

## Nuclear policy of India: A historical analysis and global approach

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### Abstract

The present study is attempted to explore and evaluate the nuclear policy of India. The main objectives of this study is to discuss historical and global analysis of india,s nuclear policy. The data for this study is secondary data collected from books, newspapers, journals, research papers etc. The process of making nuclear choice arose from India's own understanding of itself and the world order. In the initial phases, Indian nuclear programme was conceived as means of economic development. Atomic science and development assumed a significant role in the technological development and the modernization of the country. However the existence of threat from nuclear China and Pakistan covert nuclear programme is ascertained as a factor for India's nuclear choice. India opted for the policy of keeping its nuclear option open by refusing to sign NPT and CTBT on discriminatory grounds in late 1990's. India's decision to conduct nuclear test in 1998 and self-declared as a nuclear weapon state is an important transition from its past stand on nuclear weapon for development purpose only and India – US nuclear deal in 2005 was important decision in global order.

**Keywords:** nuclear policy of India, historical and global order

### Introduction

The beginning of India's nuclear programme is a story of two powerful persons, Jawaharlal Nehru, Homi Bhabha and their ideas. They consider nuclear power, electric and explosive, as representing modernity, potential prosperity, the transcendence of the colonial past, individual and collective prowess and international leverage. Amid the early years of independence, India required after what Nehru called —a peaceful nuclear programme which implied that the programme was developed not to build nuclear weapons but rather was a substitute to provide clean energy to the people of India. PM Nehru controlled both foreign office and Department of Atomic Energy. On November 13, 1945, Jawaharlal Nehru declared that the revolutionary discovery of atomic energy would either completely destroy human civilization or take it to unbelievable level of prosperity. The official policy of the Government of India was to use nuclear energy for peaceful purpose which was highlighted in the bilateral agreements between Canada, UK, USA and USSR.

### Historical Analysis

India's indigenous endeavours in atomic science and technology were set up remarkably early. The initial step was taken by Dr. Homi Jahangir Bhabha in March 1944 when he presented a proposition to the Sir Dorab Tata Trust to establish an atomic research foundation, more than three years before independence and a year prior to the first weapon test in 1945 by US. This prompted the formation of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) on 19 December 1945 with Bhabha as its first Director. Not even exactly a year after independence, on 15 April 1948, the new Government of India passed the Atomic Energy Act,

prompting the foundation of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC). In the 1950s, the general view about atomic R&D was that the 'peaceful use of the atom' could solve many of the economic and social problems of humankind. Given such a favourable international circumstance and utilising commercial interests of the industrialised countries, India garnered considerable assistance from France, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States to build its nuclear programme. The construction of India's first reactor, the 1MW Aspara Research Reactor, built with British assistance in 1955 made the transition much easier. This was only the first step, as after a long negotiations Canada approve to supply India with the 40MW Canada-India Reactor (CIR). This was combined along with the US agreement under the Eisenhower Administration's 'Atoms for Peace' program to supply heavy water for the reactor. In 1958, for the first time China publicly declared its desire to develop nuclear weapons, Chinese pronouncement came at a time when India-China relations was gradually declining overshadowing the spirit of Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai (Indians and Chinese are brothers). It immediately made an impact on some quarters of India's political circles, as a consequence on 10 March 1959 the Lok Sabha introduced the motion for discussion which suggested extensive nuclear research in the field of defence From 1959 India-China border dispute ascended leading to large scale troop deployments by both the countries in early 1962. Moreover a year back India become aware of China's nuclear program which gave greater impetus to India's nuclear efforts. India publicly indicated its increasing interest in nuclear weapons, on 9 January 1961 PM Nehru asserted that "we are approaching a stage when it is possible to for us, to make

atomic weapons. In September 1962, on Bhabha's recommendation, Nehru passed the revised Atomic Energy Act tightening central government control over all decisions on atomic energy which led to more secretive decision making. Indian nuclear history can be divided into the following two phases:

### **Pokhran-I**

India nuclear policy emerged in early 1970 to the principles of anti-nuclear and pro-nuclear options where a nuclear bomb would be developed but not used. Scholars have observed that India had both capacity and political motivation to conduct a nuclear test. The nuclear scientists of India have demonstrated its ability to explode a nuclear device and realized their capabilities after conducted its first round nuclear test on May 1974, a test described as a 'peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE)' which is also called as "Smiling Buddha" (a confidential code name of India's first underground nuclear test as suggested by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India) a strategy to investigate non-military applications of nuclear explosives. The defence ministry of India, Jagjivan Ram argued that the first nuclear test of India had few or military implications and was simply a part of India's enduring attempt to connect the peaceful uses of nuclear energy (Maitra, 2015). The peaceful nuclear explosive is a nuclear device necessary to supplement systemic explanation by taking domestic politics and individual leadership into an account. It is highly significant that after the India China War (1962) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), India's inducement to pursue a bomb were strengthened just as the superpower latter on India welcomed the resumption of an international dialogue signing the Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963) which prohibited nuclear explosive tests in the atmosphere. As a non-signatory of the NPT, India was also not under the regime of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which was the serious resentment from the side of the international community. However, as had been the case for the NPT (1968), India refused to sign the CTBT (1996), because India argued that treaty favoured the 'Permanent Five', did not carry forward the process of disarmament

### **Pokhran II**

After the Mrs Indira Gandhi's first-round nuclear test in 1974, to that extent the NDA led BJP government came out with another series of the nuclear test under the leadership of Atal Vihari Vajpayee, with the induction of nuclear weapons as their election manifesto. The Second instance of India's nuclear testing is that the Pokhran II tests were a series of five nuclear bomb test explosions carried out by India at the Indian Army's Pokhran Test Range in May 1998 (MEA, 1998). As C. Rajmohan expounds that "for god or bad and whether the world liked it or not, India decided to cross nuclear Rubicon". Indeed, this statement of Rajmohan exclusively endorses the image of India as a powerful, resurgent and dynamic country at the international level (Rajmohan, 2003) [8]. The BJP party recognized the symbolic appeal of testing nuclear weapons. This is the starting point of India's nuclear security paradigm. At that time, several regional, global and systemic factors were also involved. India's 1998 nuclear explosions were the first overt tests since the NPT (1968) had come in to force. The politician and the great nuclear elites of India announced that the nuclear test of 1998 is not only declared India's

power to the world but also the ongoing validation of her nuclear programme and technological development. Indeed, the Pokhran II test that was unknowingly a diplomatic shockwave to the world community as conveyed by the Indian National Security adviser. Latter on the BJP party declared India proved herself as a nuclear weapons state & India's nuclear command structure was made in the year 2003 introduced the Nuclear Command Authority with National Security Advisor. But, in another hand, there was predictably a strong condemnation by the international community especially by the nuclear weapon states and their military allies protected by nuclear weapon even if not legally nuclear. After that US directly imposed economic sanction over India but India's stance was remained utter and apparently exemplified on the reason of its testing for the future necessity (Singh, 2013) [9].

### **India's Integrations into Nuclear Global Approach**

Indian leaders had carefully constructed a responsible and restrained character of India's nuclear programme, even before the 1998 nuclear test. The long 24 years of self-restrained after first nuclear test in 1974 was referred as a responsible behaviour of India who had refrain from testing and weaponization. Infact after the 1998 nuclear test, restraint became the bedrock of India's nuclear diplomacy. This can be asserted from the fact that the immediately after the test PM Vajpayee declared that India intentions have been and always will be peaceful and asserted that India's would be content with "minimum nuclear deterrent" and assured that India did not intend to build large nuclear arsenal unlike other nuclear states. Infact India would induct nuclear weapons into arm force only if it is necessary. India made it clear that it was not into any kind of arm race with any other country.

With the opening up of nuclear cooperation with the US and other countries it appears that India's status as a nuclear armed state has been recognized by the world. The Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal in 2008 was the result of India's cautious diplomacy aiming to establish an identity of itself as a responsible possessor of nuclear weapons. This nuclear deal virtually ended the Indian isolation in the global nuclear order. The bargain that the two countries had struck was a useful compromise, New Delhi didn't have to give up its nuclear weapons to be part of the international nuclear order nor had the NPT to be rewritten to accommodate India.

One of the major features of the contemporary nuclear order- apart the major treaty commitment of the NPT- is the existence of international nuclear cartels. These export control organizations have conventionally sought to confine India. Nonetheless, post-2008 India has been in negotiations to gain membership of various international export control regimes. The 2008 NSG waiver facilitate India to engage in civilian international nuclear trade and commerce. The waiver is exceptional mainly because it is the only such waiver granted by the NSG and is an acknowledgement of India's excellent non-proliferation record, despite being a non-signatory to the NPT. India has abide by the NSG Guidelines and accordingly coordinate its export controls. After the 2008 waiver, India has inked several civil nuclear cooperation agreements with more than a dozen countries. India's decision to sign the 'Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation' (HCO) on June 2, 2016 in Vienna, is yet another evident of India's exemplary record of non-proliferation which reassure India's commitments in

working towards global disarmament (MEA 2016) The HCOC membership became instrumental in India's quest for MTCR membership, on June 27, 2016. As a producer and exporter of many items that comes under the control lists of Wassenaar Arrangement and India's adherence to the principles and norms of non-proliferation has been well established. India also fulfilled all commitments that other NWS under NPT have met have facilitated India's membership to Wassenaar Arrangement in 2017.

