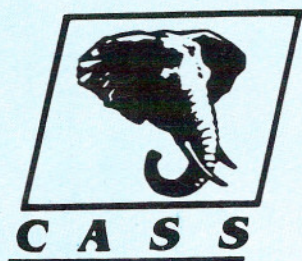

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**INDIA AND THE
NUCLEAR CHALLENGE**

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INDIA AND THE
NUCLEAR CHALLENGE

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CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STRATEGIC STUDIES

Lt. Gen. E. A Vas, a former Eastern Army Commander and an author of several books on security and related issues. Prominent works include a trilogy on violence in society, book on Bhutan, Kashmir and an autobiography, 'Fools And Infantrymen'.

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Centre.

INDIA : THE NUCLEAR CHALLENGE

FOREWORD

Ever since India's peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974, there has been a continuing debate and speculation regarding the likely future direction of nuclear programme in India. The debate and discussions were intense during the period leading to the NPT extension conference in 1995. It seemed to have abated when the NPT was unanimously extended for an indefinite period, India having abstained from the conference. However, the issue has once again become live due to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva which is deliberating upon the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – initially proposed by India in 1954 as a disarmament measure. The other reason for the need to debate the issue at this time is the impending elections in India and the differing stance of the major political parties regarding the nuclear option.

Although there is a general consensus that India should not submit itself to any discriminatory nuclear regime, opinions differ widely as to the "stance" India should adopt. There is a section which supports the present ambivalent stance, whereas there is also another dominant and vociferous section that seeks an end to the nuclear ambiguity by India. Each of these, no doubt, have their merits and demerits.

It was thus considered appropriate to consider the nuclear challenge to India in a systematic manner. The present paper by Lt. Gen. Vas, Maj. Gen. Pendse and Col (Dr.) Athale, aims at reviewing the current global situation and options available to India, before deliberating upon the preferred option. All the three officers, having retired from the Army after a distinguished career are active participants in the nuclear debate and have taken part in discussions and seminars on the subject in Pune. It is hoped that this paper will clarify some of the points involved in this complex issue.

Pune
30th March, 1996

Air Marshal S. Kulkarni

INDIA AND THE NUCLEAR CHALLENGE

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Nations have no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests, said Palmerston. Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) of the day, who have twisted the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) into an appendage of the indefinitely extended Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) seem to be safeguarding their own narrow national interests, with a cynical disregard for the threat that their huge nuclear arsenals pose to the future of all mankind. The non-NWSs are expected to fall in line and accept the travesty of a CTBT, which includes neither time bound commitment to total nuclear disarmament nor a ban on research for further sophistication of nuclear weapons, let alone a declaration of no first use by many of the NWSs.

During the discussions at Geneva on the draft CTBT, representatives of India and Pakistan highlighted this failure of the NWSs in almost identical terms ie the omission to commit themselves to a time bound nuclear disarmament. The NWSs appear confident of getting the CTBT ratified despite the obvious shortcomings. Whatever the outcome of the Geneva deliberations, this paper proposes to review the current global environment, the role ascribed to nuclear deterrence during and after the cold war, assess likely future threat scenarios and choices before India for responding appropriately to these threats. This background will help in examining India's preferred options to meet the nuclear challenge.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Global power equations that appeared more or less frozen during the cold war into bi-polarity, have broken free from those constraints. A fierce trade war, waged mainly by Japan, the US and United Europe, is validating Michael Howard's quip about commerce being a continuation of war by an admixture of other means. Two features of this on-going struggle are worthy of note. First, it is these very advanced countries, with their population at 23 % of the world total, are in command of 85 % of the world income. Secondly, India with a 0.5 % share in the global trade, has little influence over the outcome of this trade war. There is no doubt that India with a 200 million strong middle class is viewed as a lucrative market. But the fact that it is a home to one sixth of the humanity is brushed aside and even her claim for a seat on the UN Security Council has very little support. The US has vehemently opposed India's inclusion in the Security Council. It is a moot question whether India will remain a pariah in the global system, currently dominated by the US, Russia, United Europe, China and Japan, or, become a global player itself. The answer may depend as much, if not more, on the likely success in achieving an economic stature as on its military ability to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. To appreciate the nuances of this global power play, it is necessary to recognise the major trends which predominate the world and ultimately may endanger world peace.

