

India and Issue of Nuclear Diplomacy

Dr. Mohd. Rizwan

*Asso. Prof., Deptt. of Defence Studies
Meerut College, Meerut*

Abstract

India was the the first country which raised its strong voice against, nuclear Proliferation and armament through a resolution “Standstill Agreement on Nuclear Issue” passed in in Indian parliament im April 1954. But very unfortunately India could not become the a party of NPT 1968 and CTBT 1996 due to very strong and valid reasons. This piece of work reveals different reasons and circumstances behind this story.

Key Words : *CTBT, NPT, PTBT, Proliferation, ENDC, CD, NWS, NNWS, Discriminatory, Threshold, IAEA, Minimum Credible Deterrence.*

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Introduction

The nuclear explosions carried out by India and Pakistan invited fire and fury from all over the world. The immediate effect was to pressurize both India and Pakistan to sign Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and prevent them from further testing and development of nuclear capability. The pressure to sign the CTBT can be viewed from different angles. First of all, taking a philosophical view that proliferation and escalation of nuclear weapons is against the survival of humanity, it is most likely that the other countries would follow suit and many more countries will be encouraged to acquire this capability, endangering the survival of the entire world. The other angle through which the problem can be viewed is economic and impracticality of the nuclear weapons. The Americans and the Russians spent enormous amount of their financial resources on research and development. All these stockpiles of weapons with these countries remain merely show pieces. 'It is, therefore, likely that the possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan would be impractical and inadvisable. There is yet another argument which questions the diplomatic wisdom of India and Pakistan. The Americans and the Russians possessed diplomatic skill through their wide experience in international politics and could avoid nuclear confrontation between them although on couple of occasions they were on the brink of going to nuclear war. India and Pakistan are new nations and their leaders do not have necessary acumen. Some argued by stating that the rivalry between India and Pakistan is deep rooted in their history. They have already fought three actual wars and both are involved to a lesser or greater degree in promoting insurgency and terrorist activities. This creates a serious situation where there is a likelihood of using nuclear weapons out of sheer desperation or their survival. Putting all these arguments together, the international pressure led by USA on India and Pakistan to sign the CTBT was mounted.

Right from the beginning, India had changing views on the non-proliferation arrangement: The PTBT, NPT and the CTBT.

Views on the PTBT: -

Since the beginning of the atomic age in 1945, the possession and deployment of nuclear weapons became the dominant factor in the international system. Those countries that acquired the nuclear weapons have become primary world powers, but, as the number of such countries started increasing, the potential to use the nuclear weapons also increased. In response to this in the early 1960s the United States led an international effort to slow down or block the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

India was among the first countries to adhere to the Partial Test Ban Treaty, when it was opened for signature in Moscow on August 1963. India had signed the PTBT even though it had some of the shortcomings for which India had refused to sign the NPT in 1968. These are firstly the PTBT prohibited nuclear tests in three environments, atmosphere, outer space and on the seabed but allowed underground tests. Secondly, the PTBT did not make any distinction between nuclear tests conducted for peaceful purposes and those for military ones. Thirdly, the PTBT was a treaty to halt the spread of nuclear weapons among the non-nuclear weapons states and had nothing to do with the nuclear weapons states.

In spite of the criticism in the Lok Sabha for signing the partial arms control agreement instead of insisting on a comprehensive one, India signed the treaty. Nehru at this point said: "A partial agreement does not rule out a comprehensive agreement; it is a step towards that; it produces an atmosphere of confidence to go further" ¹.

India and the NPT: -

India maintained its position in favour of altering nuclear weapons until Jawaharlal Nehru was at the helm of affairs. However, after his death, India decided to depart from the idealistic path and prepare itself for acquiring nuclear weapons in case it became necessary. Slowly and steadily, India realized that idealism did not completely serve the foreign policy objective. India did initially show its strong support for a nuclear test ban treaty and adhered to the NPT. However, in 1968 when negotiations were completed on the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty and in 1970 when the unique global agreement went into force, India decided to stay out of it ².

