CHAPTER IV

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERCEPTIONS TO INDIA'S BALLISTIC MISSILE PROGRAMME

India’s entry into the ballistic missile club has attracted considerable attention both at the national and international level. The national perception has been more of a favourable response where majority of Indian defence scientists, politicians and common masses applaud India’s admission into the missile club. The opposition leaders and the economists, however, ignoring the burgeoning burden of India’s security imperatives, have been skeptical to India’s missile programme. At the international level, the response has been more varying: from over-reaction by the United States, Pakistan and China to muted response or even encouragement by the erstwhile Soviet Union/Russia. The perceptions of these countries have been shaped by their national self-interests and varying implications of India’s missile programme on them. Against this background, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the national and international perceptions to India’s ballistic missile programme. The second part discusses the national and international perceptions to India’s latest IRBM Agni-II test conducted on April 11, 1999.

I

NATIONAL PERCEPTIONS

The successful launch of ballistic missiles, such as Prithvi and Agni was welcomed by politicians and journalists of widely differing political affiliations as a major achievement of Indian science and technology which was expected to lead a much more influential role in global affairs. While the military implications had somewhat been downplayed, Indian political elites highlighted their strategic implications. Following the Agni test, the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi argued that “Agni represented a step
towards safeguarding the country's independence." He noted that "India lost its independence two centuries ago, because we were disunited at home front and not vigilant on the external front. We must remember that technological backwardness leads to subjugation. Never again will we allow our freedom to be so compromised."2

The opposition leaders denounced the launching of the Agni and emphasised that it was demonstrated only to suit some narrow political gains. The Janata Dal leaders opposed it on the ground that it would sow the seeds of nuclear war. If India engaged itself in building missiles for nuclear strike, its more powerful neighbours would vapourise Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta in less than 5 minutes. This perception of the Janata Dal changed when it came to power at the Centre in 1989.

The public opinion polls indicated that majority of the people forwarded the test. Similar response had also come from hundreds of technicians and engineers who had worked for decades to mobilise India's military-industrial capacity. For them, success of Agni test was "a milestone in the progress of Indian science and technology in general and defence research and development in particular."3

India's intellectual community had not been particularly unanimous in its response towards the ballistic missile programme. This was clearly evident from its response when India successfully test-fired its first IRBM Agni in 1989.

K. Subrahmanyam, India's leading strategic analysts, for instance, argued that "Agni makes India a significant factor in international power politics. If it is followed by successful ASLV, PSLV and ICBM test, there can be no future international arms control negotiations without India's voice being heard with much greater attention than has been the case hitherto. One sixth of humanity coming into international decision-making means greater democratisation of the process ... It is only a neo-colonialist mentality
which sees the Western, Soviet and Chinese possession of missiles and nuclear capabilities as stabilising and India's as destabilising." He further added that "Agni and its successor ICBM missile (which India must develop) are powerful contributions to international peace and stability, to increasing democratisation of the international order through greater diffusion of power and would lead to a stage when war should become a non-viable instrument of policy in our part of the world too as it has already become in the industrialised world."

Subrahmanyam also advocated that "a beneficial fallout of Agni could be greater credibility in other Southern nations in India's technological capability. Efforts should be to make use of this factor to promote South-South co-operation. He concludes that "as Agni soared over the morning sky on May 22, 1989, it triggered a new era in our thinking and called for a new world view for India. Its role as a weapon is the least of its roles. It is a confidence builder and a symbol of India's assertion of self-reliance not merely in defence but in the broader international political arena as well."

According to Brahma Chellaney, "the significance of the Agni test lay in the fact that India became the second country outside the club of declared nuclear powers to demonstrate an intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM) capability." He saw Agni's development as a sign that India intended to eventually move into the ranks of the world's military powers. He further added, "while casting a cloud over the MTCR, the test also signalled that India could potentially progress to Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)."

To Air Marshall R.S. Bedi, "Agni is not a mere weapon or a missile but an instrument of national security. The deterrence value of this missile has to be understood in the context of an insurance against Pakistan and China."

Inder Malhotra, a former editor of The Times of India advocated that "Agni is the answer to those who are trying hard to twist our arms to stop us
from developing missiles on the one hand and on the other to make us to sign the NPT on the dotted line. It is, of course, also a testimony to India’s technological prowess of which we ought to be proud.”

For Amit Gupta, “Agni marks an essential step in fulfilling a vital gap in Indian security. India till then had no known defence against a missile attack. Agni with its accurate guidance capability appears to be the only answer to the missiles that the Chinese are developing.” He added that “an important use of the IRBM Agni is to put a string on military observation satellites by other countries which have photographed every centimetre of sensitive installations in the country.”

Some saw Agni as nothing more than a “technology demonstrator.” For instance, according to former Defence Minister K.C. Panth, Agni was a means to “test some of the advanced missile technologies developed indigenously ... Being an experimental R & D vehicle, the goals of Agni are technological.” Contradicting this Bharat Wariavwalla of the IDSA remarked that “Like good Hindus and pacificists, we say the programme is only for peaceful uses. But the Agni is, in every sense, a delivery system for nuclear weapons.” In similar voice, an IDR Research Team put it “No Sect, clan, tribe or nation which falls under its shadow will believe Agni is a “technology demonstrator.”

For Cecil Victor, “Agni (if it is taken to its logical conclusion) ends the strategic imbalance in the region vis a vis China, Pakistan and even the US. With a range varying from 1500 kms with a heavy payload and 2500 kms with a somewhat reduced warhead, its reach is sufficient to put all the important targets in Tibet (where Chinese nuclear missiles are deployed) and the Sinkiang within contentions. This also applies to Pakistan and (this may be the reason why the US is tickled to death), the US air and naval base at Diego Garcia it tends to reduce the efficiency of the US rapid deployment force or such tactics as the induction of the Seventh Fleet base force to press a point against India.” He added that as ‘technology demonstrator’,
the *Agni* does a great many things. It illustrates, for instance, that in the next three years, even without a nuclear warhead, this country can hit targets out that range. It is being argued that without a nuclear warhead it has little deterrent value - that is best left moot. If it did not have deterrent value why would the USA be so agitated about it. India can and should use this quality to advantage. It can be used as currency to serve its goal of general and complete disarmament and simultaneously, the creation of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean."\(^{17}\)

To N.C. Menon, "apart from India’s aspirations to becoming at least a regional Super Power, the basic idea behind the development of *Agni* was not to pull rank on Pakistan, so as to speak. India’s sophisticated, accurate and much heralded *Prithvi* missile and its sizable edge in conventional weaponry would have sufficed to cool down Islamabad’s potential military ambitions. The development of *Agni* is intended to be a subtle hint to China that it is not the only Asian giant and that it can not force its regional hegemonical dictates on India. It is not that India’s *Agni* missiles can devastate China. But they still can cause considerable and internationally visible damage on China’s population centres."\(^{18}\)

Some intellectuals saw *Agni* as a signal to the great powers that India had acquired technology on the basis of which great powers status was based. The external factor behind the test had been the promotion of India’s position in her relations with China and the Super Powers. The test could be regarded as an implicit message to India’s real or potential opponents highlighting the ability to react according to specific circumstances.

