

India's Simultaneously Changing Foreign Policy; A Reflection on India's Nuclear Policy

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Abstract:

Any country's foreign policy has fundamentals of permanency and amendments resulting to a change in government. India's foreign policy is no different. The changes have not essentially been unambiguously spoken, but are inherent in the government's actions and view of the world.

There are areas of the evolving changes are the supremacy given to economic and technological development; the prominence on national power comprising primarily military power; and stress on soft power; a bargain in self-imposed constraints on actions that other countries may interpret as unwelcoming to their interests; and the orientation of domestic and foreign policies toward this objective.

When India emerged as an Independent country to take its place in comity of nations on 15th August, 1947, the nuclear age had already dawned. India took a significant decision to be self-reliant and have freedom of thought and action. India rejected the Cold War paradigm and avoided aligning herself with either bloc rather chose a more stringent policy of non-alignment. And if the whole world then was moving towards nuclear armament, India too required building up its strength through the available resources, the skills and the creativity

of the people. India was a new strength for its neighboring countries which had almost an insignificant place in the world map. It was a new found strength and diplomatic priority of the region was evident in its initiative in having cordial relations with the countries of both the blocks. The policy makers of the time had the awareness of protecting its own sovereignty along with the neighboring countries very clear in their minds. Modi government's new approach called 'Neighbourhood First' is a step further in improving its connectivity, mitigating nationalism with its neighbouring countries. The objectives of these phrases broadly indicate the four things. The first is New Delhi's inclination to give political and diplomatic significance to its close neighbors and the Indian Ocean island states. The second objective is to offer resources, equipment and training as required by its neighbors with support. The third priority is greater connectivity and integration, so as to improve the free flow of goods, people, energy, capital, and information which perhaps is the most important. The fourth is to promote a model of India-led regionalism with which its neighbours are comfortable.

Development of science and inculcation of the scientific spirit was amongst the earliest initiatives taken by the first Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. "It is this initiative that laid the foundation for the achievement of 11 and 13 May, made possible by exemplary cooperation among the scientists from Department of Atomic Energy and Defense Research & Development Organization. Disarmament was then and continues to be a major plank in our foreign policy now. It was, in essence and remains still, the natural course for a country that had waged a unique struggle for independence on the basis of 'ahimsa' and 'satyagraha'." (Focus)

It is really difficult to explain the theories of International Relations to adequately explain the reason for India's nuclearization. But after studying Scott Sagan's "Why do States Build Nuclear Weapons: Three models in search of a bomb" where he identifies three main reasons for nuclearisation of states and very closely explains the Indian position. According to Sagan – what I call "models" in the very informal sense of the term- about why states decide to build or refrain from developing nuclear weapons: "the domestic politics model," which envisions

nuclear weapons as political tools used to advance parochial domestic and bureaucratic interest: and “the norms model,” under which nuclear weapons decisions are made because weapon acquisition, or restraint in weapon development, provides an important normative symbol of a state’s modernity and identity.” (Sagan, 55)

Sagan finds the second model most applicable to India. He explains Indian nuclearisation from the vantage point of the need of the 1973-74 Indira Gandhi government to increase its popularity given recent reverses. Sagan also correctly finds the role of the scientific community of India (primarily the Atomic Energy Commission) crucial in influencing the final decision towards Operation Smiling Buddha, the ‘Peaceful Nuclear Explosion’ of 1974 (Sagan 1996, 67-68). But the fact of the matter is that the Indian quest for nuclear power predated the Indira Gandhi government by decades. The nuclear debate has been at the heart of Indian political discourse from soon after its independence in 1947. It was under Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, that the Atomic Energy Commission was set up in 1948 and six years later, the Department of Atomic Energy in 1954. Nehru and Homi J. Bhabha (also known as the father of the Indian nuclear bomb) were clear on the need to develop nuclear weapons and the former hence never closed that option down, despite his clear pro-disarmament public stand. Nehru employed Moralpolitik and championed the cause of non-violence and even global disarmament [3](Karnad 2002,66), while simultaneously giving his blessings to and being actively interested in the growth of the Indian nuclear programme. Nehru can thus be credited to be the architect of the tradition of strategic ambiguity that marked Indian nuclear doctrine till the overt nuclear weaponisation in 1998.

