

*Dhruba Kumar*

## NUCLEAR AND MISSILE PROLIFERATION AND THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIA

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Nuclear deterrence around which the post-war consensus was built as a bedrock of the West's defence philosophy had collapsed once the perception of nuclear war became an imminent possibility in 1983. The INF 1987 was its consequence which was followed by a series of agreements to denuclearize the world by shaping up the disarmament race. This made the peaceful exit of the cold war possible and help shackle bipolarity--an euphemism governed by the perceived or real nuclear muscles of the superpowers. Although the objective of denuclearizing world politics is still distant<sup>1</sup>, and to put back the nuclear genie into the bottle is a forlorn-hope, the urge to realize a "nuclear safe", if not a "nuclear free", world has in itself transformed the orientation of international relations. This qualitative shift is genuinely reflected in the increased adherence to the NPT regime recently contrary to its denunciation by certain nuclear weapons threshold states. The addictive flavour of national sovereignty has led nations like India and Pakistan to oppose the NPT regime transparently on the ground of its

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1. David Kay of the International Uranium Institute has opined at the Energy 1993 Helsinki Conference that a safe and supervised dismantling of the nuclear weapons under the Russo-American bilateral agreements will take at least 20 years. The nuclear weapons to be dismantled contain 816 tonnes of weapon grade uranium and 171 tonnes of weapon grade plutonium. The elimination of 80 percent missiles under the Russo-American agreements (1987- 92) does not specify about what is to be done with the left over nuclear materials. AFP report in the *Rising Nepal*, March 13, 1993.

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The Dhaka Summit Declaration of April 1993 to cooperate in implementing the South Asia Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) to achieve higher levels of trade and economic cooperation in the region has been a non-starter due to the reservation of one of its members that there was no question of economic cooperation until political issues among SAARC member countries were resolved.<sup>22</sup> However, insistence of India and Bangladesh that meaningful policy approaches must be evolved to deal with the global trends in regional cooperation and trading blocs as witnessed in Western Europe, NAFTA, ASEAN and the Asia Pacific Region with APEC had some sobering influence. It may be a pointer for further South Asia Cooperation not only in economic areas, but also in other technical, cultural and environmental fields. The proposal for the establishment of a South Asian Development Fund (SADF) with a strong resource base to take care of credits, equity and financing requirements and Sri Lanka's eagerness to establish SAPTA fully by the year 1997 might as well boost a greater sense of urgency and realization to come closer in respect of bilateral or multi-lateral cooperation or at least some kind of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on such important essential environment issues like water-pollution and availability of drinking water, waste management, energy efficiency and alternative source of energy in order to formulate national policies to implement the process of sustainable development. Hopefully, some of these issues might be sorted out in the forthcoming proposed summit between the premiers of Bangladesh and India sometime this year.

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22. See, M.K. Dhar, "Concern over Pak Stand on SAPTA", *The Hindustan Times*, 20 December 1993, p. 9:1-4.

The question whether weaponization of nuclear capability has occurred is immaterial in view of India's 1974 nuclear explosion and Pakistan's conceding of possessing components to manufacture at least one nuclear weapon.<sup>10</sup> The problem, therefore, is no longer to make South Asia a nuclear free but is that of making a nuclear South Asia free from tensions and conflicts leading to war with increasing probability of the use of nuclear weapons. Tension escalation leading to the conflict threshold which could be considerably influenced by the failure of intelligence information conditioning misperception on the part of the decision makers across the contiguous borders could create a very different situation that might urge either contending party to launch a preemptive strike. This deadly prospect would unlikely to be contained by an already ratified agreement, nor would it be possible to manage any mechanism of minimum deterrence once nations in perpetual enmity think of higher stakes involved to be preserve. As security through proliferation has become the buzz-word to determine the strategic profile of India and Pakistan toward each other, they have conveniently overlooked the possible destabilizing ramifications of the weaponization process. Rather they have tended to view proliferation as a guarantee to war prevention by making adversaries much more cautious. The absence of war in the subcontinent for nearly over two decades since 1971, some strongly believe, is caused by the stabilizing effect of the nuclear weapons that both New Delhi and Islamabad is convinced the either possesses.<sup>11</sup> Belief on which this argument is based is either drawn from the European experience or the broader context of the East-West relations that did not break into direct and open conflict. Precisely, if the relevance of the European experience in the post-war years were to be tailored into the South Asian context, it should also live with the security dilemma that Europe suffered till the end of the cold war. A majority of the strategic community

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10. Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Shehryar Khan's Interview, *Washington Post*, February 7, 1992.

11. Contrary to this belief, it was reported that both these countries were on the brink of a nuclear war with Pakistan apparently taking lead to drop the bomb with the use of F-16s to end the Kashmir flare up in 1990. See Seymour M. Hersh, "On the Nuclear Edge", *The New Yorker*, March 29, 1993, pp. 56-73.



in the West, therefore, maintains that nuclear weapons were not helpful in restoring peace, their harmful effects were their to be curbed once the mindset in the region was not prone to any conflagration, thus rendering the irrelevance of the nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup>

It does not mean, however, to suggest that nuclear weapons are not considered dangerous in the Subcontinent. The element of its destructiveness itself makes the nuclear weapons the precious arms. The said control of this weapon by the army in Pakistan, not by the civilian government, in making decisions to develop, deploy and use or threaten to use (unlike in any other nuclear weapons countries) makes the arsenal "uniquely dangerous".<sup>13</sup> Pakistan's past authoritarian regimes were a class in itself, for India having fought three wars when its conventional deterrence had failed to prevent the militarily inferior country from taking strategic offensives. Conventional deterrence involving India in the past conflicts were always a failure. Deterrence signalling had failed to prevent wars as these were flaunted thrice by Pakistan as an adversary and once by India itself against its rival China while itself being in a militarily inferior position. In all these cases misperception and miscalculation played the role in the escalation of conflicts which should not had been intended to occur, because the provocateurs in all these cases were significantly weaker and had been threatened in advance of severe reprisals. The conflict behaviour patterns drawn from these cases, however, show that both Pakistani and the Indian decision makers were not being rational and cautious; instead they were prone to risk-taking and thus their behaviour were against the "culture of deterrence".<sup>14</sup> Auccinct conclusion of the cases outlined above is that deterrence can be irrelevant, ineffective and even provocative when the initiators of conflict become insensitive to threat and its consequences.<sup>15</sup>

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12. For example, see, John Mueller, "The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World", *International Security*, Fall 1989; Michael McGwire, "The Dilemmas and Delusions of Deterrence", in Gwin Prins, ed., *The Choice: Nuclear Weapons Versus Security*, pp. 75-97.

13. See, K. Subrahmanyam, "Deterrence capability vital for India's N- Programme", *Business and Political Observer*, December 26, 1990.

14. See, John Mearshmeier, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

15. See, Janice Gross Stein, "Reassurance in International Conflict Management", *Political Science Quarterly*, Fall 1991, p. 433.



