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## **INDIA – CHINA – PAKISTAN NUCLEAR SECURITY DIALOGUES AND INDIA-CHINA NUCLEAR CBMS**

**Major General Dipankar Banerjee, AVSM (Retd)**

### **EXORDIUM**

Eliminating nuclear weapons remain even more urgent since the end of the Cold War and its potential threat to world peace is more dangerous than ever. As one looks around the world and at potential conflict scenarios, nuclear weapons use are alas being considered in a number of situations. Asia remains particularly vulnerable. Growing nuclear arsenals, possibly unsecured fissile material, weak government control, combined with religious extremism, unresolved borders and competition for oceanic resources; all go to form a deadly mix. Addressing these issues remain a major concern. Issues of nuclear weapons safety and security must remain high on the international security agenda.

Global nuclear disarmament pose many near term challenges, but it must remain the goal. Concerted actions by all affected parties to achieve this objective in a practical and realistic manner in a measurable time frame should remain high on the international agenda. This will call for action at many levels but begin with reducing tensions between nations directly affected. Doctrines of 'limited war', 'cold start', and 'zero warning responses' and concepts of tactical use of nuclear weapons, have to be countered by exposing them for what they are; unacceptable and dangerous options. The ultimate objective must be to move through a safe and secure process towards an early global elimination of nuclear weapons.

This paper will address and explain three separate approaches towards nuclear disarmament and confidence building in Asia. One is a trilateral dialogue on nuclear safety between India-China-Pakistan, sponsored by the Nuclear Threat

Initiative (NTI). Two, briefly mention an initiative for the resumption of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan for a Nuclear Weapons free and Non-violent World Order, 1988 (RGAP) supported by the government of India. Three, discuss in outline the possibilities of nuclear confidence building between India and China.

### **Trilateral Nuclear Security Dialogues 2008-12**

Since the last four years, with the support of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies in New Delhi, has led a unique project addressing nuclear security in India-China-Pakistan. Leading experts, practitioners and former senior officials from these three countries have been working towards this objective. A number of participants in these dialogues are present among this audience. While we do not claim to have achieved our goals, I do believe we have made very significant progress. The fact that we have sustained five rounds of dialogue among senior interlocutors, addressed serious issues and are in the process of removing mutual concerns, allows me to make this point. In addition, as in other track 2 dialogues, this has led to the possibility of bringing these issues on the official dialogue agenda.

### **Pursuing the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan 1988**

India has recently launched another initiative in 2010 specifically focused on implementing the RGAP. An informal Study Group was set up, which prepared a comprehensive report that was released on 20 Aug 2011.<sup>1</sup> As an initial measure it approached the three nuclear weapons countries of Asia to generate a consensus and agree to a plan of action. Mani Shankar Aiyar, a former cabinet minister in the Government of India and currently a Member of the Indian Parliament leads this initiative. A preliminary effort was to begin with a conference between selected experts from India, China and Pakistan, which was scheduled for July 2012 at New Delhi. Even though all arrangements were made, the conference had to be postponed due to unavoidable reasons. Efforts are being made to resume this

meeting. Brief reference will be made to the thought process that has gone behind this initiative.

### **Call for India-China Nuclear CBMs**

India and China are two large civilizational entities living in close proximity to each other through history. This several millennia old co-existence led to peaceful exchange of goods through multiple trade routes. Along these have travelled people and merchandise. Commerce benefitted both nations. Scholars and religious teachers followed and made this long and difficult journey of many months in search of knowledge and holy scripts. This peaceful exchange enriched both nations and humanity at large for several centuries. Remarkably this long association witnessed no conflict. This was broken only in the twentieth century by two decades of conflict and tension; a mere blip in the history of time.<sup>2</sup>

Today once again when both India and China are reassuming their positions in the global hierarchy of leading nations, it is important to relearn those lessons of peaceful co-existence. China is already the second most important country in the world; with the second largest GDP, still growing robustly. India remains well behind but is also rising steadily. With its large and young population and a stable though somewhat fractious democracy, it too has demonstrated a potential for high growth. Both countries living together in peace and harmony can provide a degree of stability and security not merely in Asia but also in the world. Enhancing nuclear CBMs and working towards global nuclear disarmament (GND) will strengthen this enormously. An attempt will be made to highlight some possibilities in that direction.

### **BACKDROP**

At the outset it is necessary to make one point clear. Issues of nuclear disarmament cannot fructify bilaterally, even though confidence building can. Nuclear weapons are global weapons. One nation with suitable means of delivery can cause devastation and death anywhere in the world. If terrorists with imagined international grievances get hold of these, they can cause untold damage. Hence issues of GND must be discussed globally among all countries and particularly with all those possessing these weapons. During our meetings, this issue was emphasized repeatedly.

