THE EVOLUTION OF INDIAN NUCLEAR POLICY

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Abstract

Indian nuclear policy has evolved over time through different phases of nuclear weapon development. This process has been slow but consistent. Prestige and technological factors, as well as domestic politics, have been the core drivers of Indian nuclear development along with security. These drivers have been operational during different phases of Indian nuclear development. Decision-making about Indian nuclear policy has been restricted to the top leadership, bureaucracy, and scientists. Its evolution has fluctuated between the ideologies of these actors. Nehru was a Gandhian at heart but he was pragmatic in a sense that he started the peaceful nuclear programme in India with a view that it would help India in making a nuclear weapon at a later stage when required. Although the scientists have been staunch supporters of nuclear weapons, the political leaders had been hesitant to endorse them until the perception changed about nuclear weapons and they started to be considered as a source of national prestige. The aim of the Indian nuclear policy is to correspond to the overall worldview of India as a great civilisation and its projection as the largest democracy.

Introduction

Indian nuclear policy has evolved from a stance of non-indulgence to a nucleus-loving country. Indian foreign policy as a whole has been characterised by a struggle for developing an independent foreign policy. Although the evolution of nuclear policy has been slow and to some extent introverted, the process has been undergoing constant evolution. Indian nuclear policy has been labelled as humane and peaceful, but nuclear development by India illustrates its 'uneasy

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Regional Studies, Vol. XXXVI, No.1, Winter 2017-18, pp.89-107.

relationship' with nuclear weapons. India has been the torch-bearer of arms control and non-proliferation on the one hand and has developed as a progressive nuclear weapon state on the other. Indian nuclear policy represents a distinct disconnect between the vision and reality in relation to nuclear development. This paper analyses the basic rationale behind the nuclear development in India and explains the evolution of Indian nuclear policy over time. The paper also explores the motives behind the shift from the Gandhian tradition of non-violence to the concept of nuclear deterrence in its policy.

The Theoretical Basis for Evolution

The international system is anarchic and characterised by a struggle for power and hegemony. Every state strives to protect its national interest and sovereignty at any possible cost. Collectivity is at the heart of realist thinking while describing the social life that forms the basic unit of the international system, i.e., the state. The state is sovereign in its relations with other states.[1] Realism has retained its relevance in the international system due to the fact that right from the system of empires to the nation-state system, the struggle for power and interests has been the central theme of events. Continuing from the ancient Greek historian Thucydides, the intellectual roots of realism have developed and evolved over centuries through the writings of Kautilya, Machiavelli, Hans J. Morgenthau, George F. Kennan, E.H. Carr, Kenneth W. Thompson, and Reinhold Niebuhr.[2] It is as applicable to international politics now as it was in that era.

The power struggle has always been complemented by wars and it is measured by the military capabilities of a state. So the states seeking power, primarily seek military superiority over others. The revolution in military affairs has subsequently given power-seeking states an impetus for achieving their objective. Consequently, nuclear weapons have become a source of military power that bestow a country with the ultimate defensive and offensive power against other states. So the states seek nuclear weapons to guarantee their security and to increase their value in the overall power structure of the international system. Although the ultimate goal is power projection, states have certain other motives behind seeking nuclear weapons.

The Rationale for Nuclear Development

Every country has a rationale for nuclear development, which outlines the reason for the development of nuclear weapons. Security is the most relevant objective that motivates a country to go for nuclear weapons. Many scholars have suggested several concepts to explain the nuclearisation of states. For reference here, Joseph Cirincione has given his thesis on why states want nuclear weapons and why they don't. It lists five models to explain this, i.e., the national security model, prestige model, technological model, domestic political model, and economic model.[3] By analysing all the models given by Cirincione, the Indian model for nuclear development can be understood.

