

## NUCLEAR POLICY OF INDIA: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES



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**Abstract:-**After getting Independence from the British, India had to devise its foreign policy so as to serve its national interests. The strategy of every state has to decide on certain course of action and refrain from certain others and, the performance of each state affects the performance of others. China attacked on India in 1962; Pakistan fought a war with India in 1965, and the tests conducted by China and worsened relations between China and India and India and Pakistan. These tests had changed the security scenario in South Asia, especially in India. In the meantime, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was adopted for signature but India did not sign the treaty for its discriminatory provisions for nuclear and non-nuclear nations. Every country of the world was talking about NPT but on the other side persistently developing nuclear programme like in 1945 the United Nations, Russia in 1949, United Kingdom in 1952, France in 1960, China in 1964, the tests conducted by all the above mentioned countries compelled India to go for nuclear in 1974. After conducting nuclear tests in Rajasthan desert in 1974, India maintained that it was only for peaceful proposes. In 1998, India conducted five nuclear tests and declared itself as 'nuclear weapons state.' This paper examines that nuclear policy of India has many phases and why and how the country developed its weapons autonomously?

**Keywords:**Nuclear Policy, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, Global Politics.

**INTRODUCTION :-**

In 1947, when India emerged as a free country to take its rightful place in the comity of nations, India's primary objective was to achieve economic, political, social, scientific and technological development within a peaceful and democratic framework. From its inception, India tried to cultivate friendly relations with all countries. India, after independence, had to prepare its own independent foreign policy which could not have the influence of the British. India does not require nuclear weapons for prestige or status. India has been in favour of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes because it was a vast source of power and could help in the development of the country.

**EPIGRAMMATIC HISTORY OF NUCLEAR POLICY OF INDIA:**

Independent India's foreign policy, in its early years, was shaped by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's idealistic world view. Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister from 1947 till his death in 1964. The foundation of India's foreign policy was firmly laid by him.<sup>1</sup> Independent India's foreign policy, in its early years, was shaped by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's idealistic world view. Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister from 1947 till his death in 1964. The foundation of India's foreign policy was firmly laid by him.<sup>2</sup>

The use of nuclear bombs by the United States in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 was viewed in serious terms by Nehru and the congress leadership. In a press conference on 13th November 1945, Nehru said that the danger of the nuclear bomb would continue to hover over our heads as long as the cause of friction was not removed. There is always constant fear among other neighbouring nations that this atomic energy could be used for their destruction and take it to unheard of levels.<sup>3</sup>

After the use of atomic energy by United States against Japan, India, realizing the need of nuclear capability for its national security, then started its nuclear programme in mid 1940s.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the Indian nuclear programme has long historical background. The origin of nuclear programme had started before the pre independence era when a young Indian physicist Homi Bhaba, who had trained under Ernest Rutherford at Cambridge University, returned to India in 1944 and convinced the wealthy philanthropic Tata family of the potential uses of nuclear energy. Therefore, with financial assistance from the Tatas in 1945, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research was created in Bombay with Bhaba as its first director. Bhaba then successfully convinced India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru to create a department of Atomic Energy (DAE) in 1948.<sup>5</sup>

On 26 June 1946, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, "As long as the world is constituted as it is every country will have to devise and use the latest scientific devices for its protection. I have no doubts India will develop her scientific researches and I hope Indian scientists will use the atomic force for constructive purposes. But, if India is "threatened, she will inevitably try to defend herself by all means at her disposal."<sup>6</sup>

**CHALLENGES OF NUCLEAR POLICY OF INDIA:**

From the last many years the Indian leadership, has been genuinely aware of the dangers posed by nuclear armament. In a speech delivered in the Indian Constituent Assembly on 14th August 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru observed: "we hear a lot about the atom bomb and various kinds of energy that it represents.... In essence today there is conflict between two things, the atom bomb and what it represents and the spirit of humanity. I hope that while India will no doubt play a great part in all the material spheres, she will always lay stress on the spirit of humanity."

