

Living with South Asian Nuclear Reality

by Iftekharuzzaman

THE nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in May 1998 and their self-acclaimed status of nuclear weapon states have caused irreversible strategic transformation in South Asia. These have also posed formidable new challenges to the global non-proliferation regime. Given that there are now for the first time two states with declared weapons capability, which are also actively hostile traditional rivals, the commonplace wisdom is that the South Asian region may any time become a flash point for a nuclear catastrophe – by choice or by accident.

Apart from the fear of a nuclear confrontation between the two, the dilemma for the international community is that the Parties to the NPT cannot ignore emergence of new nuclear weapons states, while it is also impossible to open the treaty for re-negotiation, and increase the number of the nuclear weapon states from five to seven or more.

The Desirable versus the Possible

The Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests were received in both the countries with unprecedented national euphoria and pride on both sides of the borders. India apparently chose to give up all its credit for non-violence and *panch shila*. The tests even led to a shameful reinterpretation of Gandhian non-violence as something for the brave and not cowards, claiming that India should now be able to take a strong stand before the world community. Immediate popular reaction in Pakistan was equally inglorious. If not more. However, the initial enthusiasm gradually dissipated and gave way to more sombre reflections including expressions of grave concern about the security and stability of both the countries as well as the rest of South Asia.

India has subsequently announced its nuclear doctrine, under which a triad of land, sea and air-based "minimum credible deterrence" is to be ensured by deploying 350-400 nuclear weapons over the next three decades. It is only obvious to expect Pakistan to also come up with its own response. Pakistan's nuclear force will obviously be much smaller than India's. Notably, on the one hand India has been pledging that there will be no first use, while on the other it also continues to maintain an aggressive nuclear strategy.

In any case, South Asian nuclear question is no longer a problem of preventing India and Pakistan from assuming nuclear weapons power status – "recognized" or not. It is more a problem of meaningfully engaging India and Pakistan in a process that could lead to their association with the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, and more importantly to a degree of mutual trust and confidence between the two, which is the sine qua non for stability and peace in the region of South Asia.

Most of the international reactions and responses to the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan have been based on a commonplace wisdom of linking the South Asian nuclear problem with the conflict between the two traditional rivals. In some cases it is also viewed as a fall-out of the Sino-Indian rivalry. However, in reality the Indian move was only partially a response from New Delhi to its perceived nuclear threats from immediate neighborhood – China and Pakistan. Pokhran II was an expression of India's challenge to the discriminatory international nuclear regime. More important, the act showed New Delhi's determination to force itself into the "exclusive club" of nuclear weapon states (NWS).

It is not known if the Indian shift, followed by Pakistan's, from a long-standing position of nuclear ambiguity to the present status of self-proclaimed NWS followed careful consideration of the strategic, political and economic costs compared with advantages of ambiguity. Be that as it may, the reality today is that India and Pakistan have achieved the status of nuclear weapons power – recognized or not. What needs to be realized is the gap between the desirable and the possible. It is obviously most desirable to roll back to pre-May 11, 1998 situation – which is rather unlikely, whereas what is possible is to explore ways to prevent further worsening of the situation. The reason a rollback scenario is unlikely is simple. Pakistan would "eat grass" rather than renounce its nuclear option, while India would not do the same before China and other NWS make definite progress towards complete elimination of their nuclear

weapons. While Pakistan's nuclear weapons program is a direct response to India's, the latter's nuclear ambition is only partially addressed to security threats from any particular country including Pakistan and China. It is to a greater extent linked with global nuclear weapons problem. India has made it abundantly clear that the existing *adverse nuclear asymmetry* was not acceptable to it. The underlying rationale of the asymmetry argument is New Delhi's long-nourished major power ambition.

Nuclear Weapons: Status Symbol

Indian elite's perceived destiny and international role as a major power in the region and international influence has always shaped New Delhi's foreign and security policies and actions. Conscious of India's power potential – physical size, population, economy and resource base, industrial and technological strength, strategic location, democratic institutions, historical past – India aspires to play the role of a power that matter in the international arena. India's leading initiatives in the non-aligned movement was to a great extent guided by its aspiration to play a role of global importance.

The reference point for India is not only its neighborhood but also great powers. Nehru was a genuine supporter of nuclear disarmament. But from him also came the inspiration in the successive generations of Indian political leaders to be too proud to accept any status lower than those with whom India considers itself at par. Quite clearly, India's nuclear aspiration as an instrument to ensure its long-standing desire to emerge as a power of global importance is nothing new. There is also apparently a large-scale popular support to India's nuclear program.

