

Nuclear fears, hopes and realities in Pakistan

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Fifteen years have passed since India and Pakistan carried out back-to-back nuclear weapon tests in May 1998. In this time, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal has been rapidly expanding, alongside a growing capacity to make nuclear weapon materials. An array of nuclear delivery systems has been under development, including weapons for use on the battlefield.¹ Pakistan is said to have the fastest-growing nuclear arsenal in the world.² Pakistan's leaders and much of its public are committed to maintaining and expanding its nuclear weapons programme.

What will it take for Pakistan to reconsider its nuclear posture and to begin to move towards nuclear restraint, arms control and eventual disarmament? In this article we seek answers to this difficult question. Any attempt must take into consideration the way of thinking and structure of feelings that have led much of the country's elite and most of its public to tie the fate of their country to the bomb. It is these ideas and sensibilities that would have to be questioned and set aside by elites and public alike for Pakistan to engage in nuclear disarmament.

Here we sketch out the origin and evolution of now widely shared ways of thinking and feeling that mark the dominant threads in Pakistani discussion and decision-making about the bomb. We outline some of the main hopes invested in the bomb by Pakistan's elite, and suggest why they have not been fulfilled. We then highlight some of the current domestic and regional crises facing Pakistan and the benefits that could accrue to Pakistan from getting past the bomb.

It is well understood that Pakistan sees itself in an arms race with India. Many in Pakistan see India as an existential enemy, and keep fresh memories of the four wars and the many crises between the two countries. Less appreciated are the other drivers of the nuclear buildup that have to do with each of Pakistan's armed services wanting a nuclear role, self-interest on the part of its nuclear establishment,

¹ On Pakistan's recent nuclear development, see Zia Mian, 'Pakistan', in Ray Acheson, ed., *Assuring destruction forever: nuclear weapon modernization around the world* (New York: Reaching Critical Will, 2012), <http://www.princeton.edu/sgs/faculty-staff/zia-mian/Pakistan-nuclear-modernization-2012.pdf>. For a detailed assessment of Pakistan's production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium for nuclear weapons, see International Panel on Fissile Materials, *Global Fissile Material Report 2010: balancing the books—production and stocks* (Princeton, NJ, 2010), <http://ipfmlibrary.org/gfmr10.pdf>. For a 2013 update on stockpiles, see International Panel on Fissile Materials, *Global Fissile Material Report 2013: increasing transparency of nuclear warhead and fissile material stocks as a step toward disarmament* (Princeton, NJ, 2013), <http://ipfmlibrary.org/gfmr13.pdf>. All accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

² Thom Shanker and David Sanger, 'Pakistan is rapidly adding nuclear arms, US says', *New York Times*, 18 May 2009.

increasing redundancy in its arsenal to make sure some weapons will survive an attack, and a desire to deter the United States from attempting to snatch Pakistan's weapons.

For many Pakistanis, the bomb serves many other roles as well. They clutch it passionately as a talisman believed capable of warding off danger and realizing hopes, a source of safety and success, a symbol of national achievement and power. The bomb did not conjure these ideas and feelings into being. All of them existed before Pakistan got the bomb, but were seen as separate and to be achieved in different ways. The power of the bomb, however, was so overwhelming that many in Pakistan thought that it could solve all their problems.

There is dissent, even if there is no national nuclear debate in Pakistan. A small community of civil society groups, of which the authors are members, has long been pressing for nuclear restraint and disarmament and peace with India.³ This nascent movement points out the many dangers and costs of Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons—dangers and costs that imperil a country already torn by its wars and crises, struggling with recurring failures of governance, now manifest in multiple armed insurgencies and widespread sectarian religious and ethnic violence, and riven with social and economic inequalities.⁴ This perspective has gained little currency so far, however.

To be fair, Pakistan is not the first nuclear-armed state to remain in thrall to the power of the bomb despite the dangers and the costs. President Harry Truman, who took the decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, called the atomic bomb the 'greatest thing in history'.⁵ Nevertheless, in 1962, with America trapped in an expanding arms race against the Soviet Union, President John F. Kennedy described the bomb as having turned the world into a prison in which humanity awaits its execution, and called for progress on nuclear disarmament.⁶ More recently, in 2009, in Prague, President Barack Obama declared that: 'As a nuclear power, as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act', and went on: 'I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.'⁷ And yet, despite major reductions in its arsenal through a series of agreements with the Soviet Union and now Russia, the United States still has thousands of nuclear weapons, is investing heavily in modernizing them, and expects to retain them for the indefinite future. Pakistan's path to nuclear restraint and to disarmament may be at least as challenging.

³ See the essays in Smitu Kothari and Zia Mian, eds, *Out of the nuclear shadow* (London and New Delhi: Zed and Lokayan/Rainbow, 2001; 2nd rev. edn Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003); Zia Mian and Smitu Kothari, eds, with K. Bhasin, A. H. Nayyar and M. Tahseen, *Bridging partition: people's initiatives for peace between India and Pakistan* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2010).

⁴ See the essays in Pervez Hoodbhoy, ed., *Confronting the bomb: Pakistani and Indian scientists speak out* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁵ Cited in Richard Rhodes, *The making of the atomic bomb* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), p. 734.

⁶ President John F. Kennedy, State of the Union speech, 11 Jan. 1962, http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/jfk/publicpapers/1962/jfko7_62.html, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

⁷ Remarks by President Barack Obama, Hradcany Square, Prague, Czech Republic, 5 April 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

The path from nuclear ambivalence

In the beginning, there was little enthusiasm in Pakistan for making the bomb. In the first decade after gaining independence from Britain in 1947, only a small band of scientists and military leaders thought it might ever be necessary or possible for the country to build the bomb.⁸ It was not discussed and did not figure large in the national consciousness—except when driven by outside events such as nuclear weapons tests by the United States and the Soviet Union, and the idea of the ‘Atoms for Peace’ programme.

Some of Pakistan’s elite were hopeful of one day having a nuclear option. They found opportunity to make their case from the 1960s, against the background of public arguments in India in favour of building a bomb and progress in India’s plutonium separation programme. They were turned down by General Ayub Khan, the first Pakistani army chief, who seized power in a military coup in 1958 and ruled for over a decade. Ayub preferred strengthening Pakistan’s conventional military forces and building alliances with the United States and, later, China.

