval capability in the Indian Ocean and to eliminate from the Ocean all bases, military installations, nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. The resolution also called upon the littoral and hinterland states as well as the permanent members of the Security Council to enter into negotiations. The resolution was opposed by the Soviet bloc and the Western powers until 1976. It was broadly endorsed by the international community in 1976.<sup>2</sup>

The principles were accepted for the implementation of the 1971 declaration of the Indian Ocean by the littoral and hinterland states in 1979. They are:

1. Elimination of the military presence of the great powers in the Ocean.
2. Elimination of military bases and other installations of the great powers
3. Denuclearisation of the Ocean
4. Non-use of force and peaceful settlement of disputes
5. Regional and other cooperation
6. Free and uninterrupted use of the ocean by vessels of all nations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *UN Disarmament Yearbook, 1975* (New York, 1975), p.570.

<sup>3</sup> *SIPRI Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmament, 1980* (Stockholm, 1980), pp.615-20.

The declaration which was primarily initiated to eliminate the presence of nuclear powers in the Indian Ocean was faced with a shift at a later stage when Sri Lanka and Pakistan focussed on India's naval "threat" and projected the idea that regional powers also could be a threat to regional security.

A final document was adopted in a meeting of littoral and hinterland states of the Indian Ocean held from 2-13 July 1979 in the midst of the differences. The document called upon the littoral and hinterland states to agree not to acquire or introduce nuclear weapons. It also called for a system of universal, collective security without military alliances and called for demilitarisation in the context of great power rivalry.

The Ad-Hoc Committee set up by the United Nations General Assembly for the implementation of the declaration held a meeting on 25 May 1982 where the Western powers presented a paper entitled "Proposal for a Set of Principles on the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace". It emphasised the strengthening of security and peace in the region. Also, it called upon states to



prevent the spread of nuclear weapons with relevance to the provisions of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).<sup>4</sup>

In 1983, Australia, Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, USA and UK put forth a set of principles regarding the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace which broadly fell into political, security and economic concerns. The political principles included respect for national sovereignty, peaceful settlement of disputes, ensuring equal rights and self determination, non-use of force, and respect for the right to be free from military occupation resulting from the use of force.<sup>5</sup> The security principles are individual and collective defence, right of freedom of navigation, prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons and withdrawal of foreign forces from the region. The economic principles are: mutual trade and recognition of benefits of cooperation in trade, industry, science and technology.

The rivalry between the superpowers disrupted the progress of implementation. After the disintegration of

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<sup>4</sup> *SIPRI Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmament, 1984* (Stockholm, 1984), pp.420-23.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Harigan, "Security Interests in the Persian Gulf and the Western Indian Ocean" in Patrick Wall, ed., *The Indian Ocean and the Threat to the West* (London, 1975), pp.19-38.

the USSR, there was a possibility that the idea could be revived. However, with the disengagement of Soviet naval forces from the Ocean, in the wake of the Cold War, the original concern over superpower naval competition diminished. Moreover, many of the countries which feared US naval power in the Ocean now see it differently. This includes India and Sri Lanka, both of whom in the 1960s and 1970s, worried about Washington's naval reach. In addition, the differences among regional states have not reduced enough so that there is greater political cohesion in the region. With the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests of 1998, the prospects of a zone of peace have probably retreated even further.

### ***The Strategic Significance of the Indian Ocean***

The American strategic thinker Alfred Mahan once observed that "whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. The Ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Alfred Mahan, "Will the Indian Ocean become a Soviet Pond", *Atlas* (New York), 19 November 1970, p.20.

The Indian Ocean became an area of strategic and nuclear significance to the great powers after the Second World War. The Indian Ocean's strategic significance was based on four important factors:

- i. The Indian Ocean littoral consists mostly of developing countries which are faced with internal turbulence arising out of religious, ethnic, linguistic and tribal conflicts. With uneven economic development, these diverse conflicts spill across borders and invite external intervention.
- ii. The power rivalry between the east and west after the Second World War was extended to the Indian Ocean.
- iii. The Western powers claimed enormous stakes in the vast energy and other mineral resources in the region and declared these to be vital interests.<sup>7</sup>
- iv. The renewed emphasis by the traditional and new maritime actors on doctrines of sea power. The importance of ocean resources and the development of new naval warfare and weapon systems raised the stakes of the great powers in the Indian Ocean.<sup>8</sup> The introduction of nuclear weapons was a key development.