The 'national security' model purports that states acquire nuclear weapons to ensure their security. Therefore, nuclear weapons are considered the ultimate defence against any rival. Nuclear deterrence has the ability to overpower every conventional advantage of one state over the other. Acquisition of nuclear weapons by one state compels other states to acquire the same because of their immense power value that gives a greater advantage over conventional superiority.[4] The realist paradigm in international relations focuses on the security model of nuclear proliferation. Indian nuclearisation fits well into the national security model and it is the primary driver of nuclearisation of India. The strategic environment of the region was tense after the Indo-China war and the subsequent nuclear weapons tests by China in 1962. The national security situation for India was further challenged by the Pak-China nexus in the region and Chinese support to Pakistan in the 1965 war. So India had to go for nuclear weapons owing to its security imperatives.

The prestige model argues that nuclear weapons make states perceive themselves as more relevant in international politics and as having much more power than other states on the basis of which they acquire respect.[5] States are tempted to perceive that their stature in the international system will increase with nuclearisation and they will enjoy greater negotiating leverage at the international level. Scott Sagan is of the view that "nuclear weapons may serve important symbolic functions—both shaping and reflecting a state's identity."[6] In the Indian case, the country sees itself as a great civilisation with a proud history and international identity. The civilisational aspect establishes the soft

power of India while the nuclear weapons are aimed at making it invincible in the world's hard power structure. Furthermore, India has aspired to have a greater say at the international level and nuclear capability can render such prestige.

The bureaucratic structure of a state and its political actors influence the decision-making regarding the acquisition of nuclear weapons.[7] Domestic politics is shaped in such a way that it is able to influence public opinion in favour of nuclear weapons. In such a scenario, the political parties have their basic leanings towards a certain philosophy, according to either leftist or rightist ideologies. The political leaders have their own vested interests in gaining popularity to sustain power in the country or to re-establish their declining credibility. In the Indian nuclear policy dynamics, the domestic political system has played a vital role. In the initial years after independence, the Nehruvian thought descended from the Gandhian ideology of non-violence. So Nehru emphasised peaceful nuclear development. But his ideology seems to have faded away with the realist nature of international relations and the emergence of a realist pattern in the Indian foreign and security policy. For example, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had a radical nationalist ideology, which culminated in its 1998 nuclear tests. Additionally, the influence of domestic pressure groups and bureaucracy on the political leaders also played a role in the development of Indian nuclear policy. For instance, even though Lal Bahadur Shastri was a Gandhian by ideology, Homi Bhabha, the nuclear physicist who is considered the father of the Indian nuclear programme, exerted pressure on Shastri to go for the nuclear option. Bhabha succeeded in getting public support behind him by projecting the vitality of nuclear weapons in ensuring national security. In the end, Shastri had to let go of the Gandhian ideology and cave in to Bhabha's pressure.

Cirincione contends, "If a state has the technological ability to develop nuclear weapons, then it will do so; the awesome power of nuclear technology and arms is too much for most leaders to resist."[8] Despite the cost tagged to nuclear weapons, states do go for the ultimate source of security attached to the nuclear weapons. In the Indian case, it was possible to think about going nuclear because India had developed the wherewithal for nuclear technology through the Atoms for Peace

programme and, of course, the possibility of acquisitions from the underground nuclear black market cannot be undermined.

If a state has economic resources, it always has the option to go for nuclear weapons. Nuclear enthusiasts believe that nuclear weapons bring affordable and assured national security cheaper than the management of conventional forces. It is pertinent to mention that it is not necessary that a state having economic affordability would essentially develop nuclear weapons. However, economic stability does offer an option available to a state.[9] In the case of India, however, the security imperative reinforced the need for nuclear weapons so much so that it set aside economic considerations and went for nuclear weapon development.

This theoretical base helps explain the contours of Indian nuclear policy with the dynamics of the events and with the changing strategic environment of the region. The models discussed above do find application in the Indian development of nuclear weapons. We find that Indian nuclear policy has evolved over time with the qualitative and quantitative developments in its nuclear weapons. Nehru's period was the stage of laying the foundations of Indian foreign policy as well as nuclear policy.

