

## BOOK REVIEWS

# PAKISTAN'S BOMB

## Mission Unstoppable

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*America and the Islamic Bomb: The Deadly Compromise*, by David Armstrong and Joseph Trento. Steerforth Press, 2007. 292 pages, \$24.95.

*Deception: Pakistan, the United States, and the Secret Trade in Nuclear Weapons*, by Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark. Walker & Company, 2007. 586 pages, \$28.95.

*The Nuclear Jihadist: The True Story of the Man Who Sold the World's Most Dangerous Secrets . . . and How We Could Have Stopped Him*, by Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins. Twelve, 2007. 413 pages, \$25.

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During the fall of 1994, with preparations under way toward holding a bilateral summit meeting sometime early in the coming year, I spoke with senior Pakistani officials to learn whether Benazir Bhutto would heed long-standing U.S. urgings and prevent Pakistan's nuclear program from enriching large amounts of uranium to weapon-grade and then building atomic bombs.

Bhutto's resurfacing as Pakistan's prime minister in late 1993 was seen by some U.S. officials as an opportunity to move Pakistan in directions Washington favored. The administration of President Bill Clinton was freshly staffed with personalities who for years had advocated upgrading the U.S. nonproliferation profile, and the Cold War was rapidly becoming a memory. It appeared that a window of opportunity might open for Clinton and Bhutto to effectively address concerns voiced by some U.S. lawmakers and policy specialists that Pakistan was marching unflinchingly toward possession of nuclear arms.

The biggest open question was whether Bhutto had the freedom of action to rein in Pakistan's nuclear development.

I did not get a clear answer in discussions I had with senior Pakistani officials in 1994. Bhutto had herself said—in a comment that was expressly not for attribution—that she was “not in charge” of making technical decisions about Pakistan's uranium enrichment program and that these matters were left to A.Q. Khan, the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), and, ultimately, Pakistan's military leaders responsible for the security of nuclear installations.

On the other hand, I was also informed that Bhutto had made clear to Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao that unless India agreed to cap its growing stockpile of weapon-grade plutonium, Pakistan would finish and then operate a plutonium production reactor, which was secretly under construction at a place called Khushab.

I had first heard speculation about such a project back in 1989, when executives running a small German company called NTG were investigated by German justice authorities for a flurry of hardware sales to India, Pakistan, and South Africa. Engineers from the firm testified that Pakistan was shopping for piping, valves, and reflector material for an indigenous 50-megawatt (MW) reactor. At the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which monitored Pakistan's declared and safeguarded nuclear installations, the German information about a new project drew a blank.

In October 1994, having obtained direct Pakistani confirmation of the existence of this reactor, *Nucleonics Week*, for which I was an editor, published an article identifying the construction site in northern Pakistan. Within days after the story ran, sources in Washington began ringing up, explaining that U.S. intelligence had known for years about Khushab, having gotten wind of the project nearly immediately after it was spawned in the early 1980s by Munir Khan, the chairman of the PAEC. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had watched Munir Khan build the reactor. The NTG firm, I was told on good authority, had never contributed in any significant way to the enterprise. But, as Pakistani officials had informed me, Western officials believed that China was helping build the reactor.

By the end of 1994, it was apparent that for about ten years U.S. intelligence agencies, national laboratory analysts, and three executive branch departments had all kept their knowledge of the Khushab project secret. That was, I thought then, astonishing. After all, this development implied that, in addition to A.Q. Khan's uranium enrichment program, which the United States had known about since the late 1970s, there was now a separate and independent project going on under the noses of the U.S. Embassy and CIA operatives in Pakistan, which, if continued unabated, would provide Pakistan about 10 kilograms of weapon-grade plutonium every twelve months—maybe enough for a new nuclear bomb each year.

### Old Story, New Facts

One conclusion suggested by the above episode—that U.S. intelligence-handlers for years protected from public disclosure what they knew about an alarming new development in Pakistan's nuclear program—is consistent with the tableau presented in all three books considered for this review. A critical subplot is that U.S. intelligence analysts didn't miss a trick and were fully aware of Pakistan's nuclear quest for decades, and that successive U.S. administrations closeted this sensitive knowledge to prevent outsiders from deterring the United States from trying to enlist Islamabad to fight successive wars against the Soviet Union and the Taliban.

