

US-India nuclear deal: New guidelines for peaceful nuclear energy

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VORACIOUS energy needs, global climate change and emission of less carbon dioxide has led to renewed interest in nuclear energy. India argues that the US-India nuclear deal will help the country generate adequate energy for its economic and social development.

The existing regime for peaceful nuclear energy as stipulated in the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is flawed because the same method can be used for nuclear weapons. The only difference, observers say, is that 5% per cent enrichment of uranium is necessary for peaceful nuclear energy while 95% per cent enrichment is needed for nuclear weapons.

It is noted that the 45-member nuclear suppliers group has waived its conditions for India with respect to its nuclear deal with the US and has concluded they need to work outside the NPT to allow India for generation of peaceful nuclear energy.

Renewed interest in nuclear energy

One of the ramifications of the US-India Nuclear deal is that nations are to be allowed for peaceful nuclear energy for their economic development.

According to IAEA, nuclear energy is clean, and cost-effective in the long run. The new technological advances and new reactor designs of third generation reactors have both reduced the likelihood of accidents and bolstered our ability to deal with any that do occur.

According to nuclear experts, third generation reactors, with an output of 600 MW, are simpler, smaller, more rugged, and reduce substantially the possibility of a core meltdown accident, from a likelihood of 1 in 20,000 to 1 in 800,000 per reactor year.

Furthermore, third generation reactors are known to have, for example, 80 percent fewer control cables and 60 percent less piping. They are standardized to expedite licensing and reduce construction time. Fourth generation fusion reactors, one hopes, will be coming into operation in the foreseeable future.

Nuclear power is so powerful that one pound of uranium produces 20,000 times more energy than one pound of coal. Nuclear energy (uranium 235 and uranium 238-derived plutonium produce) emits no harmful gases or toxic metals into the environment. And, unlike hydroelectric dams, it does



not alter a region's ecosystem.

France uses nuclear power to generate 77 percent of its electricity, and Russia uses 20% of its total energy requirements. More than 35 nuclear power plants are currently under construction around the world, 24 of them in Asia including in China.

Today about 12,500 nuclear plants provide safe, clean and cheap energy to about 32 countries. Indonesia, Malaysia and Egypt are to develop nuclear energy. Bangladesh wants to revive its Rooppur nuclear reactor with the Chinese assistance.

The countries that at one stage did not encourage nuclear energy are currently seriously debating on the use of it because of environmental concerns. Sweden, Australia and Germany are among them.

For new construction of nuclear plants, countries have to evaluate whether they need nuclear energy and some of the following relevant factors are to be assessed. First, it depends on the alternatives available. Some countries are rich in alternative energy resources; others less so. Some alternatives that used to be cheap and attractive in the past may be less so in the future e.g. coal for environmental reasons or natural gas for cost reasons. Second, it depends on the overall electricity demand in a country and how fast it is growing. Third, it depends on the market structure and investment

environment that assures attractive returns.

International Commission for Nuclear Non-Proliferation & Disarmament Commission

In June in Hiroshima, Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced to set up the International Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Commission. At the UN General Assembly session, on 26th September, Australian and Japanese Prime Ministers have announced the setting up of the Commission and its broad terms of reference.

Experts argue that membership should not be limited to NPT states, nor should the Commission's life conclude on the eve of the May 2010 NPT review conference or be tied to the outcome of the conference, where the record for reaching agreement on anything is poor.

The Commission should develop a vision and plan that draws in all relevant players within and outside the NPT.

The Commission's work is timely, given that both US presidential candidates have supported intensification of international disarmament efforts, supported by strong advocacy from senior US statesmen such as William Perry, Henry Kissinger, George Shultz and Sam Nunn in several articles in The Wall Street Journal.

But the Commission's work for total disarmament including the

nuclear weapons will be difficult and little can be achieved if some of the main players, such as the US and Russia, won't even talk to one another (after Georgia's conflict), let alone resume nuclear reduction talks coming out of the Cold War. Big power leadership that will be critical seems to be nil.

