Some Realities Of Nuclear Terrorism In South Asia

The issue of nuclear safety and non-proliferation has been transformed by the proliferation of terrorism in South Asia and the world at large. While there is no realistic prospect for global nuclear disarmament, there is a need to heighten and improve precautions and mechanisms to prevent the use of nuclear weapons or fissile material by terrorists. The rise of extremist religious groups with genocidal or apocalyptic agendas has increased the risk of nuclear terrorism. This article advocates the implementation of several measures and policies to reduce the threat of "rogue" nuclear attacks in South Asia with the support and participation of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations and the United States of America.

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Akin to most regions of the world, debate and research on security in South Asia have traditionally focussed on the nation-state and the external threat perception. Security studies have remained isolated in nature, military oriented in approach and unidimensional. The nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in May 1998 completely changed the strategic environment of the subcontinent. The detonation of nuclear devices brought about an "equilibrium change" rather than a radical transformation of the existing regional strategic environment. The evolutionary development has been increasingly manifest by overt reminders in the form of resumed nuclear testing, continued acquisition of more dependable and sophisticated delivery systems, purposeful modernisation of supporting infrastructure and vocal references to the continued nuclear weaponisation of the South Asian region. The term

"equilibrium change" is borrowed from Morton Kaplan's classic work *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1957, pp6–8), where it refers to any movement that contributes to the achievement of new operating levels in an otherwise stable political system. Equilibrium change thus stands in contrast to system change, which refers to the complete transformation of the system of action itself (for a comprehensive review of nuclear stability in South Asia—Ashley J Tellis, "Nuclear Stability in Southern Asia" in PR Chari, Sonika Gupta and Arpit Rajain, *Nuclear Stability in South Asia*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2003, pp19–25 and Shyam Saran, "Nuclear Proliferation and International Security", *Strategic Analysis*, vol29, no3, July–September 2005, pp361–9).

Nuclear security in Asia is a complex issue with many entangled dimensions. It hosts three declared nuclear powers with the possibility of non-state actors—terrorist outfits like *al Qaeda*—eventually emerging on the stage armed with weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). This has become more likely after Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan's (known as the "father of atoms" in his country) alleged involvement in the transference of nuclear technology to a number of countries (Iran and North Korea) and the tilt of some of his peers towards various extremist groups with established deep roots in the region. The greatest challenge to the United States of America (US) and all other countries that advocate the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is dealing with the possibility of nuclear terrorism.

As expected, India and Pakistan's nuclear testing resulted in negative reactions from a number of academicians, diplomats, governments, political elites, etc. There was a proliferation of articles, theses and books on the origins of India's nuclear programme and the contradiction between its nuclear policy and diplomacy, specifically as India detonated its nuclear devices decades after vociferous advocacy of nuclear disarmament and the need for a nuclear weapons free world. Many assumed that the tests were a clear case of New Delhi's hypocrisy and deviousness or betrayal leading to vicious attacks on its policies and actions. Some even alleged that India had been pursuing a clandestine weapons policy all along to achieve the international status it otherwise lacked, while cynically using the smokescreen of the cause of nuclear disarmament. A number of other analysts, particularly of Indian origin assessed that India had at last thrown off the burden of years of rhetoric and unrealistic idealistic posturing and adopted a "realistic and enlightened" approach to the world. Neither group however believed there was genuine commitment to disarmament and a nuclear free

world (Arundhati Ghosh "Disarmament and India's Nuclear Policy: Evolution of a 'Reluctant' Nuclear Weapon State" in Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta, *Indian Foreign Policy: Challenges and Opportunities*, New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007, pp979–80).

