

INDIA AND ITS NUCLEAR POLICY

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During the early period of independence, leaders of Indian National Congress, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, vocally expressed their opposition to nuclear weapons. However, later on, they were convinced that nuclear technology has a role to play in the economic and industrial development of the country. Also, in a lesser degree, they were convinced that nuclear weapon technology might have a role to play in the national defense, if efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament should fail. These somewhat, contradictory stands are still visible today, as they have been through much of the last six decades of Indian Nuclear Policy.

Therefore, considering the perpetual existence of conflict and conflict situation in the Indian Sub-Continent, the need for pursuing nuclear technology has been considered important. Indeed, India's decision to build a nuclear force was taken only in late 1980s, much after it had become clear that Pakistan, with Chinese technological assistance, had made rapid advances in its nuclear weapon programme.

Indian leaders generally considered nuclear weapons, at best, a necessary evil. They sought for total nuclear disarmament. Prime Minister Morarji Desai shut down Indian Nuclear Programme for the time being, and even Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee, who ordered the conduct of nuclear test in 1998, voted siding with Morarji Desai against restarting of the weapon programme in 1979. This in other words, implies that Indian leaders are persistently against having nuclear weapons. It is the growing nuclear threats from across the border and a progressively un-

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accommodating global nuclear order which force India to move towards nuclearization of its arsenal weapon state in 1990s.

From 1960 to 1990, the question that had been under discussion and that had been the agenda of academic and intellectual debate was, 'should India pursue the weapon programme'. But since 1990 when India openly declared itself as a nuclear weapon state, though not within the purview of Article I of NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty), the debate over Indian nuclear issue has shifted from "should India pursue the weapon programme to what India should do with nuclear weapons. Right from 1980s, Indian nuclear strategist Sunderji started writing on 'In what way nuclear weapons could be made useful, and the question, 'should India go for nuclear weapon programme has become out of text and irrelevant. The topic or active consideration now is, now India could make best use of its nuclear weapons. The two Indian nuclear strategists, Subramayam and Sundarji maintain that "the kind of bloated nuclear arsenals that the US and Russia (Soviet Union) developed during the Cold War period were unnecessary and wasteful. Nuclear deterrence could be had at a far more cheaper cost, with a relatively small arsenal." This view expressed by the two nuclear strategists suggests a more emphasis on the political utility of the weapon and its deterrence, rather than war fighting capability. This view of the political utility of the weapon of mass destruction is also to be seen in arguments on nuclear weapons for providing political space in the international arena, and for making the weapons to provide deterrence capacity of the country, precisely, "strategic autonomy" This provides argument in support of Indian Foreign Minister who said "not surprisingly, the eventual Indian nuclear deterrent emphasized small numbers and a capability to reliable, rather than building a deterrence force that would have parity with other nuclear weapon states."

In any case, India does not seem to be for building a credible nuclear force with an overwhelming number of the weapons, but it is for building a minimum nuclear deterrent force with a minimum number of war heads. However, in this context, other considerations like, Pakistan and China factor should be a guiding principle in the formulation of Indian nuclear policy and doctrine. India developed

nuclear weapon, not because India could face nuclear attack by the US, the UK or Russia, but rather because India has two hostile nuclear weapon state neighbors, Pakistan and China. As for China, India has a long standing border disputes, both in the eastern and western sectors; also India has faced a humiliating Chinese attack in the eastern sector in 1962. This is a manifestation of the fact that India could face a similar or even far more humiliating attack, anytime, any moment. With Pakistan, right from the creation of the two states in 1947, India and Pakistan had perpetually been having conflicting relation, which escalated into two major wars in 1965 and 1971. Now, both India and Pakistan are nuclear weapon states having their own nuclear policy. India, after having the weapon, has to have a kind of nuclear doctrine that would ensure the full deterrent capability against both China and Pakistan; and not minimum deterrent capability.

India not being a party to NPT regime criticized the Treaty for being discriminatory in nature. But India is at the same time, a country with “exemplary record on non-proliferation of four decades and more” Therefore, Indian view of the spread of the nuclear weapons is fundamentally different from the more, may be, better arguments of proliferation optimists such as Kenneth Waltz or even the radical rejection of the concept of non-proliferation by China prior to 1991. India do not think that nuclear weapons have stabilized the region, but rather, it thinks that nuclear weapons in the hands of Pakistan increase the nuclear risk in the region, because Pakistan is seen as irresponsible.