ANALYSIS OF MAJOR TRENDS

The current global scene, marked by an all out economic competition, is a chaotic one. Alvin and Heidi Toffler have explained this chaos as a natural consequence of the co-existence of three civilizations on the earth; a first wave agrarian, a second

wave industrial and a third wave informational one. Each of these has a different way of producing wealth, differing survival needs, different working speeds and different ways of looking at national sovereignty and national interests. Clashes between nations that are in different 'waves of civilization', are therefore inevitable. Many times, such clashes occur within the nation and its society that has interest groups wedded to these different models of production of wealth. Both China and India have been witness to this phenomenon.

Ilya Prigogine in his work 'Order out of Chaos', states that structures in a chaotic scenario may either dissipate totally or re-organize themselves into a higher order structure. But which of the two alternatives is more likely to come about cannot be said with any certainty. Paul Kennedy, author of 'Preparing for the Twentyfirst Century' while commenting upon the population explosion in the poorer part of the world alongside a continuing technological revolution in the rich nations, has remarked that this is a poor recipe for a stable world order in the coming century. He has further forecast the onset of widespread wars of re-distribution of people and resources. This will happen as the destitute majority of the world takes recourse to violent means to correct this glaring economic disparity, being perpetuated under the pretext of establishing a 'new world order'. In their book 'The First Global Revolution, A Club of Rome Report', King and Schneider have expressed an apprehension that the richer nations may retreat into a ghetto whose walls may be bristling with weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). These weapons may be launched against the hordes of the deprived demanding their share of the cake which an iniquitous global system has denied them thus far. Such a desperate option may be forced upon the NWSs in their effort to cling to their affluent life styles because of the horizontal proliferation of technologies

of mass destruction. The easy availability of small arms, remote controlled explosives and drug money to fund terrorism around the world, are some of the factors that are converging to make non - state actors a force in the world affairs. Their growing alienation from the corrupt state apparatus, and a fierce resolve of many minorities to seek territorial identity based on ethnic or religious fervour, are likely to engulf the future world in a million mutinies.

A recent declaration by some of the NWSs before the International Court of Justice that they have a right to use nuclear weapons in defence of their supreme national interest, therefore confirms the stark possibility of these countries adopting such an irrational and inhuman approach using their nuclear supremacy. This strategy raises an interesting question : "How are nuclear weapons going to deter an opponent who has no fixed territory and does not provide a definable target which can be held hostage through such a threat ?" Before the riddle of where deterrence ends and destruction begins can be solved, it is necessary to take a total view of the nuclear doctrines in vogue during and after the cold war.

UNDERSTANDING THE NUCLEAR ERA

Use of force to settle disputes , or the threat of use of such force, is as old as history of mankind. Similarly holding of hostages was in vogue from the earliest times. Dropping of the atom bombs by the US on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 launched the reign of nuclear terror. When in 1949, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) an arch rival of the USA acquired this 'absolute ' weapon, the world was ushered into an era of balance of terror. These developments

made many analysts predict the end of all wars and conflicts. But before the cold war ended in 1991, the world witnessed more than one hundred and fifty conflicts, mainly in the third world.

