



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN INDIA'S NUCLEAR POLICY

Dattatraya Shivaji Thorat

Asst. Professor (Political Science)

**Sahakar Maharshi Shankarrao Mohite Patil, Mahavidyalaya, Natepute
Tal. Malshiras, Dist. Solapur (M.S.) (India)**

ABSTRACT :

India is a democratic country and the major aim of nuclear policy is to harness power from nuclear plants for effective use. India has always resisted use of nuclear weapons. Nuclear policy was necessary to safeguard its interests in the region, where countries like China, Pakistan were the lurking dangers in the region. Nuclear Weapon technology was meant to safeguard its borders from its adamant neighbors. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru recognized tremendous energy potential in nuclear energy apart from nuclear weapons to strengthen its foreign policy.

KEYWORDS : Foreign Policy, India, Nuclear Policy .

INTRODUCTION-

India has resisted nuclear weapons technology. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru took a very public and very vocal stand against nuclear weapons. He was convinced that nuclear technology had a role to play in national development. He thought that nuclear weapons technology might have a role to play in national defense if efforts at nuclear disarmament should fail. Since six decades of Indian nuclear policy ideology has changed perspective. Nehru's perspective on nuclear weapons was not the only determinant in Indian nuclear policy. India's nuclear policy was also influenced by India's international security condition as well as by domestic variables such as the vagaries of political change and the influence of bureaucratic elites. India's decision to build a nuclear force was taken only in the late 1980s after its neighbor's had made rapid



advances in the nuclear weapons programme. As for bureaucratic influence, some defense scientists played a key role in keeping the weapons programme alive even when there was no political support or indeed, active opposition, while other bureaucrats were responsible for creating political awareness of India's declining nuclear options. Nevertheless, these variables suggest a moderate Indian approach to nuclear weapons and thus reinforce the dominant tendency towards a political rather a military approach to looking at nuclear weapons.

POLITICAL THOUGHT ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

As early as 26 June 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru, soon to be India's first Prime Minister, announced:

“As long as the world is constituted as it is, every country will have to devise and use the latest devices for its protection. I have no doubt India will develop her scientific researches and I hope Indian scientists will use the atomic force for constructive purposes. But if India is threatened, she will inevitably try to defend herself by all means at her disposal.”

India's nuclear programme started on March 1944 and its three-stage indigenous efforts in technology were established by nuclear research centre, the Institute of Fundamental Research which was founded by Dr. Homi Baba. India's loss of territory to China in a brief Himalayan border war in October 1962, provided the New Delhi government impetus for developing nuclear weapons as a means of deterring potential Chinese aggression. India first tested a nuclear device in 1974 (code-named "Smiling Buddha"), which it called a "peaceful nuclear explosion." The test used plutonium produced in the Canadian-supplied CIRUS reactor, and raised concerns that nuclear technology supplied for peaceful purposes could be diverted to weapons purposes. This also stimulated the early work of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. India performed further nuclear tests in 1998 (code-named "Operation Shakti"). In 1998, as a response to the continuing tests, the United States and Japan imposed sanctions on India, which have since been lifted

Indian leaders have generally considered nuclear weapons at best a necessary evil. Prime Ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri and Rajiv Gandhi sought international solutions to avoid committing to nuclear weapons; Prime Minister Morarji Desai shut down the weapons program for a time. Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee ordered the nuclear tests in 1998, was more resistant two decades earlier, siding with Desai in voting against restarting the nuclear weapons program in 1979.

As its neighbors China and Pakistan advancement in nuclear technology made it evident to for nuclear programme. Growing nuclear threats and a progressively unaccommodating global nuclear order forced New Delhi to move towards a declared nuclear arsenal in the 1990s. This discomfort with nuclear weapons has defined the manner in which India has viewed nuclear weapons. Much of the Indian debate about nuclear weapons between the 1960s and the 1990s did not consider how nuclear weapons might be used within the framework of Indian strategy. The arguments and propositions largely revolved around whether India should go nuclear, not what India should do with nuclear weapons. It was only in the 1980s that some Indian strategists such as K. Subrahmanyam and General K. Sundarji started writing about what nuclear weapons might be useful for. This also coincides with greater attention among decision-makers to such questions. Both Sundarji and Subrahmanyam argued that the kind of bloated nuclear arsenals that the US and the Soviet Union developed during the Cold War were unnecessary and wasteful. Nuclear deterrence could be had at far cheaper cost, with a relatively small arsenal.

Indian nuclear deterrent emphasized small numbers and a capability to retaliate, rather than building a deterrent force that would have parity with other nuclear powers. But the notion that nuclear weapons are political tools is primarily about how India views the usability of nuclear weapons. It does not extend to India's views about how other states, particularly Pakistan, might see nuclear weapons. In fact Indian views about what nuclear weapons in others' hands might do are highly pessimistic, assuming implicitly that other states might not be as responsible as New Delhi is or has been. India's view on nuclear proliferation is one indicator of this deeply pessimistic view that India has of the possibility of nuclear weapons use by other states. India objected to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). It has seen proliferation itself as a threat to international stability and has repeatedly touted its "exemplary non-proliferation record of four decades and more."

