

South Asia After The Nuclear Tests : Securing Insecurity

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Preface to Death of a Crow

The nuclear phenomenon in South Asia was inaugurated with its brutal consequence in May 1974 by killing an innocent crow as its first victim. As one story has it, a crow that flew in and sat on top of the explosion site as the zero hour arrived, was blown out by the blast (Mian 1998) It was ironic in the sense that the killing of the crow unknowingly completed the Hindu rituals of sacrificing animals or birds when worshipping any machine or tools for future use. Again, it was doubly ironic for a person, Homi Bhabha, who ignited the nuclear fuse in South Asia for the first time, to be born as a Parsi, and the Parsies are supposed to be crow eaters. Homi Bhabha, the first Indian scientist, who initiated the nuclear research in India in the early 1940s, though, did not live to see his dreams come true, the leadership that took the decision for India to go nuclear, however, was also a Parsi by conjugal relationships. The late prime minister Indira Gandhi's decision to conduct the Pokhran 1 test was never a decision invoked by any strategic consideration. It was rather a decision with domestic politics in mind to revive the declining popularity of the Congress-I government led by Indira Gandhi. The *grandeur* of Pokhran 1 significantly surged the popularity of the prime minister though it was temporal and did not help her to rule India for long even with the imposition of emergency in 1975.

The domestic factor was also particularly pronounced in India leading to the May 11 and 13, 1998 nuclear tests that the fragile government formed by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) constituting thirteen-odd coalition groups had promised its electorate. The mood of festivities surrounding the blasts had led the BJP supporters thinking about distributing the sand from the test sites around the country (like the Moon rocks brought by Apollo 11 distributed around the world) as they were distributing sweets to the passersby on the streets. In jubilation, some BJP leaders had also talked about building a monument at Pokhran test site as a 'shrine of strength,' as the tests were conducted under a code-name 'Operation Shakti,' meaning power. One strategic analyst had gone to the extent of eulogizing prime minister Vajpayee as the "prince of peace" by being a person to exercise his authority to achieve "peace through deterrence" with nuclear tests (Chellaney 1998a). But as all things must pass, the sense of euphoria quickly turned into a pall of gloom. The series of predictable nuclear tests by Pakistan on May 28 and 30, 1998 not only had the sobering effect on India but also robbed the glow from its motive of becoming a 'global player.' Pakistan's raising of the nuclear ante has much challenged the perspective of one of India's hard core nuclear strategists, K. Subrahmanyam (1998), who has been advocating that the nuclear weapon is not an issue, but the rights of India to exercise the nuclear option as a major power where one sixth of humanity inhabit, to be equal. India's decision to go nuclear, as the title of an earlier article of the incumbent Indian Minister for External Affairs Jaswant Singh suggests in the *Foreign Affairs*, is actually 'Against Nuclear Apartheid' (Singh 1998) The frustrating experience of India against

the denial and recognition of its major power ambitions by the international community has ultimately led it to claim the cherished nuclear weapons power status.

On the other hand, when asked about the need to detonate the nuclear device, prime minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan explained that it was forced to do so by India and the compulsion behind the nuclear tests was much related with the Indian tests. According to him: 'It was a question of our survival. Our security was in grave danger' (Time, November 30, 1998.) And as the logic has it, in its quest for a major power status induced by the national pride to parlay itself into grabbing a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, India now finds itself condemned to coexist with a nuclear-armed Pakistan on an equal footing rather than as a predominant power in South Asia with considerable military edge.

The 1974 Pokhran 1 blast has created a scientific momentum towards the 1998 tests and the subsequent counter-tests. South Asian security dilemma that has also graduated to encompass the nuclear dimension now awaits its tragic consequences: the lightening of a nuclear fire in South Asia that consumed a crow is a preface to the South Asian nuclear politics questioning the imperatives behind the thinking of the declining utility of nuclear weapons. The fallacies of the nuclear non-proliferation regime as well as the rationality of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and its future are now on the spotlight. Although the South Asian tests have led to qualify the positions of the possessionists in the region and around the world, the tests have, however, not changed the strategic equation in South Asia. The presumption that nuclear weapons are the ultimate weapons for preserving peace is yet to be proven true in the region desperately seeking an alternate future to conflicts, crises and mounting violence. Evidently, the new round of festering conflict and the war of attrition in Kashmir with artillery duels on the ground supported by the Indian fighter aircraft this summer for the first time has also belied the optimism born after the Lahore Declaration of February 21, 1999 that conflict management as a means of settling disputes would reduce the risk of all out war between India and Pakistan against the presence of nuclear weapons.

Thus, this article modestly attempts to unravel the features why, despite the logic behind the nuclear tests, the security environment in South Asia would not improve with the possession of the nuclear weapons. Instead, as the post-1998 developments show, the Indo-Pak rivalries will intensify than stabilize, which, as a matter of fact, will cause by the existence of nuclear weapons in the region.

Nuclear Junkies

Actually, the South Asian leaderships are not among the believers who see the nuclear weapons as the relics of the bygone Cold War. Instead, their possessionist urge have been dramatically raised by the end of the Cold War and the subsequent events leading them to live in a situation of strategic orphanage. Five factors have pushed them towards a thinking about the imperatives of nuclear weapons for their security. First, the imposition of the Pressler Amendment by the Bush Administration in 1990 stopped the source of sophisticated arms supplies to Pakistan. Second, the disappearance and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union had led to make India's reliable source of arms supply non-existent. Third, the ever shrinking foreign exchange reserve along with increasing indebtedness forced both of these rivals to constrict their military expenditure. Fourth, the Chinese military ascendancy, particularly for India, was a constant reminder of strategic imbalance in the cis-Himalaya region with perceived threat from across the border to Indian security interests.

Fifth, the most awe-inspiring experience for both India and Pakistan was the lessons from the Gulf War that demonstrated the utility of high-tech weapons and their devastating consequences. The Gulf War was not only fought in the desert battle fields and the dark skies over the Middle East, it was actually fought in the drawing rooms of the world television viewers with the message of the 'Unipolar World' with the flashing of the American arms' might by the CNN. As one estimate has it, in its historically unprecedented aerial bombing, the US-led allied attack dropped more explosives in the first two weeks of the 42 day long Gulf war than in the entire course of the World War II. The 350MI Tanks Armoured Division of the United States used more fuel oil during the Gulf War in comparison to the fuel oil used by the US 3rd. Army during its invasion of Germany in 1944-1945 (McLaunchlan and Hooks 1995). Indeed, the Gulf War was a scientific feat: it was interesting to watch the submarine based Tomahawk missile fired from a distance of some 800km. silently entering a residential building with a slight knock in one of its several windows and suddenly bursting into a fireball with its dehumanizing consequences. Desert Storm had actually stormed the conscience of humanity.

For both India and Pakistan the war in the future with the use of precision weapons, however, remains a fantasy. Neither would it be affordable nor would it be possible in the projectable future. And the hunches had it that had Iraq possessed the nuclear weapons, the US would never have engaged and committed its forces in the Gulf. Contemplations like this over the board led the leaderships both in India and Pakistan to conclude that the possession of nuclear weapon would be cheaper than buying an unit of the F-16 fighter bomber (TI, July13, 1995.) The extraordinarily arrogant French nuclear tests in the South Pacific in 1995 which faces no considerable threat but claims its security depends on nuclear capabilities had also deeply influenced the conviction both in India and Pakistan that nuclear weapons should be the logical choice. They also displayed a strong reservation against the fact that even after the end of the Cold War, the nuclear weapons powers retain some 35 000 nuclear warheads.

Hence, the reality is that neither the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty's (NPT) indefinite extension 1995 nor the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) 1996 prohibit the so-called 'subcritical tests' by the nuclear weapons powers to keep their nuclear arsenals effective and alive. More disheartening for the non-nuclear world, including India and Pakistan, was the World Court Advisory Decision in 1996. Its suggestion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be 'contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law, except in an extreme circumstance of self defence in which the very survival of the state would be at stake' (ICJ 1996) makes the nuclear weapons the trappings of the real power. The decision stops well short of recommending the abolition of nuclear weapons by delegitimizing it, as the International Court of Justice is also predominantly an institution under the influence of the major nuclear weapons powers.