*Agni* was also seen as an important shot in the arm for the Indian psyche, which lives to believe that if others can do it, the Indians can do it better. For some others, by launching *Agni*, India had demonstrated beyond doubt that it really needed to acquire adequate and credible defence for its security against external threat and that India had not and would not succumb to pressures from the West.
Agni re-enforced India’s role as the regional Super Power in the South-Asian region. Having emerged as the dominant power in the South-Asian region after the 1971 war with Pakistan, India had conveyed to the South Asian States that it was capable of developing high technology weapon system, which, if necessary, could be converted into military one within a very short time. It was also possible that the Indian leadership had made continued reference to Pakistan’s possession of short-range ballistic missiles, Saudi Arabia’s possession of Chinese mode CSS-2 IRBM and Israel’s Jerico-II ballistic missile meaning thereby Agni was an attempt to counter the growth of ballistic missiles in the region and hence create mutual deterrence.

However, some intellectuals had been very critical to the Agni missile test. Prof. Dhirendra Sharma, for instance, enunciated that the euphoria created by the successful launch of the missile Agni is not an Eureka. To him, “India’s entry into the Super Power club is meaningless, without first providing its citizens basic necessities of life. Our space odyssey in real term offers no return to the masses. There are no strategic parameters which necessitate the spending of our meager resources to non-productive and obsolete weapons system.” The decision of glorifying Agni was, according to him, “just another political gimmick to hoodwink the electorate, when Rajiv Gandhi needed to give a fill-up to his sagging popularity.”

He further added that “not even the members of NAM congratulated the Indian Prime Minister on the demonstration of an aggressive posture of greatness. If our immediate neighbours and friends in the Third World are not proud of this technological achievement, then there is something amiss in our doctrine of defence.”

“The launching of Agni had further alienated India in SAARC and from other Third World states. Since then India has been equated with those who speak of world peace with a double tongue. Agni would ignite further hostility, mistrust and accentuate the missile race in the South Asian region. New Delhi’s expensive space odyssey is likely to lead to another nuclear
race, resulting in unprecedented increase in the demand for resources. Our social welfare and rural development plan will be the first causality."\(^{23}\)

While criticising the launching of the *Agni* missile test, S. Bilveer advocated that like Soviet Union in the Gorbachev era, India has become a one-legged power, its most successful achievement has been the development of its war machinery. But when it comes to providing for the people, it is an example par excellence of a disastrous Third World state."\(^{24}\)

According to Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, "*Agni* is a good ego booster for India but useless as a weapon, if India were to start putting of *Agni* launch facilities all over the place, its neighbours would have no choice but to assume it is about to become a nuclear missile power. At 2,500 km, *Agni* can hit China, South-East Asia, Iran and Kazakhstan. From Riyadh to Beijing to Alma Atta governments would have to start targetting nuclear tipped missiles at India. This will be required by the inexorable logic of nuclear deterrence. To make it worse, everyone knows India’s main missile against Pakistan is the short-range ‘*Prithvi*’. If *Prithvi* is for Pakistan, they will ask who is *Agni* aimed at. Instead of having to worry just about Pakistan, India will have to worry about everybody. India’s security environment will simply sour beyond redemption. It would find itself in multiple arms races which it does not want and cannot afford. India would go bankrupt long before everything else. The five year’s *Agni* programme cost an estimated Rs.20 billion. According to Mr. Kalam, father of India’s missile programme, each individual missile costs Rs.30 million."\(^{25}\)

Similarly, Ashok Mitra mentioned that "in recent years, there has been a growing concern about the size of the defence budget. Such concern comes not from general public but from the economic planners within the country who feel that India can not sustain a continuous military growth raising the important question of guns or butter."\(^{26}\) Thus, he concluded by preferring “bread to ballistic missiles.”
Rejecting the bread vrs. butter controversy, Major Gen. K.S. Pendse stated that “the missile programme is not exhorbitantly costly to the nation. One estimate says that the Agni may have cost about 30 crores. If this is compared to the cost of a Mirage or Mig-29, then it is not particularly counter-productive.” He concluded that “those who ascribe the sluggishness of the Indian economy’s growth to defence do so possibly out of their conviction about the need for universal disarmament than because of any proof in direct support of their contention.”

To Arvind Kala, “the missile programme will weaken India vis a vis Pakistan because our best security interests lie in freezing the present military status quo between US and Pakistan. If we allow a missile or nuclear bomb race, we will end up nullifying India’s overwhelming superiority over Pakistan in conventional arms strength.” He further added that “missiles and nuclear bombs are great levellers. A weak nation possessing them becomes a formidable enemy. At present Pakistan is much weaker than India militarily but if it possesses missiles and bombs, it becomes our military equal because it can inflict unacceptable damage on us.”

THE BALIAPAL AGITATION: A STUDY OF PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS

The Baliapal agitation provides the best example to know the people’s perceptions on India’s ballistic missile programme. Originally, the Government of India had planned to establish a National Test Range (NTR) for launching its larger missiles and satellites at the Baliapal/Bhograi area of Balasore district in Orissa. But this site, since long, has become a matter of national controversy. Local politicians have organised strong movements in the Baliapal area against the establishment of a NTR and the Government of India has proved impotent against this popular resistance.

As far back as in November 1978, the government had set up a Committee to identify a site for the establishment of an instrumented test range. A group of experts had surveyed a number of sites, including the
Sunderbans (West Bengal), the Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu), Satbhaya (Orissa), Adaman and Nicobar Islands and the Balasore (Baliapal) coast (Orissa). The only suitable site found was the Balasore coast having all advantages of a test range based on scientific, logistics and technical consideration compared to other places in the country.

Although the original decision to set up the NTR was made in 1979 by the Janata Government and pursued by the Congress (I) when it came to power in 1980, it was not until July, 1985 that formal announcement was made that Baliapal/ Bhogroi had been chosen as an appropriate site for NTR covering 102 sq kms and 55 villages. Mr. J.B. Pattnaik, the Orissa Chief Minister, described it as a “Puja Gift” to the people of Orissa from Mrs. Gandhi. Since then a militant Movement had grown in the area by the local people against the government decision to take their land (“Heela Mati”) and reallocate them elsewhere.

The Baliapal agitation was formally launched in December, 1985 with the formation of Uttara Balasore Khepanashtra Ghati Pratirodh Samiti (UBKGPS) and since then it had become one of the most militant agitations in the country. It was an agitation that had been able to mobilise people from all classes in society and had broken down barriers of caste, gender and age, thus making it a mass agitation. It had been able to garner the support of all major political parties in the state. Active support for the agitation had extended all the way from Marxist-Leninist group to the Congress (I) at the village and the block level. In a dominant political climate, vitiated by narrow political objectives and consideration of political gain, the support of wide spectrum of political parties and groups for the agitation had reflected not only the political strength that it commanded but also its political maturity for not compromising for narrow political gains.

The twin issues of displacement and rehabilitation had been the source of the growth of many agitations in the country in the recent past. What distinguished this agitation from the others of a similar nature was the mass
involvement of the people in this area, irrespective of vertical and horizontal hierarchies as well as its militancy.