Notably, the newly declared Indian nuclear doctrine is silent on identifying specific sources of its nuclear threat. The strategy is targeted at all the nuclear powers, not just Pakistan and China. It clearly states that India's weapons will be deployed against "any state or entity" that threatens India, and hence the ambit of "minimum" and "credible" deterrence it talks about is inclusive of all states that are in possession of nuclear weapons. Hardly anyone in responsible position in India would perhaps stipulate actual use of the weapons against any of these powers, but it is basically the urge to achieve the status of being equal to them that motivates the Indian policy. Although the big five never admit openly, the status symbol attached with the possession of nuclear weapons cannot be underestimated.

A Comprehensive Approach

The above discussion clearly shows that the possibility of renunciation of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan is remote, if not nil, as long as the recognized nuclear powers do not make any progress towards elimination of their own nuclear arsenal. The focus of international initiatives should, therefore, be on a comprehensive approach that could include the following components.

a) Global Nuclear Disarmament

If nuclear tests by India and Pakistan are any indicator for the future, it must be that the global nuclear non-proliferation movement in the true sense cannot be sustained without progress on nuclear disarmament. A basic question underlying the international non-proliferation regime, particularly NPT and a number of other allied processes including CTBT, FMCT, START and NWFFs is whether the ultimate goal of all these is the total elimination of nuclear weapons as provided under article VI of the NPT, or management of the problem created by possession of nuclear weapons. The simple and indisputable answer is: to explore a practicable road map leading to elimination rather than management.

The international community reiterates firm and unequivocal commitment and concrete steps on the part of NWS to eliminate nuclear weapons leading to global nuclear disarmament. The Canberra Commission reported:

Nuclear weapons are held by a handful of states, which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is thus unduly discriminatory and thus unstable. It cannot be sustained. The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to other states to acquire them.

(emphasis added).

The Indian and Pakistani tests provide a clear evidence of the validity of this statement. The same message came from the summit meeting of the South Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held in Colombo which for the first time after the Indian and Pakistani tests brought the Prime Ministers of the two countries together. It is well known that the SAARC has no potential to function as a security forum. However, it did consider the new international security situation created by the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan.

The Advisory Opinion of July 8, 1996 issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) stated with reference to Article VI of the NPT: "There exists obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". No significant movement has taken place in this direction proving the fundamentally flawed nature and limited utility of the non-proliferation regime. The declared recognized nuclear powers have actually moved in opposite direction from disarmament enhancing actual capacity through further sophistication of their arsenal. The United States and Russia have taken some steps to cut their nuclear arsenals, but even if they go ahead with ratification of the START II, the two will be left with enormous advantage

over other nuclear weapons states. These latter are unlikely to participate in any nuclear weapons reduction negotiations until US and Russian stockpiles are reduced to a level comparable to theirs, which remains a remote possibility. Hence the vicious circle. No goals of genuine non-proliferation can be achieved as long as the P5 nuclear weapons powers continue to pay lip service to their commitment under Article VI of the NPT.

Freeze, Reduce, Eliminate

The Canberra Commission identified several practical and achievable steps, which have not been taken. One possible way forward in the present context is that India and Pakistan freeze their nuclear programs at current levels without weaponizing or deploying for an agreed period, while during this agreed period the five NWS could undertake a specific commitment and action plan on a phased timetable for universal nuclear disarmament. As a first step in a process of FRE (freeze, reduce, eliminate) that could follow, all nuclear weapons states could agree on

an upper limit of the number of nuclear explosive devices to be achieved within a specific date – say 1000 devices by the year 2015. Under the terms of this agreement to be signed by all recognized and other nuclear weapons powers the next steps could be to reduce their respective arsenals by an agreed factor in each successive periods leading to the achievement of zero level – say by the year 2020. This multi-step elimination process takes into consideration concerns of all parties involved including deterrence for all recognized weapons powers and countries enjoying their nuclear umbrella for as long as all weapons are not totally eliminated. It also addresses India's insistence on non-discriminatory global nuclear disarmament, which by implication also covers Pakistan's concerns.