In addition to these four general, long-term factors, the deployment of cruise missiles by the United States and the Soviet Union in their naval arsenals from 1984 onwards increased the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean. Apart from this, the presence of nuclear

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Bajpai, ed., *India's Security The Politico-Strategic Environment* (New Delhi, 1982), p.105.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

infrastructure in the region related to research, development, testing and command, control communication and intelligence (C<sup>3</sup>I) systems made the Ocean a key waterway.<sup>9</sup>

### ***External Powers in the Ocean Region***

In order to appreciate the strategic vitality of the Indian Ocean region it is necessary to look more closely at the interests of the major external powers, namely, the US, USSR, UK, France and China. The interests of outside powers may be summarised as follows. First, the two superpowers had an interest in oil. The energy needs of the industrialised world dictated a profound concern regarding access to the resources in the Persian Gulf and about the security of the tanker routes across the Indian Ocean.<sup>10</sup> Second, the high financial investment by the external powers in seabed resources (marine food, minerals, metals and energy) also played a vital role.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> C. Raja Mohan, "Indian Ocean: Zone of Peace or Conflict?", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.11, no.3, June 1986, p.253-54.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Harigan, "Security Interests in the Persian Gulf and the Western Indian Ocean" in Patrick Wall, ed., *The Indian Ocean and the Threat to the West* (London, 1975), pp.19-38.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Third, the US, USSR, United Kingdom and France accounted for most of the arms exports in the world, much of which was imported by the developing nations in the Ocean region. Fourth, on many occasions the littoral states had sought superpower defence umbrellas before confronting or balancing their regional adversaries.<sup>12</sup>

The most important factor for the US was the purchase and safe transport of oil. The other factors were the deployment of cruise missiles and to impose Western dominance in the region. The economic priorities of the US transformed its strategy in the region from a purely military matter into a broad policy concern.

US strategy in the 1970s and 1980s in the Indian Ocean was 'offensive' while that of the Soviet Union was 'defensive'. The emergence of new weapon systems, especially the sea-launched Polaris A-2 and A-3 and the Poseidon missiles, provided the US with an advantage over the Soviet Union. These missiles could be targeted to almost any place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from the Indian Ocean, going as far north as Leningrad and the main industrial heartland from Ukraine to

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<sup>12</sup> Satish Talwar, "Power Struggle in the Indian Ocean", *USI Journal* (New Delhi), vol.115, no.480, April-June 1985, pp.102-3.

Kuslas.<sup>13</sup> These missiles could also strike all the vital points of China.

The Indian Ocean was also slated to play an important part in the US Strategic Defence Initiative. In the event of nuclear warfare, space satellites would play a key role in communication, reconnaissance, electronic intelligence, and early warning, and hence destruction of the adversary's satellites would cripple its capacity in a war. A variety of anti-satellite weapons were being developed for this purpose and the US had established a worldwide network of space observation centres called Ground-based Electro-Optical Deep Space Surveillance (GEODSS) System. Diego Garcia located in the heart of the Indian Ocean was one of five such centres.<sup>14</sup>

The Soviet Union's entry into the Indian Ocean was made in 1968 with a small part of its Pacific fleet. Principally, it was a result of growing Soviet fears regarding its own global security position in the rivalry with the US and the vulnerability of its own southern flank. The Soviet view was that it could not remain

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<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Jukes, "The Indian Ocean in Soviet Naval Policy", *Adelphi Papers* (London), no.87, May 1972.

<sup>14</sup> Jasjit Singh, "Indian Ocean in Global Strategies: Some Perspectives", *IDSA Journal*, November 1984, pp.1-35.

indifferent to the US effort to militarise the Indian Ocean.<sup>15</sup> The economic, political and security interests of the Soviet Union were enormous because eighty per cent of Soviet trade between her eastern and western wings passed through the Indian Ocean and the USSR operated one of the largest merchant fleets at sea. Secondly, the Soviets' arms sales to the Indian Ocean states constituted ten per cent of their exports. Thirdly, fishing in the Indian Ocean region accounted for one-third of the Soviet Union's annual catch.

