

light in which India views China. Pakistan looks to nuclear weapons both to offset India's conventional superiority, and to provide a last-ditch deterrent to Indian aggression in the event that conventional deterrence fails.¹⁶

The Pakistani nuclear equation is complicated by the turmoil in Pakistan's political institutions, as witnessed by the 1999 coup by Army Commander General Pervais Musharraf. Successive elected governments in Pakistan have demonstrated a lamentable tendency towards corruption, the commonest charge leading to the fall of government after government throughout the 1990s. The result is that Pakistan's finances are in deep trouble, with Islamabad shouldering a gigantic debt burden, the IMF and the World Bank perennially threatening foreclosure, and the Pakistani military clamouring for arms to meet the Indian threat. Despite repeated promises to "clean up" government, corruption has persisted unabated, and was the primary pretext for the 1999 coup.

In the long run, the most recent coup could do Pakistan more good than ill. Unlike India, where the military is held on a tight leash by government, and has to fight to be included in the decision making process on military and strategic issues, the armed forces in Pakistan enjoy a considerably higher degree of prestige and public confidence, so much so that the Pakistani populace often looks to the Army as a legitimate alternative to corrupt politicians. The support for the military in Pakistan, and the highly professional nature of the Pakistani military, are not well appreciated outside, with the result that military coups in Pakistan tend to receive rapid condemnation from the Western powers despite the fact that they frequently meet with the approval of the majority of Pakistanis.¹⁷

That said, the powerful position held by the military in Pakistan virtually ensures that nuclear weapons programmes (and delivery systems, such as ballistic missiles) will continue to receive high priority in the budgetary decision making process; Pakistan's finances are sufficiently crippled that Islamabad cannot afford both guns and butter, and with the gun-wielders making the decisions, the people are likely to suffer. While Indian progress towards collective affluence is hardly rapid, it is well ahead of Pakistan's.

The Pakistani socio-political environment is further complicated by the decay of the social order, evidenced by continuing sectarian violence and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, spurred by the use of Pakistan by Taliban and Mujaheddin activists as a base of operations. Fundamentalism can pose another stimulus to nuclearization; Pakistan, as the first Muslim state to develop a nuclear

¹⁶ The manner in which the utility of nuclear deterrents is perceived respectively by New Delhi and Islamabad is discussed by Pavin Sawhney in "How inevitable is an Asian 'missile race'", *Jane's Intelligence Review* (January 2000), pp. 30-4.

¹⁷ Rahul Bedi offers an intriguing glimpse into the extent to which the Indian governmental and military institutions are often at loggerheads in "Indian military, MoD try to settle turf wars", *Jane's Intelligence Review* (January 2000), pp. 27-9.