All three books relate in straightforward, chronological terms the story of the origins and development of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program over a period of about 40 years. In *America and the Islamic Bomb*, David Armstrong and Joseph Trento begin by linking the birth of Pakistan's nuclear ambitions with Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program in the late 1950s. Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins in *The Nuclear Jihadist* and Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark in *Deception* pick up the trail in 1972, when A.Q. Khan began working for a laboratory in the Netherlands that had been contracted by the

newly formed trilateral consortium Urenco to assist it in developing gas centrifuges for uranium enrichment.

From this point on, all three books present accounts that are consistent with confirmed and well-known facts: Khan steals know-how from Urenco while in the Netherlands between 1972 and 1975. In 1974 India conducts a nuclear test. In 1976 Khan is back in Pakistan, where he has impressed its leaders to give him a chance to enrich uranium to fuel Pakistan's own nuclear program. Khan relies on contacts back in Europe to move his enrichment project forward, and by the end of the 1970s, his role in organizing the project in Pakistan on the basis of stolen Urenco know-how is exposed in Europe.

Very little of this information is new. The first half of Armstrong and Trento's book—nearly 150 pages—reiterates, mostly from published sources referred to in copious footnotes, the chronology of Pakistan's nuclear program up to the mid-1990s. Frantz and Collins chart the same territory in their first twenty chapters. (After Chapter 7, however, their detailed endnotes abruptly cease; the reader is instead referred to a document on the book's website that supposedly contains the rest of the notes, but which, as of this writing—more than four months after the book's publication—was listed as indefinitely "under construction.") Levy and Scott-Clark likewise devote nearly half of their 600-page tome to the first twenty years of Pakistan's nuclear development.

The accounts become more interesting when they move into territory in which the authors did real-time reporting. Once onto the backstretch, all three books document in great detail the record of Pakistan's increasingly problematic nuclear diplomacy with the United States, Washington's growing dilemma in facing a nuclear-arming Pakistan while confronting in Afghanistan first the Soviet Union and then the Taliban, the establishment and then expansion of A.Q. Khan's nuclear procurement empire during the 1980s and 1990s, efforts by U.S. and U.K. intelligence to keep track of Khan's activities, and, finally, the fall of A.Q. Khan in the wake of incontrovertible evidence that he had aided nuclear programs in Libya, Iran, and North Korea.

The books rely on statements and information culled from many sources (the Levy and Scott-Clark book, its publisher says, was based on "hundreds of interviews" over a period of ten years); however, a handful of individuals strongly flavor the message the books give us.

One is Benazir Bhutto. According to Frantz and Collins, in 1988 Khan conspired with General Mirza Aslam Beg, the vice chief of the army, to oust her (the publisher says this is one of the "ten new elements of Khan's story" that distinguish the book from others on the subject). No details are offered about whether in fact Khan was actively involved in efforts to overthrow Bhutto, but—in one of many assertions in the last twenty-two chapters that are neither footnoted nor referenced—the authors say that, "Bhutto herself later maintained that her opposition to going nuclear was one of the reasons she was later ousted from office."

If Khan was involved in Bhutto's ouster, Bhutto did not directly confirm it. In part based on interviews with her, Levy and Scott-Clark assert that Bhutto opposed Beg's intention to sell Pakistan's nuclear wares to other countries and that Beg responded by simply circumventing Bhutto and dealing with Iran.

Another frequently cited source in two of the books is Peter Griffin, a U.K. businessman who has had a long, murky relationship with A.Q. Khan. Frantz and Collins

describe Griffin as someone “who could be pugnacious or charming, as the situation required,” and, based on Griffin’s interactions with reporters since the full extent of Khan’s procurement network was publicly exposed in detail beginning in 2004, that description rings true. Griffin has fiercely combated media allegations that he abetted clandestine nuclear programs, in two cases suing the BBC and the *Guardian* newspaper in the United Kingdom and convincing them to pay damages out of court.

Armstrong and Trento got nowhere with Griffin. They prefaced part of a chapter that contains allegations about Griffin’s business dealings—based on U.K. Customs reports—with a full-page, italicized disclaimer that appears to have been carefully lawyered, underscoring that the authors made repeated, unsuccessful efforts to get Griffin to talk.