Indo-US Nuclear Deal opened the door to world nuclear order. It was the recognition of India's impeccable record and unwavering commitment to non-proliferation, and India's willingness to contribute to the same cause which led the international community, including the NSG and the IAEA, to formally accept India into its fold in 2008. The next step for India's integration with the global nuclear order was its inclusion in the four export control bodies, out of which India has been included in MTCR and WA in 2016 and 2017 respectively. India is no more considered as a target of non-proliferations and is regarded as a responsible partner to contain proliferation of weapon of mass destruction.

### Conclusion

India's nuclear programme has evolved gradually rather than drastically. The process of making nuclear choice arose from India's own understanding of itself and the world order. In the initial phases, Indian nuclear programme was conceived as an instrument of economic development. Atomic science and development assumed a significant role in the technological development and the modernization of the country. Then India pursued the policy of keeping nuclear option open' by not being a party to the NPT and CTBT. India's decision to conduct nuclear tests and formally declare itself a nuclear weapon state marks an important historical transition. The 1998 test was not only an event driven by domestic political compulsions though it may have influenced but rather it was a logical and perhaps an even inexorable culmination of a decade long evolution of strategic which was influenced by increasingly complex and hostile security environment, geopolitical developments and its quest for status and identity.

The two and a half decades of restraint exercised by India after exhibiting its nuclear capacity in 1974 until its second nuclear explosion in 1998 is itself an exceptional example. Building up on a record of nuclear restrained behaviour and a peaceful image of itself proved crucial in facilitating a positive image of India's nuclear past. The exceptional Indo-US civil nuclear deal signalled that India has drawn resourcefully on its history to complete the journey from nuclear rogue to nuclear partner.

The influence played by the US in these multilateral export control regimes is undeniable. After all, it has had an important role in their establishment. Consequently, the US government carries a major role in India's integration process. There have been a couple of major factors that particularly motivated the US government to sign the civil nuclear deal with India and negotiate the India-specific waiver with NSG members. First was the anticipation of multiple business opportunities within India that would open up for the US civil nuclear industry. The commercial gain was one of the most important factors in generating domestic political momentum for civil nuclear cooperation with India. There was a realization that as India's economy

grows, so will its demand for energy, to meet which, reliance on nuclear energy would expand significantly. That in turn would open up a huge market for the American civil nuclear industry.

The second factor was that of facilitating strategic partnership between India and the US. Over the last two decades, New Delhi and Washington's strategic interests have aligned well, especially in the Asia-Pacific where uncertainty over the implications of China's growing power has raised concerns in both the state. From that perspective, the civil nuclear cooperation agreement between India and the US was an indication that the two democracies were working towards strengthening their partnership and furthering their common strategic interests. These factors provided strong impetus for the US government to pursue both the civil nuclear deal and the subsequent NSG waiver. The US government has continued its support for the next stage of India's integration with the global nuclear order, In all the joint-statements issued by India and the US since 2010, US government has acknowledged India's efforts towards strengthening the global nonproliferation architecture and has noted that India is ready to be member of the international nuclear regime. It is simultaneously important to acknowledge that both the global nonproliferation architecture as well as India's approach to it has evolved significantly over the last two decades. What once was a troubled relationship is now marked by growing cooperation and trust. Indo-US Nuclear Deal opened the door to world nuclear order. It was the recognition of India's impeccable record and unwavering commitment to non-proliferation, and India's willingness to contribute to the same cause which led the international community, including the NSG and the IAEA, to formally accept India into its fold in 2008. The next step for India's integration with the global nuclear order was its inclusion in the four export control bodies, out of which India has been included in MTCR and WA in 2017. The memberships in these influential strategic affairs' groups, put India in unique position to bargain the entry into NSG India got membership of both MTCR and Wassenaar Arrangement, without signing the NPT. Along with this, in July 2017, India signed bilateral treaty with Japan on nuclear civil co-operation. These enhance India's non-proliferation credentials, along with giving access to acquire some critical technologies. Along with this, Wassenaar Arrangement would also give India an opportunity to take leadership role in preventing these technologies going in hands of terrorists. These developments make India's case much stronger in the next plenary session of NSG in June 2018. India's accession into the global regimes will go a long way in raising the credibility of both India as a responsible stakeholder and the regime as open and inclusive within the global nuclear order.

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