NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION FROM PAKISTAN: A PEEP INTO THE PAST AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

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In 2001, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Pakistan's Khan Research Laboratories[1] (KRL), the country's national research institute most famous for nuclear enrichment, then President Musharraf lavishly commended the work of Dr AQ Khan, widely known in Pakistan as the Father of the Bomb[2]. He described Khan's role in Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme as a "unique national success story… of selfless devotion, unbridled dedication, scientific brilliance, technological mastery and, above all, supreme patriotism and religious fervor" among the "general sea of disappointment" that Pakistan had long experienced.[3] The generous praise for the scientist who was to be virtually disowned by the Pakistan government a few years later was certainly true in at least two respects. The first of these related to

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1. The KRL started as the Engineering Research Laboratories (ERL) in 1976 to build and operate a full scale centrifuge plant for uranium enrichment. President Zia renamed the lab in the name of A Q Khan after a visit to the place in 1981 that left him thoroughly impressed with the work under way at the facility.
2. A title bestowed on A Q Khan by former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 1992 after he became the first elected prime minister to tour the Kahuta enrichment complex.
3. Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark, *Deception: Pakistan, the United States and the Global Nuclear Weapons Conspiracy* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 308.

the uniqueness of the success of Pakistan's nuclear programme, given that the country could claim hardly any successes in national socio-economic indicators or techno-scientific achievements. Secondly, for his country, and for a few others, AQ Khan certainly spelt the hope of realising their nuclear weapons ambitions.

Irrespective of how he is remembered at home, across the world, AQ Khan is the most well known face of the elaborate nuclear proliferation network run from Pakistan. He made a televised disclosure of his "unauthorized proliferation activities" on February 4, 2004, claiming that these were "only for personal financial gain and not as Pakistani state policy".[4] This statement was made under the watchful eye of the government of President Musharraf who then assured the US and the world that he "would share all the information he learns about the Khan network" and that "his country will never again be a source of proliferation". President Musharraf nevertheless demitted office without actually sharing any useful details of the proliferation network.

Indeed, successive Pakistani governments have denied any nuclear misconduct. But many publications[5] over the last 15 years have amply documented that the proliferation from Pakistan was done *in the knowledge, and with the complicity, of the Pakistan Army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)*. To quote Husain Haqqani, adviser to four Pakistani prime ministers, "The military had been in sole control of KRL and PAEC [Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission] since Zia's days. They had always been in charge of Khan – in that, all of his activities were governed by their orders."[6] AQ Khan himself stated in an interview to *Der Spiegel* in 2011, a statement that was in sharp contrast to the one he had made seven years earlier, "Logistics and security at our plant were in the hands of the army and they checked each and every item that came in or left… I took sole blame for this whole episode

4. Husain Haqqani, *India Vs Pakistan: Why Can't We Just be Friends?* (New Delhi: Juggernaut Books, 2016), p. 76.
5. Gordon Correra, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity and Rise and Fall of AQ Khan Network* (London: Oxford University Press, 2006); Levy and Scott-Clark, n. 3; William Langewiesche, *The Atomic Bazaar* (Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2003); Thomas C Reed and Danny Stillman, *The Nuclear Express: The Political History of the Bomb and its Proliferation* (Zenith Press, 2009).
6. As cited in Levy and Scott-Clark, n.3, p. 296.

because the political leadership urgently asked me to do so…."[7]

Given that its nuclear programme has always been run as such a tight ship by the Pakistan Army and that nuclear policy decisions have remained the preserve of the army, it is impossible that the smuggling or the coordination of the illicit procurement network on the scale at which it took place could have been possible without the knowledge of the highest echelons of the army. In fact, as William Langewiesche, an investigative journalist, points out, "AQ Khan had allies in high places who, rather than ignoring his activities, were *directly involved and almost certainly approved. In Pakistan, this can only mean the generals….*"[8] For instance, in the case of the KRL, it has been reported that in the early 1980s, the ISI and the Intelligence Bureau manned the road from Kahuta to Islamabad international airport with everything being tracked and "any shipment, day or night, reported back to army headquarters."[9]

It is possible that the proliferation activities may not have taken place under a clear chain of command or with a formal process in place, but nevertheless these did occur with a tacit understanding amongst the elite in the military, the coopted politicians and the scientists from the nuclear establishment.