While Ayub Khan was not particularly concerned about India’s possible nuclearization, his young Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, saw both danger and opportunity. Bhutto had been exposed to nuclear thinking in the early years of the Cold War, while a student in the United States in the late 1940s and then in Britain in the early 1950s. A populist, deeply insecure autocrat who built his subsequent career around slogans of Islamic socialism and anti-Indianism, Bhutto argued for the bomb in Pakistan’s cabinet as well as publicly. In 1965, asked about Pakistan’s response to the prospect of India developing nuclear weapons, Bhutto replied famously: ‘We should have to eat grass and get one, or buy one, of our own.’⁹

As India pressed ahead with its nuclear programme, even General Ayub Khan began to worry. His diary entry for 14 January 1967 records a visit from Glenn Seaborg, chairman of the United States Atomic Energy Commission. Responding to Seaborg’s assessment that India might be capable of making sufficient plutonium for a few nuclear weapons a year, Ayub Khan noted grimly: ‘If India was to acquire atomic military capability, we shall have to follow suit and it will just ruin us both.’¹⁰

Meanwhile, Bhutto hardened his argument for a nuclear Pakistan. In his book *The myth of independence*, written in 1967 after leaving his post as foreign minister, Bhutto declared:

Pakistan’s security and territorial integrity are more important than economic development ... All wars of our age have become total wars; all European strategy is based on the concept of total war; and it will have to be assumed that a war waged against Pakistan is capable of becoming a total war. It would be dangerous to plan for less and our plans

⁸ Zia Mian, ‘Fevered with dreams of the future: the coming of the atomic age to Pakistan’, in Itty Abraham, ed., *South Asia cultures of the bomb* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

⁹ Quoted in Patrick Keatley, ‘The brown bomb’, *Guardian* (Manchester), 11 March 1965.

¹⁰ Craig Baxter, ed., *Diaries of Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan 1966–1972* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 49.

should, therefore, include the nuclear deterrent ... our problem in its essence, is how to obtain such a weapon in time before the crisis begins.¹¹

Bhutto got his chance in the wake of the 1971 civil war between East and West Pakistan, during which India's military intervention in support of the pro-independence Bengali forces in East Pakistan tipped the balance and helped establish it as Bangladesh. In January 1972, barely a month after taking office as president of Pakistan, Bhutto called senior scientists and engineers to a meeting in Multan and tasked them to begin building a bomb. Given Bhutto's longstanding commitment to the bomb, it is quite possible that he would have launched a nuclear weapons programme when he came to power, regardless of the defeat in the 1971 war.

The quest for the bomb became a scramble in 1974, following India's first nuclear test. But India's test had brought international sanctions and concerns about Pakistan following suit. Pakistan took an official position that its suddenly stepped-up nuclear programme was entirely for peaceful uses. The lie convinced very few, if any. It was an open secret that Pakistan had a bomb programme, and before the end of the decade the world came to know about the uranium enrichment plant at Kahuta and its soon-to-be-famous head, Abdul Qadeer Khan.¹²

In the four decades since that meeting in Multan, the bomb has become a major part of the Pakistani national sensibility and imagination. Belief in the bomb has been nurtured by national leaders including Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and, later, his daughter (herself twice prime minister) Benazir Bhutto, the current Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (now in office for the third time), and Generals Zia ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf, who ruled the country for almost a decade each, as well as by Pakistan's political and military elites, the bomb-builders and much of the media. It has taken hold to the point that it has come to be regarded as common sense by many in Pakistan.

Ensuring Pakistan's security?

Many Pakistanis believe that India threatens their country and seeks to destroy it, and that only acquiring the bomb has prevented this. This belief comes from a conviction that the defeat in the 1971 war was attributable to military weakness and a determination that such a situation should not recur. This narrative has been offered repeatedly in public by A. Q. Khan. He wrote in 1986, for instance: 'The deep-rooted Pakistani fears of India, especially after its dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971, puts tremendous pressure on Pakistan to take appropriate

¹¹ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *Myth of independence* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 152–3.

¹² A 1979 *Washington Post* article, for instance, identified the Kahuta site, the enrichment facility there, and its purpose: 'Behind an eight-foot-high stone wall near the sleepy town of Kahuta, 40 miles from Pakistan's capital of Islamabad, a clock is ticking for mankind ... Within three to five years by official United States estimate, and sooner in the reckoning of some, the heavily guarded industrial plant under construction there will produce enough highly enriched uranium for Pakistan to explode an atomic bomb.' It names A. Q. Khan as the Pakistani scientist who had acquired 'blueprints for the plant' from the uranium enrichment centrifuge facility at Almelo, Holland, and was now heading Kahuta. Don Oberdorfer, 'Pakistan: the quest for atomic bomb', *Washington Post*, 27 Aug. 1979.

measures to avoid a nuclear Munich at India's hands in the event of an actual conflict, which many Pakistanis think very real.'¹³

Over time, A. Q. Khan has made explicit that he believes the bomb could have saved Pakistan in 1971. He claimed in 2011: 'If we had had nuclear capability before 1971, we would not have lost half of our country—present-day Bangladesh—after disgraceful defeat.'¹⁴ Little thought is given in such assertions to the possibility that the Bengalis in East Pakistan, the majority population in the whole country, had good reasons for their rebellion against the unjust and unequal treatment meted out to them by the ruling elite concentrated in West Pakistan, and deserved independence.

Like A. Q. Khan, the Pakistani media, especially the Urdu press, take it for granted that India continues to be an imminent threat that needs to be countered. At the time of the nuclear tests in May 1998, a leading Urdu newspaper (others carried similar accounts) wrote:

It has been learnt through reliable sources that Pakistan has started installing 'deterrents' on its missiles. The missiles carry a 'deterrent' that can foil any enemy attack instantly. In the case of any foreign aggression, these 'deterrent'-carrying missiles will be used as the 'first option', not the 'last option'. This will foil the evil designs of the enemy.¹⁵

The officially sponsored national celebration on the first anniversary of the nuclear tests, *yum-e-takbir* (the day of reaffirming faith), was a riotous affair. In spite of the economic pain resulting from sanctions imposed by western powers, there was mass jubilation. Looking at speeches and articles from around that time, some common themes emerge: Pakistan has become impregnable; it is now strong and no one can threaten it; Indian expansionism has been checkmated; the nation can be proud because we have stood up for ourselves and defied the Great Powers.