Levy and Scott-Clark fared better. Their tale is laced with plenty of chatty recollections from Griffin about meetings with Khan and about Griffin’s run-ins in far-flung locations with a handful of individuals who since 2003 have been targeted by governments as suspects in Khan’s procurement empire. In page after page of these remarks, Griffin seems careful never to implicate himself in any actions that would constitute a violation of export control laws or suggest he was party to Khan’s nuclear schemes.

### A U.S. Cover-up?

One witness appearing in all three books is Richard Barlow, a former CIA and Department of Defense analyst who has sued the U.S. government and has claimed that he was a victim of a vendetta to ruin his credibility. Since about 2004, Barlow has courted numerous journalists looking into Pakistan’s nuclear program, and his testimony in all three books strongly suggests that the U.S. government ignored intelligence findings and failed to take action to put a halt to Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program and destroy Khan’s network. That theme is exploited at length by all three accounts.

All three books demonstrate convincingly that, especially during the 1990s and beyond, stopping Khan’s network required coordinated international attention. But the books themselves are strongly focused on how the United States (and for Levy and Scott-Clark, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom) responded to the challenge.

The basic conclusion that the United States failed to prevent Pakistan from going nuclear and A.Q. Khan from exporting his country’s nuclear assets is consistent with the known facts. But the more attention-grabbing claim that weaves in and out of these books—that U.S. officials or agencies conspired to mislead the public and prevent action from being taken to halt the proliferation—has far less meat on the bone.

Levy and Scott-Clark go to considerable pains to convince the reader of the conspiracy theory, in fact beginning their account with a nine-page overture in which they summarize their argument: “This is the story of how our elected representatives have conjured a grand deception. . . . The true scandal was how the trade [in nuclear weapons] and the Pakistan military’s role in it had been discovered by high-ranking US and European officials, many years before, but rather than interdict it they had worked hard to cover it up.” The cover-up, the authors charge, “rapidly bloomed into a complex conspiracy [in which] evidence was destroyed, criminal files were diverted, Congress was repeatedly lied to, and . . . presidential appointees even tipped off the Pakistan government so as to

prevent its agents from getting caught in US Customs Service stings that aimed to catch them buying nuclear components in America."

Armstrong and Trento's account is the most modest of the three with regard to the claim that U.S. leaders ignored and covered up sinister facts. Their account includes passing references to successful U.S. diplomacy since the late 1970s to prevent Pakistan from importing a reprocessing plant from France (the authors even call that development a "dramatic shift in US policy" against supporting "Atoms for Peace" in Pakistan), and they acknowledge that once Pakistan's enrichment program had been exposed, the United States worked hard to close loopholes in export control commodity lists. (My own historical files are stuffed with U.S. government diplomatic cables, written between 1978 and the late 1980s, documenting the extent to which U.S. national laboratories, executive branch agencies, and a dozen U.S. embassies in Asia and Europe pressed foreign governments to tighten guidelines concerning the export of equipment that could be used for uranium enrichment.) But Armstrong and Trento on occasion also flirt with the argument that the U.S. government interfered with the quest for the truth. President Ronald Reagan, they summarize, for example, had "institutionalize[d] the policy of winking at—and in some cases covering up—Pakistan's nuclear program to ensure [Pakistani President Muhammad Zia ul-Haq's] cooperation [in fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan]. As a result, Islamabad's drive for an atomic bomb proceeded virtually unfettered."

But for all three author pairs, the key witness making the claim that virulent forces were at play in the U.S. failure to crush Khan and Pakistan's nuclear program is Barlow. The books describe Barlow's rise from humble origins to become what they imply was the most committed and best-informed CIA intelligence analyst on the Pakistan nuclear beat. According to Frantz and Collins, at the zenith of his career, "Barlow was a hero within the CIA." After Barlow in 1987 contradicts a U.S. official during a congressional briefing by asserting that there were "scores" of cases where Pakistani agents had tried to illicitly buy nuclear wares in the United States on behalf of the Pakistani government, Barlow's life takes a dramatic turn for the worse, and he loses his career, his wife, and his government pension—described in anguishing detail by all the books.

Armstrong and Trento relate that according to Barlow, when he "was monitoring Pakistan's nuclear program in the mid-to-late 1980s there was already more than enough evidence of malfeasance to justify taking action. . . . He believes the Khan network's subsequent nuclear trafficking was 'totally and utterly' avoidable. 'We clearly could have shut it down,' Barlow says."