So, it was a clear-headed, conscious decision, or as one analyst has described it, "the foreign policy of a nation, plotted and supervised by Pakistan's ruling military clique"[10] to offer a nuclear weapon to Iraq in the early 1980s, and to undertake nuclear related transfers to Libya, Iran, North Korea, and possibly, Syria and Saudi Arabia. It is possible that the proliferation activities may not have taken place under a clear chain of command or with a formal process in place, but nevertheless these did occur with a tacit understanding amongst the elite in the military, the coopted politicians and the scientists from the nuclear establishment. The activities were undertaken with impunity till

7. Interview as cited in Ahmed Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the West* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 63.
8. William Langewiesche, *The Atomic Bazaar: The Rise of the Nuclear Poor* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 155.
9. Levy and Scott-Clark, n.3, p. 95.
10. Ibid., p.2.

such time the network was revealed to public view in October 2003 with the seizure of the German ship *BBC China* on its way to Libya with parts for a nuclear weapons programme. When Libya decided to renounce its nuclear ambitions and handed over nuclear material it had obtained illegitimately, the contents included the design of the Chinese bomb, Chicom 4, wrapped in a bag that belonged to the favourite tailor of A Q Khan.[11]

The fact that proliferation of a considerable extent and expanse took place from Pakistan is now well established, claims of innocence from within the country notwithstanding.[12] But even more intriguing is the fact that the countries that have benefitted from Pakistan's nuclear largesse, all except North Korea, have been Islamic nations. Was this by design? Was the peddling of nuclear wares by Pakistan a commercial or an ideological venture? Was the military trying to raise capital or build political influence by exporting the bomb to Muslim nations? What role did the 'Islamic' identity play in Pakistan's development and disbursement of its nuclear capability? What are the dilemmas that this poses for Pakistan itself? What are the future challenges that arise from Pakistan's proliferation? These are some of the questions that this paper seeks to answer.

Divided into four broad sections, the paper first highlights some facts about the Pakistani proliferation network. The second segment explores the role of the nuclear weapon in defining and sustaining Pakistan's Islamic identity. The third section exposes some of the dilemmas posed by Pakistan's projection of its nuclear weapon as an "Islamic bomb" and explains why this description has been abandoned or toned down in the last few years. The concluding section identifies the challenges that Pakistan's willful proliferation will pose for the future of nuclear and international security.

PROLIFERATION FROM PAKISTAN: "AN ALTERNATIVE REVENUE STREAM"

According to Western intelligence estimates that had been tracking AQ

11. It may be recalled that this was the same bomb that China had tested for the Pakistanis at its test site, Lop Nor, in 1990.
12. For instance, see the protestations of Gen Musharraf in his autobiography, *In the Line of Fire* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

Khan's deals in Europe and the USA in 1984-85, the Khan Research Laboratories had been spending anything between $550-700 million even though the official budget was shown at $18 million.[13] Much of this yawning gap between actual and projected spending was made up by siphoning the US assistance flowing into Pakistan for fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. A British diplomat graphically explained the process as being conducted through a "raft of charities, educational set-ups and health groups that were named as legitimate beneficiaries [which] turned out to be covers, run by the military that skillfully drained, laundered and redirected the cash to the nuclear fund."[14] But with the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan, this money was going to dry up and Pakistan was well aware of this. Then Foreign Minister of Pakistan Agha Shahi expressed the need for Pakistan "to broker new alliances and develop a revenue stream that was dependable and outside the scope of the US-run Afghan war." It was in this context that the idea of using the KRL as a "cash cow" emerged and according to reports, "in early 1985, an elite group of principals, steered by the president, began at highly secretive meetings, to explore trading KRL's skills and assets".[15]

Amongst the early potential customers that were contacted by Pakistan's Foreign Ministry were Iran, Iraq and Libya. From Iran, which was caught in a war with Iraq at the time, the response was near immediate and in February 1986, AQ Khan had flown to Tehran to provide help for restarting its nuclear programme that dated back to the time of the Shah of Iran but which had been stalled in 1979 after the Islamic revolution.