The World Court restricts the use of nuclear weapons in armed conflicts in general but did not suggest the use itself is illegitimate. The lacunae is that humanitarian law does not govern either the possession or the use of nuclear weapons. Nor is international law observable in the context of defining the 'extreme circumstance' properly because national interests and security stakes are defined in accordance with the perceptions of the indigenous leaderships in conflicts not by the lawyers in the World Court. Again, war itself could affect the human mind because of the war being in itself an abnormal situation. The moral degeneration caused by war could lead leaders to unleash barbarity. On the other hand, the recommendations of the Canberra Commission published in August 1996 strongly urging the world to move towards the elimination of nuclear weapons with the global adoption of 'no first use' policy was also counterpoised by the policies of major nuclear weapons powers (CanberraCommission

1996.) The Russians have given an enhanced role for the nuclear weapons by justifying the necessity of the weapons to cope with future challenges from the South in the course of delinking their strategic relationships from the US-Russian context (Schell 1998.) Similarly, the US Presidential Decision Directive on Nuclear Posture Review of 1997 has continued to maintain the conviction that the nuclear weapons are the ultimate weapon of security (Schell 1998.)

These international conditioning when translated into the South Asian context would suggest three prominent reasons behind the Indian nuclear tests. The first is the budding non-proliferation pressure, the second is the failure of disarmament goal, and, the third is the perceived increasing capabilities of India's rivals jeopardizing its security interests.

The unconditional and indefinite extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1995 signed by 185 states, according to India, has provided with the required legitimacy to retain the dreadful weapons to the five nuclear weapons powers. Though Article VI of the NPT calls for a complete elimination of nuclear weapons by foreclosing the chances for a country like India to exercise its nuclear option, none of powers committed to the Article have taken any constructive steps to achieve the goal. Likewise, the CTBT overruled the Indian position on setting a time frame for elimination of nuclear weapons. Instead, it stipulated a 'entry into force' clause stating that the treaty will not take effect unless India and the rest of 42 leftover countries ratify it. Accordingly, any country that fails to ratify the treaty within the three years of its opening for signature in 1996 would face an unspecified counter-measure consistent with international law. Actually, the 'entry into force' provision is the ultimate display of insensitivity by the five nuclear weapons powers to the Vienna Convention that stipulates that no treaty could be enforced under duress. However, the irony is that the CTBT also permits the signatories to withdraw from the treaty in the ultimate interests of their national security. Thus the CTBT has failed to resolve the persistent conflict of interests pervading the world. It has also failed in meeting, as James Laue has suggested in some other context, the basic criterion of some 'mutually agreed upon standards of fairness and justice,' (Laue 1993) when resolving conflict of interests pertaining to the evolving security order.

As a consequence, India's perceived national security interests in the regional context appeared to have been thoroughly undermined by both the NPT and CTBT arrangements. This claim of India is premised on the strategic development in the region. Particularly, the ever strengthening Sino-Pakistani strategic relationships have been pointed out by India as a reason for strategic instability in South Asia. The letter that the Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee wrote to the US president Clinton on May 11, 1998 (which was deliberately leaked to the *New York Times*) had succinctly explained the reason behind the Indian nuclear tests:

...We have an overt nuclear weapons state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved... an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust, that country has materially helped another neighbor of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state. At the hands of this bitter neighbor we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years (NYT, May 13, 1998.)

Understandably, China's defence modernization programme with increasing nuclear arsenals along with Dongfeng 31 missile with a range to cover the whole subcontinent; its unflinching support to Pakistan on nuclear field, and the perceived naval expansion in the Indian Ocean through the Burmese (Myanmar) shores has cast an unease in the Indian strategic community. For some the efforts to contain the 'dragon next door' through diplomacy was inadequate on the part of India (Chellaney 1998b.)

The real crunch, however, came when Pakistan successfully tested its 1500 km. Ghauri missile in April 1998 - allegedly a variant of either Chinese or North Korean design. The Ghauri has ultimately quashed the Indian sense of strategic depth vis a vis Pakistan forcing it to reconsider its nuclear option and come out with open blast. As explained by prime minister Vajpayee, India's security concerns revolve around the Sino-Pak nexus that can be only checkmated by the possession of a 'big bomb.' The nuclear weapons in South Asia, therefore, have two major rationale: it is the ultimate defiance of India against the discriminatory global security regime based on the privy of five declared nuclear weapons powers and 16 crypto-nuclear weapons states living under the nuclear umbrella. Second, the security imperatives of India and Pakistan, more so that of Pakistan, have led both to become nuclear junkies whose status as nuclear weapons powers would always be questioned under the present structure of NPT treaty.

Security Problematique

The killing of a crow that heralded the nuclear phenomenon in South Asia has become much of a metaphor in 1998 when in an act of fury India destroyed the incipient attempt at constructing a global security regime under the banner of NPT and CTBT. In other words, India has particularly put on notice that the objective of maintaining the nuclear status quo of the five nuclear weapons powers is no more contingent to its security interests (Ghose 1996.) Past experiences, as the denial of a nuclear umbrella to India by the superpowers and Britain in the aftermath of the Chinese nuclear test in 1964, and the American infirmities in providing alliance support to Pakistan in the subsequent Indo-Pak wars in 1965 and 1971 have strengthened the resolve in both of these countries to achieve strategic independence through nuclear weapons possession. In addition, the Pakistani request for the nuclear umbrella was again denied by the United States in May 1998 after the Indian nuclear tests (NYT, May 30, 1998), nor had China reconciled to the idea (Rosenthal 1998), which understandably compelled Pakistan to match Indian tests. As both India and Pakistan are not governed either by NPT or CTBT security regimes, they have not violated any rules or norms set by these treaties by becoming nuclear weapons powers. Though India in particular did not violate any international law by becoming nuclear weapons power, it violated the humanitarian norm and commitment made back in 1964 by signing and inscribing the Gong in Hiroshima by the then Indian Ambassador to Japan, Lalji Mehrotra, with a dedication never to seek security through the weapons of mass destruction.

It was the crow they killed that was crowing over their heads since long. It was the heroic feat both India and Pakistan achieved separately which was also supported by over 90 percent of opinion polls held immediately after the blasts. It was a bang for the bang once the 'minds at war' (Kull 1988) have no other resolution in sight for the festering problems in their relationships. The deepseated psychological animosity persisting between India and Pakistan has perceptibly become a case for rationalizing their nuclear possession (Goldgeier 1997; Cashman 1993.) Actually, the drive for becoming nuclear weapons power was not threat driven but status driven. The grandiosed vision of India as a great power seeking parity with China and Pakistan's status consciousness to be at par with India, at the end, had led both of them to do a copy cat. The utterly depressing situation in which both of these countries live today with a sense that they have 'hit the rock bottom' have questioned all the arguments put forth by the leaderships in these two countries prior to and in the aftermath of the nuclear tests.

Despite the logic advanced to rationalize the process of overt nuclearization in South Asia, the tests,

however, have failed to address the primary objective of enhancing national security of both India and Pakistan. The conspicuous absence of any semblance of security regime in the region, defined by Jervis (1982) as 'those principles, rules, and norms that permit nations to be restrained in their behavior in the belief that others will reciprocate... a form of cooperation that is more than the following of short run self-interest,' could lead to unpredictable consequences. This unpredictability in the behavioural persuasion of security both in India and Pakistan questions the logic behind the conception of deterrence as a fundamental underpinning for the possession of nuclear weapons. Deterrence which is construed on the principle of mutual assured destruction (MAD) has never considered the human fallibility as a possibility. Therefore, the concept is both intellectually untenable and functionally impracticable. Intellectually, deterrence requires transparency and cooperation between the deadly adversaries and willingness to restrain temptations to unleash nuclear forces expecting the same attitude governs the motivation on the opposite side. Functionally, it is impracticable because deterrence requires the constant and continuous efforts to optimize nuclear forces structure and readiness to use it to annihilate the opponent with serious reprisal. Thus will 'cooperation under security dilemma' occur through heightening the balance of terror?

