CHAPTER VI
ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN SOUTH ASIA: 1974-1989

India carried out what it called a "peaceful nuclear explosion" at Pokhran in Rajasthan on 19 May 1974. It came as a surprise and therefore reactions in various capitals all over the world were sharp. Fears were expressed in certain quarters that India was soon going to be a nuclear weapon Power.

Before analysing what followed in the aftermath of the Pokhran explosion especially in terms of reactions and interactions at the United Nations, it would be pertinent here to attempt a survey of India’s policy and attitude towards the questions of nuclear energy and

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*To avoid prior detection by the satellites of the super powers which constantly keep other countries under surveillance, according to an author, the digging and masonry work at the site of the experiment was made to appear as part of a programme of sinking wells. Further, only two ministers, besides the then Prime Minister and no more than half a dozen officials were privy to it, thus ruling out the possibility of the news about it being passed on to interested foreign or domestic elements. See G.S. Bhargava, "India’s Nuclear Policy", India Quarterly (New Delhi), vol. 34, 1978, p. 135.*
nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{2}

Since its independence, India has adhered to the view that nuclear weapons are a threat to the existence of the human civilization. At the same time it has been aware of the potential contribution nuclear technology could make in the fields of energy and industry. It has denounced the use of nuclear energy for military purpose. The following four major elements could be deduced from India's nuclear policy: (a) not to acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons; (b) to develop and to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; (c) not to accept discriminatory international inspection and safeguards arrangements in respect of national nuclear facilities; and (d) to work for and support nuclear disarmament and nuclear arms control measures.\textsuperscript{3}

India's policy of not manufacturing or acquiring nuclear weapons remained unchanged to a considerable


\textsuperscript{3}Kaushik, n. 2, p. 779.
extent throughout the past three and half decades. But the idealism witnessed during the Nehru era was geared to a pragmatic approach in the later years, especially after China became a nuclear-weapon Power in 1964. The reasons for the discernible shift could be a realisation that India's interest demanded "keeping the option open".

In line with its policy, India had refused to yield to the attempts by some nuclear-weapon States to impose restrictions on the freedom of the non-nuclear-weapon States to use nuclear energy for any purpose without inspection. This was the reason why India refused to sign the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968), which, as India argued, provided no mutually balanced obligations on responsibilities between the nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States. In other words, as an author

4Looking back, one writer observes, it seems surprising that the Government paid greater heed to world opinion which was against India going nuclear than the security-conscious Indian opinion which favoured the move. See Rajan, "India: A Case of Power without Force", n. 2, p. 302.

5Kaushik, n. 2, p. 732. The author remarks that this change in policy was brought about by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1967 bearing in mind the country's security interest. However, as an aberration, Nararji Desai, who succeeded her in late 1970s disapproved of India going nuclear and went a step ahead to consider the peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs) also as unnecessary.
described, these discriminatory provisions stood for a sort of "nuclear apartheid". However, India was committed to support various efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament. It became a signatory to the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty which banned nuclear tests in atmosphere. It participated actively in several international conferences on disarmament held under the auspices of the United Nations.

India believed that nuclear technology was not bad in itself, but the military use it was put to was indeed dangerous. To carry out research on the possible uses of nuclear energy for peaceful and development purposes, an Atomic Energy Commission was established in India way back in 1949. Subsequently, significant progress was made in nuclear research (of course, in collaboration with countries such as Canada and the United States). It was a turning point in the area of its nuclear research, when India successfully exploded a peaceful nuclear device in 1974.

International reaction to the underground nuclear test was generally unfavourable. In the South Asian sub-

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7 The United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim expressed serious concern over the development. The United States and Japan reiterated opposition to nuclear proliferation. New Zealand stated that the test ran counter to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and could only encourage others with similar capabilities. Canada, which collaborated with India in the development of nuclear technology since 1956, reacted sharply and suspended all assistance except food supplies. See Keesing's Contemporary Archives (London, 1974), p. 26585.
continent all the countries were understandably alarmed over the dramatic development, but all—excepting Pakistan—welcomed Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assurance that the technology would be used solely for peaceful purposes.

Pakistan believed that "a more grave" event had not taken place before in Pakistan's history to introduce a qualitative change in the situation in the Indian sub-continent. While responding to Indira Gandhi's letter, Prime Minister Bhutto explained that his country's reaction was "in no way abnormal or disproportionate", given the kind of confrontation and unresolved disputes which had bedevilled relations between the two countries. Further, with reference

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9. For details of correspondence between the two Prime Ministers, see Foreign Affairs Reports (New Delhi), vol. 23, no. 7, July 1974.

