
Nuclear Proliferation in the Subcontinent and U.S. Policy

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The issue of nuclear proliferation in the Indian Subcontinent drew worldwide attention after President Clinton's visit in March of 2000. This research will seek to investigate U.S. policy with regard to nuclear non-proliferation with a focus on the Indian subcontinent. U.S. policy has been to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, which may threaten the strategic balance in the world. An analysis of the Kashmir dispute, the domestic problems in India and Pakistan, the nature and type of government in both the countries, and the failure of the United States to implement a comprehensive test ban treaty will be undertaken to have a comprehensive understanding of the problem.

This research will seek to investigate United States policy with regard to nuclear non-proliferation with a focus on the Indian subcontinent. U.S. policy has been to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, which may threaten the strategic balance in the world. This research will seek to explore the complexities in pursuing the goal of nuclear non-proliferation in the subcontinent. The problems of nuclear non-proliferation in the subcontinent are as follows: the failure to resolve the political disputes in a peaceful manner, the lack of leadership of the U.S. in the subcontinent in mediating the disputes, a belief in nuclear deterrence, the emergence of hawkish government in both Pakistan and India, domestic political unrest in both those countries, and the failure to implement a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Failure to Resolve Political Disputes

Kashmir, the main problem between India and Pakistan, has been in existence since 1948. It has led to two major wars and regular skirmishes between the two countries. The dispute over Kashmir is the major reason for the increasing arms race, reaching the point of nuclear conflict in the subcontinent. As a result of the cold war, the US and Soviet Union were concerned with the countries that were considered their primary interest. So, there was no endeavor on a global level to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Recently, Mr. Inderfurth visited both India and Pakistan to release the tension there and to express the desire of the United States in negotiating a political settlement of the Kashmir dispute. However, India is opposed to any kind of involvement by a third party and believes that the dispute between her and Pakistan ought to be resolved by bilateral negotiations. According to Levanthal (1998), "Kashmir is today's Cuba." India's claim on Kashmir as an integral part of its territory and its insistence that a part of Kashmir is occupied by foreign (Pakistani) troops lead to further proliferation of nuclear weapons (Celeste, June 22, 1998).

Lack of U.S. Leadership in the Subcontinent in Mediating Disputes

The United States failed to understand the root cause of nuclear proliferation in the subcontinent by failing to provide leadership in negotiating between India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute. United States policy has been sporadic during the time of the cold war. The United States was content to have Pakistan as an ally and was not interested in getting too involved in the subcontinent. Moreover, the United States feared getting too involved in the subcontinent might irritate India. It was very careful not to irritate India though the latter tilted towards the Soviet Union because the U.S. considered India to be an ally during the period of hostilities between the United States and China until 1969. Though the U.S. considered Pakistan to be an ally against Soviet aggression, U.S. policy has never been very comfortable with Pakistan because of the rule of the military, which conflicted with the American values of democracy and human rights. In the 1971 war, the U.S. sided with Pakistan but failed to provide any effective support because the majority of the people of Bangladesh were in favor of independence. From 1971 until 1979, U.S. policy in the subcontinent was dominated by its general interest of providing food and economic assistance, but took no active part in political disputes. During these periods, U.S. relationship with Pakistan had been uneasy because of Pakistan's effort in developing nuclear weapons. U.S. policy made a significant turn in 1979 with Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Pakistan was considered to be a frontline defense against Soviet communism. The United States was mainly concerned about Soviet aggression and had no interest in getting actively involved in the politics of the subcontinent. After the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, U.S. policy makers again put the subcontinent on the backburner. However, with the nuclear explosions by both India and Pakistan in 1998, the subcontinent is of interest to the U.S.