Nehruvian Philosophy

Jawaharlal Nehru was the only Indian Prime Minister to hold the office for around 20 years, from 1947 to 1964. He was a leader with a pragmatic approach to foreign policy. His daughter Indira Gandhi writes about him that his thoughts were driven by both East and West and that he was at the same time a socialist who had an abhorrence for discipline and a democrat who believed that individual freedom was the key to eradicate social and economic division.[10] Nehru is regarded as the founder of Indian foreign policy at the nascent stage of Indian statehood and during the difficult period of the Cold War. When the world was divided into two poles, he stood strong to be one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). He aspired for an independent foreign policy for India devoid of any pressure and influence from the two world powers leading the two blocs in the Cold War. His policy has been both introverted and extroverted at times. Introverted in a sense that he somewhat isolated India from the world, according to socialist designs,

while extroverted in a sense that he had carried forward the slogan of greater India. Admittedly, in the opinion of international relations analysts, the emergence of India as a major power has made it an aspirant of great power status at the world level. This confusion or contradictory strand is quite clear in the nuclear policy as well. Continuing the Gandhian tradition of nuclear opposition, Nehru also opposed nuclear weapons. However, he was also not oblivious of the importance of nuclear technology in national development. His worldview about nuclear weapons was that they may play a role in future for national defence if the efforts for nuclear disarmament fail.[11]

Nehru declared in 1945, "The revolution caused by discoveries having to do with atomic energy can either destroy human civilisation, or take it up to unheard levels."[12] Despite such a stance, he never foreclosed the nuclear option forever. To his credit, he brought about the infrastructure for research and development of nuclear technology in India. The nuclear option was kept alive. He realised the connection between great power status and modern military wherewithal, as well as the fact that the atom bomb was the new standard of international power. He also understood that if India was to realise its ambition of becoming a great power, it had to have the capability to construct a nuclear weapon. Other than his own deep understanding of history, he also understood the connection between the strategic attributes of the country and its nuclear imperatives.[13] Nehru controlled the foreign office and the Department of Atomic Energy and stressed that the programme had to be kept secret. He declared himself and the team designated for nuclear development as immune from public scrutiny.

The evolution of Nehru's strategic thinking regarding nuclear capability originated from the concepts of three Englishmen: Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck, Lt Gen Francis Tuker, and Professor P. M. S. Blackette. Nehru came across these ideas in the transition phase to the independence of India when he met these three persons as the interim Prime Minister of India. The former two English army men gave him ideas about the utility of nuclear weapons and advanced conceptions about modernising the nuclear weapons usability. But he was more impressed with the ideas of Professor Blackette, who wove three themes—the usefulness of nuclear weapons, the politics of nuclear disarmament at the international level, and the peaceful use of nuclear

energy in the form of electricity—into his argument, which, it turned out, were dear to Nehru. He admitted that nuclear weapons were the decisive weapons that had revolutionised warfare, but that these were not weapons of war but 'weapons of mass destruction'. Further, he appreciated the deterrent value of even a small number of nuclear armaments. He made the case that India needed 'cheap power' considering the economic conditions and technological capabilities of India and a small weapons capability rather than a heap of bombs.[14]

Descending from the Gandhian tradition, another aspect of the Nehruvian policy was that he was conscious of the world image of India. India was a supporter of NAM and supported the finalisation of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), so the Indian reputation at the international level would have been damaged had it gone for the nuclear weapons at that stage. In 1961, when research reactor Zerlina became operational, it became obvious that India could develop the bomb within two years if it so desired. However, India did not choose to do so at the time.[15] Nehru has had a very strong impact on the foreign policy of India. His successors have in one way or the other stuck to his ideals of having an independent foreign policy for India.

