Chapter - III

Evolution of Pakistan's Nuclear Programme

Pakistan's nuclear programme began with the setting up of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Committee in 1955. In March 1956, the Pakistan Government established the Atomic Energy Council, which consisted of a governing body and the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission. The earliest speculations that Pakistan's nuclear energy programme was not meant solely for peaceful purposes surfaced around 1960 when the US was propagating its "Atoms for Peace" programme worldwide.[1]

Though the idea of a Pakistani nuclear weapons programme supported by US in the 60s seems far fetched, there is some logic in the US attempting to develop in Pakistan, a minimum level of theoretical expertise and basic understanding of how to run dual-use programme of power and research reactors as a deterrent against China. As to how this went totally against US' interest of non-proliferation later will become clear later in the chapter.

The actual impetus for Pakistan's nuclear development came actually in 1972. Pakistan's crushing defeat in the 1971 war and India's close ties with USSR prompted Pakistan to actively pursue the bomb option. Bhutto who was the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1972 is acknowledged worldwide as the architect of Pakistan's nuclear bomb.

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1. Bidwai and Vanaik, 'South Asia on a Short Fuse' (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 109.

In his book 'The Myth of Independence' written as far back as in 1969, he has stated "All wars of our age have become total wars and it will 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 should therefore include the nuclear deterrent".[2]

In January 1972, Bhutto convened a secret meeting in Multan of Pakistan's top scientists, engineers, military officers and bureaucrats. The scientists included Dr. Abdur Salam, Dr. I. H. Usmani and Dr. Munir Ahmad Khan. It was at the meeting that Bhutto announced his decision to manufacture the bomb within three years. Dr. M.A. Khan as head of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission replaced Dr. Usmani who was opposed to the idea of the bomb.

Pakistan's only nuclear power reactor KANNUP (Karachi Nuclear Power Plant) which Pakistan had built with the help of Canada went critical in 1971 and was inaugurated by Bhutto in November 1972. It began working at the desired capacity of 125 MW from July 1973.

Before proceeding to the progress of Pakistan's nuclear programme, the logic of taking the path to nuclearisation bears examination. Four distinct factors stand out and it will be seen that Pakistan's nuclear programme, unlike that of India, was conceived right from its inception as a weapons oriented one. The factors that drove Pakistan's weapons programme in the 70s are listed below.

- Pakistan's defeat in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war.
- India's PNE (Peace Nuclear Explosion) in 1974.

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2. D.K. Palit and P.K.S. Namboodari, Pakistan's Islamic Bomb, (New Delhi: Vikas, 1979), p. 15.

- ➡ Pakistan's overriding ambition to be the leader of the Islamic world.
- ➡ The distorted view that nuclearisation will neutralize the imbalance in conventional superiority vis-à-vis India.

Pakistan now embarked with two tracks in its nuclear programme. The first one was to set up eight 600 MW power stations in 20 years. The second was to be independent for nuclear material, both uranium and plutonium in the manufacture of which, material would be diverted for the bomb. The first programme was under Dr. Munir Khan, head of the PAEE (Pakistan Atomic Energy Establishment) and the latter, the bomb route under Dr. A.Q. Khan.[3]

But as is very clear, Pakistan just did not have the infrastructure to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear bomb. Nor did other technological infrastructure permit Pakistan to produce the bomb indigenously. This was the position in which Pakistan was at the beginning of its clandestine effort to produce the bomb.

Pakistan's Clandestine Bomb Programme:

The two paths adopted by Pakistan in its clandestine bomb programme in 1972 are aptly summed up by Dr. Savita Pande "Two trends can be detected since 1972 in the nuclear activities of Pakistan. One is towards re-processing (1972-1978) and the other is away from re-processing from 1978 onwards. After 1978 reproce-

It was kept latest as a form of insurance. Enrichment became the primary route after 1978, while from 1975-1978 both reprocessing and enrichment paths were active.[4]

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3. Raja Menon, A Nuclear Strategy for India, (New Delhi: Sage 2000), p. 90.
4. Savitha Pande, 'Pakistan's Nuclear Strategy', Asian Strategic Review, 1993-1994.

The Plutonium Route:

Initially Bhutto intended to pursue the nuclear weapons programme by acquiring a large reprocessing plant from France for extracting plutonium from spent power reactor fuel. Pakistan had no apparent need for this material in its civilian nuclear programme. In 1976, there was a major tussle between US and France, with France wanting to sell its reprocessing plant without IAEA safeguards to Pakistan. US Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger was dispatched to Pakistan and France and under US pressure France aborted the deal, thus frustrating Pakistan's efforts to go the plutonium route.[5] In September 1977 US cut off economic and military aid to Pakistan. Bhutto himself had acknowledged the actual purpose behind the French deal in his written testament shortly before his execution.