Admiral Gorshkov, the great naval strategist of the Soviet Union, said:

The Indian Ocean takes about one-tenth of world's shipping. The economic importance of the Indian Ocean lies essentially in the fact that along it run world trade routes from the Black Sea and Baltic ports of the USSR to the ports in the Far East and also to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Burma and other countries.<sup>16</sup>

While the Soviet desire for influence in the Third World was significant, Moscow had other concerns. In particular, it was worried about the US' space warfare plans which had a regional component. In early 1977, the

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<sup>15</sup> F.A. Vali, *Politics of the Indian Ocean Region* (New York, 1976), p.185.

<sup>16</sup> S.G. Gorshkov, *The Sea Power of the State* (London, 1979), p.15.

Soviets alleged that the US intended to use the Indian Ocean region for its "Star Wars" programme. When the US completed the installation of its satellite surveillance station in early 1987,<sup>17</sup> the Soviet Union was compelled to deploy its space operations task force in the Indian Ocean.

Thus, the Soviet Union, while taking necessary steps to counter the Western naval buildup in the Indian Ocean was basically on the strategic defensive in the area. The Soviet's support for the establishment of a peace zone in the Indian Ocean must be seen in light of this basic posture.

Moscow's options in the situation were to build a countervailing Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean and to seek a bilateral accord with Washington on mutual abstention from any deployment of nuclear weapons in the area. Since Moscow was unable to exercise the first option, as her strategy was primarily non-naval in the initial stages, she presented a proposal in the UN in December 1964 to declare the Indian Ocean a nuclear free

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<sup>17</sup> J.P. Anand, "Indian Ocean: Soviet Military Presence", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.11, no.6, September 1987, pp.718-20.



zone.<sup>18</sup> Despite the support of the littoral countries, the proposal was rejected by the US. The Soviets then reverted to their first option, i.e., the strengthening of their anti-submarine capability. From the early 1960s, therefore, Moscow participated in a naval buildup with the US which made the entire region uneasy.<sup>19</sup>

The Indian Ocean was host not only to the two superpowers but also to other great power navies. These included two other Western navies, the UK and France. The United Kingdom had substantial economic, political and military interests in the region. It maintained a residual military force and actively supported an increasing US military presence in the Ocean. London also exercised considerable diplomatic influence and wanted to maintain its lines of communication with and across the Indian Ocean region to Southeast Asia and Far East. It had full base facilities at Diego Garcia and naval facilities at Mombasa in Kenya. It also had overflying, training, and defence agreements with Kenya, and was working closely with Zimbabwe. There were in addition treaties of friendship with Bahrain, Qatar and UAE. Its

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<sup>18</sup> N. Amelko, "For Peace in the Indian Ocean", *Soviet Military Review* (Moscow), vol.18, August 1984, pp.49-50.

<sup>19</sup> Harish Kapur, n.14, p.53.

naval presence was bolstered by a 5000 strong Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), and it self-consciously shared responsibility with the US for the security of the Gulf. As part of its security involvement, it carried out joint exercises with the navies of Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand, as part of the Five Power Defence Arrangement.<sup>20</sup> The trade with the Indian Ocean countries amounted to approximately twenty two per cent of its overseas transactions. Forty-five per cent of its overseas investments were based in the region. Thus, it had a vital interest in protecting the trade routes and freedom of navigation in the Ocean.

France, by contrast, maintained a much more independent military presence in the Indian Ocean. It started reinforcing its military presence in the Red Sea and the north west quadrant of the Ocean as a part of a policy of wooing oil producing nations in West Asia.

From the early 1970s, Paris made spectacular long term oil-for-arms and oil-for-trade deals, worth hundreds of millions of dollars, with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Iraq and Iran. It supplied aircraft, warships, missiles and other weapons to South Africa, Pakistan, India, and

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<sup>20</sup> S.R.S. Dalal, "Extra Regional Navies in the Indian Ocean", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.12, no.11, May 1989, p.135.

Australia. It also expressed its willingness to construct nuclear power stations in Bangladesh and Pakistan, and it reconstructed the damaged reactor in Iraq.

