Pakistan and Chinese Response to Indo-US Nuclear Deal

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Abstract: India-China-Pakistan are the triangular nuclear weapon states of Asian continent with physical land contiguous. This paper aims to analyse Chinese and Pakistan’s response to Indo-US nuclear deal. India and United States in 2005 started the process of nuclear deal which was finalized in 2008 but due to some operational problems the deal could not set in motion. On his three days visit to India, US president Barak Obama finally ticked the riddle in the deal and India assured that the uranium will be used for economic and commercial purposes. While China and Pakistan on the other hand insisted that the deal has negative impacts and may harm the peace and security of South Asia. This paper concludes that Indo-US Nuclear Deal has accelerated the tempo of nuclear technology in south Asia particularly in China and Pakistan as both the nations are assured that this deal is meant to counter them as a result they made efforts to strengthen their strategic relations.

Keywords: Nuclear Deal, non-proliferation, perpetual instability, Nuclear Technology

I. Introduction

About nine years ago, United States and India sowed the seeds of nuclear trade. Initially, it evoked muted criticism from both the non-proliferation community as well as nuclear community. Many U.S. and foreign experts hoped that the deal would fall through pressing India for non-proliferation concessions. Those hopes faded as the details and process of the agreement unfolded. Critics feared that global non-proliferation norms would be undermined by the extension of nuclear trade to India, a state that has tested nuclear weapons and never signed the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). They also feared that the deal could have the practical result of freeing up domestic uranium that India could use for its weapons program. The proponents of the India-US nuclear initiative argue that the deal is “an effort to strengthen India’s ability to expand its civilian nuclear energy’s contribution to India’s large and rapidly growing electricity needs, rather than a closet ‘atoms for war’ effort that would have the effect of covertly accelerating the growth in India’s nuclear arsenal.” Geoffrey Pyatt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs in 2011 remarked “our civil nuclear cooperation is about more than just powering computers and cell phones. It is fundamentally about transforming the strategic relationship between our two countries by working together to achieve the “indispensable partnership”

Pakistan and China on the other hand feared that, India could use it against us. However, India tried her best to make it clear that, the same will be used to meet the energy requirements. Similar argument was given by US Secretary of the State Condoleezza Rice in her testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, she said; “Civil nuclear cooperation agreement with India will help meet its rising energy needs without increasing its reliance on unstable foreign sources of oil and gas, such as nearby Iran”. Edward J Markey, while testifying before the House International Relations Committee said; “In 2005, only 1% of India’s installed electrical capacity was fuelled by oil and only 2.7% by nuclear power....Throughout the next century, Coal will continue to be the major player in India’s electricity sector. India plans to build additional 213 coal plants by 2012. These plants will produce the bulk of India’s electricity. A realistic, safe, and practical plan for partnership between the United States and India would be a Clean-coal cooperative, not a nuclear one, and an aggressive plan by India of improved energy efficiency could substitute for all the future power output from nuclear reactors currently being planned in India between now and 2020. Obama’s visit to New Delhi on the eve of Republic Day broke the deadlock on nuclear deal and said, "We have achieved a breakthrough and are moving towards full implementation of the civil nuclear energy deal." Modi said “Civil nuclear deal was the centerpiece of Indo-US understanding. Six year after the bilateral agreement, we are now moving towards commercial cooperation...” Soon after the deal, India got criticisms from its nuclear and non nuclear neighbours. On the other hand, a few divergent voices, including and especially that of the CPI(M) have, while being been sharply critical of the overall Indo-US Agreement, the threats to India's independent foreign policy and the implicit acceptance by India of US hegemony in world affairs, have viewed the nuclear deal itself in a different light. There are indeed
many important issues that the general discourse has not brought out with regard to India’s strategic vision, its nuclear policy both civilian and military, its energy security as well as the near-term geo-political scenario and the role of the US in it. China and Pakistan were the ardent external critics of Indo-US Nuclear deal. Responding to the question as to whether Pakistan would get similar treatment from the U.S., the U.S. assistant secretary of state, Richard Boucher, said:

"Pakistan’s energy requirements and economic needs are different from those of India."

He concluded that Pakistan should not expect similar arrangements to those the U.S. had made with India. The reason behind this statement may be various. When asked when Pakistan would be able to share the nuclear technology with the U.S. for civilian purposes, his answer was

"Now, in 10 years, 20 years or 50 years, no, I don’t see anything like that on the cards for Pakistan."  