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13. Levy and Scott-Clark, n.3, p. 124.
14. Ibid., p. 126.
15. Ibid., p. 133.

was to dismantle the nuclear programme in order to avert any "westoxification" of Iran. On June 17, 1980, an official suspension of the programme was declared with a statement that claimed that the construction of reactors was "harmful for the country from the economic, political and technical points of view, and was a cause of greater dependence on imperialist countries."[16] But the view on the nuclear programme began to change during the course of the Iran-Iraq War. Baghdad's attack on the half finished Iranian nuclear reactors in 1984 and 1985 was met with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inaction and its subsequent use of chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers heralded the victimisation syndrome in Iran when it felt completely isolated. It is hardly surprising that then Parliament Speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani expressed that his country should plan to equip itself in both the offensive and defensive use of chemical, bacteriological and radiological weapons.[17]

Outreach by AQ Khan at this time came in timely and helpful. The two countries entered into a Nuclear Cooperation Agreement in 1986 wherein Pakistan offered to train Iranian nuclear scientists in return for financial support for its own nuclear programme. According to the Iranian opposition sources, both countries also signed an agreement for joint development of nuclear weapons, under which Iran was to provide funding while Pakistan contributed its expertise, including for training of Iran's nuclear physicists at the Pakistan Institute for Nuclear Science and Technology (PINSTECH) and KRL. Iran was also provided with P-1 centrifuges, though this was not the latest technology then available with Pakistan since it had advanced to P-2 centrifuges. But the KRL had a warehouse full of spare P-1 machines and components ready for sale and AQ Khan wanted to put them to some use. These were priced in such a manner that "even if the Iranians bought the bare minimum, the deal would net the KRL in excess of $ 2 million", according to some IAEA estimates done later. Over the years, Iran received, through Dubai, "nearly 18 tons of materials, including centrifuges, components and drawings."[18]

16. David Patrikarakos, *Nuclear Iran: The Birth of an Atomic State* (London: IB Tauris, 2012), p. 110.
17. As cited by Arun Vishwanathan, "Iran's Nuclear Programme: Where is it Headed?", in A Vishwanathan and R Nagappa, eds., *Troubling Tehran: Reflections on Geopolitics* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), p. 24.
18. n. 3, p. 294.

By 1991, the supply of the P-1 centrifuge parts had been completed along with some fully functioning centrifuges. Soon thereafter, Gen Beg travelled to Tehran to offer the Iranian Revolutionary Guards a "complete nuclear warhead or blueprints for a weapon" for hundreds of millions of dollars, to be transferred through Kazakhstan.[19] The deal, however, never materialised allegedly because Pakistan's President Ishaq Khan had reservations about equipping a Shia dominant regime in Iran. Later reports, nevertheless, establish that "a full set of general P-2 centrifuge drawings"[20] was given to Tehran in 1994-96. IAEA has reported 13 meetings between Iran and A Q Khan during 1994 and 1999.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's link to Libya goes back even further to 1972 when then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto visited Libya soon after authorising the start of the nuclear weapons programme in his own country. Libya agreed to generously contribute its petro-dollars and even facilitated the transfer of uranium from Niger for this programme.

Even as the relationship with Iran continued, interestingly enough, two months after Iraq invaded Kuwait, Baghdad received a letter dated October 6, 1990, carrying a proposal from AQ Khan offering to help Iraq "establish a project to enrich uranium and manufacture nuclear weapons".[21] This fact has been corroborated by an official Iraqi declaration sent to the UN in 2003 which claimed that an emissary of AQ Khan had offered nuclear assistance to Baghdad at the time of the Gulf War.[22] The proposal included a weapon for US $150 million in three years compared to Pakistan itself having spent double this amount and ten years in building the weapon. On sale were also detailed designs and actual blueprints of the bomb for as little as US$ 5 million.[23] However, Saddam Hussein was suspicious of the offer and it was never taken up.

19. As revealed by the Iranian dissidents, and cited in Levy and Clark, n.3, p. 225.
20. Patrikarakos, n. 16, p. 158.
21. Wilson John, *Pakistan's Nuclear Underworld :An Investigation* (New Delhi: Samskriti, 2005), p. 106.
22. Ibid., p. 106.
23. David Albright, *Peddling Peril: How the Secret Nuclear Trade Arms America's Enemies* (Free Press, 2010).