The Commission should transcend the stale debate of whether disarmament takes precedence over non-proliferation. It will need to work on three fronts in parallel: (a) a disarmament, (b) non-proliferation and (c) the safe management of civilian nuclear co-operation in the future.

Hypocrisy of nuclear weapon states

The compelling case for accelerated action to get rid of nuclear weapons remains: not only because they are dangerous, but also because continued attachment to them makes them an attractive asset for others.

Nuclear weapon states' emphasis on the dangers of further proliferation has been seen as deflecting attention from their failure to make credible progress on disarmament. Between the US and Russia alone, there are more than 13,000 nuclear warheads ready for action.

This perceived hypocrisy of nuclear weapon states has led many countries pursuing an indigenous enrichment capacity as a way of keeping its future weapons options open.

The nuclear weapon states do not seem to realise that the existing institutions may not be able to handle a world with an additional dozen states with the capacity to develop the full nuclear fuel cycle for nuclear weapons.

Furthermore for many states, the need for nuclear weapons has become relevant because they act as a deterrent. For example if Iraq had nuclear weapons, the US would not have invaded the country in 2003. Nuclear-armed North Korea is an example where the US had to negotiate on non-proliferation.

Conclusion

What the proposed Commission can do is to provide a blueprint for building a new era of peaceful nuclear co-operation.

The Commission may provide international protocol for technology sharing, training, capacity building and development of proliferation-safe technologies, national export controls, and other forms of nuclear co-operation for those states that want to use nuclear energy for power.

In this way, the Commission may facilitate generation of peaceful nuclear energy with the cooperation of the world's nuclear industry, which is an indispensable partner in this process.

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Politics has no military solution

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Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in his hey days as Pakistan's Prime Minister in the early 1970s had said that there is never a point of no return for politicians. A politician is never finished till he/she is dead, in fact charismatic politicians influence politics even after they are dead. Bhutto should know it for with his own political career, he has established this truth. Even after his death, his name lives, carried by his daughter Benazir and now her husband who has become Pakistan's President based on the legacy of Bhutto. Two military dictators have failed to wipe out the legacy.

History is replete with such examples. If the military backers of this Government had cared to look at history, they would have known politicians cannot be banned by a military decree. The nature and course of politics cannot be pre-determined by military intelligence. No one doubts that this military backed government was right in assuming that the BNP and the AL were conducting destructive politics for which the two ladies were largely responsible. They were however hasty and wrong in assuming that they could set politics right and that too as a Government with limited constitutional responsibilities.

Another major mistake they made was they never resolved whether they are a caretaker government or an interim one. Fakhruddin said many times that this is a caretaker government under emergency but he himself left no one in doubt that this is a military government where he and the Advisors are carrying out the agenda of the military that showed a determined to change politics qualitatively. Early in its tenure, the Army Chief General Moeen attempted to give the country the military's 'vision' of democracy. He also told us what we should do with the issue of Father of the Nation versus Announcer of the Declaration of Independence, a thorny political agenda. He undertook visits to the USA to strengthen our relations with the world's only Super Power and then went to India to deal with our most important neighbour where elected and military governments of the past have all dreaded to tread. When Sidr struck, he was seen receiving relief although in the past, in case of such a national calamity, this was left exclusively to the Head of the Government.

Fakhruddin's Advisors chose the media to keep the nation abreast with the CG, trying to give a sense of transparency in governance. They failed to see that instead they have contradicted one another because real power has never been in their hands. First, Barrister Molnu Hossain gave us the minus-two formula under which we witnessed fruitless drama. We waited to see the two ladies to be forced out on exile; instead we saw them sent to jail.