Nuclear Development

The legendary pacifism of Mahatma Gandhi did not deter Nehru from embarking on an ambitious nuclear programme because he was familiar with the adoption in 1921 by Mahatma Gandhi—the father of the nation—of the 'doctrine of the sword' justifying the use of violence in self-defence and for national security, alongside the latter's articulation of the ideology of nonviolence.[16] This philosophy forms the strategic culture of India and India's nuclear development has been closely associated with the dynamics of its strategic culture. This influence of strategic culture on the development of Indian nuclear weapons has been threefold:

1. Indian nuclearisation has been slow due to the restriction of Nehruvian thought;
2. The pre-requisite of Indian nuclear weaponisation was the weakening of the Nehruvian philosophy of nuclear pacifism;
3. The strategic concept that was represented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was a crucial reason for India's overt nuclear deterrence concept.[17]

If we go through the history of the development of the nuclear weapons of India, we learn that although Nehru's political idealism did not put a halt to India's nuclear development, it did slow down its progress. The changing threat perception of India in the region helped change this concept and a more realist approach crept into the nuclear policy of India. But it would not be fair to say that Nehru lacked strategic thinking; rather he misread the speed of events that changed the strategic environment of the region.

The basis of the nuclear programme was laid in Trombay at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) under Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace programme. The main focus of this programme was to utilise the large deposits of thorium in India.[18] Nehru trusted the Cambridge University-trained physicist Homi J. Bhabha and handed him the charge of structuring and running a versatile dual-use nuclear programme.[19] Under the Atoms for Peace, India built its first nuclear reactor named Apsara in 1955 with the help of the British. Next year, CIRUS, a 40 MW research reactor was given to India by Canada.[20] Two other projects were associated with the reactor, which involved materials that could have been used for nuclear development. These materials were eventually diverted to nuclear weapons development.

Strategic Environment and Evolution of Indian Nuclear Policy

Indian nuclear policy evolved according to the evolving strategic environment of the region. The relevant threat perception of India vis-à-vis China and Sino-Pak alliance imparted a realist outlook to the Indian nuclear policy. Owing to the economic and technological constraints, the strategy of credible minimum deterrence was adopted.[21]

China Factor

Lal Bahadur Shastri was a Gandhian by thought and did not consider nuclear weapons necessary. This was, in fact, quite a point of contention between Bhabha and Shastri. Bhabha advocated for nuclear weapons but Shastri was somehow not ready for it. He could not, however, resist the public pressure generated after Chinese nuclear tests. The strategic environment of South Asia was changing and India was aware of Chinese nuclear development in 1961. This was coupled with the Indo-China clash at the Tibetan border. The border dispute led

to troops deployment by both sides in early 1962, which resulted in a war. The thumping defeat to India at the hands of Chinese in this war was an eye-opener for Indian policymakers. This gave a considerable impetus to India's efforts to go for nuclearisation. Meanwhile, Bhabha gained popularity among the public for his rhetoric in favour of the bomb. He stated in a speech aired on All India Radio that nuclear weapons were cheap to develop. He cited the cost estimates provided by the US Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) as $600,000 for a 2 Megaton yield and $350,000 for a 10 kiloton bomb. Furthermore, according to him, the cost for 50 warheads would be around $21 million and $31.5 million for a 2 Megaton hydrogen bomb.[22] This was the actual amount to be spent on warhead development. While explaining so, however, he totally ignored the huge cost on the overall research and development during the Manhattan project.

This instigated a motion in the Lok Sabha by the Jana Sangh party, which was a vocal advocate of nuclear weapons. Shastri lost support for his 'no weapon' policy in his own Indian National Congress, as the majority favoured the weapons programme. Shastri formally approved the nuclear explosive development programme in April 1965. The approval came after the US refused to sell India the Plowshare device. This refusal by the US President Johnson came after the report of Gilpatric Committee in 1965, which recommended to the US President to tighten the US arms control policy. Shastri, thus, approved the Study for Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes (SNEPP) after the nuclearisation of China in 1964 and the formation of China-Pakistan nexus in 1965.[23]

The China factor aside, Pakistan and China alliance also caused suspicion among the Indians. The 1965 Indo-Pak war showed India that in the anarchic international system states must ensure their security by all means. This resulted in a change in the foreign policy of India when it sought an alliance with Russia. India lost both Shastri and Bhabha in a short period of time. India was left with no direction. Indira Gandhi succeeded the premiership of the country after Shastri. She appointed Vikram Sarabhai as a successor of Bhabha who was a nuclear pessimist Gandhian and did not buy the idea of nuclear weapons. But the people after Bhabha at BARC, Raja Ramanna and Homi Sethna continued the effort to develop the Peaceful Nuclear Explosives programme.