Ashley J Tellis (*ibid*, p20) avers that in such a situation "dyadic behaviour patterns are not relevant". Strong factors in both India and Pakistan, propel the acquisition of more nuclear weapons, including their deployment at strategic locations and possible use, competing grant strategies, differences in national military capabilities and poor leadership quality in regional states. "There is (also) a general weakness of domestic political and organisational structures and the continual intrusion of domestic pressures on matters of high politics". The menace of the *Taliban* in Pakistan and the possible *Talibinsation* of strategic areas like the Swat Valley where the army has launched numerous operations are matters of concern. Only time will tell whether the complete elimination of the *Taliban* is possible or not. The US is also apprehensive about the safety of nuclear weapons, passing into the hands of terrorist outfits. According to General Ved Prakash Malik, former Chief of the Indian Army ("Pak Offensive against the *Taliban*", *The Tribune*, 3 June 2009) insurgencies tend to behave like balloons—when squashed in one spot they quickly inflate in another. A setback in Swat would affect neighbouring tribal areas and could even be a catalyst for binding together loose confederations operating in the North West Frontier Province resulting in a more united militant force. Thus, a *Taliban* victory in Swat or even a stalemate would be an unmitigated disaster and would embolden the outfit further and spell ruin for Pakistan. "A heavy handed indiscriminate use of offensive and fire power will definitely eliminate some rebels but it is bound to alienate many more people and thus cause sociopolitical instability" (*ibid*). If the situation remains unchanged, the fast growing number of internally displaced persons "will present ideal breeding grounds. The extremists prey on the dispossessed and marginalised segments of society. This would further complicate the fight against terrorism" (*The News*, 27 May 2009). The complex interplay of these multi drivers and forces almost leads one to despair about the intractability of the problem of nuclear stability in South Asia (Tellis, *ibid*).

In early 2002, an Italian arms control institution the Landau Network Centro Volta (LNCV) prepared a report *Nuclear Safety, Nuclear Stability and Nuclear Strategy in Pakistan* (*Indian Express*, 6 January 2002). The aim was to gain a better understanding of the security problems concerning nuclear weapons, material,

situations, scientists and experts of the development of Pakistani nuclear strategy, approach to arms control and confidence building measures. Network members held meetings with nearly 80 people particularly from the Islamabad Policy Research Institute, the Institute for Regional Studies, the Institute for Strategic Studies and Strategic Planning Division Sustainable Development Policy Institute, the then Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar, etc. They also interacted with academicians and noted defence and political analysts from the Pakistani media. In all the meetings, it was stressed that Pakistan's motives for acquiring nuclear weapons had to do almost exclusively with India's analogous decision and that the neighbouring country represented a security threat. Motivations based on prestige were equally mentioned or denied, while it was stressed that India's nuclear programme predated Pakistan's. Opposition to the nuclear agenda seemed weak, while nuclear testing was overwhelmingly justified by the majority of the people—the argument being that Pakistan had to show India and the rest of the world that it could match its neighbour's nuclear capabilities. Some did believe that both India and Pakistan should give up their nuclear programmes, as they provided no extra security. According to the report however, the prospects of removing nuclear weapons from the subcontinent did not appear a realistic perspective for the near future (*ibid*).

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A delicate question in any organisation dealing with nuclear material and weapons concerns the reliability and trustworthiness of military people, scientists and technicians with the responsibility of handling them. The risks of nuclear blackmail and terrorism have risen in recent years because of three factors—the growth and spread of nuclear weapons, the expansion of civil nuclear programmes and the increase in extremist political groups waging terror campaigns. The world has become aware of the growing danger of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. Lax security of nuclear material in one country could be exploited to trigger atomic blackmail and terrorism elsewhere. Inadequate security at nuclear facilities could also help extremists

wage a campaign of terror within a nation—an opportunity to create a situation of national terror by seizing or sabotaging a civilian nuclear laboratory, plant or research reactor. These buildings are vulnerable to acts of sabotage and blatant terrorist attacks that could be instrumental in the release of dangerous amounts of radioactive material. The phenomenal increase of the civil trading of weapons and usable nuclear material has created the possibility for the theft of plutonium or uranium in significant quantities in plots aimed at political blackmail or terror. It is widely feared that nuclear weapons may also be easily smuggled. The increasing level of technological sophistication among terrorist groups, coupled with a renewed determination to achieve political goals has also contributed to and raised significantly the potential for nuclear terrorism. The expanding threat of nuclear blackmail and terror should spur policymakers to focus on corrective measures to ensure stringent safety and security at nuclear installations (Paul Leventhal and Yonah Alexander, *The Report and the Papers of the International Task Force on the Prevention of Nuclear Terrorism*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 1987).

A report prepared under an interagency agreement by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress entitled *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who becomes a Terrorist and Why* (Washington DC, September 1999, online at http://www.loc.gov) focuses attention on types of individuals and groups who become terrorists, with the aim of improving American counterterrorist methods and policies. The emergence of amorphous and largely unknown terrorists operating independently (freelancers) and new recruitment patterns such as enlisting suicide commandos, female and child terrorists and scientists capable of developing WMDs, provide a measure of urgency for better understanding the psychological and sociological dynamics of terrorist groups and individuals. Although the study was conducted more than a decade ago, some of its findings are still relevant and have been proven correct by an analysis of the trends of terrorism as well as the way terrorists operate and try to achieve their objectives. The report stated that trends contradicted the conventional thinking that terrorist were averse to the use of WMDs as wide condemnation would make it counterproductive.