India's policy on nuclear proliferation and the decision to stay out of the NPT was due to the discriminatory character. The discrimination started right from the beginning when the resolution was passed in 1965 at the General Assembly for the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons suggesting that the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) should negotiate a non-proliferation treaty. India, as a member of the ENDC had to play a decisive role in formulating the treaty, but the draft treaty was formulated only by the US and the USSR. At this point, India opposed it for having not involved in the ENDC, which in India's view was the real representative of the forces involved in international relations. India was not alone in the signing the NPT some of the non-signatories included non-nuclear weapons states like South Africa, Brazil, Argentina, Pakistan, Israel and India. India, by not signing the NPT, also made known its decision to keep its nuclear option open. Looking at the Indian perspective on the nuclear issue, both the idealist and the realist strings could be seen together. Right from the beginning, India supported the proliferation of nuclear technology, without any discrimination to all the countries of the world, for

peaceful purpose and for economic gain but it is against proliferation of nuclear weapons further India advocated a nuclear weapon free world, based on disarmament Whereas in the 1960s India had decided to keep its nuclear option open, in the 1970s it made this option visible by conducting nuclear test in the Pokhran range of Rajasthan in May 1974. This test took everyone by surprise. The Indian government called the test as a 'peaceful nuclear explosion'. Whether the test was peaceful or not, the reality proved that it marked a policy departure from diplomatic option in the 1960s to a confirm bomb capability in the 1970s. By carrying out the test India demonstrated that it not only kept its option open but was also capable of fabricating nuclear weapons. The NPT was due for renewal in 1995. Through pressure the US tried to induce countries like India into signing the NPT, but India had firm belief in the principle of non-proliferation but it was always opposed to signing the discriminatory NPT ³.

Dilemma over the issue of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT):

The other attempt to cap and eventually roll back the nuclear programme of threshold countries was through the CTBT. When the CTBT negotiations began in 1994 at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, India entertained a hope that it would be directed towards the eliminations of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner: However, during the negotiations India realized that the NWS were not willing to take the CTBT in the direction of nuclear disarmament. Therefore, when the negotiations got over in 1996, India became its firm opponent, as it was realized that the treaty was neither comprehensive nor did it deal with the test ban. It did ban nuclear explosions but allowed high-tech forms of testing. It allowed non-explosive sub-critical tests that gave the nuclear weapon states the right to continue tests and strengthen their nuclear arsenals. It became increasingly clear that the whole CTBT exercise was aimed at forcing India to take subordinate positions, and to remain an NNWS forever. However, when the CTBT was finally adopted at the UN on 10 September 1996, India's chief negotiator, Mrs Arundhati Ghosh, stated categorically "India would never sign the unequal treaty, neither now nor later ⁴."

Further, while expressing her views on the CTBT, Arundhati Ghosh said: "This treaty is so flawed and our security environment is so dangerous that we will not accept any restraint on our actions to defend ourselves. So India will never sign this treaty." She said that people had jumped; to the wrong conclusion that it was possible for India to sign the CTBT provided we were given some concessions. It would be a mistake to sign the CTBT at all.

India has two main reasons to reject the CTBT. Firstly, it is not a nuclear disarmament measure and secondly, it is against India's national security interests.

For the NWS the CTBT has become an instrument to consolidate their monopoly of nuclear weapons.

India did not sign the treaty because it wanted to keep its option open to acquire nuclear weapons. Besides, India faces threat to its security from two of its neighbors- Pakistan and China. Both these countries have waged wars against India to solve bilateral problems, which still remains unresolved. Pakistan has been manufacturing nuclear weapons since 1989, and has also developed or acquired the delivery vehicles for its nuclear warhead. This has put India's security in grave jeopardy. Further, China detonated its first nuclear explosion in 1964 and this increased India's security concern and since then India has been busy building its nuclear force. Thus, India was left with no option but to have its own nuclear deterrence. The main reason for having a nuclear deterrent is to safeguard the nation. Further, after knowing that Pakistan had nuclear weapons and that it had acquired delivery vehicles for such weapons, it would have been very irresponsible on the part of the Indian government not to have taken any measure for acquiring its own nuclear deterrence.

In view of India's refusal to sign the CTBT as passed by the UN General Assembly, as it was discriminatory, non-comprehensive and not a nuclear disarmament measure, India could not wait to decide the next step indefinitely. India was keen to retain the nuclear option-something every Indian prime minister had spoken about since Mrs. Gandhi. The time for decision was rapidly running out as the CTBT was to come into force by September 1999 and in that case India had to decide whether to sign the treaty and forego its nuclear option or join the "nuclear weapons state" by conducting the tests.

On 11 May 1998, the world was surprised when India announced the successful detonation of three advanced nuclear devices including a boosted or thermo nuclear device, followed by two more a few days later, in contrast to the single peaceful explosion of 1974. Pakistan followed with its own tests. The result was that India and Pakistan moved from the stage of nuclear threshold states with ambiguous or unacknowledged weapon capabilities to become de-facto nuclear weapons states. The number of nuclear powers changed from five to seven and the nuclear equilibrium that lasted since 1964 was shattered. As a result the nuclear non-proliferation question is faced with its most significant challenge since it was raised.