These sentiments persist even today. It is believed that India's willingness and ability to use its superior conventional military capability have been sharply reduced by Pakistan's nuclear capability. Indian restraint during the 1999 Kargil war, the subsequent failure of Indian efforts at coercive diplomacy in 2001–2002 and the muted reaction to the attacks on Mumbai in 2008 are seen as attesting to the central lesson of the nuclear age: it is not worth going to war against a nuclear-armed adversary on a matter that is of less than national life-or-death importance.

It is interesting to note that senior Pakistani officials, and also the country's press, frequently refer to the country's 'nuclear assets'; the term 'nuclear deterrent' is not commonly used, except by the handful of professional Pakistani strategic analysts. In fact, there is no widely used Urdu equivalent of 'deterrent'—the word *sad-e-jareehat* (deterrence) would be unfamiliar to most speakers of Urdu as the equivalent of 'deterrence'. This reflects the fact that nuclear weapons are conceived of as providing Pakistan with more than just the ability to 'deter' an

¹³ Abdul Qadeer Khan, 'The spread of nuclear weapons among nations: militarization of development', in Sadruddin Agha Khan, ed., *Nuclear war, nuclear proliferation and their consequences* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 423.

¹⁴ Abdul Qadeer Khan, 'I saved my country from nuclear blackmail', *Newsweek*, 16 May 2011.

¹⁵ 'Pakistan installing missiles at border', *Jang* (Rawalpindi), 22 May 1998.

aggressor; they also provide proof of Pakistan's parity with India and its viability as a nation, and serve as a symbol of technological achievement. These aspects are discussed further below.

For the past decade, Pakistan's search for recognition as a peer of India has focused on demanding that the West accord Pakistan a formal nuclear status on a par with India, and the lack of such recognition is seen as unfair discrimination and proof of prejudice against Pakistan. The Pakistani demand was triggered by the January 2004 US–India 'Statement on the next steps in strategic partnership', which codified a special strategic relationship under which the United States agreed to assist India with its civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programme, missile defence, and high-technology dual-use trade. This began the process of lifting the US nuclear sanctions that had been imposed on India after its 1974 nuclear test. The sanctions were internationalized through the 46-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which agreed guidelines on sales of nuclear reactors, nuclear fuel and related technologies. These guidelines require that countries be parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as non-nuclear weapon states and have International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards on all their nuclear facilities, and so exclude India, Pakistan and Israel. In 2008, under pressure from the United States, the NSG agreed to exempt India from these provisions. Pakistan demands a similar waiver.

Giving up the bomb would bring tangible benefits to Pakistan. The danger of a nuclear war with India, deliberate or accidental, would be eliminated. Today, unwanted or accidental war between Pakistan and India is not outside the realm of possibility. Indeed, soon after the crisis precipitated by India's Brasstacks exercises along the Pakistani border in 1986, General Zia ul-Haq is said to have remarked: 'Neither India nor Pakistan wanted to go to war but we could have easily gone to war.'¹⁶ That such a war could now perhaps lead to a catastrophic nuclear exchange by deliberate decision, misunderstanding of instructions, sabotage or ideology is a fearsome thought. Nor can the possibility of unauthorized use of a nuclear weapon by a pilot or missile field commander be ruled out.

Despite the history of wars and crises, and concern about parity-of-status issues, there is widespread desire in Pakistan for better relations with India and for diplomatic solutions. A 2012 Pew poll found that over two-thirds of Pakistanis support peace talks with India and about 60 per cent support increased bilateral trade.¹⁷ It is now increasingly common to see Indian vegetables for sale in Pakistani markets, including staples of the Pakistani diet such as tomatoes and chillies.¹⁸ The large-scale import of electricity from India (under discussion at least since 2011) would benefit Pakistani industries currently shut down for want of power, as well as alleviating the suffering of domestic consumers.¹⁹ This is far from the idea of India

¹⁶ Cited in *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hong Kong, 1988), p. 71.

¹⁷ Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, 'Deepening economic doubts in India', 10 Sept. 2012, <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2012/09/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Project-India-Report-FINAL-September-10-2012.pdf>, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

¹⁸ 'As floods ravage Sindh, Pakistan imports vegetables from India', *Express Tribune*, 19 Sept. 2011; Aamir Shafaat Khan, 'Potato import may cost over \$60m', *Dawn*, 9 May 2014.

¹⁹ Zafar Bhutta, 'Pakistan all set to import electricity from India', *Express Tribune*, 20 March 2014.

as an 'existential' threat that advocates of the Pakistani bomb have tried so hard to cultivate in the Pakistani people.

Keeping India at bay is now not the only reason why Pakistan is expanding its nuclear arsenal, however. Many in Pakistan are convinced that the country's nuclear weapons are threatened by America, and believe that having more weapons would make a weapon-snatch more difficult. This perception is reinforced by the many statements by key US officials and related military planning over the past decade. A key exchange came in 2005 during the confirmation of Condoleezza Rice as Secretary of State under President George W. Bush; in response to a question by Senator John Kerry about a possible successful coup in Pakistan leading to 'nuclear weapons in the hand of a radical Islamic state', Rice replied: 'We have noted this problem, and we are prepared to try to deal with it.'²⁰ The veteran national security reporter Seymour Hersh revealed in 2009 that: 'An American former senior intelligence official said that a team that has trained for years to remove or dismantle parts of the Pakistani arsenal has now been augmented by a unit of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), the élite counterterrorism group.'²¹

Pakistani fears mounted after the May 2011 US raid that killed Osama bin Laden in the city of Abbotabad. Two weeks later Senator John Kerry, then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, came to Islamabad. Chief of Army Staff Ashfaq Pervez Kayani used a private session with Kerry and Pakistan's President and Prime Minister to seek a written assurance that the United States would not try to seize the country's nuclear weapons. Kerry apparently said he was prepared to 'write in blood' such an assurance.²²

Destroying or seizing Pakistan's nuclear weapons is probably not a feasible option for an external power. Given that the weapons are mobile and hidden, locating all of them would be a very demanding task, if not impossible without insider assistance. Even if the weapons were found and seized or destroyed, the capacity to make more would remain. Actual denuclearization of Pakistan would require that the plutonium production reactors, reprocessing plants, uranium enrichment plants and weapon assembly facilities also be eliminated. It would require military action little short of a major war. This, together with the retaliation that would inevitably follow, would be catastrophic.