Moving towards nuclear weapons elimination will not be easy. These “cherished” weapons were acquired by all three Asian countries at great cost and high national sacrifice. They remain symbols of national pride. Their possession reinforces traditional thinking of national security, based on strategies of war fighting and deterrence. It will not be easy to eliminate these from national arsenals till they are delegitimized. As a first step, nuclear weapons must find no place in military doctrines. Particularly in Asia, it will also need Pakistan to give up some of its long cherished notions of national security based on possible pre-emptive strikes and facilitate progress on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament.

An attempt had to be made to break out of this cycle of helplessness and attempt a dialogue towards eliminating these weapons from national arsenals even accepting that this may be a slow process. That is the rationale for the three processes that I will briefly mention in this paper.

### **TRILATERAL NUCLEAR SECURITY DIALOGUES**

The trilateral nuclear security dialogues took place in the backdrop of a global movement towards nuclear disarmament. This began with President Obama’s exhortations at Prague, the initiation of the Global Zero project, the statements by the four eminent US statesmen supported by the NTI and the Evans – Kawaguchi Report on *Eliminating Nuclear Threats*, among others. All these initiatives took

place simultaneously and influenced and strengthened each other. These measures appeared to be motivated by a genuine global desire towards addressing the issue of nuclear weapons elimination. A realization that something had to be done to rid the world of these evil weapons that cast a pall over human existence.

This brief narrative on the possibility of evolving a framework of cooperation between nuclear weapon states led to a parallel process initiated by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS). Supported by the NTI, this project on *Nuclear Safety and Security in Asia* started in December 2008. Though not by design, the first meeting was held a fortnight after the Mumbai terrorist attacks in Nov 2008, when South Asia confronted one of its more tense moments in recent history. This process includes former top military and scientific experts, senior experts and diplomats from India, China and Pakistan, many of whom are present in the conference today.

Nuclear strategic issues have not featured in a major way in bilateral official dialogues between the three countries till date. Under the India-Pakistan Composite Dialogue process this issue was raised and discussed in 2004 and in December 2011. Other official dialogues too have been held leading to a number of nuclear confidence building measures, though perhaps not as substantive as required under the circumstances. But, China did not recognize India's status as a Nuclear Weapon State and hence the question of an official dialogue on this issue did not arise. It was expected that this might be taken up between them at the Special Representative level on the border talks, but no information is available whether this has actually been done.

The objectives in conceiving and starting this trilateral nuclear security dialogue were four fold;

- First, to get a group of senior nuclear strategic professionals from these three countries to exchange views through free and frank

dialogue and develop through this process a degree of confidence and comfort.

- Examine recent global developments of nuclear doctrines, arms control and disarmament and analyze their impact on respective countries.
- Consider nuclear doctrinal questions in these three countries and examine how these can be harmonized towards a more stable and secure relationship.
- Examine ways towards disarmament and global elimination of nuclear arms.

### **Summary of Meetings and Discussions**

Five meetings have taken place under this format so far:

#### **First meeting (Planning Conference)**

Date: 6-7 Dec 2008

Venue: Hotel Galadari, **Colombo**

#### **Second meeting**

Date: 8-9 August 2009

Venue: Fudan University, **Shanghai**

#### **Third meeting**

Date: 31 July-1 Aug 2010

Venue: Laguna Golf and Country Club, **Singapore**

#### **Fourth meeting**

Date: 29-30 Jan 2011

Venue: Hotel Lebua Tower Club, **Bangkok**

#### **Fifth meeting**

Date: 29-30 September 2011

Venue: Hotel Wanshou, **Beijing**

We expect to hold the Sixth meeting at New Delhi in early 2013.

### **Issues discussed and Agenda**

The group discussed all issues connected with nuclear security; frankly and without reservations. Participants changed from meeting to meeting to incorporate the best experts on respective subjects, but a core group was common from one to the next. A summary of discussions was shared after each meeting so that respective governments could be kept informed. Deliberately as a matter of policy it was decided not to put out any joint reports till now, even though individuals were allowed to write on issues based on their own understanding of the discussions. The issues that featured in the agenda are listed below in no particular order:-

- Global nuclear developments, dangers and threat perceptions.
- Examination of nuclear doctrines and attempts at harmonization.
- Assessment of existing nuclear Confidence Building Measures.
- Fissile material stockpiles, their control and production ban.
- Issues hindering nuclear weapons elimination and evolving a process facilitating the same.
- Examining impending global dialogues and deliberations – START, CTBT, FMCT, 2010 NPT RevCon and others.
- Nuclear threats arising from states and non state actors including nuclear terrorism.
- Nuclear non-proliferation beyond the NPT.
- Evolving dialogue mechanisms and policies for global nuclear weapons elimination.
- Impact of the New START in Asia.
- An agenda for the CTBT and FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament.
- Revisiting nuclear doctrines including ‘No First Use’.
- Enhancing Nuclear Security in Asia by developing reliable risk reduction measures - bilaterally and multilaterally.
- Assessing North Korean and Iranian nuclear developments.
- Securing nuclear energy options in the global nuclear future.