In the post cold war euphoria some claimed that history had ended and that trade wars were replacing use of military force. Clash of civilizations was also predicted to be the new battleground. Many in the West demanded a peace dividend. But third world nations like India find little difference in the attitude of the NWSs towards use of force in furtherance of their national interest. This apparent paradox stems from the fact that once the Soviet Union ceased to exist and the ideological challenge of communism seemed to have ended, the Western nations were encouraged to freeze the current lopsided economic and political order for ever. In the heyday of balance-of-terror induced stability, most regions of the world came under the long shadow of this super power confrontation. As argued by Major General D. K. Palit , even the regional conflicts like the Middle Eastern or the Indo - Pakistani one, acquired the characteristics of a dual level confrontation. At the lower level it was a confrontation between the smaller powers directly involved and at the upper level there was the interplay between the two super powers. The final outcome of these conflicts was more influenced by the latter than by the actions of the nations directly involved. The break up of the Soviet Union has ended the upper level confrontation to a large extent and countries like India are bereft of the kind of support they garnered from the Soviet Union during the 1971 Indo Pak conflict to resolve its regional problems. The cold war has ended but as far as India is concerned, the context, the content and the philosophy of national power and its expression through use of force by those mighty global powers that are not only permanent, veto wielding members of the UN

Security Council but are also the acknowledged NWSs, continues. The security environment thus shows very little positive change from India's point of view.

At the global level, it is widely acknowledged that the communication and information revolution that is sweeping the world is bound to alter the existing politico/military power balance. History of the last three thousand years is a witness to many such shifts. The spread of technology through an information revolution is impossible to stop, and that includes the technology of WMD, whatever efforts may be made by the currently advanced nations. The real challenge before mankind is to usher in this change peacefully. It needs to be remembered that despite the end of cold war tensions, those terrible instruments of mass death and destruction - the thermonuclear weapons, continue to exist with no early prospect of their elimination. Similarly, the rash of 'settling the score' conflicts in many parts of the world is a grim reminder of the fact that use of force to settle disputes is still the reality governing inter state relations. India, very much a part of this milieu, has little option but to acknowledge the reality of use of force. This needs reiteration because a concerted dis-information campaign has been launched by the West that proclaims a utopia of 'one world' and economics having replaced politics of force. It is claimed that military strength has become redundant as economic strength has become the sole arbiter of a nation's destiny. Nothing could be further from the 'reality' of the world today.

There is an everpresent danger of 'realism' degenerating into a dogmatic adherence to status quo. Yet it can be safely acknowledged that from the realist's point of view, the world situation is quite different from the Western version. The world continues to be divided between two systems-as during the cold war-main and subordinate. The main system consists of the industrialized countries of the north, with the former communist

block nations hovering on the fringes. The rest of the world forms the subordinate system. This division existed during the cold war as well but with a crucial difference. During that period the primary interdependence in the main system was the assured destructive power of nuclear weapons. The states in the subordinate system were in a 'dependency' relationship with the main system (with some exceptions). While the changes in the main system had impact on the states in the subordinate system, the reverse was seldom true.

Balance of terror ended with the demise of the cold war. Since then, at the main system level, economic interdependence rather than 'force', has emerged as the governing factor. However this change has not affected the relationship between the states of the main and the subordinate system; that relationship still rests on the power differential as there is no economic interdependence - only dependence. Earlier, as 'force' was the governing factor at both the main and subordinate systems, there was a degree of interplay between the confrontations at either levels. This acted as a restraint all through the cold war, as the threat of world destruction though a process of escalation was a possibility. After an end to the balance of terror, this linkage stands broken and the use of force at the subordinate system level, either within or from main system states, has become autonomous and there is a greater possibility of its occurrence. The end of cold war has thus increased the possibilities of use of force against India. So far, she has displayed her wish to retain her independence of decision making through various policy pronouncements, but has been short on action. The result can be seen in references made in Washington to 'pain of punishment' should India stand firm on the NPT and CTBT. The emerging situation makes it imperative for the Indian masses, and elites in particular, to understand the role of nuclear weapons with clarity and precision.

The current debate in the West on the role of force in post cold war era was sparked off by the Western failure to force Iraq to quit Kuwait by all means short of war. Deterrence as a technique to contain the Soviet Union and subsequently bring it down to its knees depended for its success as much on the economic consequences of an arms race as on the threat of use of nuclear weapons. Deterrence is an amalgam of psychology, threats, and politico-economic dimension of coercive diplomacy to achieve political objectives without recourse to a shooting war. But deterrence is neither omnipotent nor omnibus. It is on the other hand issue and country specific. It appears that in the post cold war era, the West is attempting to make nuclear deterrence a panacea for all its problems.