Unfortunately, the strategists obsessed with the concept see nuclear deterrence in a totally different category because of its said "crystal ball effect" on adversaries' perception by ignoring the fact that it may also not be so.<sup>16</sup> In South Asia, in particular, nuclear deterrence is viewed as the only effective measure against conventional arms spiral, a regional nuclear threat and the questionable rationality of the perceived decision making process in the region. A finite deterrence should at first clear out any possibility of nuclear coercion and secondly, should provide disincentive for any preemptive use. If this rationalization fails, one should be able to deliver a second strike to paralyze the enemy.<sup>17</sup> Pointedly, both India and Pakistan have clinched this primary nuclear strategy with elementary deterrence value.

To take the first point that nuclear deterrence would economize the conventional defence expenditure could have been an attractive proposition for Pakistan to indulge in the business, given its numerical and economic inferiority *vis-a-vis* India. Initially, India could also have contemplated the same, particularly against China in conventional terms. But their own story of nuclearization suggests conventional arms have to be built rather than reduced. Nowhere in the world conventional armament was reduced once nuclear parity was achieved. Examples of China, the United States and the erstwhile Soviet Union maintaining the largest standing army even after stockpiling the formidable nuclear weapons are sufficient to prove such discourse as absurd. The Pakistani case, however, could be still different in view of its past and present security predicament as it feels highly threatened by the conventional superiority of India.<sup>18</sup> India's conventional superiority on the ground, sea and the air will remain unmatched even if Pakistan aggressively rearms. Besides anything, the "hinduisation"<sup>19</sup> of the Indian army in itself constitutes a threat to Pakistan's Islamic existence.

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16. Report of the Harvard Nuclear Study group cited in Patrick J. Garrity, "The Depreciation of Nuclear Weapons in International Politics: Possibilities, Limits, Uncertainty", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, December 1991, pp. 467-468.

17. For Indian views, see, K. Sundarji, *Blindmen of Hindustan*; Nair, *Nuclear India*, and Jasjit Singh, "The Strategic Deterrence Option", *Strategic Analysis*, September 1989.

18. For the forces deployment pattern, see, *The Military Balance 1992/1993* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Autumn 1992).

19. Mushahid Hussain, "Indian Army's Changing Profile", *Regional Studies*, Summer 1991, p. 11.



Pakistan justifies its need of nuclear weapons not only to offset the conventional military superiority of India but also to discourage the tendency of religionization of the armed forces. Even though the necessity of nuclear weapons against a conventionally superior power possessing nuclear weapons had been proved by the recent experience drawn from across the region in the Persian Gulf,<sup>20</sup> such a deterrence posture could have been maintained or could be maintained, in Pakistan case, through uncertainty only.<sup>21</sup>

In a nuclearized South Asia the mirror image of a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan would be more pertinent when asymmetry in the weaponization process would also prevail. Although the opaque nuclearization process makes it difficult to foresee the number of nuclear warheads in possession of either country at any time in the future, certain estimates, however, suggest that a maximum of 2732 warheads would be within manufacturing capacity of India by 2000 AD. Similarly, Pakistan would enable itself to produce 1070 warheads by that time.<sup>22</sup> As this estimate does not concur with the present reality, perhaps it would not be the case in the near future, it definitely shows the relative asymmetry caused by the resources and technological disparities between the two. The ascertained vulnerability of Pakistan, if this situation continues, would be much hazardous than before. The nuclear reach of India covers all Pakistan whereas Pakistan would only be able to threaten the Northwest and the Western territories of India as their current capabilities show.

Both countries presently retain the capabilities to strike the target and ascertain desired results with the use of their advanced aircraft squadrons. India's MiG-23s, 25s, 27s, 29s along with Jaguar and the Mirage-2000s are

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20. Had Iraq been in possession of even a crude nuclear weapons system the United States and its allies would have given a second thought before moving into the conflict theatre considering Saddam Hussain's irrational and monstrous image in the West.

21. Lewis A. Dunn and Herman Kahn, *Trends in Nuclear Proliferation 1975-1995: Projections, Problems and Policy Options* (New York: Hudson Institute, 1976), p. 97.

22. A 1982 study of smaller nuclear forces cited in Lt. Gen. E.A. Vas, "India's Nuclear Options in the 1990s and Its Effects in India's Armed Forces," *Indian Defence Review*, January 1986, p. 20.

all capable of performing the role of carrying the nuclear payloads. Pakistan with Mirage III and V, and the F-16 which could be made nuclear capable by modifying the bomb racks could comparably cover equal Indian territory with nuclear weapons. Reported consideration of Pakistan's acquisition of Mirage-2000 strike aircraft from France to make up the void caused by the American refusal to supply F-16 Falcons, which is superior to the version that India possesses, has caused further concern in New Delhi.<sup>23</sup> But this additional numbers of aircraft will not make Pakistani position any better against the well guarded Indian air defence system which makes penetration comparably difficult. Conversely, the cost-effectiveness of the strike aircraft in the regional ground attack missions have been determined favourably as operational choice on the basis of their accuracy, mobility and ability to carry larger payloads in delivering conventional high-tech weapons or chemical ordinance. The loss rate per sortie in the context of Indo-Pak air wars in the past was not comparatively high. This could also be an indicator for the future use of strike aircraft as a delivery means for nuclear weapons across the border, if not deter the aggression.<sup>24</sup> Proper maintenance of this strike force for a credible delivery system would demand more purse for the high-tech war. Absence of these strategically offensive aircraft or even failure in their operationalization could render the nuclear weaponization programme ineffective. Hence the alternative that emerged is a missile system in the region.

Though missiles are considered the weapons of mass destruction, they are, in fact, a delivery system. They are not potent enough to destabilize the balance of power in the regional context, neither are they capable to wreck destruction of unacceptable magnitude. Ballistic missiles are only potent when armed with nuclear missions in which their comparative superiority to the strike aircraft could be rationalized in terms of cost-effectiveness for a

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23. *Times of India*, February 10, 1992. Russian MiG-29s, Su27s and the Swedish Gripen Fighter Aircraft are also looked for an alternative source, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 26, 1993.

24. Jasjit Singh, "Strategic Air Command: The Credible Deterrence Option", *Indian Defence Review*, January 1990, p. 38.



single sortie.<sup>25</sup> Development of ballistic missiles as a direct combat weapon appears to be pertinent in the Pakistani case in view of its air inferiority, resource lag and difficulties in aircraft acquisition relative to India. Successful tests of Hatf I and Hatf II missiles with 500 kg payload capacity along with its said acquisition of M-11 long range missiles from China and further development of these missiles to integrate into its defence system would provide Pakistan certain tactical military roles but their limited range would still be a hindrance to ensure major devastation in the Indian territory, unless armed with nuclear warheads.<sup>26</sup>

Under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme, India has more successfully test fired its missile system ranging from Prithvi, Trisul and Agni, and achieved technological breakthrough for the development of an anti-aircraft missile Akash, and the anti-tank missile, Nag. Indigenous development of a long range air-to-air missile Astra to be fitted onto the Indian LCA-still under development - is also under serious consideration. Interestingly, both the Indian and Pakistani missiles have names symbolizing their religious beliefs. The liquid propellant Prithvi which was test launched for the twelfth time on November 30, 1993, is a tactical ballistic missile with a range of 250 kilometers. Initially, India was preparing to assign these missiles to the Indian Air Force to be integrated with the strategic command; later on it was decided to be inducted to the Jullander based 60 Heavy Artillery Regiment of the Indian Army,<sup>27</sup> which, which reportedly, was deployed in 1993. Agni is more significant intermediate range ballistic missile with a maximum range of 2500 kilometers, which is seen as destabilizing development within and beyond the

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25. John R. Harvey, "Regional Ballistic Missiles and Advanced Strike Aircraft: Comparing Military Effectiveness", *International Security*, Fall 1992, p. 74; also see John R. Harvey and Uzi Rubin, "Controlling Ballistic Missiles: How Important? How To Do It?" *Arms Control Today*, March 1992, pp. 13-18.

