

Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament Campaign

Beyond Obama – Priorities Towards Nuclear Abolition

Nuclear Armed India and Pakistan – Preventing the danger of total annihilation

Public meeting
2.00 – 4.30 pm and 6.00 – 8.00 pm

Speaker:
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Room 4a, House of Lords, London

Chair: Lord Peter Archer of Sandwell

Panel speakers include Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Ambassador CHUN Yung-Woo (Republic of South Korea), Frank Barnaby, Rebecca Johnson, Colin Archer, Brian Cooper and Frank Jackson.

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Introduction

The global strategic environment in South Asia today is more lethal than ever before. The epicenter is the Indian subcontinent and the tensions between India and Pakistan and more importantly, the extremist forces like the Taliban and Al Qaeda within Pakistan which may take over the entire country.

With 175 million people in Pakistan, most of them impoverished and illiterate, insurgency and violence on the increase, and a large store of nuclear weapons, Pakistan is potentially a far larger problem than Afghanistan, Iran and North Korea put together.

Pakistan has between 60 to 100 Nuclear Weapons and is continuing to expand its nuclear bomb-making facilities despite growing international concern that advancing Islamist extremists could overrun one or more of its atomic weapons plants or seize sufficient radioactive material to make a dirty bomb.

Commercial satellite photos showed two plutonium producing reactors were nearing completion at Khushab, about 160 miles south-west of Islamabad. The scene of heavy fighting between Taliban and government forces. Another vulnerable facility is the Gadwal uranium enrichment plant, less than 60 miles South Buner district where some of the fiercest clashes have taken place recently, Taliban controlled areas and also where nuclear warheads are stored

There are growing apprehensions that massive infusion of US aid is indirectly bankrolling Pakistan's nuclear programme. Moreover, the Obama administration has bowed to Pakistan governments sensitivities and dropped the demand for access to nuclear smuggler A. Q. Khan.

Threat of Terrorism – A nuclear nightmare

Pakistan is expanding its nuclear programme and bolstering its destructive power. Pakistan does not have a stated nuclear policy, but its 'minimum credible deterrent' thought to be positioned to offset an Indian military attack. The obvious question is for what use? It cannot use it to ward off the threat from India as they would only retaliate with their own nuclear arsenal. It cannot be used against terrorists, that is the Taliban or Al Qaeda as using one of them will involve killing a few million of its own population.

Challenges facing Pakistan

Pakistan currently faces two challenges of unprecedented nature. The first is the challenge to its sovereignty in the North West Frontier Province from the Taliban and related rise in insurgency violence that has led President Obama to label the Taliban infested border areas 'the most dangerous place in the world'. US Army General David Petraeus, who is responsible for the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has called the Taliban an "existential threat" to the Pakistani state. His advisor on counter insurgency in Iraq, David Kilcullen, has warned that Pakistan could fall within six months. If this were not sufficient, Pakistan's second challenge is the worsening economic climate and growing dissatisfaction with the current government.

In Pakistan, the Taliban's violent militarism is spreading out from sanctuaries along the border and beginning to penetrate to the heart of a once peaceful society. In addition, some in Pakistan are in denial about the severity of the threat. This threat is three-fold; first, the spread of extremism and the choking of freedom in the region. Second, violent armed groups gaining increasing influence over a nuclear-armed state. Third, Taliban can get hold of a nuclear weapon

and export it to India via a sea borne container. This could trigger a change in India's nuclear posture of no first strike and start a deadly war.

The Taliban are not all that different from other jihadi organisations like the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Hizbul Mujahideen, which the Pakistan Army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) which employ proxy warfare with the Indian Army is already fighting in Kashmir. The jihadi outfits, the Taliban included, represent a brutish ideology combining the worst of medieval religious beliefs with savage tribal practices, which have remained unchanged since the early Middle Ages.

The Taliban and Al Qaeda's activities are financed by the sale of heroin via criminal smugglers and terrorist groups, with deadly ambitions, a global security nightmare.