Panditji stated in another speech in the Lok Sabha on 10th May 1954: "it is perfectly clear that atomic energy can be used for peaceful purposes to the immense advantage of humanity. It may take some years before it can be used more or less economically. I would like the house to remember that use of technology for peaceful purposes is far more important for a country like India whose power resources are limited than for a country like France, an industrially advanced country."<sup>7</sup>

However, Nehru remained opposed to India's advancement of nuclear weapons at a political level. Initially, he was not in favour of nuclear weapons and in most of his pronouncements on nuclear technology he showed this intention. As in 1954, he called for a worldwide cessation of all nuclear tests. His opposition to the nuclear option for India drew in part from his acute concern about the opportunity costs of defense spending in a poor developing nation facing numerous socio-economic challenges.<sup>8</sup>

Nehru wanted to give main importance to nuclear disarmament. The fact that Nehru had decided to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes ever since India became independent, he established the Atomic Energy Commission and Department of Atomic Energy, both under his control. He was of the belief that it is indispensable for a country like India to develop nuclear energy because it will help as an additional

and valuable source of energy.

Nehru also felt that as long as China was kept out of the United Nations, it would be pointless to talk about international regimes to control the spread of nuclear weapons. His anticipation that China would become a nuclear weapon power was proved to be correct as China conducted its first nuclear weapons test in 1964, though the event occurred after Nehru's passing from the scene. India took the initiative at the U.N. General Assembly to affirm the world community's solemn desire for the elimination and prohibition of atomic, hydrogen, bacterial, chemical and other weapons of war and mass destruction in 1953. Due to India's efforts in 1953, Disarmament Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission was formed. Nehru suggested in a meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission to consider the possibility of a Standstill Agreement in respect of actual explosions and to give wide publicity of the destructive nature and extent of the weapons.<sup>9</sup>

In January 1956 Nehru announced in parliament that if adequate resources were diverted, in India, atomic bomb could be made in three to four years. The uranium processing plant was commissioned in Trombay in November or December 1958 and slab of pure uranium had been produced.<sup>10</sup> While inaugurating India's first nuclear reactor, Apsara, at Trombay in January 1957, he said "whatever be the circumstances we shall always use the atomic energy for peaceful purposes." There was no evidence that Nehru contemplated a change in his policy even after the security environment radically altered when Chinese attacked India in 1962 and that the strategic environment worsened. Nehru instead of opting for nuclear weapons intensified campaign for outlawing nuclear war with great vigour. He said in an interview on 18th May, 1964 that "we do not think we will make the bomb."<sup>11</sup>

Nehru believed that development of the country was necessary for internal as well as external strengths of the nation. The Nehru era followed the idealistic policy relating to diplomacy. But, idealism without the kernel of self interest may sound hypocritical and hollow. The foreign policy of a nation is a complete and dynamic political course which must include the prevailing pattern of its interests as well as principles and ideas in its conduct towards other states.

China is India's largest neighbour. Nehru tried to befriend to China when there was a change of government in 1949 and Chou-En-Lai became the Prime Minister. Nehru sought a UN seat for the new regime although China did not get it during Nehru's life time. Nehru recognized Chinese suzerainty over Tibet and introduced Chou-en-Lai to the world leaders in Bandung in 1955. Earlier they both signed a treaty and enunciated the five principles of peaceful-co-existence in 1954. Despite worsening relations between India and China culminating in the Sino-India war in 1962, Nehru bore no ill feeling against China although he felt betrayed by his so-called friend.<sup>12</sup>

Chinese nuclear programme began as early as 1951, when China signed a secret agreement with Moscow. China conducted its first nuclear explosion on October 6, 1964. It was 25 kiloton device.<sup>13</sup> The political fallout in India over the Chinese nuclear explosion cannot be underestimated. Nehru's policy that India would never produce nuclear weapons was diluted by his successors. Lal Bahadur Shastri refused to commit that India's weapons policy would remain unchanged for ever. Admittedly, China's successful nuclear test in 1964 was the factor that accounted for the shift and the 1962 Sino Indian borders conflict was still circumspect. Mrs. Indira Gandhi was quoted to have told parliament in May 1968: "India is making every efforts to develop nuclear know-how and capacity. The belief that China can attack any country with nuclear bombs is misconceived".<sup>14</sup>

In October 1962 China and India fought a brief but bloody border war, and secondly, China's nuclear test in 1964, both the incidents set the stage for India's nuclear weapon programme. Prime Minister Lal Bhadur Shastri gave the green signal for a peaceful nuclear explosion but also clarified his intention that India would never make the bomb for destructive purposes.<sup>15</sup> The developed countries sometime tried to maximise their interests and neglected the interests of developing countries that is why the aim of India's foreign policy has been friendly, cooperative towards their neighbours and against the favourable growth wherever it exists, seek to find a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the outstanding border issue. For the accomplishment of these proposes a number of high level visits have been exchanged, bilateral trade and economies are growing and an agreement on confidence building measures, as part of a wider dialogue on security, has been signed.