If war against Pakistan is not an option, the only sensible way out is to explore stabilizing mechanisms. It is self-evident that only a stable Pakistani state can make progress on nuclear arms control, restrain the buildup, begin reductions and move towards nuclear disarmament. In this regard, it is worrying that the state's authority continues to be whittled down, both inside and outside Pakistan's tribal areas. This is evident from the military's indecisive actions against the Pakistani

²⁰ United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 'The nomination of Dr Condoleezza Rice to be Secretary of State', 18–19 Jan. 2005, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-109shrg22847/pdf/CHRG-109shrg22847.pdf>, p. 128.

²¹ Seymour M. Hersh, 'Defending the arsenal: in an unstable Pakistan, can nuclear warheads be kept safe?', *New Yorker*, 16 Nov. 2009.

²² David E. Sanger, *Confront and conceal: Obama's secret war and surprising use of American power* (New York: Random House, 2012), p. 109.

Taliban organization (the TTP) and the more narrowly sectarian Islamic groups that have targeted minority religious communities and prominent figures without being effectively countered by state power.

Unless the state finds sufficient resolve to confront the Islamist militancy, it might find itself overwhelmed over the next few years. In many areas of the Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province, armed militias have set up parallel governments. In 2013, in his final Independence Day address, Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani painted a grim picture: 'The menace of terrorism and extremism has claimed thousands of lives ... it is Pakistan and its valiant people who are a target of this war and are suffering tremendously.'²³ Kayani's successor, General Raheel Sharif, is credited with having helped in shaping this perspective. He is described as believing the threat to Pakistan from Islamist militants is at least as important as the one the army sees from India.²⁴

Unlike Kayani, Raheel Sharif has shown some inclination to take on the militants. In June 2014, the Pakistan army launched a large-scale invasion of North Waziristan. Whether operation Zarb-e-Azb will eventually succeed in reducing the militant threat remains to be seen. It has, however, resulted in as many as a million refugees fleeing to safer areas of Pakistan and across the border into Afghanistan.

The bomb has proved no help in fighting Islamic insurgents. On the contrary, it has become a source of concern, as fears grow of militants seizing nuclear weapons or materials and unleashing nuclear terrorism.²⁵ This has led to the creation of a dedicated force of over 20,000 troops to guard nuclear facilities. There is no reason to assume, however, that this force would be immune to the problems associated with the units guarding regular military facilities. Insider help has featured in a number of militant attacks on heavily guarded military bases across Pakistan, including the army's general headquarters in Rawalpindi. Giving up nuclear weapons would resolve once and for all the challenge of defending these weapons against internal enemies.

Resolving Kashmir?

Many Pakistanis hoped that with the acquisition of nuclear weapons, the resolution of the long-immobilized dispute with India over the people and territory of Kashmir could somehow be quickened—and, of course, in Pakistan's favour.²⁶ Less clearly understood was how this was to happen. It was around the time when the first bomb was ready—about 1987—that a new idea worked its way into the Pakistan army's strategic thinking. Nuclear weapons could be an umbrella from

²³ Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, address on the eve of the Day of the Martyrs 2013, Rawalpindi, 30 April 2013, http://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2013/4/30, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

²⁴ Mehreen Zahra-Malik, 'Pakistan chooses moderate to take over as army chief', Reuters, 27 Nov. 2013.

²⁵ Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'Post bin Laden: the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal', in Hoodbhoy, ed., *Confronting the bomb*.

²⁶ See Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'Kashmir: from nuclear flashpoint to South Asia's bridge of peace?', in Hoodbhoy, ed., *Confronting the bomb*.

under which Pakistan could support militant groups to wage a low-cost war against Indian forces based in Kashmir.

The covert war had two goals. The first was to weaken India by raising the human and economic costs of occupation. The bomb would protect Pakistan against possible Indian retaliatory cross-border raids. At some point, Pakistan's military reasoned, it would become too much trouble for the Indians to hang on to Kashmir. The second objective was to internationalize a local dispute by raising fears of nuclear escalation. As a way to frame the problem, Pakistani officials and soon others started using the term 'nuclear flashpoint' for Kashmir. The hope was to draw in western intermediaries and force India to the bargaining table.

The basic approach was put to the test in the 1999 Kargil crisis, when the Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf, sent Pakistani troops out of uniform along with Islamist militant fighters to seize strategic positions in the high mountains of the Kargil area on the Indian side of the line of control in Kashmir. To the surprise of Pakistan's military planners and strategists, India vigorously counter-attacked, threatening a military disaster for Pakistan; and, worse, Pakistan stood isolated diplomatically. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif flew to Washington to seek support and a way out, and was rebuffed. He agreed to immediate withdrawal.

Since then, contrary to what had been anticipated by Pakistan, global interest in intervention in the Kashmir dispute has shrunk despite the threat of nuclear escalation. The focus of geopolitics has moved to the threat of radical Islam and to the rise of China. Meanwhile, India has emerged as a major player in the world market for labour, goods and capital, while Pakistan is seen as unstable and a haven for terrorism. In 2003, Pakistan was compelled to offer India a ceasefire in Kashmir.²⁷ It held, largely, for the next decade. At the same time, the Kashmiri independence movement seems to have run out of steam. In 2013 in Kashmir, schools were open, tourists were back and European countries had rescinded their advice to travellers to avoid the area. The bomb resolved nothing.

Tensions over Kashmir could resurface, however—as threatened to happen in 2013 when Indian and Pakistani forces exchanged fire across the line of control.²⁸ A possible resumption of Pakistani-backed militant attacks in Kashmir is expected after the United States withdraws from Afghanistan.²⁹ Kashmiri separatist leaders visiting Pakistan in December 2012 reported meeting Islamist militant leaders Hafiz Saeed, the head of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, and Seyed Salahuddin of Hizbul Mujahideen, who indicated that 'militancy in Kashmir would escalate after the US-led international troops depart from Afghanistan in 2014'.³⁰

²⁷ Luke Harding, 'Pakistan offers cease fire', *Guardian*, 13 Aug. 2003.