26. Janne E. Nolan, *Trappings of Power: Ballistic Missiles in the Third World* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1991), p. 89.

27. For details see, *India Today*, September 15, 1992, and *Sunday*, October 22, 1989. For reports on India having deployed Prithvi missiles near Pakistan border, see, *Arms Control Reporter*, May 1993, p. 706.



region. Its potentiality of carrying a 1000 kg payload of nuclear warheads concerns the non-proliferation community. However, its failure to achieve a desired result during the second test in May 1992, and the launch failure after the completion of countdown of January 7, 1994 makes it unlikely that the Agni would be ready for deployment in the near future. Snags developed during the ISRO's PSLV launch failure on September 20, 1993 were also a mild setback to India's ambition to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile capability.<sup>28</sup>

As these drawbacks are not seen as technically insurmountable problems, they could be corrected by perfecting human errors. In over two decades of its space programme, the Indian scientific community has mastered technological skills (compared to over three decades of Chinese experience to develop and deploy ICMBs), and as claimed by Professor U.R. Rao on January 8, 1994, India would be able to manufacture the much sought after cryogenic engine by 1998. It suggests there would be no stopping to the long range missile programme.

South Asian ballistic missiles programme, as an implication, would significantly alter the strategic continuum throughout the Asian continent. Deployment of Agni is certain to change the "security complex" with China. India's ballistic missiles development programme is moreover concerned with altering its geographically disadvantageous position *vis-a-vis* China than with Pakistan; in the latter case Prithvi missiles and aircraft with nuclear warheads are enough. This motivation itself has proved that the IRBM or the future ICBMs are not to be armed with the conventional warheads (as reiterated several times) but it would rather be for the use of nuclear warheads. The reason is that if conventional weapons are used such missiles will have no "military sense", particularly in the Sino-Indian

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28. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has claimed to have detected the cause of the failure. It had also asked for an allocation of Rs. 3600 crore from the government up to the period 1997. The programme also depends on the availability of cryogenic engine, the ISRO says. *Times of India*, December 1, 1993; also see V.M. Gogte, "Should We persist with PSLV?," *Indian Express* (Hyderabad), October 8, 1993.



context.<sup>29</sup> Notably, when a delivery system is integrated with the nuclear weapon it becomes more threatening and the "deadly synergism of missiles and the bomb"<sup>30</sup> could be the only instrument to alter the regional power balance drastically by "widening circumference of conflict".<sup>31</sup>

This scenario leads to a conclusion that the induction of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in South Asia would pertain to a future in which strategic instability would prevail. Such a future could be anachronous to the perceived value of deterrence. In the South Asian context and particularly in India, deterrence is emphasized on the basis of overwhelming focus on Pakistan's and China's military capabilities without paying any attention to these countries' interests, their intentions and their historical realities. The Indian strategic community still views China as an expansionist communist power with heavy orientation for achieving uncontested military role in Asia. Pakistan, on the other hand, is seen as a real problem in the short term that must be managed. The inherent flaw in such a thinking is that capability is seen as a real monstrous problem and the assumed expansionism as a driving force to involve in a conflict. Whether China's and Pakistan's interests would be served by such an act remain beyond consideration. This flawed threat assessment, therefore, leads the policy to be wrongly defined.

Deterrence that comes to fore as a buzz word to define and explain all policy, to justify any weapons programme and operational deployment to meet both Pakistani and Chinese challenges, has, in the final analysis, overlooked the fact that it has become an over insurance to Indian security by misreading others' interests. Such a deterrence posture has sharpened Indo-Pakistani contentions further by pushing them towards a never ending cycle of deterrence structuralization (as previously witnessed in the US-

29. See, Steve Fetter, "Ballistic Missiles and Weapons of Mass Destruction: What is the Threat? What Should be Done?" *International Security*, Summer 1991, p. 40.

30. See, Aaron Karp, "Ballistic Missiles in the Third World", *International Security*, Winter 1984-85, p. 167.

31. See, Martin Navias, *Ballistic Missile Proliferation in the Third World* (London: Adelphi Papers, No. 252, Brassey's for IISS, Summer 1990), p. 32.

Soviet conflict.) To avert such a future scenario, it would be meaningful for India to take responsibilities to "effectively manage the regional problem of nuclear proliferation," as a country retaining larger nuclear infrastructure than Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> If both the rival countries in South Asia were to opt for nuclear deterrence, it was also suggested that the relevance of nuclear weapons within the security and geopolitical interests of Pakistan and India in particular should be dispassionately assessed.<sup>33</sup>

Precisely, there is an array of disincentives rather than incentives for proliferation, if the purpose of nuclear weapons and the expensive delivery systems are for deterrence in practice. Deterrence between nuclear adversaries is simply thought to be more effective in regulating conflict duly because nuclear war is seen to be so terrifying as to sober up the behaviour of the leadership in a crisis situation. Unpredictability still holds this condition because the nuclear fear works two ways: as the fear induces caution on one party, it may also lead the cautious party to think of similar situation governing the other party's mindset. This could prompt either party to mistakenly view that the other of them will tolerate a considerable amount of pressure and provocation which may lead to further escalation and risk nuclear war.<sup>34</sup> Any theoretical premises on which the principle of deterrence and the conflict management under nuclear strategy are developed, are considered unrealistic as the empirical evidence marshalled so far proved the contrary. Lebow has pointed out that the paramount weakness of the deterrence theory has been its ignoring of difficulties associated with the signalling process which could breakdown, could be blocked and distorted as well. The prospect of decapitation of C<sup>3</sup>I could entirely make the assumption of attainability of unambiguous signalling process defunct. Such a command vulnerability could become a major source of nuclear instability to increase the prospect of the weapons' use.<sup>35</sup>

32. See, Ram Rajan Subramaniam, *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia: Security in the 1980s* (Canberra: Canberra papers on Strategy and Defence, No. 26, ANU, 1982), p. 31.

33. See, Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Nuclear Weapons? Policy Options for India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1983), p. 18.

34. See, Richard Ned Lebow, "Deterrence Reconsidered: The Challenge of Recent Research", *Survival*, January/February 1985, p. 27.

35. See, Lebow, "Deterrence Reconsidered", pp. 21-24; Daniel Shuchman, "Nuclear Strategy and the Problem of Command and Control", *Survival*, July/August 1987, pp. 336-359.



