



Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

Title:	PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME AND NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH CHINA
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“Pakistan’s Nuclear Programme could never have taken off in isolation.” The phrase is true as the sophisticated technology required for developing the bomb was far from a pure indigenous effort by Pakistan. Still, the way in which the Islamic state managed to attain nuclear weaponry, delivery systems, highly enriched uranium, high technological know-how and funds for furthering its atomic dreams is astonishing and raises numerous questions.

The ‘eating grass’ statement of the Late Pakistani PM, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the father of the bomb lobby of Pakistan, revealed the theatrics and determination of Pakistan to go for the ‘absolute weapon’ even at the cost of essentials. Nuclear weapon possession, as widely understood, has got the power to evaporate the distinction between the weak and the strong. Pakistan was keen to overcome its inferiority in conventional weaponry vis-a-vis India and was thus keenly interested in nuclear weapons. For this purpose it received assistance from various states at different times in its nuclear journey. In the summer of 1998, Pakistan declared its nuclear weapon capability through a testing, yet the fact remains that as far back as 1987 its nuclear weapons were well in shape. Earlier, Pakistan in 1953 got attracted to the ‘Atoms for Peace’ programme launched by the United States



under President Eisenhower. In 1956 the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) was established and in 1963 the Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology (PINSTECH) was set up. Subsequently, in 1965, construction of the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANUPP), a 137 MWe CANada Deuterium Uranium (CANDU) reactor was started. The first phase of Pakistan's introduction to the nuclear technology was through US assistance, which was largely for peaceful/civilian purposes. The second phase, however, witnessed proactive and strategic Chinese direct assistance to bring Pakistan's nuclear weapons dream into reality.

Pakistan learnt several salient lessons in the 1960s that were precious and decisive for its nuclear programme in the following decades. Firstly, it realized that defence cooperation with the US proved to be futile as the country didn't stand up for it in times of war. Secondly, the 'enthusiastic' Chinese support also failed to be anything more than diplomatic support during the 1965 India-Pakistan conflict. And thirdly, the most important lesson was that India was militarily stronger than Pakistan. Several glaring examples of Pakistan's defeat in wars waged by it on India made it aware of its inferiority as compared with the Indian defence forces. In the 1960's, the first signs of change in Pakistan's nuclear intentions were recorded; before that there were hardly any military nuclear intentions visible to outsiders. The 1971 conflict wounded Pakistan further with another defeat at the hands of the Indian Defence Forces. In 1972 at Multan, Prime Minister Bhutto decisively led the charge for the bomb and gave 3 years to the Pakistani scientists to come up with the atomic bomb. The PNE by India in 1974 gave another excuse and prompted the speeding up of Pakistan's existing nuclear programme. China's friendship had its limits and it had realistically avoided sending its military to fight alongside Pakistan on earlier occasions. In realization of this fact, Pakistan furthered a nuclear cooperation with China. Pakistan shared its centrifuge technology with the Chinese (which AQ Khan had stolen from the Netherlands) and in return Pakistan received the much needed 50kg of HEU and 15 tons of uranium hexafluoride. The United States, aware of the unholy barter, chose silence in order to strengthen its strategic bonds with Pakistan. The Cold War developments - and especially the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan - gave Pakistan the opportunity of an uninterrupted nuclear programme with almost no US retaliation and

interference in its adventures. In 1987 the long awaited fruit of the Pakistani nuclear programme was ripe as Pakistan was in possession of nuclear weapons. This altered Pakistan's military strategy permanently- its foundations now were based on possession of nuclear weapons. Pakistan clubbed its conventional inferiority in warfare with nuclear capabilities and challenged India on several instances since then. A prolonged series of political brinkmanship and Pakistan sponsored terror activities were targeted against India. The presence and portrayal of the Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW) by Pakistan revealed its irresponsibility. With an average increase of ten warheads per year Pakistan is in the process of rapidly multiplying its nuclear weaponry. The nuclear programme, overall, exhibits a combination of the strategy of 'beg-borrow-steal', more than anything else. Without the crucial assistance from China on nuclear goods and technology, North Korea on delivery systems, Saudi Arabia and others on funds, and United States on civilian nuclear know how initially and later in maintaining deafening silence on the reports of Pakistan nuclear advances, Pakistan's dreams of nuclear weapons would have never seen the light of day.