In a state characterised by extreme poverty, the green paddy fields of Balasore are the basis of relative prosperity. Balasore is considered as the rice bowl of the state. It is one of the most fertile agricultural lands in India producing a variety of crops including betel leaves, coconut, groundnuts and cashew. Proximity to the coast and the Subernarekha River also enables the people to earn a living through inland sea fishing. The area is also one of the most densely populated in Orissa-Bhagraoi having 600 persons per sq km and Baliapal with 397 persons per sq km.

The local villagers did not question the issue of arms or the necessity of defence preparedness. The appeal lied in the fact that if destructive weapons are a must for a nation, then another site must be chosen for testing such as a desert or a sparsely populated region.

The Government stated that it had strong technical reasons for choosing of Baliapal over other sites for this project. According to it, rockets and missiles can not be launched from anywhere. There are two major factors that have to be taken into consideration, while choosing a launch site. First, there must be an open, uninhabited stretch of land or water (several hundred kilometers long) ‘down range.’ Second, the site ideally, must allow for longitudinal launch. The first requirement is to ensure that a malfunction during the launch stage does not cause damage to civilian lives and property. Rocket propellant is highly explosive and if it does explode during the launch stage, burning fuel and metal fragments are sprayed over vast areas. Often, rockets fail to take off along the planned trajectory and have to be destroyed by the range safety officer. In this case too, the effects are so devastating that most launch sites around the world are consequently located on a coast. The only exceptions to this rule are the launch sites operated by the erstwhile Soviet Union and China.
The Bay of Bengal provides an ideal stretch of sea over which missiles can be fired. This part of the Indian Ocean does not have major international maritime or airlines routes criss-crossing it and during test launches the few existing routes can be closed temporarily without causing much disruption. More importantly, the Bay of Bengal is, in a sense, a protected sea. On the Western side, it can be monitored from Peninsular India and in the East, there is the Andaman & Nicobar Island chain. This means that telemetry stations can be set up easily to cover most of the Bay area.

Baliapal’s additional advantage stems from the fact that it is located in a ‘charmed’ meteorological spot. This is in area of the Orissa coast that forms a natural concavity and is not prone to cyclones that frequently develop in the Bay of Bengal. The continental shelf extends to several kilometres into the sea from Chandipur and the shallow waters dampen wind speeds. Consequently, studies have shown that at an average, between 248 and 280 days a year are available for launches. This is better than what can be obtained at any other site along the Eastern Coast.

Baliapal’s greatest advantage, however, stems from the fact that ballistic missiles as well as polar satellites can be launched longitudinally. Baliapal is located close to longitude 87 degree, 20 minutes East and missiles launched from here can have a totally unobstructed trajectory over the sea. In case of failure, the missiles will plunge into the sea without causing any harm. Moreover, it is much cheaper to launch rockets and missiles into orbital paths along a longitudinal direction.

Even before the formal announcement for land acquisition, the Movement was mobilised by Gadadhar Giri, a long respected leader of the area associated with Praja Socialist Party who fought for the rights of the peasantry in this area. After the official gazettee notification, the Movement which was largely spontaneous in nature acquired a formal shape. The UBKGPS was formed in December, 1985 which then led the agitation.
A district level Co-ordination Committee was set up with Brajnath Rath, a noted progressive poet as its convener. A public meeting was held at Balasore, in which all opposition parties and groups participated. These include the Janata Party, CPI(M), CPI etc. In 1987, another district Co-ordination Committee was set up, the Convenor of which was Arun De.

A significant difference on perspective regarding the NTR existed among the various members of the resistance groups in the sense that, members of Janata, CPI, CPM acknowledged the national security needs of the state and hence accepted the necessity of the NTR. They merely opposed the specific location in Baliapal/ Bhograi region. But others had opposed the location and the very existence of the test range. Indeed a strong feeling existed among the activists of the area that the principal reason for the Political Parties involvement in the struggle was to arrest electoral support in the area, the support being split between the Congress(I) and the Janata Party. It was also felt that these parties, because they accepted in principle the necessity of the NTR would eventually bargain for the best rehabilitation deal they could obtain from the state rather than to continue to resist the construction of the base. The opposition party came to power in the constituency with the pledge that they would not allow the NTR to be established in that region. But the pledges of the leaders did not materialise into real policy action as a result of which, the people of the region felt betrayed and were consequently engaged in a continuous process of opposition to the establishment of the NTR.

The National Front Government's stand on the NTR project at Baliapal had upset the people of Baliapal. The announcement of the Minister of Defence, Dr. Raja Ramna, in the Rajya Sabha that there was no proposal for snapping the project had put the Orissa Janata Dal leaders in an uncomfortable position. The State Dal leaders were at a dilemma to face the people because now they could not say that the proposed Test Range was a Centre's project and they had nothing to do with it when their party
was already a constituent of Government at the Centre.\textsuperscript{45}

With the loss of Janta Dal's support, the Movement became defensive in nature seeking to preserve the status quo by restricting the base and dislocation of the traditional culture. The villagers had adopted non-violent, non-cooperative methods of resistance. Government officials and representatives were prevented from entering into their area. To enforce this, four check posts were set up. The roads approaching the Baliapal/Bhograi area were barricaded with bamboo and trenches dug in order to stop government vehicles. In Baliapal, a Maran Sena (suicide squad) of 5,000 people comprising women, children and men had been created. A similar group Freedom Brigade was also set up. The area was effectively sealed by villagers refusing to pay bank loans and taxes. In 1985-86, the villagers refused to pay land revenue of Rs. 100,000. In concert with these forms of resistance, the Movement had also held bandhs, demonstrations and mass public meetings.\textsuperscript{46}

The local villagers did not question the issue of arms or the necessity of defence preparedness. According to Sujatha Mehta, their appeal was innocuous. They were merely asking to be left alone in their island of peace. This was not only an environmental issue but also a denial of fundamental right of security to the people who were already unprivileged.\textsuperscript{47}

Professor Manoranjan Mohanty notably alleged that "the choice of the location of NTR in Orissa during the Congress regime was due to its political vulnerability since it was a Congress ruled state. Other potential sites were rejected, such as West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh because they were under opposition rule. They preferred to Eastern coast which undergoes much silting and as a consequence has much shipping backlog. Orissa has also defence projects in a district which is an asset for NTR coordination."\textsuperscript{48}

Government's response to this resistance had followed the model of integration and repression. More subtly, the Government had pursued a
The threefold approach: seduction, coercion and mediation. The first approach, seduction had come in the form of rehabilitation and compensation plan worth Rs. 127 crores announced by the Central Government in 1986, with the hope of placating popular resistance to the missile range.  

The plan intended to relocate the people of Baliapal/Bhogroi into model villages up to 15 km away from their present homes. The model villages would contain schools, hospitals, community centres, post offices as to ensure people of its good intent. Nine industries including oil, leather and tool manufacturing would be set up to provide direct or indirect job for one member of every displaced family.

Several factors, however, came into the question of feasibility of the supposed good intent of the government scheme. Firstly, it was announced by the Government on September 4, 1986 that 11,000 acres out of revised total of 21,000 acres required for the range was considered government land, which had been encroached upon by the local farmers for many years. The Government had announced that it would evict the encroachers without compensation from the land but would compensate for any structures and standing crops. Secondly, given the population density of Balasore district, 357 persons per square km, it appeared to be improbable that 45,000 people can be resettled within a 10-15 km range of their present residences.

