



# INDIA'S NUCLEAR POLICY IN CONTEXT OF CHINA AND SUPER POWERS

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## ABSTRACT

The claims over South China Sea is being contested by China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, and any move to build nuclear reactors is bound to stoke further tension in the region. China is the most active builder of nuclear power plants, with 32 reactors in operation, 22 under construction and more planned. Thanks to the conditions that prompted India to stick on its current policy and could be successful in having nuclear agreement with United States of America resulting into Hyde Act 2006. As such, it becomes pertinent to mark— how has India's nuclear policy been oscillating between strategic and peace purposes. By an accident of history India was not an independent state at that moment, and its only hope for representation at the conference was the Churchill administration, then in its closing days, which vehemently opposed India's national aspirations. Finally, relations with Pakistan, India's long - standing adversary remained contentious as ever. In considerable part the relationship with Pakistan deteriorated because of the outbreak of an ethno - religious insurgency in the dispute state of Jammu and Kashmir in December 1989. India's security analysts are also perturbed by how after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the world's sole super power has along with it's military allies decimated small and vulnerable nations. The aggressive manner in which the US and it's NATO allies targeted Iraq and Yugoslavia has undoubtedly played on the minds of India's national security analysts. However despite the Pakistani provocation India exercised remarkable restraint and a large scale war was effectively avoided. Similar in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001 India resorted to a strategy of coercive diplomacy albeit with mixed results. The Bush administration's willingness to exempt India from the expectations of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty negotiations the Congress-led regime of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh withstood a parliamentary vote of no-confidence in July 2008. There little question that this agreement can make a meaningful contribution towards alleviating India's energy needs.

**Keywords :** Nuclear, Weapon, India, USA, Russia, Security, Policy, Pakistan, Indian, NATO, NPT, CTBT.

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The recent turbulence and turmoil in South China Sea has again opened the debates on whether India should possess nuclear warheads or go strictly for the peaceful uses. The claims over South China Sea is being contested by China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, and any move to build nuclear reactors is bound to stoke further tension in the region. China is the most active builder of nuclear power plants, with 32 reactors in operation, 22 under construction and more planned. It relies heavily on U.S., French and Russian technology but is developing its own. The latest initiatives are led by China General Nuclear Power Group (CNG) and China National Nuclear Co. (CNNC). Both have research or consulting agreements with Westinghouse Electric Co. And France's EDF and Areva, but say their floating plants will use home-grown technology. aggressive attitude of China and North Korea in the waters<sup>1</sup> on one hand and confrontations posed by some countries like America and even India on the other. Though India, being the pioneer of international peace, has always pleaded for deterrence in use of nuclear power, yet it cannot ignore comprehensive security needs in the present situation. India has thrived for possessing nuclear power since beginning but international situation has been compelling its nuclear policy shifting between the two extremes. Thanks to the conditions that prompted India to stick on its current policy and could be successful in having nuclear agreement with United States of America resulting into Hyde Act 2006. As such, it becomes pertinent to mark - how has India's nuclear policy been oscillating between strategic and peace purposes. The current paper examines the shifting trends of

India's nuclear policy from beginning of Cold War to Post - Cold War periods and onwards.

India's indigenous efforts in nuclear science and technology were established remarkably early. The first step was taken by Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha in March 1944 when he submitted a proposal to the Sir Dorab Tata Trust (established in honor of Bhabha's own uncle, Sir Dorab Tata) to found a nuclear research institute, over three years before independence and a year before the first nuclear weapon test. This led to the creation of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) on 19 December 1945 with Bhabha as its first Director. The new government of India passed the Atomic Energy Act, on 15 April 1948, leading to the establishment of the declared: "We must develop this atomic Indian Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) not quite one year after independence. At that time Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru energy quite apart from war - indeed I think we must develop it for the purpose of using it for peaceful purposes. ... Of course, if we are compelled as a nation to use it for other purposes, possibly no pious sentiments of any of us will stop the nation from using it that way".<sup>2</sup>

### **Nuclear Policy of India during Cold War:**

The end of World War II marked a revolution in world affairs— the recasting of nations and relations between nations, and the emergence of a new technology which fundamentally changed the role of warfare. Within the span of two years and two months, from 1945 to 1947, three critical events occurred whose reverberations have brought the threat of nuclear war in South Asia seemingly daily to the front pages of newspapers everywhere.



members all acquired nuclear, then thermonuclear, arms. With the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty in 1970, and the replacement on the Council of the non nuclear Taipei Chinese government with the nuclear armed government in Beijing shortly thereafter, the de facto principle that the Security Council permanent members and the nuclear club " were one and the same was firmly established.<sup>4</sup>

Recognition of India as a world power in driving the critical importance of the desire for forward the nuclear weapons program, even overshadowing considerations of military necessity and deterrence is underscored by comments by former weapons program leader Raj Ramanna— "There was never a discussion among us over whether we should not make the bomb. How to do it was more important, For us it was a matter of prestige that would justify our ancient past. The question of deterrence came much later. Also, as Indian scientists we were keen to show our Western counterparts, who thought little of us those days, that we too could do it."<sup>5</sup>