Some analysts criticized the way the Indian side rushed to write to Pakistan in an attempt to dispel its fears. See, for instance, Ravi Kail, India's Nuclear Spin-off (Allahabad, 1974). The author blamed the Ministry of External Affairs officials for not studying the psychological advantages a power, able to explode a nuclear device for peaceful purposes, derives from possessing such an ability. Further, he refused to believe that there was no one in the decision-making hierarchy of the Ministry who could not have drafted the reply which Bhutto himself sent, if he had been asked to place himself in Islamabad's shoes with Pakistan's and Bhutto's reactions spelt out in great details already. p. 125.
to India's idea of a joint nuclear umbrella for the non-
nuclear weapon States, he informed that he had already
addressed the United Nations Secretary-General on the
matter.

Pakistan sought to project, it appeared, the
Indian experiment as a threat to the security of not only
the States in the sub-continent, but also as a potential
challenge to the Islam (implying that it might encourage
Israel) and more importantly as an affront to the inter-
national order sought to be created by the nuclear powers
through the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
To pursue its objectives Pakistan raised the matter in
various international forums as deemed appropriate.

Within a month of the nuclear explosion, Pakistan
raised the question in the Ad Hoc Committee on Indian Ocean.
It argued therein that India's nuclear explosion called for
a fresh look on the question of making Indian Ocean a peace
zone. Its representative reiterated Pakistan's earlier
stand that commitments by the littoral States not to acquire
nuclear weapons formed one of the basic objectives of the
Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a peace zone. 10

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10 Summary Records of the Ad Hoc Committee on
Indian Ocean, 12th mtg., 7 June 1974 (A/AC. 159/31.12,
Pakistan's Initiative

Obviously Pakistan received sympathy and encouragement from various quarters, which prompted it to formally write to the United Nations Secretary-General in August 1974 seeking inclusion of a supplementary item on "Declaration and Establishment of a Nuclear Free Zone in South Asia" in the agenda of the twenty-ninth regular session of the General Assembly.\footnote{UN Doc. A/9706, 19 August 1974.} It was explained in a memorandum that the establishment of such a zone was "imperative" in the light of "recent events". The memorandum referred to a common posture amongst all the South Asian countries in opposing the acquisition of nuclear weapons and to the introduction of such weapons in the region. Also, Pakistan found a model for the purpose in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which, besides containing an unequivocal commitment on the part of the Latin American States not to acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons, provided also for peaceful nuclear explosions governed by certain established procedures.\footnote{Ibid.} Pakistan was reportedly in contact with a number of Afro-Asian and Latin American Member States for the purpose of
seeking political support to its move.\footnote{13} While Pakistan's initiative was made in August, the actual consideration of the proposal took place in November 1974. During the intervening period of two months, India was expected to plan its strategy on the question.

\textbf{Interactions in 1974}

During the consideration of the question in the General Assembly, Pakistan stated that India's nuclear experiment was a development of grave concern. Pakistan indicated that other nuclear threshold countries might follow suit and, therefore, suggested that preventive steps should be taken immediately.\footnote{14} Explaining the rationale behind its proposal, the representative of Pakistan hoped that the goal of general and complete disarmament could be "brought nearer by collateral measures such as the establishment of nuclear-free zones in various parts of the world".\footnote{15}

\footnote{13} For instance, a spokesman of the Malaysian Foreign Ministry announced in September 1974 that the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) had agreed to support the Pakistani proposal. It was also reported that the matter was discussed during Sri Lanka Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's visit to Pakistan in September 1974. See K.R. Singh, "Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in South Asia", India Quarterly, vol. 32, 1976, p. 292.

\footnote{14} General Assembly Official Records (hereinafter referred to as GAR) (Provisional), session 29, Plenary, 2247th mtg., 27 September 1974, p. 41.

\footnote{15} Ibid., p. 42.
Reference was made to the pronouncements by various South Asian countries including India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka on the non-use of nuclear technology for the production of weapons and to the fact that all of them favoured, on earlier occasions, establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a way of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. That common desire, in the view of Pakistan, deserved to be transformed into a formal agreement. In its view a model for such an agreement already existed in the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

India opposed Pakistan's move. It proposed a draft resolution containing its views. In the preambular

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16 Ibid., First Committee, 2002nd mtg, 23 October 1974, p. 46.

17 With the signing of this Treaty, Latin America became the first large part of inhabitants in the world to have been designated as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The treaty not only contained an unequivocal consent by the regional States not to acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons, but it established a regime for independent observation and verification of explosions conducted for peaceful purposes as a safeguard against diversion of peaceful nuclear programmes to military ends. The General Assembly endorsed the Treaty in Res. 2236 on 5 December 1957 during the twenty-second session, Singh, n. 13, p. 290.