Cases of corruption were brought against them that made no headway. Then in a 180 degree turn about, government emissaries were sent to the two ladies for 'negotiation' about which we came to know, courtesy, Adviser Zillur Rahman's running commentary on TV channels. In his enthusiasm he told us how he 'negotiated' the release of the two former Prime Ministers, although their cases for corruption are pending in a court. In less than a year, this government has humiliated Khaleda and Hasina by accusing them as corrupt politicians and then turned both into presumptive Prime Ministers, now 'acknowledging' openly that the country cannot do without them. It is again Zillur who came up with the idea of 'Summit' between the two ladies so that the country's future could be secure in their hands. These acts of the Advisors convinced the public that they are carrying out the military's agenda; an agenda largely political set into motion by intelligence agencies who unfortunately created a fear psychosis that paralyzed govern-

nance and caused havoc to the economy as it took upon its weak shoulders much more tasks that it could handle; most of these tasks were also outside its constitutional responsibilities.

It is therefore hardly surprising that politics has come back, to use a cliché, to square one, into the politicians' court. Khaleda and Hasina have emerged stronger. Most of those arrested for corruption in high profile cases are out of jail. One does not need a crystal ball to predict that very few of these politicians will spend time in jail once elected government returns.

The dramatic turnabout has been the result of this Government's attempt to provide military or military influenced solutions to political problems. Yet when this military backed government came, people gave it full support because the politicians had taken the country to the verge of becoming a failed state. They also felt that as this was not martial law per se, they could perhaps take it as a civilian one, with Fakhruddin in charge.

Our last tryst with military rule under Ershad was a nightmare and still makes people shudder at the thought of military rule. As a result of all these, people are disenchanted with this government and are now convinced that their hope on the military to solve their political problems has been misplaced, seeing the mess this government has created in governance, particularly on the corruption agenda, which was main reason for people to support this Government, an agenda that has now virtually collapsed.

Our experience with this government should remind us to be cautious in expecting that the military would solve our political problems. But more importantly, it is the politicians who should know that when they hold the country for ransom for their selfish ends, the military will step into the political arena as they have done on 1/11. Let us not fish around for conspiracies, which is our favourite political pastime. One eleven came because unwritten laws that govern politics came into play.

The BNP and the AL in fact offered the country's governance to the armed forces in a silver platter by the ugly nature of their political strife. If they do the same after return to civilian rule, the military may intervene again. As for the military, they should know civilians do not like military or military backed rule; they can overstay and give us their 'visions' but none of these will be sustainable, for 'visions' to be sustainable must come from politicians. The military's intervention in politics must be surgical, quick and precise. Our military could have helped their image and done the country immense good, by focusing on a limited agenda, dealt with it quickly, helped hold an election and then left, which should have happened long ago. It has stayed too long and hence made a mess of governance. The experiences since 1/11 therefore have enough lessons for all: the military, the politicians and the people and hence in that sense it has not been wasted time.

This Government has little power to control political events anymore. They should thus let politics take its own course and hope with the people that the politicians, particularly Khaleda and Hasina, have learnt a few important lessons. The other ray of hope for the future lies in the EC putting a stop to 'election commerce' that could send a good number of honest people to Parliament with the ACC acting as the watchdog to stop the influence of black money in elections. There is no quick fix to political problems, or military or intelligence initiated ones. Politicians themselves must solve political problems.

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Nuclear deal and strategic concerns: Myths and realities

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INDIAN diplomacy has displayed maturity and has acted in accordance with the economic aspirations of the country. This becomes evident upon a careful analysis of the following myths and realities that surround our 'strategic concerns.'

First, India's nuclear program is guided primarily by strategic threats from China. Nuclear deterrence involves a complete weapons system which includes a payload i.e. bombs, launching vehicles, missiles and bombers and launching pads (mobile as well as over-ground and underground facilities). The Agni missile programme is still in its trial stage and it would take time for India to develop an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile capable of bringing China within its range and thus provide India with credible nuclear deterrence. Today, Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle can drop nuclear bombs on more than one city with acute precision. However, India has a long way to go towards acquiring a second-strike capability necessary for any meaningful deterrence. Therefore, mere possession of bombs and a right to conduct tests would not provide us a credible deterrence. Moreover, in a world that may eventually move towards reduced arsenals and non-proliferation, this is a retrograde proposition.