### Post-Cold War Nuclear Policy

Simultaneously, India also directed its gaze towards South-East Asia after a long span of neglect. During much of the Cold War Indian policymakers had shunned the states of South-East Asia, with the critical exception of Vietnam, seeing them as mostly American puppets. Now as part and parcel of the opening of its markets to foreign investment and seeking to develop a viable export sector, the country embarked upon "Look East policy". Closer to home, the Narasimha Rao regime efforts continued to improve relations with the PRC, a process that had been initiated during the Rajiv Gandhi

regime in the late 1980s. Even though the two sides forged two important confidence building measures (CBMs) in 1993 and 1996 designed to reduce tensions along the Line of Actual Control, little or no progress was made in resolving the border dispute.<sup>6</sup> Finally, relations with Pakistan, India's long-standing adversary remained contentious as ever. In considerable part the relationship with Pakistan deteriorated because of the outbreak of an ethno-religious insurgency in the dispute state of Jammu and Kashmir in December 1989. The origins of this insurgency were mostly indigenous could be traced to a process of growing political mobilization against a backdrop of steady institutional decay. However, with the outbreak of the insurgency Pakistan's policymakers quickly stepped into the fray and helped transform a largely internal uprising into an ideologically charged, sanguinary, extortion racket.<sup>7</sup>

In the new circumstances India went to alter the country's foreign policy orientation towards the emergent, sole superpower, the United States ran into an important hurdle for three compelling reasons First, at a global level, the United States had few significant interests in India barring , non-proliferation This issue, of course, put the two sides on a collision course as India was a staunch opponent of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and categorically refused to accede to its expectations. The US, especially, under the Clinton administration, was committed to its indefinite and unconditional extension at the Review Conference in 1995. Not surprisingly, their fundamental differences put the two countries ate odds. Second, a regional level, even though the US Department of Commerce under the stewardship of Secretary of



Commerce, Ron Brown, had anointed India as one of the world's big emerging markets "8, American investment in and trade with India was so negligible that the nonproliferation issue overshadowed other interests. Third and finally, at a bureaucratic level in both countries the "shadow of the past weighed heavily on all deliberations. Most Indian foreign policy bureaucrats looked were dubious about American goals and interests in South Asia and there were lingering distrust of India in both the state and defense departments in the United States. These mutual misgivings hobbled the growth of the relationship even though some small progress had been made in the last days of Indira Gandhi and her son and successor Rajiv Gandhi. As an outcome of these three factors improvements in relations were at best fitful, and frequent hostage to minor, episodic differences. For example, the Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphael's careless remark about Kashmir's accession to India at a press briefing in Washington, DC became a major diplomatic contretemps. Ibid.<sup>9</sup>

In an interview with Rakesh Sharma of Deccan Herald News Service former prime minister I K Gujral elaborated at length on India's security concerns he pointed to the fact that Indian coastal borders were very extensive nearly 7,000 miles, and was located in an area that was heavily nuclearised. The Indian Ocean is home to the US military base in Diego Garcia which has been nuclearized by the U S government and there is constant movement of nuclear weapon carrying warships, submarines and aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. US, NATO and Australian military maneuvers have greatly increased in this region.

India's security analysts are also perturbed by how after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the world's sole super power (i.e. the US) has along with its military allies decimated small and vulnerable nations. The aggressive manner in which the US and its NATO allies targeted Iraq and Yugoslavia has undoubtedly played on the minds of India's national security analysts. **Dilip Lahiri** Additional Secretary (UN) hinted as much when he explicitly brought up the US bombardment of Yugoslavia at the *United Nations Disarmament Commission* on April 13, 1999, in New York. He stated that "Apart from the impact which it has already had on regional peace, the implications of NATO action in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are far-reaching. If a group of countries or regional arrangements take it upon themselves to act outside the UN Charter, in violation of its provisions, using violence against another sovereign state without the authorization of the Security Council, the legal foundations on which international relations have been built up since the end of the Second World War are gravely undermined. So too is the confidence of states in agreeing disarmament measures, because if countries can be attacked without sanction, because its opponents are militarily more powerful none would be prepared to lower its guard events in the Balkans therefore will inevitably have repercussions on the international disarmament agenda. "It should be noted that it was the threatening and coercive presence in the Bay of Bengal of the US Seventh Fleet (led by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier enterprise) during the 1971 Bangladesh war of independence that had triggered India's first nuclear test.<sup>10</sup>



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Pakistan's needling of India in Kashmir was and remains susceptible to management through India's conventional military capabilities. Nor does Pakistan's conventional about a possible nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan have not materialized Pakistan's feckless attempt to revive the Kashmir issue through its incursion in the capabilities pose an especially compelling threat to India's security. The conventional military capabilities, the persistence of the border dispute and the PRC's nuclear weapons posed an altogether different order of threat to India's security. Indeed it was the long-term security threats that the PRC posed to India proved to be the most compelling underlying factor that drove India's nuclear weapons program. The specific timing of the program, contrary to much polemical writing had little to do with the ascendance of the right-of-center Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to power.<sup>11</sup> Instead it was closely tied to the successful extension of the NPT in 1995 and the seeming inexorable efforts of the Clinton administration to conclude a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. Fearful that the test ban treaty was all but inevitable Indian policymakers chose to exercise the nuclear option before ineluctable pressures were brought to bear on India to accede to the regime.