This balance of terror was particularly assumed to have produced the belief of 'existential deterrence' in the period of opacity between India and Pakistan. According to some of the prominent Indian as well as Pakistani military Generals, nonweaponized deterrence had played its role during the largest Indian military exercise 'Operation Brasstacks' in 1986-87 and the violent flareup in Kashmir in 1990 in war prevention (Hagerty, 1998; Bajpai, et.al., 1995; Hersh, 1993.) The fourth Indo-Pakistani war was averted, according to a leader of Pakistan's Muslim League Party, M. Iqbal Haq (the son of late president Zia Ul Haq) because his father had convinced the late Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi about Pakistani nuclear capability with the words 'I also possess what you possess,' (TA, August 19, 1996) during the former's visit to New Delhi under the guise of famous 'cricket diplomacy.' Among the prominent believers were the former Chief of Army Staff, General Sundarji of India who felt that had his country possessed nuclear weapons all the past wars would have been averted (Sundarji, 1993, 1994.) His counterpart Pakistani General Mirza Aslam Beg is of the view that the bifurcation of Pakistan could have been averted in 1971 had Pakistan possessed nuclear weapons (Beg, 1994.)

In India, deterrence is conceived as a double-edge sword to prevent the Sino-Pak nexus and to foil the possibility of a two front war. The Chinese threat that does not actually exist was the mantra for the Indian strategic community to continue to maintain a momentum towards nuclearization of South Asia. According to them, the Chinese expansionist policy is evident in its occupation of 38 000 sq km. of Indian territory in Aksai Chin, and the claim over 90 000 sq km. of territory in the Arunachal Pradesh. Likewise, India has 740 km. long disputed border with Pakistan. Besides the invocation of the Chinese threat, according to some, it also serves a number of Indian foreign policy objectives: 'It elevates India's international status... justifies high defence spending; legitimatizes India's nuclear and missile programmes and demands for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council; undermines Pakistan's attempt to gain strategic parity with India; and diverts attention from India's regional supremacy ambitions to China's expansionist designs...' (Malik, 1995) thereby bringing India closer to the anti-China lobbies both in domestic and foreign context.

These flawed precepts may be correct in unnecessarily intensifying India's conflict interactions with China. But whether China's interests would be served by generating conflicts with India likewise remain beyond consideration in conceptualizing the Chinese threat. This flawed assessment has led

India's nuclear policy to be wrongly defined. This statement will be explained later on.

Precisely speaking, there are an array of disincentives than incentives for nuclear weapons possession and their expansion through weaponization with the development of delivery system, if the purpose of nuclear weapons and delivery systems are for deterrence in practice. Deterrence between nuclear adversaries is simply thought to be more effective in regulating conflict duly because nuclear threat requires nuclear responses to caution the behaviour of the opponent. The reality behind this assumption has been questioned by the empirical evidences marshalled so far in the context of the Cold war. For example, the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 was the best managed cold war crisis when the world was on the brink of nuclear precipice. If one were to review the literature on the Cuban missile crisis Retrospective Meetings and the recently released *Kennedy Tapes*, it would be sufficient to suggest, according to Robert McNamara, the then US Defense Secretary who actually instituted the doctrine of deterrence and the MAD theory, that there was no talks of nuclear deterrence during the crisis. 'It is no credit to us that we missed nuclear war, at least, we had to be lucky as well as wise,' he says (May and Zelikow, 1997.) Bruce Blair, now a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, Washington DC, who had served as the US Air Force Launch Control Officer responsible for the Minuteman Nuclear missiles in Montana, has pointed out in his early writing *Strategic Command and Control* published in 1985 about the extreme vulnerability of the US Command and Control systems. On the basis of his practical experiences he doubted even the US capability of delivering a single prompt and massive retaliatory attack that is considered a *sin qua none* of nuclear deterrence. Subsequently, he has suggested that the thinking about deterrence that worked during the Cold War to save the world from the nuclear holocaust simply never quite existed (Blair, 1994.)

General George Lee Butler (1997), who retired in 1994 after heading the US Strategic Command, was of the opinion that the Soviet Union was never amenable to the concept of deterrence. Their nuclear doctrine was based on the war fighting and war winning capabilities; they never thought about losing the nuclear war with the United States. They had not realized the devastating consequences that the nuclear weapons could cause until very late in 1986 when Chernobyl led them to directly experience it. Thus deterrence as conceptualized was uniquely a Western construct, it was not operational in the Soviet mind during much of the tense period of the Cold War. Likewise, Richard Lebow had earlier pointed out that the paramount weakness of the deterrence theory has been its ignoring of the difficulties associated with the signalling process which could breakdown, be blocked as well as distorted. The prospect of decapitation of the command, control, communication and intelligence (C³I) could entirely make the assumption of attaining an unambiguous signalling process defunct. Such a command vulnerability could become a major source of nuclear instability to increase the prospects of the weapons' use (Lebow, 1985.)

Securing Insecurity

Thinking about nuclear weapons vary in South Asia. For India, nuclear weapon is the weapon of last resort as its 'no first use' proposal indicates. Whereas for Pakistan which senses that India had tried to kill the prospect of its nuclear deterrence through the 'no first use' agreement, it is 'now or never' phenomenon. The worth of nuclear weapons for Pakistan is in its use whenever it feels its national security interests are jeopardised by the conventional Indian armed invasion. This diametrically opposite view on the utility and the use of nuclear weapons leads one to contemplate about the reality of situation sur-

rounding South Asian strategic landscape opening up further to severe vulnerabilities. First, South Asia is a region where technical sophistication for the workable C³I is far from available. This is also a region where all four wars previously had started without any notice and where nuclear threat currently has become a policy imperative, particularly between India and Pakistan. The fresh testimony to this pattern of interaction is traceable in the words of the Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani against Pakistan to hands off Kashmir immediately after the May 11 nuclear tests, warning the latter to consider the strategic change in the region. This warning reportedly had raised the conflict threshold in the region leaving Pakistan with no other alternative than to blast and go bust. On May 27, 1998, one day before the Pak nuclear tests, the Indian Army's Signals Intelligence Directorate intercepted a coded telegram altering the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi that Islamabad had 'credible information' that India was about to carry out a pre-dawn attack on Pak nuclear installations. India's prompt denial of such intensions did not led to reassure Pakistan. Instead, Pakistan clamped down a state of emergency suspending its democratic constitution under the pretext of the impending external threat after the nuclear tests. The Indo-Pak tests not only proved the inadequacy of nonweaponized or existential deterrence, these also suggest about the lack of trust and transparency in their relationships. Thus, deterrence, in whatever form, does not resolve conflict. Rather it makes conflict abound. Deterrence lacks one principle element for cooperation that is reassurance that could change the behavioural pattern leading even deadly rivals to seek alternative towards the formation of a working relationships in mitigating conflicts (Stein, 1991.)

Second, closely linked with the operationalization of C³I is the channel and process of verification to determine the correctness and reliability of the information. The past behavioural patterns, however were disappointing in this case even at the conventional footings. As said earlier, all the wars in South Asia begin without notice, they were eventually a consequence of misreading and misinterpretation of the signalling processes. Military superiority and inferiority were hardly a factor in both Indian and Pakistani decision making while waging wars. Therefore, conventional deterrence in South Asia in the past was always a failure. Pakistan fought three wars against India when in a militarily inferior situation. But the military inferiority did not prevent it to take strategic initiatives. Likewise, the case with India was also the same vis-a-vis China but its 'forward policy' created the condition for the border war in 1962. In the wars in South Asia war initiations were the weaker powers' game plan when the stronger rivals were in trouble. Deterrence signalling from the stronger adversaries had failed to prevent these wars. In all these cases misperception and miscalculation had played a role in the conflict escalation which was allowed to occur because the provocateurs in all these cases were significantly inferior and had been threatened in advance with severe reprisals (Dhruba Kumar, 1997.)