India declared itself a SNW (State with Nuclear Weapon) after the Pokhran II but it didn’t come as a surprise to most of the Indian as we knew though we may be moving towards it in a slow pace but India already had shown its interest in being a nuclear power nation as early as in 1946 when the Prime-minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru said “India would develop atomic power for peaceful uses but warned that, as long the world was constituted as it was, every country would have to develop and use the latest scientific devices for its protection.”

In 1974 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi gave instructions for a peaceful nuclear test. These test had its various implications, “it is often ignored that this was also a signal to Moscow that

India would not need Clause 9 (on security) of the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty in future. The result was that no one ever referred to this clause again and when the treaty came up for review in 1991, the clause was quietly dropped. India also considered acquiring the Tu-22 bomber from the USSR but the proposal fell through although special airfields along the Himalayan belt were prepared for the task of launching them.” In the seventies the agenda to develop indigenous ballistic missile system did not turn out to be very fruitful or we can say nothing came out of it. As a result of which the agenda for Integrated Guided Missile was launched in 1983. Though by this time Pakistan was taken seriously in terms of its conventional capability but it was not seen as calculus ordynamic in any nuclear security. In fact, even Jammu and Kashmir was not a factor defining the security relationship between India and Pakistan for two decades after 1966. A major negative impact on Indian security was the experience of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and more significant was Pakistan’s willingness to accept the role of “front-line state.”

Recently demands for exercising nuclear option and openuclearization have grown, especially during 90s. “The position adopted with regard to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, articulated national security as a major reason for not signing it. There were a number of options in the manner and method of exercising the nuclear option, kept open clearly as a deliberate policy since at least 1964. These related essentially to the choices that would provide the optimum cost-benefit ratios but did not deviate from the central issue and the growing consensus that exercising the nuclear option had now become almost inevitable. This had less to do with any immediate military threat and far more to do with assessment of how to maintain the minimum level of strategic capabilities which remain credible and flexible to meet the strategic uncertainties of the future. It is in this context that the tests became useful in that they indicated the resolve and the technological prowess to provide necessary credibility for deterrence.”

According to Jasjit Singh, Director, IDSA, “India does not require nuclear weapons for prestige or status although nuclear weapons have been seen as the currency of power since Hiroshima. Our prestige will be governed by our ability to solve our problems successfully. The issue of national security in relation to nuclear weapon threat is one of those myriad problems. For a country pursuing an independent foreign and security policy, potential

challenges posed by existential and specific nuclear weapons threat can be adequately addressed only (i) through global abolition of nuclear weapons or (ii) by reliance on nuclear deterrence to ward off such challenges. The latter could be autonomous or provided by military alliance (as is the case for a large number of countries).”

The Indian leadership have always pursued an independent and non-aligned foreign and defense policy. Then a big question arise what is the need for nuclear weapons? The fundamental issue that lead India toward overt nuclear weapons deterrence can be summed up broadly in following pointers:

1. The China Issue. Historically, India has had to plan its nuclear policy in the perspective of those of the nuclear weapon states, with China as a central factor. Fundamental completion with China, which indisputably poses the biggest strategic challenge, has catered India’s policy from the beginning. To avoid recurrence of the 1962’s situation India needs to take discreet precautions for a possible reversal in that process in the future. Though we should try and continue to ‘build close and cooperative relations with China.’
2. Nuclear proliferation should continue to be enhanced. It has become a rat race especially in Asian continent. During 1990’s it has flowered increasingly in countries like Pakistan in 1983 tested its nuclear device in Lop Nor in China. Even after acceding to the NPT in 1992 China has continued to propagate the technology for nuclear weapon. “A US Senate Committee report in January 1998 stated: "China is the principal supplier of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology to the world and US government efforts to turn Beijing against international proliferation have met with little success." Iraq had almost acquired nuclear weapon if it had not been stopped due to the Gulf War. North Korea violated the treaty and is rewarded with a nuclear reactor. Iran is suspected to be pursuing nuclear development programs in spite of its commitment to NPT. Same persuasion and ambition for nuclear weapon were reported for Saudi Arabia too.
3. The prospect of disarmament is grinding down. Unfortunately the end of the Cold War reflected a negative mood. The international community and the states with advanced weapons did not show any commitment towards global nuclear

disarmament. And second major reason was permanent extension of NPT without following any strict measures for disarmament it went to the extent of abolishing the post of Under Secretary General for disarmament. For India, if a nuclear weapon-free world was not likely or feasible, the only other option to ensure its security was through acquisition of nuclear weapons.