The Enrichment Route:

Reprocessing was not the only route Pakistan was pursuing in its nuclear weapons programme. Pakistan planned for a uranium enrichment plant using ultra high speed centrifuges, as enriched uranium was the alternative to plutonium, which Pakistan was frustrated in their efforts to produce. A secret project named "Project 706" was set up under direct supervision of Bhutto. The plan was to set up a massive industrial unit at Kahuta. Project 706 aimed at acquiring the necessary supplies and equipment facility at Kahuta. The key figure in organizing this venture was Dr. A.Q. Khan, known widely as the father of the Pakistan bomb. A.Q. Khan who worked at a certified centrifuge enrichment plant at Almelo, Netherlands gained access and copied the all important list of private suppliers of crucial

5. Leonard S Spector, 'The Undeclared Bomb' (Cambridge: Ballinger, 1988), p. 121.

components for building a gas centrifuge plant and brought it back to Pakistan in 1975.[6]

Pakistan's clandestine weapons programme thus got its start with A.Q. Khan stealing secrets from abroad. The next step was to obtain hardware for the Kahuta plant. This was done by obtaining these from a number of western nations, often violating export control norms and even resorting to smuggling. The effort involved use of dummy corporations and transhipments through their countries. Some of these instances which have been documented are listed below:

- An entire plant for converting uranium powder into uranium hexaflouride, the easily gasified material that is the feedstock for the Kahuta enrichment facility was smuggled into Pakistan from West Germany between 1977 and 1980. In March 1985 a West German court convicted Albrecht Migule for the deed.[7]

- In June 1984 three Pakistan nations were indicted for attempting to smuggle 50 cryotrons high-speed electronic switches used in nuclear weapons, out of the United States. Two of the three were released after turning state's evidence and the third Nazir Vaid, ultimately pleaded guilty to a lesser charge, serving three months in a US jail before being deported to Pakistan. Telegrams taken from defendants at the time of arrest revealed that the parts had been ordered by S.A. Butt, Director of Supply and Procurement, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission.

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6. Bidwai and Vanaik, ibid. p. 110.
7. Leonard S. Spector, Ibid., p. 125.

- Ashad Pervez, a Pakistani born Canadian was arrested in Philadelphia on July 11, 1987 for attempting to export illegally to Pakistan 25 tons of 'maraging' steel, an especially strong form of metal used in uranium enrichment centrifuges and bellyrium used in nuclear weapons to increase their yield. On December 17,

1987 Ashad Pervez was found guilty and convicted to Philadelphia. Dr. A.Q. Khan himself was convicted for a four-year term in Holland in November 1983 for espionage but the charges were dropped in 1990. Some of the unconfirmed clandestine acquisitions are briefly listed below:

- 6500 tubes of hard steel used in the gas centrifuge system from Van Doorne Tranmissie of Tilburg, Holland between 1976-1979.
- 100 metric tons of 'yellow cake' from Libya acting as a front, which purchased from Niger and re-exported it to Pakistan in 1979.
- Heavy water from Nukeismi's Swiss Subsidiary Internuclear in 1988.
- Nuclear plant accessories and reprocessed fuel from the Turkish firm, Ankara.

Though the above reports, is not considered hard evidence, it is quite obvious that the hardware and fissile material required for the bomb was neither available in Pakistan nor did Pakistan have the infrastructure to develop it. Import of the above materials was violation of international law. Suffice to conclude that Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme was pursued and achieved by illegal and often clandestine means.

Certain events during this period brought into sharp focus the tremendous progress that Pakistan was making in its nuclear weapon programme and that it

had the capability and was one step away from actual weaponisation in 1987 is now accepted as fact. These events are listed below:

- Announcement by Dr. A.Q. Khan in 1984 that Pakistan had been successful in the uranium enrichment endeavour.
- Statement by Gen. Zia-Ul-Haq on 01 March 1985 to the magazine Christian Science Monitor that Pakistan had enriched uranium upto 5%.
- Dr. A.Q. Khan's controversial interview to Indian journalist Kuldip Nayar in 1987 when he publicly declared that Pakistan had the bomb. The interview had been facilitated by Mushahid Hussain, then editor of 'Muslim', a Pakistani newspaper. In the interview, Dr. Khan had made a statement that Pakistan had the nuclear weapon and would use it to counter Indian aggression. Dr. Khan subsequently denied this interview but both, the Indian and Pakistan journalists stood by it.[8]