In addition, France was committed to safeguarding its island territories of Reunion, Illes Goset, Kergeulen and Mayotte.<sup>21</sup> It maintained military bases in Djibouti and Reunion. As part of its strategy, it deployed the second largest naval fleet in the Indian Ocean. Overall, it sought to justify its military presence by citing reasons such as freedom of navigation in international waters, protection of sea lanes and oil routes, and protection of its dependencies in the region.

Finally, China has gradually been increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean. Its basic concern was to offset Soviet and American influence on the eastern flank of the Indian Ocean area and in South East Asia. It was concerned with breaking the Western-backed ring of anti-Chinese regimes and wanted to get a foothold in the Indian Ocean area. It also wanted to utilise the facilities in Bangladesh and Pakistan to scuttle Indian

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

influence in the region and to prevent itself being encircled by nations close to the USSR.<sup>22</sup>

### *Nepal as a Zone of Peace*

After the accession of King Birendra of Nepal in January 1972, the proposal for establishing Nepal as a zone of peace became a major foreign policy goal. The plan was to announce the proposal at the Fourth Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned countries at Algiers in 1973. This, however, failed or was deferred, and it was formally announced only on 25 February 1975 by King Birendra on the occasion of his own coronation.<sup>23</sup> Though the announcement was made as early as 1975, the scope and definition of the zone was delayed till February 1982, when Prime Minister S.B. Thapa proposed a seven point definition.

1. Nepal will adhere to the policy of peace, nonalignment and peaceful co-existence and will constantly endeavour to develop friendly relations with all countries of the world regardless of their social and political systems and particularly with its neighbours on the basis of equality

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<sup>22</sup> Jasjit Singh, "Growth of Chinese Navy and Its Implications for Indian Security", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.12, no.2, March 1990, pp.12-13.

<sup>23</sup> King Birendra, *Speeches, Proclamations and Messages* (Kathmandu, 1977), p.121.

and respect for each other's independence and sovereignty.

2. Nepal will seek peaceful settlement of all disputes between itself and any other state or states.
3. Nepal will not resort to use or threaten to use of force in anyway, which might endanger the peace and security of other countries.
4. Nepal will not interfere in the internal affairs of other states.
5. Nepal will not permit activities on its soil that are hostile to other states supporting this proposal and in reciprocity other states supporting this proposal will not permit any activities hostile to Nepal.
6. Nepal will continue to honour the obligations of all the existing treaties which it has concluded with other countries as long as they remain valid.
7. In conformity with its policy of peace and non-alignment Nepal will not enter into military alliance nor will it allow the establishment of any foreign military base on its soil. In reciprocity other countries supporting the proposal will not enter into military alliance nor will they allow the establishment of military bases on their soil directed against Nepal.<sup>24</sup>

There were two main arguments which lay behind this formulation. First, Nepal would not take sides in regional conflicts. Secondly, the establishment of a peace zone would ensure political stability and economic progress. This implied a redefinition of the strategic

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<sup>24</sup> Bishwa Pradhan, *Nepal as a Peace Zone* (New Delhi, 1982).

importance of Nepal to India and the maintenance of equidistance between India and China. The King's visit to China and establishing airlinks with that country was followed by repeated statements to give the impression of equidistance between China and India.<sup>25</sup> As part of this posture, Nepal requested India to withdraw its intelligence posts in its territory. There were demands also to abrogate the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950).<sup>26</sup>

Under the Treaty of Peace and Friendship which was concluded on 31 July 1950 between India and Nepal, the two countries undertook "to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring state likely to cause any breach in the friendly relations subsisting between the two governments."<sup>27</sup>

The popular enthusiasm for India gradually declined in Nepal over the years and led to protests against New Delhi, allegedly due to the interference in Nepal's internal affairs. King Tribhuvan's special relations with

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<sup>25</sup> S.D. Muni, "Nepal as a Zone of Peace", *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi), vol.7, January 1984, p.780.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.783.

<sup>27</sup> A.S. Bhasin, *Documents on Nepal's Relations with India and China, 1949-66* (Delhi, 1970), p.30.

India were sought to be modified under King Birendra in favour of "equal friendship" with all countries. As a result, Nepal maintained a strict neutrality in the Sino-Indian border conflict of 1962.