4. One of the most important reasons for India's nuclearisation is the CTBT Deadline as said by Jasjit Singh in his report, "The negotiated draft of the CTBT as it emerged in June 1996 not only violated the original mandate of the 1993 UN General Assembly, but failed to address India's concerns. India, therefore, indicated its unwillingness to sign the CTBT but made it clear that it would not come in the way of the treaty coming into force. However, in violation of all norms, the international community brought forth a draft at the end of July that sought to impose the CTBT on India through the stipulation of Article XIV, making India's (among others) signature essential to the treaty coming into force. Concurrently, an implicit threat of punitive action was held out in the shape of "measures" to be taken if the treaty did not enter into force three years later. Thus, the CTBT clock timed to September 1999 was ticking whereby India could face punitive measures if it did not sign the CTBT even if it did not weaponise. This created a time- bound imperative for declaration of weapons capability. The BJP's assumption of power facilitated the decision which was further propelled by the Ghauri intermediate range ballistic missile test by Pakistan to which the US responded with only mild regret."

"The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)** is a multilateral treaty by which states agree to ban all nuclear explosions in all environments, for military or civilian purposes. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 September 1996, but it has not entered into force due to the non-ratification of eight specific states."CTBT is itself not ratified by 8 important nations, including the mighty US itself, which has put 8 condition points for it to agree. As it demands complete ban over all nuclear explosions in all environments, for military or civilian purposes, I guess India must and should adopt wait and watch policy before signing it. "As of September 2014, 163 states have ratified the CTBT and another 20 states have signed but not ratified it."

Signing NPT India will be highly dependent on those 5 nations which are not prohibited for nuclear fuels under this treaty, especially US. It seems like a deliberate move by the permanent members of Security Council to lead the world. It is said that "To be powerful is the basic necessity for being peaceful". So there is no reason for signing NPT. Although India has not signed NPT and CTBT, she is waiver by 123 Agreement with US. It is widely felt that the objection raised by India regarding the treaty was and still is extremely valid and just.

“The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, commonly known as the Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT, is an international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament. Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970. On 11 May 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely. Four UN member states have never joined the NPT: India, Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan.”

The chief of the Defence Research and Development Organisation, camping in the Thar Desert for over a fortnight, Kalam, who had supervised the Pokhran-II explosions had said the testing was a "defining moment" in the country's history, next only to adopting the path of economic liberalisation in 1991. 'Missile Man of India' had tweeted, "Today, I remember the hot day of 1998 at Pokhran: 53C. When most of the world was sleeping; India's nuclear era emerged." (In Memory of Dr. Kalam)

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is a mere farce. It is an 'ancient' and unjust contract not reflecting the present geopolitical structure. Drafted in 1968, it only gives the P-5 (Permanent 5: USA, UK, Russia, China and France) the right to hold nuclear weapons. Although it calls for nuclear disarmament, no fixed targets had been mentioned. China has (allegedly) violated the treaty by propagating knowledge to Pakistan.

Although it permits all nations to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, this puts the remaining countries at risk. Their security is threatened until these five completely dismantle their nuclear arsenal. Indian Foreign Policy has therefore been against the NPT. India, Pakistan and Israel are the only non-signatories. North Korea pulled out so that it may beef

up its security. So today, only 8 countries possess nuclear arsenal (P5, Indo-Pak, Israel), although Iran and North Korea are suspected to have acquired nuclear weapons them as well.

Although this lessens India's Soft Power, India's stance remains unchanged due to strategic planning. The same goes for CTBT. However, in an attempt to make up for this, India adopted the 'No First Use Policy.'

What eventually matters in the analysis of India's international relation is its broad direction and orientation. There are various odes which need to be made even. We need not be very specific about it because media bashing play its own role in changing the environment. Appraising India's expansion of its international interests will need a clearer evaluation of its objectives, the progress made, and India's continuing and sometimes growing limitations hat challenge will be all the more difficult in a fast-evolving and unpredictable world.

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