According to Rear Admiral Raja Menon, "The end of 1987 is considered a watershed in the nuclearisation of South Asia because from this point onwards India accepted that Pakistan had the bomb".[9]

Pakistan's built up of Infrastructure:

The build up of Pakistan's nuclear installations and infrastructure that facilitated the making of the bomb has continued unabated even after nuclear explosions by Pakistan in May 1998. The build up of its installations and infrastructure is linked with the incidents quoted above. Part of the build up of

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8. K. Subrahmanyam. 'Indian Nuclear Policy', 'Nuclear India', ed. Jasjit Singh, p. 42.
9. Raja Menon. Ibid., p. 99.

infrastructure as was the case with progress in bomb making was also done by clandestine means. A chronological narration of the build up of its technological infrastructure that was part and parcel of its nuclear weapons programme is given below. It is to be noted, at times, Pakistan had two or more projects going simultaneously.

The start point was in 1959 when the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission decided on acquisition of a research reactor, which would go critical by 1959. Due to bureaucratic delays the US supplied 5 MW research reactor was finally set up at Pakistan Institute of Science and Technology (PINSTECH) in 1963, six years behind schedule.[10]

In the meanwhile DAEC, in 1962, entered into negotiations with Canada for the acquisitions of a CANDU type nuclear power plant and concluded an agreement in 1965. The Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANNUP), covered by trilateral safeguards went critical in 1971 and was formally inaugurated in 1972. A laboratory, scale-processing plant known as 'hot cell' was set up at PINSTECH for training of nuclear technicians and for experiments in plutonium chemistry. According to Leonard. S. Spector the plant became functional in 1971.[11]

Pakistan's efforts to achieve nuclear fuel cycle autonomy that is essential for developing a nuclear weapons option commenced in the early 70s and gained momentum after India's nuclear implosion in 1974. Work began on a 'fuel fabrication' plant at Chashma in 1974. In 1976, the Canadians withdrew from this

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10. Naveen Ahmed Salik, 'Pakistan's Nuclear Programme', 'Nuclear Non Proliferation in India and Pakistan' (New Delhi : Monohar, 1996), p. 87.

11. David Fisher. 'Stopping the Speed of Nuclear Weapons – The Past & the Prospects', (Routledge, London, 1993), p. 95.

agreement. Work continued on the plant and by illegal acquisitions which have been described earlier in this chapter, the plant had started supplying its indigenously fabricated fuel for KANNUP by 1981.[12]

The most vital and controversial of the Pakistani nuclear programme is the Ultracentrifuge Enrichment Plant at Kahuta. The cancellation of the French deal due to US pressure has already been explained. The pilot enrichment plant was constructed at Sihala, near the proposed site of the main enrichment plant. This facility became operational in 1979. The Kahuta enrichment plant had also started clandestine uranium enrichment in 1986. Between 1977 and 1980 Pakistan had acquired a 'gasification' plant and a solidification plant illegally from Germany and Switzerland respectively.[13] The gasification plant is required to convert solid uranium into gaseous form for induction into the centrifuges and the solidification plant is required to covert the enriched uranium from gaseous to solid form for its eventual conversion to metallic nuclear cores.

Pakistan achieved a major breakthrough in nuclear reactor design technology in 1991 when they indigenously redesigned and upgraded PAAR – 1 (Pakistan Atomic Research Reactor – 1) from 5 MW to 10 MW. The achievement indicated the level of technical expertise and experience of Pakistani nuclear scientists and technicians. By December 1988, Pakistan had attained the capability to produce enough highly enriched uranium for two to three weapons annually.

Reports in the international press in 1985 that Pakistan had successfully tested non-nuclear triggering package for a nuclear weapon were corroborated by a

12. David Fisher. Ibid. p. 96.

13. Naveen Ahmed Salik. Ibid. p. 91

'Special National Intelligence Estimate' released in 1996. Pakistan's second commercial nuclear power plant is the Chashma Nuclear Power Plant (CHASNUPP). It is a 31 billion rupee Chinese aided project and the culmination of a contract signed on 31 December 1991. The plant went critical on 03 May 2000. This light water reactor is designed to generate 300 MW of electricity using 12 tons of enriched uranium annually. IAEA safeguards cover this plant. While there has been some transparency at this plant due to the safeguards, the 40 MW reactors constructed at Joharabad in Khushab district of Punjab remains shrouded in secrecy. The difference between CHASNUPP and KHUSHAB is that while the former is meant for production of electricity, the latter is suspected to be meant to produce weapons grade plutonium to make miniaturized nuclear warheads for being fitted in to the missiles clandestinely procured by Pakistan from China and North Korea.