²⁸ 'Pakistan accuses Indian troops of killing soldier in latest attack along Kashmir border', *Washington Post*, 22 Aug. 2013; 'Kashmir attack could put India–Pakistan peace talks on ice', *Christian Science Monitor*, 6 Aug. 2013.

²⁹ Frank Jack Daniel and Sanjeev Miglani, 'Insight: as Afghanistan endgame looms, India–Pakistan tensions rise', *Reuters*, 13 Aug. 2013; Aijaz Hussain and Katy Daigle, 'India fears more militants as US quits Afghanistan', Associated Press, 9 Nov. 2013; 'As US role in Afghanistan winds down, Kashmir winds up', 13 Aug. 2013, *The American Interest*, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/blog/2013/08/13/as-us-role-in-afghanistan-winds-down-kashmir-winds-up>, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

³⁰ 'Hurriyat delegation meets Hafiz Saeed and Salahuddin', *Tehelka.com*, Jan. 2013 <http://www.tehelka.com/jihad-will-revive-in-kashmir-in-2014-hafiz-saeed-salahuddin-tell-hurriyat-delegation/>, accessed 6 Aug. 2014.

In a Pakistan without the bomb, state-backed jihadist groups such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, who today feel protected by the nuclear shield, would be more strongly constrained and could not expect to attack India freely. This would certainly redound to Pakistan's benefit, because a major Pakistan-based attack upon India could bring disaster.

A new national spirit?

For the elite in Pakistan, the bomb has been welcomed as a new instrument for nation-building.³¹ It is presented as a national achievement by the state and the elite, and as deserving of public support. Support for the bomb and bomb-makers serves both to strengthen and to express patriotism. As a corollary, dissent becomes treason. Thus, even in the mid-1980s, during the years of Zia ul-Haq's brutal military dictatorship, *The Muslim*, considered then to be the most liberal Pakistani newspaper, berated the few anti-nuclear voices: 'Anybody opposed to the Kahuta Enrichment Plant must be treated as a traitor of Pakistan, and the national consensus in favour of Kahuta is irrevocable and irreversible and no referendum is needed to ascertain it.'³²

Pakistan is not the first state to have used the bomb as an instrument for building or consolidating a national spirit and bolstering support for the ruling elite. One need only recall Charles de Gaulle's exclamation after the first French nuclear test on 13 February 1960: 'Hurray for France! From this morning she is stronger and prouder.'³³ The bomb adds to the repertoire of tools for nation-building, which involves both propaganda and the creation of state and national symbols such as buildings, holidays, flags, anthems, sports teams and, of course, military might. The goal is to unify the disparate peoples within a state under the leadership of the existing elite, reduce internal conflict, and so create the conditions for economic and political governance without, or with less, resort to coercion.

The nuclear tests of May 1998 led to mass celebrations in Pakistan, inspired and organized by the government. TV programmes showed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif congratulating cheering citizens against a backdrop of the nuclear test site in the Chagai mountains in Balochistan. The euphoric press compared this historic moment with the birth of Pakistan in 1947, and Pakistan's bomb-makers became national heroes. Schoolchildren were handed free badges bearing pictures of mushroom clouds, poetry competitions on the theme of the bomb were organized, and bomb and missile replicas were erected in public spaces in major cities.

Since then, the surge of bomb-inspired nationalism has largely subsided, except in the cities of Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province. The bomb has healed none of the class, religious, ethnic and linguistic divisions that have always been a serious problem for leaders in Pakistan. Angry Sindhis want water and jobs, and they blame Punjab for taking these away. The Baloch say that their mineral riches

³¹ Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'Nationalism and the bomb', in Hoodbhoy, ed., *Confronting the bomb*.

³² *The Muslim* (Islamabad), 2 Oct. 1985.

³³ Cited in Jacques C. Hymans, *The psychology of nuclear proliferation: identity, emotions and foreign policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 86.

have been expropriated by the state, and many have taken up arms and demand that Punjab's army get off their land. The Pathans seek protection from Taliban suicide bombers and drone attacks by the United States, and find the Pakistan army and its nuclear weapons unable to offer it.

A leader among Islamic countries?

Some in Pakistan saw in the bomb an opportunity to play a leadership role in the Muslim world or *umma*.³⁴ Pakistan was created in the quest for a homeland for India's Muslims, and is now the world's second most populous Muslim country. As a nuclear power, Pakistan would stand tall alongside the much older, more established and richer Muslim nations and be their defender.

The hope of creating a common defence for the *umma* was promoted by numerous Islamist parties in Pakistan, most notably the Jamaat-e-Islami. They cheered the bomb and in street demonstrations claimed it for Islam rather than just Pakistan. Much of the media were similarly enthusiastic about the wider appeal of the bomb.

Some bomb-makers embraced this role. In an interview, A. Q. Khan said that a correspondent from an Arab newspaper based in Islamabad had come to him a few days after the tests: 'She kissed my hands with tears in her eyes and prayers on her lips. She was trembling while telling me "You have made Muslims stand proudly in the world." Inshallah we are back again on the path of greatness.'³⁵ There was some truth to this. Many in Muslim nations as diverse as Iran and Saudi Arabia were pleased at Pakistan's successful nuclear tests. Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi congratulated Pakistan on its achievement: 'From all over the world, Muslims are happy that Pakistan has this capability.'³⁶ Saudi Arabia went further: it provided Pakistan with 50,000 barrels per day of free oil to help it cope with the international sanctions triggered by the May 1998 nuclear tests.

Pakistan's relationship with the Arab world, and especially with Saudi Arabia, has been a double-edged sword. Large gifts from Saudi princes and religious institutions have contributed to the mushrooming and radicalization of Islamic groups and institutions in Pakistani society. The Pakistani *madrassa* system, widely seen as a network of training centres for Islamic militants, is partially funded by Saudi and other Gulf state donors. Pakistani jihadists and fighters from elsewhere trained in Pakistan are seen as a threat by a growing number of countries.

Whatever it has gained in standing among some Muslim nations by going nuclear, Pakistan's present international image is terrible. It is seen as a praetorian state run by an unaccountable army; a country at war with itself, overrun by terrorists and a source of potential nuclear terrorism; a country whose people are trapped in misery, without security, health or education; a nation locked in conflict with all its neighbours except China; and a dangerous destination for foreigners. In 2013, a poll conducted by the BBC in 24 countries ranked Pakistan

³⁴ Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the "Islamic bomb"', in Hoodbhoy, ed., *Confronting the bomb*.