The conflict behavioural pattern drawn from the past shows that military asymmetries were not the cause of these wars. Rather the precious absence of rationality in decision making processes had drifted these countries towards perilous conflicts. Such were the cases repeated both during the Brasstacks military exercise in 1986/87 by India and the flare up in Kashmir in 1990 that had virtually led India and Pakistan to the brink of war, perhaps with the potentiality of nuclear exchange (Hersh, 1993; Burrow and Windren, 1994.) These cases also suggest about the imprudence and unpredictability in decision making process prevalent even in democratic India, that had put its own prime minister (the supreme commander and decision maker) in the dark till the eleventh hour (particularly during the Brasstacks exercises.) Reportedly, the minister of state for Defence, Arun Singh, and the Chief of Army Staff, General K. Sunderji had plan to provoke Pakistan into a war even when these two countries were at

peace diplomatically (Bajpai, et.al., 1995; Rikhye, 1989; Rikhye, 1990.) Furthermore, every peace efforts have been followed by the conflict displaying the prominent characteristics of the dysfunctional relationships between India and Pakistan. Recently, the Lahore Declaration of February 21, 1999, which promised a new beginning in their relations, unfortunately, did not consummated into diplomatic negotiations but erupted into renewed conflict in May that lasted more than ten weeks before subsiding after severe international pressure forcing them to step back from the brink of an all out war.

Certainly, the past conflict pattern wrapped in ambiguity cannot be conducive to the objective of nuclear deterrence in the future. The lack of transparency in the Indo-Pak strategic interactions would always lead both of the adversaries to guess that either of them could achieve attack capability by improving both quality and quantity of their respective weaponry. In a situation where the intentions of the opponent are always a suspect, the operationalization of deterrence would be a fantasy. Similarly, in weapons stock and capability, India would remain far superior to Pakistan in the foreseeable future. Pakistan, as being the weaker power and also a nonadherent to the concept of no first use, will always be tempted to take the nuclear initiatives first with now or never feelings because even as the nuclear exponent scholar Kenneth Waltz suggests, the lesser nuclear weapons powers may 'destroy themselves through restoring to nuclear weapons' (Waltz, 1981) use first in case of the threat to their national survival. As the cases of Brasstacks 1986/87 and resurgence in Kashmir 1990 suggest, Pakistan had reportedly taken the nuclear initiatives against the overwhelming conventional military power of India (Hersh, 1993.) This possibility then was doubted (Krepon and Farugee, 1994; Hagerty 1995-96; Hagerty, 1998.) But given the context of overt nuclearization, the technological push towards weaponization, and the deployment of theater ballistic missiles without basic C³I, the possibility of any false alarm in the future becoming the first and the last in the subcontinent cannot also be negated.

Thus, in the context of C³I's effectiveness and vulnerability, geography plays a critical role in the nuclear discourses of South Asia. The nuclear rivals in South Asia are geographically contiguous. In the Indo-Pakistani context, a commercial aircraft flight from New Delhi to Lahore takes around 45 minutes. Both India and Pakistan possesses a sizable number of nuclear mission capable missiles and aircraft. The flight time for a quick-reaction fighter bomber from its base to target would usually be between 15 to 30 minutes or even more. Since aircraft can be recalled catastrophe can be averted even in the last minute. This is not so with ballistic missiles. Missiles which are invulnerable to the risk of interception can reach from one target to another within 3 to 6 minutes in the South Asian strategic trajectory. A comparable time from the erstwhile Soviet Union to the United States is 30 minutes. In the cross Atlantic context, as Blair has noted, the lift off of a land based missile from the Soviet soil could be detected within 30 seconds; a conference of US decision makers will take five minutes to convene; within 20 or so minutes the presidential decision will have to be made and filtered down as order for retaliation; the order processed and successfully executed. Obviously, these deadlines place an extraordinary pressure on the entire decision making process. This is the case in relations to the land based missiles (ICBMs). If the missiles were to be fired from the submarine the lift off and the hit time is around twelve minutes (Blair, 1994.) The lessons from the Cold War, therefore, was that even with the 'sophisticated' C³I and the institutionalized chain of command with the regular CBMs (Confidence Building Measures) at places, the superpowers had come to the brink of conflict several times by reading each other wrongly.

It is easier for one to imagine the way decisions could be made in the context of the South Asian missile trajectory. Within the short span of 3 to 6 minutes decisions will have to be taken whether the alarm

is genuine, whether the missiles are presumed to be carrying the nuclear warheads and whether the missiles are fired from the presumed enemy territory. (The case of the US sending immediately its high level official, the Deputy Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Ralston to Pakistan in August 1998 when its missiles landed in Afghanistan/Pakistan border had sensitively displayed the possibility of Pak reacting against India thinking that the missiles were fired from the Indian territory.) The short time however constrains the worth of information processing and verifying its reliability. Again reliability of information hardly matters in the Indo-Pak context. Because the case in South Asia previously was that the envious intelligence agencies thrive on supplying misinformation; there are records of the field commanders of the armed forces not using direct hotlines and its shut down during the crisis. The hot border with eye-ball-to-eye-ball military deployment can burst anytime. An envious military commander can trigger the conflict and one never knows about the consequence. Because irrationality governs the strategic as well as political mindset in the Indo-Pak context as it is evident, among others, in the long drawn out conflict at the Siachen Glacier. Neither India nor Pakistan has ever shown any eagerness towards this particular conflict resolution which cost each of them \$2 million a day just to put forces intact in the glacier situated over 16000ft. altitude. Thus, since *ad hocism* in decision makings is prevalent and reliable information so scarce the only alternative for either of the party in conflict will be to adopt the launch on warning or launch on short notice principle as nuclear doctrine. Strategies like these are inherently fraught with the danger of possible misinterpretation of the nuclear signalling.

Besides this, Pakistani nuclear strategy is moreover based on the pre-emptive strike in the case of failure of the warning to prevent India from moving its formidable conventional forces to the threatening positions across the border. Pakistan strategic doctrine of offensive defence would therefore establish an enduring crisis situation compelling both India and Pakistan to remain perpetually on nuclear alert. But with the development of a second strike capability by India, as its no first use doctrine indicates, this option enhancing policy of Pakistan would be compromised to the extent of creating a situation in which India would be in a position to reduce Pakistan to ashes whereas Pakistan's ability to do so would be geographically impossible. The calculus of deterrence could change the behaviour of the rivals to the detriment of the national survival. Previous wars in South Asia were mostly border skirmishes fought between the combatants avoiding the civilian casualties and destruction of valuable assets. Deterrence is presumably based on the principle of the risk of the destruction of countervalue targets than counterforce targets. In case of the nuclear conflagration what would be the difference between countervalue or counterforce targets if Sind and the Punjab in Pakistan are hit by thermonuclear bombs? Likewise, the bomb's hit on the political and command leadership in New Delhi or even Bombay will not only destroy the army cantonments and naval shipyards but also envelop the cities and population surrounding the epicentre. Estimates vary on the deaths that the use of nuclear weapons can cause in these cities but they are all horrendous. The densely populated major cities of India and Pakistan, their transportation bottlenecks, slums and collapsing old buildings in the cities, negligible availability of emergency relief, low medical facilities etc., all could add up to the number of instant deaths caused by radiation, derbis and health hazards. The possibility of a holocaust has become a reality only with the possession of nuclear weapons and the missile delivery systems by India as well as Pakistan.