Concerning the establishment of industrial complexes, certain economic and cultural factors need to be considered. First evictions were planned before the new factories were due to be completed, hence forcing evictees to seek work elsewhere until employment at factories became available. Secondly, there was no guarantee that the evictees would be able to perform industrial jobs. Past experiences of the developmental projects in India had shown that local people did not eventually obtain the bulk of new jobs created except those that are insecure, temporary and contractual. Also since the government planned to create only one job for each family, the other members of the family would be left out without any alternative employment.
For the people of Baliapal/Bhograi area, whose livelihood and culture were intimately linked with the land and coastal river water, the severance of this relationship amounted to cultural ethnocide, a process that was occurring in India as the local culture was destroyed throughout the process of development.

The initial attempts of seduction and co-option, via rehabilitation schemes by the Government had shifted to systematic programme of increasing coercion. This coercion took several forms. Firstly, it set up an unofficial economic blockade of the area, whereby, essential commodities such as kerosene and sugar were no longer made available to the villagers. The Government imposed deterrent fines on bullock carts and vehicles leaving the area. The area was deprived of any help from developmental anti-poverty 20 Point Programme for over 3 years on the plea that personnel were not allowed in that area. In February, 1986, 24 Magistrates accompanied by 3000 armed police attempted to enter the area to explain the residents the reasons for the choice of the site. Undaunted by the show of force, 20,000 villagers formed a human blockade across the road and prevented them from entering into their area.

The State Government had increasingly deployed Orissa State Armed Police into the area. By late 1988, 14 battalions of armed police had been deployed. This was followed by an abortive attempt by the state to bring forced eviction of the villagers in the Baliapal/Bhograi area, named Operation Baliapal on 10th and 11th May 1988. However, a series of events led to the action being called off. First, the plan was widely published in the Indian press, thus alerting the opponents of the imminent danger. Secondly, the Orissa Administrative Service (OAS) officers rejected the plan of Balasore District Collector to involve themselves in the operation. Third, under the leadership of Biju Pattanaik, the opposition leader of the Janata Dal, mediation talks were held indicating the likelihood of bloodshed in the region if the operation continued.
After the stiff opposition to the creation of the National Test Range at Baliapal, the site had to be moved to the Wheeler Island about 2 sq km in area and about 20 km off Chandipur coast. The local tribals opposed their eviction from the Chandipur site too. People of 15 villages formed the Purbanchal Surakshya Samiti to spearhead the agitation. In the end, the Government went for a compromise. Instead of permanently evicting all the tribals, it was decided that a core area would be cleared permanently and the rest of the zone cleared only during the actual launching of the missile.

INTERNATIONAL PERCEPTIONS

The international perception to the Indian ballistic missile programme has been on predictable lines. Reaction of an adverse or critical nature has emanated from the United States and Pakistan, whereas the friendly countries especially USSR/Russia has applauded India's achievement in the missile field.

THE USA PERCEPTIONS

The USA concern over Indian ballistic missiles can be viewed at three levels. At the first level, the USA concerns are with "global proliferation of advanced weaponry and ballistic missiles and the effects it can impose on the US force projection capacities." For instance, a Congressional Research Service Report (August, 1987) indicated that "global proliferation of ballistic missiles would unfavourably affect the United State security objectives directly or indirectly." As more countries acquire missiles with longer ranges, not only US military installations, business establishments and citizens abroad may be affected but the US troops engaged in conflict are likely to be threatened by missile attacks.

With the direct threat to US friends and allies in South Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific rim, increasing with range, accuracy and destructiveness of missiles, the likelihood of United States being drawn into a regional conflict would increase if the existence of its client state is threatened or if
any missile deployment creates military asymmetry against its interest. 61

The existence of missiles in the hands of developing nations such as India, due to their speed and penetratability may also offset the existing balance derived from conventional weapons development in some inherently volatile Third World regions. As effective counter-measures against missile attack have not been developed even by the USA, ballistic missiles would bring in a new dimension of vulnerability to the existing security equilibrium.

The study emphasised that besides the existing nuclear powers who have sizeable missile capabilities, nations like India, Pakistan are nuclear threshold states pursuing an undeclared nuclear programme, making a nuclear warhead to a missile force would not only increase the damage potential but provide a strong psychological dimension to terror factor in international politics. It also emphasised that arms race would burden the constrained Third World economies by diverting resources towards escalating nuclear arms race. This would have indirect impact on the economic field by accelerating the demand for aid from United States through the demand for the New International Economic Order. 62

The well known US think tank, the Rand Corporation had come out with a report of the relative decline of the Western economic and military power over the next two decades. It predicts that India and Brazil would gain relative power and influences besides Japan and China. The US looks with apprehension of the growing nuclear power of some developing nations which would make intervention so costly as to rule it out as an instrument of policy against those nations. 63

On the eve of India's first Agni missile test, some American commentators in startled tones announced that "India, one of the poorest nations of the world, had joined a technological elite: a demonstrated ability to produce and launch a ballistic missile which had previously been the domain of only the United States, the Soviet Union, France, Britain, Israel
and China. In fact, in late 1988, American officials had tried to persuade New Delhi to cancel the Agni test by decrying the programme as a "highly destabilising development in the region." Twenty-two Senators were more strident in their criticism, demanding India's actions in a letter to President Bush as being "in direct contradiction of US and Soviet efforts to lessen global tensions by reducing ballistic missiles."

In a similar voice, Jeff Bingaman, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Defence had said that "India should be barred from receiving any high technology items from the US because the Agni launch showed that India was diverting such technology from its civilian space programme to ballistic missile programme." He also asserted that the US should scrap its assistance to New Delhi's civilian space programme because the Agni launch showed that India's credibility after it argued that such a programme was for peaceful purposes, had been diminished.

Another hardliner, Mr. Howard Schaffer, a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the US State Department perceived Agni as a 'contentious' issue in the Indo-USA relations. He threatened that the US State Department was willing to go so far as to use foreign aid as a lever to curb missile proliferation. Similarly, Jim Hind, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence argued for transfer of US missile technologies to the allies and friends to promote stability. Likewise, one alleged US expert compared the Agni missile to a smoking gun implying that the test revealed the Indian intentions to go nuclear.

At the second level, the US is concerned with the impact of emerging Indian missile potential in the Indian Ocean region, particularly "on its interests in the region. Soon after assuming office, the Clinton Administration has urged India "to stop its missile development programme on the ground that it will fan tensions with Pakistan and China, cause a regional race to put advanced nuclear warhead on missiles and complicate global arms control efforts." A senior US official has advised that "the acquisition of ballistic
missiles by India and Pakistan will destabilise and undermine the security of both the countries."

Reacting to India’s SRBM ‘Prithvi’, the USA argued that “the short range missiles are highly inaccurate and hence weapons of terror.” Obviously, this argument was based on the dismal performance of its own Patriot and Scud missiles during the Gulf war (Prithvi is India’s version of Scud). Little does the US realise that ‘Prithvi’ is far more accurate than both. America also projects “Prithvi as the biggest threat to Pakistan’s security and the one that can disturb the arms balance in the Indian sub-continent.”