The recruitment of Nepalese citizens for the Indian and British armies was now portrayed as a national disgrace. Four prominent leaders belonging to different outlawed parties, namely, S.P. Upadhyaya , former Home Minister, T.P. Acharya, former Prime Minister, D.R. Regmi, former Foreign Minister, and K.J. Rayamajhi, Secretary of the banned Communist Party of Nepal, came out with a joint statement demanding the closure of the recruitment centres.<sup>28</sup>

The immediate reason for Nepal's demand for a peace zone was because of the partyless Panchayat system and the strong challenge to the King posed by the Nepali Congress. A spate of violent activities and protests followed the institution of the new system: the attack on Hariपुर police station in the Nepal Terai in August 1972; the hijacking of a Royal Nepal Airlines plane in June 1973; the looting of 30 lakhs by activists of the Nepali Congress; a major fire that destroyed large parts of the famous Singha Durbar (Central Secretariat Building). All

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<sup>28</sup> *Times of India* (New Delhi), 14 January 1981.

these rattled the Nepali authorities. The call of B.P. Koirala for an armed revolution to restore democracy increased the anxiety of the King.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the fact that India restrained the movements of the Nepali Congress leaders along India's borders, the King feared that India would back the revolt. In October 1973, King Birendra, during his visit, was assured that "no hostile activities will be supported or advocated against his regime from Indian soil".<sup>30</sup>

There were other causes of unease in Kathmandu. The establishment of a new nation, Bangladesh, as a result of war in 1971 shattered the continuing quest for parity of power and military strength between India and Pakistan. As India emerged the dominant power in South Asia, Nepal felt that the significant changes in the power equation in the region could have a direct impact on the security of the Kingdom. The peaceful nuclear test explosion conducted by India on 18 May 1974 increased Nepal's apprehension of threats in and around its borders.

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<sup>29</sup> Parmanand, *The Nepali Congress Since its Inception: A Critical Assessment* (Delhi, 1982), pp.367-68 and 378-79.

<sup>30</sup> S.D. Muni, n.20, p.785.



The King of Nepal put forward the peace zone proposal to all friendly countries in the form of an appeal to recognise Nepal's desire for peace. King Birendra said that it was not

prompted out of fear of threat from any quarter but rather inspired by nothing more than a desire to see that our freedom and independence shall not be thwarted by the changing flux of time when understanding is replaced by misunderstanding, when conciliation is replaced by belligerency and war.<sup>31</sup>

King Birendra in his visit to Yugoslavia in September 1975 stated:

We can contribute to peace in our region in ensuring that the soil of our country is not used to build up tensions or in mounting hostilities against another country.<sup>32</sup>

He added that this proposition would not only make Nepal a bulwark for peace in the region, but it would also contribute to the prospects of peace elsewhere in the world.<sup>33</sup>

Nepal repeated its proposal at the Fifth Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned countries held in Colombo in 1976.<sup>34</sup> During King Birendra's state visit to the USSR on 18 November 1976 he said:

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<sup>31</sup> King Birendra, n.18, p.121.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.133.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp.164-65.

In ensuring on a reciprocal basis that the territory of one country is not used for conflict against another country which is what my zone of peace proposal aims at for Nepal, we are reducing to a degree the possible areas of tension and brightening in the same measure the prospect of peace. We assure all countries that our initiations have been conceived not in the context of rivalry or power politics but rather from our urge to maintain our sovereign identity in a framework of peace that is durable and that does not fluctuate with the degree of relationship among nations outside our frontiers.<sup>35</sup>

While addressing the Sixth Conference of the Heads of States and Governments of the Non-aligned countries, King Birendra explained the rationale and justification of his peace zone proposal. King Birendra, during his state visit to the US in December 1983, made a serious attempt to explain the relevance of the peace zone concept.

### ***International Response to Nepal's Proposal***

The United States was one of the early supporters of Nepal's move for establishing peace in the region, but it refrained from giving formal recognition to the proposal initially. Charles Percy, member of the United States official delegation during his visit to Nepal on the occasion of the coronation of King Birendra, told the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp.174-75.