Furthermore, in the 1971 India-Pakistan war, it became clear to Indian policymakers that Pakistan-China alliance was a serious threat to Indian security. This situation strengthened the Indian resolve to test the bomb.

The 1974 so-called peaceful nuclear explosion was the culmination of a hesitant Indian advance to nuclear weapons development behind the cover of the so-called peaceful nuclear programme.[24] The peaceful nuclear explosion was termed peaceful to avoid the sanctions of the international community. India, being one of the leaders in slogans for arms control and non-proliferation, could not afford to have the tag of an overt and aggressive nuclear weapon state at the time. The international reaction was negative and culminated in escalating efforts for non-proliferation. The Canadian support to India disappeared four days after the test. As a result of the loss of Canadian support, the working of Rajasthan-II and Kota reactors stopped.[25] Indeed, it was the Indian nuclear test that resulted in the formation of the so-called nuclear non-proliferation regime.

For India, the most to suffer was the civilian nuclear programme because it was totally dependent on foreign assistance, which stopped following the so-called peaceful nuclear explosion. The atmosphere after the Indian nuclear test indicated that when the dust of domestic fame and appreciation settled down, Indira realised that the decision to break away from the Nehruvian foreign policy principles had been for no gain and her interest in the programme decreased. This could be either due to the international sanctions or the feeling that this came long after China had tested its nuclear weapon. If India had a threat perception vis-à-vis China and this peaceful nuclear explosion was for China, it was a rather late response to that. But what it did was that it instigated the Pakistani nuclear programme.

Bharat Karnad writes that Indira fell to the US realism when she refrained from further testing after 1974. He says that Henry Kissinger pleaded with Indira after the 1974 peaceful nuclear explosion not to undertake further nuclear tests and in return for recognition as a nuclear weapons state. Quoting Robert J. Einhorn, Karnad says:

> In 1974, if Indira Gandhi had gone ahead with a weapons programme, it would have been a different non-proliferation order because NPT [Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty] came into being in 1970 and in 1974 many states were still undecided

> about it. By not weaponizing then, India, in effect, supported the NPT and ensured its success.[26]

Another development that brought a lull in the Indian nuclear weapons development was the turf war between the two stalwarts of the Indian nuclear programme, Homi Sethna and Raja Ramanna. Their disagreements over the programme were because of their different styles. Sethna was not a nuclear enthusiast and tried to demoralise the supporters of Ramanna. Their differences increased to an extent that they did not even speak to each other. This was compounded by the fall of democracy and subsequent accession of Murarji Desai to the premiership of India. He was not that active in pursuing the weapons programme, yet he gave verbal authorisation for improvements on the 1974 device design. Desai tried to end the feud between Ramanna and Sethna and for that he appointed Ramanna as the scientific advisor to the Ministry of Defence and later he was appointed as the Director General of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Pakistan's Nuclear Programme and Missile Development

Pakistan's nuclear programme started soon after the so-called Indian peaceful nuclear explosion. Former Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto is considered the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme. Bhutto initiated the military nuclear programme on priority basis considering the security dilemma posed by the Indian nuclear weapons programme.[27] It was during the period of the late 1970s and start of 1980s when India realised the scope of Pakistan's nuclear programme, which had by then gone under the military control when Z. A. Bhutto was hanged by General Zia ul Haq. Furthermore, the dynamics of the strategic environment were such that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan resulted in closer ties of the US with Pakistan, as the former sought support from the latter to wage its proxy war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union as a containment strategy. With aggressively anti-Soviet Reagan in power, India had figured out that Pakistan would get away with nuclear development as a barter for fighting US proxy war in Afghanistan.