The Clinton administration has conveyed to the Indian Government that it would consider the commencement of serial production of the Prithvi as an intent to deploy the missile. And deployment, USA Secretary of Defence, William Perry pointed out during his visit to India (March, 1995) and Pakistan, would be regarded by Washington as “clear escalatory action” in the sub-continental context. The US Ambassador to India, Mr. Frank Wisner even cautioned against the ‘wisdom’ of the step.

The US once again expressed the view on January 29, 1996 that it considered India’s Prithvi missile test “a mistake” and as a result, Washington had held detailed consultations with Indian officials on the test and other developments in the sub-continent. Nicholas Burns, the official spokesman of the US State Department unambiguously stated that “Washington’s strong belief is that no country in the sub-continent should acquire, test or deploy ballistic missiles. Therefore, the decision by the Indian Government to test the ‘Prithvi’ missile in our judgement is a mistake.”

In June, 1997, The Washington Post reported that Indian military had moved a handful of Prithvi missiles to a site near the border with Pakistan. Expressing serious concern, the US said that “any actual deployment of the missile by India and efforts to make it operational would be extremely
destabilising and Washington would object to India deploying ballistic missiles because “there are very clear international restrictions on the acquisition and use of ballistic missiles.”

At the third level, the US concerns arise from the future Indian capacity to graduate from a demonstrated IRBM technology to a nuclear capable ICBM. It is assumed in the USA that such developments will not only generate responses in China for improving its strategic preponderance vis-à-vis India but in turn, may set off a chain reaction of concerns in the Euro-Asian region with consequent effects cascading into the existing international security scenario. This explains why the US views the Indian space programme with deep concern because India which has developed a formidable nuclear weapons capability could employ its civilian rocket technology to build nuclear capable ICBMs. The planned development of the GSLV will give India an undisputed ICBM capability. Washington argued that the cryogenic engine technology that India was buying could be diverted to its ballistic missile programme. The cryogenic technology combines liquid hydrogen with liquid oxygen to provide much greater lift off power to the launch vehicle.

It may be recalled that the Bush Administration imposed two-year sanctions against the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Russian Space Agency, Glavkosmos on May 11, 1992, banning US trade with and technology transfer to them for their refusal to comply with the US requests and cancel a deal involving sale of Russian advanced cryogenic rocket motor technology to India. Claiming that the cryogenic rocket technology would “contribute” to India’s ballistic missile programme, Richard Boucher, the US State Department’s Deputy Spokesman, made it clear that the objectives of the United States “is to bring the broadest possible international co-operation in curbing the dangerous proliferation of missile technology.”
Asked why the US was seeking to halt India's missile testing and its access to cryogenic technology, Mr. Gujral on a visit to Singapore replied "I think some countries have a belief that we must always be kept away from new technologies and that only some countries have a right to modern technology of this type. This is the colonial mentality which we want to break away from." \(^{83}\)

The US perceptions reflected in its criticism to Indian ballistic missile programme is, however, unfair. It has brushed aside the Chinese dimension of the problem and told India to abandon its ballistic missile programme in a purely Indo-Pakistani context. Moreover, the United States has consistently turned a blind eye to the Sino-Pak technological co-operation on missile production and the Chinese supply of M-11 missile to Pakistan even though its own intelligence agencies have confirmed this. And finally, Washington seems to believe that "the defence and deterrence posture of any other nation should accord with its own global strategy irrespective or whether or not that fits in with the individual country's threat perceptions." \(^{84}\)

**THE PAKISTANI PERCEPTIONS**

Pakistan due to its traditionally antagonistic posture in relation to India has voiced the American concerns more vociferously. The Pakistani press and leadership have become critical not only to India's missile move but also that New Delhi has been able to introduce an advanced technology in the region earlier than Pakistan.

On the eve of the user trials of *Prithvi*, the Pakistani defence experts made no bones to the fact that once *Prithvi* is inducted in the Indian Army, almost overnight all the important Pakistani installations, entire air defence system and big cities would become vulnerable to Indian missile attack. They concede that India's most sophisticated and indigenously built surface-to-surface missile, its range varying from 40 km to 250 km, can devastate with considerable precision airbases, roads, marshalling yards. "We can see
what it means” says Defence writer Afzal Mahmood in a cover story “A Threat to Pakistan’s Security” in the widely circulated “The Globe” cautioning that four perfectly targetted Prithvis can blunt his country’s ground attack.\textsuperscript{85}

“‘Prithvi’ can not be challenged by anything in Pakistan arsenal as of today”\textsuperscript{86} screamed another story by Ali Abbas Rizvi, another expert in the field while suggesting that Pakistan must reassess its combat strength and fighting strategy thereof. These writers have, in fact, gone to the extent of predicting that deployment of Prithvi will seriously alter the balance of power in the region and war tactics will have to be looked into all over again in the entire sub-continent. While Mr. Rizvi feels that India’s IRBM Agni, even if it has been tested in the recent past, will still be long way off, he mines no words in asserting that a couple of hundred ‘Prithvi’ missiles fired on important Pakistani installations in a “presumptive strike could reduce Pakistan’s capability to fight a full fledged war.”\textsuperscript{87}

General Mirja Aslam Beg, Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff (now retired) has remarked that “given Pakistan’s proximity to India and the limited depth of its territory, the 250 km range Prithvi is more menacing than the 2000 km Agni.”\textsuperscript{88} In a similar voice, Mrs. Benazir Bhutto described it as ‘provocative.’\textsuperscript{89} Pakistan Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yakub Khan, speaking in the Upper House of Parliament advocated that “India’s massive armament policy, its acquisition of nuclear submarine and testing Agni missile were of serious concern to Pakistan. This posed a threat to regional security as well as to international peace.”\textsuperscript{90}

Addressing the National Defence College, Pakistani President Mr. F.A. Leghari emphasised that the “Agni threatens a vast region from China to South East Asia to Khazakstan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. He also remarked that India’s acquisition of cryogenic rocket engines provide it with a licence to acquire ICBM capability.”\textsuperscript{91} Some others feel that India is bound to upset the hitherto tranquil atmosphere in the region and the pretext of problems
of Indian expropriates could be reason enough to intervene in the Gulf region. Reduction of Pakistan as a credible military force would be enough temptation for an attack on Pakistan, even by a nuclear armed Agni, which in any case is beyond the reach of Pakistan’s retaliation.

Reacting to the report of The Washington Post, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif raised the issue of deployment of Prithvi missiles at the Developing Eight (D-8) Summit consisting of Muslim nations primarily and said that “Pakistan was deeply concerned about India’s deployment of missiles along with the Pakistan border. He went on to say that while Pakistan did not wish to embark on a ballistic missile race in South Asia which the region could ill-afford, it could not remain indifferent to its legitimate security concerns.”

As soon as he read the Post story, Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan shot off a letter to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright complaining against India’s fouling the South-Asian security environment. “It will not be easy for him now to accuse Mr. Albright’s America of misleading Pakistan”, he asserted. He also emphasised that “the movement of the Prithvis would not help talks and would create unnecessary tension.” Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff, General Jahangir Karamat said that “this was a deliberate policy decision by India and started mulling over appropriate responses from his side.”