However, the Taliban could create an existential threat to India if they succeed in seizing power in Pakistan through a radicalised government under their control.

Pakistan has been the traditional adversary of India and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future as well. This is so as the logic of Pakistan's military and security elites persist in viewing India as the existential threat. On the other hand, besides a few hardliners, India is more tolerant to its Muslim population (the third largest in the world) and has also elected three Muslim Presidents since Independence, which speaks for itself. Three of India's most famous film actors/heroes are Muslims, and their films are watched by millions of predominantly Hindus.

Challenges facing India

India, a country in the middle of a huge transformative process, also faces many problems, from extreme poverty and the threat of terrorism, to the impact of the financial crisis on its booming industries. India's future success rests not just on economic growth, but on genuine inclusive democracy, social security, public health and sustainable energy, which can transcend India's diverse and often opposing political agendas and safeguard the country's future. Given the recent harrowing atrocities in Mumbai, continued tensions with its neighbour Pakistan and questions over whether India can and will act as a democratic counter-balance to the Chinese model in South and East Asia, remain to be seen.

War on terror remains a common problem for both the countries. While the Mumbai attacks have been blamed on Pakistani-based militant groups, a series of bombings have been claimed by homegrown Islamist terrorists apparently angry over the plight of India's large Muslim community, which make up about 13% of India's nearly 1.2 billion people. Simmering tensions between the communities (Naxalities and Maoists) have sometimes led to bloody riots and clashes. However, besides frequent terrorists attacks, India has managed to grow at an phenomenal rate of 8-9 per cent alongside a stable democracy.

There is a recognition in India that the solution in Afghanistan and Pakistan cannot be military. Therefore, the new strategy should be diplomacy, development and not defense. So diplomacy is the buzzword - negotiation and reconciliation. This is the hardest part for India to accept as the implication is that you are now going to negotiate with the very forces you wanted to fight. However, the composite dialogue for a long term solution is the only way out.

In an odd way India has a stake in Pakistan's stability and prosperity. Pakistan is going through a great tragedy. The very existence of Pakistan is at stake. Does India want a talibanised country on its western front which would be far more dangerous to the entire India or does it want to have a stable, secular, democratic government that people have voted for there? India should assist in strengthening Pakistan to achieve a united democratic government. For India a weak and tragic

Pakistan is far more dangerous than a strong Pakistan. Its western frontier will be safe only if Pakistan is safe. India should resume dialogue with its neighbour, Pakistan, by extending the hand of friendship and understanding.

Realistic options and actions to prevent nuclear annihilation

Most Pakistani's are not Islamic terrorists and believe in moderate and spiritual form of Islam including Sufism. However, with the present troubles Pakistan is reaching a tipping point, with a chronic failure of leadership whether – civilian politicians or the army.

The volatile situation in Pakistan, with increased terrorist attacks brings the possibility of imminent threat of nuclear proliferation, and the theft of nuclear materials. It is important that Pakistan and the international community find a way to address the threat posed by the Taliban to the Pakistani state and the entire region. Let us look at the limited realistic options available.

- All nuclear facilities should be secure under an international monitoring system in India and Pakistan as a serious accident involving nuclear weapons could have the consequences of wiping out millions of people. International community need to stand up to India and Pakistan to disable their nuclear terror
- India and Pakistan should ratify CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) which will reduce the tension in the area and also hinder progress in developing new nuclear, neutron and miniaturised hydrogen bombs.
- All access and production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons should be under UN or International control. India and Pakistan should be allowed to mine or by fissile material themselves or from another country as they are doing at present
- Deal with the extremists, fundamentalists and so-called jihadists and their sympathisers. Uproot the places of unchecked terrorism and destroy terrorist training camps.
- Start an international regional campaign for the reduction and abolition of nuclear weapons in both countries. Have a major conference for the promotion and engagement of governments and civil society in promoting non-proliferation and achieving nuclear disarmament, not just in India and Pakistan but also in Israel and Iran.
- Pakistan should urge US to stop drone attacks which have a low success rate in eliminating Al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorists and high rate of killing civilians. Also, the US has no right to attack another sovereign country.
- Civil society and civilian and military leaders should promote democratic renewal .and rise above partisan considerations in order to face threat facing Pakistan. Not long ago we saw the long march of lawyers and citizenry in Pakistan to reinstate its chief justice.
- Support the peace movements in India and Pakistan in achieving a peaceful and nuclear free world.
- Change the concept of security by militarism which only creates insecurity. Redefine the meaning of security, as freedom from poverty, violence and war, disease and illness, and this clearly relates to the emotional security derived from social inclusion, employment and valued activity and an economic order which supports these outcomes.