Comprehending the situation, after her re-election, Indira Gandhi started the nuclear pursuit with a new resolve. She reappointed

Ramanna as the director of BARC. The decade of the 1980s saw the dawn of the missile race. Considering that missile production would take some time, she cleared a programme in 1982 to prepare an aircraft to deliver India's nuclear bomb. Moreover, it was for the first time in the history of India when she overtly advocated the development of nuclear weapons.[28] A.P.J. Abdul Kalam initiated the missile programme in 1983 under the project named Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). This project was done at the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL).[29]

The long pause in further tests continued while Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister after Indira was killed by her bodyguards on 31 October 1984. This pause can be attributed to a number of reasons: First, Rajiv was not in favour of further tests because he recognised that India needed access to the advanced technology of the US so, for that, any detectable progress towards nuclear weapons would have slammed many of the doors shut.[30] Second, the strategic environment in that period saw many twists and turns. A crisis that nearly accelerated to war was developed with the Brasstack exercises of 1986, the largest in Indian history planned by Gen. Sundarji. Pakistan responded with force mobilisation also but the crisis was controlled when an indirect signal was given that Pakistan had the bomb in the basement.[31] Third, the domestic situation had put India on the back-foot as the Khalistan movement gathered strength and later India's involvement in supporting the Tamils in Sri Lanka brought a bad name to India too.

The end of the Cold War brought two major developments: first, the disintegration of Soviet Union, which created an environment of confusion and uncertainty because it was not clear that what shape the Cold War-era Indo-Soviet alliance would take, and second, Gen Zia died in an air crash. Congress won the elections in 1991 and Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister of India. His focus was more on development, which was evident from the economic reforms that he introduced.[32] The 1995 NPT review conference was an important development because it gave lifetime extension to the NPT. In addition to that, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was also being negotiated. The international pressure on India against nuclear tests was enormous. Rao was caught in a dilemma to test or not to test because

he thought economic fragility did not allow India to bear sanctions that would follow the tests.

A change came about in 1996 elections when the coalition government of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) was established. Atal Bihari Vajpai was very enthusiastic about nuclear tests because he made this the prescript in the elections to come to power and his credibility was at stake.[33] India, Pakistan, and Israel were singled out on CTBT voting and, subsequently, a condition was applied that the treaty would not enter into force until they ratified it. The BJP government managed to withstand the pressure and finally, the tests were conducted in May 1998 termed as Pokhran-II. The main objectives were to gain legitimacy as a powerful government at the domestic level, to propagate power at the regional and global level, and to counter the Chinese threat.[34] It can be argued that most of these objectives were partially fulfilled, but with the Pakistani response to the tests, the overall security situation of the region became uncertain.

The National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), a group of non-governmental experts, documented and released the Indian Draft Nuclear Doctrine in 1999. This doctrine stated that India followed the policy of minimum credible deterrence. Neither is the minimum for the deterrence specified in the document nor is credible. Additionally, the document states that India would follow the 'no first use' (NFU) policy, which implies that it will refrain from using nuclear weapons first. However, the official nuclear doctrine that was announced in 2003 was much briefer than this and showed three major variations from the previous one: addition of massive retaliation, dilution of the NFU, and the NSA.[35] This revision was done after the failure of 'Operation Parakram' in 2001-02. Indian nuclear policy after this represented a more proactive stance.

Changed Geostrategic Scenario

After the initial phase of worldwide condemnation, the South Asian strategic environment represented India as a potential counterweight against China in the foreign policy of the US. The US foreign policy underwent a major shift with the initiation of strategic cooperation with India through the 2005 joint statement, symbolising the Indo-US nuclear deal. The deal served the economic as well as the

strategic interests of both the countries. It provided India with access to dual-use technology. The deal was done with the necessary changes in the domestic law of the US to allow nuclear trade with a non-NPT country. This was followed by the separation plan by India to separate its civilian facilities from the military ones that would be under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. The most important development was the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) waiver to India, which was advocated by the US. According to this, India could have nuclear trade with NSG countries without being a party to the NPT. Furthermore, the US is actively pursuing India's full membership of the NSG. The US circulated a discussion paper *Food for Thought on Indian NSG Membership* prior to the NSG plenary meeting held in June 2011 for feedback from the participant governments. It suggested that in order to allow India to join NSG, the group could adopt the following two options:

1. 'Revise' the existing criteria for membership in the NSG; or
2. Only 'consider' the existing membership criteria when making judgments about membership rather than making the criteria a requirement.