³⁵ *Daily Jasarat*, special supplement, 1 June 1999.

³⁶ 'Pakistan claims it has new missile', *Washington Post*, 2 June 1998.

the second most unpopular country in the world, ahead only of Iran: the bottom five on the list were Iran, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel and Russia.³⁷

Along with its image problem, stemming from the growing presence and power of Islamist militants, Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme has also emerged as a source of a possible future crisis in its relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia. Although A. Q. Khan secretly sold early-generation centrifuges to Iran, Pakistan is wary of Iran's becoming a nuclear weapon state. Leaked US diplomatic cables made available by WikiLeaks detail Pakistan's efforts to dissuade Iran from pursuing its weapons programme. In an April 2006 meeting with US Senator Chuck Hagel, Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri provided a list of other reasons why Pakistan was so keen to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, including that 'we are the only Moslem country [with such a weapon] and don't want anyone else to get it'.³⁸ With its large minority Shi'i population under increasingly frequent violent attack from radical Sunni Islamists, Pakistani policy-makers' concern about the Iranian nuclear programme may be based in part on the prospect of a nuclear-armed Shi'i state on its border.

The possibility that Iran might some day choose to cross the nuclear threshold has already triggered demands in Saudi Arabia, the self-professed leader of the Sunni Muslim community, to follow suit and seek its own bomb, with one senior Saudi adviser claiming that it was 'inconceivable that there would be a day when Iran had a nuclear weapon and Saudi Arabia did not'.³⁹ Sunni Saudi Arabia has seen Shi'i Iran as its primary enemy since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, and the two states have vied for influence across the Muslim world.

Saudi Arabia may turn to Pakistan to fulfil its nuclear ambitions. Some already fear an outright transfer of nuclear weapons by Pakistan.⁴⁰ Saudi Arabia, after all, provided major funding for Pakistan's nuclear programme in the 1970s; it is said that suitcases of cash were brought into Pakistan from Saudi Arabia (as well as Libya). In gratitude, Bhutto renamed the city of Lyallpur Faisalabad, after King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi footprint in Pakistan has grown steadily deeper since the early 1970s. Pakistan has received more aid from Saudi Arabia than any country outside the Arab world since the 1960s. For Pakistan to hand over some of its nuclear weapons to Saudi Arabia, or even extend a nuclear umbrella over the kingdom, would likely fuel great concern in Iran and in the larger international community, and bring new problems for Pakistan.

Saudi Arabia's route to nuclear weapons may be more circumspect, however. It may seek to build a nuclear weapons capability by acquiring nuclear reactors for electricity generation. Uranium enrichment can be pursued under cover of making nuclear fuel, and the spent fuel from power reactors can be reprocessed for

³⁷ BBC World Service and GlobeScan/PIPA, 'Country rating poll', 22 May 2013, [http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/2013/Country Rating Poll.pdf](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/2013/Country%20Rating%20Poll.pdf), accessed 6 Aug. 2014.

³⁸ US Embassy Islamabad, 'With Senator Hagel, Foreign Minister Kasuri pushes for civil nuclear transfers and warns that a military attack on Iran would mean disaster for Pakistan', cable 06ISLAMABAD6647_a, 17 April 2006, http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06ISLAMABAD6647_a.html, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

³⁹ Jason Burke, 'Saudi Arabia worries about stability, security and Iran', *Guardian*, 29 June 2011.

⁴⁰ Mark Urban, 'Saudi nuclear weapons "on order" from Pakistan', BBC, 6 Nov. 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24823846>, accessed 6 Aug. 2014.

plutonium. But for all its wealth, Saudi Arabia does not have the domestic technical and scientific base to create a nuclear energy infrastructure. Driven by both ideological and economic interests, veterans of Pakistan's nuclear programme could be enthusiastic about supplying Saudi Arabia with the engineering and scientific skills to help it become nuclear weapons-capable. As with a more direct state-to-state transfer, the regional and international consequences for Pakistan would be grave.

Giving up the bomb would not remove all these problems, but it would be conducive to a much more positive international view of Pakistan and reduce the likelihood of its being caught up in the sectarian and regional power struggles between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and trapped at the centre of global fears of further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

A new age of self-reliance?

Announcing the nuclear tests in May 1998, Prime Minister Sharif declared it to be an 'auspicious day ... an historic event for us'. The tests would bring international sanctions, and for Pakistan to endure them would need national sacrifice and self-reliance. He declared that:

Without sacrifices, no nation can either stand on its feet or can become strong and worthy of respect ... I wish this day had come earlier so that we could have manage[d] our demands according to our resources ... The time itself has given us a golden chance to stand on our own feet by giving up the path of borrowing ... Hard and difficult times will come. Hardships will increase. But if you keep your morale high and accept the challenge boldly, there is no reason that we will not be successful in this test. This is a chance to show your capabilities. Do not let this chance go to waste.⁴¹

Fifteen years later, Pakistan remains a poor, underdeveloped economy dependent on foreign aid and assistance, and on remittances from expatriate Pakistani workers. In December 2013, Pakistan received \$554 million from the International Monetary Fund as part of a three-year \$6.6 billion bailout to stabilize the economy.⁴² Explaining the loan, the head of the IMF's mission to Pakistan said: 'Pakistan is in a difficult economic situation right now ... To avoid a full-blown crisis and a collapse of the currency, the government decided to seek financial assistance from the IMF. In addition, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other partners have offered significant financial support.'⁴³

The World Bank currently gives Pakistan over \$1.2 billion per year in economic assistance, observing that the country is 'trapped in a low growth equilibrium, lower than other South Asian countries ... due to macroeconomic instability, low investment and savings, a business-unfriendly environment, and low productivity'.⁴⁴ The Asian Development Bank, which has provided Pakistan with

⁴¹ Speech by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, 28 May 1998, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/monitoring/102445.stm>, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

⁴² Anwar Iqbal, 'IMF approves \$6.68bn loan for Pakistan', *Dawn*, 5 Sept. 2013.