II. Indo-US Nuclear Deal: Terms and Conditions

The U.S. Congress on October 1, 2008, finally ticked an agreement facilitating nuclear cooperation between the United States and India. The deal is seen as a watershed in U.S.-India relations and introduces a new aspect to international non-proliferation efforts. The window of this deal was opened by President Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on July 18, 2005, the deal lifts a three-decade U.S. moratorium on nuclear trade with India. It provides U.S. assistance to India’s civilian nuclear energy program, and expands U.S.-India cooperation in energy and satellite technology. The nuclear deal is expected to increase nuclear power generation in India from 4,000 megawatts to 20,000 megawatts by 2020. It will also spur world economic growth as nuclear plant projects worth more than $150 billion will be up for grabs by developed countries. The world economy, which is facing a serious downturn, is expected to get a big boost from nuclear energy investments in India. But critics in the United States say the deal fundamentally reverses half a century of U.S. non-proliferation efforts, undermines attempts to prevent states like Iran and North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons, and potentially contributes to a nuclear arms race in Asia. "It’s an unprecedented deal for India," says Charles D. Ferguson, science and technology fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. "If you look at the three countries outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)-Israel, India, and Pakistan-this stands to be a unique deal."  

The details of the deal include the following:

- India agrees to allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) the United Nations’ nuclear watchdog group, access to its civilian nuclear program. By March 2006, India promised to place fourteen of its twenty-two power reactors under IAEA safeguards permanently. Teresa Schaffer director of the South Asia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies says these will include domestically built plants, which India has not been willing to safeguard before now. India has promised that all future civilian thermal and breeder reactors shall be placed under IAEA safeguards permanently. However, the Indian prime minister says New Delhi retains the sole right to determine such reactors as civilian. According to him: "This means that India will not be constrained in any way in building future nuclear facilities, whether civilian or military, as per our national requirements.” Military facilities-and stockpiles of nuclear fuel that India has produced up to now-will be exempt from inspections or safeguards.

- India agrees to signing an Additional Protocol (PDF)-which allows more intrusive IAEA inspections-of its civilian facilities.

- India agrees to continue its moratorium on nuclear weapons testing.

- India commits to strengthening the security of its nuclear arsenals.

- India works toward negotiating a Fissile Material Cut off Treaty (FMCT) with the United States banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. India agrees to prevent the spread of enrichment and reprocessing technologies to states that don’t possess them and to support international non-proliferation efforts.

- U.S. companies will be allowed to build nuclear reactors in India and provide nuclear fuel for its civilian energy program. (An approval by the Nuclear Suppliers Group lifting the ban on India has also cleared the way for other countries to make nuclear fuel and technology sales to India.)

China and Pakistan were the major opponent of the Indo-US nuclear deal though they did not openly protested but their media reflected what they desired so. In 2013, Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad conducted a seminar on “Indo-US Nuclear Deal and Pakistan: The Years Ahead, Leader of the house in the Senate of Pakistan, Senator Raja Zafar-ul-Haq has said that Pakistan has serious reservations over Indo-US nuclear deal and related efforts to give India more prominence in international nuclear scenario by bypassing laws and was closely monitoring the regional and global developments. He said, “Pakistan had been able to ride the tide and counter challenges posed to it since its inception” Former ambassador Tariq Osman Hyder while addressing to the seminar asked the United States and other members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to adopt a “non-discriminatory, criteria-based approach” in extending nuclear cooperation to other countries. He was of the opinion that, “US was investing in India as part of a “grand strategy” in which India is part of an “anti-China coalition”
III. **Pakistan Response to Indo-US Nuclear Deal**

Pakistan’s primary security objective has always been to ensure Pakistan’s territorial integrity against an existential threat from its large eastern neighbour. If this threat is compounded because of the Indo-US strategic partnership and becomes difficult to manage, Pakistan could be compelled to exercise all available options including a possible strategic alliance with other big powers such as Russia and China. In spite of being a non-NATO member, Pakistan has been critical of the U.S.-India nuclear cooperation agreement, but at the same time has periodically sought a similar arrangement for itself, a demand Washington has so far turned down, advisor to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said in a statement "The operationalisation of Indo-US nuclear deal for political and economic expediencies would have a detrimental impact on deterrence stability in South Asia." Pakistan has circulated a letter to the Board members of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) expressing concern that if the safeguards agreement sought by India is approved by the IAEA, it will lead to increased Indian access to nuclear fuel and may contribute to a renewed nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. However, India expects the safeguards agreement to be signed with IAEA in spite of Pakistan’s objection, since the overwhelming mood in the IAEA Board of Governors is to support the Indian safeguards agreement. President Musharraf earlier stated; “Pakistan pursues the strategy of credible deterrence in both conventional and unconventional fields in accordance with the threat it may perceive. Pakistan, he said, has quantified the strategy of minimum defensive deterrence and is refining its deterrence level of force…whenever an imbalance is created in the region; Pakistan has to balance it out in accordance with its strategy of minimum deterrence.”