In 1965, India and Pakistan fought a short war over Kashmir during which China pledged support to Pakistan but did not engage in military action against India. Pakistan used US-supplied weapons against India during this war, despite prior promises that it would not do so. During the war, the United States had cut off aid to both countries. Both parties agreed to a UN backed cease-fire that took effect on 23 on September. The day before the UN cease-fire was to take effect, numerous members of Parliament from various parties wrote letters to the Prime Minister to change the official policy on nuclear weapons. One of the letters read, "India's survival both as a nation and as a democracy, in the face of the collusion between

China and Pakistan, [this] casts a clear and imperative duty on the government to take an immediate decision to develop nuclear weapons.”<sup>17</sup>

Responding to a question in the Lok Sabha about whether the government had reviewed its non-nuclear posture in light of recent hostilities with Pakistan, Prime Minister Shastri wrote that "despite the continued threat of aggression from China, which has developed nuclear weapons, government has continued to adhere to the decision not to go in for nuclear weapons but to work for their elimination. It is hardly necessary to alter this decision in the light of the conflict with Pakistan.”<sup>18</sup>

The 22 days war with Pakistan in September 1965 and a simultaneous naked threat from China convinced Shastri and a peaceful democratic India that our neighbours have nothing to keep them united except to wage wars to divert domestic attention. By promoting development of Peaceful Nuclear Explosive devices, Shastri in effect had allowed the nuclear scientists to reach up a point where, if necessary, it would be easy to switch over to weapons production in short span of time. Shastri, however, refused to come out openly in favour of a weapons programme but kept the weapons option open for the future and not to be bound under any such type of commitment for not using nuclear power.<sup>19</sup>

Prime Minister Shastri suddenly died of a heart attack in Tashkent on January 11th 1966. His tenure was too short, but all indications were towards policy of political realism and towards a greater focus on the country's national interest. In overall terms, one comes to the important conclusion that Lal Bahadur Shastri as the Prime Minister of India was the initiator of realpolitik as a governing factor in India's foreign and defence politics. His approach did not have aggressive, expansionist, acquisitive or competitive dimensions. He brought the important principles of realism and practicability to bear on our foreign Policy and defence planning processes.

On 15 February, 1966, the Indian representative to the Non-Proliferation Treaty negotiations in Geneva insisted on balanced obligations between nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states. This speech underlined the Indian shift from seeking nuclear guarantees to the desire for the elimination of nuclear weapons. On 1 March, 1966, members from India's lower house of parliament (Lok Sabha) asked Prime Minister Gandhi if the government intended to seek security guarantees from nuclear weapons states instead of developing nuclear weapons indigenously. She stated that India would not seek security assurances because India “should not do anything which will precipitate the crisis and lead to the development of nuclear weapons in many more countries.”<sup>21</sup> India had taken a decision not to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty because of its discriminatory provisions which allowed the existing nuclear weapons states that is those countries which possessed nuclear weapon by January 1968, to retain their nuclear weapons while others were prohibited from possessing weapons or acquiring any technology capable of producing them.

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The Lok Sabha debated the NPT in April 1968. The then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi assured the House that, “we shall be guided entirely by our self enlightenment and the consideration of national security.” She highlighted the shortcomings of the NPT whilst re-emphasising the country's commitment to nuclear technology, “that not signing the treaty may bring the nation many difficulties. It may mean the stoppage of help. Since we are taking this decision together, we must all be together facing its consequences.” That was a turning point. This house then strengthened the decision of the government by reflecting a national consensus.<sup>22</sup> Our decision not to sign the NPT was in keeping with the basic objective of maintaining freedom of thought and action. India's decision in not signing the NPT was motivated by its interest in the development of the peaceful applications of the nuclear energy. Mrs. Gandhi was simply following the traditional patterns of India's nuclear policy as had been outlined before by two of her predecessors, Nehru and Shastri.