⁴³ 'Pakistan gets \$6.6 billion loan from IMF', *IMF Survey*, 4 Sept. 2013.

⁴⁴ World Bank, *Pakistan partnership: country program snapshot*, Oct. 2013, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/10/09/000333037_20131009142935/Rendered/PDF/817160WPOp

loans totalling more than \$22.6 billion since its foundation in 1966, currently provides Pakistan with about \$1.5 billion per year on average.⁴⁵ Even more generous has been support from the United States, which since 2002 alone has provided Pakistan with over \$26 billion in economic and military aid.⁴⁶ All aid figures should, however, be seen against the backdrop of remittances which, in 2013, totalled \$14.9 billion. This suggests that aid can have only limited leverage in influencing Pakistan's policies.

It would, however, be a mistake to assume that Pakistan's economic situation is so dire that the country is teetering on the brink of collapse. The government of Nawaz Sharif was able to reduce the value of the dollar significantly, from a record high of 108 rupees in November 2013 to 98 rupees in May 2014. An injection of approximately \$1.5 billion by a 'brotherly country' (widely assumed to be Saudi Arabia, which thereby bought Pakistani support for anti-Assad forces in Syria), and expressions of greater confidence by the IMF and World Bank, have improved expectations of GDP growth in fiscal year 2014.

The bomb clearly has not reduced Pakistan's massive dependence on foreign aid and borrowing. If anything, aid dependence has increased since the nuclear tests of 1998. In its first 15 years the nuclear state has failed its people, just as the non-nuclear state did in the five decades before it tested nuclear weapons. Today, Pakistan's people are poor and many lack any reliable source of shelter, water, food, health care, education, electricity or even law and order. The most recent Government of Pakistan National Nutrition Survey, carried out in 2011, found that over 58 per cent of the population were food insecure and over 45 per cent of the heads of households were illiterate—data which showed very little had changed since the previous survey a decade earlier, in 2001, which had reported 'a dire malnutrition situation in Pakistan'.⁴⁷ In fact, the data showed that in the period 2001–11 the nutritional and health situation had actually worsened for the most vulnerable.

Resources have been found, however, for massive investment in nuclear weapons, with the creation of an entire industrial complex for the production of nuclear weapons and delivery systems.⁴⁸ Each such weapon is a highly complex piece of equipment. Much of the metallization and weapon fabrication work is done in and around the Heavy Mechanical Complex in Taxila and the adjoining military city of Wah.⁴⁹ The technologies involved are typical of those used in medium-tech industries.

akisoBox0379824BooPUBLICo.pdf, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

⁴⁵ 'Asian Development Bank and Pakistan', Asian Development Bank, 31 Dec. 2012, <http://www.adb.org/countries/pakistan/main>, accessed 6 Aug. 2014.

⁴⁶ Susan B. Epstein and K. Alan Kronstadt, 'Pakistan: US foreign assistance', Congressional Research Service, 1 July 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41856.pdf>, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

⁴⁷ Planning Commission, Planning and Development Division, *National Nutrition Survey 2011* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 2011).

⁴⁸ Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'Pakistan: understanding the "world's fastest growing arsenal"', in Hoodbhoy, ed., *Confronting the bomb*.

⁴⁹ The Heavy Mechanical Complex (HMC), together with the Heavy Forge Factory, is the biggest undertaking of its type in Pakistan and was established in 1979 with Chinese assistance. HMC has computer-aided design facilities and also manufactures equipment for hydroelectric and thermal power plants, chemical plants, and other installations.

Although Pakistan claims nuclear self-reliance, Chinese help has been critical to the success of Pakistan's military and civil nuclear programmes for over 40 years. It is quite likely that Pakistan would eventually have succeeded in developing nuclear weapons without Chinese assistance, but it would certainly have taken longer. According to A. Q. Khan, China supplied 15 tons of UF₆ (uranium hexafluoride) for Pakistan's uranium enrichment centrifuges and 50 kilograms of highly enriched uranium (enough for at least two weapons), together with a blueprint for a simple weapon that China had previously tested, thus providing a virtual do-it-yourself kit.⁵⁰ Chinese help was also important in the development of Pakistan's ballistic missiles.⁵¹

China's assistance has been a closely guarded secret; it does not figure significantly even in recent semi-official accounts and features not at all in the public understanding of the history and image of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme.⁵² Instead, there is a general impression among elite and public alike that China is a reliable strategic ally that, unlike the United States, does not set conditions on its support for Pakistan—even though the United States historically has provided and continues to provide much larger amounts of military and economic aid than China, and played an active role in Pakistan–India crisis diplomacy, most recently in helping end the 1999 Kargil war, defusing the 2001–2002 military standoff, and managing the aftermath of the 2008 Mumbai attacks.⁵³

China's support for Pakistan takes most tangible shape in the form of military technology transfer and large, long-term, easy-credit infrastructure investments. The Chinese National Nuclear Corporation has already committed to build on a turnkey basis two ACP-1000 nuclear power reactors, worth \$4.8 billion apiece, just outside Karachi. Since Pakistan is not able to pay for these reactors up front, China has provided a soft \$6.5 billion loan. Safety concerns about building these hitherto untested Chinese reactors next to Karachi, a city of 20 million people, have led to a public debate in Pakistan.⁵⁴ Pakistan is China's only client for nuclear power reactors.

For any country with poor social indicators, spending on weapons systems takes away from resources for providing vital services and infrastructure. How much does the bomb cost? In Pakistan's case, no reliable estimate can be given. Pakistan releases no information on its nuclear weapons budget; there are only a few hints here and there. In 2001, retired Major-General Mahmud Ali Durrani suggested that Pakistan's annual expenditure on 'nuclear weapons and allied programs' was about \$300–400 million, and that Pakistan 'will now need to spend enormous

⁵⁰ R. Jeffrey Smith and Joby Warrick, 'Pakistani nuclear scientist's accounts tell of Chinese proliferation', *Washington Post*, 13 Nov. 2009.

⁵¹ Feroz Hassan Khan, *Eating grass: the making of the Pakistani bomb* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp. 238–9.

⁵² See the semi-official account by Khan, *Eating grass*, pp. 238–9.

⁵³ Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon, *US crisis management in South Asia's twin peaks crisis* (Washington DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2006); Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon, *The unfinished crisis: US crisis management after the 2008 Mumbai attacks* (Washington DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2012).

