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**WHO WINS — WHO LOSES?  
An Indian Overview**

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by

Amarnath Kakkar

The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything  
save our modes of thinking, and we thus drift  
toward unparalleled catastrophe

Albert Einstein  
(Otto Nathan and Heinz, eds , Einstein on Peace  
New York Schocken, 1968 )

I

The more we reflect on the nuclear holocaust and the greater our efforts to understand its nature, the more we realize the enormous difficulties in imagining such an eventuality. We do not know what it would be like, how it should be conceived, and to what it could be compared. Since a nuclear holocaust has no precedent in either scope or scale within the history of human civilization, it is a possibility that surpasses the limits of mundane human experience and imagination. Nuclear war has the potential to bring everything in humanity to an end. A nuclear holocaust could be the human event to end all human events. However, we have gathered here today to discuss the unthinkable.

Let us first take the term "nuclear proliferation." It has acquired a particular connotation over the years, and, in most of the literature, it refers to the acquisition of nuclear weapon capability by new states.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "proliferation" as a process in which elementary parts grow by multiplication and increase rapidly. The term "nuclear proliferation", therefore, should cover the growth of nuclear arsenals in countries presently possessing nuclear weapons as well. In fact, the most significant and continuous nuclear proliferation has been undertaken by the



states that currently have nuclear weapons "The spread of nuclear weapons" has been a phrase used to refer to the acquisition of nuclear weapon capability by new states Even this is a somewhat misleading term, since most of the spreading of nuclear arsenals to various areas of the world is done by the nuclear weapon powers

The nuclear arms issue has to be viewed against the background of persistent attempts by the overwhelming majority of nations to delegitimize and ultimately prohibit the use of nuclear weapons, and the attempts by a smaller number of nations to legitimize the use and the threat of use of the weapons

The U N , in its very first resolution in 1946, proclaimed that all categories of weapons of mass destruction -- biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear -- should be banned A biological weapons convention has been negotiated and come into force Negotiations to ban chemical and radiological weapons are underway Only in the case of nuclear weapons are there no negotiations designed to prohibit them Indeed, such efforts that do exist, such as NPT and Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) concepts tend to legitimize the continuance of nuclear weapons arsenals in the hands of a few powers

It seems to be totally unrealistic for the world to assume that the spread of nuclear weapons can be any more effectively controlled and contained than can the spread of narcotics In both cases the problem has to be tackled at the point of origin -- namely the poppy fields and nuclear weapons producing states both demand global solutions Just the U S and industrialized countries cannot have local regional solutions against the assault of narcotics, so it is difficult to envisage regional solutions to nuclear issues

## II

It is difficult to define South Asia in strictly geographical terms. If Tibet were to be considered as South Asia, then nuclear weapons may already have been introduced in the area. Taking into account the 200 mile extended economic zone, by South Asia, it is also difficult to exclude the water around the Indian peninsula from nuclear weapon deployment. In that case one can only speculate about the presence or absence (within these waters) of superpower naval vessels.

The breakdown of the Soviet-American arms control talks also have a serious impact on the region. Increases in Soviet nuclear capability as a result of the U S - U S S R arms race and continuous deployment of more sophisticated nuclear weapons are viewed by China with great concern. Similarly, any increase in Chinese nuclear capability to counter U S S R is also to be viewed with concern in India. While India does not pursue an uncompromising policy towards China, the fundamental political, economic, territorial and strategic differences have not been removed. In the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pakistani wars, China had indirectly threatened to intervene on the side of its ally, Pakistan. Any U S assistance to China to enhance Chinese nuclear capability to counter the Soviet Union's threat adds to the problems in South Asia as well.

It is therefore necessary to take steps to curb vertical nuclear proliferation before tackling the problem of horizontal nuclear proliferation. The proposal to establish a nuclear free zone in South Asia seems to be unrealistic because it does not take into account a nuclear armed China getting deeply involved in the overall modernization process.

It is also a well known fact by now that the nuclear weapons programme of Pakistan was initiated in a meeting at Multan in January 1972, many months before India decided to develop a peaceful nuclear explosive device (PNE). From the evidence published in the west, it would appear that the Israeli nuclear capability triggered Pakistani efforts (with financial support from Libya and other Islamic states). However, it is difficult to say that Pakistan will be irrational enough to join hands with the Arab world against Israel. But there can be no guarantee against nuclear thefts. If Pakistan-Iran relations deteriorate and Pakistan decides to share its nuclear know-how with Iraq, there will be a serious impact on the politics of the Islamic world. This will also deprive Pakistan of a friend, namely the U S, if it decides to help anti-Israeli nations of the Arab world.