The Pakistani Foreign Office talked about a “qualitative change in the security environment in South Asia” and reserved its right to take necessary counter measures. Pakistan’s nuclear armurer Abdul Qadar Khan, found the situation well suited for him to do a bit of muscle flexing. He was not at all worried about his country’s security because “every Indian city is within our target.”

Writing in The News Time, Mushahid Hussain, a well known commentator, remarked that “the deployment of Prithvi serves a two-in-one purpose for India.” Since Prithvi can be equipped with nuclear warheads, the Indian’s are now in a position to brandish their nuclear sword through the Prithvi without the formality of a nuclear test. And meanwhile, Pakistan
sits with its hands folded having capped the nuclear programme in 1989 just because any counter measures that it may take for its own security or survival may not be palatable to some in the West. The News in its editorial wrote, "for all the talks of peace emanating from Delhi under the new Administration of Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral, nothing really has changed on the ground. For Pakistan, it has to be India's actions rather than its words that count in the final analysis." 97

In June, 1997, Pakistan said that it has decided to beef up its military arsenal and launch a diplomatic offensive strategy to counter India's Prithvi missile. "The government has identified a three-prolonged response to India's Prithvi missile - boosting military power, launching a diplomatic offensive in the region and economic revivaL" 98 claimed an adviser to the Pakistani Prime Minister. All Indian spokesmen including Mr. I.K. Gujral pointed out convincingly that there was no reason for India to deploy Prithvi missiles, now anywhere for, first, there was no threat to the country's security, and secondly so far as Pakistan was concerned, India would not do anything that might frustrate its own serious attempt now on, at settling as many problems between the two countries as possible by talks of the level of the Prime Minister, Foreign Ministers and Foreign Secretaries.

THE CHINESE PERCEPTIONS

The Chinese are very unhappy about the Agni test but they are very restrained in voicing their displeasure which has not come out in public. Before others, they view the Indian missile development as New Delhi's own national security matter and it has no relevance to China. The Chinese wonder how they could be concerned by the Indian missiles when they do not feel any apprehension even from the American missiles. 99 The American scholars, on the contrary, are concerned that Agni development might lead to Chinese reaction to target India which will trigger an era of unprecedented nuclear tension between the two Asian giants. 100
THE USSR PERCEPTIONS

The only country that came out in open support to the Agni and Prithvi missile tests, was Soviet Union. The Soviet Support to the Indian ballistic programme may sound paradoxical vis a vis Gorbachev’s peace initiative and call for universal disarmament but if viewed in the context of continuation of the policies as embodied in the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971, it was the most logical response. Thus, the totality of this relationship could not be discarded in Soviet reaction to the Indian missile programme.

USSR’s perception towards the development of ballistic missiles by India had been shaped by certain factors. The first factor emanated from USSR’s encouragement to India to accelerate its technological development. Secondly, the USSR understood India’s place and role in the modern world. The Soviet Union felt that India was not merely a South Asian country but a great power whose impact on international events was likely to increase.

The Soviet support to Indian security had lent the Indo-Soviet Relationship a unique quality over the years. The Soviet Ambassador to India, Mr. Victor Isakov described the Agni test as a great achievement technologically and maintained that it would not constitute to a missile race in the sub-continent.101 While praising the development of Indian science, Isakov scorned Western observers for their double standards of accepting Pakistan’s assertion that its nuclear and missile programme were for peaceful purposes and doubting the Indian missile programme.102

II

AGNI-II: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERCEPTIONS

In May 1998, India decided to go nuclear. Exactly 11 months after the Pokhran-II nuclear tests, it test-fired Agni-II missile bridging a key gap in its minimum nuclear deterrent profile. In a sense the launching of the Agni-II is more important and more significant than the Pokhran-II because the nuclear and thermo-nuclear experiments carried out then could have been
stimulated in computers without actually going for the explosions on the ground while there was no alternative to actual test-firing of the intermediate range ballistic missile, capable of delivering both conventional and nuclear warheads to any target within the 2000 km range.103

Interestingly, Agni-II came to the limelight even before its actual test-firing. For instance, when India successfully demonstrated its nuclear capability, there was intense debate in the country on the feasibility of India’s minimum credible nuclear doctrine without a tested medium range delivery system. The missile also attracted attention when a prototype of Agni-II was displayed at this year’s Republic Day parade.104 But after its test flight on April 11, 1999, the Agni-II has received high attention both at the national and international level. This is because the test-firing has not only ended the five years uncertainty on the Agni-missile project but also proved certain unique characteristics of Agni-II (greater mobility, survivability, maneuverability etc.) in comparison to the Agni-I.

National Perceptions

The Prime Minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee described the test-firing of Agni-II as a “purely defensive step” and said the missile was not meant to be used for aggression against any nation. In an address to the nation over Doordarshan, Mr. Vajpayee said “Agni is a proof of our determination to strengthen our national security so comprehensively that we can defend ourselves. In a rapidly changing security environment, India can not depend on others to defend her. We have to develop our own indigenous capabilities. Agni is a symbol of that resurgent India which is able to say: “Yes, we will stand on our own feet.”105 He appreciated the team of scientists, technicians and defence personnel involved in the project and said, “Agni was tribute to their dedication and team-work.”106

The Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes who was present in the test site said, “We have added a new dimension to our defence capabilities.
No one will dare threaten us any more. India will not repeat mistakes of the past-decades. By Sunday's test-firing, we have reached the point of operationalisation of Agni as a weapon system.\textsuperscript{107} Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi, the Science and Technology Minister, remarked "This (Agni-II) has given a better and safer security environment to the country."\textsuperscript{108}

The Information and Broadcasting Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, termed the launch a historic feat, "we have ensured that our security interests are taken care of. On that there is no compromise with anybody."\textsuperscript{109} General Ved Prakash Malik, the Chief of Army Staff clarified that the test of Agni-II was not a threat to any country including Pakistan and was aimed at strengthening "our defence capabilities".\textsuperscript{110} He also ruled out the possibility of any high intensity war in the region.

All major political parties welcomed the test-firing of the Agni-II missile and complimented the scientists for the successful launch. However, certain political parties saw the test as an attempt by a shaky government to reap political dividends and stabilise itself.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) described the test-firing as yet another feather in the cap of the Vajpayee Government. In a statement, the party Vice-President, Mr. K.L. Sharma, said the decision to launch the missile would "also dispel all apprehensions that India was shelving its missile programme under foreign pressure."\textsuperscript{111}

Congratulating the scientists, engineers and defence personnel, who were associated with the project, the Congres(I) said: "It bears testimony to our technological competence and self-reliance in the field of defence preparedness. Thus, the process which was started about two decades ago, has come to a successful end."\textsuperscript{112}

The Communist Party of India (CPI) expressed the fear that it would encourage an arms race in the sub-continent. Mr. D. Raja, the CPI National Secretary, expressed the apprehension that the test-firing would jeopardise
the process of normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan. In his opinion, the launch was given the go-ahead by the Government owning to "political compulsions." The CPI(M) said the timing of the test-firing was linked with the survival of the Government and not based on India's security concerns. Mr. Sitaram Yechuri, the CPI(M) Politburo member said, "now when the Government is about to leave, it clearly appears that the tests have little to do with security concerns and more with the political concerns of the Vajpayee Government."