Domestic Unrest and the Emergence of Hawkish Governments

Another reason for the nuclear arms race is the problem of separatism and regionalism that characterize the politics in India and Pakistan. India faces a problem of separatism in Punjab and in the Northeast. India is a complex society with a divergent culture and languages. The social and sectarian conflicts lead to further instability. The decay of the Congress in India has further augmented the rise of fundamentalism. From a historical point of view, Southern India maintains its separate identity from northern India.

Pakistan is also faced with the problem of separatism in Sind and Northwest Frontier Province. Because of regionalism and separatism, both India and Pakistan promote an arms race with the hope that the people will rally under the flag during a national crisis. So, a popular slogan for the parties and politicians is an advocacy of a tougher stand towards the other, with the idea that people will galvanize their support for the party which takes a tougher stand. It has led to the victory of the hawkish parties in both India and Pakistan. With a military takeover in Pakistan in October 1999, militarism and nuclear proliferation have received an added fuel. Faced with economic and political problems, the military in Pakistan found a rallying cry in nuclear weapons and conflict with India. Similarly, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emphasizes that India should never have to fear about being blown away by China or Pakistan. The 1998 BJP manifesto is based on economic nationalism, social harmony, Hindutva (cultural nationalism) and raising of India's image in the international arena. The BJP considers nuclear power as India's glory and prestige in international politics.

Failure of the U.S. to Implement Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Despite the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the United States failed to enforce the principle of the treaty. The nuclear non-proliferation treaty obligates the five acknowledged nuclear states (U.S., Russia, U.K., France, and China) not to transfer nuclear weapons, other nuclear devices, or their technology to any non-nuclear states. Non-nuclear states undertake not to acquire or produce nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices. They are also required to accept safeguards to detect diversions of nuclear materials from peaceful activities, such as power generation to the production of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The treaty was signed by the U.S., U.K., U.S.S.R., and 59 other countries. China joined in March 1992, and France joined in August 1992. Over 180 non-nuclear states are now members of the NPT. In 1996, Belarus joined Ukraine and Kazakhstan and transferred nuclear weapons to Russia and joined the NPT as non-nuclear states.

The United States failed to stop the transfer of nuclear technology in the world. Moreover, many third world countries are advancing in technology leading to a diminished control of the western nations on the scientific technology on which they had a monopoly. The United States also failed to prevent China from giving Pakistan nuclear technology. Pakistan desperately needed to develop nuclear weapons to have an effective deterrence against any nuclear or conventional attack by India.

Congress in 1985 and 1990 blocked the sales of civilian nuclear reactors and fuel to China by requiring the president to certify that “China has provided clear and unequivocal assurance to the United States that it is not assisting any nonnuclear weapons states, either directly or indirectly in acquiring nuclear explosive devices or the materials and components for such devices” (Levanthal 1998).

As a matter of fact, the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations have failed to certify China because of its assistance in developing nuclear devices to Algeria, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan despite the fact of China’s commitment not to do so (Levanthal 1998).

According to Levanthal (1998), “India-Pakistan represent a colossal U.S. foreign policy failure and U.S. non-proliferation is in disarray.” The United States improved commercial and political relations with India and Pakistan without any condition of nuclear non-proliferation.

The visit by Inderfurth, Secretary of State Albright and the National Security Adviser gave the impression that nuclear differences would not stand in the way of improved US-India relationships. India used the slogan of peaceful purpose to conceal its program. Atom for peace reactor was supplied by Canada and heavy water was supplied by the United States.

Pakistan has been successful in producing plutonium weapons with the assistance of China (Levanthal 1998). Both India and Pakistan have kept a weapons program outside of the NPT and the CTBT. “600 pounds of plutonium, enough for 50 bombs, were produced in India’s Cirus Nuclear Reactor. It was an atom for peace reactor built by Canada and made operable by an essential 21 tons of heavy water supplied by the United States” (Gilinsky and Laventhal 1998). India used this reactor to explode a 1974 nuclear device for a peaceful purpose. The then