Brian M Jenkins' (*High Technology Terrorism and Surrogate Warfare: The Impact of New Technology on Low Level Violence*, Santa Monica: Rand, 1975 and "International Terrorism: A New Model of Conflict" in David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf (Eds), *International Terrorism and World Security*, London: Croom

Helm, 1975) premise that "terrorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead" was based on the assumption that the behaviour of terrorists is normative and if they exceeded certain constraints and employed WMDs, they would completely alienate themselves from the public and possibly provoke swift and harsh retaliation. When assumptions about terrorists not using WMDs were made in the 1970s and 1980s, most groups making headlines had nationalist, political or separatist agendas. Today however it has become increasingly evident that the assumption does not apply to religious terrorists or millenarian cults and thus some analysts have predicted that the first groups to employ WMDs would be religious sects with a millenarian, messianic or apocalyptic mindset.

When conventional terrorists of the early 1970s are compared with terrorists of the early 1990s, a trend becomes visible—the emergence of religious fundamentalist and new religious groups espousing the rhetoric of mass destruction. By the 1990s, groups motivated by religious imperatives such as *al Qaeda*, *Aum Shinrikyo*, *Hezbollah, Mujahidin*, etc had grown and proliferated. Many of them have a different attitude towards violence—one that is extreme and seeks to maximise violence against the perceived enemy, essentially anyone who is not a fellow fundamentalist. Their outlook simplistically divides the world into "us" and "them" and with its attack on the Tokyo subway system on 20 March 1995 the doomsday cult *Aum Shinrikyo* turned the prediction of terrorists using WMDs into reality. A contrast between key members of the religious extremist groups mentioned above and conventional terrorists reveals certain general trends relating to personal attributes of terrorists' likely to use WMDs in the coming years. According to psychologist Jerrold M Post (Library of Congress, *ibid*), the most dangerous terrorist is likely to be the religious terrorist and unlike the average political or social terrorist, who has a defined mission measurable in terms of media attention or government reaction, the religious terrorist can justify the most heinous acts "in the name of Allah" or one could add in the name of *Aum Shinrikyo's* Shoko Asahara. The growth and

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intensification of religious fundamentalism in security matters in India as well as in Pakistan, is a dangerous proposition. Religious fundamentalism carried to violent channels both interacts with and compounds the danger of nuclear war breaking out between the two states and complicates efforts in dealing with them. When religious fundamentalism encroaches on the policies, institutions and crisis decisions of nuclear armed states, it becomes a nuclear danger in its own right. Religious fervour and fatalism in the minds of decision makers obscures and overwhelms sober awareness of the enormous lethality and irreversibility of nuclear destruction—facts that are intrinsically modern and secular by definition (Rodney W Jones, *Religious Radicalism and Nuclear Confrontation in South Asia*, Delhi: Media House, 2004, pp14–5).

For contemporary Western leaders, the possible danger of terrorists acquiring WMDs and the connection with religious extremism came to the fore because of 9/11. It validated the concept of transnational terrorist threats that now drive the US led war on international terror as well as the campaign launched in the tribal areas of Pakistan with the use of drones, compelling authorities to root out the *Taliban*. *Al Qaeda* and other international terrorist organisations active in West Asia have tried to acquire WMDs and if they do, it is likely that they would not hesitate to use them against the West. However, this nuclear terrorism phenomenon may be seen as a subset of the encroachment of religious fundamentalism on governments and nuclear security. With respect to South Asia, it is increasingly clear that the problem exists in both India and Pakistan, even if the international dimensions are more visible and active today in the former and latent or beneath the surface in the latter (*ibid*, p15). The impact of religious extremism on nuclear stability has become a source of concern for the world community. Even the United Nations has been paying attention particularly after 9/11 to the possible threat of the use of nuclear weapons by terrorists. Security Council Draft Resolution of 29 March 2004 stated that there was concern of the threat of the nexus between international terrorism, the use of chemical or nuclear weapons and the involvement of non-state actors (individuals or entities not acting under the lawful authority of any state in conducting activities). It called upon all states to refrain from providing any form of support to non-state actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, process, transport or use biological, chemical or nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. The resolution also required all states to establish various types of domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of such weapons and their related material and was

adopted on 28 April 2004 as Resolution 1540 (online at http://www.un-org and *Hindustan Times*, 29 April 2004).