South Asia is a region where technological sophistication for the perfection of C<sup>3</sup>I is far from available; where previous wars had started without notice and where nuclear threat has become a policy imperative for regimes involved in conflicts. Evidently, Pakistan has raised the spectre of nuclear war once again if the Kashmir turmoil remains unresolved.<sup>36</sup> Hence, the crisis and the magnitude of which has matured to be considered significantly with international implications. Indo-Pakistani tensions in Kashmir does not confine to their bilateral conflicts, it has ramifications for the future insecurity of South Asia where the nuclear weapons are likely to be involved and the destructions are not to be contained within the area of conflict. Deterrence does not resolve the conflict, it rather makes conflict abound. Here if South Asia were to be made conflict free and a region absent of a nuclear weapon, the Kashmir problem must be on agenda for resolution. As suggested: "The road to accession to NPT runs through Kashmir."<sup>37</sup> On the contrary, deterrence coerces and thrives on perpetuation of conflict. The continuation of conflict could enliven unthinkable danger, which should never be considered a positive public policy for the future of South Asian security.

#### NON-PROLIFERATION CONCERNS

Persistent complexities compounding the Indo-Pak problem, notwithstanding the future of Sino-Indian nuclear equation, have increased the South Asian security dilemma. Security perceptions being at variance these countries' apparent nod to a nonproliferation regime is difficult to harmonize with the current reality. Their deliberate ambiguity between proliferation and nonproliferation had given them enough time to prepare for a future with acknowledged nuclear weapons capability. Ambiguity in the Indian context was maintained and utilized to bring in pressure against

36. See, Pakistan Foreign Minister Assef Ahmad Ali's news conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on January 8, in *Sunday Times of India*, January 9, 1994.

37. See, Stephen P. Cohen, "A Fresh U.S. Policy for South Asia", *India Abroad*, April 2, 1993.

Pakistan to renounce the bomb option by enlisting the Western countries' support. Failure to achieve the purpose justified India's own nuclear programme which has simultaneously acquired technological sophistication in the meantime. Nuclear ambiguity has also provided India some security benefits by forestalling a negative relations with its strategic partner, the then Soviet Union, and in containing adverse international reactions against being offensive proliferator. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union collapsed India's strategic clout. Its security vulnerability against the two traditional rivals thus requires it to prepare for the eventuality as per its national interest.<sup>38</sup> This gives credence to certain speculation that India would be first to openly deploy nuclear weapons later in this decade, precisely in 1997, once it acquires all the needed elements to challenge the Chinese nuclear monopoly in Asia.<sup>39</sup>

Among the manifold implications of this Indian move, the first would be to destroy whatever residual interests the nonproliferation treaty evokes on the international community towards the regime. As the nuclear diplomacy in the 1990s is mired by two mutually contradictory trends - more nations joining the NPT but some of the adherents' open defiance - it remains difficult to foresee whether NPT would exist in the current form beyond 1995 if the NPT opponents, including India, were to preclude its functioning. A pall of gloom is observable in the West as the challenges of proliferation resurfaced with its vigour which was seemingly ignored, although discouraged during the cold war. The recognition of the possible spread of the "nuclear epidemic"<sup>40</sup> is reported as the US officials privately conceded that their attempts to prevent the nuclear spread through several measures inclusive of the continuation of secrecy, technology denial through exports control and IAEA safeguards have failed, which is further

38. See, Sundarji, *Blindmen of Hindustan*; Nair, *Nuclear India*; and for a general overview see Kousar J. Azam, ed., *India's Defence Policy for the 1990s* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1992).

39. See, Lewis A. Dunn, *Containing Nuclear Proliferation* (London: Adelphi Papers No. 263, Brassey's for IISS, Winter 1991), pp. 9- 11; and Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Proliferation in South Asia after the Kashmir Crisis", in *The Role of Nuclear Weapons in the Year 2000* (Livermore, Ca.: Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, January 18, 1991).

40. See, Stephen Budiansky. "The Nuclear Epidemic" *U.S. News and World Report*, March 16, 1992.



revealed by Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons programme and North Korea's sudden decision to withdraw from the nonproliferation treaty.

Dramatic revelations of the by-ways through which Iraq had successfully developed its nuclear weapons programme, even after being a signatory to the NPT and acquiescence to the full-scope IAEA safeguards, has sent a shock wave to the American strategic community for the failure of its judgement. Terrible, indeed, was the finding that several of the Iraqi nuclear infrastructure survived that the precision bombing claimed to had destroyed. Further disclosures of a Iraqi defector made the mockery of the IAEA inspection efficiency and proved NPT as being puny, as these agreements have only cast a cloak of respectability over cheaters.<sup>41</sup> Cases like Iraq's undercover operation and North Korean defiance have wrecked thus far the efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. The way such unprecedented but critical situation will be handled will definitely be another defining moment for the future.<sup>42</sup> However, on the face of these challenges, pessimism has overtaken to question the merit of global orchestration for renunciation of nuclear weapons, which has become not only impractical but also a "utopian fantasy". Alternately, the West, especially America must adjust to proliferation by obviously rejecting the extension of the NPT at its renewal in 1995, because the status quo oriented nonproliferation policy has become "intellectually bankrupt" and has overlived its utility.<sup>43</sup>

The other view among the nonproliferation community is that the proliferation danger has been grossly exaggerated in aggravating tension leading to the formulation of a self-defeating policy option. Viewed against the current positive trends of even China and France joining the NPT and the threshold countries like South Africa, Argentina and Brazil's adherence to the nonproliferation regime, the chances of evolving a fresh

41. See, "Nuclear Treaty: Its broke, so fix it", *The Economist*, July 27, 1991, p. 13; also see Jennifer Scarlout, "Nuclear Proliferation After the Cold War", *World Policy Journal*, Fall 1991, p. 688.

42. Nayan Chanda, "Atomic Shock Wave", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 25, 1993; and "Apocalypse Asia", *The Economist*, March 20, 1993.

43. See, Ted Galen Carpenter, "A New Proliferation Policy", *The National Interest*, Summer 1992, pp. 63-72.

understanding to roll back proliferation are likely.<sup>44</sup> Although, Iraq's negative pursuit has highlighted the danger, it has also assuredly led the five declared nuclear weapons powers and the permanent members of the UN Security Council to develop a consensus in favour of a more stringent intrusive inspection by forging guidelines and adopting it on October 18, 1991 at a London meeting. Empowering the UN for a mandatory intrusive inspection to prevent proliferation in suspected nations, the guidelines have finally clipped off the sovereignty content of a said defiant or suspected nation that has shielded the covert nuclear activities. Amidst the desirability and uncertainty of the measures adopted, intensive negotiations on the issue could also furnish the objective as has also been proved by Ukraine's recent decision to give up all the nuclear weapons at its disposal on January 14, 1994.

All these could be trend setters either way. And these developments have certainly brought about an unprecedented international pressure on South Asian "proliferators". Dramatic use of both carrot and stick in the case of India and Pakistan is seen to have been a function of a policy that assumes that India's positive moves could be indispensable to avert proliferation tide.<sup>45</sup> American withdrawal of military and economic aid to Pakistan since October 1990 under the Pressler Amendment has been much aimed at India to reconsider its nuclear proliferation programme. Differing interpretations it received from both India and Pakistan initially were to becloud their respective relations with the United States. Initially it helped India to mauling Pakistan and it was thought that it would dissuade the latter from any further efforts at bomb making. In reality it was not the Indian intention; the purpose, however, was to complicate the US-Pak relations by collaborating with the Americans to classify Pakistan as a "terrorist state" and simply kill two birds with a stone. In other words, India was bent over to destroy the edifice of US-Pakistani relations and justify its

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44. See, Thomas W. Graham, "Winning the Nonproliferation Battle", *Arms Control Today*, September 1991, p. 10.

