

III Nuclear Proliferation in Asia

US policies undermine its credibility in a strategic region.

**By the Honorable Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali
Foreign Minister of Pakistan**

SINCE THE 1960S, PAKISTAN HAS BEEN ACTIVELY engaged in a programme for the development of nuclear energy and technology for peaceful purposes. The Government is determined to continue its nuclear programme to meet our growing energy requirements and to derive other benefits from the development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Pakistan is an energy-starved country. The per capita consumption of energy is one of the lowest even in comparison to other developing countries. Such a situation cannot be permitted to continue as the availability of energy in adequate measure constitutes a vital precondition for enhancing economic growth and revitalizing the process of development in the country. Development of nuclear power generation will be complementary to the Government's efforts to increase energy production through conventional sources.

Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to the goal of nuclear non-proliferation. Our nuclear programme is entirely peaceful. It is not weapon-oriented. We are committed to promoting Pakistan's peaceful nuclear programme for the purposes of economic and social development of the country.

Despite India's nuclear explosion of 1974 and its vast un safeguarded nuclear programme, which have been a source of great concern to Pakistan, we remain committed to the goal of nuclear non-proliferation. Pakistan is willing to accept any non-discriminatory and equitable regime for keeping South Asia free of nuclear weapons.

Since 1974, when India exploded a nuclear device and demonstrated conclusively its nuclear weapon capability, Pakistan has made the following equitable proposals to ensure nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia:

a) Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in South Asia, a proposal which has been endorsed repeatedly by the UN General Assembly since 1974.

b) In view of India's opposition to the establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in South Asia, we proposed in 1978 that, as a first step, Pakistan and India should issue a joint Declaration renouncing the acquisition or manufacture of nuclear weapons.

c) In 1979, Pakistan proposed an agreement with India on a system of bilateral inspection of all nuclear facilities on a reciprocal basis.

d) We also proposed in 1979 simultaneous acceptance of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards by Pakistan and India on all nuclear facilities.

e) Pakistan expressed its readiness in 1979 to accede to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) simultaneously with India.

f) Later in 1987, Pakistan proposed the conclusion of a bilateral or regional Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty.

g) In 1987, Pakistan also proposed the convening of a Conference on nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia under the auspices of the United Nations with the participation of regional and other interested states.

h) In 1991, Pakistan proposed the convening of five-nation consultations to ensure nuclear non-proliferation in the region. With the exception of India, this proposal has been accepted by all the parties, namely, the United States, Russia and China.

India has not accepted any of the proposals made by Pakistan for preventing nuclear proliferation in South Asia. This is not only contrary to the positive international trends for bringing about meaningful disarmament measures but also against the cause of peace, stability and progress of the region.

Pakistan, in the process of the development of its peaceful nuclear programme, has acquired some technical capability in the nuclear field. Over a dozen non-nuclear-weapon states in the world possess the same technical capability. This is the inevitable result of acquiring self-sufficiency in the development of nuclear energy and technology for peaceful purposes. However, a political decision has been taken at the highest level to use this technical capability for peaceful purposes and not to produce nuclear weapons.

Pakistan does not possess a nuclear explosive device nor does it intend to make one. In consonance with its commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, Pakistan will also not transfer sensitive nuclear technology to third countries.

At the same time, for obvious security reasons, Pakistan cannot forego its options unilaterally and, thus, place itself at a disadvantage vis a vis India, which refuses to sign the NPT or to accept comprehensive IAEA safeguards covering all of its nuclear facilities.

Pakistan and the United States have traditionally enjoyed a relationship of friendship and cooperation. We also share the basic objective of ensuring non-proliferation in South Asia on a

Editor's Note

The Pressler Amendment prohibits all foreign aid to Pakistan unless the President certifies that they are not developing nuclear weapons. The decision, initially made by President Bush, to penalize the US' strongest ally against Soviet aggression in Afghanistan has raised questions about the credibility of US foreign policy in Asia. These questions are exacerbated by the fact that Pakistan's chief rival, India, at best a recalcitrant partner of US foreign policy, has exploded a nuclear device with no repercussions from the US. Further damaging the US' standing is its refusal to release \$800 million in military equipment that Pakistan had already paid for or to return the funds to Pakistan.

regional basis. Pakistan, however, insists that equity and non-discrimination should be manifest in practical terms. Our main differences with the United States on the issue of non-proliferation relate to the Pressler amendment. It is a discriminatory law as it applies only to Pakistan whose nuclear programme is entirely peaceful and not to India or other countries that are known to possess nuclear weapons capability. It is our position that unless the Pressler amendment is removed, it would be difficult to create an environment conducive to the resolution of the issue of non-proliferation as India will see no incentive to negotiate constructively as long as Pakistan continues to be singled out for discriminatory treatment. Meanwhile, Pakistan will not agree to any conditions on its nuclear programme which do not apply equally to India.

Pakistan's vigorous support for non-proliferation stems not only from our commitment to ensure the elimination from the world of weapons of mass destruction. It is more importantly an expression of our serious concern about India's proven nuclear weapons capability-

The application of the Pressler restrictions has seriously impaired Pakistan's defence capability. Military imbalance in a region full of tension is the surest invention to aggression. India's behavior in South Asia forcefully testifies to its hegemonistic ambitions. Its treatment of its neighbors is proof of a misguided quest for great power status. By depriving Pakistan of its legitimate defence needs, the Pressler Amendment may well have sowed the seeds of yet another Indian misadventure in South Asia.

The people of Pakistan are bewildered by the treatment meted out to them by the United States. Pakistan more than any other country, has been the bulwark of strength for the free world in this region. Its bold and courageous stand against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and its role in the Gulf War are two notable examples of this contribution. Despite enormous risks, Pakistan willingly assumed the status of a front-line state to stop the Soviet juggernaut. The unjust Pressler restrictions have created a sense of profound disappointment and dismay amongst the people of Pakistan. It is not wise to abandon friends. Particularly when they have stood by you without reservation in times of trial. Even more disconcerting is the fact that following the passage of the

Pressler Amendment, the law was applied retroactively to Pakistan thus stopping the transfer of one billion dollars worth of military hardware for which Pakistan had paid in cash.

Pakistan is not just another country. Its constituency comprises a billion Muslims of the world. It is a leading member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It is amongst the few Islamic countries with a strong democratic ethos, a liberal outlook, and an open economy. Its foreign policy is anchored in the principles of the UN Charter and tempered by moderation and responsibility. Its credentials as an earnest proponent of non-proliferation in South Asia are widely acknowledged. It has supported the Middle East peace process, despite serious domestic opposition. The continued application of the Pressler law is, therefore, a source of deep bafflement for the government and the people of Pakistan.

Thrice in the past, India has committed

aggression against Pakistan. Its massive military build-up and its nuclear weapons capability together with an aggressive missile development programme, which now encompasses long range missiles, are a serious threat to Pakistan's security. These negative developments, especially the deployment of nuclear-capable missiles by India will accentuate the danger of nuclear proliferation in our region and will cause a serious setback to regional and international peace and security.

Pakistan hopes that India, in the interest of peace and progress, would respond positively to proposals for regional non-proliferation in South Asia and adopt reasonable policies for the settlement of outstanding disputes, particularly in Kashmir, so that regional countries can devote themselves to the gigantic task of economic development and raising the standard of living of their peoples. IB

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