Many believe that another tsunami is coming—a tidal wave of nuclear terrorism. However being manmade, it would be preventable if enough people know about it in time. The early warning system for nuclear terrorism includes intelligence agencies, the news and electronic media, etc. However, terrorists decide their own course of action, time, place and method. On 20 October 1997, retired Russian General Alexander Lebed announced that at the time of the fall of the Soviet Union, Moscow lost track of more than 100 suitcase size nuclear weapons. In October 2001, US intelligence resources received a report that terrorists had acquired a 10-kiloton nuclear bomb and were planning to smuggle it into Manhattan. Fortunately, both reports turned out to be false. However, the episodes illuminate the frightening reality that such events could indeed happen (*Globe and Mail*, 30 October, 1997). The two cases illustrate that the continued existence of nuclear weapons proliferation in both horizontal and vertical forms provide a chance for WMDs to fall into the hands of violent extremist groups (Sukhwant S Bindra, "United Nations and Nuclear Terrorism: Some Dimensions", *Journal of Political Studies*, vol1, no2, September 2005, p19). American intelligence agencies are well aware of this danger. *The Washington Post* of 18 March 2003 reported that President George W Bush after getting information of *al Qaeda's* growing activities ordered his national security team to "give nuclear terrorism priority over every other threat to the US".

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Nuclear terrorism has became so crucial an issue that during the 2004 US presidential election campaigns, Senator Richard G Lugar, then Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations presented a list of 12 items towards which the winning candidate needed to bring the full weight of US diplomatic and economic power to bear. The list he said was "daunting and

illustrated that the uncertain work of non-proliferation required flexibility, persistence, creativity and allied cooperation. The war on terrorism proceeds in a world awash with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and material. The minimum standard for victory in this war is the prevention of any terrorist cell from obtaining weapons or material of mass destruction" (*The New York Times*, 7 August 2004). A study prepared for the Nuclear Control Institute by five nuclear weapons designers concluded that a sophisticated terrorist group would be capable of designing and building a workable bomb from stolen plutonium or highly enriched uranium, with a potential kiloton range. This danger must be taken seriously particularly in the light of attempts by *al Qaeda* to acquire nuclear material and weapons design information (Bindra, *ibid*, p20). Making a crude nuclear bomb is not so easy, but is within the capabilities of technically sophisticated terrorist groups. While stealing or smuggling a nuclear device would be difficult for terrorists, especially if it were equipped with modern technical safeguards such as permissive action links, the possibility cannot be ruled out that they could cut open a stolen nuclear weapon of their own ("The US–Russia Joint Threat Assessment on Nuclear Terrorism", May 2011, online at http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu). The material required to make a nuclear device while easy to collect, is difficult to detect, making it a major challenge to stop nuclear smuggling or to recover nuclear material once it has been stolen. Hence, a primary focus in reducing the risk must be to keep nuclear material and weapons from being stolen by continually improving security as agreed at the National Security Summit held in Washington DC, 12–13 April 2010.

Counting assembled nuclear weapons is far easier than accounting for nuclear material in bulk form. Usable nuclear material particularly in the civilian sector does not have the security arrangements akin to those of nuclear weapons. Thus, terrorists' best chance of achieving WMD capabilities, may be a long term effort to construct an improvised nuclear device with weapons and unstable material stolen or purchased in the black market (Michael Levi, *Nuclear Terrorism* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007, pp35–49 and Peter D Zimmerman and Jeffrey G Lewis "The Bomb in the Backyard", *Foreign Policy*, October 2009, online at http://foreignpolicy.com). Terrorists could make two types of improvised nuclear devices—a gun type bomb by hammering together two pieces of highly enriched uranium at high speed or an implosion type bomb by precisely arranging explosives to crush nuclear material to a much higher density setting off a chain reaction. The latter would be more difficult for