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Syria too is suspected of having received help akin to that provided to Libya, though significant tangible evidence of this is yet to surface. A 2006 Kuwaiti news report hinted at Syria's clandestine efforts. The IAEA then scrutinised overhead images of the complex and discovered that it was significantly similar in layout to the plans for a uranium enrichment site obtained from Libya. However, Syrian President Bashar Assad clarified in 2007 that though he had received a written statement apparently penned by Khan, his government had not responded. Damascus has maintained that the Dair Alzour site, which was bombed by Israel in 2007 on suspicion of being a plutonium production facility, was actually a military installation with no nuclear component.[24]

Meanwhile, Pakistan's nuclear link with Saudi Arabia is also extremely interesting. Both nations have shared a close relationship owing to their geographical proximity, religious affinity, and historic relations that have thrived owing to congruence of their individual needs. Nowhere is the last aspect more true than in the case of their nuclear relationship. Saudi Arabia has been flush with cash while Pakistan has had the wherewithal to develop nuclear weapons, and it was almost inevitable that the two should have decided to help one another. In fact, instances of military cooperation between the two can be found from 1969 onwards when pilots of the Pakistan Air Force had flown Saudi Air Force jets to defend the country against South Yemen. Pakistan Army soldiers have defended the Saudi oil fields, and stood

24. Global Security Newswire, November 1, 2011, at NTI website www.nti.org/gsn/article/iaea-finds-signs-of-syrian-ties-to-khan-network/

on standby to guard the Saudi kingdom. Why then should this relationship not have a nuclear dimension?

In 1989-90, Pakistan brokered a deal for 36 CSS-II long range, nuclear capable missiles between China and Saudi Arabia. This brought it renewed financial assistance from Saudi Arabia based on an understanding that as and when Pakistan developed the nuclear bomb, it would be available to Saudi Arabia too "to stash away in case of emergency".[25] In another indication of the closeness of their nuclear relationship, in May 1999, Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdal Aziz was allowed to visit the KRL, a complex normally out of bounds for outsiders, including Pakistan's own elected leaders. More recently too, there has been speculation that Pakistan has ramped up the number of its nuclear warheads to cater for a contingency when it might have to supply some to Riyadh, especially in the eventuality of Iran becoming an overt nuclear weapon state.

As is evident from the clients of Pakistan's nuclear proliferation network – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Saudi Arabia—the religious identity of all, except North Korea, has been the same. They are all Islamic nations. Was this by design? Or, were there motivations other than religious in the choice of these customers? It has been concluded by some analysts that President Zia, in whose time the conscious decision to proliferate was taken, was clearly inspired by the idea of a "crescent of nuclear-armed Islamic nations [that] would match NATO in power and influence".[26] But for the other military and ISI officers engaged in the enterprise, it was money that was the primary motive. For instance, as stated earlier too in this paper, President Zia's Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Gen Mirza Aslam Beg, justified the transfer of nuclear technology, materials and weapon designs as a means of earning foreign exchange "in an honourable way" since he thought it was "the best way for Pakistan to pay off her debts."[27] In his opinion, it was legitimate to sell nuclear technology and material. He opined, "Why can nuclear technology not be used for constructive enterprises, and also fetch money to get rid

25. Levy and Scott-Clark, n.3, p. 174.
26. Ibid., p. 219.
27. Ibid., p. 219.

By the end of the 1990s, the KRL was sending its sales representatives to international arms shows in Malaysia, Indonesia, UAE, etc to advertise its products. Even more interestingly, in July 2000, only two years after demonstrating its nuclear capability in six tests, then President Musharraf decided to legitimise proliferation by publishing an advertisement in national newspapers offering the same list of items for sale that AQ Khan had covertly been peddling to Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya and Syria.

of economic hardships Pakistan is currently facing? It is indeed a very sagacious way to pay off debt which is an enormous burden on the national 'psyche'. Pakistan has a right to earn legitimate dollars."[28]