45. See, Barbara Crosette, "India is Pressed on Atom Project", *New York Times*, February 12, 1992.



nuclear weapons programme against a threatening "terrorist state" in the neighbourhood. Both these endeavours, however, became counterproductive.<sup>46</sup>

Indian efforts to rope in American support in its favour against Pakistan and to a certain extent against China encountered further setbacks when the US priority towards South Asia began to receive a sharpened focus. With the establishment of the South Asia Bureau at the State Department, the United States has approached the region reconsidering the previous lapses by prioritizing human rights and democracy; population explosion and migration, environment, narcotics trade and terrorism and nuclear proliferation as a comprehensive issue-driven area, which are obviously not congenial to either Pakistan or India. This selective engagement policy has produced a strategy that drifted considerably from the previously much sought after efforts in South Asia under the Kicklighter proposal.<sup>47</sup> Resurgence of emphasis on human rights and nonproliferation under the Clinton Administration appeared to have finally overcome its elusive thrust for nuclear restraints by proliferators like India and Pakistan to be replaced with recently announced Counter-proliferation Initiatives.<sup>48</sup> Identifying the post-cold war situation as completely being different, the new policy has recognized the possibility of further proliferation and increased threat to the American national security interests. It thus advocates for a more aggressive policy by making essential changes in the new mission by "adding the task of protection to the task of prevention."

46. Even in the United States the Pressler Amendment increasingly came under fire due to its one sided application. Since 1991 the US Congress has been trying to equate both Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons programme under the law, which is not pleasing to India. The Clinton Administration is even reconsidering to replace it with a new law to broadly encompass many nuclear threshold states which would also include India. See *Hindustan Times*, November 26, 1993; *Times of India*, November 26, 1993; and "US Decides not to place Pakistan on Terrorist States' list", *The Pakistan Times*, July 16, 1993.

47. For some interesting features on the South Asian Bureau, see, *India Abroad*, December 31, 1991; for the shift in US priority see Dhruva Kumar, "India, South Asia and the United States: A Search for a Rationale of Relationship (II)", *The Kathmandu Post*, October 20, 1993; and for the Kicklighter proposals see Gautam Adhikari, "New Era in Indo-US Ties Likely", *Sunday Times of India*, September 8, 1991.

48. See, US Secretary of Defence Les Aspin's Speech to the National Academy of Sciences on "Counter-Proliferation Policy", on December 7, 1993.

This policy thrust has its origin in Aspin's previous advocacy of "denuking the loose nukes" as the new threats in the post cold war period have become non-deterrable.<sup>49</sup> Stemming proliferation should, therefore, be the priority in the changing strategic context. This should be done, if possible, by forging collaborative efforts with Russia with the support of other members of the nuclear club to "physically destroy Third World nuclear facilities." Among the options, preemption was considered to be the best in certain circumstances which could be achieved by the employment of non-nuclear military forces against proliferators.

President Clinton's uplifting of non-proliferation as a crucial agenda in the national priorities by trying to weave this issue deeply into the fabric of the future of American relations with the world has further strengthened the US commitment to stem proliferation in a world where "bloody ethnic conflict, religious and civil wars rage" (as in Kashmir). The spread of nuclear weapons could make even small conflicts disastrous. In this context, South Asia is clearly pointed out as an area of discord and political instability which could possibly lead to war as the terrible consequence of feud between India and Pakistan.<sup>50</sup>

The American objective in South Asia has been to discourage any further attempt by both India and Pakistan to seek the nuclear option. It has encouraged them to evolve a regional approach to complement with broader global effort at nonproliferation by observing the trend that has strengthened nonproliferation treaty. The Americans have stressed on to "cap, then overtime reduce, and finally eliminate the possession" of nuclear weapons and their delivery means in South Asia. The standing offer of the Five Party Conference proposal could be provisionally considered as a consultative venue to meet the purpose of denuclearizing the region, if India concedes. The basic difficulties encountered in the US efforts to engage India in this

49. See, Les Aspin, *From Deterrence to Denuking: Dealing with Proliferation in the 1990s* (Report of the Chairman, House Armed Services Committee to the 102nd Congress; US House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Service; Washington D.C., February 18, 1992).

50. See, President Bill Clinton's speech to the UN General Assembly, "Clinton Warns of Perils Ahead Despite Cold War's End", on September 27, 1993.



positive platform have made the situation fluid even after certain tension reducing measures were promoted in the region.<sup>51</sup> Perceptively, India's stigmatized attitude towards the NPT has further hardened the US approach to the issue as is indicated by its link up of human rights, territorial conflicts and the nuclear proliferation. Comprehending this thrust it would not be difficult to understand the evolving American concern over Kashmir even to the extent of questioning its "accession" with India, as being the underlying cause of insecurity leading to heightened tension and driving the contending parties to opt for nuclear weapons programme.<sup>52</sup>

The nonproliferation community in the United States which has worked independently or in conjunction with the government has suggested several positive measures in the process of stemming proliferation. Ranging from developing proliferation firebreaks to measures proposed to institute verification procedures, their effective application in the South Asian context is yet to be considered by the involved parties.<sup>53</sup> For the US, some suggest, there are three possible measures to proceed to avert the tide of proliferation in the South Asian context. These could be to build pressure on (1) both India and Pakistan to eliminate their nuclear weapon capabilities and sign NPT as non-nuclear weapons states; (2) manage overt proliferation

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51. For details see The Clinton Administration's Report to the Congress, "Progress Toward Regional Nonproliferation in South Asia" (Washington DC: The White House, May 5, 1993); See also the testimony of the Interim Director of South Asian Bureau, John Mallot to the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, "Stability, Nonproliferation Top US Goals in South Asia", on April 28, 1993.

52. See, the statement of the US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel at a press briefing in Washington DC on October 29, 1993. Diplomatic row grew between India and the United States over the issue which is yet to cool down by subsequent clarification given by the State Department. For details see Bharat Bhushan, "US questions validity of Kashmir accession", *Indian Express*, October 30, 1993; Dilip Bobb, "Turning the Screws", *India Today*, November 30, 1993; Arati R. Jerath, "The Raphel Rhetoric", *Indian Express*, November 9, 1993; For the US position on Kashmir status as being a disputed territory see the "Text of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Malott's Speech in New Delhi", at the Indian International Center on May 19, 1993.