The dilemma therefore is should India accede to the CTBT or maintain status quo. There are different views on this issue. The first thing to be noted here is that CTBT is not an independent treaty. It has an integrated relationship with the NPT concluded in 1970, which created distinction between the Nuclear Weapons

States (NWS), which have the right to process and improve nuclear weapons, and the Non-Nuclear Weapons State (NNWS) which do not have such rights. In effect, the NPT created a framework for the permanent domination of NWS over the NNWS. This was one factor why India did not adhere to this Treaty. The implication for India was that on the one hand, the NPT legitimized China as a NWS and on the other hand, it sought to prevent India from becoming a nuclear weapons state. That was inimical to India's security. Further, the indefinite extension of the NPT in May 1995 indicates that the five nuclear weapons states i.e. USA, Russia, France, Britain and China are keen to keep their monopoly over nuclear weapons.

When these countries met to sign the CTBT in 1996, they were already in possession of 35,000 nuclear weapons. Out of them Russia had about 22500 nuclear weapons US 12070, France 500, China 450 and Britain 380. In addition, these countries by 1996 had already conducted 2,047 nuclear tests the US 1032, Russia 715, France 210, Britain and China 45 each. France and China continued the "test right up to the signing of the CTBT. It indicates that none of the nuclear weapons states had any inclination to give up their nuclear weapons⁵.

The Table below gives a picture of the total number of nuclear tests conducted by different countries.

No.	Country	Total Tests	First Nuclear Test	Last Nuclear Test
1.	USA	1032	1945	1992
2.	Russia/USSR	715	1949	1990
3.	France	210	1961	1996
4.	Britain	45	1952	1991
5.	China	45	1964	1996
6.	India	06	1974	1998
7.	Pakistan	06	1998	1998

Source: *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Destitute of Strategic and International relations, Paris, 1998.

In May-June 1996 session of the Conference on Disarmament, (CD) India rejected the draft treaty. The decision to reject the treaty was announced by the Indian Ambassador to the CD, Arundhati Ghosh in Geneva and by the Foreign Secretary in India. She said that India could not subscribe to the Treaty in its 'present form'. Further she added that India would not sign this unequal treaty today, a tomorrow or in three years time⁶. She said that it would be a mistake to sign the CTBT at all. It would also be a mistake to enter into negotiation on the FMCT because both the

treaties were corollaries that flowed from the NPT, which was the basis of the present unequal nuclear regime, which we had always argued against. This is an instable regime and cannot continue⁷.

There were valid reasons for India's opposition to the CTBT in 1996. India's security concerns did not dictate such a course of action, the treaty was weighted in favour of the nuclear 'haves', as they would be able to update their arsenals through laboratory processes and the linkage between the test ban and the disarmament was too weak. However, India's tests have taken care of the first two objectives. The country now possesses a 'proven capability for a weaponised nuclear programme' and the database useful for various designs is expected to carry Indian scientists towards a sound computer simulation capability. The third objection still remains valid but new pressures are bound to generate with the addition of two nuclear powers, which will increase the -importance of banishing nuclear weapons⁸.

After the Pokhran tests, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee pointed out that India was willing to move towards signing the CTBT. India is now a nuclear weapons state and cannot be ignored any further. By declaring moratorium on the tests, India has virtually met the 'basic obligation of the CTBT'⁹.

In an interview Mr. Jaswant Singh reiterated that the Indian decision on the CTBT would be guided by India's security interest. According to him, the May 1998 nuclear tests were conducted to establish credibility of Indian deterrent¹⁰. The Indian scientists concerned have said that the Pokhran-II tests have given them enough data and the capacity to conduct non-explosive experiments in laboratories as well as sub critical tests to fabricate nuclear devices to fit the delivery vehicles at India's disposal. They are also convinced that they can test the reliability of these devices." Moreover, India after the May 1998 tests has unilaterally applied moratorium on further testing as have the other powers possessing nuclear weapons. In such an environment even if India does not sign the CTBT, it would find it extremely difficult to carry out further testing. On the positive side, if India sign the CTBT and joins the mainstream of international dialogue on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation India's interaction in the political and security environment would become more substantial¹¹.

"In the debate on the signing of the CTBT, all the three groups, the rejectionist, pragmatists and maximalists have differing views. For rejectionists, the CTBT and the FMCT are anathema. Signing them would represent surrender to the new world order by the United States and the other P-5 countries, an order that is weighed in favour of the powerful. Rejectionists see both treaties as fundamentally discriminatory

since they are embedded in a nuclear and diplomatic order that is unequal. By contrast, the pragmatists argue that having gone nuclear, India should sign the CTBT. New Delhi should look for a deal with the international community in which India accedes to the CTBT¹².