In the interim period leading to achieving the zero level, while India and Pakistan cannot be clearly recognized as a nuclear weapon state under the existing framework of NPT, they could be persuaded to sign a protocol under which they would commit to the obligations of the NPT, including safeguards and export controls. After the tests, India and Pakistan sent signals that they may be willing to negotiate signing of the CTBT, though India was initially talking of certain unspecified conditions, and now stressing the need to achieve national consensus, which can

Pakistan tests have led to an extraordinary situation, and if the international community is really keen to see India and Pakistan renounce their nuclear capability, it also deserves extraordinary response. The alternative is a scenario where India will have deployed its 350-400 warheads in next 30 years, with Pakistan ensuring its own numbers.

Ironically, the fait accompli provided by Indian and Pakistani tests may be viewed to have extended renewed imperatives and opportunities for global nuclear disarmament. The tests persuaded the international community of the need to wake up and move with greater degree of seriousness than ever before in dialogue with them, especially India. The level and intensity with which the US, for instance, has engaged in dialogue with India has hardly any parallel in the history of US-India relations. Although the series of dialogues that took place have not produced much in concrete terms, these demonstrate the willingness on both sides not to allow differences dictate the terms of negotiations. The Kargil conflict of June-July this year brought forth a coincidence of Indo-US perspectives in ensuring regional stability, especially against a backdrop of widespread doubts about credible command and control as well as safeguards in South Asian nuclear capability. While Washington was found to be

huge step for the five to take but if we are to avoid the growth of enormous dangers, it will be inevitable. ... Once the big five had agreed that their long term goal was to eliminate nuclear weapons, the problems posed by India and Pakistan would be less complex, India and Pakistan will lose their moral arguments for retaining nuclear weapons and India would lose its rationale that China will always pose a nuclear threat".

b) International Legal Instrument for Security of NNWS

South Asia today is clearly under a nuclear shadow with no active and reliable instruments available for mutual confidence, communication and transparency of information between the two actively hostile neighbors sharing disputable borders. The smaller countries of the region have been thrown into a state of helplessness and despair. Prospect of improving trade and economic relations between India and Pakistan within or outside the framework of SAARC, about which expectations grew high recently has suffered a serious setback. The idea of economic ties working as a confidence building measure has been rendered irrelevant in the South Asian context.

Irrespective of whether or not the region will face a direct nuclear catastrophe, there is certainly going to be a balance of terror. An indication of this came from the way the smaller

curity Council did not consider, for instance, any collective action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The tests did shock other international forums like Non-aligned Movement, which, however, failed to come up with any clear position on the question. It is indeed difficult to imagine how the international community can make sanctions work against countries that possess nuclear capability, especially India.

Economic sanctions were certainly expensive, but from the very beginning it was doubtful if the kind of sanctions that were being imposed were going to help rolling back to the pre-May 1998 situation. Notably, the economic sanctions focused almost exclusively on financial assistance, both bilateral and multilateral, whereas there was hardly any initiative that could affect trade and investment relations. In case of Pakistan, sanctions had indeed provided some external and externally dependent economy a severe blow. But the Pakistani economy had already been surviving on borrowed money and borrowed time for long, with or without its nuclear program. Sanctions have certainly caused a temporary setback, and functioned as an instrument of pressure, but the linkage of nuclear capacity with national pride not only accounted for the emotions attached at the respective national levels but also rendered the financial and other costs bearable.

In case of India, which is a huge economy but has relatively smaller, though not negligible, external economic dependence, sanctions and the associated international pressures perhaps provided New Delhi a moral and political humiliation rather than any substantive economic setback that prompted India to launch its own diplomatic counter-offensive. But it was always unthinkable that the cost of economic sanctions that were imposed would be unbearable for India in practical terms.

On the other hand, one inevitable outcome of such sanctions is the loss of space for negotiations for objectives that sanctions are supposed to achieve. Not too long after the sanctions became effective, the US Senate authorized the President to waive some of these to give it room to maneuver in nuclear bargaining with Indian and Pakistani Governments. Japan also gradually moved away from its initial position of punitive sanctions to constructive dialogues. Indeed, for the NWS as well as other leading members of the international community maintaining a stable relationship with India and Pakistan with proven nuclear weapons capability is clearly more desirable rather than isolating them, especially because of their active mutual hostility.