In 2008 Islamabad pushed for criteria based exemption to the rules of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which unlike the country-based exception benefiting only India could have made Pakistan eligible for nuclear cooperation with NSG members. Despite its reservations about the India special exception, Islamabad joined other members of the Board of Governors in approving India’s safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in August 2008. Islamabad in Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in 2010 again sought “non-discriminatory access” to civilian nuclear technology, while also offering nuclear fuel cycle services covered by IAEA safeguards to the international community. Collaboration between New Delhi and Washington, particularly, in the nuclear and space fields would disturb the conventional and non-conventional balance of power between India and Pakistan. The nuclear deal will further enhance Indian capability to have pre-emptive attack against Pakistan. The Indo-US nuclear deal gave a green signal to India’s nuclear programme, raising its status from “unlawful and illegal” to the legitimized nuclear power. Pakistan expressed its desire time and again to US to sign the similar nuclear deal, but the latter did not pay any response. As a result, Pakistan was compelled to explore a number of options that would best serve its security interests in the face of emerging Indo-US strategic partnership in the region. The prime concern for Pakistan was the acquisition of counter-force capability by India, which put the former military assets at stake in the case of major conflict. There are apprehensions that India may covert its civilian nuclear program into nuclear arms, which will have serious security implications for Pakistan. Moreover, the deal will compel Pakistan to pursue a qualitative approach to increase its deterrence stability. This includes technological improvements in its offensive and defensive capabilities. Pakistan follows a strategy of minimum deterrence in both conventional and nuclear fields in accordance with the threat it perceives, whenever strategic balance is disturbed in the region, Pakistan tries to balance it in accordance with its strategy of minimum deterrence. In addition, Pakistan also attempts to robust second strike capability through the quantitative increase in delivery systems and warheads, or through a sea-based capability.

IV. **Chinese Response to Indo-US Nuclear Deal**

China is an important part of the South Asian regional security arena. Importance of China in the Indian strategic calculus provides an ostensible reason for India to acquire nuclear weapons. China factor also helps diverting possible Western cynicism on India’s huge military expenditure that is primarily aimed at enhancing India’s military stature rather than stemming from any genuine security concern and this was also reflected in PM Vajpayee’s statement soon after the 1998 nuclear tests, once he said; “India had become the sixth nuclear force capability by India, which put the former military assets at stake in the case of major conflict.” There are apprehensions that India may covert its civilian nuclear program into nuclear arms, which will have serious security implications for Pakistan. Moreover, the deal will compel Pakistan to pursue a qualitative approach to increase its deterrence stability. This includes technological improvements in its offensive and defensive capabilities. Pakistan follows a strategy of minimum deterrence in both conventional and nuclear fields in accordance with the threat it perceives, whenever strategic balance is disturbed in the region, Pakistan tries to balance it in accordance with its strategy of minimum deterrence. In addition, Pakistan also attempts to robust second strike capability through the quantitative increase in delivery systems and warheads, or through a sea-based capability.
a threat but the international community must act responsibly. Dr Maria Sultan, said South Asia is confronted by challenges including new, ambitious “limited war fighting concepts” of the Indian military, she further said there has also been a massive increase in India’s conventional defence spending, which has pushed the region towards “perpetual instability.” Sultan said India’s Cold Start military doctrine, developed to be used in case of war with Pakistan, together with “massive militarisation” gives India the capability to increase the level of the arms race in South Asia. This will also raise the level of minimum deterrence stability in the region. She said Pakistan’s Full Spectrum Deterrence strategy is a response measure against evolving threats. The strategy includes as its key elements a short range ballistic missile system. Dr Pervez Iqbal Cheema, Dean of the National Defence University’s faculty of contemporary studies, said serious threats from its eastern border led Pakistan to develop nuclear deterrent capability. Lt-Gen (retd) Sikandar Afzal said the discriminatory policies relating to nuclear cooperation pursued by some major powers were creating insecurity and Pakistan had been compelled to take a stand against nuclear exceptionalism, selectivity and discrimination.

V. Conclusion

One of the negative implications of Indo-US nuclear deal for India is that both China and Pakistan made a strategic shift in their relations and Pakistan was obliviously gainer. Though Indian government reassured both Pakistan and China that the nuclear deal was not aimed at any other country, but China and Pakistan, in fact, made some high profile announcements in anticipation of the Indo-US nuclear deal. In July 2005, before Singh’s visit to the US, China and Pakistan had met to consult on matters relating to arms control, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Subsequently, on 14 July, the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) announced plans for 13 new nuclear power plants in the next 25 years, for which the Pakistanis have admitted they were largely depending on China for assistance. Though Indian government reassured both India and Pakistan that the nuclear deal was not aimed at any other country, but China and Pakistan, in fact, made some high profile announcements in anticipation of the Indo-US nuclear deal. In July 2005, before Singh’s visit to the US, China and Pakistan had met to consult on matters relating to arms control, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Subsequently, on 14 July, the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) announced plans for 13 new nuclear power plants in the next 25 years, for which the Pakistanis have admitted they were largely depending on China for assistance. Pakistan also demanded US to have such a type of deal with it. But United States did not respond actively. This reveals that But the U.S.-India nuclear deal, many think, is a dangerous policy that could ignite an arms race in South Asia.

End Notes

[21] Ibid.