The Janata Dal leader, Mr. Jaipal Reddy, congratulated the scientists on the achievement. However, the BJP-led coalition Government came in for criticism from the party General Secretary, Mr. Wasim Ahmed. He said "the test firing was meant to divert the attention of the people from the controversy surrounding the dismissal of the former Naval Chief, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat."

The AIADMK lauded the scientists for the successful launch of the missile but said a "genuine nationalist government" was needed at the Centre to boldly pursue the Agni-III and IV programme. In a statement, senior AIADMK leaders alleged that Fernandes had ordered the DRDO scientists to cancel the plans to test-fire Agni-II due to pressure from the US and other countries.

In a message, the former Prime Minister, Mr. H.D. Dave Gowda, lauded the scientists, technocrats and others connected with the project. The former Prime Minister, Mr. I.K. Gujral said after Agni missile's exhibition at this year's Republic Day parade, the test-firing of Agni-II was "inevitable."

Agni-II captured the headline of all Indian newspapers and many hailed the test in their edit page. The Times of India, for instance, in its editorial remarked, "Agni-II launched India into a select 'club' of geo-strategic players who have not only the technological hardware but hopefully the maturity to use this wisely for peace and stability." In an editorial "Agni Ablaze",

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The Hindustan Times wrote “The Agni-II launch is a logical corollary to the Shakti tests of less than a year ago which demonstrated India’s capability to manufacture a range of sophisticated nuclear weapons. Not to produce and test the Agni-II, India’s main nuclear delivery vehicle, would have undercut the very objective of the Shakti tests.” It also added that “India, finally has a missile that can reach the heartland of China, which by conducting missile de-targeting pacts with the US and Russia has an added capacity to target India with its increasingly lethal missile arsenal. In a global setting in which power respects power and weak remain meek, the IRBM test will only boost India’s international stature.”

The Hindu in its editorial said, “Agni-II is a significant step in the missile technology development programme that has been planned with great care over the last several years and a triumph for the scientists, engineers and technologists of Defence Research and Development Organisation.”

In an editorial, “Inevitable Agni”, The Economic Times held, “Given the fact that Pokhran-II is a reality, there was a certain inevitability about the latest test. After all, for a minimum nuclear deterrent to be credible, it must be backed up by a proven delivery system which Agni-II now provides over a 2,000 km range.” Evaluating the missile test, the Paper added that “the geo-political realities of the region and the world at large demanded such a response from India. Even if the right response has come for the wrong reasons.”

The Indian Express wrote, “The test-firing of Agni-II appears to be successful on two accounts, technologically and with regard to management of the external fall-out. Although the range of around 2,000 km may have fallen short of the expected 2,500 km, the DRDO is on the road to mastering solid fuel technology.” On the management of external fall-out, the Paper added, “Pakistan’s relatively muted initial reaction is probably the outcome of confidence building efforts by the leadership of the two countries .... In the interim also, NATO has been doing its best to prove that those with
military superiority make the rules. India can, therefore, expect to escape the worst of Western lecturing."

_The Pioneer_ hailed the country’s arrival as a “missile Super Power.” In its editorial, it remarks, “military self-sufficiency holds the key to international recognition. Those who had regarded India as a land of snake charmers at best and beggars at worst, need to take cognizance of its newfound self-esteem.” In an editorial, “Fire Power”, _The Asian Age_ lauded the test as “a giant leap in upgrading India’s defence capabilities” but it cautioned that “confidence of the nation should arise from its ability to feed its people, clothe them, give them electricity, water and other basic needs of life and ensure economic self-sufficiency and not through weaponisation and deployment of nuclear weapons.”

According to _The Observer_, _Agni-II_ is “India’s most effective and to our enemies the most dangerous weapon.” In fact, “Agni-II is more than a weapon, it demonstrates our resolve to convince, whosoever needs to be convinced that when it comes to defending our national interests, we would never make any compromise, would never allow ourselves to be arm-twisted.” In its editorial, _The National Herald_ wrote, “The _Agni-II_ would emerge as a highly powerful nuclear delivery vehicle to accomplish our goal of credible nuclear deterrence and strategic autonomy .... After having decided to go in for exercising its nuclear option and devised the policy of credible nuclear deterrence, New Delhi has logically gone ahead with its _Agni_ project.”

Indian strategic community is unanimous in its response to the _Agni-II_ test. K. Subramanyam, for instance, writes “Our scientists have done the country proud giving it a solid fuelled road mobile missile, thereby providing the country “the essential ingredient of its credible nuclear deterrent. As in the case of last year’s nuclear tests, they have reached a high degree of sophistication with minimum testing.”
The IDSA Director, Jasjit Singh, rejecting the allegations of political opportunism in the timing of the launch advocates that the Government was unlikely to stop with the Agni-11. “There is no real point in investing so much money unless India intends to develop a 5,000 km inter-continental ballistic missile.”

C. Uday Bhaskar thinks that “There is no defence against missiles and the only deterrence one could have is a matching missile capability.” He is also of the view that “the test-firing of Agni-II is but the second stage of our development of the minimum deterrent that we must have in order to ensure that our security concerns are taken care of.”

In a commentary in The Hindustan Times, Brahma Chellaney remarks, “By successfully flight-testing the sophisticated Agni-II IRBM barely 11 months after detonating different types of nuclear war heads, India has arrived as an important military power, with proven nuclear and missile capabilities to defend itself with the ultimate means.” He further adds that “by going ahead with the Agni-II’s maiden flight test after more than two months of political hesitation, India has rebuffed the United States and shown its determination to stand up to China. The Agni-II test is another example of how China’s India containment-policy is backfiring with its strategic encirclement providing New Delhi to do what Beijing has always wanted to prevent-create a deterrent force.”

General D. Banerjee is apprehensive that “Agni-II would draw China into a competitive missile race with India and may prove to be a set back in the just thawing Sino-Indian ties.” C. Raja Mohan feels that “Agni has very little to do with its security dynamic with Pakistan. New Delhi’s quest for a minimum range missile has been driven by the need to deter the nuclear forces of China. The absence of such a missile has been a gaping hope in the Indian plans to put together a credible minimum deterrent.”
According to K.K. Katyal, *Agni-II* test “signifies a crucial step” in filing the gap in the missile technology at a time when there is a proliferation of advanced versions in the neighbourhood. *Agni-II* test also represents the country’s resolve not to bow to outside pressures on matters related to security.”

Prof. Amitabh Matoo is of the view that “the new version of *Agni* is certainly a step towards achieving the minimum credible deterrent but it still does not give us cent per cent credibility. We need to further improve on our missile capability and further versions are required.”

Major General Ashok K. Mehta feels that *Agni-II* is “one step forward by India in making its minimum nuclear deterrent credible. Nuclear capability consists of the weapon system and the delivery vehicle. Pokhran-II gave birth to the weapon, *Agni-II* is the delivery vehicle which will carry the bomb to its designated target.”