Given the history of confrontational relationship between the two, now with the nuclear dimension added, it is more important than ever before to facilitate effective avoidance measures. This demands possession of advanced technologies and devices that can prevent miscalculation, misinformed or even accidental use of nuclear weapons. Many experts see the possibility of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan not by a conscious and a well-thought-out design but as a result of misperception and miscalculation of each other's moves or even unintended consequences. If indeed this happens it will have as much to do with the lack of communication and transparency as the lack of relevant expertise and technology. There is little information on whether the weapons capabilities in possession of Pakistan and India are equipped with fully dependable safety devices. In this connection it will be imperative upon the recognized nuclear weapons states to facilitate access to technologies that would ensure safety of whatever nuclear weapons capabilities India and Pakistan are in possession of. In the absence of proper safeguards the Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons may indeed provide the ultimate and most expensive evidence of the failure of the deterrence value of such weapons.

d) Confidence Building – Rethinking Security

Indian and Pakistan must be able to work out specific and achievable confidence building measures that could lead to a stable relationship. A good number of mutually agreed CBM instruments are already in place between India and Pakistan. The problem lies in their practical implication and use. The Lahore Declaration and Memorandum of Understanding of February 1999 included a series of arms control and confidence building measures – both conventional and nuclear. If duly implemented, in addition

tion to security and confidence building in the region, these could contribute to global non-proliferation objectives. Not surprisingly in Indo-Pak relations, the spirit of the Declaration and prospect of any tangible outcomes of it met with serious setbacks by the Kargil conflict that followed within five months.

Then came the recently announced Indian nuclear doctrine creating incentives for an arsenal far larger than necessary for mere deterrence. First, it proposes the creation of a triad of forces on land, sea, and in the air, mimicking the superpowers. But the triad – and the multitude of delivery systems associated with it – is proposed not so much because it was carefully determined that such a structure would ensure India's security and stability, but perhaps more as a consequence of inter-service rivalry for allocation of military budget.

Second, by not specifying what a "minimum deterrent" is, and by calling for robust and survivable second-strike forces, the doctrine endorses an open-ended arsenal. Someone will always be able to argue that a number of weapons is not sufficient because, of course, India's forces will not be developed in isolation. Pakistan and possibly China will respond, leading to a counter-response by India and so on. The result will be an arms race, with each side's actions – taken in the name of increasing security – leading to more insecurity for the other.

The document is unidimensional, and not in conformity with contemporary knowledge about national security problems. Ignoring the whole gamut of other factors, it is preoccupied with only one dimension of national security – the quantitative and the qualitative aspect of the nuclear deterrence. What India and Pakistan need is not a nuclear doctrine, but a national security strategy that would include multi-dimensional aspects of security concerns – political, social, economic as well as defence. Imperatives for realistic, non-polemic and non-confrontational assessment of defence requirements cannot be more urgent anywhere in the world than in India and Pakistan.

Security discourse in India and Pakistan, and hence, in the rest of South Asia has always been distorted because defence or military build up and strength have been perceived as the instrument of self-assertion and as the currency of status and power. This is wrong and outdated. India and Pakistan need to adopt non-offensive defence strategy that would abandon the policy and practice of using defence preparedness as an instrument of power projection and confrontational foreign and security relation, and would instead adopt a policy of developing military strength for purely self-defence purposes. Accordingly, build-up and modernization of military strength – conventional as well as nuclear where applicable – must be based on objective and multi-disciplinary assessment of external threats, relative national priorities, as well as financial and economic capabilities and constraints.

Equally important are imperatives of activism of the civil society groups and institutions in transforming the security and strategic discourse in the region. The growing frequency of "track two" initiatives in the region is encouraging, and must be encouraged. Institutions and groups engaged in research and education should particularly focus on sensitizing younger generation of South Asians as agents of change. The role of media and education are vital; it is particularly important to review and rethink knowledge and information systems that could help a transformation process.

The common South Asian civil society idea on what India and Pakistan plan to do with their nuclear weapons capabilities. There is hardly any doubt that nuclearization has made India and Pakistan – and thereby the rest of South Asia – more insecure than ever before. Whatever these weapons are supposed to do, these cannot certainly address the security concern of the common South Asian, nor can they help the cause of regional stability, development and cooperation in the region. The peoples of the region in their search to know where do they stand in the nuclear space must work towards strengthening the regional civil society movements. Although such movements may not go too far in making the region free of nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future, they can at least help rethink security and promote a human-centred security discourse.

The author is the Executive Director, Bangladesh Freedom Foundation.

