

Nuclear Summit endorses US' nuclear objectives

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ONE of President Obama's election pledges was to secure "loose nukes" in his first term in office. Towards achieving that pledge, he invited to Washington 47 nuclear states to get a plan of action to deal with nuclear threat from non-state actors and terrorist groups in place of "some vague gauzy statements." In the built up to this Summit, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that US intelligence sources have information that Al Qaeda terrorists are seeking to get hold of nuclear weapons while at the same time planning to target nuclear installations for terrorist attacks. Her statement put the Summit in context.

In attendance were all the big players. China was represented by President Hu Jin Tao; India by Manmohan Singh; France by President Sarkozy while Foreign Secretary David Miliband stood in for his Prime Minister. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was one surprise absentee, withdrawing at the last moment perhaps apprehending censure. Before embarking on getting all the important nations using nuclear energy and/or possessing nuclear weapons for a Summit, President Obama laid down the new US nuclear policy a week ahead of the Summit. In that policy, President Obama made a substantial departure from his predecessor by putting a halt on the development of any new nuclear weapons. The other important element of the new policy is that it clearly states that the US will not launch a nuclear attack against a non-nuclear state even if such a state would launch a biological or a chemical or a crippling cyber attack. However, US would reconsider nuclear retaliation if the development of chemical or biological weapons reached a stage to subject the US to a devastating attack.

President Obama followed the announcement of his administration's new plan by a meeting with President Medvedev of Russia, a country indispensable for the success of the new

nuclear policy of the US President whose main objective is to discourage nations from acquiring nuclear weapons. Together, the US and Russia have 95% of the world's nuclear weapons and that makes it indispensable for the two countries to cooperate to, first, contain the spread of nuclear weapons, and then to eventually eliminate nuclear weapons altogether. President Obama wants success of such a strategy to be the lasting legacy of his presidency.

US-Russian relations had soured over the war in Georgia last year. Russia was also unhappy with the US initiative for a missile defense system in Eastern Europe as a shield against Iran's nuclear ambitions that Russia objected as it is on its backyards. In the end, President Obama and President Medvedev were able to reach an agreement that should be seen as a success for the US President's diplomatic efforts and not very good news for the Iranians who in the past have depended on the Russians for support on the nuclear issue. In the agreement the USA and Russia would voluntarily reduce their nuclear arsenals by a quarter as a first step in the containment policy of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of unstable regions. The treaty will be finalized by December and then it will have to be ratified by the legislature of both the countries. It could then lead to more substantial reductions in further talks between the two countries next year. The US-Russia Summit set the stage for cooperation on the nuclear issue that was firmly in evidence during the Washington Nuclear Summit.

President Obama thus went to the Nuclear Summit with sufficient preparation and a vision on what he expected the Summit to deliver. In opening the Summit, President Obama was emphatic in telling his fellow Summiteers that the risk of nuclear attack is now on the rise despite the end of Cold War. The increased threat according to him comes from international terrorist groups such as the Al Qaeda. He received unanimous endorsement of the Summiteers about the threat from terrorist groups and the need to make



PHOTO:AFP

all nuclear materials safe in the next four years so that none would fall into the hands of the terrorists. President Obama put the Summit threat in context by telling Summiteers that plutonium no bigger than an apple would allow the terrorists to detonate a device that could kill hundreds of thousands. Heeding to the need to secure nuclear materials Ukraine, Canada and Mexico voluntarily gave up highly enriched uranium each possessed to make it harder for terrorist groups or criminal gangs to steal a key ingredient for making atomic bombs. The Summiteers agreed to cooperate with the IAEA for sharing information on nuclear materials to prevent trafficking.

On the issue of dealing with Iran that is a key element in the new US nuclear policy, President Obama was able to get China on board when the

Chinese agreed to work with USA for a fourth round on sanctions against Iran in order to deter it from possessing nuclear weapons. There was, however, some discrepancy between the US and Chinese statements on sanctions against Iran with the Chinese unwilling to mention Iran in public. Russia that is equally crucial if not more in keeping Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons was more firmly with the US following the nuclear deal between President Obama and President Medvedev reached in Moscow shortly before the Washington Summit. Thus a major outcome of the Washington Summit has been the gathering of forces against Iran in its perceived attempt to acquire nuclear weapons. On North Korea, the Summit concluded that although "sanctions are not a magic wand", there was alterna-

tion but to continue with it to force that country to return to nuclear disarmament talks that it had abandoned before President Obama took office.

The Summit has been a success for India as it helped bring US-India relations back on firm track after it had wandered off on the issue of Pakistan's use of US military aid against India. President Obama received the Indian Prime Minister as the first guest in the limited list of bilateral meetings on the sides of the Summit. He assured Manmohan Singh that the US would take up India's concerns seriously. Media reported "relief, satisfaction and renewed confidence" among Indian officials after the 50-minute talks between the two leaders.