Secretary of Defense admitted that it was a bomb all the time (ibid 1998). The United States supplied two nuclear power reactors in 1963 (Ibid, 1998). India could use American self-deception, which derives from a mix of ideology and commercial greed. The reaction to 1974 explosion was the Nuclear non-proliferation Act of 1978. But the State Department helped India to get around the law by arranging for France and later China to continue the Tarapur fuel supply (Ibid 1998). “The 1998 tests present a defining event in U.S. non-proliferation policy. We failed to react sharply enough to head off the Pakistani test. No point in trying to engage in nuclear limitation, if we do not enforce existing agreements” (Ibid, 1998)

“Reactors were supplied to India by Canada, and Russia. Heavy water to make the plants operable was supplied by China, Norway, Rumania, the Soviet Union and West Germany” (Dolley June, 1998). China provided Pakistan almost its entire nuclear program. China even supplied a tested nuclear bomb design to Pakistan in the early 1980s (Dolley 1998). China helped Pakistan construct the Khushab reactor. Pakistan used uranium development technology stolen from URENCO, a European consortium in the 1970. France provided reprocessing technology and components. Germany provided tritium production technology to produce nuclear weapons.

India insists that it will join only as a nuclear weapon state and Pakistan insists it will join if India does it first. President Clinton maintained that a “quantum leap in relationship with India.” He insisted that nuclear disagreement would not dominate the agenda. Only a few months later India conducted its tests followed by Pakistan (Dolley June, 1998). India’s decision to test is a clear repudiation of the Clinton administration’s nuclear nonproliferation policy. At the urging of the Council on Foreign Relations, President Clinton offered economic assistance to India, including the supply of a nuclear power plan without stipulating India’s continued abstinence from nuclear weapons. The NCI appeal to the Clinton administration to demand that China take back a large supply of heavy water that it had provided to Pakistan fell upon a deaf ear.

The U.S. supplied the essential heavywater component that made the Indian Cirus reactor operable, and let Canada take the fall for the Indian test. Canada promptly cut off nuclear exports to India, but the US did not. In 1976, the Senate Committee was concerned about the U.S. exports of heavy water and questioned the State Department. The response was that the heavy water had already leaked out with a rate of 10% each year (Leavanthal 1998). But the committee learned from Canada that the actual heavy water loss is about 1% and more than 90% of the U.S. heavy water was still in the Cirus reactor even though it took a decade for India to develop the nuclear device (Leavanthal 1998).

The great failures in terms of nuclear non-proliferation are India and Pakistan. United States’ efforts to block Pakistan from developing nuclear weapons were diminished by the more pressing need of combating the Soviets in Afghanistan. United States’ efforts to curtail nuclear supply was diminished by the more urgent need of stopping Iran. The U.S. tilt towards China including the activation of the 1985 nuclear cooperation was done without any respect toward the impact it would have on India. Paul Levanthal cautioned against nuclear proliferation in the subcontinent. In his testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on October 22, 1987, he remarked, “The prevailing wisdom of U.S. non-proliferation over the years has been to manage is human, to prevent is divine. Our policies toward India and Israel are clearly

management oriented.” He suggested that the U.S. could use the \$4.02 billion aid package. “The legislative history of the waiver of the cut off requirements of the Glen-Symington amendment provides an evidence that the U.S. is prepared to let Pakistan go far in developing nuclear weapon” (Levanthal 1987). The U.S. cut off aid twice and it restored twice. The U.S. cut off aid to Pakistan in response to Pakistan’s import of a reprocessing technology from France. United States cut off aid in 1979 in response to the Symington Amendment to Pakistan’s construction of an unsafeguarded enrichment plant at Kahuta using stolen Dutch technology (ibid 1987). In 1979, US tried to reach out to Zia for his help in Afghanistan and provided a \$3.2 billion aid package in 1981. Congress decided to suspend the Symington Amendment with respect to Pakistan during the aid period of six years. President Reagan wrote to Zia assuring that Pakistan would not enrich uranium beyond the 5% level. In 1985 Congress passed laws to cut off aid if it found a proof of a nuclear device. The Solarz Amendment was expected to bar aid to non-nuclear weapons states seeking illegally export nuclear item from the US.