- An Asian approach to abolishing nuclear weapons – What is the tipping point?

### **Discussion Summary**

The above list is formidable and kept the participants deeply engrossed in debating the various issues. Details of each meeting and results are summarized in the IPCS web site. A brief summary of major issues only is mentioned below.<sup>3</sup>

It was clear that for China, US nuclear policy and posture, deployment of missile defense in East Asia and nuclear terrorism were amongst its major concerns. A senior Chinese participant opined that even though the Government of China did not recognize the nuclear status of India and Pakistan under the NPT, a dialogue at Track II level was reasonable and necessary. For Pakistan, nuclear policies were India centric. It was agreed that further proliferation of nuclear weapons would be very undesirable and must be prevented. It was also accepted that the possibility of unauthorized use of nuclear weapons or nuclear accidents remains high, particularly among new nuclear weapon states.

There was a general consensus that both USA and Russia should take a lead in substantially reducing their nuclear arsenals before the other nuclear weapon powers could be expected to join. At the same time it was accepted that Asian countries should develop their own regional positions on nuclear weapons security and elimination. The possibilities of a trilateral de-alert status of nuclear forces or no-first-use statement should be explored. There is a need for innovative CBM approaches between India and Pakistan because the existing ones have run out of steam.

It was agreed that threats from biological and chemical weapons have to be factored into security calculations while considering elimination of nuclear weapons. Yet, this may not be a focus of our future deliberations.



There were a number of discussion sessions on the doctrine of 'No First Use'. It remains an accepted doctrine in the case of China and India, though not yet acceptable to Pakistan. The specificities in the case of India and China were discussed at length. The reason Pakistan was unable to accept it was also considered. It was agreed that a conciliation between India and China was possible on this and some means of formalising this could become an important CBM. But, Pakistan's acceptance of this was not likely in the absence of major concessions from India, which seemed very improbable. However, it was conceded that this remained a very important area for further discussion and an issue that had significant promise. Could this then be extended more widely?

The CTBT is not expected to come in to force anytime soon. However, China is a signatory and both India and Pakistan have made statements to abjure testing. It is necessary to make this de facto situation a de jure reality through stronger and repeated statements reinforcing their respective moratorium.

An arms race such as during the Cold War remains a major concern in Asia. Transparency on capability and doctrine are necessary, else mistrust and fears are likely to call for larger arsenals.

Significant numbers of proliferators are located in Asia, including North Korea and Iran. The challenge is how to stop and roll back North Korea, and persuade Iran to abjure its intentions of acquiring these weapons and put in place international safeguard over its nuclear facilities.

Till nuclear weapons are held in respective arsenals, the danger of its use will exist, irrespective of doctrinal issues.

A guaranteed de-alert status at peace time is an important CBM, but requires

verifiable declarations from all three countries. China, India, and Pakistan could also agree to mutual agreeable cut-off on military fissile production under a cooperative security arrangement, rather than seek each other as excuses for an arms race.

The fear of nuclear terrorism often blurs the differences between nuclear weapons terrorism and the use of a dirty bomb or radiological dispersal device. The group conceded that nuclear terrorism in all its various forms and dimensions remained the most significant challenge to nuclear security in Asia and the world. Much greater coordinated and purposeful dialogues are necessary to ensure security against this threat.

The future focus would be on the safety end of nuclear technology and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, such as the renaissance of nuclear energy. The future focus should be on the safety end of nuclear technology and peaceful use of nuclear energy, even as there is a burgeoning growth in the nuclear power industry.

The NPT, for all its flaws, remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime. Yet, significant modifications will be necessary to allow India and Pakistan a status that accepts the reality of their nuclear weapons possession. This will help them both to play a more constructive role in the implementation of the Treaty provisions.

Battlefield nuclear weapons are dangerous and contradictory to the principle of 'nuclear weapons solely as tools of deterrence'. Miniaturization of nuclear weapons should be discouraged, even as the concept of tactical nuclear weapons must be undermined.