18 A/C.1/1-L.631, 15 November 1974. In the words of the Indian delegate, the move was "a positive gesture to keep the way open for a right procedure and to reach an understanding through mutual consultations". GA08 (Prov.), session 29, First Committee, 2020th mtg, 15 November 1974, p. 3.

On the other hand, the introduction of a draft resolution by India earlier than Pakistan could be interpreted as a step to claim procedural precedence (see rules 93 and 132 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly) and gain, thereby, tactical advantage at the time of voting.
part, the draft resolution recalled General Assembly resolution 1373(XIV) which set out the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control; and referred to various efforts made to establish demilitarized zones in Africa and Latin America. It also noted that conditions and procedures for the creation of such zones differed from region to region. The draft's operative part considered that "the initiative for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the appropriate region of Asia, should come from the States of the region concerned, taking into account its special features and geographical context".\textsuperscript{19}

Pakistan also introduced a draft resolution.\textsuperscript{20} In the preambular part, the draft entailed commitments by the States concerned to use nuclear materials and facilities under their jurisdiction exclusively for peaceful purposes and prevent "testing, use, manufacture, production, acquisition or storage of any nuclear weapons or nuclear-weapon Components".

\textsuperscript{19}Explaining rationale behind the introduction of the draft, an official of the Indian Mission in New York who wished to be unidentified, stated that India was interested in not only placing its views clearly on record, but also securing endorsement of these by the international community. Measured in this respect, he claimed, India's efforts were successful.

\textsuperscript{20}A/C.1/L.632, 15 November 1974.
launching devices. It also took note of the affirmation by the States of the region not to acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons and to devote their nuclear programmes exclusively to the economic and social advancement of their peoples. In the operative part, the draft proclaimed South Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Further, it invited the South Asian States, and such other neighbouring States as may be interested, to initiate necessary consultations with a view to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The United Nations Secretary-General was requested to convene a meeting of the South Asian States and report on his efforts to the thirtieth session of the Assembly. The draft resolution also hoped that the nuclear-weapon States would extend full co-operation for the effective realization of the aims and objectives of the resolution.

The representative of India soon exercised right of reply and noted that amongst all of India's neighbours only Pakistan doubted India's intentions. Thus, he said, Pakistan's concern was of a bilateral nature and not regional. In spite of India's reaffirmation that it would not manufacture nuclear weapons, it was stated, Pakistan insisted that India should undertake an international

21GAOR (Prov.) session 29, First Committee, 2002nd mtg, 23 October 1974, pp. 73-75.
commitment. The Indian representative wondered that if Pakistan thought that such a limitation of sovereignty was justified, "then, what prevents Pakistan from acting exactly according to what it preaches? Why does Pakistan not ratify the PNB Treaty? Why does Pakistan not accede to the non-proliferation Treaty?"22

At a later stage of the debate, the Indian representative pointed out that the United Nations had never adopted a declaration on nuclear-weapon-free zones disregarding the views of the States of the region concerned.23 Maintaining that conditions for establishing such zones differed from region to region, he stated that five out of six States in South Asia (including Pakistan) were not parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Sri Lanka, which was a signatory to it, had not yet ratified it. He

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22Ibid. In reply, the Pakistan's representative clarified that he did not express suspicion against India but only stated that the situation required "very sober", very careful attention of the Political Committee. He, therefore, urged the Indian representative to study his statements more carefully first and set his country's position forth later, so that "we can all understand it". In his reply, the Indian representative assured his counterpart from Pakistan that he listened to him carefully and that he knew very clearly what Pakistan's intention was. p. 77.

remarked that if the idea of even small regions declaring
themselves nuclear-free zones was practicable, "leopard-
skin pattern of such zones" would have appeared all over
the world. Any viable zone should ensure, according to
the Indian delegate, the security and other vital interests
of all Member States in the region. The Indian delegate
made the position clear thus:

We would not like to impose our views on
anyone, however small or big that country
might be. At the same time, we cannot
accept imposition of a concept from anyone.
This is a matter of principle, that is a
matter of sovereign equality of States
represented here. 24

Reacting to the Pakistan-sponsored draft resolution,
the Indian representative indicated that the question of
effectively halting the proliferation of nuclear armaments
(fourth preambular paragraph) was wider in scope and
could not be achieved by binding the hands of the non-
nuclear States in the region. Referring to the preambular
paragraph 7, India, he said, was in favour of universal,
functional, and non-discriminatory safeguards which
should apply to all—whether they were nuclear-weapon
States or non-nuclear-weapon States—and, also, to all
programmes. Further, the representative of India indicated
that if any international commitment was to be undertaken,

24 Ibid., p. 16.
basing on India's repeated pronouncements on the non-exercise of its nuclear option, that was to be done on a "particular basis".

