POLITICAL TRANSITIONS AND NUCLEAR MANAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN

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Outline

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- Overview of Political Transitions (1954-77)
- Zia’s Crash; the Birth of Troika; the Role of the Military (1988-99)
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Introduction
Civilian and Military Rule

Civilian Rule
- 1947 - 1958
- 1972 - 1977
- 1988 - 1999
- 2008 - 2012

Military Rule
- 1958 - 1962
- 1969 - 1972
- 1977 - 1985
- 1999 - 2002

Hybrid Rule
- 1962 - 1968
- 1985 - 1988
- 2002 - 2007

32 years
18 years
14 years
Overwhelming National Consensus

- Political system vacillates between parliamentary and presidential authority
- Army Chief becomes arbitrator of national security and the sponsor of the military-bureaucracy-scientific community
- Nuclear management remains unaffected despite turbulent political change
- Barring major upheaval, the current nuclear management system is unlikely to change
Overview of Political Transitions (1954-77)
The Genesis of Nuclear Science in Pakistan

- Atomic science in the 1950s is a low priority for policy-makers in Pakistan; nation-building took precedence
  - U.S. military alliance and Atoms-for-Peace initiative
  - The birth of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC)
- The troika of Bhutto, Salam, and Usmani create a foundation for a soft technological infrastructure (hundreds of scientist sent abroad)
The Nuclear Debate: Two Camps

**Nuclear Enthusiasts**

- After China Test, India with unsafeguarded nuclear facilities was surely pursuing weapon capability
- Costs of a U.S. alliance were starting to outweigh the benefits
- NPT debate had already commenced and sooner or later severe restrictions on nuclear trade would be enforced
- asymmetry in conventional weaponry between India and Pakistan was already widening
- nuclear weapons program would necessitate an expansion of Pakistan’s scientific infrastructure and human capital, becoming a pillar supporting Pakistan’s high-technology goals

**Nuclear Cautionists**

- Pakistan’s alliance with the United States is weakened due to aggressive security policies, especially in regard to Kashmir
- Economy was financially sound, but dependent on good graces of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- Conventional military imbalance required modernizing with Western equipment
- Atoms for Peace benefits were helping to create a base of both soft technology and hard technology
- Doubtful of India’s ability to acquire nuclear technology
- Nuclear competition was a luxury of the big powers. For small developing countries nuclear technology was associated with poverty alleviation
Bhutto’s Nuclear Program

Pakistan Weapons Program

- Bomb lobby comes to power
- Multan Meeting
- 1974 India test
- Hedging capability becomes a crash program

“There is no need to be alarmed over India’s nuclear demonstration… Let me make it clear that we are determined not to be intimidated by this threat. I give a solemn pledge to all our countrymen that we will never let Pakistan be a victim of nuclear blackmail.”

- Bhutto’s reaction to India’s first nuclear test
Nuclear Program and Zia’s Coup

- Bhutto tightly controls the program for secrecy
- Inter-ministerial committee formed to ensure progress and to overcome bureaucratic hurdles
- Minimized the military’s role in decision-making but leverages its technical resources
- Plutonium dead-end leads to pursuit of HEU
- Zia’s coup transfers nuclear decisions from the Prime Minister’s office to CMLA and later the Presidency
- Bhutto becomes concerned that the nuclear program is adversely affected by Zia’s Coup
Zia’s Crash; the Birth of Troika; the Role of the Military (1988-99)
Zia’s Management of the Nuclear Program

- Like Bhutto, personally in-charge
- Retains the same coordination committee (Ghulam Ishaq and Agha Shahi and Gen Arif)
- Generates competition between PAEC and KRL
- Zia fears infiltration of Western spies that might sabotage the program
Fear of preventive strikes after 1981 (Osiraq and India’s plan to mimic)

Deal with Reagan: no hot tests, no HEU, no machining into core, and no transfer of know-how

By 1988, enough fissile material was accumulated to assemble a few devices with short notice
The Decade of Democracy and Power Troika

- Sudden crash of military leadership results in the ascendance of Pres. GIK and Gen. Aslam-Beg
- GIK most knowledgeable, but Beg is a key coordinator on behalf of president; inter-ministerial committee disappears
- Benazir Bhutto rises to power and makes deal with the army:
  - Continue to support Pres. GIK
  - Not seek revenge from Gen Zia-ul-Haq’s family
  - Continue the services of Foreign Minister Sahibada Yaqub-Khan
  - Not meddle in the internal matters of the armed forces
- Troika was an informal diffusion of power not a governance structure – requires consensus between the three principals in the most critical security policy of the state
The Decade of Democracy and Power Troika: Phase 1

- Phase 1: 1988-1993
  - Ultimate authority over all nuclear decisions and financial approvals rests with the president
  - Benazir Bhutto is not kept fully in-the-loop (Beg denies); CIA briefing in 1989 causes distrust

- Nuclear restraint policy
  - So-called national command authority (troika plus two scientists)
  - Reconfirms Reagan-era restraint commitment

- AQ Khan is able to bypass all three powers by playing-off one against the other
- The power rivalry between the president
The Role of the Military (1993-99)

- Decade of Democracy and Power Troika: Phase 2
  - Military command changes from Beg to Waheed
  - Bitter crisis between Prime Minister Sharif and GIK lead both to resign in 1993 – resulting in establishment of an interim government
  - GIK hands over nuclear responsibility to army chief before resigning
    - The role of the Combat Development Directorate (July 1993 – Dec 1998)
    - The birth of the Strategic Plans Division (March 1999)

- Sharif’s rise to power and clash with president-judiciary
  - The demise of 8th constitutional amendment
  - The nuclear test decision: role of PM and army
  - The dismissal of army chief (1998)

- The Kargil Crisis (May – July 1999)

- Military Coup (October 1999)
Transition to Unified Command (1999)
Unity of Command

- Coup - the first power transition after Pakistan declared itself an overt nuclear power
- The functioning of SPD strengthens, and Musharraf announces the establishment of the National Command Authority (NCA) in Feb 2000
  - April 1999 Musharraf presents Sharif with NCA concept
  - Sharif approves but fears NCA resembles National Security Council proposal – and pauses to reexamine
- Nuclear program transitions from demonstrated deterrence to operational deterrence (2000-present)
- The tight institutional control of the nuclear program from 1998 onward results in the accountability of all scientific organizations and contributes to the unraveling of the network and a
Musharraf resigns as army chief (Nov 2007) and as president (Aug 2008)

- New political transition continues with the same NCA system intact
- President abdicates nuclear responsibilities to the PM before the adoption of the 18th Amendment
Conclusions
Conclusions

- Despite a tumultuous political history, the military maintained an effective organizational structure that prevented the degradation of control of nuclear weapons.

- Nuclear weapons management remains firewalled from political shocks; the role of the army chief has been pivotal – especially since 1993.

- The existing command and control arrangement is viewed as robust, institutional, and professional with support from across the entire political spectrum.

For further details look-up *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb* (Stanford University Press, 2012)