53. See, Lewis A. Dunn, *Containing Nuclear Proliferation*, pp. 28-45; Stephen Philip Cohen, ed., *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia: The Prospects for Arms Control* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1991); and Selig S. Harrison and Geoffrey Kemp, eds., *India and America after the Cold War* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993), pp. 36-38.

by assisting these countries to build safe, survivable stable order with a centralized efficient command and control structure; and (3) help construct a non weaponized deterrence regime that continues to maintain nuclear ambiguity.<sup>54</sup> Nuclear restraints or nuclear ambiguity could be the preferred way for both the contending parties at the current level which should be pressed to be maintained. This state of affairs avails both India and Pakistan chance to retain their stockpiles of weapons grade plutonium and uranium and they could manufacture bomb whenever necessary but not at the moment. Constraints should be imposed at the present level and whenever circumstances change for the better both the rivals should be encouraged to sign the NPT. Such a policy could ease the immediate pressure to join the NPT but could intensify collaborations of these countries to fortify NPT regime if their broader security sensitivities are given due consideration.<sup>55</sup>

However, the case of nuclear ambiguity itself has become a difficult proposition. As the state of nuclear ambiguity cannot be verified and unless there is a verifiable commitment not to build nuclear weapons the objective of non weaponized deterrence (as it is understood in the present stage of Indo-Pak equation) could be self-defeating. Reasonably, ambiguity shields verification process, so it would be difficult to achieve the ever desirous purpose of non-proliferation.<sup>56</sup> Alternatively, some suggest the striking of a balanced bargain between the NPT, covert nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems. Accordingly, it has been prescribed that the US should abandon its traditional approach to the NPT regime and highly militarized way of dealing with the problem. Instead a more cooperative and equitable approach based on promoting technology transfer inclusive of non- nuclear renewal energy source, non-intervention to impose solution to the problem are recommended. Likewise, it was also advocated that there should be a link to be established between the horizontal and vertical proliferation, preference

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54. See, George Perkovich, "Nuclear Third Way in South Asia", *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1993, pp. 91-98.

55. Leonard S. Spector, "Repentant Nuclear Proliferants", *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1992, pp. 21-37.

56. David Albright and Tom Zamora, "India, Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons: All the Pieces in Place", *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, June 1989, p. 26.



for general negotiation on comprehensive test ban treaty and the promise of no first use of nuclear weapons by the nuclear "haves".<sup>57</sup> Further suggestions are also on the offing to basically reach understanding in curbing the ballistic missile proliferation as a means of delivery than eliminating the clandestine nuclear weapons capabilities of the suspect nations. The benefits of this endeavour could be strategic, technical and political as well. Containing ballistic missile could be feasible than clandestine nuclear activity because of its visibility. And the absence of ballistic missiles could make the world less vulnerable than its presence. Though nuclear weapons without ballistic missiles could still be dangerous, the pace of its employment could provide enough time in a crisis situation for diplomacy to take over, and avert the catastrophe. Comparable technical opportunity to enforce a system against the missile proliferation has been provided by the recently achieved understanding on cooperative verification and deployment of missiles which should be further strengthened with collaboration with other states like India and Pakistan. Prohibition on the production of ballistic missile could be politically presented as a truly non-discriminatory in the context of disinclination shown by the five permanent members of the UN towards the system, which may attract the reluctant countries to join the new arms control regime.<sup>58</sup>

The reality in South Asia, however, is different from these intellectual exercises promoting American concerns over non-proliferation for the region. India's approach to nonproliferation is comparably different as it views the problem is neither local nor regional; nuclear nonproliferation should be applied globally. It has, therefore, rejected all the proposals concerning nonproliferation to date. Among them several of the Pakistani proposals in the 1980s were dismissed outright under the pretext that these were externally inspired. As is well known, all these proposals formed a plan to defuse the proliferation hazard regionally or say, within the ambit of

57. Jennifer Scarlott, "Nuclear Proliferation After the Cold War", p. 707.

58. Alton Frye, "Zero Ballistic Missiles". *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1992, pp. 3-20.

the Indo-Pak bilateral relations. Pakistan's bid to make India for simultaneous accession to NPT; acceptance of full scope safeguards for all the nuclear installations; mutual inspection of each others' nuclear facilities; joint renunciation of nuclear weapons; and the establishment of nuclear weapons free zone in South Asia were all categorically brushed aside considering that any semblance of parity should not reflect in Indian decision while dealing on the issue with Pakistan. Another reason for India to reject these attempts was basically its concern of a nuclear China, as these proposals had failed to address the Indian security sensitivities. India had never considered the rationality behind these proposals as it was evident in the condemnation the June 6, 1991, Nawaz Sharif's renewal of the NWFZ proposal received. This proposal for five powers multilateral conference on the problem of proliferation was deemed uncongenial because it was not in conformity of India's global approach to the issue. The crux of the problem was that all these proposals were made by Pakistan, not India. A joke circulating in the Indian strategic community reminds the grievous reality of circumstance: even if Pakistan were to flaunt the Indian proposal word by word, including the one about nuclear proliferation being a global and not regional issue, India will reject it without blinking an eye announcing it to be a brazen attempt by Pakistan to weaken its security interests.

It does not mean, however, to suggest that India has never taken any initiative towards nuclear nonproliferation. India's involvement on the issue could be traced back to its historic resolution it placed at the United Nations General Assembly on October 7, 1948. Its refusal to be a party to the NPT regime in 1968 on the grounds of discrimination was a view vindicating the voices of a majority of countries. The time, however, has changed and the context in which the NPT regime expanded despite its several weaknesses has increasingly isolated India on the issue in the international forum. Recognition of this reality has perceptibly influenced India's approach towards NPT. Though there seems to be no substantial change in India's treatment of the NPT issue as was highlighted by Prime Minister



Narasimha Rao at the UN Security Council meeting in January 1992, by his advocacy of complete disarmament within the year 2000 which reduced the time frame proposed by Rajiv Gandhi at the Third UN Disarmament Session in 1988 by 10 years, subsequent bilateral talks with the United States revealed a new thinking. Speculation about India's participation on the five nation conference to promote nuclear nonproliferation during Indian Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit's visit to Washington and even India's signing of NPT under Article I as a "nuclear weapons power" incensed the domestic politics as it was against the principled consensus developed on the issue.<sup>59</sup> Indian efforts, however, were undoubtedly concentrated to remove the critical chasm surrounding the issue while talking to the United States. In the three rounds of talks so far discussion was held in conjunction to the sensitivities of both countries by vaguely stressing on the "non-discriminatory elements" of the "discriminatory" nonproliferation treaty. Reportedly, these talks have helped narrow the gap between India and the United States on NPT regime. Specifically, during the third round of talks in September last, the NPT was conspicuous by its absence and pondering over an alternative to NPT was enthusiastically undertaken.<sup>60</sup>

Both India and the United States are well aware of the fact that substantial issue has not disappeared altogether. Aside from the growing American pressure, India's sensitivities on nonproliferation were recently exposed to the public over the said to be "unauthorized" seminar held in New Delhi on "Proliferation: A Cost/Benefit Analysis," on November 8-9, 1993. This seminar was jointly sponsored by the US based National Security Research, Inc., and the Russia based INSS, which coincided with a hardening American posture towards India. This tendency is certainly to make the magnitude of problem more difficult to comprehend. There is a school of thought in India that suggests the ripe time for India to adhere

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59. See, Aziz Haniffa, "Dixit Mixes His Signals in D.C.", *India Abroad*, March 20, 1992; Cameron Barr, "Indian Nod Toward Nonproliferation Draws Fire at Home", *Christian Science Monitor*, March 19, 1992; also see *New York Times*, March 11, 1992, p. A-3.