Lt. Gen. V.R. Raghavan suggests that “India must now break free from the competition in missile range, payload and numbers and must integrate globally.”

**International Perceptions**

**USA**

The USA regretted the flight testing of *Agni-II* by India. In a statement shortly after the missile test, a White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said, “although this may not violate any existing arms control treaty, it certainly do nothing to enhance the environment in which co-operation between the countries is enhanced.” The spokesman also added that although the Indian Government had informed both the United States and other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council as well as neighbouring Pakistan, before the test was conducted, the move “appears to be out of step with” recent moves to ease nuclear tensions in the region. State Department spokesman James Rupin expressed similar sentiments. He acknowledged that such actions could lead to arms race in South Asia, further destabilising
the region. In his comments before the State Foreign Relations Committee, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Karl Inderfurth said, the US believed that India had a special responsibility, since Pakistan which had test fired its Ghauri-II and Saheen missile in retaliation against India’s Agni-II had been responding to Indian actions, both with regard to the missile test and the earlier nuclear tests.

RUSSIA

Russia’s official news agency Itar-Tass said, Agni-II was an “important component” of Indian nuclear deterrence force for self-defence. The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a much softer worded communique for the press on the Indian test of Agni-II missile. The communique did not express any concern or regret, but confined itself to stating that “such steps do not help to strengthen stability in the region.”

A Russian official told PTI on phone, “we are concerned at the arms race in the sub-continent in close vicinity of Russia and its CIS allies in Central Asia.” Noting that India had test-fired Agni-II exactly 11 months after the Pokhran-II nuclear test, radio station “Esho Moskvy” pointed out that New Delhi had notified Islamabad in advance about the test under the recent Lahore Declaration. It said the missile was an attempt to strike a “balance” with “nuclear China”.

CHINA

The official Chinese media refrained from making any comment on India’s Agni-II missile test firing but the fre-wheeling Hong Kong press questioned its timing and purpose. Leading official newspapers of China, ‘People’s Daily, ‘China Daily’ and ‘Liberation Army Daily’ relegated the news to the inside pages and unlike during last May’s Pokhran nuclear test, did not offer any comment. The state-run Xinhua news agency ran news items and reactions from Washington, Moscow, Tokyo and Islamabad without comment while the official China Central Television (CCTV) covered the test-firing in all its major news casts.
The Chinese Foreign Ministry in a prepared statement expressed “regret and concern” at the test but did not call it a threat or menace. “This could initiate another round of arms race in South Asia,” it said. “By conducting the missile test, India violated a U.N. Security Council resolution that called on India to stop developing nuclear weapons and missiles to deliver them,” the Foreign Ministry reminded. It affirmed China’s commitment to improve relations with India and said, “we have taken note of the remark by the Indian Prime Minister that this test is not directed against any country.”

PAKISTAN

Pakistan slammed India for test-firing its long-range Agni-II missile saying it aggravated the conventional imbalance in South Asia and accused New Delhi of not providing it with proper information about the launch under terms of the historic Lahore Accord between the two countries. Foreign Minister, Sartaj Aziz said that the development of Agni-II introduces a “new weapon system” in the region and is “naturally a matter of deep concern for Pakistan.” Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman Tariq Altaf said in a statement that “Pakistan is obliged to maintain a deterrence in the interest of its security and peace and stability of the region” and added “our indigenous missile programme is part of this deterrence.” Federal Information Minister stated that “Islamabad will give its strong reaction soon.” Chief of Army Staff General Pervaiz Musharraf remarked that “Pakistan would pay in the same coin and that there is no reason for the nation to be upset over India’s massive military build up.”

Ms. Benazir Bhutto reacted to the Indian action by saying that “it has negated the spirit behind the Lahore Resolution.” The Jammat-e-Islami demanded that the government should immediately respond to India’s missile test. A number of former army generals in Pakistan have also asked the Government to give a “befitting reply” to India and immediately order the test firing of matching missiles which are already in Islamabad’s arsenal. Former Military Chief Mirza Aslam Beg said, “The test-firing of India’s
missile is aimed at maintaining its dominance in the region." He also called for an early test in response. Pakistan's leading nuclear scientist, Dr. A.Q. Khan said, the next few days were going to be very hectic for him. Former Chief of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), General Hamid Gul said, efforts were being made to "lay a siege to Pakistan" and called for a "befitting reply" to those posing threat to Pakistan's security and nuclear capability.

*The Pakistan Times* in an editorial 'First Step Towards Holocaust', wrote "whether Agni is Pakistan's specific or not, all this build up can not be termed as a step towards regional or global peace .... By indulging in missile and nuclear experiments, India is triggering a chain reaction that might in the end turn up as a first step towards holocaust."

*The Frontier Post* in its editorial comment remarked "the new Indian missile has triggered a sense of vulnerability in Pakistan, something that is bound to result in tit-for-tat missile tests, pushing the sub-content into another crazy round of arms race. As in the past, it is India that has again pushed the sub-continent towards greater and senseless militarisation .... How can India and Pakistan live in peace in a situation where nuclear tipped missiles are pointed at each other's territory? Once again India's quest for playing a dominant role in the region has given the peace-loving people on the sub-continent sleepless nights."

Nishant Ahmed, Director of the Pakistan Institute for Regional Studies said, "soon after the nuclear test, India declared it would test its medium range ballistic missile and that would force Pakistan to respond. We tried hard to convince India not to go this route, but now they have and we will have to respond." Osama bid Shoaib, a dealer at the Karachi Stock Exchange felt that "India has aggressive designs on the entire region and for this purpose is making advances in the missile technology field, despite recent peace talks between the two governments. I stress that Pakistan should not come under pressure, it should continue with its nuclear programme," he said. It is instructive to note that two days after India test-fired *Agni-II*,

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Pakistan, ignoring Western appeals for restraint, responded by test-firing *Ghauri-II* and *Shaheen-I* ballistic missiles.

**UNO**

The United Nations said that the recent missile tests by India and Pakistan “underscored the need for a multinationally negotiated norms against development of such weapons” and asked both countries to “demonstrate maximum restraint.” Expressing concern over the missile tests by India and Pakistan, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan pointed out that since there was no treaty at present regulating missiles, an international accord on such norms would substantially improve prospects for future progress on existing bilateral and multinational disarmament and arms control treaties.

**OTHERS**

The Japanese Foreign Ministry in its reaction said, “it is truly regrettable that India conducted a missile testing despite the repeated requests made by Japan against it.” It also added that “the testing could not be detrimental to peace and stability and hoped the test-firing would not heighten tension between India and Pakistan.” A British Foreign Office spokesman in London said, Britain believed “restraint in developing missiles and nuclear weapons is in India’s long-term interests.” In a similar voice Canada said, India and Pakistan’s ballistic missile tests flouted international public opinion and wasted the two countries resources. Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian Foreign Minister remarked “we regret the decision taken by India and Pakistan to proceed with testing medium range ballistic missiles.” The Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the German Parliament, Mr. Hans Ulrich Klose whose official visit to India coincided with *Agni-II* test said, he appreciated India’s security concerns but cautioned that it might trigger a regional arms race.
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