Despite the initial burst of hostility from the United States and the other great powers, the international community has come to grudgingly accept India as a de facto nuclear weapons state. Secretary of State, *Strobe Talbott* and *Jaswant Singh* the Indian Minister for External Affairs.<sup>12</sup> Also their alarmist claims and fears about a possible nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan have not materialized. Pakistan feckless attempt to

revive the Kashmir issue through its incursion in the Kargil region did contribute to a limited war between the two states in 1999.<sup>13</sup> However despite the Pakistani provocation India exercised remarkable restraint and a large scale war was effectively avoided. Similar in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001 India resorted to a strategy of coercive diplomacy albeit with mixed results. However it is important to note that neither of these two crises culminated in a full-scale war between the two long-standing adversaries.

In the aftermath of the 2001-2002 crisis India and Pakistan with some American prodding embarked upon a peace process. The results from this process have been limited though it had resulted in some de escalation of tensions on the Kashmir front. 10 However, in August 2008, tensions once again came to the fore with Indian claims about a Pakistani violation of the cease-fire agreement. Matters worsened considerably after India (and the United States) alleged that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI-D) was behind the attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul in July 2008.<sup>14</sup>

While relations with Pakistan remain quite fraught, Indo-US relations now seem to be on a very secure footing. The Bush administration's willingness to exempt India from the expectations of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (which India had never acceded to in the first place) and pursue a civilian nuclear agreement provided a sound foundation for the relationship.<sup>15</sup> After protracted bilateral and internal negotiations the Congress-led regime of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh withstood a parliamentary vote of no-confidence in July 2008. There little question that this agreement can make a



meaningful contribution towards alleviating India's energy needs. However, once consummated, its greater importance will lie in ending India's thirty-odd years of nuclear isolation from the global order. Since the United States had been one of the principal protagonists in creating and bolstering these global arrangements, the shift in American policy, which made an exception for India, was nothing short of revolutionary. Consequently, the American concession on this critical issue must be construed as recognition of India's emerging potential as a great power in Asia and beyond.<sup>16</sup>

Post-Soviet Russia's official line Vis-a-Vis India that the differences over the NPT and CTBT would not be allowed to come in the way of their multifarious cooperation. The task of exerting pressure on India on the nuclear issue largely left to the USA, indisputably the most powerful country in the post-Cold War period. It seemed that in its present state relative weakness and dependence on Western economic assistance, the Russian government would not like to do anything that would disturb the present balance of power and annoy the West.

The present system of international relations due to historical reasons, is largely dominated by the Western powers led by the USA, Russia has been accepted in most of the fora as a part of the system. Last year, Russia was admitted to the G-7 also, the grouping of the world's richest and the most advanced countries which consequently became the G-8. However, the fact remains that although Russia has no overwhelming impulse and need to question and oppose the basic parameters of the current world order; still it is not a very satisfied member of the system. The eastward enlargement of

the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) raises a grave spectre of security threat for Russia. Moscow is piqued by energetically pursued US policy of cultivating the former Soviet republics and giving a prop to their independence "so that a resurgent and cohesive Eurasia does not again pose a challenge to the West as the Soviet Union did earlier. The declaration by the USA of oil and gas rich Central Asia and Caucasus as the sphere of US interests has particularly irked Moscow as also the overtures of NATO to Ukraine, the Baltics and other former Soviet republics. Russia also has reasons to be dissatisfied with the scale of Western economic assistance.

As regards India, there seems to exist a general consensus in Russia regarding the need of cementing ties with New Delhi, India is often referred to as Russia's "strategic partner. "Indo-Russian broad geo-political interests not only do not clash, but in most cases coincident India's nuclear tests on May 11 and 13 1998 Therefore, put Russian policymakers on the horns of a dilemma. In its official response Moscow unequivocally criticized the tests. President Yeltsin lamented that "India has let us down. "The official statement issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry on May 12 expressed "alarm and concern "and" very deep regret in Russia "over the Indian action. The statement urged India to reverse its nuclear policy and sign the NPT and CTBT. An apprehension was expressed that India's policy may lead to a chain reaction in South Asia and beyond this, in fact, became the legit motif of all Russian pronouncements on the subject. Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov remarked that India's decision to carry out nuclear explosion was "short sighted" and "unacceptable" as



far as Russia was concerned. He felt that there was serious risk of India-Pakistan conflict and added, "We especially would not want Pakistan to follow in India's footsteps." Moscow is one with other P-5 countries in **Sumit Ganguly**, "Border Issues, Domestic Francine Frankel and Harry Harding, eds his desire to keep the nuclear club small and exclusive and not allow new entrants. It is not prepared to recognize India as well as Pakistan as nuclear weapon states as according to the NPT only those states which had nuclear - weapons or had exploded a nuclear device prior to January 1, 1967, can be regarded as nuclear weapon states.

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