India has often declared its lack of faith in the workability of nuclear deterrence and it perceives its success in living with a nuclear power like China on its northern borders without a major clash since 1962, as an adequate proof. Its policy makers continue to follow a sequential process of conflict management, in which diplomacy is the first step. Contingency planning and training by the armed forces is the next step and should diplomacy fail to achieve desired results, war is seen as the final step in this linear process. As opposed to this, deterrence means a constant state of readiness for war with an assured level of destruction that in the first place will help avoid it. IN DETERRENCE REGIMES THERE IS NO DIVISION BETWEEN PLANNING AND CONDUCT, AS THE THREAT OF USE OF FORCE IS CONTINUOUSLY BROUGHT TO BEAR ON AN ADVERSARY TO BE DETERRED. During the period of the cold war, there was very little difference between an ordinary day and crisis. Holding one's adversary hostage to the threat of nuclear annihilation was a factor constant to the deterrence regime.

Deterrence is product of capability and intent; credibility of threat is therefore as important as actual capability. All available means are used to convince the adversary about the certainty of one's will to use force. Successful deterrence, therefore, involves a fine tuning of all the activities of a nation towards this end. Strategic studies played a major role in developing this technique of using threat, rather than the force proper to achieve national security and also avoid a nuclear war. This is a significant departure from the earlier concept of 'balance of power' that also aimed at peace but its failure from time to time resulted in war. Deterrence, unlike 'balance of power' that was concerned exclusively with military force, is a multidimensional technique that managed to keep peace between the super powers during the cold war.

Strategy or technique of use of force thus remains relevant in the post cold war era. Deterrence, which during the cold war era was a two person, non zero sum game between the two super powers is sought to be made into a global, non zero sum game. This is clearly indicated by the recent American writings on the subject, wherein there is a search for a viable 'enemy' to justify the existence and further refinements to nuclear arsenals. These huge costs are being justified on the plea of deterring a future enemy, not yet identified. Technology control regimes like the NPT, Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and CTBT and others are meant to keep in check the numbers and ability of potential adversaries. New thinking also believes that threat of selective nuclear destruction with small and clean weapons, can be used in events and on issues not directly linked to military threats. Taking a far fetched example, some time in the future, nuclear threat may well be used to curb the industrial development of a poor country in the South because of the threat of green house effect that this is likely to pose. Incidentally, in case of shift in the rainfall patterns, the areas likely to be most

severely affected are the American mid West and Southern Russia. This seems to be the only rationale behind attempts on the one hand to make nuclear deterrence omnipotent and on the other to impose restrictive regimes like NPT, CTBT et al. In this emerging scenario, India as a developing country intent on changing the economic status quo, has little option but to understand the technique of use of nuclear threats and learn to counter it. This is the only way it can maintain a modicum of independence of decision making that is a necessary precondition for economic development.

LIKELY THREAT SCENARIOS

Having seen how the probability of the use of force by the nations of the main system against those of the subordinate system has in fact increased after the end of the cold war, it is necessary to visualize the circumstances under which such use is likely to materialise in future. As early as 1978, Mr. Ronald Higgins had observed in his book 'The Seventh Enemy', some converging threats to the very existence of mankind on earth. These were, population explosion, food crisis, resource scarcity, environmental degradation, nuclear weapons abuse and unleashing of science and technology without moral restraints. What was most worrying, according to him was the all pervasive human apathy towards the gravity of the situation. Subsequent events have borne out these dire predictions. Nearly two decades after this work was written, there appears precisely such convergence of threats at the global level.

GLOBAL THREATS

Paul Kennedy in his earlier quoted work has analyzed the demographic trends. According to his data, the advanced nations

of the rich North face the prospect of rapidly 'graying' populations. The proportion of those above sixty is rising rapidly in the North even as the world population is likely to touch the eleven billion mark by mid Twentyfirst Century. As this increase would mainly be due to a high growth rate in Afro Asian countries, the income disparities in the globalized market economy would only worsen, both within the poor nations of the South as well as between the North and the South. Large population shifts would therefore occur, legally or illegally, from the poor South to the rich North. The movement would be motivated by an urge to equalize opportunity for leading a better life. This huge population shift can trigger the wars of redistribution mentioned earlier.