60. Thomas Abraham, "An Alternative to the NPT", *The Hindu*, September 30, 1993; also "US Ready to Think beyond NPT?" *The Hindu*, September 26, 1993.

even to a nuclear option has long passed. Conversely, a majority belongs to the hawkish school who thinks the nuclear option is the best guarantee for India as a bargaining tool while seeking accommodation with both the United States and China which will make the Pakistani problem comfortable. This school stands to vindicate its thinking against the recent American posture that has made the relevance of nuclear weapons in a chaotic world. Both American and Russian nuclear doctrine upholds the potential first use of the weapon which could only be averted by strengthening India's own nuclear capability.

The "minds at war" on the proliferation issue has no near solution. South Asia is set for a nuclear future despite the possible delay in the overt weaponization and deployment process caused by technical, resources problems or the international pressure. What would be the American attitude and how would it likely manage the proliferation problem in the region and what would be the response of South Asian proliferators towards the US initiatives are at best uncertain.

#### THE REGIONAL CONCERN

The third country in South Asia in possession of a nuclear research reactor is Bangladesh which is under IAEA safeguard as required by its adherence to the Non-proliferation treaty. Works concerning Bangladesh's nuclear power plant are at the inventory level. Along with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka are signatories of the NPT regime. These countries have been consistently opposed to proliferation as it is demonstrated in their voting pattern at the UN on the issue. Their support remains principled, not for and against any country, even though such a voting pattern has been considered unfavourably by certain country. Any proposal in relations to non-proliferation gains support by these countries irrespective of some reservation expressed by a certain country because of that nation's particular compulsion.<sup>61</sup>

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61. For example, the Pakistani proposal to make South Asia a nuclear weapon free zone was favourably voted by 104 against 3 and 25 abstention at the UN General Assembly. Then the erstwhile Soviet Union also voted in favour for the first time against India. See *The Hindu*, November 14, 1991.



Nepal and the Maldives were the first two countries of the five South Asian smaller nations to sign the NPT in 1970 at its inception. Among these countries, Nepal and Bhutan are placed in a typical situation: these two are not only landlocked between India and China, they are also sandwiched between these two nuclear weapons powers, the role of which would certainly be counter targeting in future, if not at present. Minus war, even the contingency planning that undertakes counter force targeting across the Sino-Indian border could make the Nepalese and Bhutanese situation the worst one as the perception of themselves being hostage to the nuclear forces of either China or India becomes a reality. Contemplation of the nuclear fallout could become another concern driving these nations towards seeking remedies to their geopolitical tragedy. Similar concern could arise in Bangladesh in contemplation of a case in which the target emplaced in North-east India is hit and destroyed in the eventuality of a nuclear exchange between India and China.

Although, these scenarios could be called farfetched ones given the current scene in Sino-Indian relations, the very existence of nuclear weapons and their planned deployment, however, could not be neglected, if they were meant for deterring each other and for use in case of deterrence failure. For India, the weaponization of its nuclear capability and institutionalizing a security regime with ballistic missiles' induction would be a further ensuring of the relationally perceived Chinese threat. The prospect of demilitarization of conventional forces across the Himalayas would be redundant if they were to be replaced by an array of vastly superior Chinese missile forces in Tibet against Indian deployment.

The Sri Lankan and the Maldivian situation would differ marginally if nuclear weapons were to be trained across the Himalayas in the north and the western landscape across the Indo- Pak border. Unfortunately, these countries too would not be able to escape from the nuclear threat as was evident in the European situation during the cold war. Further the demographic and ecological repercussion caused by radiation, in case of a war, would engulf these tiny countries eventually with the expansion of the

adversaries' nuclear reach. Perhaps the possibility of these countries' encirclement of nuclear weapons powers would be completed, if in the eventuality of South Asian overt nuclear deployment, Indonesia might become tempted to undertake nuclear option (along with the existing US command structure in Deigo Garcia).

Interestingly, none of these countries has made anti-nuclearization in South Asia as a policy choice, apart from the ritual vote at the UN. This procedure at the UN is forgotten once these smaller neighbours of South Asian nuclear powers - India and Pakistan - step down from their multilateral concern to bilateral issues. May be their more traditional priorities in bilateral context are overwhelmingly crucial to be resolved currently than the threat emanating from the nuclearization of the region. But the time now demands South Asian nuclearization should also be on the agenda of immediacy of the problems to be resolved, because the intensification of this neighbourhood problem could be disastrous for all.

What could, then, be the policy that the non-nuclear neighbours in South Asia should evolve; how could they approach the problem - both within the bilateral and multilateral framework as well? What pressure could they bring in to make their concerns more coherent and palatable to both India and Pakistan? On what plank they have to collectively approach China for drawing it out from the seemingly nuclearization of Tibet? Frankly, I do not have any specific answers to these queries, nor do I think the South Asian governments are anxious to find a resolution to these problems. The answers to these questions could be at best at the conjectural level based on certain premises like all these smaller South Asian countries have either close or constructive relationships with both India and Pakistan. Towards China, the bilateral relations of all these smaller countries are in better shape than their bilateral relations with either India or Pakistan. Hence I feel that bilateral understanding could be the best avenue to explore the chances of undertaking a collective pursuit to avert a coming disaster which is desired by none.



The non-nuclear South Asian countries should unilaterally or collectively encourage the anti-nuclear movement in the region by informing and educating the people in the region about the grievous impact of a nuclear exchange, even limited to the theatre of conflict. The modality of the peace movement of Europe in 1983 is before South Asia to learn from and various non-governmental organizations could be instrumental in furthering this objective. It may also be advisable here to take note of the peace dividends witnessed in the classical theatre of conflict in Europe after the cold war. Drastic cuts in the defence funds could be diverted properly for the much needy areas in the pursuits like poverty alleviation. This however has not occurred in South Asia. Resources for the developmental works are still pegged for defence which go unaccounted because these are not even properly mentioned in the regular government budget. Although national security in the military terms remains a priority of every conceivable government, it does not mean however money should be spent irrespective of the need of the real security of the sovereign people it rules. For instance, an estimate in 1983 reveals interestingly the contradictory priority of the government of India in its dilemma of choosing between defence and development. Experts were of the view that Rs. 500 crore a year would be enough for the initial stage of the nuclear weapons development programme which was not a big amount for India in the context of its GNP. But the appropriation of the same Rs. 500 crore a year would have supplied safe drinking water for all Indian villages within 1993,<sup>62</sup> which was, however, not considered. Similarly, the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's hype that "we will eat grass" to acquire nuclear weapons in case of Indian nuclear programme had much satisfied nationalist urge of the time by enlisting Pakistan to be a fiercest enemy of India, nothing else.