terrorists to achieve, but still plausible if they were able to obtain knowledgeable help, as they have been actively attempting to do. A crude implosion type design does not have to be as complex or as sophisticated as the Nagasaki bomb (Zimmerman and Lewis, *ibid*, p19 and Matthew Bunn and Anthony Wier, "Terrorist Nuclear Bomb Construction: How Difficult", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol607, no1, pp113–49 and Stanislav Rodionov, "Could Terrorists produce Low Yield Nuclear Weapons", *High Impact Terrorism*: *Proceedings of Joint US–Russian Workshop*, Washington DC: National Academy Press, 2002). Despite claims to the contrary from plutonium fuel advocates in the nuclear power industry, weapons could be made using reactor grade plutonium, hundreds of tonnes of which are processed, stored and circulated around the world in civilian nuclear commerce (Zimmerman and Lewis, *ibid*, pp20–1). Less than 18 pounds of plutonium or 55 pounds of highly enriched uranium are required to produce a nuclear bomb. A crucial defence against nuclear terrorism and proliferation would be to end civilian commerce in plutonium and highly enriched uranium and the conversion of military stacks of nuclear explosives into non-weapons useable devices as soon as possible.

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Even the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a staunch promoter of nuclear power has acknowledged an urgent need to improve protection of civilian and military nuclear material at plant sites as well as in transit. There is widespread criticism of the inability of IAEA's inspections and other safeguard measures to detect large-scale losses of plutonium and highly enriched uranium or ensure adequate protection against their theft in transit or storage. The IAEA's physical security standards currently apply only to international shipments of nuclear material not to the facilities where it is processed, stored and used. Due to these shortcomings, at times it is even not known if material that could be used in nuclear weapons is missing. Although generally better secured than fissile material, there is a possibility that nuclear weapons could also be stolen by terrorists (Bindra, *ibid*, p21 and Mohammad Ramzan Ali "The the US in

South Asia in New Millennium", *Regional Studies*, vol22, no 3, Summer 2004, pp3–30).

The IAEA Secretariat has highlighted some areas related to nuclear terrorism that require immediate attention. It strongly believes that physical protection of nuclear material and facilities should be the first line of defence against possible acts of terrorism. There is a need to create infrastructure for the detection of malicious activities involving all radioactive material. There is a need to help states develop their own capabilities primarily against theft and illicit possession, as well as trafficking for gain. A state system must evolve for nuclear material accountancy and control with the objective to ensure the implementation of a multitude of obligations such as agreements and safeguards of export control regimes, improved security measures with a particular focus on large sources that have already fallen out of control, assessment of security related vulnerabilities of nuclear facilities focussing on external events such as planes crashing into installations and the need for strengthening the capabilities of states to access the weaknesses of systems for possible malicious acts. The IAEA's Emergency Response Centre should also be upgraded to respond to possible terrorist attacks (Bindra, *ibid*). States should also adhere to and implement international agreements, guidelines and recommendations, especially those relating to new threats and for establishing necessary legal frameworks and more countries should be persuaded to do so as well. Lastly, nuclear security coordination and information management should work to consolidate data through exchanges, leading to the development of a new layer of activities (Bindra, *ibid*).

In the South Asian context, the potential for nuclear terrorism is a matter of special concern for several reasons (Paul Leventhal and Brahma Chellany, "Nuclear Terrorism: Threat Perception and Response in South Asia", Report presented to the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, October 1988, online at http://www.nci.org).

1. The rapidly growing nuclear programmes in India and Pakistan involving massive investments in the construction and operation of civilian nuclear laboratories, power plants, research reactor and reprocessing and enrichment facilities.
2. The growing stockpiles of nuclear fission material and maybe even of actual weapons in each country, while their protection requires special safety systems, security checks, surveillance and technologies.

3. The neighbours continue to be beset by high levels of terrorist activities that pose major political challenges to national leaders.
4. The growing sophistication of terrorists' methods of operation and attack and the increasing availability of portable weapon systems like shoulder fired rockets that could be used accurately to strike nuclear installations.