The Club of Rome report had pointed out in the seventies that there are severe limits to such growth of population. Finite arable land, lack of water resource, shortage of renewable energy sources and internal financial resources, are some of the factors that are likely to pose an obstacle to the rapid industrialization of the third world. Paul Kennedy is quite categorical in stating, "It is inconceivable that the earth can sustain a population of ten billion people devouring resources at the rate enjoyed by the richer societies today- or at even half that rate." Therefore the resource crunch is going to equally affect all nations, rich or poor, very severely.

Damage to the ecosphere, either due to rapid industrialization by continental sized countries like India or China or the destruction of rain forest cover due to inroads made by agriculture by the poor in the deprived regions, is likely to affect the climate and result in shifts in rainfall patterns. An accentuated green house effect with rise in sea levels could cause major relocation of populations in the third world. It is doubtful if the world eco-system can carry the burden of increased population

that is consuming the resources and adding an intolerable burden on the natural process of renewal. This danger of upsetting an ecological balance in turn can cause food scarcity and the earlier mentioned prospect of wars of redistribution.

The advanced nations with their faith in finding a 'technological fix' for every human problem may develop appropriate technologies to solve some of the problems. There is great promise in bio-technology to solve the problem of increased food needs and man may be able to control the climate. But wedded as these nations are to the concept of preservation of narrow national interest, even to the extent of use of force, they seem unlikely to transfer these technologies that can solve the problems of the world's poor. In fact, the effort is in the opposite direction; of using the concept of 'Intellectual Property Rights' (IPR) to prevent precisely such cross fertilization of ideas and concepts that would otherwise help third world countries like India to harness this advanced technology to remove poverty. With its growing population devouring every increase in production, a country like India has very little prospect of generating the economic surpluses needed to pay for this. As a reaction to this unilateral imposition of IPR and denial of technology, the populations in the third world countries may resort to violence to get their right to a better standard of living.

The information revolution and growing global human contacts have made the diffusion of technology of WMDs, a reality. It is next to impossible to draw a clear distinction between civil and military use of concepts, components and technologies. Therefore in future, terrorist organizations, religious fanatics and a variety of ethnic minorities seeking a separate geographical identity, will be increasingly in a position to fabricate crude versions of WMDs in backyards. The use of

Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo sub way by the Om Shiri group in 1995, was a clear pointer to the future.

Finally, there is the awesome contingency in which these graying rich nations would retreat into a ghetto bristling with WMDs. These WMDs may then be used in a desperate bid to keep the hordes of poor destitutes from demanding access to resources for better life; a life style that is currently the monopoly of the minority in the rich North. Such a suicidal use of WMDs will spell doom for most species on earth.

THREATS TO INDIA'S SECURITY

India as a member of the global state system is automatically exposed to these global level threats. However there are a few threats specific to India, including nuclear ones, that have to be enumerated afresh. There is otherwise a possibility that a prolonged exposure and familiarity may make the Indian elite miss their real and immediate danger.

It is understood that China has deployed nuclear tipped medium range ballistic missiles in Tibet, the only targets for these can be Indian cities. It is also a party to helping Pakistan with nuclear weapon technology/completed weapon assemblies as well as short range missiles. China's 'Middle Kingdom' syndrome has propelled its four modernizations which will ultimately enable it to dominate South East Asia and isolate India within South Asia. Its astonishing 13 % annual growth of naval ships leaves no doubts about its long term goals. China's assertive military actions against Taiwan in March 1996, irrespective of their legality and status of Taiwan, point to a growing Chinese military muscle. After merger of Hongkong in 1997, China will emerge as the world's second largest economy

and there will be considerable upgradation of technology. Its prevarications over solving a dispute over the Indo-Tibetan border leaves open an option for it to teach another lesson to India at an opportune time. However, any instability in post Deng China and its territorial dispute with Kazakistan over the future of Sinkiang, can have a fallout for the Indian subcontinent. It would be prudent to assume a live Chinese threat to Indian security in the coming decade.