- Change the mode of thinking or mindset as have been advocated by Albert Einstein, Joseph Rotblat and Gorbachev that will stir both the countries away from nuclear catastrophe.
- Resume the India - Pakistan 'bilateral peace process' and also resolve the outstanding matter of Kashmir which has been the cause of 3 wars between the both countries.
- Stop double standards that underpin the nuclear weapons of India and Pakistan who are increasing their stock of weapons specially when Pakistan is rocked with civil war. On the other hand Iran and North Korea are sanctioned and embargoed for breaking the rules and thereby pronounced to threaten the peace.

Conclusion

With half the population in both India and Pakistan, impoverished and illiterate, spending money and resources on building nuclear weapons can only be a recipe for disaster. However, that is not the case with the ordinary person in the street, who rejoice whenever a nuclear device is test-fired.

The biggest obstacle in the way of nuclear disarmament for India and Pakistan is the perception that having nuclear weapons gives them prestige, insurance against attack and a bargaining chip in the world. They can see the example of North Korea which has been successfully managing its nuclear arsenal to extract concessions from the international community. In other words, it gives their populations a false sense of security and importance. The most awful fact is that there is no international condemnation or punishment against India and Pakistan for possessing nuclear weapons and also for not observing global norms and rules.

Both India and Pakistan and their political parties have no intentions for carrying forward the objective of reduction and abolition of nuclear weapons. Instead they are busy mining Uranium and developing more powerful weapons.

Nuclear weapon building is further supplemented in both countries by Pakistan having a deal with China and India having a deal with US which gives them a free hand to develop nuclear technology by the aid of the two major powers in the world. It gives them legitimacy over possession of their nuclear weapons regardless of the fact that they are not signatories to the NPT and they refuse ratify CTBT

However the reality is the risk of nuclear attack has increased and if a serious accident or a terrorist attack happen, involving nuclear weapons, the consequences could be million-fold wiping out a population of a city like Mumbai or Karachi, producing human suffering on a scale never visualised before

The challenge for the international community and civil society in India and Pakistan is to get out of the madness of nuclearism by building a strong groundswell of public opinion for reducing and abolishing nuclear weapons as it once happened when the world had ended apartheid, slavery and child labour.

Thank you for listening.

The full version of this speech can be downloaded from:

- VM Centre for Peace www.vmpeace.org
- Action for UN Renewal www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk

Vijay Mehta is president of VM Centre for Peace www.vmpeace.org , Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity www.fortuneforum.org , Chair of Action for UN Renewal www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk and co-Chair of World Disarmament Campaign. He is an author and global activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment. Some of his notable books are The Fortune Forum Summit: For a Sustainable Future, Arms No More, and The United Nations and Its Future in the 21st Century.

His latest book is on Global Warming and is called 'Climate Change 365,' which is available to download free of charge in electronic form from the website www.climatechange365.co.uk

He along with his daughter Renu Mehta founder of Fortune Forum charity held two summits in London in 2006 and 2007. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage. The keynote speakers for the first and second summit were Bill Clinton, former US President and Al Gore, former US vice-President, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2007.

Vijay Mehta has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ahtak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.