A general notion is that fundamentalist Muslim movements may destabilise Pakistan and possibly transform it into the first radical Islamic country owning nuclear weapons. Many fear that such movements could influence military people and scientists dealing with nuclear weapons and fissile material. Although the possibility of the *Talibinsation* of Pakistan does not seem to be a real danger for now, there is a risk factor involved (LNCV, *ibid*). While the possibility of radical Islamists influencing scientists and technicians dealing with nuclear weapons seems to be remote, the possession of fissile material and good basic knowledge would allow a small group to build a crude nuclear device. Others including physicists believe that besides the acquisition of fissile material, large laboratories would be needed to start a primitive clandestine nuclear programme. However, for nuclear scientists and technical experts to work for the construction of nuclear weapons for other states or for non-state actors there would be no need for Islamic groups to gain full control of Pakistan, far less would do. The "risks of nuclear proliferation in Pakistan may be linked more to acquired nuclear expertise combined with sporadic political attitudes than with the actual risk of the leakage of fissile material or of nuclear weapons". That was the conclusion suggested to the LNCV (*ibid*) by some prominent physicists even though others stated that no scientist in Pakistan would work for a non-state organisation in the development of nuclear weapons. However "there appeared to be a general consensus that the international community should keep increasing the security

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level of all nuclear structures worldwide" (LNCV, *ibid*).

In recent years, Pakistan has initiated a number of steps to increase international confidence in the security of its nuclear arsenal. In addition to overhauling the nuclear command and control structures after 11 September 2001, it has implemented new personnel security programmes. Moreover, since the 2004 revelations about a procurement network run by former nuclear scientist AQ Khan, steps have been taken to improve nuclear security and prevent further proliferation of related material and technologies. A number of initiatives like the strengthening of export control laws and international nuclear security cooperation programmes have contributed significantly in fortifying the security situation. However, political instability and the role of the army in civil affairs have called the extent and durability of these reforms into question. Many nuclear analysts believe that a fundamentalist takeover of the government that possesses the nuclear bomb or proliferation by radical sympathisers within the Pakistani nuclear complex may become a reality in case of a breakdown of control. While American and Pakistani officials continue to express confidence of control over Pakistan's nuclear weapons, continued instability in the country could impact safeguards (Paul K Kerr and Mary Beth Nikitin, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons: Proliferation and Security Issues", Congressional Research Service, July 2011, online at http://fpc.state.gov).

Religious extremism in Pakistan and India is getting stronger. In general, religious fundamentalists of all faiths are not necessarily predisposed to impose their views through violence, only a small fraction deliberately turn to it (Jones, *ibid*, pp24–5). Religious extremism in Pakistan gained ground in the 1980s due to three main factors:

1. The mobilisation of *jihad* vocabulary and the organising of the *Mujahidin* to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan in which the US participated methodically behind the scenes until the Soviet intervention was repelled in 1989.
2. The effects of the 1979 Iranian Islamic revolution, which stimulated Shia sectarian ambitions in the Gulf and both pride and apprehensions within Pakistan's own Shiite community.
3. Saudi private sector propagation of Wahhabi doctrinal influence through charitable donations to Sunni mosques and schools in Pakistan as well as other countries of the region.

In India today, Hindu revivalism is taking hold at the centre of the political system. The rise of Hindu religious consciousness has been in tandem with the decline of the Indian National Congress Party—a party committed to the country's secular constitution and the protection of rights of all citizens, irrespective of religion. The *Bharatiya Janata Party's* coming to power in 1998 was accomplished largely by methodically stirring Hindu nationalism (*Hindutva*) and encouraging the activities of "hardline" political allies (the *Bajrang Dal*, the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, the *Shiv Sena* and the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (Jones, *ibid*) making them an even more powerful force in the country, especially in urban areas. While the effects of "Hinduisation" to date seem not to have had any bearing on the stability of India's evolving nuclear command control system, political impulses clearly reinforce the anti-Pakistan sentiments in the predominately Hindu society and set the stage for a more belligerent and coercive approach to the neighbour. Nuclear strategy generally decides the nature and substance of the command control system, which executes strategy in accordance with the doctrine—thus there is a linkage between doctrine, strategy and structure ("Nuclear Command and Control", *Strategic Analysis*, vol25, no2, May 2001, pp147–50). However, the long term effects of setting religious communities against each other in India certainly could sow the seeds for communal misgivings and reciprocal religious suspicion in hiring in the military forces and sensitive defence programmes (Jones, *ibid*, pp24–5 and K Alan Kronstadt and Bruce Vaughn, "Terrorism in South Asia", Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Washington DC, 8 March 2004, online at http://terrorisme.net). Moreover, grievances, intense communal violence and terrorist acts could make the majority community suspect the national loyalties of the minority community, turning the old Muslim "Two Nations Theory" around within India itself. The implications of such a trend would be particularly dangerous for the country and for stability in relations with Pakistan over the long run (Sukhwant S Bindra, "Continuity and

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Change in Indo–Pak Relations", *World Affairs*, vol10, no1, August 2005).