The United States backed away from enforcing the sanction of an aid cutoff against Pakistan permitting the waiver of the Symington Amendment through legislation in 1981, waiving the Glen Amendment by presidential action in 1982 (Levanthal 1987).

Although the Carter administration agreed that the supply of nuclear fuel would bring concessions from India in non-proliferation, the outcome was never realized (Buel 1983). On June 29, 1998, the agreement between China and the United States on peaceful use of nuclear technology was signed. The Clinton administration lifted the 1989 embargo on nuclear exports to China after the Chinese Premier promised that it would not help countries like Pakistan and Iran develop nuclear weapons.

Another event marks a failure of U.S. effort in nuclear non-proliferation. President Clinton sent the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) for Senate approval on September 22, 1999 but it was turned down by the Senate on October 13, 1999 by a vote of 51 against to 48 in favor, far short of the two third vote needed. All but 3 of the 44 nations (India, Pakistan and North Korea) have signed the treaty. The failure of the CTBT in the Senate would make it very difficult to convince other nations to sign the treaty on comprehensive ban and the non-proliferation treaty.

The U.S. government has set up a new agency, Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). This new agency will consolidate the present agencies: On Site Inspection Agency, Defense Special Weapons Agency, and Defense Technology Security Administration. This new agency will be directly responsible to the Under Secretary of Defense Acquisition and Technology (*Economic Times* May 25, 1998).

Failure of Sanctions as a Tool to Prevent Nuclear Proliferation

In an interdependent world, it is difficult to have a lasting impact of economic sanctions to modify the behavior of the nations unless there is a coordinated and unified effort.

Clinton called the Indian nuclear tests a “terrible mistake,” unhinging security in South Asia and imposed more than \$20 billion worth of economic sanctions against India. Japan suspended loans to India and withdrew its ambassador temporarily; India considered this as hypocrisy on the part

of the western power. According to India, it is a double standard for the U.S., which defies the call of international community to disarmament. In a world of five nuclear powers and two undeclared powers like Pakistan and Israel, India cannot avoid being nuclear (May 14, 1998 *Economic Times*) In a modern world, it is difficult to have any effective impact of economic sanctions as a tool of getting compliance of other nations in nuclear non-proliferation. Bhagwati, Professor of Economics at Columbia University remarked that the sanctions would have very little impact on India (*Economic Times*, May 26, 1998). Moreover, he thought it would have a beneficial effect on India by encouraging economic independence.

The following chronological events would prove the ineffectiveness of the sanctions. On May 22, 1998 Former Congressman Solarz proposed that India be admitted to the nuclear club as a quid pro quo for signing the NPT and other agreements. Karl Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs acknowledged the need for a new approach.

France and Germany lobbied against sanctions (*The Economic Times*, May 27). Instead of lobbying against India in the World Bank, the US decided to go for a postponement on the loan to India. This came after a meeting of the Indian ambassador and US Under Secretary of State with an assurance that India is working on a consensus on the issue (*The Economic Times on Line*, May 27, 1998).