Pakistan, despite its rudimentary industrial capability, may have managed to build a few fission type nuclear weapons with the Chinese help and American connivance. Kazakistan, a former Soviet Republic, has a nuclear armoury that is much larger than that of China. Central Asia's future is fraught with uncertainty as it gets influenced by Pan Islamism and Muslim fundamentalism. The United States of America, though far removed from India geographically, has a formidable naval presence in the Indian Ocean. It is difficult to predict as to which of the nuclear weapon wielding neighbour of India may fall prey to chaotic decision making in the coming decades and unleash a nuclear weapon against India or use coercive diplomacy or nuclear blackmail against India.

INDIA'S POSSIBLE CHOICES

The Western nations, claiming victory for market capitalism at the end of cold war are making an attempt to freeze the existing global politico-military balance to retain their relative advantage in terms of control over resources, over the rest of the world, forever. India's efforts to develop its economy and, consequently national power, are a threat to the status quo desired by the advanced nations. India needs to appreciate a possible use of force by the West against an India emerging as a great power. For at least three decades India has seemingly been deterred by a nuclear weapons armed China. An India that

sought a US air umbrella after the defeat at the hands of the Chinese and a nuclear protection after the 1964 Chinese nuclear test, ought to realize that it needs a credible, unambiguous, nuclear capability to counter the various threats to her security enumerated herein. That it continues to put its faith in a 'strategy of ambiguity', presented to the world as 'Recessed Deterrence', is of a piece with India's infinite capacity to delude itself over major issues of its survival as an independent decisionmaking centre. If study of history is to be understood as study of society, then the difference between progressive societies willing to follow the lead given by creative individuals and non- progressive societies that seem to be in permanent stupor, is self evident. The Indian society appears to be in such a stupor as it needs a good deal of prodding towards action, even in its own self interest.

India needs to wake up to the reality that in the post cold war era, the US as the sole super power, has abjured its option to lead the world to an equitable global order. It has under Mr. Clinton, deliberately chosen to pursue its own narrow national interest while professing to bring in a new world order. The American efforts thus far can be summed up as 'making the world safe for all Americans.' Russia no longer aspires to a world role and there is no visible nuclear threat to the West. There is however a vigorous attempt to justify the stockpiles of WMDs. by ascribing a new role to them. Their most likely role is against the Non Nuclear Weapon States, as recently declared by the NWSs in the International Court of Justice.

India has been nurturing a nuclear weapon option since 1950s. Its space programme and nuclear power programme was targeted to give her a missile based defensive option by 1970s. There have been many slippages and a submarine based missile option eludes her. Despite all this, India in 1996 has the

resources, manpower and industrial base to adopt a security strategy based on nuclear weapons.

CHOICES BEFORE INDIA

India has three clear choices. First one is to sign the NPT and/or CTBT and give up her option of nuclear weapons. The nuclear threats to her may be ignored and be taken care of by the vague promises and guarantees by the nuclear powers. Second choice is to go overt with her nuclear weapons capability and adopt a deterrent/dissuasion posture to counter direct conventional and nuclear threats to her security. This would imply a change in the Indian mind-set which would have to accept the workability of the concept of deterrence. The third choice is to do nothing. This option would mean that India neither signs the various treaties nor exercises its option. India instead then launches a global diplomatic offensive for a total nuclear disarmament- a path followed by her throughout most of the cold war period.

The bureaucracy dominated decision making process in India is inclined towards the do nothing option. But now that the NPT has been extended indefinitely and there is mounting pressure on India to sign CTBT (a NPT by backdoor as all talk of keeping the option open is meaningless then), India will be isolated and pressure will continue to be mounted for her adherence . On the other hand since under this choice India does not intend to exercise her option to deploy nuclear weapons, all the threats to her, enumerated above, remain. India continues to then spend 2-3 percent of her GNP on defence without effectively either deterring or dissuading her potential nuclear adversaries. Of all the three, this is the least cost effective and dangerous option.