Several deals were struck in a clandestine fashion to translate this idea into reality. In fact, by the end of the 1990s, the KRL was sending its sales representatives to international arms shows in Malaysia, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), etc to advertise its products. Even more interestingly, in July 2000, only two years after demonstrating its nuclear capability in six tests, then President Musharraf decided to legitimise proliferation by publishing an advertisement in national newspapers offering the same list of items for sale that AQ Khan had covertly been peddling to Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya and Syria. The only difference in approach was the mention that such deals in the future would be subject to the approval of the Defence Control Committee and, hence, under some kind of export controls. The list included materials for making nuclear weapons, including natural, depleted or enriched uranium, thorium, plutonium or zirconium, heavy water, tritium or beryllium, nuclear grade graphite, etc, besides equipment for the production, use or application of nuclear energy, gas centrifuges, UF6 mass spectrometers and frequency changers.[29] Gen Beg, a staunch supporter of the idea of using Pakistan's nuclear capability for commercial gains, hailed

28. Gen Mirza Aslam Beg, "Nuclear Substances and Equipment for Sale", http://www.friends.org.pk, cited in John, n. 21, p. 45.
29. *The News* and *Dawn*, July 24, 2000, reproduced in *The Times of India*, July 25, 2000.

the step as "Islamic Atoms for Peace". Following up on this, in November 2000, the Pakistan Army held an international munitions fair called IDEAS 2000, where, along with other defence equipment on display, was a booth set up by the KRL to promote the sale – installation, repair and maintenance – of centrifuges, including after sales service![30]

Mao was a strong supporter of efforts that could degrade/erode the influence of Western imperialist states and he perceived nuclear proliferation as one way of doing so. The same strategy continued through the 1980s, when under Deng Xiaoping, China decided to proliferate nuclear technology to Communists and Muslims in the Third World.

It is indeed evident that a major motivation for the nuclear sales from Pakistan was commercial and it lost no opportunity to tout the 'economical' wares on sale. By the early 1980s, the country's nuclear programme had blossomed into a successful though expensive venture. As long as the US kept on handing over money to the Pakistan Army to run the covert operations against the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, funding the nuclear programme was not a cause of concern. But once this stream of revenue was expected to dry up, Pakistan found it expedient to sell a technology and material that was not normally available off-the-shelf and, hence, had the potential to fetch huge profits.

The reason for Pakistan finding its main customers amongst Muslim nations is explained in the following section that explores the Islamic identity of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. But it must be highlighted here that besides being Islamic states, these countries had another common characteristic. They were all also anti-West in their ideological orientation and for each one of them, the ambition for acquiring the nuclear weapon arose from a desire to break the imperialist monopoly. It is also worth considering that Pakistan's support for such nations perhaps was also influenced by the fact that it received assistance for its own nuclear weapons from China – a relationship that started when Mao Tse Tung ruled Beijing. Mao was a strong supporter of

30. Levy and Scott-Clark, n.3, p. 299.

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Whether Pakistan was a *complicit pawn* in this Chinese strategy or whether it became an *inadvertent facilitator* can only be matter of speculation till such time as some official documents prove it either way. But there can be no doubt that Pakistan had little compunctions about proliferating for profit, and if it happened to be to its Muslim brethren, it was so much the better. And, in the process, if it could fulfill a strategy of China, with which it has a friendship that is "higher than the mountains and deeper than the oceans", it did not mind it at all.

ROLE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN PAKISTAN'S ISLAMIC IDENTITY

The nuclear weapon has played a clear role in reinforcing and accentuating the Islamic identity of Pakistan and in making it a credible claimant to the position of leadership of the Muslim world. During the course of the development of its bomb – whether through theft of technology from the Uranium Enrichment Company (URENCO) in the Netherlands, or through clandestine acquisition of components and equipment from several European suppliers, and nuclear materials and weapons designs from China – Pakistan found it useful to characterise the weapon as an Islamic bomb in order to gain moral and financial support for the enterprise from other Muslim countries. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who started the Pakistani nuclear weapons programme in 1972, claimed in his testament written while he was in jail in the late 1970s, "We know that Israel and South Africa have full

31. Thomas Reed in an interview to US News, January 2, 2009, as available at http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2009/01/02/why-china-helped-countries-like-pakistan-north-korea-build-nuclear-bombs. Accessed on June 20, 2012.

nuclear capability. The Christian, Jewish and Hindu civilizations have this capability. The Communist powers also possess it. Only the Islamic civilization was without it, but that position was about to change."[32] Saudi Arabia and Libya are particularly known to have contributed generously to the Pakistani nuclear weapons programme because they perceived it as an achievement for the Islamic community.