The common South Asian citizens have no idea on what India and Pakistan plan to do with their nuclear weapons capabilities. There is hardly any doubt that nuclearization has made India and Pakistan – and thereby the rest of South Asia – more insecure than ever before.

be a convenient ploy to delay the process. Both New Delhi and Islamabad have pledged voluntary moratorium on further tests. They have also indicated their willingness to join the Conference on Disarmament for Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty negotiations. It can also be expected that they would be willing to conform to other related instruments including the Missile Technology Control Regime. By joining these international regimes, which do not require giving up nuclear weapons capability, India and Pakistan could avert further international condemnation. Although the failure of US to ratify the CTBT has provided India, and hence Pakistan, the scope to be reticent, these are options, especially for India, to be in a morally stronger position to work towards its long-proffered goal of nuclear disarmament.

The proposed FRE scheme to achieve total elimination of nuclear weapons in 20 years, which also for the first time links Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons programs with that of the P5, may appear ambitious, but if the Indian and

sympathetic to India in the conflict, unusually for India it had no hesitation in accepting a US role in ending the conflict. The point here is, in the period since the nuclear tests in the region the atmosphere in dialogue with South Asia has changed where the international community is more interested to co-opt India and Pakistan in the non-proliferation regime rather than treat them as pariah. This is not an unmitigated blessing, as it can lead to a situation where the world becomes used to South Asian nuclear status, further restraining the possibility of global nuclear disarmament. The US having failed to ratify the CTBT and taking refuge to voluntary adherence to the treaty, has for instance, lost a main source of disagreement with India, which in turn having achieved the status of a nuclear weapons power for all practical purposes, and having imposed voluntary moratorium on testing, would have developed an interest in maintaining the status quo and ensuring further horizontal proliferation an objective that brings India closer to the US perspectives.

The United States is indeed clearly proceeding towards accepting the reality of India possessing nuclear weapons in exchange of New Delhi signing the CTBT. The US was reported to have eased some of the last remaining sanctions including the ones against 51 Indian companies allowing them to source goods and technologies from Washington.

The official was also quoted to have said that New Delhi could have a minimum nuclear deterrent "at the level it chooses" even if signed the CTBT. Not surprisingly, this would be viewed in India as a step towards Washington's de facto acceptance of India's status as a nuclear weapons power. The Indian External Affairs Ministry termed the development as "self-evident truths", and said "It has always been clear that India will determine and define its security requirements and nuclear deterrent". In the meantime, while the new military rulers of Pakistan were reported to be willing to sign the CTBT by mid-January 2000 following extensive behind the scenes informal diplomacy with the US, Islamabad has made it clear that it reserved the right to carry out more tests if India rejected the treaty.

The real challenge, therefore, is to make progress on complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons and deterrence are a historical dead-end. Nuclearism is also a "psychopathological syndrome", a "drive for potency and genocidal mentality" that motivates even people ideologically committed to highest forms of democratic institutions and governance to participate in a worst form of authoritarianism. All nuclear weapons states – collectively and severally – must be able to demonstrate that they are committed to global peace and stability, and not disaster. They have to "recognize that their long-term security interests would be better served by ridding the world of nuclear weapons, and hence, acting on that basis. In other words nuclear weapons should be treated similarly to the other two categories of weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, and eliminated. This, of course, is a

States of the region responded to the tests. Countries like Bangladesh and Maldives reiterated their commitment to a nuclear weapon-free world but refrained from making any direct critical comment on the Indian and Pakistani tests. The visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to New Delhi and Islamabad in the wake of the tests was clearly an evidence of her concern for the impact that nuclearization would have on the stability of the region. But in consultation that she held with her Indian counterpart she refrained from raising the issue clearly because it was not to be well received by the hosts. Sri Lanka, which has always been at the forefront of non-proliferation movement, took a position that was tantamount to endorsing India's "right" to conduct the tests. They did so largely because they have no capacity or will to antagonize India, especially when they are always concerned of being penalized in their bilateral relations if any move they take is not liked in New Delhi.

