

convincingly, wished above all to restore Pakistan's deteriorated international image, use the sudden popularity of the nuclear option to reinforce his political position and his posture *vis-à-vis* his own armed forces, mobilize the solidarity of other Muslim states, use the slowing of the programme as a counter to obtain international aid, and pressure India on arms control. Strictly defence issues thus seem to have been less central than is sometimes said. As with India then, it is important not to underestimate the simple prestige factor in the decision-making process.<sup>13</sup>

In the following years it is unclear to what extent either country invested significantly in a real nuclear weapons policy. Both argued that their interest in such capabilities was limited to peaceful uses. Each emphasised the need to retain its potential to react to an unfavourable evolution of events.

The 1974 test is difficult to assess in this context. India does not appear to do very much with the event in terms of emphasizing major foreign policy points, changing military postures, or even using new means for development projects. Fortmann goes so far as to suggest that indeed the explosion was costly in several diplomatic senses, most particularly in that it appears to have been a major spur to the Pakistani nuclear programme and hence in creating another element of rivalry that had not existed beforehand. Indeed, Pakistan finds in the test a club with which to hit the Indians in international forums where it can claim to be the victim of irresponsible Indian nuclear adventurism.

Be that as it may, positive prestige and scientific reasons appear to have still counted for more than these negative issues. India had shown the world what it was capable of doing, by itself, in technological terms. And nationalist bureaucratic and military opinion supported fully the move. Elements of a more expansionist foreign policy followed the explosion. New Delhi was feeling its muscles and wanted to ensure that all neighbours, and not just China or Pakistan, noticed them. Great powers were neither welcome nor needed in a region where India was now clearly and completely superior to any other state.

As with Argentina facing obvious Brazilian superiority in so many fields, so with Pakistan facing India, many voices were raised in Islamabad suggesting that nuclear weapons for Pakistan could act as the great equalizer in a competition where Indian dominance was absolute. This argument has had a durability in Pakistani discourse that it has not been able to retain in Argentina. In this context, the Pakistani programme as it developed showed consistency and longevity. Aid from other Muslim countries began to arrive in earnest after 1976 as part of Bhutto's call for more cooperation in defence among Muslim states. Prestige counted for a great deal in all this, not only prestige on the international stage but at home where national unity remained difficult to maintain. The ability to pressure the United States for assistance with national security concerns did, and does as well.

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 322-23.