On May 30, the British Foreign Secretary declared his plan to bring India and Pakistan to non-proliferation agreement. He also mentioned that the poor should not suffer as a result of international sanction. The U.S.-India Business Council warned the Clinton administration about the adverse impact of sanctions on American businesses. "U.S. Sanctions might actually strengthen Indian government monopolies, which militates against the very concept of liberalization" (*The Economic Times*, June 5, 1998). Foreign ministers of the G-8 countries informally agreed on a draft that opened ways for talks with India and Pakistan on the nuclear issue without seeking to publicly push the countries into a corner (*The Economic Times*, June 11). A meeting of the Security Council called on India and Pakistan to stop testing nuclear weapons as well as missiles and to sign the CTBT and the non-proliferation treaty (*The Economic Times*, June 11, 1998). Secretary of State Albright sought flexibility in implementation of sanctions fearing that the sanctions would hurt US businesses (*The Economic Times*, June 12). Foreign Ministers of the G-8 Countries agreed to postpone all the loans to India and Pakistan. However, they agreed that they were encouraged by the first signs that the two countries were ready to open a dialogue. They were encouraged by the moratorium declared by the two countries. G-8 countries emphasized that steps should be taken to open a dialogue on all issues, including Kashmir. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) endorsed India to the nuclear weapon states to engage in meaningful disarmament as part of a global strategy to eliminate nuclear weapons (*The Economic Times*, June 14, 1998).

Secretary of State Albright admitted publicly that the sanctions against India and Pakistan following their tests failed miserably. She also admitted that India had deceived the United States (*The Economic Times*, June 17). The Under Secretary of Commerce in his testimony before a Congressional Panel on Asia and the Pacific during its special hearing on India-Pakistan Nuclear Non-Proliferation said, "While it is doubtful the sanctions will cripple India's economy, they would nevertheless diminish the ability of US companies to pursue projects in India and block

new financing by international financial institutions” (*The Economic Times*, June 17, 1998). He said, “Our approach has been to implement sanctions in a way that is not likely to influence the affected governments, while minimizing to the extent possible the impact of US business, and labor and the populations of these countries (*The Economic Times*, June 17). Karl Inderfurth said, “Sanctions against India and Pakistan will not take the US very far as it needs to take note of India’s concern if the current South Asia crisis has to be restored.” (*The Economic Times*, June 20). President Clinton on June 20 expressed his disenchantment with U.S. sanctions policy. Under Secretary of Treasury David Lipton stated that the banks would not be barred from doing business. The loans relating to education, maternal and child health, water, sewage, low income housing and rural development would go through despite the sanctions.

According to the U.S. Ambassador in India, Richard Celeste, “When the sanctions were laid out in law, the most important goal was to deter countries from testing nuclear weapons. Having failed to do that, the purpose of sanction is to convey a message of concern and dismay without intending to punish or to do fundamental harm to the Indian economy.” (*The Economic Times*, June 22). The Ambassador also mentioned that the business community in the US is opposed to the sanctions. The investment bankers were lobbying hard to exempt them from the economic sanctions. Investment banking deals more with arranging and structuring financial deals for companies based on fee. Australian High Commissioner remarked that the sanctions would no way hurt the business relations with India (*The Economic Times*, June 24).

The Clinton Administration issued an executive order barring private banks from lending to India and Pakistan and would seek to minimize the effects on other banks. (*The Economic Times*, June 24, 1998). The World Bank approved a loan of \$543 million to Andhra Pradesh. (*The Economic Times*, June 26),

On June 30 The world Bank approved fresh loans totaling \$376.4 million for developing Indian health infra-structure. The World Bank cleared projects worth a little less than a \$1 billion in less than a week. The Indian Finance Minister remarked, “This is a rebuff to those who have been claiming that we will be severely hit by the sanctions.”

On July 8, 1998, Commerce Secretary William Daley blasted Washington’s tendency of imposing unilateral sanctions and warned that in the absence of multilateral cooperation, these measures could prove counter-productive. On July 10, 1998, the Senate voted to lift agricultural sanctions against India and Pakistan for their nuclear tests. It was due to the pressure of the agricultural lobby.

Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott reasserted that India and Pakistan are not welcome to the exclusive nuclear club unless they manage to fulfill certain conditions. He ruled out any high technology transfer to both countries (*The Economic Times*, November 13, 1998).