Two main political issues affect relations between the neighbours—Kashmir and Pakistan sponsored terrorism. Escalating tensions in South Asia now have a dangerous nuclear angle built into them and often attract active US involvement. This participation must go beyond mere diplomacy for two reasons. First, Washington must distinguish between the perpetrators of terror and its victim. Islamabad should be put on a short leash and threatened with sanctions if it does not reverse its dangerous course of supporting terror in Kashmir and other parts of India (Mohammad Ayoob, "South Asia Nuclear Danger", *The Washington Post*, 1 April 2002; JK Baral and JN Mahanty, "The US War against Terrorism: Implications for South Asia", *Strategic Analysis*, vol26, no4, October–December 2002, S Kumar, "Politics in Pakistan Post 11 September 2001", *Strategic Analysis*, vol26, no2, April–June 2002). Second, the nuclear postures of India and Pakistan are entirely different. India is committed to the no first use policy and would not need to use its nuclear capability in a war with its neighbour except in retaliation. Pakistan on the other hand, is unwilling to subscribe to the no first use doctrine. South Asia and the world would be a far safer place if Washington clarified to Islamabad that its support for terrorism and the deliberate uncertainty surrounding its nuclear posture would no longer be tolerated and a continuation of such policies would result in disastrous consequences (*ibid* and Naeem Salik, "A Cooperative Threat Reduction and Regional Verification Monitoring Model for South Asia: The Pakistan View", LNCV South Asian Security Project Case Study, 3/2006, online at http://www.centrovolta.it). The designs of terrorists to use WMDs against governments locally as well as in Western Europe put the spotlight on the issue of stable national command and control over nuclear weapons. *Al Qaeda* elements and *Taliban* sympathisers in Pakistan are trying their best to gain control of such weapons.

There is an urgent need to take steps to reduce the danger of nuclear terrorism. First, rolling back religious extremism in both South Asian societies is not only an urgent task but may be the best place to begin. However, this would be easier to visualise if external factors were not continually roiling emotions in both countries. Second, fresh attention must be paid to the structural and technical dangers of nuclear crisis instability and the growing burden of military budgets. These issues would be easier to tackle if political tensions were lowered by diplomacy. Third, the US should continue playing a diplomatic role in the South Asian region, particularly to check the menace of terrorism. Success

will depend on greater cultural sensitivity and political sophistication than the Americans are known for. Nonetheless, they could make a decisive difference in regional disputes if the leadership of key regional powers converge on serious approaches to resolve their own urgent problems. Indian and Pakistani leaders and domestic organisations however must bear the main share of the responsibility for stemming the tide of religious extremism, as they will pay the biggest price of failure.

Fourth, both India and Pakistan must pass domestic legislation, upgrade anti-terrorist safeguards and physical security systems of facilities and material and enact tough penalties and sentences against those convicted of nuclear related blackmail, smuggling, terrorism and theft. Fifth, in the international scenario, both countries should ratify the IAEA's Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material of March 1980. It defines a wide range of nuclear terrorist activities and is an important step in deterring nuclear terrorism and blackmail, mainly directed at the protection of shipments of civilian nuclear material between nations. The IAEA is the depository of key international conventions and legal agreements and is also entrusted with responsibilities under other agreements and treaties that states have adopted (The Optional Protocol Concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes to the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, INFCIRC/500, online at http://www.iaea.org).

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Sixth, a comprehensive strategy for preventing nuclear terrorism must include many strands from offensive action against terrorists with a global reach to measures to stop nuclear smuggling. However, the most crucial element of such a strategy would be to safeguard every nuclear weapon and every kilogram of potential fissile material, as nuclear weapons and their essential ingredients do not occur in nature and are difficult for terrorists to produce on their own—if

stockpiles can be kept out of terrorist hands, nuclear terrorism could be reliably prevented (Mathew Bunn and Anthony Wier, "Securing the Bomb 2005 – The New Global Imperative", Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, May 2005, online at http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu). Seventh, special strategy and security planning should be executed in protecting nuclear arsenals and installations in both India and Pakistan. The latter in this respect needs more attention, a fact that the US administration is well aware of and has accordingly provided the Pakistanis the latest in equipment and surveillance systems to guard their nuclear facilities and is itself keeping a sharp eye on the safety of nuclear installations.