"The CIA was up to the minute on this stuff,' Barlow remembered," referring to nuclear smuggling by A.Q. Khan's network in Europe during the 1980s, Levy and Scott-Clark write. "We had wiretaps. Phone intercepts. We read mail. The file was as fat as any I have seen. The difficulty was that no one in the administration . . . gave a damn. And in Europe the US failed to exert any pressure in case governments pointed to the ambiguity of US policy regarding Pakistan."

After running into trouble with the CIA and then being hired on as an analyst for the Department of Defense, Frantz and Collins write, Barlow finally left the government after having been "shaken by the lies told to Congress" by the U.S. government: "The Pentagon

bosses who had cooked the intelligence to support the administration's policy then decided they had to get rid of him. In fact, they decided to destroy him."

Levy and Scott-Clark's book is studded with pages of text in which Barlow asserts that he was the victim of vicious attacks by administration officials to shipwreck his personal life and damage his reputation.

Watertight as all three accounts of his life appear in the books, Barlow's version of events is, however, not universally shared. When I asked individuals who for years have been handling intelligence on Pakistan's nuclear program for the U.S. government whether they could corroborate Barlow's assertions, in some cases the answer was no.

One former U.S. official who worked with Barlow told me in March 2008 that it was certainly true that Barlow was hounded by personal adversaries in the U.S. government. But, he added, "part of the equation was that Barlow had very strong opinions, and if you didn't agree with him he would treat you as an enemy."

A few people deeply involved in tracking Pakistan's nuclear program over the last few decades confessed to experiencing powerful negative reactions to the Levy and Scott-Clark account. One said he "wanted to throw up" after reading claims advanced by Barlow that U.S. officials conspired to hide the facts and then ruin his life. "Barlow presents himself as a truth-teller," this individual said. "That's not what he was. He ran over a lot of people and has a lot of axes to grind. The real story is a different story, but it's all classified. The problem is that in books like these, authors have to get close to their sources if they want details, and the end result won't look tidy and compelling if it contains major contradictions."

### **Nonproliferation Comes in Second**

The subtitle of *The Nuclear Jihadist* says the book is "The true story of the man who sold the world's most dangerous secrets . . . and how we could have stopped him." (The main title is itself misleading; Khan was never a jihadist.) Like the other two sets of authors, Frantz and Collins suggest that, had the United States and perhaps other governments taken firm, timely action, Pakistan's nuclear weapons program could have been terminated and Khan's smuggling could have been prevented.

Armstrong and Trento seem to imply that the United States gave up the fight to curb Pakistan's nuclear appetite at the outset, citing declassified U.S. government memos from 1975 showing that the United States was concerned that Pakistan had a "solid incentive" to develop nuclear weapons in response to India's test the year before. "Yet despite all of this the US chose to resume military aid to Pakistan" after a ten-year ban, the authors write.

After investigating and researching Pakistan's nuclear program for about twenty years, it is not clear to me that, on the basis of evidence brought forth in nearly 1,300 pages of these texts, the United States or other governments could have ended it.

There are two known cases in which the United States firmly and directly intervened during the 1970s to halt clandestine nuclear programs: Taiwan and South Korea. On the basis of the strong leverage that the United States exercised over both, U.S. officials walked into laboratories, shut down activities related to plutonium production, and forced governments to comply with full-scope IAEA safeguards. The United States had no such

leverage with Pakistan. Unlike Pakistan, both Taiwan and South Korea were totally dependent on the United States for their security vis-à-vis China and North Korea, respectively.

All three books profusely document that the United States, seeking to respond to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and then to the rise of the Taliban and Islamic fundamentalism after the Soviets pulled out, did not single-mindedly pursue the goals of shutting down Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. That is not a revelation. The books also quote eyewitnesses from the 1980s and 1990s who interpreted this lack of success as a U.S. policy failure.

One expert who for many years has monitored intelligence for U.S. agencies and who has read the books told me in February that the policy "may have failed" to halt Pakistan from getting nuclear weapons, "but it wasn't a cover-up. There was a huge and intense internal debate. In the end we had to make a choice." When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, he said, "electing to get Pakistan to support the resistance movement was the obvious choice to make. The nonproliferation concerns would come in second." The same dilemma arose again when the United States in 2001 considered its options in combating Islamic terrorism nested in Afghanistan, he said. "Priorities had to be established. That's what policy making is all about."