The Summit helped raise the stature of President Barack Obama on world stage because he was able to give the

leadership and vision needed for handling the apprehensions across many nations, particularly those in the western world, about the terrorists gaining access to nuclear weapons. He also succeeded in raising the level of concern for protecting nuclear installations from terrorist attacks. In fact, the Summit reiterated in its non-binding communiqué the major objectives of the new nuclear policy of the United States that the President had announced shortly before the Summit that has been the largest gathering on US soil since the 1946 conference in San Francisco for establishing the UN. There has also been criticism of the Summit and its achievements. One criticism stated that no concrete mechanism has been designed to deal with nuclear terrorism.

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Strategic significance of Putin's India visit

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ON 11 March, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin visited India to strengthen the close partnership Moscow and New Delhi have traditionally enjoyed for more than 60 years.

Putin, who last visited India as Russian president in 2007, met his counterpart Manmohan Singh and the Indian President Pratibha Patil. This will be Putin's first trip to India in his current capacity.

In 2007 Putin noted in a interview in the India Today magazine: "It is in our interest to have a strong, developed, independent India that would be a major player on the world scene. We see this as one of the balancing factors in the world."

Beginning with the State visit of President Patil in September 2009, India's Commerce and Industry Minister, Anand Sharma, Defence Minister A.K. Antony and External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna visited the Russian Federation in the months of October and November 2009, when diverse aspects of the bilateral relationship have been reviewed and the path ahead has been charted out.

The essential purpose of Putin's trip to India this time was to "reset" the bilateral relations, of late marred by problems like delay in the agreement on aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov. The sale of Gorshkov has been marred by a series of price disputes and delayed deliveries, compounding concerns in Moscow that India could be tempted to end its dependence on

An official with state aircraft holding United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) confirmed to AFP that UAC and India's HAL planned to sign a deal to create a "new joint venture" to develop the transport aircraft. Russia and India have already pledged to commit 300 million dollars each to the project.

Russia is the biggest supplier into areas of energy and information technology in India. Energy has emerged as a focus between oil and gas rich Russia and energy-hungry India.

Russia has agreed to build 16 nuclear reactors at three different sites and six of them would be built by 2017.

Russia is already building two nuclear power units in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu and agreed to install four more nuclear reactors there as part of an agreement signed

multi-polar world economy not dominated by the United States. The four countries, combined, currently account for more than a quarter of the world's land area and more than 40% of the world's population.

By 2050 the combined economies of the BRICs could eclipse the combined economies of the current richest countries of the world.

However, at just over 7.5 billion dollars in 2009, bilateral trade turnover is minuscule and the two countries will aim to increase it to 20 billion dollars by 2015. (India and China want to raise their bilateral trade over \$30 billion by that time).

India-Russia cooperation against Islamic militants was believed to come up for discussion as terrorism has spread from the Philippines to Kosovo, including Kashmir, Afghanistan and Russia's northern Caucasus.

About 25,000 Russian troops and border guards are stationed on the Tajik-Afghan frontier guarding Tajikistan. Russia, which has repeatedly accused Islamic militants of assisting Islamic rebels in Chechnya.

In the 1970s and 1980s, alliances were relatively clear cut. The US maintained close ties with Pakistan and its military, exploiting the country as a base for its covert support of Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas against the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan. China also supported Pakistan. The Soviet Union maintained economic and defence ties with India and supported it in its conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir.

But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the strategic equation has changed. Both sides have realised the India-Russia agreements were not a return to the relations or rhetoric of the Cold War but were based on "new global realities".

The visit of Prime Minister Putin is to return the earlier visit of India's Prime Minister to Russia on 6th December, 2009. Indian ties with the Russian Federation are historic, close and uniquely enduring.

Russia wishes to make it clear that Russia's presence in India will continue despite close relationship between India and US. India at the same time wants to demonstrate that it has the ability to balance its relations with both US and Russia and provide a signal to the US that India can afford to run its independent foreign policy as an emerging global power.

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Waiting for Endgame

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WILL the United States and Pakistan ever trust each other enough to cooperate fully in fighting the Taliban and al Qaeda? This was the question haunting the recent strategic dialogue between the top brass of the two countries, which aimed to put their prickly relationship on a new footing. Although Pakistan's delegation was headed by its Foreign Minister, the suave Shah Mahmood Qureshi, it also included its wily military commander, General Ashfaq Kayani. Washington promised to speed up delivery of economic aid and military equipment for Pakistan's increased efforts at battling militants on the Afghan border. "This is a new day," declared Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who hopes to shrink the yawning trust deficit between the two countries. But are there grounds to believe that when it comes to fighting militants, Islamabad and the White House' interests can converge?