Aid from Islamic Countries:

Pakistan had close ties to the oil producing Arab states and benefited economically in its quest for a nuclear weapons. Libya is believed to have agreed to finance Pakistan's nuclear programme in 1973. From 1973 to 1976, Pakistan received grants and loans worth nearly $ 1 billion. From 1980 to1993, assistance amounting to $ 1222.5 million was received from Iran, Libya, Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. In 1981 Kuwait gave aid worth $ 130 million and the Islamic bank $ 19.4 million. In 1982 Pakistan received a loan of $ 500 million from Saudi Arabia. Military assistance from the Islamic nations in 1983 amounted to $ 1000 million. The Islamic countries were generous

in their offers of aid to Pakistan. This, an addition to the China and US factor discussed next, assisted Pakistan on its quest for the nuclear bomb.[14]

The China Factor:

After the 1974 nuclear explosion by India, the Chinese pledged support to Pakistan against nuclear threat and nuclear blackmail. The alleged deal between Pakistan and China in 1976 in which China had assured wide ranging help in the development of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programmes stands to logic in view of further developments.

The Chinese accelerated their support to Pakistan's nuclear programme in the early 80s. Yakub Khan's presence at a nuclear test in neither Lap nor, US Intelligence report of the transfer of a complete bomb design and enough uranium for two implosion devices was all indicators of Chinese active involvement. On 16 November 1989, Chinese Premier Li Peng during a visit to Islamabad announced that China would sell a 300 MW nuclear power reactor under a nuclear co-operation agreement signed by the two countries. The contract for the nuclear power plant was finally signed on December 31 1991 in Beijing. In mid 1985, the Indian Army Chief corroborated the US Intelligence report that China was about to conduct a nuclear test on behalf of Pakistan. The international press however reported in 1985 that China had already tested the Pakistan bomb.[15] The Chinese sale of 5000 ring magnets to the A.Q. Khan Research Laboratory in Kakula in 1995 also helped Pakistan in their nuclear weapons programme. The Defence

14. Sumita Kumar. 'Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Programme', Nuclear India (New Delhi, Knowledge World 1998), p. 160.

15. Leonard Spector. 'Nuclear Ambitions', (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p. 93.

Intelligence Agency of USA reported that the firm which sold the ring magnets to Pakistan was under the direct control of the State Council, which chaired by Chinese Premier Li Peng and constitutes the nation's top policymaking group.[16]

On the delivery systems front, Pakistan received the nuclear capable 300 km. range M-11 missiles from China including key components for the system. In August 1993 the US imposed sanctions on Pakistan's space agency and on China's Ministry of Aerospace Industries because of the sale of missiles with a range of 600 km. and inherently carrying a 500 kg. Payload. The recently inducted Pakistani Ghauri missile, which triggered off India's Pokhran II explosion is believed to be a derivative of either the Chinese Dong-Feng 25 (1700 km. range) or the North Korean Nodong-2 (1500-2000 km. range).

While there is no doubt whatsoever that the Chinese assisted Pakistan considerably in their nuclear weapons programme, their assistance could be summed up as under:

- Chinese assistance was more important in the seventies and early eighties.
- Chinese made major contributions both at the level of information and at the level of supply of spare parts, equipment, technology and trained manpower.
- Such assistance as given was significant but not decisive in Pakistan's quest. At best it accelerated the pace at which Pakistan reached its goal.

US Role in Pakistan's Nuclear Programme:

The US role in Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme has been a dubious one. The US faced a dilemma on its commitment to non-proliferation on one

16. Sumita Kumar. Ibid. p. 165.

hand and its desire to keep Pakistan as a frontline state due to Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, on the other. This dilemma prompted the US administration to ignore 'inconvenient realities' such as missile and nuclear technology acquisition by Pakistan. The events narrated below bring out starkly, the importance of the US administration to slow down or terminate Pakistan's clandestine nuclear weapons programme in spite of clear evidence presented by US intelligence agencies itself.

In May 1979, Washington made public its concern over Pakistan's perusal of its enrichment programme and terminated aid for the second time. Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Pickering declared in a Congressional testimony that Pakistan's enrichment programme was not justified by its nuclear energy needs. He added "we are concerned therefore that the Pakistani programme is not peaceful but related to an effort to develop a nuclear explosive capability".[17] on 25 December 1979 barely six months after reimposition of sanctions by the US, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan commenced. This incident had dramatic consequences for Pakistan. US immediately reversed course and offered both economic and military aid to Pakistan. This trend continued right till 1990 when the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan.