I looked in vain in these books for clear insight or guidance about what the United States, the United Kingdom, and other governments should have done to halt Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. Both Levy and Scott-Clark and Frantz and Collins include an account of a meeting (it appears to have taken place in 1979) between U.S. officials and IAEA Director General Sigvard Eklund in which the U.S. officials briefed Eklund in general terms about Pakistan's effort to enrich uranium. Frantz and Collins' account states that the United States would not permit Eklund to discuss U.S. findings with IAEA staffers, and it seems to imply that the United States failed to cooperate with the IAEA sufficiently to permit Eklund to intervene with Pakistan. "Eklund was in a quandary" as a result of what he was told by the United States, Frantz and Collins write. They quote Eklund as saying, "The only chance of stopping the Pakistanis would be to give wide publicity to the information, which might lead the responsible countries of the world to put enough pressure on them to stop the program."

In 2003, the IAEA learned—likewise from member states providing it facts culled from intelligence data—that Iran had embarked on a hidden uranium enrichment program. Unlike Pakistan, Iran is a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and what the IAEA learned constituted violations of Iran's commitments in its safeguards agreement with the IAEA. During the last five years, however, steps taken by the IAEA and its member states have failed to halt or even suspend Iran's enrichment program.

It thus seems inconceivable that the IAEA or its member states could have halted Pakistan in 1979. Because Pakistan was not an NPT state, the IAEA had even less leverage over Pakistan than it did over Iran in 2003, and no mandate to take any independent and decisive action with Islamabad.

These books briefly mention the policy deliberations of India and Israel—two countries that, it could be argued, were far more existentially threatened by a nuclear-

armed Pakistan than was the United States. Both of them, according to the authors, mulled launching a military strike against nuclear installations in Pakistan. The fact that they did not, however, might have prompted the authors to pause and reflect whether the United States itself—with far more on its plate—could have ultimately forced Pakistan to halt its nuclear weapons program.

The *New York Times*, Frantz and Collins recalled, revealed in 1979 that the Pentagon had developed “a strategy for an air assault on Kahuta and other nuclear sites in Pakistan if the diplomatic route failed.” The authors said that Israel was also “secretly considering air strikes against the same targets.”

One of the most intriguing assertions by Levy and Scott-Clark is the claim that India and Israel secretly conferred about the possibility of carrying out joint air strikes against the Kahuta enrichment plant in 1983. According to these authors, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had approved the operation, but the CIA somehow scotched the attack by alerting Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq.

Thereafter, Levy and Scott-Clark recount that in interviews with Pakistani media, A.Q. Khan had “bragged” that, “Pakistan can set up several nuclear centers of the Kahuta pattern.”

Facing the possibility of foreign military action, however, Khan wasn’t bragging. None of the authors appear to have fully grasped that a military strike against Kahuta would have set back Pakistan’s timetable for producing highly enriched uranium for bombs, but it would not likely have halted the program.

In 1981, Israeli aircraft destroyed a French-supplied reactor in Iraq that could have generated large amounts of weapon-grade plutonium if finished and operated. In the wake of IAEA findings after the 1991 Gulf War that Iraq during the 1980s had invested in a massive uranium enrichment program, some officials investigating that program concluded that the Israeli attack on the reactor in 1981 had driven Iraq’s nuclear program underground and redoubled Saddam Hussein’s effort to protect it by opting for an alternative fissile material production technology—gas centrifuges—which could not easily be wiped out by foreign aircraft or missiles.

While the reactor site in Iraq was a sitting duck for Israeli aircraft, a gas centrifuge program would not be. Kahuta was built by replicating hundreds and then thousands of modular enriching assemblies. Once Khan had learned how to build these, he could keep producing them and setting them up in any location he chose, including inside facilities that were bunkered and located underground. One U.S. national laboratory official involved in recent years in trying to put a halt to North Korea’s nuclear program told me in late 2007 that “if we had taken out Kahuta, Pakistan would simply have moved its centrifuges to a different square on the chessboard.”

Unlike a reactor, centrifuges are notoriously difficult to detect. On the basis of what Khan provided North Korea, U.S. intelligence has been looking for a hidden centrifuge plant in North Korea for most of this decade. So far, they haven’t found it.