He also remarked that South Asia was an integral part of a larger Asian region and hence it was not possible to agree to the endorsement of the concept of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia merely. He expressed his apprehension that the text would place some States including India, who favoured negotiations and agreement in regard to a larger region, in disadvantage. He believed, further, that the initiation of consultations on the subject—in fact the very initiation of an idea of a nuclear-weapon-free zone—must emanate from the States of the region following an agreement within the region. Finally, it was firmly stated that India was not obliged to enter into any consultations envisaged in the resolution and that it was a matter of regret to India if Pakistan's draft was adopted.

25Ibid., 2025th mtg, 20 November 1974, pp. 7-12.

26Ibid., p. 12. India did not leave the matter there. It raised objection in the Fifth Committee which was considering the financial implications of Pakistan's draft resolution. The Indian representative said that India could not approve financing of any meeting organized under the terms of the draft recommendation. In this connection, he recalled the Fifth Committee's concern expressed earlier at the proliferation of unproductive meetings and desired that the Committee should refuse to allocate any resources for the proposed meeting. However, the Fifth Committee felt that if the General Assembly adopted the resolution, no additional appropriation would be necessary. See Doc. A/3323, 6 December 1974.
As the formal debate continued, behind the scenes diplomatic interactions apparently became intense. There were reportedly discrete efforts made both by India and Pakistan, at the initiative of some friendly delegations to search for an agreement on the question.  

At the same time, Pakistan was reportedly making efforts to muster support to its draft resolution. Alternative texts were believed to be prepared in order to secure support and find credible sponsors.

The informal diplomatic interactions on Pakistan's draft text apparently led to certain significant modifications. It appears that the first operative paragraph recalling the affirmation by various States of the region not to acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons and

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27 Press Trust of India reported the unexpected meeting between Indian and Pakistani representatives to narrow down the differences. The Statesman (Delhi), 9 November 1974. Also, Times of India (Delhi), 5 November 1974 reported that Indian Foreign Secretary was leaving for New York to assist the Indian delegation in dealing with Pakistan's proposal. It was also added that he would discuss the Indian standpoint with friendly countries with the aim of formulating an agreed approach.

28 According to The Statesman (Delhi), 16 October 1974, Pakistan failed to secure much support to the draft it first circulated in which it desired the General Assembly to straight away declare the South Asian Zone free from nuclear weapons. As the report reads, even after two further drafts modifying earlier texts, Pakistan could not find a co-sponsor to its draft resolution. The same report was carried by Anand Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), The Tribune (Chandigarh), and Times of India of the same date.
devote nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes was added to the original text at the instance of Sri Lanka's delegation.\textsuperscript{29} The second operative paragraph was also toned down in emphasis. The paragraph did not, by implication, either declare South Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone nor did it endorse the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Eventually, it only endorsed the "concept" of such a zone "in principle".\textsuperscript{30}

Subsequently, there were some efforts to avoid division of Member States on the subject.\textsuperscript{31} At one stage, the delegate of Nigeria suggested that the General Assembly could appeal to the two delegations, either by means of a simple resolution stating that the General Assembly having received the two resolutions takes note of them and stop there, or formally move now that the two draft resolutions be considered together and be adopted by consensus. \textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{29} For the statement of the delegate of Sri Lanka, GAOR (Provl.), session 29, First Committee, 2022nd mtg., 13 November 1974, pp. 4-5.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} For instance, the Mauritius delegate informed the Political Committee that his suggestion for postponement of the consideration of the question for one year set with approval by one delegation (obviously \textit{e.g.,} India) and disagreement from another (Pakistan). Ibid., 2024th mtg., 20 November 1974, pp. 43-45.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., pp. 34-35.
India offered to agree, in a spirit of goodwill to the first part of the suggestion and to accept a statement of consensus by the Chairman of the Committee that the Assembly took note of the two drafts. But it was not prepared to agree to the adoption of both the draft resolutions by consensus. Pakistan was also firm in its position. Hence, vote became unavoidable. The Political Committee, by a recorded vote, recommended adoption of both the draft resolutions to the Plenary. In the Plenary, while 104 Members voted in favour of the Indian draft, 96 voted for the Pakistani draft.