Bestowing an Islamic identity on its nuclear weapons capability certainly had its advantages in terms of the financial benefits and moral backing received from Muslim nations, including for Pakistan's cause in Kashmir against India. However, the depiction of the pan-Islamic flavour has also posed several dilemmas for the country.

Islam was invoked yet again in 1998 when, after the Indian nuclear tests on May 11 and 13, 1998, Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was dithering under American pressure that sought to restrain him from conducting nuclear tests. At the time, the Pakistan clergy and right wing Muslim parties quoted from the Quran to convince him that he would be an apostate if he did not test the nuclear weapon in response to the Indian action. He was warned that he would be "violating Sura Al-Anfal of the Quran" which says, "And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war (tanks, planes, missiles, artillery) to threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others besides whom you may not know but whom Allah does know."[33] For a military significantly Islamised by the concerted efforts of Gen Zia-ul Haq, such an interpretation carried immense traction.

At the same time, for the religious parties waging *jihad* in Kashmir, the bomb has been perceived as an umbrella under which to fight against India without fear of conventional reprisal. The idea has obviously also appealed to the military. It was well nigh impossible for Sharif to stand up to such ideological pressure and he approved the conduct of the tests in June 1998. Thereafter he said, "Not only the whole nation, but the *whole Islamic ummah*

32. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *If I am Assassinated*… (Vikas Publishers, 1979).
33. Khaled Ahmed, *Pakistan: The State in Crisis* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2002), pp 71-72.

hailed Pakistan for its great achievement and expressed happiness over the decision".[34] Indeed, overjoyed Palestinians paraded models of the Hatf missile and it was hailed as "triumph of Islam".[35] Hamas leaders described it as "an asset to the Arab and Muslim nations". Pakistan portrayed a distinct wider pride in its nuclear capability and used it to seek material and moral patronage for its nuclear weapons programme.

Pakistan's Dilemma over the 'Islamic Bomb'

Bestowing an Islamic identity on its nuclear weapons capability certainly had its advantages in terms of the financial benefits and moral backing received from Muslim nations, including for Pakistan's cause in Kashmir against India. However, the depiction of the pan-Islamic flavour has also posed several dilemmas for the country. The first of these is evident in Pakistan's dealing with the US, owing to the importance that the US attaches to non-proliferation.[36] Therefore, Islamabad has had to perform a tight balancing act in ratcheting up, or down, the intensity of the Islamic content of its nuclear enterprise.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, Pakistan had no compunctions in hailing the Islamic identity of its nuclear weapons. In fact, during the period when Pakistan was the frontline state for the US proxy war against the USSR in Afghanistan, Islamabad engaged in proliferation with open abandon. And, the US too was willing to even ignore/suppress information from its own intelligence agencies on the activities that were being undertaken by Islamabad. But, the stance changed substantially after 9/11 when Pakistan was compelled to join the US-led global war on terror and even more so after the AQ Khan revelations. Then onwards, Pakistan took pains to mellow the Islamic identity of the bomb and focussed more on signalling a firmer control and more responsible attitude towards its nuclear assets. Instead, for the American audience, the nuclear weapon has been consistently upheld

34. *Summary of World Broadcasts*, Part 3 (Asia Pacific) FE/3241, June 1, 1998, p. A1. Emphasis added.
35. Surendra Chopra and Kusum Lata Chadda, *Islamic Fundamentalism, Pakistan and the Muslim World* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2009), p. 139.
36. It is a different matter that Washington has not hesitated to ignore, suppress, deny or overlook information on proliferation when it has not suited its national interest.

by the Pakistan Army as being necessary to meet the threat posed by the superior conventional military of India.