Another crucial feature of insecurity introduced by the nuclear weapons in South Asia is the uncertainty in Sino-Indian relations. The reason is that China has been identified by the government of India as the formidable enemy which was never a case before despite India's humiliating defeat in the 1962 War. The notable improvement in the Sino-Indian relationships, particularly, after Rajiv Gandhi's visit

to Beijing in December 1988 and the signing of several accords along with CBMs across the disputed border have all now become immaterial in front of the Indian official assertion that its nuclear weapons are meant for preventing Chinese expansionist policies as well as assistance to Pakistan to potentially become a nuclear weapons power. The perceived Chinese threat has long been a cause for India in rationalizing nuclear proliferation with nationalist fervour. Its determination to break the Chinese nuclear monopoly in Asia has thus unqualified support throughout the nation. It does not matter then whether China poses any threat both in conventional and nuclear terms. Suffice it to say that the possession of nuclear weapons by China as an adversary is definitely a threat because of the past history and yet unresolved border problems.

In the Indian contingency planning the Chinese threat has remained the most potential problem for the future. The Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme constituted in 1983 to build Agni missile in particular was considerably influenced by the perception of a looming Chinese threat. The Agni ballistic missile, when fully developed, will be able to reach the eastern seaboard regions of China with a 1000kg payload of nuclear warheads. The development of Agni missile is fundamentally addressed towards altering India's geographically disadvantageous position vis-a-vis China. Because most of the prosperous and valuable targets in China are beyond the reach of fighter bombers that India currently possesses. Perhaps the acquisition of the SU-30 long range bomber from Russia by India may enable it to cover most of the Chinese territory. This sophisticated aircraft is not invulnerable to detection and interception, however. Therefore, the Agni missile development along with the nuclear tests by India have further enlarged the 'circumference of conflict,' to borrow Martin Navias' (1990) term, by converting the perceived nuclear threat from China into a reality for India.

Before May 1998 China was least concerned with any conceivable threat from India except in the case that New Delhi may become a factor for destabilization in Tibet. Chinese diplomacy has successfully neutralized the Tibetan issue at the governmental level with India until the coming to power of the Bhartiya Janata Party government with a socialist defence minister George Fernandes, a longtime Free Tibet activist Fernandes was the first Indian political leader with crucial defence portfolio to fire salvos at China pointing out it to be the enemy number one with nuclear missiles trained against India. The crumbling of the relationships was so sudden that it revived the fear of resurfacing old animosities in certain quarters. The tightening of the Beijing-Islamabad axis naturally flows from the growing aspersions between India and China that New Delhi was desirous to break.

The most damaging situation that the political rhetorics than the nuclear tests created in the Sino-Indian relationships was that it squarely turned all the previous agreement to its head. The process of institutionalizing the Sino-Indian relations through confidence building measures with the formation of Joint Working Committee that has led to the signing of an agreement on the 'Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the Sino-Indian Border Areas' on September 7, 1993 now has gone astray. Article I of that agreement was of critical importance in building their relations towards cooperation. The Article stipulates: 'Neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other *by any means* (emphasis mine), and that both countries shall 'strictly respect and observe the line of actual control between the two sides' (Agreement, 1993.) By inserting the term *by any means* in the agreement they had apparently reach an understanding that nuclear weapons would never surface in their relationships. Though China had avoided any reference to the nuclear issue with India, as the latter then being the non-nuclear weapons state, its universal pledge of no first use was singularly addressed to assure such state (s) of the Chinese intention despite its capability.

Following the agreement, commitment was made to reduction of troops to a mutually agreed upon ceiling, prior notification of military exercises by limiting these exercises in a mutually determined zone and force level, avoidance of air intrusion with the adoption of various verification measures. These measures were further codified during the eighth round of Joint Working Committee meetings in New Delhi on August 20, 1995. Subsequently, troops disengagement from four posts located at the trijunction of Sino-Indian-Bhutanese border was finalized. Along with this another agreement on CBM was signed during the Chinese president Jiang Zemin's visit to India on November 29, 1996 (FBIS, 1998a.) When in Pakistan, president Zemin retracted from the previous Chinese position on Kashmir suggesting that the issue is bilateral problem between India and Pakistan and should be resolved accordingly. In April 1998, the PLA Chief of the General Staff, Gen. Fu Quanyou's (i.e. the commander of the PLA's land, air and naval forces) mission to India was successfully concluded with China looking for military to military level cooperation with the latter.

However, the bolt from the blue in May turned everything upside down. Fernandes' spats against China and Vajpayee's letter to president Clinton publicly downgraded a decade of efforts towards mutual confidence building to mutual apprehension. It was no resolution to the damage already done by prime minister Vajpayee's later correctives in telling the representative of CPI (M) that 'China was not the reason why the tests were carried out.' It is yet to be decided whether it was just an exercise in defusing the tension created by his previous assertion or an influence of delusion on the security decision making. The prophets of arms have finally turned the chimerical Chinese threat into a reality. Whether nurturing of this threat would serve India's international image boosting by becoming a global partner of anti-China lobby is indefinite. At the moment the South Asian nuclearization has been projected differently. President Clinton's speech in China in June 1998 and the joint statement issued at the end of his visit suggest a different proposition to emerge which may influence the South Asian strategic course in the coming days (FBIS, 1998b.)

The nuclear tests have also led to the certainty of a considerable level of arms buildup in South Asia. The region was previously characterized by a unique feature in the conventional arms race in which India was always racing against itself with Pakistan following the suit. In the decade of the 1980s India had emerged as one of the largest arms importers in the world with \$30 billion worth of state-of-the-art weapons under its wings. Despite the economic sluggishness in the 1990s, it has not lagged behind ordering \$2 billion worth of night vision Hawk fighter aircraft from Britain and negotiate for the long range SU-30 nuclear capable aircraft from Russian Federation on soft loan. It has also purchased \$800 million worth of spare parts for its ageing weapons from Russia in the recent past. According to SIPRI 1991 estimate, of the total arms inducted in South Asia in the 1980s, the share of India was 74 percent as compared with 19 percent of Pakistan.

As circumstance had it, both India and Pakistan were beneficiaries of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in December 1979. Throughout the 1980s, Pakistan's 'Frontline State' status qualified it to receive arms assistance from the United States in the latter's covert efforts to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan that led the Reagan Administration to provide aid package worth \$3.2 billion and \$3.5 billion twice to Islamabad. India received MiG-27s and MiG-29s fighter aircraft along with Main Battle Tanks, and Aircraft Carrier on lease from the Soviet Union. Although, Arun Singh (1997), a former Indian minister of state for Defence during 1985-1989, suggests that there was no evidence of any increase in defence spending either in India or Pakistan, nor was there any evidence of any significant weapons systems deployed by either country, the 1980s was indeed a period of arms race between India

and Pakistan when new weapons systems including Jaguar, Mirage-2000, MiG-27s and 29s, F-16s fighter aircraft were inducted in the South Asian strategic landscape (Smith, 1994.)

No doubt, there was a falling ratio of defence spending in both India and Pakistan in comparison to their GDP. But percentage does not reflect the truth. Percentagewise, India's defence spending currently is around 2.5 percent of GDP as compared to Pakistan's 5 to 6 percent. India had raised its total defence spending by 14 percent in 1998/99 amounting to \$10 billion and Pakistan had to reciprocate by raising its defence profile by 8 percent constituting \$4 billion. These figures appear to be miniscule even in comparison to Japan's \$40 billion plus annual defence budget which constitutes around 1 percent of its GDP. But Japan's self-defence force is still not awe-inspiring to any neighbours. Whereas the Japanese anxieties with the famine-stricken North Korea is well known.

In the Indian context, arguments were made to cut the defence spending further by trimming down some wasteful indigenous projects. Some studies had suggested that given the context of rivalries with Pakistan and currently ensuing military relationships there are rooms for a sizable trimming of Indian defence spending by 20 to 25 percent (Kaushal, 1995.) This was the case before the nuclear blasts. After the blasts, India has destroyed its strategic edge with Pakistan by rendering its conventional superiority with acknowledged ratio of 2:1 of the military balance ineffective. As the logic of deterrence suggests the conventional forces would be ineffective in the case of war. Thus, would the technological momentum gained after the nuclear tests be arrested and both India and Pakistan rest assured without weaponization and building a sophisticated delivery system to cope with the challenge posed by themselves by becoming overt nuclear weapons powers? Can the tide of nuclearization of South Asia be turned to a matured relations between the adversaries? And would it be possible for India to sustain a nuclear relationships with China in the future?