The Indian underground nuclear test was part of a comprehensive and broad-based nuclear energy development programme for peaceful purposes. In any case, it is now common knowledge on the basis of sufficient intelligence that India has not built up a nuclear arsenal. On the contrary, the U S in particular, and the west in general, have all possible evidence that Pakistan's primary interest lies in a nuclear weapons programme.

Pakistan took the position in the conference of the Committee on Disarmament in 1970 that there is no distinction between the technologies of PNE and those of nuclear weapons and that, therefore, no non-weapon country should undertake any PNE. This position was maintained till 1981 by the Pakistani leaders. But since then there seems to be some hedging on this stand. In the meantime, extensively documented accounts of Pakistan's clandestine purchases of plant and equipment for its enrichment and reprocessing technologies seem to rule out the possibility of expensive non-weapons related research. The

intention seems to be to obtain weapons-grade fissile material at the earliest possible time. Pakistan also believes that it has as much right to nuclear weapons as the nuclear weapons powers. There is little doubt about the fact that the nuclear weapons powers have not adopted confidence inspiring behavior when dealing with non-nuclear weapons states. Pakistan has had its share of difficulties in developing a national identity and in adjusting to its environment and, presumably, looks upon nuclear capability as a means of ensuring its survival in a hostile environment. Whatever the rationale of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, it is bound to have repercussions in its neighborhood.

### III

The majority of informed military opinion in India is of the view that the asymmetric possession of a nuclear weapon by Pakistan could not be effectively deterred by any conventional superiority of the Indian Armed Forces. Nuclear weapons can be deterred only by other nuclear weapons. It seems logical to expect that over a period of time, just as has happened with Israeli and South African nuclear weapons, the U S and some West European nations may come to accept a Pakistani nuclear weapon as well. The waiver of the Symington agreement freeing Washington from having to impose an automatic cutoff of conventional arms transfers subsequent to any nuclear test by Pakistan, points to an evolving process of acceptance of a nuclear Pakistan.

In such circumstances, Pakistan may believe that its nuclear capability will paralyse the Indian nuclear decision and Indian conventional forces and that it might be possible to undertake a bold strike to liberate Kashmir at a time when the Indian leadership is hesitant and faced with internal political

problems

Given these perceptions in the subcontinent, it is natural for the people of India to demand an adequate matching response. No one doubts that India has the necessary capability to overtake Pakistan's nuclear capability in a short time if it decides to do so. Once that happens, there is no reason to believe that a state of stable mutual deterrence would not set in among the two subcontinental nations as has happened among other opposing pairs of nations. New nuclear states will be more concerned for their safety and more mindful of dangers than some of the old ones have been. The likelihood of war will decrease as deterrent and defensive capabilities increase.

Since India is the status quo power in the subcontinent, the stability of deterrence will not be unfavorable to India. It might at the same time help to assuage the sense of insecurity among the Pakistani elite vis a vis both India and the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The development of an increased sense of security among the Pakistani elite may have domestic repercussions. In the short run, the Pakistani military elite may feel secure but in the long run security and peace may rob this elite of its justification to remain in power.

It will therefore be of considerable interest to watch the future approach of Pakistan's military to the problems of peace, security and political development in Pakistan and the region. If as a result of a better security environment, i.e., one in which there is no perceived threat from India or the Soviet Union, they decide in favour of developing the democratic process within Pakistan, the victory will be that of democracy. But if the military remains in power to serve its own interests by the perpetuation of ultra-militarism and an arms race in the subcontinent, no one will win. Efforts at achieving military parity with India will hamper the development processes in both countries, and

there will be no substantial reduction of dependence on the superpowers. A stable South Asia and peace in the Indian subcontinent is in the interest not just of South Asians but also of the United States because it will strengthen democratic forces in the area rather than military oligarchies.

One may also note that Pakistan's tendencies toward fragmentation are more of a worry for Islamabad than the threat of invasion from India or the Soviet Union. It is necessary for the nations of the south Asia region and superpowers to ensure that there are no serious attempts at the fragmentation of Pakistan. A threatened Pakistan is more likely to develop "Pariah" syndrome. No amount of internal trouble should force Pakistani military leaders to decide to raise a war hysteria against India in order to consolidate internal political order. If India and Pakistan were to go to war again, Pakistan could only prevail and survive as a nation if India conducted itself with enormous restraint. Any attempt to use nuclear weapons for the sake of a quick grab of territories in Kashmir will, at best, invite massive and unrestrained retaliation from India and ultimately destroy long term hopes for peace in the region. Even to simulate such possibilities is a highly disturbing phenomenon and therefore one should simulate the scenarios of peace and cooperation rather than that of conflict. If India and Pakistan can afford to have peace for 15 years since 1971, there is no reason why peace and development strategies cannot be strengthened in both of our nations. Let us hope that sanity will prevent the use of nuclear weapons and save humanity and human values.