An analysis of the Plenary vote showed that, while India along with Bhutan voted against Pakistan's proposal, Pakistan abstained on the Indian draft. amongst

33 Ibid., p. 37.
34 A/2941, 6 December 1974.
36 Explaining his abstention on the Indian text, the representative of Pakistan restated that his country had no basic objection to the "imperatively" Indian draft. He, however, regretted that the Indian draft "did not proceed further than it did". What was stated in the operative part was so "self-evident" that it did not deserve a status of a draft resolution. He maintained, therefore, that the Indian draft had to be read in conjunction with the Pakistani draft. While he entirely agreed that the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone could be the result only of consultations, the Indian proposal led nowhere and indeed was not necessary at all. However, he said, his country accepted the draft in the spirit in which it was offered. Ibid., session 29, First Committee, 2025th mtg., 29 November 1974, p. 17.
the Permanent Members of the Security Council, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France abstained on both texts in view of serious differences among the States of South Asian region on the proposal. The Soviet Union voted in favour of the Indian draft and abstained on Pakistan's text. China voted in favour of Pakistan's draft but abstained on India's text. Among the neighbours only Bhutan voted in favour of the Indian draft (because it thought that the draft allowed careful consideration of the issue in future) and voted against Pakistan's proposal. Bangladesh voted for the Indian draft and abstained on Pakistan's draft, after making clear in the debate that Pakistan's draft was introduced without carrying out necessary consultations and achieving agreement among the countries of the region. Of the other two South Asian countries, Nepal did not participate in the debate but voted in favour of both the draft resolutions. Sri Lanka saw no harm in voting for both drafts because the texts did not differ as much in basic principle of

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37 According to S. S. Sharan, Indian Foreign Policy: Annual Survey 1974 (New Delhi, 1990), the major powers saw no harm in the adoption of both or any of the drafts whose net value was likely to be negligible in view of the differences among the States of the region, p. 255.

38 GAOR (Proc.), session 29, First Committee, 2011th mtg., 7 November 1974, pp. 11-12.
democratization of the region as in approach. 39

Considering the response from the fellow South Asian countries, it could be said that India got impressive support. The Indian proposal got no negative vote from any of the South Asian countries and only one abstention, that is Pakistan's, while Pakistan's proposal did not have such smooth sail. India and Bhutan voted against, while Bangladesh abstained on Pakistan's proposal. The Southeast Asian countries voted for both the draft resolutions (except Thailand which voted only in favour of the Indian text). The Islamic countries supported Pakistan's proposal; exceptions in this category included Libya.

39 Nonetheless, Sri Lanka's representative observed once:

We have no difficulty whatsoever in supporting the Indian draft, despite its inadequacies and deficiencies. But we cannot agree to stopping there. Its adoption must not preclude a vote on the Pakistani draft, and we should like to have an assurance that no such tactic will be adopted.

Ibid., 2022nd mtg., 13 November 1974, p. 5. It is apparent that Sri Lanka made the above observation at the request of Pakistan.
(which abstained on both), Iran (which voted for both the texts), and Afghanistan (which voted for the Indian text and abstained on the Pakistani proposal). Among the prominent non-aligned countries, Burma abstained on both, Yugoslavia voted for the Indian text and abstained on Pakistan's (because, in its view, Pakistan's draft needed more balanced language), Zambia voted for the Indian text and abstained on Pakistan's text.


The Assembly debate on the question of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia continued in the regular sessions held after 1974. During these years, India reaffirmed its policy of not using nuclear technology for weapons production, but reserved the right to use it for industrial and economic progress. It continued to oppose treating South Asia as a secluded sub-region from the larger parts of Asia. It reiterated that any idea of nuclear-weapon-free zone should emanate

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43 Ibid., session 29, First Committee, 2925th mtg., 20 November 1974, p. 2.

44 Ibid., session 31, Plenary, 15th mtg., 4 October 1976, p. 67.

from the States of the region concerned only after the necessary prior agreement had been arrived at.\textsuperscript{43} It reasserted that the United Nations, or for that matter any Member, could not impose the idea of nuclear-weapon-free zone on the States of a region,\textsuperscript{44} and that the involvement of the Secretary-General could only result in a wastage of his time, energy and position, especially when it was clear that differences continued to exist.\textsuperscript{45}

During the period, India introduced new points also which justified its opposition to Pakistan's proposal. In 1975 India made use of the just-out Comprehensive Study by the Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts for the Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, which, inter alia, agreed generally on the principle that the initiative for the establishment of such zones should come

\textsuperscript{43}GAOR (Provs.), session 32, First Committee, 38th mtg., 12 November 1977, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., session 33, Plenary, 84th mtg., 5 January 1979, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., session 31, First Committee, 45th mtg., 29 November 1975, p. 35. For the texts of the Secretary-General's reports see Docs. A/10325 of 31 October 1975 and A/33/350 of 7 November 1978.
from within the region concerned and that participation must be voluntary. 46

Also, India was more explicit on its security concerns in relation to the question, when its representative noted:

It was necessary to take into account the security environment of that region as a whole. The existence of nuclear weapons in the region of Asia and the Pacific and the presence of foreign military bases in the Indian Ocean...complicated the security environment of the region and made the region inappropriate for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the sub-region of South Asia. 47