The Clinton Administration decided to use the one-year waiver authority granted by Congress to lift some of the sweeping sanctions imposed against India and Pakistan because of the progress in the non-proliferation talks with both countries. The ban on the IMET (International Military Education and Training) program against India and Pakistan was lifted. It covers removing of some parts of the Pressler amendment against Pakistan that would enable it

to receive American economic and military assistance once again. The amendment was triggered in 1990 when President Bush could not make the annual certification that Islamabad was not developing a nuclear program.

However, the Brownbeck amendment allowed for the lifting of sanctions placed under the Pressler amendment despite a ban on high technology exports including dual use technology, military sales and equipment. The United States' companies could sell high-powered computers to the Indian private sector that were not involved in nuclear or missile programs. On October 2, 1998, the Clinton administration insisted that the two countries must sign the CTBT, improve bilateral relations and meet other US conditions unconditionally before it could consider lifting sanctions against two South Asian nations.

Citing more flexibility by New Delhi on nuclear non-proliferation, including a specific time frame in which it had agreed to sign the CTBT, Washington had already informed the World Bank that it would not oppose the \$150 million loan for a power reform program in Andhra Pradesh.

An analysis of the events show the ineffectiveness of the economic sanctions as a tool to get compliance from India and Pakistan on nuclear issues.

A Belief in Nuclear Deterrence

A belief in nuclear deterrence has intensified the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent. Pakistan, outnumbered by India in conventional weapons and having fought three wars, firmly believes that only through nuclear deterrence can it prevent any Indian attack. As a result of this belief, Pakistan has embarked on a policy of nuclear weapons by any means even though such a course has serious economic consequences. Pakistan considers its nuclear weapons as a primary means to its security and survival. It has had a ripple effect on India, which regards Pakistan as its number one enemy and believes that Pakistan may be tempted to use its nuclear weapons against her. So, the only way to prevent Pakistan from using any nuclear attack is to develop a credible nuclear deterrence. India is also concerned about China, its second enemy, which has substantial nuclear capability. Faced with these enemies, according to Indian policy makers, the rational approach to its security is to have a credible nuclear detrence, reminiscent of U.S.-U.S.S.R. relationships during the cold war. Indian Defense Minister remarked, "In the absence of global nuclear disarmament, India's strategic interests require effective, credible nuclear deterrence and adequate retaliatory capacity should deterrence fail. This is consistent with the U.N. Charter, which sanctions the rights of self-defense." Capacity, in this case, refers to maximum credibility, survivability, effectiveness, safety and security. However, at the conference of the Atomic Energy Agency at Vienna, Sept 27-October 1, 1999, Mr. Chidambaram expressed the commitment of Indian nuclear mission for peaceful development purpose.

Conclusion

Clinton's visit to the subcontinent was, to some extent, helpful in diffusing the tensions. France has urged mediation between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. The Pakistani ruler has

reiterated in a recent statement that Kashmir is the only problem between India and Pakistan. A solution to the Kashmir problem will lead to the solution of other regional problems. President Clinton visited India and Pakistan in March 2000, to pacify the tension in the subcontinent. India made it clear even before the visit that it would not like President Clinton to negotiate on Kashmir. Pakistan on the other hand, asked for US help in solving the Kashmir dispute. Both India and Pakistan exchanged artillery fire on the border between Pakistani and Indian held Kashmir on the eve of Clinton's visit. Both countries showed their willingness to go to war on the issue of Kashmir. More than 25,000 people have died in Kashmir since 1990. President Clinton in his visit urged Pakistan to restore democracy immediately. He urged Pakistan to stop supporting terrorism in Kashmir and to negotiate with India in a peaceful solution of the problem. Clinton urged Pakistan to establish democracy or be a failed state, thus running the risk of being outcast in the international community. Pakistan, on the other hand, urged Clinton to negotiate on the issue of Kashmir, a proposal rejected by India. So far, there is no breakthrough in the Kashmir dispute and thereby no progress in nuclear non-proliferation in the subcontinent.

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Biographical Sketch

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