Indian views about missile defenses are a further indication of the contradiction in Indian views about nuclear weapons. If nuclear weapons are essentially political weapons, not usable in fighting wars, the logic of missile defenses seems difficult to understand: clearly missile defenses are needed only if one assumes that nuclear weapons are going to be used. India has pursued a ballistic missile defence (BMD) system since at least the mid-1990s.

India's Nuclear Doctrine

India's nuclear doctrine, in its declaratory form if not in its operational variation, has undergone some changes since it was first announced in August 1999. The 1999 doctrine was produced by the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), a group of non-governmental experts, and its status was thus somewhat suspect. Indeed, the government formally claimed that the doctrine was not the official doctrine. However, much of what was stated by the NSAB in the "unofficial" nuclear doctrine was what had already been stated by various government officials, including the prime minister, at different times in and out of parliament. The only major difference between the various official statements and what was stated in the NSAB's nuclear

doctrine was that the NSAB document discussed the need for a nuclear triad for India, which the government had not acknowledged until then but which was both logical and unsurprising. Thus, the government's coyness about the doctrine was probably unnecessary. In any case, when some details of the Indian nuclear doctrine were officially released in January 2003 it in many ways stuck to some of the main elements of the 1999 doctrine though there were some important differences. The 2003 nuclear doctrine was released as a brief press statement, but it did state the key elements of the doctrine. The actual nuclear doctrine is reported to be a much more comprehensive document.

India's Nuclear Capabilities

India possesses weapons of mass destruction in the form of nuclear weapons and, in the past, chemical weapons. Though India has not made any official statements about the size of its nuclear arsenal, recent estimates suggest that India has 110 nuclear weapons consistent with earlier estimates that it had produced enough weapons-grade plutonium for up to 75–110 nuclear weapons. In 1999 India was estimated to have 800 kg of separated reactor-grade plutonium, with a total amount of 8300 kg of civilian plutonium, enough for approximately 1,000 nuclear weapons. India is not a signatory to the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which it argues entrenches the status quo of the existing nuclear weapons states whilst preventing general nuclear disarmament.

India has signed and ratified both the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

India's nuclear capabilities are not known with any certainty. India is thought to have anywhere between 70 and 100 nuclear warheads. These are reportedly kept de-mated, with components in the hands of different agencies. Such a posture ensures greater safety for the nuclear assets and reduces the likelihood of accidents and inadvertent use of nuclear weapons. But there have been murmurs within the armed services about the feasibility of keeping weapons and delivery vehicles separated and about the smoothness and speed of integrating them. Given the sensitivity of the topic, obviously little is known about either the procedures or any problems. India has significant stores of fissile materials, as much as ten tons. This would be sufficient for as many as 1000 warheads if it were all to be used for nuclear warheads. However, most of this stockpile appears intended for feeding India's indigenously built fast breeder reactors. India's nuclear delivery capability has grown very slowly. India has kept abreast nuclear weapon technology with several long range missile like Agni, Arihant and several others which have long range capacity beyond China.

Nuclear Dilemmas

Nuclearization has had unforeseen consequences for India security. By neutralizing India's conventional superiority, nuclear weapons may have been partly responsible for hobbling India's capacity to react to Pakistan's constant provocations. Both the Kargil crisis (1999) and the Parakram crisis (2001–2002) demonstrated this. In Kargil, despite unambiguous evidence of Pakistani forces crossing the Line of Control (LoC), the Indian military response was limited to dealing with the forces that had already crossed the LoC rather than with attacking their support bases across the LoC or punishing Pakistan for that misadventure. New Delhi was extremely careful not to allow its forces to cross the LoC, giving strict instructions to its military, including the air force, that it must stay within Indian territory. Such orders constrained Indian military operations, but were nevertheless seen as necessary to prevent any escalation to a full-scale war, with potential consequences for further escalation to the nuclear level. But Pakistan also miscalculated the Indian response: Pakistani military leadership had apparently assumed that India cannot react at all to the military incursions in Kargil because of New Delhi's fear of nuclear escalation. They were wrong in that calculation but fear of nuclear escalation did limit the Indian response to India's side of the LoC.

CONCLUSION

India's nuclear policy has evolved gradually rather than dramatically. Indian leaders and the political and administrative system are cautious and risk-averse. There are domestic political or international reasons to expect rapid changes in India's nuclear policy. India is cautiously advancing its nuclear weapons arsenal, it will also be cautious in advancing on the nuclear arms control and disarmament agenda. India is unlikely to

sign either the CTBT or the FMCT. India is also unlikely to stage more nuclear tests or hugely increase its nuclear arsenal. India will gradually increase the size of its arsenal and make it more robust and reliable, with some 6000 kilometer plus range ballistic missiles and possibly one or two submarines capable of firing long-range ballistic missiles. India has sought BMDs for over a decade.

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