A second dilemma in portraying the weapon as belonging to the greater Islamic *ummah* is posed by the sectarian divides within the religion itself. For instance, while Zia was generally open to sharing the weapons technology with other Muslim nations, as a devout Sunni and follower of the Deobandi sect, he had misgivings about providing the technology to a Shia dominated Iran. It was Iran's offer of $3.2 billion to finance Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme in exchange for transfer of nuclear technology that proved to be a huge temptation.[37] According to a former Pakistan Cabinet Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Gen Beg had negotiated with Iran for a nuclear deal and had bragged that Iran was "willing to give whatever it takes".[38] The proliferation to Iran was justified on the basis that Tehran was facing a war with Iraq in the west, had the Soviets fighting in Afghanistan to its east, and was hemmed in by the US backed Sunni regimes in Islamabad, Riyadh, Amman and Cairo. Also, it was presumed that the "severely depleted and possibly irretrievably damaged" scientific community after the 1979 revolution would never be able to make much from the first generation uranium enrichment technology that Pakistan was planning to pass on to Tehran.

While Zia was generally open to sharing the weapons technology with other Muslim nations, as a devout Sunni and follower of the Deobandi sect, he had misgivings about providing the technology to a Shia dominated Iran. It was Iran's offer of $3.2 billion to finance Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme in exchange for transfer of nuclear technology that proved to be a huge temptation.

Over time, Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions came to be perceived as a threat to Saudi Arabia and there has been enough speculation on Pakistan being prepared to provide readymade nuclear weapons to Saudi Arabia in

37. "Iran's $3.2b Aid Offer for Sharing N-Knowhow Declined", *Dawn*, December 20, 1994.
38. Kathy Gannon, "Explosive Secrets from Pakistan", *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 2004.

Pakistan's proliferation activities and its 'use' of the weapon for multiple purposes pose many challenges for the nuclear future. The single most important concern confronting international security in these times is the threat of nuclear terrorism.

order to provide nuclear deterrence against Iran.[39] A Saudi defector, Mohammed Abdalla al-Khilewi, the No 2 official in the Saudi mission to the UN, has claimed that Riyadh had paid up to $5 billion to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to build it a nuclear weapon. But since this did not materialise, the country threw in its lot with Pakistan.[40] He produced documents to show that Riyadh helped bankroll Pakistan's clandestine nuclear project and signed a pact that ensured that in the event Saudi Arabia was attacked with nuclear weapons, Islamabad would immediately respond against the aggressor with its own nuclear arms. The widening Shia-Sunni divide in more recent times has brought new issues for the Islamic identity of Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

In more recent times, a third dilemma on how much Pakistan must showcase its Islamic identity as attached to the nuclear weapon has arisen in the context of the country's bid to present itself as a responsible nuclear power, ripe for membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Claiming parity with India in order to join the NSG, Pakistan has been trying to downplay its proliferation activities and, in this context, has had to dilute the Islamic identity of the bomb, a linkage that it was earlier more open to accepting.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Pakistan's proliferation activities and its 'use' of the weapon for multiple

39. Amir Mir, "Is Pakistan Helping the Saudis with a Nuclear Deterrent", http://www.rediff.com, October 4, 2011.
40. In May 1999, Defence Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz visited Pakistan's uranium enrichment and missile assembly factory and was briefed by Dr Khan. In 2005, the United Stated claimed to have acquired fresh evidence, suggesting that a broader government-to-government Pakistan-Saudi atomic collaboration is still on. Subsequent news reports in American media said that a chartered Saudi C-130 Hercules plane made scores of trips between Dhahran military base and several Pakistani cities, including Lahore and Karachi, between October 2003 and October 2004, and thereafter, considerable contacts were reported between Pakistani and Saudi Arabian nuclear scientists. Between October 2004 and January 2005, under the cover of Haj, several Pakistani scientists visited Riyadh, and remained missing from their designated hotels for 15 to 20 days.

purposes pose many challenges for the nuclear future. The single most important concern confronting international security in these times is the threat of nuclear terrorism. The US Nuclear Posture Review of 2010 placed this threat above others such as those arising from the nuclear weapons of Russia or other near-peers like China. The rationale for this change in the US' prioritisation of threat perceptions was the increasing evidence of the extent of the proliferation enterprise. Simultaneously, the American threat perceptions are also heightened by recognition of the fact that the ISI and the Pakistan Army deem the use of terrorism as a foreign policy tool. Therefore, they are engaged in the raising, training and sustaining of a number of terrorist outfits that today pose an equal threat to the USA, India, or Pakistan itself. A convergence of availability of nuclear weapons capability in a country that sponsors terrorism is obviously a huge challenge.