Signing the NPT and the CTBT, with some assured measures as stated hereafter may be a possible choice provided these are

met under a US guarantee of a nuclear shield against a conventional and nuclear threat.

- a) Chinese nuclear tipped missiles, if any, are removed from Tibet; UN monitors check that no Chinese ICBM is targeted against India.
- b) A similar safeguard against the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia.
- c) Pakistani nuclear facilities are dismantled.

In return for these guarantees India may have to pay a price, such as giving up Kashmir. The US nuclear shield is reminiscent of the status of the princely states in India where the job of defending them was handed over to the British Empire. Japan, Germany and South Korea, have these guarantees and have prospered under the US security umbrella. India then would be a client state and part of the new world order. The major problem in this approach is, India is too big to be a client and none may want it to be so.

In the absence of reasonable safeguards for India, it has no choice but to build its own nuclear shield. To allay fears of aggressive use of these weapons by India, it can invite UN teams to be present on the weapon sites to reinforce and guarantee a 'no first use' pledge by India. Such a shield is of little use against the low intensity warfare as in Kashmir. To deal with the internal security threats, India will have to maintain a small, well trained, conventional force. But once the shield is in place to take care of overt strategic threats to her security, India can reduce her conventional forces, specially the heavy import-dependent armaments and achieve a healthy balance of payments.

Historically, India has been and continues to be a non expansionist power. The cement that holds Indians together is

the realization that Indian disunity has been the main cause of their repeated misfortunes in the past. Pushed to the wall, Indians are capable of great sacrifices in the cause of the nation as was evident in 1962 at the time of the Chinese invasion. It is quite likely that irrational and unjust international pressures may generate a similar ground swell of patriotic fervour. In reality India has only two choices, either get a nuclear shield or build one herself. Simultaneously, in keeping with its convictions, India ought to put forward a time bound plan of de-nuclearization, on following general lines:-

Phase I

- a) Agreement on the clear definition of nuclear weapon/explosion as also verification regimes in CTBT. Prohibition on weapon related research.
- b) Declaration of no first use by all NWSs.
- c) An acceptance of principle of total nuclear dis-armament.

Phase II

Drawing down of the nuclear arsenals by NWSs and universal fissile material production (for weapon purposes) freeze.

Phase III

Total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Notes:-

1. Trust but verify- universally and in a non-discriminatory way.
2. Mandatory sanction against violators.

3. Time frame and monitoring organization to be decided by consensus at the UN General Assembly.

In its present frame of mind, the US will not give up its nuclear weapons nor is it likely to give a no first use assurance. The US, though the world's most law abiding, is also the world's most ruthless nation. The other questions that need to be deliberated upon are, who is to fund the nuclear disarmament process and also organize the deliberations ? Notwithstanding the difficulties, India must take the initiative and expose the duplicity of the NWSs who have perverted the original purpose of the CTBT (as a check on a nuclear arms race as well as to save the world from radio active fallout) and made it an appendage to the NPT, already extended indefinitely.

INDIA'S PREFERRED OPTION

India spends upto 2-3 percent of its GNP on her armed forces that are dependent on conventional weapons- a large part of which is imported. Conventional arms cannot deal with nuclear threats. Thus India's huge defence expenditure is a waste and makes no logical sense except as a force to deal with internal unrest.

India appears to have elected to keep her nuclear options open. By not signing the NPT, India is under no treaty obligation to desist from developing its own weapons. The negotiations and finalisation of a comprehensive test ban may prove a hurdle in the path of India keeping her options open as India has not tested a thermonuclear weapon. Much valuable data for research into controlled fusion has been obtained from the weapons related explosions. Fusion being the likely source of energy for future, the CTBT will also close that option. Recent agreement between

India, China, Iran and Russia to set up an Asian foundation for thermonuclear studies announced by Dr. Velikov, at Moscow, is a welcome development. This will pre-empt any adverse fall out should the CTBT get approved by 1997.