A six-year $ 3.2 billion aid was granted in 1981. It was a six-year exemption from a US non-proliferation law known as the Symington Amendment. This law had previously prohibited such assistance to Pakistan because of Pakistan importing enrichment equipment.

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17. Leonard Spector. 'The Undeclared Bomb', (Cambridge: Ballinger, 1998), p. 125.

Pakistan's efforts towards its nuclear weapons programme never wavered. In spite of all earlier evidence, the Reagan Administration in 1985 approved a second instalment of $ 3.2 billion and package, which had commenced in 1981. At this time the Pressler Amendment was enacted to tighten US proliferation laws. This law stipulated that the US President must certify each year that Pakistan does not possess a nuclear device before aid could be distributed. The US Congress also enacted the 'Solarz Amendment' at the same time. This law prohibited aid to any non-nuclear state found to have smuggled items from the United States for use in an explosive device. Both these laws were broken, both in letter and spirit as will be clear as the narrative unfolds.

1985 was a landmark year in US-Pakistan equation as regards its nuclear weapons programme. In 1984, US President Reagan had warned Pakistan in a letter addressed to Zia-Ul-Haq not to enrich uranium beyond 5%.[18] In September/ October 1985, Pakistan went ahead in the enrichment beyond the laid down 5%. The Reagan Administration was aware of this fact. US President did not bring up the topic with Pakistan President when they met at the UN. The issue was deliberately avoided by the US to avoid a rift with Pakistan, a key ally in US efforts against Afghanistan.

Thus US at the highest political level had decided to acquiesce in Pakistan's decision to move towards the production of weapon grade uranium, the final step in its development of a defacto nuclear weapons capability.

In March 1986, The Reagan Administration announced that it would provide Pakistan a second sex year aid package amounting $ 4.02 billion, which would

18. Leonard S. Spector. Ibid. p. 129.

begin in October 1987. From this point onward, there was no doubt in Pakistan that the US was aware of its clandestine pursuit of nuclear weapons but would turn a blind eye.

A number of other reports, too numerous to be listed in this study gave credibility to statements that Pakistan had produced weapon grade material in 1986 and had also conducted two additional tests on non-nuclear portions of the device also in 1986. US aid, however, remained unaffected and on October 27 1986, President Reagan certified that Pakistan did not 'possess' a nuclear device.[19] This certificate was necessary under the Pressler Amendment cited earlier, without which further aid to Pakistan could not be disbursed. President Reagan again certified Pakistan's non-possession in December 1987 and in January 1988 waived the 'Solarz Amendment', which prohibited aid to any non-nuclear State found smuggling items from US for use in an explosive device. Thus as mentioned earlier, both the Pressler and Solarz amendments aimed at strengthening US proliferation laws were broken in letter and spirit to accommodate Pakistan. By the end of 1987 it was clear to the world community that Pakistan had the bomb. Soon after the Soviet troops withdrew

From Afghanistan in 1989, Pakistan's strategic relevance to the US was reduced and the US government decided in 1990 to suspend economic and military aid to Pakistan. The US President refused to certify that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device and brought into force the Pressler amendment to suspend aid.

From bomb in the basement to nuclearisation:

In 1991, India and Pakistan entered into an agreement prohibiting attacks on each others' nuclear installations. In 1992, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary publicly

19. Leonard S. Spector. Ibid., p. 142.

discussed Pakistan's possession of 'cores' of nuclear devices. In December 1992 Senator Larry Pressler stated in a press interview that Pakistan had assembled seven weapons and could air drop one in a matter of hours.[20] In 1994, US commenced its efforts to cap reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons in South Asia. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott visited Pakistan as part of this effort.

In January 1992, India and Pakistan exchanged lists of atomic installations, which each side pledged not to attack as part of confidence building measures. In 1996 Pakistan commissioned an unsafeguarded nuclear reactor details of which have been given earlier in this chapter. The purchase of the controversial 'ring magnets' from China for the Kahuta plant confirmed Pakistan's intention in accumulating enriched uranium for use in nuclear weapons.

In July 1997 Pakistan confirmed its test firing of the new indigenous Hatf missile. In September 1997 Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif confirmed Pakistan's nuclear capability. On 06 April 1998, Pakistan successfully test fired its medium range ballistic missile Ghauri. India responded by carrying out its nuclear tests between 11th and 13th May in the same year. Pakistan brought its bombs out of the basement and went nuclear by detonating five nuclear devices on 28 May 1998 and one device on 30 May 1998, lying to rest once and for all speculation regarding its nuclear status.