On missile defense, if nuclear weapons are essentially political weapons, not weapons for fighting the war, then there seems to be no need for developing missile defense system; because missile defenses are needed only if one assumes that nuclear weapons are going to be used. India, for that matter, pursues its missile defense programme (BMD) since atleast the mid 1990s. This programme, perhaps is in response to Pakistan’s acquisition of nuclear delivery system with the help of China. Therefore, it has to be understood that nuclear weapon, ballistic missile system, ballistic missile defense system, all belongs to one and the same entity. If a country has the nuclear weapon, it has to have the delivery system, the defense

system, etc. It is for this reason that India pursues nuclear weapons, its delivery system as well as its defense system. The same is the case with Pakistan, China and the rest of nuclear weapon states. The search for an appropriate ballistic missile system by India has been a continuing process despite changes in political leadership. India has sought to possess the Russia built S-300, the Israeli-American Arrow, and the US built Patriot Ballistic Missile system. However, in spite of India's persistent desire for missile defense system, there is no mentioning of the system in the official nuclear doctrine of India. As a matter of fact, none of the party in power since 1995, have given any reason why they want the missile defense system, while at the same time, seeking to possess the same persistently. Therefore, what could be seen in the Indian nuclear doctrine is the presence of elements of inconsistency; nuclear weapons are essentially political weapons and unusable militarily by India, but other states might not hesitate to use the weapon militarily. As a consequence, India both opposes the spread of the weapons and pursues BMD.

Changing Nuclear Doctrine:

Indian nuclear doctrine has undergone changes in its declaratory form since its inception in August, 1999. The Indian nuclear doctrine was produced by the National Security Advisory Board, which is a group of non-governmental experts. However, the government has suspected the credibility of the Board. However, there are no major differences between the report of the NSAB and what had been stated by government officials, including officials at the pre-ministerial level. The only difference between the two is the NSAB discussed the need for a nuclear triad for India, which the government had not acknowledged. But what has been suggested by NSAB is logical and unsurprising.

The official nuclear doctrine of India was released in January, 2003 and the released nuclear doctrine stuck to some of the main elements of the 1999 doctrine with certain important variation. The followings are the main elements of Indian Nuclear Doctrine.

The Indian nuclear doctrine, released in 1999, suggested for an unspecified minimum force, which, however, be credible and survivable. India, according to the

doctrine, would not be a party to first use the weapons (no first use of nuclear weapons or, and also would not use nuclear weapon against non-nuclear weapon states. (Negative Security Assurances.) The doctrine also stated that India will maintain a credible nuclear force that would enable India to survive the first nuclear attack by any nuclear powered state against it. Also, it suggested the need for strict political control of India's nuclear forces. Also mention was made for India to get involved itself in the disarmament. These are all there in the unofficial nuclear doctrine released by NSAB in 1999. What is new here is, however, the need for nuclear triad of aircraft, long range ballistic missiles and submarine launched ballistic missiles.

The government in 2003, released a brief statement that revealed some aspects of the official nuclear doctrine (349 words only). Its unclear, however, that when the so called official nuclear doctrine was formulated, who formulated it and it is also not clear as to whether it is related to 1999 doctrine, prepared by NSAB. The official press statement also added that many of the elements of Indian nuclear doctrine was the same as that of 1999. But a number of caveats had been added, and some pledges, specially that of 'No First Use' (NFU) and Non-use against non-nuclear state had been diluted. Details of command and control were also mentioned in the doctrine.

As seen in the press statement, there are atleast three variations in the new doctrine. First the word, "massive" retaliation was used to replace the word 'punitive' retaliation to nuclear attack on India the word, being used to mean the same in extend and severity of the relation there seems to be no need for replacing the original word. It is not clear, however, as to why this change was introduced, and whether this was a change in the true sense of the term. A cynical yet plausible interpretation is that this was simply a public braggadocio, specially, since the press release came in the wake of India's failed attempt at corrosive diplomacy in the territories attack on the Indian Parliament in December, 2001.