Signing the CTBT, India faces two possible after effects. One is a danger of future nuclear blackmail to stop economic progress, and, second, to deny access to a future energy source. Formation of the Asia Foundation can take care of the second aspect. India needs to conduct a thermonuclear test to develop the technology based on fusion. Having tested, it can sign the CTBT with a proviso that it will continue laboratory experiments in controlled fusion. It should also continue to remain away from the NPT. As an assurance of the peaceful intention, India could give a 'verifiable' (by UN monitors at site) no first use guarantee on the lines mentioned earlier. On the issue of production of fissile material cutoff, Indian position needs to be in line with that of the UK, France and China, namely that India will begin cutting back its weapon related fissile material stocks once the levels of the US and Russian arsenals are reduced substantially.

Pakistan's urge to achieve nuclear parity with India that has superior conventional armed strength is understandable. India must promise no first use unless Pakistan resorts to overt aggression or use even a single nuclear weapon. In that case India should assure Pakistan that there will be a complete and total destruction of its territory and people.

Such a declaration and action by India will remove all ambiguity about its nuclear capability. In order to convince the world and would be adversaries that India's 'no first use pledge' is not a bluff, it needs to carry out a diagnostic thermonuclear

test before signing the CTBT, while retaining its right to conduct further research in controlled fusion. Since India has not signed the NPT in its present discriminatory form, this option safeguards India's long term interest without threatening any nation.

At a meeting of the parliamentary consultative committee on defence, on 1 February 1996, the Indian Prime Minister, more or less, confirmed the above option as the most preferred one, barring the conduct of a thermonuclear test. He also declared India's resolve to continue with its missile programme. Without openly stating so, India has adopted a nuclear posture in line with that of China, France and the UK, of retaining a dissuasive nuclear capability until all nuclear weapons are eliminated from the world.

Unsuitability of nuclear weapons to deter non- state actors is self evident. No nuclear weapon has also actually been used since 1945. But their possession seems to lend courage to the NWSs to browbeat non weapon states with the threat of its use. If national nuclear arsenals need to be preserved for such a power play, there is an equal need to ensure that the NWSs do not enjoy a monopoly and use it as a part of their effort to settle disputes amongst nations by use of force. Creation of an international nuclear force, drawn from non partisan states, such as Sweden, Germany, Japan, India and such like other non - NWSs can act as a restraining force. India should canvass actively for the formation of such a force side by side with a campaign for total nuclear disarmament. The idea is to usher in an era of 'collective nuclear security' in line with the ideas enshrined in the UN charter.

CONCLUSION

India has been, all along, opposed to the use of nuclear weapons, but as a prudent measure has created a formidable nuclear capability of its own. However, all these years a creative and positive Indian response to discriminatory regimes like the NPT has been lacking. This paper is an attempt to formulate such a response as an alternative to the ineffective and discriminatory NPT, and its appendage the CTBT. Most Indians agree that India must keep its nuclear option open as long as nuclear weapons exist anywhere else in the world. But without an Indian alternative to discriminatory regimes, it may be politically isolated and may even be forced to give up its option altogether under a threat of 'punishment'.

Alternatives suggested in this paper aim at constructing a global regime that will restrain the use of force, a function carried out by the 'balance of terror' during the cold war. It must be also clearly understood that nuclear disarmament cannot be pursued in isolation from curbs on conventional and other futuristic weapons like beam weapons. If the world has to survive and remain peaceful, limits have to be placed on the use of force to solve disputes between nations. Only a holistic approach has a chance of succeeding, and not piece meal and discriminatory regimes- how so ever attractive they may appear in the short term. Even the Treaty of Versailles was hailed as a 'success' even when it actually sowed the seeds of second world war. As suggested in this paper, when the NWSs give up their option to use nuclear weapons, except in self defence, they in reality give up nothing because nuclear threats have never worked in any other contingencies. A global consensus on restraining the nuclear menace is the only remedy to save mankind from extinction.

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