

Deception - Pakistan, The United States and the Global Nuclear Weapons
Conspiracy by Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark.
Atlantic Books 2007.

By the time of writing this review, May 2008, the final months of George W Bush's supremely disastrous presidency of the United States of America is drawing to a merciful close. Book after book on the Iraq invasion, the 'war on terror' and internal US politics have detailed just why the 43rd President of America is almost universally deemed to be the worst ever, the impact of whose 8 years of misgovernance of his own country and his malevolent impact on the rest of the world will be felt for decades after he has returned to well-deserved obscurity.

Deception, an analysis of the development by Pakistan of nuclear weapons technology, and then the weapons themselves, from the mid-1970s onwards, demonstrates that George W's administration is not the only one that could be accused of cavalier and criminal negligence in its international dealings. Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark have done an intense investigation of Pakistan's nuclear industry, and especially its clandestine moves to acquire, first nuclear weapons technology, and then to manufacture nuclear bombs. Championed by both civilian and military rulers, the Pakistani drive to be a nuclear power was master-minded by a scientist called Abdul Qadeer Khan; a strange and flawed man who became the ultimate fall-guy after his work for his country became internationally known and horrified the world.

There are many aspects of Deception that make it disturbing: the way in which lax security and passive or active collusion between Khan and certain European companies enabled him to get detailed information on crucial centrifuge technology, the support given to Pakistan by China, and the links between Pakistan and other putative or existing nuclear nations. But what is far and away the most alarming and infuriating is the detail of the collusion, deception, dishonesty and obfuscation of successive US administrations, under Presidents Carter, Reagan, Bush 41 and Bush 43, that characterises the relationship between America and Pakistan, at no time more so than since 9/11 when Pervez Musharraf became one of Bush's key allies against Islamist terrorism.

The Pakistanis have profited hugely from this devious relationship, and the upshot of it all is that the world, and particularly the parts of it inhabited by Western nations, are now at greater risk than ever of a nuclear attack in one of their major cities, technology courtesy of Holland, Britain, Germany and others, political cover courtesy of the USA, delivery courtesy of Al Qaeda.

It is impossible not to conclude this fascinating, well-written and immaculately researched book without feeling very worried indeed about the future.

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