It may be pointed out that Pakistan's Foreign Minister Assef Ahmad Ali, on a recent visit to Uzbekistan expatiated his country's declarator country's policy

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20. Dec. 01, 1992. NBC News Broadcast.

underpinning its nuclear strategy. At a news conference, on 8 Jan 1994, *he warned that nuclear was might engulf South Asia If his country's territorial dispute with India went unresolved* – "Unless the Kashmir dispute is solved peacefully on terms on terms of international law and UN resolutions, there cannot be lasting peace in South Asia and there is always danger of a fourth war in the region ... And this time around, the concern of the world, the concern of regional countries is that if a war takes place in South Asia it might become a nuclear war ... *It is very important for all countries in the region to recognise the immense danger to the world of a war in South Asia which could become the first nuclear war in the history of this part of the world".*

The declaration by Assef Ahmad Ali, unlike past disclosures made by Pakistan's nuclear fraternity diplomats or United States intelligence sources, is a direct and authentically articulated threat to the security of South Asia in general and India in particular. The Government of India and a – number of intellectuals have readily accepted the subsequent disclaimer by the Pakistan Government, that the Minister had been misquoted by the press. This low-key reaction may be justified in normal dipolmatese. But what needs to be grasped is that nuclear diplomacy has its own dynamics and is a totally different kettle of fish. Statements at press conferences in today's world are recorded. It is difficult to believe that all members of the Press would uniformly file an incorrect report. The ploy of making a public statement and following it up by a retraction is not new. But when we analyse the intricacies of declaratory statements in support of nuclear policy, it takes on a sinister hue.

Pakistan is a unique situation where its expansionist strategy to wrest Kashmir from India is being effectively stymied by India. The causes of frustration are:

- Pakistani sponsored insurgency in Kashmir is taking an unprecedented whipping at the hands of the Indian Army. The inability of Pakistani forces to bail out the militants has adversely affected their credibility, which in turn has loosened their hold on the dissidents in Kashmir.

- Pakistan has been hovering on the brink of being declared a terrorist state by the United States under threat of international sanctions. The Government is showing signs of desperation to achieve their goats in Kashmir before the curtain come down.

- The stability of the newly elected PPP Government is threatened by internal dissension brought about by internecine contradictions in the Bhutto family and the Party's precarious dependence on its coalition partners. The forecloses Bhutto's options to negotiate with India on Kashmir.

- With the materialisation of pre Independence bloc in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, Benazir Bhutto's Government is being forced to take a virulent stand on Kashmir to demonstrate its bona fides in domestic policies. This leaves little, if any, room to develop a realistic policy that would ameliorate tensions in the subcontinent.

- The insufficiency of conventional military means to force a decision in Kashmir has, to large degrees been responsible for Pakistan's compulsions to go nuclear.

These issues and the articulated threat cannot be wished away, ignored or procrastinated over. Such a reaction communicates a lack of political will and inability to appreciate and formulate National Strategy to defend India's vital

National Interests leaving her open to diplomatic coercion and physical destruction. Therefore, it is imperative that the Indian Government makes an immediate and appropriate response.

The Indian leadership cannot but take cognisance of these statements for the following reasons:

- The statement was made by the Foreign Minister and, therefore, constitutes a part of Pakistan's foreign policy;
- It was delivered at a press conference in a foreign country, a pronouncement that cannot be made by such a high-ranking personality unless cleared by Government;
- It was made at a time when the Pakistan lobby in the United States was making serious attempts to have the Pressler Amendment modified to re-open military and economic aid to the ailing economy;
- It was made immediately after the Seventh round of Foreign Secretary level talks recently concluded in Islamabad (1 – 3 January) following a gap of 17 months where all issues including nuclear non-proliferation were reportedly part of the agenda;
- It was made as a part of the concerted drive by Pakistan to internationalise the Kashmir issue to draw the United States into the controversy to overcome to military disadvantageous equation on the subcontinent;
- Comes at a time when the United States has been making a number of anti-Indian pronouncements and initiatives to inveigle their way into the negotiation process on J & K.

- The prime motivation of the statement flows from policies initiated by Prime Minister Qureshi, on the collapse of Nawaz Sarief Government, directed towards highlighting South Asian security concerns overtly to sensitise international opinion.

- Pakistan has deliberately developed nuclear weapons as an equaliser to off set its inferiority in conventional military power. She can be expected to initiate a pre-emptive nuclear strike in the event an Indian offensive threatens defeat.

