

THE NUCLEAR OPTION

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The Nuclear Option

By: Senator Professor Khurshid Ahmad

Pakistan's nuclear option is neither a purely academic issue nor just an emotional one. It would also be incorrect to look upon the issue from the view point of the alleged strategy of nuclear non-proliferation. The whole approach is based upon the ethno-centric psyche of the Western powers who believe in monopolizing certain technologies. If possession of nuclear power is a moral crime, all nations of the world must stand on equal footing. If in the context of a strategy for deterrence some have a right to possess a certain technology, there is no reason why others should be denied the same.

Nuclear technology is indispensable for Pakistan for three reasons;

First, while this technology has a destructive dimension, there are thousand and one peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Risks involved are calculable and to a large extent coverable. In the interest of promotion of science and technology and with a view to harness all those resources that have been created for man, it is our right and duty to pursue research, in the field of nuclear physics and develop this technology keeping in view our/and mankind's needs for an honourable existence.

Secondly, Pakistan's energy situation is very tight. We are short in oil and high quality coal. Gas resources are limited. Hydro-electric potential is also not only limited but subject to a number of political constraints. Solar energy is harnessable, yet the immediate potential remains quite limited. As such it would be suicidal not to simultaneously pursue the development of nuclear power plants in the country. My considered view is that the KANUP project was a pioneering effort made at the right time. It is tragic that it was not followed properly. There is a 20 years' gap. Every effort must be made to establish nuclear power-plants in the country in such a manner, choosing the right size and technology that would enable the country to be self-reliant within the next two decades. Keeping in view the Korean experience, this is not a wild thought but a realisable target.

Thirdly, security interests of Pakistan also demand that nuclear technology must, be developed to an extent that any threat to Pakistan's independence and sovereignty from any of the regional powers could be effectively met. I do not want to mince words. It is a fact that Indian and Israeli nuclear capability has reached a stage that any of these countries can become operational in a moment and pose threat to the very existence of Pakistan and the Muslim Middle East. The only answer to this is development of Pakistan's nuclear technology to an extent that it could have real deterrent effect. I see no other choice. As such, development of nuclear and missile technology is a must for our national security. If some of those who claim to be our friends are unhappy on that, I would have very strong reservations to regard them as our friends.