Second, the probability of a nuclear war in the South Asia is remote. The world community has gained maturity and is unlikely to resort to an exchange of nuclear weapons and India, China and Pakistan are no exception. India has already been constructively engaging China and Pakistan to resolve its border disputes with them and also improve its diplomatic relations. Poverty, hunger and unemployment are some of the biggest threats to the civilized life, and strategic concerns should be raised in terms of development rather than defence. In fact, one of the main reasons for the collapse of the mighty Soviet Union was the arms race with the US, which bled the Soviet Union economically and pushed it towards implosion. India cannot wish to emulate the same.

Third, the biggest threat, today, is the potential of weapons of mass destructions falling into the hands of non-state actors against which a differ-

ent kind of preparation is required rather than nuclear deterrence.

Fourth, the theory of India falling into the 'American strategic trap' has misguided public opinion. It is an ambiguous expression being used for bashing the US. The allegation, that the US is engaging India to encircle China is a trifle. The US military presence at Diego Garcia, Afghanistan, Iraq and West Asia is driven by economic compulsions of the US than a military game plan. India committed a mistake by projecting the nuclear agreement as an Indo-US strategic relationship rather than a normalization of Indo-US nuclear relations. India has unfairly been excluded from international civil nuclear commerce as a result of the US policies. The continued exclusion would have deprived India of a voice in managing emerging nuclear problems, such as the security of Pakistan's nuclear assets in case of continued internal instability, which is not in India's interest.

Fifth, it has been argued by some that the Hyde Act's binding nature on the US administration and IAEA monitoring would close India's option to conduct a test. The new US administration to take office in 2009 is likely to be headed by a Democrat President, which would certainly revive the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). If the US, China and Pakistan join the CTBT, India is likely to follow. Thus, the freedom to conduct tests is not going to live long.

Finally, greater economic ties with US will increase its stakes and subsequently lead to the development of 'security communities' in the US and India, thereby rendering nuclear war redundant. Moreover, with increased business interests in India, the US and other suppliers of fuel and technology would never wish to suffer losses because of instability in the region. India has always strived to pursue an independent foreign policy and this is lucidly demonstrated by its stand at the WTO, the ongoing Doha Round, its proven stand on climate change, and its struggle for a new international economic order. With India's growing need for energy, sacrificing the deal would have been too high a price to pay for an imaginary fear of strategic concerns and independence in foreign policy matters being compromised.

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Road map for peace in Iraq

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FINALLY George W. Bush at the age end of his second term in White House has responded to the calls to approve the plans of troops withdrawal from beleaguered Iraq. Only God alone knows whether Bush's attitude has been prompted by the pressure of the tormented, frustrated, and 'getting poorer everyday' people of Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine and the kith and kin of the coalition soldiers deployed there.

Whatever may have led President Bush to agree to this plan, one might think that 2011 is long enough a time to pull out foreign soldiers from the torched and tormented Iraq, as these three years may extend (created through ruse) the period of stay to train the homegrown guardians and soldiers who have mastered puppetry.

Although a fragile peace seems to be prevailing in Iraq at present we should not ignore the nagging concern that is challenging the peace effort, which is mutual apprehension of each other's commitment to real peace. At a time when sounds of explosion and wailing of mothers and children is commonplace, we do not observe any conscious effort to draw Iraqis of all warring factions to a dialogue to agree to a set of rationales that can help draw up ground rules for peace.