King that Nepal's determination to preserve its independence and sovereignty impressed them. He further assured Nepal that peace and stability in South Asia was the primary interest of the US. In December 1983, during King Birendra's visit to the US, President Ronald Reagan said that the US supported the objectives of the proposal. He urged Nepal to work closely with neighbours to make the zone of peace a reality.<sup>36</sup>

The Soviet Union supported the King's proposal initially on 20 July 1975, but when the Soviet Ambassador to Nepal, K.B. Udumyan, declared that Nepal's zone of peace is very similar to the Soviet proposal of an "Asian Collective Security" system it invited criticisms from Nepal. Later, the USSR interpreted its initial support as merely an endorsement of Nepal's policy of positive nonalignment and of the King's desire not to allow Nepal to be an area of tension and a centre for hostilities against other countries.<sup>37</sup> The Soviets saw the King's proposal as commensurate with the oft repeated Soviet demand that the allegedly anti-Soviet, anti-Indian

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<sup>36</sup> S.D. Muni, n.20, p.788.

<sup>37</sup> Rishikesh Shah, *Essays in the Practice of Government in Nepal* (New Delhi, 1982), p.212.

propaganda conducted by the embassies of China and Pakistan in Nepal should cease.<sup>38</sup>

The Nepalese Government continued to get support for its initiative. French President Francois Mitterand extended his support during his visit to Nepal in May 1983. Britain also gave her support to the proposal, advising Nepal to obtain the neighbouring countries' backing to its idea in order to make it workable. Pakistan pledged unequivocal support for its implementation. Its objective was to neutralise Indian influence in the Himalayan kingdom. In an interview to the *New Herald* in Lahore on 11 Mach 1975, Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto said:

Pakistan welcomes His Majesty King Birendra's proposition that Nepal be declared a Zone of Peace. We have ourselves initiated certain proposals on the same line. We welcome any other proposal made by a friendly country and a friendly sovereign like His Majesty King Birendra.<sup>39</sup>

China strongly supported Nepal's peace zone proposal as early as 1976. The former Prime Minister, Hua Guofeng, remarked: "We firmly support the just stand taken by His Majesty the King of Nepal in declaring Nepal a zone of peace. We are ready to assume appropriate commitments

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<sup>38</sup> Rishikesh Shah, *Nepal Politics: Retrospect and Prospect* (Delhi, 1978), p.163.

<sup>39</sup> Rishikesh Shah, n.34, p.212.

arising therefrom".<sup>40</sup> Later, in the UNGA in October 1976, the former Chinese Foreign Minister, Chiao Kuanhua, declared that his country strongly supported the proposition that Nepal be declared a zone of peace. Finally, it should be noted that Bangladesh and Sri Lanka also supported Nepal's peace zone proposal.

### ***India's Response to Nepal as a Peace Zone***

The official Indian response to the Nepalese proposal has been non-committal. India's explanation for its lack of endorsement of this proposal is that since Nepal already had peace and friendship treaties with both of its neighbours (with India in 1950 and with China in 1960), the Himalayan Kingdom, in effect, was already a zone of peace, and it was difficult to comprehend from which quarter Nepal perceived a threat to its security.

The USSR related the proposal to its "Asian Collective Security" proposal and Pakistan related it to its South Asian nuclear weapon free zone proposal which clearly indicated the concern of the respective countries. China and Pakistan were among the first to support the Nepalese proposal. However, there was no fundamental change in the basic tenets of India's foreign

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<sup>40</sup> S.D. Muni, n.23, p.786.

policy, even after the Janata Party came to power. Nepal responded with a seven-point proposal when India officially requested a concrete outline of the peace zone proposition. After India asked Nepal to clarify some aspects of the proposal, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi once again asked Nepal to explain from which source it feared a threat to its own peace and security.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

There have been three proposals for a nuclear weapon free zone or peace zone which involved South Asia; the South Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, and Nepal as a Zone of Peace. None of the three progressed all the way to a formal agreement, even though a number of states, including the great powers, at various times, endorsed them. A key reason was of course the doubts, hesitation and opposition of those powers. Another reason was the differences between the regional states themselves. Finally, it should be noted that India found itself in opposition to the three plans at various points. New Delhi's opposition was not uniform. In the case of the South Asian nuclear weapon free zone, it felt that China's absence from the scheme

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.789.

rendered it meaningless for India strategically. IN the case of the Indian Ocean scheme, it was not convinced that the great powers' presence in the area would be limited enough. It also sensed that the scheme as it evolved would be used by the powers to restrict India's nuclear and conventional capabilities under the guise of regional peace and stability. Finally, in the case of Nepal's call for a zone of peace, it saw this as directed at India and its special relationship with the Himalayan Kingdom.