Analysis of Factors

International perceptions notwithstanding, India cannot and will not predicate its nuclear strategy on the use of nuclear weapons to attain its objectives. Initiation of a nuclear exchange is a self-defeating stratagem, which would destroy the socio-economic fabric of the nation state with no scope of achieving the desired political objective. A pre-emptive first strike is indicative of an inability to formulate and put into place a practicable nuclear strategy and infrastructural bankruptcy. Whatever else, Indian policy-makers would create a weapons capability of contingent to having responsible, comprehensive and responsive infrastructure in place, which would make the Government accountable to its own people and collateral communities.

To date India has forsworn the right to exercise the nuclear option thus bringing about a dangerous nuclear asymmetry that could invite a pre-emptive strike by an irresponsible belligerent, such as Pakistan. A country that has based its very existence on an anti-Indian stand and directed its foreign policy accordingly.

Pakistan's nuclear capability and strategy have been cautiously unveiled in a graduated manner to that global perceptions were contained at levels that would not precipitate political and economic fallout to unmanageable dimensions and would full India into a state of vulnerable complacency. Have we now reached that stage where Pakistan feels confident in its nuclear capabilities to express its intent as categorically as has been done by the Foreign Minister? What must the Indian Government do to safeguard its national security? The moral high ground is no protection against nuclear coercion. Lofty ideals or cerebral inertia, whichever is responsible for the dangerously asymmetric nuclear equation in South Asia, must give way to formulation of pragmatic national security strategy corresponding to ground realities.

The present Government of Pakistan is, to an extent, dependent on the indulgence of the military. It is not clear who controls the nuclear arsenal. Is it with the military through General Arif (Retd.) with the political leadership cut out of the loop? If so, it needs to be noted that the General wields extraordinary influence with the higher echelons of the Pakistani Army.

The Pakistani-initiated low intensity conflict in Kashmir has stalled with the militant cadres presently on the defensive, military materials running low and prospects of further reverses predicted in the next three to four months, Pakistan is endeavouring to:

- Stem the collapse of the militant structures created in the Valley.
- Buy time to put into place materials and men to rejuvenate their strategy in the Valley.

- Upgrade the low level insurgency into a full-fledged guerrilla war in J & K. The need to buy time and circumscribe India's anti-militant operations has given impetus to diplomatic initiatives to compel the international community to intervene in Kashmir and reduce the pressure on the militants.

Blatantly specious efforts at linking Pakistan's aspirations to Kashmir with their nuclear strategy are aimed at heightening international security perceptions sufficiently to draw the United States into intervening in Indo-Pak relations.

Their protestations notwithstanding, the United States has a number of prime strategic interests in the Subcontinent.

- The need for a suitable host country along the Southern flank of the Central Asian Republics to provide surveillance and military facilities to safeguard their interests in that explosive region. An independent and beholden Kashmir would fit the bill.
- Creation of a viable and totally dependent State in the region for future initiatives to meet long-term objectives designed to destabilise China through Tibet and institute of defensive measures against resurgent, recalcitrant Russia.
- Pressure India to conform with the United State's national interests to ensure non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and their delivery means;
- Disallow the emergence of another power centre (India), which would place a greater strain on an already hard, pressed United States to maintain it's pre-eminence in global power equations – even if it means the Balkanisation of India. The administration's attempts to modify the Pressler Amendment

would allow the President to sanction, aid to Pakistan, even if it is in violation, of specific Unites States laws, if it is considered in the American security interests. It would be an interesting exercise to analyse United States security imperatives in the Kashmir region.

Pakistan would like India to believe that if the restraints being exercised by the latter in Kashmir were replaced by a more aggressive policy, the escalation could result in more direct military confrontation with serious repercussions on Pakistan. As the latter's capabilities are unequal to the task of wresting Kashmir from India, the ensuing frustrations could lead to miscalculations that provide the basis for launching a pre-emptive nuclear strike against India. The likelihood of such an occurrence is expected to furnish grounds for pre-emptive intervention by external powers such as the United States.

India needs to communicate to Pakistan that:

- If India were to actuate its nuclear option, it has the wherewithal to create an endurable weapon is capability to respond to a pre-emptive nuclear-strike by Pakistan. This would provide the necessary disincentive to any form of nuclear opportunism.
- A nuclear retaliation by India on a geographically small and economically impoverished Pakistan could comprehensively destroy the socio-economic structure of that country.
- On the other hand, with Pakistan's limited capabilities, while it could deliver a crippling blow through a pre-emptive nuclear strike, India has the geographic, economic, technological, industrial and structural endurance to survive and reconstruct itself.