At the outset of these books, the authors recall that in 1965, nine years before India tested a nuclear device, Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto vowed that if India went nuclear first, “we will eat grass”—do whatever was necessary—to obtain nuclear weapons. That vow was serious. In the face of this kind of determination, do the authors

seriously believe that a cutoff of U.S. aid would have persuaded the Pakistanis to give up their nuclear weapons ambitions?

What Pakistan accomplished technically was as important to this story as the accounts in these books of Western governments' bureaucratic infighting, personal vendettas, and massaging of intelligence reports to fit desired policy outcomes, but in all three books, we learn very little of a technical nature about how A.Q. Khan and Pakistan succeeded.

A single quote buried in the Frantz and Collins book may get to the heart of the matter. Charles Van Doren, assistant director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency during the late 1970s, is cited—the reference is missing—as declaring that Pakistan's nuclear program "is a railroad train that is going down the track very fast, and I am not sure anything will turn it off."

Again and again, the Pakistani Bank of Credit & Commerce International (BCCI) turns up in all three accounts, and the authors document that Pakistan set up hard-to-penetrate accounting dodges and shell companies to keep Khan financed and divert U.S. financial aid to Pakistan's nuclear projects. The record is consistent with the behavior of a country absolutely committed to obtaining nuclear weapons at virtually any cost.

Two of the books bring forth an episode from 2000 that might suggest that U.S. and U.K. agencies were delinquent in not effectively running down Khan's network. In this case, the United Kingdom abruptly terminated a Customs investigation in Dubai after it began finding evidence Khan operatives were helping Libya. This, Armstrong and Trento claim, was a "failure of Western intelligence" in which the CIA's expressed desire to wait was "merely political cover" for U.S. and U.K. policy vis-à-vis Pakistan that "remained unchanged." But another incident clearly demonstrates that there were solid grounds why the investigation of Khan waited until 2003 before wrapping up Khan's Libyan project.

In early 2005, I wrote in *Nucleonics Week* that investigators in Switzerland had seized documents suggesting that Urs Tinner, an engineer suspected of helping Khan mass-produce centrifuge components in a factory set up in Malaysia, was a spy helping the U.S.-U.K. investigation of Khan. A few weeks later, a reporter at the *New York Times*, who had found my article, called me to let me know that White House officials had denied the story and had discouraged the *Times* from pursuing it further.

Frantz and Collins, however, corroborated it. Included on their list of "ten new elements" about Khan is the finding that, by early 2000, the CIA had recruited Tinner, and that he gave the CIA "steady reports on the network's most secretive dealings for more than three years. During that time, Khan was monitored as he provided Libya with plans for a Chinese-origin nuclear warhead and enough equipment to put Libya's nuclear weapons project firmly on the road to success."

U.K. and U.S. officials told me in 2007 that a deliberate, top-level government decision was made not to expose Khan's role in Libya and Iran until as much information as possible about the network's activities had been obtained. Robert Einhorn, former U.S. assistant secretary for nonproliferation, aptly summarized the situation in Levy and Scott-Clark, recalling that the State Department "was always making the case to roll up the network now, to stop it doing more damage. The CIA would make a plausible case to keep

watching, let the network run so eventually we could pick it up by the roots, not just lop off the tentacles." This does not corroborate Levy and Scott-Clark's thesis that there was a concerted effort to cover up disturbing facts and prevent action from being taken.

An American from another walk of life, Alan Greenspan, who over many years was able to move global stock markets by uttering just a few words, said in an interview when he turned eighty-two early this year that, "We are losing influence in the world." The three books discussed in this review cover a span of four decades during which U.S. prestige and power has been in decline—in no small part because of contradictions in U.S. nonproliferation policies and behavior. That dynamic, however, is not reflected in these books. A few Washington eyewitnesses interviewed seem affected by a time warp and to have assumed an inflated view of the ability of the United States to project power in a part of the world where its influence has never been secure and appears to be waning.

None of the books present a clear picture from their sources of what the United States would have had to do to accomplish its nonproliferation goals in Pakistan without setting back other foreign policy objectives that at the time were considered paramount.