⁵⁴ Pervez Hoodbhoy, Zia Mian and A. H. Nayyar, 'The nuclear shadow over Karachi', *Newsweek–Pakistan*, 22 March 2014.

amounts of money for the following activities: a) a second strike capability; b) a reliable early warning system; c) refinement and development of delivery systems; d) command and control systems'.⁵⁵

This extra 'enormous' expenditure appears to have come to pass. In 2004, General Musharraf claimed that during the previous three to four years the government had spent more on the nuclear weapons programme than in the previous 30 years.⁵⁶ This would be consistent with the large expansion in fissile material production capabilities and new missile system development undertaken after 2000. Yet more spending is in the pipeline. In March 2009, the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Tanvir Mehmood Ahmed, announced that \$9 billion would be spent on upgrading the air force's 'nuclear status'.⁵⁷ Independent estimates suggest that Pakistan may currently spend \$2–3 billion per year on its nuclear weapons programme.⁵⁸

There are occasional signs that some Pakistani leaders see high military spending as a tragic drain on resources that could be used to meet social needs. In a speech at the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2013, Prime Minister Sharif said: 'Our two countries [India and Pakistan] have wasted massive resources in an arms race. We could have used those resources for the economic well-being of our people.'⁵⁹ There are no indications, however, that the nuclear programme has slowed since Sharif took office in June 2013. Construction continues on Pakistan's fourth plutonium production reactor, and testing continues on new nuclear weapon delivery systems.⁶⁰

Ending the nuclear buildup would be the first step to beginning nuclear disarmament. The economic benefit would go much beyond the estimated \$2–3 billion spent yearly on nuclear weapons. Giving up the bomb would allow for a more realistic and historically informed assessment of the threat from India's larger conventional military forces and the scope of any possible future conflict between Pakistan and India. Pakistan lived with massive Indian military superiority for the better part of four decades, during which it was neither invaded by India nor coerced in any significant way. The wars between the two states in 1947, 1965 and 1971 were limited, with no efforts to attack civilian populations indiscriminately or capture the other's national territory. The wars ended not with occupation and subjugation but with ceasefires and peace talks leading to agreements to resolve disputes. Any remaining Pakistani fears of being overwhelmed by India should have been put to rest by the US failure, despite all its military and economic strength, to occupy and remake Iraq and Afghanistan.

⁵⁵ Mahmud Ali Durrani, *India and Pakistan: the cost of conflict and the benefits of peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 32.

⁵⁶ Saleem Shahid, 'Musharraf rules out rollback of N-plan', *Dawn*, 12 Sept. 2004.

⁵⁷ *The News*, 18 March 2009.

⁵⁸ Mian, 'Pakistan'.

⁵⁹ Speech by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to United Nations General Assembly, 27 Sept. 2013, http://www.pmo.gov.pk/pm_speech_details.php?speech_id=10, accessed 5 Aug. 2014.

⁶⁰ Serena Kelleher-Vergantini and Robert Avagyan, 'Further construction progress on the fourth heavy water reactor at Khushab nuclear site', *ISIS Imagery* Brief, 20 Dec. 2013, http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Khushab_November_2013.pdf, accessed 5 Aug. 2014. On the missile testing, see e.g. 'Pakistan successfully test fires Hatf IX: ISPR', *Express Tribune*, 5 Nov. 2013.

On giving up the idea of a massive all-out conventional war with India, Pakistan would have no need to keep buying ever more tanks and artillery, expensive jet fighters, submarines and warships, or to maintain such a large standing army. This could lead to significant cuts in Pakistan's conventional military budget, which for 2013/14 was about \$6 billion, not including the cost of military pensions and debt payments associated with earlier loans to purchase military equipment.⁶¹ It is difficult to estimate this peace dividend in dollar terms, but its effect would be felt across the board. More important would be the sense across society that the fulfilment of people's entitlements and needs was getting top priority.

Conclusion

Following the 1998 nuclear tests, Pakistan's military and political leaders saw in the bomb a way to push past many of their failures and realize many of their hopes. Overwhelmed by the power of the bomb, they saw it as magical; a panacea for solving Pakistan's multiple problems. They told themselves and their people that the bomb would bring national security, allow Pakistan to liberate Kashmir from India, bind the nation together, make its people proud of their country and its leaders, free the country from reliance on aid and loans, and lay the base for the long-frustrated goal of economic development. The past 15 years have shown that this set of ideas and feelings was a fantasy.

Pakistan needs an informed and reasoned national debate about the bomb. This will not by itself lead to nuclear restraint and eventual disarmament, but without such a debate there can be no reconsideration of the whole constellation of ideas, fears and hopes that have been linked to the bomb. The conditions for such a national nuclear debate in Pakistan are not hard to identify. The country is on the edge of failure as a state, economy and society. On a day-to-day basis, the bomb no longer figures as an answer to anything seen as important. It cannot protect Pakistan from those who kill soldiers and civilians across the country. It offers no path to peace with India or at home, nor does it aid the economy or help meet basic human needs. Nonetheless, it is hard to see civil society in Pakistan alone being able to overcome the political forces that foster nuclear nationalism in the country and the entrenched power of the nuclear weapons complex.

If there is to be a breakthrough that does not involve another fearful nuclear crisis to focus attention on the nuclear danger, it will require action by the international community to confront Pakistan over its nuclear weapons programme. Ever since the attacks on the United States in September 2001, most of the outside world has seen Pakistan's army as a vital ally in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and a check on radical Islamist militancy. For many leaders, especially in the western alliance led by the United States, keeping the support of Pakistan's army and political elite is a higher priority than tackling Pakistan's nuclear buildup and the nuclear arms race in South Asia.

⁶¹ 'Pakistan raises annual defence budget by 10 per cent', *Dawn*, 12 June 2013.

Much greater international concern and action about the nuclear dangers in South Asia will likely be needed to help change nuclear thinking in Pakistan. This will require dealing with the actually existing danger posed by nuclear weapons in Pakistan and giving this greater priority than the low-level war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and the potential threat of radical Islamist attacks on the West. Realistically, it will also mean dealing with India's nuclear weapons, and those of all the other nuclear weapon states, who will have to finally accept their long-evaded obligation to nuclear disarmament.