But they did so also because of the absence of any legally binding international instrument providing security assurance against use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS). The absence of such an instrument is particularly unjustified in the face of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 8, 1996, that use or threat of use of nuclear weapons are contrary to the international law. The Indian and Pakistani tests have once again underscored the need to redouble international efforts towards a universally binding international legal instrument to provide specific and complete security assurances to non-nuclear weapons states. The South Asian NNWS need support of the international community, especially the powerful G-8, as well as the United Nations and other international forums in persuading India and Pakistan to sign a binding legal instrument to guarantee their security against any possible use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This provision could be built into an agreement that may be reached between India and Pakistan to promote nuclear stability in the region.

c) Positive Incentives

As widely expected, international sanctions on India and Pakistan did not cause any major collapse of the economies of the two, especially the former. The tests resulted in widespread international condemnation. But beyond that there was no concerted international action of specific nature. Economic sanctions were imposed by the United States because it had to do so mainly thanks to domestic legal obligations. Japan followed the suit primarily also to meet its own constitutional obligations. The other leading members of the United Nations Security Council or G-8 showed no interest in taking any concrete action. The UN Security Council Resolution of June 5, 1998 declared the tests as a threat to international peace and security. It refused to confer nuclear weapons status to India and Pakistan and called upon them to sign the CTBT, and refrain from weaponization and deployment. Apart from this there was no indication of how India and Pakistan could be persuaded to oblige to such appeals. The Se-

DIPLOMATIC JUDO

Continued from page 8

precise form of the amendment is not important as long as it is acceptable to at least one-third of NPT parties. A simple amendment could, for example, be based on Article I of the Biological Weapons Convention, and would just add a new article to the NPT saying:

"Recognising their obligations under Article VI, each State party to the Treaty undertakes never in any circumstances to develop, produce, stockpile, or otherwise acquire or retain:

i) Nuclear Weapons or fissile materials, whatever their origin or method of production, that can be used for producing nuclear weapons.

ii) Equipment or means of delivery designed to use such nuclear weapons or materials for hostile purposes or in armed conflict.

iii) The verification procedures for realizing these are contained in the protocol to the Treaty."

The Conference that would be called to discuss such an amendment would become, in fact, a negotiating forum with a mandate to abolish nuclear weapons. Every signatory to the NPT would have to attend the conference as an obligation under the terms of the NPT.

Calling such a conference to amend the NPT offers a way for the NNWS to exert leverage on the nuclear disarmament process. The enormous investment of political capital that the NNWS have made in the NPT in an effort to preserve their nuclear weapons hegemony can be used against them. With the whole world watching, the NWS would have to decide just how much of a cornerstone the NPT is to maintaining the current order.

Taking the First Step

The initial impetus and support needed for the proposed amendment process is unlikely to emerge spontaneously. Creating the conditions would require a major campaign by the international peace movement and States committed to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

There are signs that the forces that could be part of such a campaign are stirring. For example, there is the New Agenda Coalition comprising Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, and Sweden, as well as the Middle Powers Initiative, created by a number of peace movement groups, including International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, International Peace Bureau, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, State of the World Forum, which seeks to "urge the leaders of several key middle-power States to press the nuclear-weapon States to negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons." The NPT amendment process outlined here could serve as a mechanism for these initiatives to help further the process of disarmament that they are committed to.

For instance, the New Agenda Coalition States could propose a resolution at the UN General Assembly calling on all States party to the NPT to "consult among themselves as to the most appropriate method to take advantage of Article VIII of the NPT for the conversion of the NPT into a Nuclear Weapons Convention". This could be followed by one that calls on signatories to the NPT to "take practical steps leading to the convening of a conference at the earliest possible date to consider amendment of the NPT that would convert it into a nuclear weapons convention."

Conclusion

The argument outlined here offers a way out from the dynamic that has emerged only too clearly since the end of the cold war. Changing this dynamic will require changing the rules of the game of disarmament. The overwhelming majority of the international community can, if it chooses, exercise its right to dub those who insist on maintaining nuclear weapons at all costs, as being outside the pale.

The authors are Research Fellows, Princeton University, USA.

LAW AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Continued from page 8

meeting was hosted by Hiti Tau, a local network of NGOs dedicated to supporting indigenous culture, anti-nuclear activism and support for test site workers and other victims of testing, independence, and economic self-sufficiency, including through enterprises like

vanilla and mango (coconut) oil cooperatives. Women are well represented among the Hiti Tau leadership.

The author is associated with

Haque Appeal for Peace,

International Association of

Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms,

Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear

Policy.

The topic of our next issue is: **Power and Public Safety**. Creative suggestions are invited from our esteemed readers. Please send your materials to: Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, Executive Director, Centre for Alternatives, Room No 431, Lecture Theatre, Arts Building, Dhaka University, Dhaka-1000. Tel: 9661900-19, Ext 4550; Fax (8802) 8316769; E-mail: imtiaz@bangla.net.