



America and the Islamic Bomb: The Deadly Compromise

By David Armstrong, Joseph J. Trento

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The turbulent nation of Pakistan, where Osama bin Laden is far more popular than George W. Bush, possesses a nuclear arsenal built with technology from the United States and Europe, and financed with the help of America's allies in the Muslim world. Its dictatorial president, Pervez Musharraf, faces widespread civil opposition, and militant extremists threaten his life every day. The nuclear weapons programs in North Korea and Iran, as well as Libya's now-defunct atomic effort, relied heavily on expertise and materials provided by the nuclear smuggling network headed by Pakistan's national hero, A.Q. Khan. The United States – from Carter and Reagan, through Bush I, Clinton, and the current president – and other Western governments knew all along that Pakistan was first developing and then exporting nuclear technology, yet consistently turned a blind eye in order to gain Pakistan's cooperation during the Cold War and, more recently, in the war on terror. As a result of this Faustian bargain, nuclear technology has been allowed to spread far and wide, dramatically increasing the chances that terrorists or unfriendly regimes will someday get their hands on an atomic device.

David Armstrong and Joseph Trento provide a new and unrivalled perspective on the so-called A.Q. Khan nuclear black market scandal, including exclusive accounts from customs agents, intelligence analysts, and other ground-level front-line operatives. Documented in these pages are maddening experiences of official interference and breathtaking instances of indifference and incompetence. Trento and Armstrong name names and reveal stunning new information about proliferators in an exposé that is sure to generate headlines. This secret history of how the Islamic bomb was developed and how nuclear arms have proliferated is as fascinating as it is disturbing.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #3284094 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Steerforth
- Published on: 2007-10-23
- Released on: 2007-10-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.00" w x 5.97" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This chilling exposé from National Security News Service bureau chief Armstrong and author Trento (*The Secret History of the CIA*) chronicles American foreign policy in relation to nuclear weapons development worldwide, and particularly in Pakistan. Beginning with Truman's Atomic Energy Act of 1946 and ending with George W. Bush's hunt for nonexistent WMDs in Iraq, the history is as interesting as it is infuriating. Operating under Cold War paranoia in the 1960s and '70s, the U.S. saw Pakistan as a conveniently located ally and so, in addition to providing hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid, helped jumpstart the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, which gave the country its nuclear capabilities. What followed was decades of mismanagement, culminating in the revelation that Pakistani national hero A.Q. Khan was deeply involved in the nuclear black market; the authors contend that the U.S. government knew all about Khan's negotiations with Libya, Iran and North Korea, but ignored it to keep Pakistan an ally, first against the Communists and now in the "War on Terror." This accessible history should raise awareness of the many devil's bargains that the U.S. has struck in the seemingly vain hope of keeping control over perhaps the greatest man-made threat to humanity.

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Review

"Provide[s] essential information for understanding the nuclear dangers posed by Pakistan." — *The New York Review of Books*

"A chilling account of the political calculus that led five successive US presidents to turn a blind eye" to Pakistan's nuclear smuggling. — *The Christian Science Monitor*

"This chilling exposé chronicles American foreign policy in relation to nuclear weapons development worldwide, and particularly in Pakistan. Beginning with Truman's Atomic Energy Act of 1946 and ending with George W. Bush's hunt for nonexistent WMDs in Iraq, the history is as interesting as it is infuriating. Operating under Cold War paranoia in the 1960s and '70s, the U.S. saw Pakistan as a conveniently located ally and so, in addition to providing hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid, helped jumpstart the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, which gave the country its nuclear capabilities. What followed was decades of mismanagement, culminating in the revelation that Pakistani national hero A.Q. Khan was deeply involved in the nuclear black market; the authors contend that the U.S. government knew all about Khan's negotiations with Libya, Iran and North Korea, but ignored it to keep Pakistan an ally, first against the Communists and now in the 'War on Terror.' This accessible history should raise awareness of the many devil's bargains that the U.S. has struck in the seemingly vain hope of keeping control over perhaps the greatest man-made threat to humanity." — *Publishers Weekly*

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"Armstrong and Trento argue convincingly that Pakistan's leaking and selling of atomic secrets across the region have increased nuclear proliferation by 'small, weak states' and the likelihood of 'terrorists or unfriendly regimes getting their hands on an atomic device.' The United States 'aided and abetted' this exchange by remaining allied to Pakistan, which harbored one of the worst culprits, A.Q. Khan, leader of a nuclear smuggling ring, and by not taking a stronger stance against nuclear proliferation. . . . Written by experienced journalists . . . combines research with a journalistic flair. . . . and invites a wide readership from

a lay audience." — *Library Journal*

“ . . . a ground-level look at the operational failures of U.S., British and other intelligence services in assessing the Khan network. . . . David Armstrong and Joseph Trento reveal multiple scuttled investigations and chronicle the infighting within several U.S. administrations, beginning under Reagan in the 1980s, over what to do about Khan and, more broadly, Pakistan, whose cooperation was deemed vital in fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. Rivetingly, Armstrong and Trento also recount the deals that Khan made . . . to supply uranium centrifuges to several countries. And they tell the story of . . . a successful British effort to uproot the tentacles of Khan's illicit purchasing network from Malaysia to Spain and France.”

— *Washington Post Book World*

About the Author

David Armstrong is the bureau chief of the National Security News Service in Washington, D.C. He is an award-winning investigative reporter and has written extensively on national security and intelligence matters as well as national politics, foreign policy, terrorism, media, finance, and the environment. He was formerly the editor of the *Texas Observer* and his work has appeared in a wide range of publications including *Harper's*, *The New Republic*, and several journalism anthologies.

Joseph Trento is the author or co-author of seven nonfiction books, including *Unsafe at Any Altitude* and *The Secret History of the CIA*, and an internationally known investigative reporter for over thirty-five years. He now serves as the president of the Public Education Center, a nonpartisan and nonprofit foundation that conducts investigative reporting on environmental and national security matters.

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