The second significant variation was the dilution of both India's No-First-Use pledge as well as the pledge for no attack on non- nuclear states (NSA). There is a

dilution of the previous, 1999 text in that "India will consider the use of nuclear weapon in respond to a major attack on India or on India forces in anywhere with chemical or biological weapons against India. This certainly is a dilution of both NFU and pledge as well as the pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states. This is dilution of the No-First use pledge, become India releases the right to use nuclear weapon, first against nuclear states which use or decide to use chemical or biological weapons against India.

for e.g. if Pakistan uses chemical weapons against India, India, instead of responding the attack with the same chemical weapons, i could use nuclear weapon against Pakistan In such case, India would be violating its No-First Use pledge. Secondly, India reserves the right to use its nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states but chemical or biological weapons states. In other words, this is a dilution of non-use against non-nuclear weapon states. Explanation – if Myanmar launches an attack on India using chemical weapons, though Myanmar is not in possession of nuclear weapons, India could consider using its nuclear weapons for retaliatory attack against Myanmar, Thereby, violating its pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon state. These contradictions have either not been thought about by those who framed the Indian nuclear doctrine or else they have not considered it seriously.

The first argument for this contradiction appears to be that there is a high possibility that India may face a chemical or biological attack by non-nuclear state on which your deterrence depends, might not be very credible in the future. However, whatever it is, the 2003 press statement remains the only official statement of India's nuclear doctrine.

Though the exact nuclear capability is not known, it is an undeniable fact that since 1998, India developed and posses nuclear weapon in its arsenal. However, India is believed to have possessed some 100 nuclear warheads and even has the capability to develop as many as 1000 nuclear warheads. India has significant stockpiles of fissile materials as much as ten tons, which if use manufacturing nuclear weapon would be sufficient for manufacturing atleast 1000 nuclear warheads. This

is, however, only the capability aspect, and does not in any way suggest that India could be happy that much nuclear weapons nor there is no need for that much war heads as of now.

Possessing nuclear weapon without having the delivery system will be meaningless. India's progress in developing and possessing the delivery system of nuclear weapon is slow and steady. though the Indian guided missile development programme is almost a 25 years old, it is yet to develop a long-range missile capable of targeting all cities of China whereas, China has already have the capability to target the entire length and breadth of India. Even, the present under-development long-range missile, Agni 3 has a range of 3500km which is too short to target most of Chinese territories. The Agni 3 has been tested four times and the fourth test was conducted by the army as a user trial. However, it is believed that the Agni 5 with a range of 5000km has been under development. If the Agni 5 is developed successfully, India will have the capability to target most of Chinese territories. It is belief that the Agni 5 development has already been started and the first test could take place within 2 years from now, i.e. early 2019.

The current capability of India with respect to ballistic missile and aircraft is sufficient as far as Pakistan is concerned. India has a number of missiles which include the Agni 1 and Agni 2 as well as Agni 3 for targeting Pakistan, the long term enemy of India. India also has a number of aircraft which could be used for delivering nuclear weapons. India is also developing sea-based deterrent in the form of nuclear powered missile submarine, the Arihant has already been launched, though it will take some more time before it could join the deterrent force. Two more submarines of the same type and the same capability are in the programme.

The most notable aspect of the nuclear weapon capability has been, its slow process of development. It has taken India a quarter of century to develop even intermediate range missiles such as the Agni 3 and it is yet to develop even intermediate ranges. On the other hand, it is unclear what final state of capabilities India is aiming at, whether interms of the warheads or interms of delivery system.

Decision on these has not been taken so far, and they are likely to remain flexible for sometimes so as to respond to the ever changing strategic required.

Nuclear Arm Control

In spite of the fact that India refused to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty, India persists its, its desire for nuclear disarmament. India Since its existence as a sovereign state in 1947, India continuously and unceasingly expresses its desire for complete nuclear disarmament. It does not see joining or not joining the NPT regime as important, because it believed that the treaty is a discriminatory treaty, and does not seek to actually eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. Therefore, there are contradictions between Indian stand on disarmament and the terms of NPT. While NPT seeks to prohibit proliferation of nuclear weapons by states parties to the treaty, it reserves the right for 5 states to retain these nuclear weapons. This obviously relates to a discrimination against more than 180 nation states. The fact about India's position on NPT is that, though India refused to sign NPT, it also refused to help other states such as Libya with nuclear technology. This, in other words means that India, while refusing to sign and be a party to NPT, adhered to a number of terms and condition, which is why it is said, for India's signing or not signing is not what is important, but adhering to the non-proliferation principle is that which is important. In short, India is a faithful adhering state to the principle of NPT.