In 1976, it reminded Member States that the existence of foreign military bases could not be ignored while considering the proposal. 48 In the next year, it was argued that "regional nuclear-weapon-free zones will not help to combat the nuclear threat to the world at large; on the contrary, they provide an advantage to nuclear weapon States since nuclear weapons and their delivery systems are, after all, intercontinental in nature". 49 Related to

46 Ibid., session 30, First Committee, 2102nd mtg., 2 December 1975, p. 51.


48 GAOR (Provisional), session 31, First Committee, 45th mtg., 29 November 1976, pp. 33-35.

49 Ibid., session 32, First Committee, 32nd mtg., 18 November 1977, p. 6.
this view, the representative of India wondered how a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia could be advocated just because the region was free of nuclear weapons. 50

Perhaps embarrassed by adoption of the Pakistani proposal year after year, the Indian representative once recorded his protest:

Today once again, and for the fifth time, the General Assembly proposes to reaffirm its endorsement in principle of the concept of a nuclear weapon-free zone in South Asia, against the declared and consistent opposition of India. We fail to understand why the General Assembly persists in this form of action which is clearly contrary to the principle of free consent that should underlie the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. 51

There were discernible changes in India's tactics during 1975-1980. It may be recalled that, in 1974 India

50 Ibid., session 35, Plenary, 84th mtg, 5 January 1979, pp. 52-53.

Pakistan's representative, in a sharp reaction, characterised this view of India as "an argument for proliferation rather than non-proliferation". Ibid., First Committee, 50th mtg, 24 November 1978, p. 66.

51 Ibid., session 35, Plenary, 84th mtg, 5 January 1979, p. 516.

On the same occasion, while thanking those Member States who did not support Pakistan's proposal, he regretted that those who repeatedly voted for Pakistan's draft and said that they could not but be regarded as "tending to tell us what is good for us, and that is not a very nice or friendly thing to do". Ibid., pp. 52-53.
not only argued against Pakistan's untimely proposal, voted against it, but also introduced its own draft and sought a recorded vote on both the drafts at the meetings of the Political Committee as well as the Plenary. In the next year, India restated its strong opposition to the proposal and introduced its own alternative text. But it did not insist on a recorded vote on either of the proposals. Consequently, both drafts were adopted by the Political Committee and by the Plenary without a vote during the thirtieth session. In 1976, India continued to oppose the Pakistani proposal and voted against it; but saw no reason to sponsor its own text that year. Nevertheless, a recorded vote was sought.

During 1977, a significant shift took place. While reiterating opposition to the Pakistan-sponsored draft resolution, India abstained along with Bhutan.\(^5^3\) No

\(^5^2\)In deference to the appeals made by Mexico, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka, India agreed not to insist on a vote on any draft. Ibid., session 30, First Committee, 2155th mtg., 4 December 1975.

\(^5^3\)According to an analyst, what India did in 1977 (which, in his view, was the right course of action) should have been done in 1974 itself. He described as "futile" India's exercise of sponsoring counter proposals. If India had abstained right from 1974, it could have saved itself from an embarrassing situation. K.P. Setu, "India and Diplomacy in the United Nations", International Studies, vol. 17, 1973, pp. 815-15.

On the contrary, a high ranking official in the Indian Mission in New York, who wished to remain unidentified, felt that India's negative vote in fact helped reduce the number of positive votes on the proposal.
specific reasons were given by the Indian representative for shifting from a negative vote to abstention.\textsuperscript{54} Perhaps one of the reasons could be that the then Indian Government led by Prime Minister Morarji Desai wished to maintain cordial relations with neighbouring States.

If, not only voting against a proposal but insisting on a separate recorded vote on its draft too in 1974, India was considered to have taken an uncompromising view and later developments were to be viewed as a gradual softening of the earlier opposition, India could be said to have reverted to maintaining firm opposition in 1978. It voted against Pakistan's proposal in 1978. As explained by the Indian representative, the exercise of the negative vote was to "remove any ambiguity" about India's opposition to the proposal.\textsuperscript{55} In the subsequent years also India continued to vote against Pakistan's proposal.

Pakistan, by and large, made repetitive points in the course of debates over the years. It referred to the

\textsuperscript{54} Pakistan's representative took note of the fact that India "did not cast a negative vote" and hoped that this would augur well for the demilitarization of South Asia. Times of India carried a report of the "Samachar" on 20 November 1977 about a comment made by one of Pakistan's senior diplomats in the lobby that his country welcomed India's abstention "regardless of the reasons" given.