For New Delhi, the recent strategic dialogue between Pakistan and the United States is an effort by Washington to coax Islamabad to play its part in the Afghan theatre. The US needs Pakistan's help to stabilize Afghanistan even as it seeks a rapid-fire exit from a region that has always been a nightmare. Pakistan knows that this is the perfect time to extract its pound of flesh from the White House. So the Pakistan will list continues with demands for helicopter gunships, pilotless drones, and a civil nuclear agreement akin to India. Add to that a US intervention to cajole India into resolving the Kashmir impasse. At the end of the day, it's a great game being played like in 19th century Central Asia.

So what's the roadmap ahead? US Joint Chief of Staff Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen has asserted that Washington cannot afford to lose in Afghanistan and that requires a US-Pak symbiosis. India is perturbed about the dollops the US is giving Pakistan. While a stable neighbour is always good news for South Block, the strategic goodies doled out to Islamabad could be used against India. Nevertheless, India does have a multi-dimensional rapport with Washington. The US needs to hook on to India; it needs to booby trap Pakistan into fighting the terrorists on the Afghan front. It also needs to ensure that Pakistan stops its covert operations against India. All this has to be cleverly managed, much like a game of chess. Thus while checkmating Pakistan; Washington has to deploy its pawns carefully. For the US, the New Delhi and Islamabad situation is like a cliffhanger. So while diplomats rattle off anecdotes at press conferences, the motive is simple. Don't rock the boat and keep everyone on tenterhooks.

That is why the US special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke emphatically opined that the US-Pak dialogue is not at India's expense. The only reason why the Pakistan Army and Inter Services Intelligence Chiefs were present was to annihilate al Qaeda, help the Afghans to be self-reliant and see Pakistan ending the menace of terror. But India blatantly fears a secret, clandestine US-Pak deal antithetical to New Delhi's interests.

The US is also skeptical as it has been frustrated in the past by Pakistan's focus on its arch enemy India and its unwillingness to root out the Afghan Taliban and al Qaeda from safe havens along the Afghan border. Pakistan helped train the anti-Indian Afghan Taliban in the 1990s and views them as a useful card should the United States quit Afghanistan soon. Some speculate the recent arrests of top Taliban leaders by Pakistan were part of an effort by Pakistan's ISI to ensure it controls any talks between Afghan Taliban and the President Hamid Karzai's government. Pakistan wants to have a seat at the bargaining table and the ISI is trying its best to place its pawns on the chessboard.

In the US, any meeting with Pakistan is tantamount to overcoming their mutual trust deficit. And for Pakistan any India-US summit is a cause of worry. This partnership between any two of its troika remains precarious and prone to suspicion, eruptions and posturing. Pakistani officials are also seeking reassurance that a substantial US military presence will remain in Afghanistan for a longer time. Obama's promised withdrawal begins in mid-2011 and Pakistan hopes that adversary India will not be allowed to expand its strategic presence in Kabul.

Times are definitely changing but that doesn't mean the United States and Pakistan now operate from the same playbook. Some US officials doubt Pakistan will ever move against the Afghan Taliban groups in North Waziristan. The Pakistanis say they have enough on their platter for now and want to attack in sequence. There is intense US-Pakistani intelligence cooperation on drone attacks against their common Taliban enemies. The Pakistani military realized they could no longer tolerate their own Taliban who had broken deals and were attacking army and intelligence bases. Once the Pakistanis began a war against their own militants they found that the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban were joined at the hip and hard to separate; finally causing a much-needed change in their attitude.

IPCS, New Delhi



PHOTO:AFP

The bilateral relationship was re-energized with the declaration of a strategic partnership between the two countries during the visit to India in 2000 by the then President Putin.

During the current visit, Putin was accompanied by two vice-premiers Sergei Sobyanin and Sergei Ivanov, Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko, CEO of RosAtom Sergei Kiriyenko, head of Rostechology Sergei Chemezov, and the General Director of Sukhoi Mikhail Pogosyan.

Partnership between the two countries has diversified enormously and today the relationship is a uniquely strong and expanding one, particularly in the fields of defence, nuclear energy, hydrocarbons, space research and science and technology.

Russian military equipment.

According to an Indian government source Putin was keen to use the trip to sort out all remaining sticking points related to the vessel's sale.

The highlight of the visit was the signing of deals to sell Russian military hardware, including an accord on the Soviet-era aircraft carrier Gorshkov.

Other deals included a contract to sell India 29 MiG fighter jets and an agreement to install additional nuclear power units in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, Putin's foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters.

Russia supplies 70 percent of India's military hardware but New Delhi has, in recent years, also looked towards other military suppliers including Israel and the United States.

during President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to India in 2008.

India is one of the world's biggest markets for nuclear technology and the reactor deal is a triumph for Russia's state atomic agency Rosatom which faces stiff competition from French and US rivals.

Putin reportedly said: "Cooperation in hi-tech is the priority for us. The Russian government is ready to directly support this activity with the help of additional financial assistance, if need be." In the space realm, Russia agreed to put two Indian astronauts into space in 2013.

Together with Brazil and China, Russia and India are part of the so-called BRIC grouping of major developing economies seeking to promote a