However, before signing the CTBT, India has to make sure that it is recognized as a nuclear weapons state. India is one of the largest democracies with complete control over its military and strategic policies. Therefore, it is necessary that it should be recognized as a nuclear weapon state. Although Russia and France have fairly enough agreed to recognize India as the nuclear weapons, state, USA and China are strictly opposed to this act. If India is not recognized as the nuclear weapon state and does not enjoy an equal status with the five nuclear weapon states, then it has to bear the obligation and will not have any benefit. The tests carried out will not lead us further as the upgrading of technology would be prevented by the international monitoring, system¹³. Further, if India signs the CTBT as a non-recognized nuclear weapons state, it will automatically come under the fold of non-proliferation regime.

Another way of looking at the issue is that India needs to build its credible deterrence with effective command and control system. Therefore, it would be suicidal for India to sign the CTBT without obtaining de-Jure recognition to its de-facto position as a nuclear weapon state. Further, signing the CTBT would mean that India would be legitimizing the Chinese hegemony over the Indian sub-continent. It would also mean signing away India's right to defend against nuclear blackmail from across. Borders which other NWS would continue to enjoy. It would mean agreeing to India's unilateral disarmament without ensuring the dismantling of the nuclear weapons of China. It would also mean India's marginalisation in world politics in the future. Further; it would mean the placement of our scientific labs under the surveillance of the CTBT international verification regime and the IAEA. It would also mean acceptance of nuclear monopoly, thereby the overlordship of the P-5 countries¹⁴. The official Indian position on the CTBT is summed up in the following words. "We have underscored the importance of placing the CTBT in a universal disarmament framework, as part of a step by step process" aimed at achieving if complete elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. It is a matter of regret that the CTBT, as it has emerged, does no justice to the mandate without being anchored in the nuclear disarmament framework it will not contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament... what we are seeking is a commitment to engage in negotiation that will lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time frame. Without such a commitment reflected in the CTBT, we are convinced that this treaty will be an end in itself rather than a first step on the road to nuclear disarmament¹⁵...

The present position on the CTBT reveals that by conducting the test India has definitely given a shift to its nuclear policy in general and the test ban policy in particular. The government has been debating the issue extensively to chalk out a bargaining strategy. Efforts have been started to build a national consensus in favour of the CTBT. The prime minister has held discussions with the Congress Party, Samajwadi Party and the leftists' parties. The government's claims that it wishes to build a national consensus on the issue and then only it will take any action. In the meanwhile, the delay in the ratification by the nuclear powers gains for India the necessary time to put nuclear doctrine of restraint which pressures rather than raises anxieties¹⁶. Till all the 44 countries ratify the treaty, India has enough time to assure all states of its. Commitment to nuclear tests moratorium, not to deploy nuclear weapons, not to transfer nuclear technology and on the meaning of the minimum nuclear deterrent. The government also needs to revise its nuclear policy and try to bring moderation into it.

In the pre-Pokhran-II period, India's main objection to sign the CTBT was on the issue of time-bound nuclear disarmament. However, the post-Pokhran-II period revolves around two main objectives: firstly, India's needs based on minimum nuclear deterrence and secondly, how signing of the CTBT would benefit it vis-à-vis the US and Pakistan. Here, it is to be noted that India agreed to adhere to the treaty if all hurdles in the technology transfer from the US were removed. According to one view, if India signs the CTBT, Pakistan will also sign it and that will benefit India's interests as Pakistan would be prevented from making further progress in its weaponisation programme. According to Brahma Chellaney, the post-Pokhran-II debate has brought two disturbing elements to the fore-front. Firstly, it has engendered differences between the Defense and Foreign Ministries and between the three military services and the technocrats' in charge of the nuclear matters. The differences have been exacerbated by the fact that the whole' deal making business with Washington is being tightly controlled by a few individuals, with even the cabinet not taken into confidence. Secondly, it has brought out the dangerous mismatch between rhetoric; and capacity and between claim and reality¹⁶. Despite official claim that India can now meet any nuclear threat, it has no operational nuclear deterrent capability. Therefore, before signing the CTBT, all the major constituents in the context of India's national security interests need to be thoroughly debated.

Prime Minister Vajpayee, in his speech in the UN General Assembly in September 1998, committed India to signing the CTBT before the deadline of September 1999 but in reality India is likely to join the treaty sponsor the- US and Russia. Since US Senate failed to ratify the treaty, now the emerging opinion in the

country is that India will not rush into signing it¹⁷.

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