While confidence-building and mutual trust are ultimate solutions to reducing tensions, three specific issues require understanding and action - Transparency (of doctrines and actions), Threat Perceptions (stemming from each

other which could be discussed in an environment free of extraneous pressure) and Causality (that drives the nuclear policies of each nation to adopt stances seen as destabilizing by others).

### **A General Summary of points**

It is not easy to summarize the rich discussions that ensued in all these five rounds. Some were contentious, even heated, yet the general spirit was one of constructive enquiry. While supporting respective doctrines and policies, it was conceded that the “other’s” point of view merited equal attention. It is in this sense that we expect that the next rounds of this dialogue will present better understanding and through this process facilitate an official dialogue, which should be fruitful.

One possibility is to agree on the following possible course of action, or in its absence an agreement to pursue these as possible immediate objectives:

- a) A guaranteed de-alert status at peace-time with verifiable declarations from all three countries.
- b) A mutual agreement of all three to cut-off military fissile production under a cooperative security arrangement.
- c) Developing a comprehensive approach on nuclear weapons security and elimination.
- d) Reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in South Asian security doctrines and policy.
- e) Bringing about a marked improvement of relations between India and Pakistan.
- f) Discouraging tactical, battlefield or miniaturization of nuclear weapons in Asia.
- g) If India agrees to a No War Pact with Pakistan, would the latter agree to an NFU?

## PURSUING THE RAJIV GANDHI ACTION PLAN

### The Outlines of the Plan

On 19 Jun 1988 at the United Nations General Assembly Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, made a powerful call for a nuclear free world and suggested a Plan of Action to eliminate nuclear weapons by 2010. He said;

*“Humanity stands at a crossroads of history. The world has lived too long under the sentence of extinction. Nuclear weapons threaten to annihilate human civilization and all that humankind has built through millennia of labor and toil. .... It is imperative that nuclear weapons be eliminated.”<sup>4</sup>*

At the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi’s UN speech, in June 2008 at Delhi Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said; “India is still *“fully committed to nuclear disarmament that is global, universal and non-discriminatory in nature.”* For India, *“the only effective form of nuclear disarmament is global nuclear disarmament”*; nuclear disarmament cannot be *“regionalized.”<sup>5</sup>*

India has been a reluctant nuclear weapon power. Even though it may have had the capability to conduct a nuclear test explosion before the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty entered into force, it showed no inclination to do so. Even when it conducted a “peaceful nuclear test” explosion in May 1974, it did not make any attempt at weaponization. It was only much later when Pakistan had announced its nuclear weapon capability in the mid 1980’s that its leaders were left with absolutely no other option.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, there is in India, strong public support towards nuclear weapons elimination in an universal context and through a non-discriminatory process.

## **The Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan in Today's World:**

What is the relevance of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan in today's world? In 1988 the world was yet to come out of the Cold War and conditions were far from propitious for implementation. It may be said the Action Plan was perhaps well ahead of its time. The world is far more favorably inclined towards nuclear disarmament today than it was in 1988. A Report prepared by an Informal Group in India on implementing the RGAP prepared a detailed action plan recommending its implementation on 20 Aug 2011.<sup>7</sup> This provides another and more viable structure for moving forward on the goal of global nuclear disarmament.

Given how the momentum is gaining on nuclear disarmament the norm of non-use is now very strong, barring the use of nuclear weapons by terrorists or a state in self-defence against major aggression. That unlikely event, though, should only strengthen the call for NWS to disarm without delay. Not even Iran or North Korea talk of using it first. Indeed, the push for Climate Change, turning the world economy around, managing food, water and energy shortages globally will only increase the need for more conversations on 'collective human security'. Even France, that has traditionally shied away from calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons, remains "fully committed to... make collective security a reality", in the words of Pierre Sellal, Secretary General for the French Foreign Affairs Ministry, speaking at the Global Zero Summit in 2010.<sup>8</sup> What can possibly be the role of nuclear weapons in such a world?

## **The Future**

The Government of India remains committed to pursue the RGAP. In what form and in what manner it will do so still remains open. With the impending leadership changes in China and a younger and a new set of leaders at the helm, there may well be a possibility of a positive response there. In Pakistan as well if

there is a transition to a new generation of democratic leaders in 2013, there can be every expectation that the civilian government may assume a greater role in nuclear policy and hence move towards a more positive engagement. These are mere speculations and reality may well be different. Yet, the possibility of positive changes look hopeful. If this were to happen, the Government of India will be more than willing to take up the initiative once again.