Pakistan was not Taiwan or South Korea. And compared to India, "What was going on in Pakistan was far less transparent [to U.S. officials] at all levels," one analyst still in the government told me last year. "The assumption of a few people [in Congress] was that if we cut off aid to Pakistan, we could have stopped them. There was no firm analysis anywhere backing that up. Could we have slowed their procurement down? Maybe. But Pakistan was never an ally. They didn't fully depend on us. They always had a Chinese card up their sleeve, and in their nuclear program they played it."

According to a former U.S. official involved, the United States tried to get both Germany and France to condition their civilian nuclear trade with China in the early 1980s on an agreement by China not to assist Pakistan's nuclear program. The Europeans, he said, "blew us off." The United States then tried to negotiate directly with China to reach the same outcome by getting China to abide by international nuclear nonproliferation norms. After the United States concluded a bilateral nuclear cooperation agreement with China, it obtained fresh intelligence showing additional disturbing Sino-Pakistani nuclear commerce. "We then refused to implement the U.S.-China agreement. This was hardly evidence that the U.S. government did not care about the Pakistani nuclear weapons program," he told me.

An unresolved issue in these books is whether cutting off economic assistance to Pakistan would have halted Islamabad's nuclear weapons activities. The authors fail to address what consequences this action would have had for the war in Afghanistan, and they present no case that a cutoff of U.S. assistance would have forced the Pakistanis to halt their nuclear program and clamp down on Khan.

The three books present a wealth of detail. Some of the material is packaged to prompt the conclusion that Pakistan succeeded in going nuclear, and Khan in exporting the products to rogue regimes, because Pakistan took advantage of one unfocused U.S. administration after another, paralyzed by bureaucratic infighting and engaged in malevolent backstabbing, disinformation, and even obstruction of justice. The big-picture truth may be simpler but less diabolical. The Western world had to make uncomfortable

policy choices trading off pressure on Pakistan's nuclear program for other goals involving the Middle East, China, India, and the Soviet Union.

The former U.S. official said that, "The fact the U.S. government gave priority to securing Pakistan's assistance in prosecuting the war in Afghanistan did not mean that it did not care about, or try to stop, the Pakistani nuclear weapons program. The U.S. worked very hard to halt Khan's procurement efforts and made numerous representations to the Pakistani government stressing that Pakistan's pursuit of nuclear weapons threatened U.S. relations" with Pakistan. The United States, he said, set up an interagency committee in the late 1970s—not in 1986 as the Levy and Scott-Clark book maintains—whose mandate was to interdict the international procurement efforts of Pakistan. "A lot of intelligence and policy officers worked very hard to stop Pakistani procurement worldwide, although in the end we were only able to slow down and increase the cost of the program. To suggest that we just sat by and looked the other way is a distortion of the facts."

### **Pakistan Plays to Win**

Other factors than conspiracy or deceit were at play in decisions taken by U.S. officials to keep what they knew about Pakistan's nuclear program secret.

In 1994, I never anticipated that Pakistani officials would tell me about a clandestine plutonium production reactor project hitherto subject to vague rumors. But at the time I never questioned why they did that. Thirteen years later, sources in the United States suggested to me that Pakistan had a good reason for confirming this project to me when it did.

As the Khushab project geared up during the 1980s, U.S. experts handling intelligence on Pakistan began ringing alarms about it both at the Department of State and at the White House. But during the four years following the inauguration of President George H.W. Bush in 1989, officials in the trenches had been unsuccessful in getting Bush to persuade Pakistan to abandon it. Initial drafts of talking points for the president had included stopping the plutonium project. But the matter never got to the top of the agenda and was never raised by Bush during meetings with Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif.

In 1993, however, Clinton succeeded Bush, amid some uncertainty in Pakistan about how the Democrats would handle the nuclear issue. In the fall of 1994 both sides started preparing for a Bhutto-Clinton summit in Washington. The meeting eventually took place the following April. U.S. sources said that the decision by Pakistani officials in 1994 to expose Khushab was taken to handcuff Clinton from persuading Bhutto to agree to halt the project.

Like their counterparts in Pakistan, for about a decade U.S. officials kept the existence of this project a secret. The reason, one participant in deliberations told me last year, was straightforward. "So long as Khushab wasn't public, there was a chance the president could get them to stop it," he said. "But as soon as the Pakistanis told you it was real, we had no card to play. Once it was out in the open, Pakistan would never back down."