To take the last question first, it would be particularly very difficult for India to turn the nuclear balance in its favour by bridging the 34 years gap vis-a-vis China without any astronomical amount invested and without the Chinese passivity. It is a rule of the nuclear game plan that if nuclear capability is openly demonstrated the nuclear threat should be made credible. (This was the situation that led Pakistan to test.) And whenever a country possesses a nuclear weapon it should be made invulnerable to the first strike. This credibility and invulnerability of possessing nuclear weapons can only be achieved through the development of a triad system, that is encompassing land, air and sea launch capability. Although, there are some skeptics both in India and Pakistan suggesting that they need not to go the whole hog in the process of nuclearization, the relative Indian nuclear link vis-a-vis China would surely be a determining factor pushing India to acquire the triad system. Thus, arms race in South Asia is inevitable.

In this case too India would be the first racing against itself. There would be temptations to India to go this far because a major nuclear weapons power cannot sit lame duck. This temptation can push India to go all out to manufacture huge tonnage thermonuclear bombs for both city busting as well as counterforce high value targets to destroy the enemy's air forces and command posts. The missile accuracy as well as first strike capability will have to be added in the nuclear forces operationalization because of the time lag (3 to 6 minutes) and avoid its own civilian and military posts destruction just by waiting to receive the enemy's thrust first. A massive development of C³I system will have to be followed to overcome the lethality of the short time for missile flight or adopt launch on warning system. And all these would not be the sure shots against the deterrence failure. Adding these paraphernalia may require India to raise its defence budget considerably. Though there is no actual figure arrived at to

maintain a “credible minimum deterrence,” some conservative estimate suggests, the expenditure would be around Rs. 40 000 to Rs. 50 000 crores for a period of ten years (Reddy, 1998.) In this case, the lessons from the history of the Cold War is worth repeating here. A recent study of the Brookings Institution estimates that by 1996 the United States has spent almost \$5.8 trillion on its nuclear capability (Schwartz, 1998). If the technological momentum of nuclearization gains its upper hand, nobody will be sure where to stop. The consequence of the arms race, perhaps will be the ‘most dangerous folly’ in South Asia (TE, October 17, 1998).

Given the present economic crunch in South Asia, it would be imprudent to think about the possibility of nuclear arms race. But the nuclear tests were in itself not economically viable even if technically possible. Economies of both India and Pakistan were never in a position to sustain the armament process even at the conventional level. The resultant effect of this has been their growing indebtedness and dependency on foreign sources of supply. India’s outstanding external debt, according to the Asian Development Bank, was \$104.3 billion in 1995. With the debt servicing ratio around 25 percent of its GDP and the debt inputs from the external sources constituting around 22 percent of its GNP, it is hardly likely for India to speed up its nuclear weapons power stature. Similarly, the plight of the Pakistani economy is all there to see after May 1998. Pakistan is finding difficulties in repaying its \$36 billion foreign debt that constitutes 72 percent of its GDP. It is facing difficulties in debt servicing which is around \$360 million a month. Debt servicing eats up 45 percent of the total governmental expenditure. Servicing debt has also outstripped annual defence expenditure in Pakistan. Reportedly, the government is trying hard to negotiated with the IMF seeking to reschedule \$7.7 billion debt. The Pakistan government also expects an external financial gap of \$19 billion between 1999 and 2001 (FT, January 28, 1999.) Pakistan’s uncertain future has now become glaring with its leadership’s inability to rule the country as the cases of handing over of power to the military to manage economic affairs through establishing military courts in a democracy show (FEER, January 14, 1999).

Thus, there is a feeling in India: ‘Can Pakistan survive the arms race?’ With the American sanctions over its head and the country itself reeling under economic crisis Pakistan would not be in a position to hike its defence expenditure. It is also thought in the South Asian context that the nuclear deterrence will help to reduce conventional defence expenditure. But these are the misconstrued optimism. South Asia had talked about the recessed nuclear deterrence since 1974 and claimed no war occurred in the region for nearly a quarter century since 1971 Bangladesh crisis because of the existential deterrence between India and Pakistan. Like in Europe where conventional high-tech weaponry was deployed with speed across the Berlin Wall throughout the Cold War period, the quarter of century of peace through nuclear deterrence had witnessed the manifold acceleration in arms imports in South Asia after 1971 that receded only in the early 1990s. There is no reason to suggest why the case would not be repeated in the nuclear context and the arms race stopped. Perhaps India could initiate a nuclear arms race in South Asia with a intention leading to the collapse of Pakistan *a la* Soviet Union in competition with the United States. But, according to one Pakistani scholar, ‘India will find, too late, that it has created a South Asian nuclear Somalia for a neighbour,’ (Hoodbhoy, 1998) in doing so.

Despite this would the intrinsic destructive power of the nuclear weapons preserve security in South Asia? The nuclear weapons, in the final analysis, have the potentiality of increasing rather than decreasing insecurity in South Asia because the regional problem of insecurity is domestic. The nuclear weapon has not prevented the growing ethno-political and sectarian violence in the region. Particularly, in India, the sectarian violence and the struggle for self-determination feature the Kashmir crisis which

is festering in the 1990s. Although, India has publicly claimed the problems in Kashmir have been instigated by Pakistan, the fact however remains that the fertile ground for the alleged involvement of Pakistan in Kashmir has been created by the failure of leadership in India to develop a coherent policy for the social inclusion of the people. The denial of democracy in Kashmir has cost India to engage more than 300 000 armed forces there to hold on Kashmir. The unending conflict in Kashmir has a mark on Indian security strategy leading it to take several unsuccessful measures in constraining the eruption of violence such as the festering battles of May-July 1999 with fatalities of more than a thousand soldiers across the LoAC and the death of unknown number of mujahedin guerrilla fighters in Kashmir. Indian armed forces are overstretched in Kashmir as well as other areas of turmoil and unrest like in Assam and the Northeast. Recurring political violence with ethno-religious and separatist overtones has compelled India to engage 25 of its army's 35 Divisions in domestic security maintenance duty. Likewise, the case of Pakistan in Sind and Baluchistan is the same. Insecurity and challenges to the governments in South Asia are moreover internal than external. Nuclear weapons cannot be used to eliminate the threat emanating from the socio-political instabilities in the domestic realm. But the nuclear weapons can again facilitate the continuation of the low intensity conflict to destabilize the regional neighbourhood under the assumption that it prevents the major war from occurring as it was the case recently.

Since 1971, Pakistan's security strategy vis-a-vis India has been to change the track from directly confronting India to probing the Indian military might through low intensity conflict in disturbed areas. This policy has been successfully implemented first in Punjab and now in Kashmir which has considerably constrained the superior arms might of India. The overt nuclear status of both these countries may not change this situation. Because the problems have to be domestically addressed and internally resolved. The painful reality for the future of South Asia is that the nuclear arms race, once unleashed, will eat up the large chunk of pie from the social sectors further pushing the people in the region to live under abject poverty and destitution. No remedies to their woes will be in sight once their leaders live in the make-believe world of nuclear deterrence. And deterrence will be a fundamental policy to create strategic instability in the region.

Future Imperilled

Then, in whose interest should India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons? Would it essentially be a policy to reduce their mutual aspersions? Or would it be a policy to achieve certain intangible objectives such as non-discriminatory non-proliferation regime or delegitimization of nuclear weapons which will be essentially irrelevant in the context of their strategic disputes in South Asia (Dhruba Kumar, 1996.) The conflicts ensuing between India and Pakistan would not be resolved with the possession of nuclear weapons, nor would this be the case of India with China. China has no strategic ambitions south of the Himalayas. Throughout its recorded history of over four thousand year there is no record of Chinese invasion of India. China's territorial claims are based on the historical facts which India has counterpoised with legality. China had already possessed what it has claimed. Unless India tries to reclaim the Aksai Chin with the use of force, any reimagining of conflicts breaking out into war between China and India would be farfetched. Besides the CBMs that India and China had signed and implemented to defuse tensions surrounding the border issue, the Chinese strategists in Beijing were also well aware of the superior Indian military disposition across the border in comparison to the PLA's near-obsolete

weaponry (Liu and Guo, 1998.)