Factionalized Iraqis are now asking 'have we been able to ensure peace or protection of life and liberty that was not in order during Bathist Regime' that conducted state sponsored terrorism? Is this why Iraqis have not yet abandoned a fratricidal campaign? Why is Iraq made to be embroiled in the Middle East (ME) imbroglio is a question that intrigues many experts and strategists. I have no hesitation to join those who have declared that Iraq is a hostage to 'Oil for peace' strategy and Iraq agreed to supply oil uninterrupted at dictated terms to dictated buyers and played a low key role to allow passage of the plans to arm to the teeth a diehard western ally to assail the detractors, they would perhaps have been left alone.

One wonders at the possibility of peace returning to Iraq. Mr. Maliki is now sitting on the hot seat and has not been able to claim success either in recovering the disarrayed economy or in surmounting the politics of disharmony and division now existing in Iraq. The division in the heart and mind of the Iraqi people is wid-

ening, which can be seen by the policy pursued by the Shias, the Sunnis and by the Kurds. A practicable parley does not seem to be in the offing. A few discussions that failed did not have a recipe for long lasting peace, nor did they promise self-governance in Iraq. The premise of the dialogues held was restricted to restoring

due priority. To my understanding, any future dialogue about Iraq should involve various factions within Iraq, countries neighboring Iraq that exercise influence there and those that pull strings from a distance.

It is not difficult to realize that the so-called scheme of things to make world

snowball into a calamity.

Should the world preside over a possible deterioration of peace that may make it a precinct of terror? It is about time we endeavoured ceaselessly to remove the impediments that may shatter our dreams of making our world a global home. No one can seize our rights to



peace only. The issue of withdrawal of foreign troops and their non-involvement in the future discourse hardly came under discussion for finding sustainable solution for security concerns. Even the other core problems that inhabits possibilities of peace and progress in Iraq did not receive

'safe' from terrorist attacks has been crafted and partially implemented by using brute force; but these acts of terrorism will probably resurface if a long lasting solution is not found. If an acceptable solution is not found, the world will once again be thrown into quagmire, which may

peace and protection. To ensure this, we have to combine our wisdom to sensitize the people at large to voice eagerness to live in peace at home and elsewhere. Countries in ME should immediately engage themselves to focus on issues of local insecurity and curve out a compre-

hensive and sustainable decision to address those by themselves. If participation from outside is inevitable, only then the UN can be mandated to broker peace either by preempting or by enforcing. I strongly feel that gun running must be discouraged. UN should enact provision to deter or impose economic sanctions on defaulting countries that clandestinely promote gun running.

Size of the Armed Forces and stockpiling of weapons disproportionate to the size of landmass and population should be downsized under the supervision of the UN. Israel should not be encouraged to act as policeman of the west in ME. Al Fatah and Hamas, the two warring factions within the state of Palestine should not be supported by anybody, rather both the factions should be asked to mend fences to construct a peaceful Palestine.

Any outsider found instigating to create problems must be admonished and thrown in the cold. The Israeli policy 'you kill one, we keep on killing' must be abandoned forthwith. An international arbiter may be engaged and if the arbitration efforts fail due to anybody's intransigence, the defaulter must face isolation and sanction. The Coalition forces should immediately withdraw paving way for deployment of UN peace enforcers and peacekeepers. The presence of outsiders in trade and commerce in ME should be discouraged unless allowed, following the local rules of business. Iraqis should be invited to take control of all local business including the management of oil resources. Countries neighboring Israel must abandon their inimical stance towards her and recognize the pre 1967 border of Israel.

Dialogues must start soon without any outside guardianship, to arrive at a concord for peace in ME in which all the stakeholders should attend with two agenda. These are: recognition of the sovereign Israel with 1967 border, and withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq. I can see that countries outside may not agree to such a move on the plea that unless some power is there to police the implementation of agreement (if at all), the exercise to ensure peace in ME may end in jeopardy. Let us not forget that any wrong decision taken at the dictation of non-ME power to protect its own stake may set into motion a whole train of traumatic events dashing all hopes for peace.

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