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Every now and then, reports have surfaced on the interest of the Al Qaeda, and, more recently, of the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS), in procuring nuclear weapons. The most concrete evidence of this was the reported meeting of the two Pakistani nuclear scientists Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Chaudhiri Abdul Majeed with Osama bin Laden some time just before 9/11. They offered to be nuclear advisers to bin Laden, but he was keen to have the bomb rather than consultants. Whether this was a one-off instance, or there are others yet to be found in the shadows of the underworld of terrorism, can only be a matter of speculation. But there is no escaping the conclusion that the challenge of nuclear terrorism is accentuated when states possessing nuclear weapons are also sponsors of terrorism. One potent example of this is the fact that the two scientists mentioned earlier were allowed to set up charity organisations such as the Ummah Tameer-e-Nau (UTN), supposedly for providing medical and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. This organisation served as a cover for them to procure sensitive nuclear technology or materials since the nature of their declared activity exempted them from a UN embargo. On the US' insistence, when

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the organisational hierarchy of the UTN was investigated, it was found to include two senior Pakistani military officers, and a former Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) scientist known to have extensive links with the Taliban.[41] Gen Hamid Gul, the former head of the ISI, the chief orchestrator of terrorism from Pakistan was the honorary patron of the organisation. By the end of 2001, the US had found enough evidence to declare the UTN a terrorist organisation, but President Musharraf was never keen to follow through the investigations and dismissed any possibility of the two scientists having passed on any nuclear arms to the Taliban. It might well be true that *no nuclear weapon may have been physically passed on* in 2001, but the relationship between the nuclear scientists, who were described by an ISI investigator as "very motivated" and "extremist in their views,"[42] and terrorist organisations animated by the ideology of religious extremism, cannot be dismissed. The implications of this could only become more severe as information about greater radicalisation of the military and nuclear establishments of Pakistan comes in. It is not surprising, therefore, that nuclear terrorism remains high on the agenda of international security concerns. Even more worrisome is the reinforcement of the belief, especially since the start of the global war on terror, that Islam is under attack from the West.

A second challenge is posed by the example set by the Pakistani behavior in showcasing the nuclear weapon as an effective bargaining chip. The use of the nuclear weapon or material for monetary benefits by governments in dire economic straits has been established by Pakistan, and subsequently demonstrated by North Korea too. Given the current economic situation of

41. Levy and Scott-Clark, n.3, pp. 320-322.
42. *Washington Post*, December 12, 2001.

Pakistan, there could be players in influential places who may be tempted to do so again, including to the non-state actors, in order to make some money. As has been stated by a leading Pakistani journalist in his book, "When a nuclear state experiences nuclear difficulties, it sells nuclear technology to avert economic collapse…. When COAS General Aslam Beg was touting his 'strategic defiance' theories during the Gulf War, unsigned documents distributed by his media managers clearly mentioned the sale of nuclear technology to boost the economy under sanctions."[43] For the economic survival of the nation then, the sale of nuclear technology offers a lucrative possibility. This obviously does not bode well for non-proliferation since other countries could learn the same lessons.

The possibility of such an occurrence is further aided by the fact that no action at the international level has been taken to punish any of the proliferation activities of nations. Whether it was the initial proliferation from China to Pakistan or from Pakistan to other nations, despite the mounds of official documents on the subject, there has been a general tendency to brush this aside instead of confronting the actors and punishing them for the acts against international security.

Nuclear proliferation from Pakistan has not only caused direct harm in terms of material and technology transfers, but also considerable intangible damage by showcasing the value of the weapon as a political instrument for undertaking bargaining. Non-proliferation definitely becomes more difficult to sustain in such an environment. In order to stem future cases of proliferation, it is necessary to take steps that ensure a devaluation of the weapon, and Pakistan's actions have instead pushed the trend in the opposite direction. The inability and unwillingness of the international community to deal with this behaviour with a firm hand has led to the impression that countries with nuclear weapons can 'get away with' activities that may otherwise be considered unacceptable. International security will have to bear the consequences of this in the years to come.

43. Khaled Ahmed, *Religious Developments in Pakistan 1999-2008* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2010), p. 20.