India's Response:

To ensure regional stability and reduce the scope for extraneous grounds for escalating the situation to nuclear exchanges, Indian diplomacy must be directed towards avoiding an outbreak of conventional war on in subcontinent – and neutralising the linkage of nuclearisation of the region with Kashmir issue to offset western mind-sets.

However, any choice that India may have had vis-à-vis their nuclear policies have now been foreclosed effectively. The government must, first and foremost, take firm measures to put into place a credible deterrent to forestall the eventuality of Pakistan taking the opportunity to initiate a nuclear strike as a fait accompli or risk being destroyed without a whimper. Sufficient justification has been provided without India deferring to the opinion of other global entities.

Failure of the United States to dissuade Pakistan from its nuclear aspirations is a consequence of the former's political shenanigans in the closing stages of the Cold War. Emerging United States national interests notwithstanding, India cannot jeopardise its own integrity and sovereignty in obeisance to such geo-strategic convolutions.

This decision must be unambiguously communicated to Pakistan. The latter must be provided enough evidence that:

- Has the capability to respond with devastation to any pre-emptive nuclear stoke, so as to destroy the socio-economic structure of Pakistan;
- Has the political will supported by viable nuclear strategy and infrastructure to safeguard its socio-economic well being and survival;

- Has clearly defined national interests on which no compromise will be made;
- Is determined to deal with Pakistan on a bilateral basis only and will not be rail roaded into multilateral negotiations on its territorial integrity, leave alone the Kashmir issue;
- Has no intentions to initiate a nuclear exchange and that the underpinning strategy is predicated solely on retaliation;
- And is willing to keep open clear lines of communication for mature management of the changed strategic configuration of the region.

At the same time the Indian Government should communicate this decision to all other states providing them the rationale for its nuclear policy. Thereafter, India would be best advised to provide verifiable guarantees that it would continue to adhere to the concept of the NPT in so much that it would:

- Not transfer nuclear weapons or related technology and materials to any other country, be it a NWS or NNWS;
- Not clandestinely import nuclear related technologies from other countries;
- Conform to globally institutionalised treaties on nuclear testing;
- Through open nuclear facilities, not associated with its security imperatives, to international safeguards;
- And forswear vertical nuclear proliferation or a regional nuclear arms race by restricting the nuclear strategy to one of the minimum deterrence with finite limitations on capability.

Finally, India should re-initiate its proposal to the United Nations for universal nuclear disarmament.

Conclusion:

International relations in the contemporary world are experiencing divergent pulls and pressures depending on the global or regional magnitude of the payers' aspirations. The United States has imperatives aimed a retaining its global pre-eminence in the political, economic and military spheres. Pakistan's imperatives the limited to regional goals aimed at acquisition of Kashmir, attaining an equitable power balance vis-à-vis India and, becoming the predominant party in the Islamic configuration in the Middle East. Both global and regional issues play a major role in the development of China's foreign policy. China's internal anxieties in Sinkiang and Tibet demand a secure flank along its South Western extremities while it is occupied by its aspirations to great power status in global politics.

Indian policy-makers must accept these complexities and their convergence on India's security environment. Each of these states has their own compulsions in the Kashmir issue and nuclear proliferation in South Asia. The United States, having accomplished the dismemberment of the erstwhile USSR now faces several challenges to its position as the remaining super power. Loss of that status will reduce its capacity to control global events in keeping with its interests. One major threat emanates from China. Do the United States plans include dismantling the Chinese power quotient? If so, do they covet an Independent Kashmir, dependent on American largesse, which would give them access to the vulnerable underbelly of China? Is that the reason that China has taken the stand that an independent Kashmir is not acceptable ?

Is there a nuclear threat to India and if so, who is it form? How does nuclear proliferation correlate to the Kashmir question? Pakistan requires American intervention to assist it in its aspirations on Kashmir. The Americans are particularly concerned with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means in South Asia. Is Pakistan forcing the issue by creating a connection between Kashmir and the 'bomb'?

The bottom line is that Pakistan has finally articulated a direct and unambiguous threat of nuclear war and cited India as the correspondent. It is a significant benchmark in the ongoing Indo-Pak animosity, which necessarily extends itself beyond the immediate region. India cannot ignore this and must take appropriate measures to make its position clear to the world at large and a specific response to Pakistan. Whether this is done in one package or through confidential and limited rejoinders to different players is a matter of detail that the Indian Government must decide. Finally, the Government must crystallise its nuclear policy and create the necessary infrastructure that would give the country the necessary deterrent and the armed forces the wherewithal to survive in combat in a nuclear environment.