## **NUCLEAR CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA**

### **Evolving Possible Confidence Building Measures**

The trilateral dialogue process helped in underlining the possibility of substantive nuclear confidence building measures, along lines that have been adopted in the conventional area over a period since 1993. This allows me to make a few bold recommendations regarding possible areas of agreement:-

- First, both sides tended to agree that the only conceivable purpose to possess nuclear weapons is to deter its possible use, that is “deterrence”. Any other use whatsoever is a failure of policy with the possible danger of mutual annihilation.
- Second, both India and China share many common approaches towards nuclear weapons; they believe in its universal elimination, through verifiable and non-discriminatory measures and in eliminating fissile material production for nuclear weapons.
- Both believe in ‘no first use’ and ‘non-use against non nuclear powers.’ Indeed they are today the only nuclear weapon powers that have this as a declared policy. Though it is equally true that in the absence of a concrete set of actions that would lend greater credibility to this policy, it loses much of its actual potential for confidence building.

- Finally, both have comparably limited arsenals though with growing effective and assured delivery capabilities, particularly with China.

These common positions allow both countries to deliberate and agree bilaterally over a set of confidence building measures in the nuclear domain. The following measures are eminently reasonable to develop further through detailed consultation:-

- First, is a joint treaty or statement reiterating “no-first use” or “threat of use” against each other.
- Second, to prevent possible accidental use, to develop effective “risk reduction measures”. As these measures take hold, over time we can initiate mutual inspections of each other’s facilities.
- Third, implement enhanced confidence building in the border areas.
- Fourth, to sign a mutual non-attack of nuclear facilities agreement. A notification of locations is not likely to be possible now but even a mere statement at this stage may be considered a positive development.
- Fifth, examine in some detail and exchange ideas about each other’s nuclear doctrines.

In proposing these measures it is necessary to remember that there are other threats and scenarios that are equally if not more relevant in each other’s context. China’s security concerns are not so much against India as it is overwhelmingly focused on its global concerns. These are in its north-east, centered around the Koreas and Japan as well as Russia in the north. The East and South China Seas have emerged as current areas of major strategic interest as well as concern. For India, Pakistan will remain a source of immediate concern, in particular when this is reinforced through its support to terrorism.

As leading and emerging global powers it is also important for both to initiate jointly multilateral measures at the international level to address issues of disarmament. Let me list out a few.

- First, make an international call for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines.
- Second, initiate negotiation of an agreement on no-first use of nuclear weapons among all nuclear weapon states.
- Third, jointly call for a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. If necessary ask for a decision once again by the International Court of Justice to outlaw nuclear weapons.
- Fourth, initiate negotiation of a nuclear convention prohibiting development, stockpiling and production of nuclear weapons, moving towards a global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of these weapons based on a realistic time frame.
- Finally collectively formulate additional measures by nuclear states to reduce accidental use.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is time today to address issues of nuclear arms both at the international and at regional levels. While many issues will be required to be dealt with globally, particularly those concerning GND; there are many other issues that remain which need urgent bilateral and multilateral initiatives. Reducing regional tensions, eliminating threats of terrorism, questions of safety and security of nuclear weapons, are among these. Intensifying these multiple initiatives can only help contribute to global peace and security.



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<sup>1</sup> The full report is available at [www.pugwashindia.org/images/uploads/Report.pdf](http://www.pugwashindia.org/images/uploads/Report.pdf) accessed on 20 Oct 2012. A Press Release was issued the previous day on 19 August 2011 at New Delhi, India; re-issued on 27 January 2012.

<sup>2</sup> I visited China first in June 1991, in a delegation of two General Officers from India at the invitation of the People's Liberation Army. This particular phrase was used often by many of our senior Chinese hosts, military and civilian and reflected in my mind the goodwill at the popular level in China.

<sup>3</sup> Available at; [www.ipcs.org](http://www.ipcs.org).

<sup>4</sup> Refer to the Action Group's paper on *Towards a Nuclear-Weapons-Free and Non-violent World Order*; [http://www.gsainstitute.org/pnnd/pubs/AIYAR\\_RajivGandhi.pdf](http://www.gsainstitute.org/pnnd/pubs/AIYAR_RajivGandhi.pdf); accessed on 20 Oct 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> The most important of this was the Pakistani nuclear scientist AQ Khan's interview to the senior Indian journalist Kuldip Nayyar on January 03, 1987, in response to a major Indian military exercise on its western border, "Operation Brasstacks". This was taken in India as a confirmation of Pakistan's capability to detonate nuclear weapons.

<sup>7</sup> Available at; <http://www.gsainstitute.org/gsi/docs/RGAP.pdf> accessed on 24 Oct 12.

<sup>8</sup> Available at <http://ambafrance-in.org/04-02-2010-Pierre-Sellal-s-speech> accessed on 24 Oct 2012.