In a statement to the Rajya Sabha on March 5, 1970 Mrs. Gandhi observed: “The Indian government believes that the present policy of developing our scientific and technological capability and expanding our programme for the peaceful uses of atomic energy and space research is in the best overall interests of the nation. In this matter, as in others, the government keeps the policy under constant review taking into account the needs of our national defence and security.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, India exploded its first nuclear device in Pokhran in 1974, within four years of the NPT coming into force. Dr. R. Venkatraman, former President of India, argued that in 1974 there was no threat perception to India's security, as, India's defence capabilities and reputation stood high after the 1971 Bangladesh war. According to him, the first Pokhran test was a protest against the arbitrary and unequal Non-Proliferation Treaty. It was undertaken to demonstrate India's capability to the rest of the world.<sup>25</sup>

### Perspectives of Nuclear Policy of India:

The immediate origins of the proposal, no doubt, lay in the underground nuclear test. India conducted on 18 May 1974, at Pokhran, Rajasthan. Few other single incidents had started the security environment in South Asia as much as India's 1974 explosion did for India had emerged as the sixth officially acknowledge nuclear power after the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Although India described the nature of its test as "peaceful", many outside the country feared that India would soon take measures for producing nuclear weapons. It is in this respect, an understanding of India's nuclear policy would be relevant.<sup>26</sup> In 1974, India conducted a 'peaceful' nuclear test of a crude fission device. The nuclear test, the victory over Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh began to change India's reputation from that of a weak state to that of a regional power and hegemony.

Another contention in support of India's nuclear tests were that through them 'India has more convincingly broken China's monopoly in Asia.' Indian political system went through a series of upheavals and had unstable intervals during this period. Mrs. Gandhi felt insecure and threatened by political developments and declared in June 1975 a state of emergency and jailed many opposition leaders and created an atmosphere of distrust and unpopularity for herself, and finally she had to lift the emergency and hold elections which she promptly lost. The new government was made up from a loose coalition of many parties and with no clear mandate. The new Prime Minister Morarji Desai, a staunch Gandhian, ensured that during his tenure 'weapon' option remained 'unweaponised'.

Indeed Morarji's absolute views almost resulted in terminating India's nuclear weapons option- an ultimately failed effort assisted, surprisingly, by his Minister for External Affairs, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, representative in the coalition government of the right-wing 'nationalist' Bhartiya Jan Singh Party, which was sworn to acquire nuclear weapons for the country.<sup>27</sup> Atal Bihari Vajpayee represented India from March 26, 1977 till July 28, 1979 as its Foreign Minister. In his tenure India's reputation started changing around the world, he visited China in 1979 to break the ice in the frozen relationship since 1962 Indo-China war. He also tried to normalise the relations with Pakistan.

After a gap of twenty four years, India has demonstrated its scientific and technological powers to test a variety of warheads ranging from thermo-nuclear to sub-kiloton devices. On May 11, 1998, India tested three devices at the Pokhran underground testing site, followed by two more tests on May 13 1998. The objection of outside world was nearly worldwide. The Indian tests drew immediate condemnation from the Clinton administration, which said the United States was "deeply disappointed" and was reviewing trade and financial sanctions against India under American non-proliferation laws; from other Western nations, including Britain, which voiced its "dismay" and Germany, which called the tests "a slap in the face" for 149 countries that have signed the treaty, and from Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary General, who issued a statement expressing his "deep regret"<sup>28</sup>

On September 2001, the United States lifts sanctions on India for their support to US-led anti-terror campaign. After years of isolating India because of its nuclear program, the United States moved toward closer ties in 2005. With US encouragement, in September 2008, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) removed the ban on India's participation in international nuclear trade.<sup>29</sup> In October 2008, after the approval by the US Congress, India and the United States signed a bilateral "123" agreement, which lifted a three-decade U.S. moratorium on nuclear trade with India by providing US assistance to India's civilian nuclear energy program and expanding US-Indian cooperation in energy and satellite technology.<sup>30</sup>

After many India signed this agreement because India was failed to produce uranium for its nuclear reactor. There are various complications which have made the task of the congress led UPA government of India very tough, but in view of the limited alternatives the dilemma seems real. On the other hand, India has limited options for other source of energy and pressure of the international community for using clean energy source on account of the threat of global warming there is little choice left for India.

### CONCLUSION:

It is apparent from the inception that India has always been in favour of global nuclear disarmament. India has always seen the spread of nuclear weapons as a danger and has been careful about ensuring that its own nuclear technology has not spread to other non nuclear weapon states. Even after openly declaring itself as a nuclear weapon state, India has reiterated its commitment to comprehensive nuclear disarmament. India has always maintained its freedom of action and independent foreign policy, therefore, any pressure on India would be seen as a compromise in its long held stand by the concerned people.

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