Both India and Pakistan today have emerged as nuclear weapons power, the reality however is that they are both entrapped increasingly in the

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62. See, Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Nuclear Weapons? : Options for India*, p. 23. For recent estimate see Nair, *Nuclear India*, pp. 218 and 250.

vicious circles of insecurity dilemma. Both articulate that they have won the support of their respective people behind them to go nuclear. And the governments in both India and Pakistan claim any retreat from the nuclear weapons programmes would be suicidal. Hence, the dilemma. What should then be the other option? Can the smaller neighbours in South Asia provide both India and Pakistan the other option by building public opinion in their respective countries and with a collective appeal? Should they remind the governments and the peoples of India and Pakistan that the deadly game of nuclear war could never be limited to themselves, the physical consequence of the nuclear radiation could be equally disastrous to all of them, even if the effects would be delayed compared to themselves. As both India and Pakistan are engrossed with the thinking of an elusive concept of a limited nuclear war, they have knowingly overlooked a phenomenon that the nuclear exchange could never be limited. Pressed by this thinking the likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons before other means are thoroughly exhausted could be increased by making these weapons a battlefield weapon by providing incentives for preemption and risk major disaster.<sup>63</sup>

Next, a serious note must be taken of an emerging divide between a nuclear and a non-nuclear South Asia. As the nuclear South Asia constitutes the core of a relationship, the rest of the smaller countries will be further marginalized to preserve their interests in the nuclear equation of the region. For the non-nuclear countries, it may be, therefore, of interest to forge an alliance among themselves to jointly raise the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction issue at the SAARC venue - not in the context of a bilaterally contentious form but as a regional concern. As the issue pertains to the concern of all the South Asian countries, neither India nor Pakistan should necessarily construe this move as initiated against either. Intensive preparation through consultations requires this endeavour to materialize. Due attention should also be given to the sensitivities of the target countries with both India and Pakistan informed in advance before moving the issue at the venue.

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63. See, Lawrence Freedman, "Limited War, Unlimited Protest: The Anti-Nuclear Weapons Movement in Europe", in Paul M. Cole and William J. Taylor, eds., *The Nuclear Freeze Debate: Arms Control Issues for the 1980s* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1983).



In the third stage, the non-nuclear South Asian countries could collectively approach China at the highest level and inform their concern about the proliferation ladder. Together they can also use their personal political contacts and influence over the Chinese leadership to consider their concern. If India and Pakistan were also to agree to maintain nuclear restraints, it could lead all the South Asian nations to put certain concrete proposals by clarifying their position in front of China and request the phased withdrawal of missile forces from Tibet in view of emerging detente in Sino-Indian relationship and further accelerate the process of normalization through actualizing the confidence building measures. They could also request for the Chinese reiteration of "no first use" of nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear weapons country in general and reassure India in particular. A regional CBM measure could also provide India its long cherished leadership if it were to agree to forsake its self-interest to promote the collective interest.

Fourthly, the non-nuclear South Asian countries could also attempt to bring in the influence of Japan and Germany - the two non-nuclear economic powers with whom all the South Asian countries have political and economic ties. These countries' helpful economic interests in the region could bear considerably on both India and Pakistan in reasonably tackling the issues related to nuclear proliferation. Unlike the United States, their pressure could also not be called amoral in this regard. Japan and Germany are on record to have expressed dissatisfaction over the nuclear tangle in South Asia. Both these countries have questioned the wisdom of nuclearization; they have, however, not allowed their friendly ties to be maligned with their discord over the proliferation issue.<sup>64</sup> Australia could be another country to join this parley with non-nuclear South Asian Countries aside from Indonesia and Singapore whose influence could help neutralize the dangerous drift towards overt nuclearization.

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64. For the Japanese reservation see, *Times of India*, June 25, 1992; and for the German's view expressed during Chancellor Kohl's visit to India, see, *Times of India*, February 23 and 24, 1993.



One may question the wisdom behind such thinking and the rationality of such endeavour particularly because of the given state of relations in South Asia. The point to be stressed here is that all these could be classified as unconventional measures to be considered against the failures of conventional diplomacy based on bilateralism in the regional setting. Witness the record of over a four decades of conventional diplomacy in the region that had failed to provide even a semblance of peace in South Asia. Major bilateral agreements and treaties like the Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950, Indo-Bangladesh treaty of 1972, the Indo-Pak Simla accord of 1972 and the Indo-Sri Lankan treaty of 1987 did not help their ties to be restored with good neighbourliness. None became a testimony to better relations between the signing parties, hence the ensuing disputes.

These propositions are based on the belief that South Asian futures could not be realistically assessed and practically resolved unless now seemingly unconventional measures are adopted. Planning to make South Asia a secure geopolitical entity does not require a prohibitive high cost expenditure on nuclear weapons, it requires sensitive thinking to make oneself alert to the new possibilities and new insights that will help in taking necessary decisions, and new ways of meeting challenges now and in the future.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The situation in South Asia today is that neither India nor Pakistan is prepared to give up the nuclear option unless their security concerns are addressed entirely. Both believe that either of them have already crossed the nuclear threshold. Their concern therefore relates to avoiding a nuclear crisis in a post proliferation situation. Their focus to seek resolution to the cause of conflict in Kashmir through plebiscite (as Pakistan proposed recently) or work through confining the question to the Simla framework (on which India has persistently stood for), however, has deadlocked the negotiation process by polarizing the situation further. Several confidence building



measures, in such a context, have failed to ameliorate the structure of conflict, instead their conflict has reached no near solution, and perhaps a stage of fatigue.

A significant move towards confidence building measures they have made so far was the agreement to no-attack on each others' nuclear facility. Exchange of information on their respective nuclear activities have furnished theoretically the knowledge they required to know each other, which was though, not previously unknown. This CBM has reduced the chances of a surprise attack, it has however legitimized their mutual rivalries and intransigence as well. But a crucial measure which could really build confidence between the involved parties remains discarded, i.e., the comprehensive verification package, on the ground that this procedure too could not hide clandestine efforts and technically unfeasible at the moment as well. Similarly, agreement on production freeze on fissile materials encountered difficulty as the absence of political understanding makes this CBM measure too self-defeating in its purpose.

As the Indian and Pakistani thinking are increasingly conditioned by the nuclear weapons imperative, any CBMs would be futile unless these correspond to their security needs. Meanwhile, a positive future for South Asia which could lead to nonproliferation through constructive CBMs could be encouraged,

— if the Sino-Indian dialogue were to result into enduring cooperation it could critically alter the Indian security perception by making the relevance of nuclear weapons in India questionable;

— if the global nuclear disarmament were to continue with reconsidered emphasis on CTBT (comprehensive test ban treaty), the "big five" pressure for nonproliferation in the regional context could positively influence the South Asian decision making on the issue;

— if India and Pakistan were to agree on the Line of Actual Control (LoAC) in Kashmir (as Farooq Abdullah has suggested in the recent past), or if they were to agree on joint administration for Kashmir or even agree to put Kashmir under the UN trusteeship for at least ten years and proceed

towards the resolution of the issue either by plebiscite or under the Simla agreement framework.

These measures could considerably deemphasize the growing threat of nuclear proliferation in the region, if not eliminate the threat. Another likely measure that should be considered is the conference of the South Asian states with the participation of the "big five" to identify the means to narrow down the divergent perspectives and forge ahead with the agreed framework to resolve the conflict and the threat emanating therefrom. Or else, should South Asia actualize a prophesy that Brzezinski made in the Fall 1991 issue of the *Foreign Affairs* "Today, on the global scale, war has become a luxury that only poor nations can afford"?



