

Book Review
By
Majid Mahmood

Feroz Hassan Khan, *Eating Grass: the Making of Pakistani Bomb* (California: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp 493

Brigadier (rtd) Feroz Hassan Khan's book titled **Eating Grass; the Making of Pakistani Bomb** traces the history of Pakistan's nuclear program and offers a useful insight to its reader about the events that enabled Pakistan to become the member of a select group of nations possessing nuclear weapons. Besides some well known scientists, the book also highlights and appreciates the role of scores of little known personalities whose resolve and commitment in the face of adverse situations made it possible for Pakistan to attain a prestigious status at the world stage.

The historical account of Pakistan's nuclear program furnished by Feroz reflects the resilience of Pakistan as a nation, which is evident in the book's title i.e. "eating grass", that it is willing to pay any price to protect its nuclear program from perceived threats from hostile regional and international environments. This resilience of Pakistani nation also stands as a central message of the book.

The book 'Eating Grass, the Making of Pakistani Bomb' in many ways is a significant contribution to the existing discourse on the evolution of Pakistan's nuclear program. First, because the majority of historical accounts before this book lacked the discussion on overall strategic context of the region which continue to change over the period of time and directly challenged Pakistan's nuclear program.

Second, this is a Pakistani perspective, which challenges all the Western discourses on Pakistan's nuclear program. Third, description of Pakistani decision makers on critical junctures where deterrent seemed challenged by regional and international events is comprehensive.

The book does not shy away from dealing with the nuclear proliferation issue in the story. It explains how and why Pakistan surmounted numerous obstacles to master the nuclear fuel cycle, pursuing both the uranium enrichment and plutonium routes, especially after 1974 when the international nonproliferation regime tried to stop, and punish, Pakistan for India's nuclear explosion.

Any history summarizing decades of endeavor for developing nuclear weapons can be expected to contain gaps. Those actively involved in the project will probably find the role of Pakistani diplomats especially in the crucial years leading up to the nuclear tests in 1998 missing from the account. This was the period of wide-ranging sanctions and unprecedented international pressure to compel Pakistan to change course and an account of how this onslaught was countered by diplomacy.

Lastly, it is difficult to agree with the author regarding the future of a nuclear Pakistan if a radical rightwing government assumes power in the country. While the author has aptly put forth the factors that will determine the role of nuclear weapons in Pakistan's security and foreign policy in future, the assertion that a radical right wing government in power would jeopardize its nuclear program is merely speculative. The author provides no evidence of perceived inability to understand global politics and manage international diplomacy of such a government. Moreover, cross spectrum consensus in Pakistan over its nuclear program is one of many evidences that can be cited in this regard.

The language of the text is simple and easy to understand for the readers, something that is difficult considering the topic under discussion. The flow of narrative is coherent, gripping and consistent. The book provides stimulus to young scholars within Pakistan to engage in research on strategic issues/nuclear policy and to increase their informed contribution on the subject. For international audience, the book will indeed be a well researched alternate narrative against less informed perspective on Pakistan's nuclear program.