Likewise, the potentiality of Indian nuclear threat was not hidden from both the civilian and military strategists in China. However, the government in Beijing had pursued diplomacy to defuse any untoward misunderstanding with its beleaguered neighbour. Even in nuclear energy field China had been conciliatory to India's needs. China had supplied the required light water fuel to run the Tarapur nuclear plants of India at a time when New Delhi faced considerable pressure from the United States to accept the comprehensive full-scope nuclear safeguards to renew the low enriched fuel supplies. Whatever may have been the Chinese motive in supplying ten tonnes of low enriched uranium in 1995, the significance in this new thrust in their relationship cannot be overlooked.

The maddening thrust of Indian policy makers to point a finger against China therefore appears to be deliberately searching an enemy to be focused in the world as a power and treated equally. Such an impetuous posture adopted by India may lead to a serious reappraisal in China's strategic equation in South Asia. Indications are already there that the government in China is more infuriated by the Indian prime minister Vajpayee's reference to the 1962 border war alleging China to be an aggressor than by the former's nuclear tests. This testifies, for the Chinese policy makers, a collapse of understandings reached through all the bilateral Confidence Building Measures between the two. A dramatic change in China's strategic posture against India can be expected in the case of India's development and deployment of delivery systems targeting China in the near future. But for a considerable period, the Chinese thrust would be confined to forge a multilateral collaboration with other nuclear weapons powers in developing mechanisms to constrain the burgeoning nuclear threat from India. China had long experience in having lived with actual nuclear threat from both the superpowers. For the present, China may not be in hurry to deploy nuclear weapons in Tibet in contemplation of Indian moves. It would not, however, be a surprise if the Chinese would start considering the positioning of long-range missiles sufficient enough to cover India. Perhaps this would be the intended fall out of the nuclearized Indian military posture generating strategic instability across the Himalayas.

On the other side of the ledger, a stable political order both in India and Pakistan is the premium need even to prevent accidental nuclear war. South Asia today stands at the lunatic fringe with nuclear pride and historical prejudice. Political instability at the centre has created fractured bureaucracy with fragile economic base coupled with increasing social anomalies that may lead to domestic upheavals with the coming to power of pathologically anti-Indian and anti-Pakistani 'Taliban-like' fundamentalist groups in these countries. Given the rise of the BJP to power from 2 parliamentary seats in 1984 to 178 seats in 1998, one never knows what will happen in secular India if BJP will be in power for two more parliamentary terms. Islamic Pakistan is not an exception in this sense. The India-hating Jamat-I-Islam is making inroads in the Pakistani politics with the failure of moderate governments there. As is well known, both the Muslim League and the Bhartiya Janata Party constituting the die-hard Islamic as well as Hindu fundamentalists have their origins even before the partition in 1947. Therefore, they have also their old scores to settle.

Thus, in their nuclear relationships what India and Pakistan should urgently think up is to avoid unwanted war inadvertently stepping into their doorsteps. If war were to be fought at the conventional level either of the countries will not last more than three week period, with their shrinking supplies and the fragile economies to sustain the war efforts at the rate of multi-million dollars a day. Though it would be difficult to arrive at actual cost incurred by war on daily basis, one can safely assume that the military expenses would increase tremendously by looking at the Indian military efforts in Kargil esti-

mated at \$ 4 million a day, excluding the cost of weaponry losses including the two MiG-29 fighters downed by Pakistan. If Kargil can cost \$ 4 million a day and comparable expenditure on the side of Pakistan, an allout war could multiply the cost several fold which will strap economies of both countries equally to the catastrophies of war. An earlier estimate published in the *India Today* had put a single day of fighting Pakistan would cost India approximately \$400 million (Ganguly, 1990/91.)

War avoidance could only occur through reinvigorating confidence buildings and the cooling off of the festering Kashmir problem through mutual agreement. Kashmir's independence is much jinxed both in India and Pakistan. But neither is prepared to let the Kashmiri people live in peace. As the ten week long battles (May-July 1999) in Kashmir subsided efforts at resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan are hijacked by the intermittant fightings as well as the war hysteria caused by the impending September elections in India. The BJP will be hellbent to make a smooth transaction of the counterfeit currency of Kargil 'vijay abhiyan' (victory campaigns) in buying ballots to win election. India's caretaker prime minister Vajpayee had, therefore, dismissed any resumption of talks with Pakistan unless the latter stops backing Muslim separatists in Kashmir. While on a election campaign on August 7, 1999, Vajpayee had even urged the United States to declare Pakistan a 'terrorist state.' On the other hand, it was ironic for Pakistan to refrain from any responsibility for the latest conflict in Kashmir but broadcast official withdrawal speech by the prime minister Nawaz Sharif on the national television; rally troops by visiting the front by telling Pakistani soldiers that the disputed region of Kashmir one day will be part of their country. He linked the nuclear issue with the conflict in Kashmir on June 23, 1999 by saying that the 'nuclear and missile technology have given us great courage.' Even if one were to understand the imperatives of elections and domestic compulsions making it difficult for either parties agree to begin fresh negotiations, the terms of engagement have to be found with due consideration for preventing further escalation of conflict. But this is not the way reflecting policy moves either in India or Pakistan. The downing of a Pakistani reconnaissance aircraft Atlantique over the Sir Creek area by an Indian Airforce Jet on August 10, 1999 is a testimony to an invitation of further instability in the security relations between the two countries. A state of belligerency has enveloped the 52nd anniversary celebrations for independence in both India and Pakistan by turning the entire Indo-Pak border into a war zone. Again the electoral politics in India is certainly to capitalize on the enemy image of Pakistan letting no chance for a melt down of the high tension.

The present stalemate demands two-prong strategy for India to consider. On the one hand it has to resume dialogue with Pakistan immediately to cool off the heat with the display of reasonableness by reinvigorating the contents of the Lahore Declaration. On the other hand, gaining of the lost confidence of the Kashmiri people should be made the highest priority of the government of India to lessen the fear engulfing the state through the massive presence of security forces and their unlawful activities. It should be clearly recognized that being increasingly capable of turning Kashmir into an occupied state militarily would not provide India with the required legitimacy to prove the perpetuity of Kashmir's accession to it. Previously India had wasted its time, energies, resources and manpower, particularly since 1972, in preparation for transforming the LoAC into an international border by inversely challenging its own assertion of the state of Kashmir being an integral part of the Indian Union. Perhaps, India's position in Kashmir would have been very different today had it ever presumed that the denial of democracy to the Kashmiri people and the record of human rights violations would not only jeopardise its secular identity but also fracture the question of territorial integrity.

For India, it is not a time to celebrate the 'Vijay' (victory) over Pakistan after the trauma and predica-

ment in Dras-Kargil sectors but a time for a fair introspection on its past failures in Kashmir and restructure a relationships with the Kashmiri people irrespective of their political creed, ethno-religious identities, and win back their confidence. Otherwise India would face a Sisipyan task to hold on the indigenous Kashmiri Azadi (freedom) movement merely on the strength of its coercive state apparatuses. Evidently, the present crisis over Kashmir has fairly demonstrated the fact that India's hold on the state is as tenuous as it ever was. Further weakening of the civilian authority in the Kashmiri state would be the consequence of the Indian military entrenchment along the LoAC. It would make any chance of normalcy and civilian governance in Kashmir to return more difficult in the predictable future.