\textsuperscript{55} UNGA (Res.4), session 33, First Committee, 55th session, 29 November 1978, p. 46.
efforts aimed at demilitarization in Africa and Latin America. In South Asia too, it said, if the voluntary pronouncements not to acquire/produce nuclear weapons were converted into binding international commitments, it would not only strengthen regional peace but also would contribute to global and general disarmament. The representative of Pakistan reiterated his view that Pakistan's proposal and the question of establishing a peace zone in Indian Ocean were interlinked. In addition, the draft resolutions sponsored by Pakistan over the years were mostly repetitive of Res. 325 B (XXIX). Selective references were also made to a few United Nations studies and reports which were favourable to its point of view.

56 Ibid., session 32, First Committee, 17th mtg., 31 October 1977, p. 32.

57 Ibid.

58 For instance, the draft resolution (A/C.1/31/L.6, 4 November 1976) proposed by Pakistan for the consideration by the thirty-first session made a reference in the preambular part to the Comprehensive Study by the Ad Hoc Group of Qualified Governmental Experts for the Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. Also, the draft resolution considered by the thirty-third session (A/C.1/L.25, 17 November 1978) referred to paragraphs 60 and 63 (concerning the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South Asia and other regions) of the Final Document of the General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament (1978).
A major tactical shift by Pakistan needs to be noted in this connection. Res. 3253B(XXIX) contained an operative paragraph calling upon the nuclear-weapon States to extend the necessary co-operation for the realization of the objective of nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. This paragraph was omitted in 1975 and 1976\textsuperscript{59} but was included in the drafts sponsored in 1977 and in subsequent years.\textsuperscript{60} In the light of this omission, one could draw one's own conclusions on Pakistan's interest in the goal of nuclear disarmament.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{59}A/C.1/31/L.733, 26 November 1975; and A/C.1/31/L.6, 4 November 1976.

\textsuperscript{60}A/C.1/32/L.7, 2 November 1977.

\textsuperscript{61}When asked whether the omission was deliberate, a diplomat in the Pakistan Mission in New York told that the paragraph in question was thought unnecessary because Pakistan sponsored a separate move on "negative security guarantees" in 1975. The officials in the Indian Mission also offered the same explanation. But records do not substantiate this contention. While it was true that Pakistan sponsored separately as part of the larger question of disarmament a draft resolution (A/C.1/31/L.33, 21 December 1975), it was equally true that this proposal was initiated in 1974 itself (see Doc. A/C.1/L.702, 21 November 1974) coinciding with its proposal on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. Further, Pakistan continued to introduce draft resolutions on strengthening security of non-nuclear States (A/C.1/32/L.6, 2 November 1977) even afterwards, when the request to nuclear-weapon States to refrain from acting against the spirit of the Declaration was restored in draft texts presented from 1977 onwards.
In the normal course, Pakistan-sponsored draft resolutions were adopted by all the successive sessions of the General Assembly since 1975. The analysis of the attitudes of Member States could be analysed under the following broad sections: Those who continued to support Pakistan's proposal consistently over the years, those who abstained for various reasons on the proposal almost consistently, those countries which made public change of their attitudes and voted in favour; and those who were inconsistent.

The first category of those who supported Pakistan included most of the Islamic countries (for example, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Oman, United Arab Emirates, etc.) and a large chunk of the Afro-Asian and Latin American countries (for example, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Yemen, Ecuador, Honduras, Iceland, Liberia, Paraguay, Philippines, Senegal, Tunisia, Upper Volta, etc.) Amongst the East European countries only

62 Res. 3476B(XX) of 11 December 1975 was adopted without a vote. Res. 31/73 of 10 December 1976 was adopted with 91 Member States voting in favour, two (India and Bhutan) against, 43 abstaining, 105 Members voted in favour, 23 abstained (including India and Bhutan which cast a negative vote previously) on Res. 32/63 of 12 December 1977. 97 Member States voted in favour, two against and 37 abstained on Res. 33/63 of 5 January 1979. Res. 34/78, 13 December 1979 was adopted as 96 Members voted in favour, three (India, Bhutan and Mauritius) against, and 40 abstained. And in 1980, 96 Member States voted for Res. 35/48 of 15 December 1980, while three cast negative vote and 44 abstained.
Romania voted in favour while Albania's non-participation in the vote bore its own significance. Among the West European and other countries, Canada and Spain consistently supported the proposal.

In the second category, the Soviet Union and its allies in East Europe abstained on Pakistan's proposal during the period under focus. The Nordic countries (such as Austria, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) also voted to abstention. Cyprus, Indonesia, Malawi, and Yugoslavia were some of the non-aligned countries which abstained on Pakistan's proposal during those years.

The third category concerned the United States and other countries which abstained on the proposal earlier and began to vote in favour from 1977. But countries like Australia, France, Greece, and Italy did not find it necessary to change their response.