The future is uncertain, but it should be noted that India is a key state in respect of peace and stability in the greater region, extending from Australia and South Africa in the south to Afghanistan and Burma in the north. India has recognised this over the years and has taken a different route to improving the security situation around it. India's preference now is regional functional and economic cooperation. Thus, New Delhi is involved in at least four schemes: SAARC, the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), BIMST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Of these, only ARF is a truly security grouping.

## **CONCLUSION**



## Conclusion

The effort to establish a NWFZ in Latin America was relatively successful, relatively quickly. South Asia's experience has not been so salutary, for a variety of reasons. What, simply put, were the factors that helped Latin America and hindered South Asia? At least five factors may be noted.

First of all, in the case of Latin America, the evolution of the NWFZ proposal came before nuclear testing by any of the regional parties. This enabled them to proceed a fair way towards early negotiations, unlike South Asia where the proposal emerged as a result of the peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE) by India in 1974.

Second, since Pakistan failed to consult the zonal parties beforehand, the South Asian NWFZ proposal forwarded by it led regional states, specifically India, to block it at its inception. Indian hostility to the idea was not an intrinsic one. New Delhi had supported the concept of NWFZs in other regional settings. Rather, it felt that its security and strategic concerns, pre-eminently China, were not addressed in the South Asian proposal put forward by Pakistan and the US. By contrast, the Latin American proposal proceeded relatively smoothly

because the initiative came from the countries of the region, even though some of the zonal parties had reservations about the initiative.

Third, the Latin American countries endeavoured to converge in their efforts to establish a NWFZ. This avoided any competing proposals from distracting their political energies. In South Asia, on the other hand, the NWFZ idea had to compete with at least two other ideas - the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and Nepal as a zone of peace.

Fourth, the absence of an organisation in South Asia, such as the Organization of American States in Latin America, also was a major factor in the failure of the NWFZ concept in South Asia.

Fifth, the politics of the superpowers around the NWFZs cannot be ignored. As the Latin American NWFZ proposal was firmly supported by the OAS which was led by the US, Cuba, backed by the Soviet Union, refused to sign and ratify the Tlatelolco treaty till 1995. As early as 1964, the Soviet Union had proposed in the United Nations that the Indian Ocean be declared a zone of peace. This was rejected by the United States, despite the support of the littoral states. The USSR proposed it because of its meagre naval capability in the Indian Ocean, and the US

rejected it because of its strategic significance and diverse interests in the Indian Ocean. Later, in the 1970s, when its naval capabilities had considerably increased, and when its geo-strategic interests in the Ocean area had grown, the USSR was to reject the zone of peace idea, now being championed by the littoral countries, especially Sri Lanka and India.

On the other hand, the US backed the Pakistani proposal for a South Asian NWFZ in 1977 and later in 1979. Indeed, the US put forward its own version of a nuclear weapon free zone for South Asia which was rejected by the USSR, its Cold War adversary. The US was interested in establishing a South Asian NWFZ in order to turn attention away from the great power military presence in the Indian Ocean and also to bring about a cap on the nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan.

Disarmament is a complex process which must be pursued along several paths simultaneously. Humanity cannot wait for the one grand movement when under the rubric of a single agreement nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction as also fearsome conventional weapons will be abolished. Sometimes unilateral policies will be vital. At other times bilateral and multilateral initiatives will be necessary. Regional efforts also have

a place in leading the world towards security and sanity. Nuclear weapons free zones have a utility in this regard, as the citizens of Africa, Latin America and the South Pacific have indicated. Gradually, an architecture, with all kinds of designs, is being built to sustain disarmament, not all of the bricks and plans fit all environments. Nuclear weapon free zones suit some regions and not others. At the very least though they help question the legitimacy of nuclear weapons as instruments of security and stability.

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