Next, Pakistan should be given a fair chance to survive economically. Despite the governmental report to the contrary, independent studies suggest Pakistan as a bankrupt state (Jalal, 1999), whose foreign exchange reserve hovers only around \$1 billion (TE, May 22, 1999.) Unlike in the case of India, Pakistan's nuclear programme was established with military overtones. It has no other civilian purpose than directly countering the Indian security challenges. The voices against the cost involving overt nuclearization and arms race are thinning out against the reality of ensuing conflict with India. Pakistan's weaponization process would certainly be rationalized against the fall out of Kargil debacle. As the Pakistani Information minister Mushahid Hussain asserts that India would have crossed the LoAC had not Pakistan possessed nuclear weapons, the future entails a thrust for weaponization and deployment despite economic difficulties. Understandably, Ayesha Jalal also expresses similar opinion forcing the Pakistani leadership to test their nuclear devices. Accordingly, she says, 'A war with India would be far worse than the impact of any economic sanctions. The nuclear weapons at least had the merit of removing Pakistan's conventional disadvantages in a military exchange with India (Jalal, 1999.) As the tests evidently show that the economic rationale behind not testing was an unattractive proposition in May 1998, the economic cost of nuclearization on the people would be less tangible in the Pakistani state's determination to prevent war with India and preserve national security. The arguments mustered so far explains Pakistan's strategy would resemble that of France or second tiered nuclear weapons powers with the advocacy of 'deterrence of the strong by the weak.' In principle, this would be an undisputed strategy for Pakistan to pursue. But the vexing questions of its effectiveness remain. If deterrence were to be effective the rudimentary power of nuclear possession should grow with credibility and the cost would be undubitably staggering.

Some nuclear hawks in India have fairly advocated their country to pursue a strategy of mounting pressure against Pakistan by massing heavily armed troops along the border and missile deployment in entrapping Pakistan and bleed its economy white. The decision to integrate Agni-II missiles into India's defence arsenal announced by prime minister Vajpayee in his Independence Day speech on August 15, 1999 is surely to raise the mercury of anxiety and temper. Subsequently, a draft of India's Nuclear Doctrine publicised by the National Security Advisory Board on August 17, 1999 clearly spelt out that a triad system would be a nuclear strategy for India to pursue. Thus, there would be no stopping to the nuclear arms race in South Asia with severe consequences on the economies of both India and Pakistan. And Pakistan's economic collapse is linked with this thrust of Indian policy to acquire a nuclear second strike capability with the development of the sea based Sagarika nuclear tipped missiles.

Such an Indian strategy would certainly be complimentary to Pakistan's need of not only matching Indian nuclear design but also in the evolution of a most conservative regime. Although there exists no hard evidence to support the argument that Pakistan would be left alone, isolated, and high and dry to face the Indian nuclear threat, there are some international imperatives which may not let Pakistan down

and go bust. The first is the Pakistan's Islamic connections that may rise to the occasion if Islamic states would lead to feel that India has stepped out of its shoes. Second, despite the dubious strategic value that Pakistan presents to the United States in the post-Cold War period, its geographical landscape touching the Persian Gulf and the Central Asian states has not devalued its importance in the wider geopolitical setting. Whatever the sense of delusion that prevails in Pakistan about its alliance relations with the United States presently, there is a cognizance of the fact in the country that the American role in South Asia would increase along with the increase in India's strategic clout. A summation of such an American posture for South Asia can be found in the Pentagon's assertion of early 1990s that the US would undertake every possible measure to prevent Indian hegemonism in the region (NYT, March 8, 1992.) Therefore, the possibility of the revival of a 'constructive military relations' with Pakistan, to promote a stable security condition in Southwest and Central Asia, cannot be negated in order to sustain the Pakistani state. Third, the excessive Indian military pressure on Pakistan may extremely encourage Islamic fundamentalism as an unintended consequence of militarization which India, China as well as the United States disapprove of in this crucial region. Pakistan, therefore, presents a complex web of spider's net for both the regional and international stability. The need in India, therefore, is to discourage any emotive strategic moves for short term expediency in the interests of the long term regional stability.

Were Pakistan to fall and disintegrate the repercussion in South Asia would be no less devastating. The human construct of nationalism on the basis of 'Hinduvtva' in India and 'Islam' in Pakistan has led both of them to possess the 'absolute weapon' of mass destruction. But what next? Would the nuclear nationalism with a coat of religious and cultural superiority of either faith be the determining factor in the evolution of Indo-Pak relations in the future? The chilling possibility of such a relationship would be that the political fragility with weak governments may further lead to instability putting their interactions on a hair-trigger alert. This situation would clearly demand the leaderships in both countries to think over the need to avoid the nuclear use - both authorised or unauthorised.

Road to Nowhere

In summing up, it is argued here that the May 1998 nuclear weapons tests in South Asia lacked security rationale and, in reality, it achieved nothing substantial in terms of enhancing security. One strategic rationale advocated by India is that it would like to be secure in an uncertain as well as anarchic world. Reasonably, the invocation of the Chinese threat is point to be considered in this context. Likewise, one has also to think over the question that would the possession of nuclear weapons and the accompanying retaliatory threat minimize the perceived Chinese belligerency' Yet there is no evidence to prove this to be correct. Similarly, India's widely talked about "minimum nuclear deterrence" has to evolve with acquisition of retaliatory capability particularly against China which merely bombs' possession cannot guarantee. Acquisition of nuclear weapons is not synonymous to deterrence credibility. It could perhaps be an impediment in arriving at any reasonable understanding with China in resolving their outstanding border dispute because of the provocative nature of deterrence strategy (Stein, 1991.)

Equally, the status rationale for nuclear weapons tests by India stands contrary to the evidence. India has seemingly linked the great power status with the nuclear weapons possession. By this logic, if India were to be a great power Pakistan would be a natural suitor. Also, India's contention that China was conferred a great power status because of being a nuclear weapons power is simply a misreading of the

history. China was already a great power without nuclear weapons with representation at the United Nations Security Council as well as General Assembly in the shape of Taiwan. India had helped restore the rights to represent the Peoples' Republic at these institutions in 1971 despite its chilly relations with China caused by the 1962 war, 1964 nuclear tests and the subsequent Cultural Revolution turmoil.

Perhaps the rationale to the nuclear weapons tests could be found in the explicit Hinduised identity formation of India to do away with its long standing victimized image by the muslim hordes as well as the white imperialists. The bomb decision that prime minister Vajpayee took was a reflection of a young and poetic Vajpayee whose poetry was publicized in a small pamphlet entitled "Angry Hindu! Yes, Why Not?" circulated back in 1988, viewing the bomb as:

This is the identity of the Hindu body, the Hindu soul and the Hindu life,
 I am that rage of Shankar, which can destroy the earth and reduce it to ashes,
 I am the devastating sound of his drum to which death dances,
 I am the unquenched thirst of the goddess of war, I am the divine laughter of Durga,
 I am the doomsday call of the god of death, the burning fire from the funeral pyre,
 If with this fire raging inside me, I burn the earth,

And the water, earth, soil, sky go up in flames on their own, do not be surprised (cited in Nandy, 1998.)

If one were to believe this as the credible explanation for nuclear test by India it contains the seed of further discord than reconciliation in the regional relationships. May be this is an aggressive polemical posture that Vajpayee as the prime minister would not allow to prevail. But, given the case of demonizing of Pakistan in India, one can only hope that their bloody past would not remain at daggers drawn stage and get sucked into an arms race in the next millennium.

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South Asia After The Nuclear Tests: Securing Insecurity

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ABSTRACT

The frustrated but status driven mindset of the Indian policy makers has finally led South Asia to wrap itself into a nuclear fold by further opening strategic vulnerabilities between India and Pakistan. The perceived threat from China by India has also equally complicated the calculus of deterrence relationships in the formation of a nuclear triangle by enlarging the circumference of regional conflict and by imprudently encouraging the possibility of strategic instability between India and China. Therefore, the Indian nuclear tests and the subsequent counter tests by Pakistan in May 1998 have definitely generated insecurity as evidenced by the festering conflicts leading to deepen the strategic schism between India and Pakistan in particular. South Asia awaits a bleak not a bright future.