Falling under the fourth category (i.e. Member States which made inconsistent responses) prominent were Bahamas (which voted for the proposal in 1977 and abstained

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63 According to the representative of the United States, his country was voting in favour to encourage an ultimate agreement among all the States concerned. A/5 (Prov.) session 32, First Committee, 37th mtg., 13 November 1977, pp. 61-62.
in 1978), Congo (which voted for the draft in 1976 and abstained in 1977), Mauritius (which abstained in the Committee voting but voted in favour in Plenary in 1978, and voted against the proposal in the subsequent years), and Zambia (which abstained in 1976 and 1978 and voted in favour in all other years).

Among the South Asian countries, Nepal⁶⁴ and Sri Lanka (mindful of the complex problems that surrounded the objective and the necessity for holding intensive consultations⁶⁵ continued to vote for the Pakistan-sponsored draft resolutions. While Bhutan and India continued to vote against (except in 1977), Bangladesh (which abstained in 1974) voted in favour of the proposal from 1975.

Summary Observations

From the preceding analysis it is clear that Pakistan made use of the United Nations processes and

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procedures to gain certain political advantages by raising
the question under discussion. It sought to force India
to make commitments on giving up its nuclear option, or, in
a situation where India refused to make firm commitments,
to mobilise moral and political pressure of the interna-
tional community against India's stance on the
question.

How could one assess India's actions and re-
actions on this question? Could it be said that whatever
strategy and procedural/tactical moves India adopted were
the right ones? It should be noted, in this connection,
that Pakistan's initiative did not come as a bolt from the
blue and that there was sufficient lapse of time between
the formal request by Pakistan (August 1974) for inclusion
of an agenda item and its consideration by the First
Committee of the General Assembly (November 1974) to allow
India to plan its moves and counter-moves. And yet India's
interactions left much to be desired in more than one
respect.

India's representatives reiterated in the course
of debates over the years that the consideration of the
proposal made by Pakistan should follow rather than
precede prior consultations and agreement among the States
concerned. Further, India maintained that the proposal to
establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a secluded
sub-region of South Asia might ignore the presence of nuclear weapons and the military bases (maintained by outside Powers in the context of great Power rivalry) in the larger region of Asia. It was also reasserted that Pakistan's proposal could not effectively check the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons which posed a more serious threat to the human civilization. All these arguments were quite valid. Obviously, India did not wish to make any commitment and wanted to keep its nuclear options open.

From what transpired at the United Nations during the past seven years, it could be argued that India's actions and reactions were marked by an inconsistent and hesitant approach. It is obvious that a resolution of the General Assembly on the subject could not be effective unless it was acceptable to all the countries of the area as also to the nuclear-weapon Powers. As such one could argue that the best course for India was to soft-pedal the proposal by setting its views on record in unequivocal terms (and in this regard the statements made by the Indian representatives went well), and that having stated its views, India should have merely abstained at the time of voting on Pakistan's draft. Such a tactic was likely to take much of the steam out of Pakistan's initiative.
On the other hand, it could be argued that India attempted to underscore its opposition to the proposal not merely by setting its views on record, but also sponsoring a draft resolution during 1974 and 1975 and seeking political support to it. The Indian draft, as its contents indicated, was deliberately couched in vague language obviously with a view to evading the basic demand made by Pakistan. It could be said that the adoption of India's draft, with more numerical support than Pakistan's draft, in a way, met India's expectations. In addition, India's negative vote on Pakistan's draft (with the exception of 1977), as some officials in the Indian Mission claimed, helped to reduce the number of positive votes on Pakistan's proposal during the years under study. India's abstention in 1977 could be viewed as a manifestation of the inconsistent responses India had made on the question. Could it be implied that, by abstaining in 1977, India realised that Pakistan's move deserved, though belated, sympathetic consideration? Or was it because of the change of Government in India in early 1977 resulting in a re-orientation of the country's foreign policy, in general, and the policy towards its neighbouring countries in particular. No answers could be obtained to these questions. Again, it could not be interpreted that India abstained in 1977 with a view to soft-pedalling
Pakistan's move while setting its reservations on record. For, India cast a negative vote the very next year (1978) and continued to do so in the subsequent years.

It should also be noted that India's reactions and interactions left much to be desired in opposing Pakistan's proposal and its follow-up. For instance, Pakistan's draft, which was adopted as Res. 3255B(XXIX) contained an operative paragraph requesting the nuclear-weapon-States to co-operate for the effective realisation of the objectives of the proposal. This key paragraph was not included when Pakistan submitted its draft resolutions in 1975 and 1976. It was, however, restored in 1977 and later. It should be noted that the Indian diplomats could have highlighted this inconsistency on the part of Pakistan in order to substantiate India's contention that Pakistani intentions were suspicious and not motivated by a genuine desire to have a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

In sum, with a little more careful planning of strategy, adroitness, and alertness, India could have done much better than what it did in safeguarding its interest and image in the context of the question under analysis.

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