However, the subsequent NSG plenary brought about more stringent guidelines and adopted a new paragraph 6 specifying the objective and subjective criteria a recipient country must meet before an NSG member sells Enrichment and Reprocessing Rights (ENR) to it. India is taking its case forward and lobbying for support in the NSG. The membership of NSG will grant India the licence to enhance its nuclear capability at a much higher rate and greater credibility at the international level. India's nuclear policy shows a clear progressive trend in the 21st century through greater cooperation with the US.

The Disconnect Between Vision and Reality

Rajesh Basrur attributes the following four major characteristics of the Indian strategic culture:

1. India accords a low level of importance to nuclear weapons;

2. India sees nuclear weapons as a political tool and does not have a military approach towards it;
3. Indian emphasis is on minimum deterrence; and
4. India is strongly committed to arms control.[36]

However, history shows a disconnect between the nuclear policy of India and the actual situation with regard to these considerations.

India has had an uncomfortable relationship with nuclear weapons.[37] Initially, it opposed nuclear weapons on humanistic grounds. Subsequently, however, the concept of the minimum number of nuclear weapons was adopted, stating that nuclear weapons were not weapons of war but merely political tools. The development of Indian missile defence system itself contradicts Indian policy of minimum credible deterrence. Furthermore, India asserts that its nuclear weapons are merely political and not for actual use but the missile defence system enables it to seek war, which fails its logic of minimum credible deterrence. So the purpose of missile defence is to create an opportunity to fight a nuclear war. Furthermore, the security imperative of Indian nuclear development is contradictory if we analyse the Indian claim to have developed a know-how about nuclear weapons before even China had tested its nuclear weapons capability. Secondly, it is not easy to understand why it took India 34 years to respond to the Chinese nuclear threat.

Going further into contradictions, Indian Draft Nuclear Doctrine offers some caveats about the notion of 'massive retaliation' in response to an attack and dilution of both NFU and NSA fundamentally negates the earlier notion of maintaining a minimum force to ensure the defence of the country. Rather, this stand indicates a more aggressive stance and is in opposition to the global disarmament rhetoric of India. In addition to that, the strategic cooperation between India and the US in nuclear and space technology, particularly with regard to missile defence systems, is practically against the doctrinal notions of India. Furthermore, India has been resisting signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaties as it is not a party to the NPT, the CTBT, and the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

Whether the Indo-US nuclear deal and the probable NSG membership will boost Indian weapon programme or not, only time will

tell, but it does give India an option to multiply its nuclear weapons at a considerable rate if it wants to. But one positive it will bring for India is that it would be accepted as a nuclear weapon state. One of the goals of the Indian nuclear policy is to get a place among the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Conclusion

Nuclear policy in India remained in the hands of the prime minister and a handful of advisers and scientists.[38] The dynamics of nuclear policy have been driven primarily by the security concerns vis-à-vis China and the traditional arch-rival Pakistan. Factors like prestige, domestic politics, and technological and economic interests have been playing their part too. Although not dramatic, the evolution of Indian nuclear policy has been consistent and this trend is likely to continue. The ballistic missile defence programme, on which India is working in collaboration with Russia, is aimed to cover a range of about 6,000 km.[39] India is working to develop the triad of nuclear forces. The development of the ballistic missile defence (BMD) system shows a long-term nuclear policy. Furthermore, it is unlikely that India would be a party to either CTBT or FMCT. Indian nuclear policy corresponds to the overall worldview of India as a great civilisation and its projection as the largest democracy. But its scheme of development creates a security dilemma for Pakistan whose threat perception stems from India. This has been and continues to be a source of instability in the region and contributes to the fragility in regional security environment.

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