

World Disarmament Campaign
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Nuclear Power and Nuclear Proliferation

*Many faces of Asian security –
perspective from India and Pakistan*

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Speakers

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Introduction

There are hotspots from North Korea to Kashmir, Iran to Pakistan, which are potential dangerous flash points for Asian Security. These trouble spots represent challenges to national unity, political stability, social harmony, economic progress, and territorial integrity. There is no peace in the world as long as armies continue to modernise & blood continues to be shed.

The tensions of two nuclear powers – India and Pakistan – is real and has the potential to destabilising the whole region.

Nuclear weapons have the potential to kill thousands and thousands of people in a single attack, and their effects may persist in the environment and in our bodies, some cases indefinitely. So long as any state has such nuclear weapons, others will want them. So long as any such weapons remain in any state's arsenal, there is a high risk that they will one day be used, by design or accident. Any such use would be catastrophic.

We are at present witnessing nuclear proliferation and tensions in India, Pakistan and Iran. The recent escalation in the situation in Iran could start another pre-emptive war. We are living at a time when the constant threat of nuclear weapons and war hangs on us.

Against this background, India and Pakistan's possession of nuclear weapons has been a serious concern in the light of the wars that have been fought between them and the continuing standoff over Kashmir. Immediately after the respective nuclear tests, there was real fear of a nuclear war between them, but that fear has receded somewhat in recent years. However, so long as the weapons exist and so long as the Kashmir situation is unresolved, the danger remains.

How the present turmoil in Pakistan and the formation of a new government is likely to affect this situation? Who has practical control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and how secure are they? Is there any danger that A Q Khan could be reinstated to any position of influence by the new government? However, there is still a danger of Pakistan's irresponsible nuclear weapons programme as some of the military and secret service personnel involved with the bomb are still in power and thus a continued source of worry for proliferation.

India – US nuclear deal and dangers of nuclear proliferation in India, Pakistan and South Asia

India is the largest democracy with stupendous growth and political power in the global arena, reshaping the map of South-east Asia. It has a mix of ambitious entrepreneurs and soaring contradictory aspirations. The super rich live along the poor and desolate who are denied the opportunities of employment, education, and health care.

The US- Indian civil nuclear cooperation agreement is widely popular among millions of Indians who see it as their passport to the nuclear club and, perhaps one day, membership to the United Nation's Security Council. It is considered to be 'macho' to possess nuclear weapons in India and Pakistan. This way they think they are part of the big, powerful nations of the world. When the first nuclear device was test fired in India there were celebrations in which people took to the streets

dancing openly. This is the perception of wrongdoing and propaganda of both the governments, Congress and the BJP who are determined to pursue the same policy of acquiring nuclear technology to further their nuclear ambitions.

The India-US nuclear deal consists of the four US-proposed non-proliferation benchmarks put forward in 1998 by the Clinton administration and now being pursued by the Bush government. This proposal includes joining the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, making progress on a fissile material treaty, exercising strategic restraint, and meeting the highest standard of export controls. That means the US government should persist until the four areas of restraint become the basis of the Indian policy. But in practical terms, that is a fantasy. At present, India is not part of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) or a signatory to the Nuclear-non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Furthermore, it is sourcing uranium in Africa for its nuclear reactors.

The US is pursuing India to have nuclear capabilities as a counter weight to China's huge nuclear arsenal as currently they are spending \$60-80 billion in modernising nuclear hardware. Besides, China plays the role of the dominant power in the Asian region, as is evident from its dealings with the Tibet issue and its disregard for human rights.

While on tour to India, Gordon Brown had sidestepped India's reluctance to sign up to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty but stated that they would assist India in carrying forward the agenda of nuclear disarmament. We, in the UK, are always flabbergasted by the double standards of nuclear weapons states who preach nuclear disarmament to other countries while trying to replace their old nuclear weaponry with new systems like the replacement of Trident in the UK. The same is true of the US who is developing new 'bunker buster' bombs while demanding that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons. However, the reality is that as a signatory to the NPT, Iran has the right to develop civil nuclear energy like any other country.

The irony of the UK situation is that while Gordon Brown is lecturing other countries to reduce their nuclear arsenal, at the same time he is trying to replace the UK's nuclear capabilities with a Trident submarine system at the cost of £75 billion.

India is a significant player in Asia and the nuclear technology deal with the US is quite rightly proving controversial in both countries. At the very least, India should sign up to the NPT before there is any talk of it being offered a place on the UN Security Council. The rise of Asia and the state of the world today should be reflected in the makeup of the council, but not at the expense of our supposed commitment to nuclear disarmament.

The most reassuring actions would be an Indian and a US commitment to promote and participate without delay in a verifiable international treaty stopping all production of fissile material for weapons. Their adherence to such a treaty would dispel any fear that the agreement could facilitate an increased production of nuclear weapons in India and risk fuelling an arms race in Asia. Similarly, a commitment by the US and India to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty would send a signal that the intentions of the two states are to promote peaceful, not military, uses of nuclear energy.

In order to get an agreement with the US over the nuclear deal, India is encouraging that countries should have multilateral negotiations for the reduction of nuclear weapons and also praising France for taking a lead in reducing its arsenal of nuclear hardware. India at present has produced six documents to be presented to conference on disarmament in Geneva. It is trying to show that it can be a responsible nuclear power and can be trusted to keep and maintain nuclear hardware.

India and Pakistan

India detonated what it called a 'peaceful nuclear device' in 1974. In May 1998, India announced five more nuclear tests and declared that it possessed nuclear weapons. The same month, Pakistan announced six nuclear tests. Neither country has provided many details about the precise yields or designs of such weapons, nor the amount of fissile material each country possesses. Most unofficial estimates claim an arsenal of about 50 weapons for each country. Both state that their weapons are intended for deterrence. India has declared a no-first-use policy, but not Pakistan.

Both India and Pakistan support the goal of concluding a multilateral fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), although only Pakistan wants it to cover past production. Both countries are maintaining a moratorium on nuclear testing, but neither has yet signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Pakistani nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan has been at the centre of illicit international supplier networks involving both imports and exports of nuclear technology and equipment.

In February 1999, India and Pakistan also signed a memorandum of understanding on a variety of nuclear confidence-building measures. Both countries, however, are continuing their efforts to develop and produce nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles.

In this view, the second wave of proliferation, which added Israel, India and Pakistan, was unwelcome – the lack of political stability in Pakistan being a special source of concern. However, efforts to induce these states to roll back their programmes – as South Africa did – have gradually been weakened and are now largely abandoned. As none of them was a party to the NPT, they could not be charged with a violation of the treaty.

Neither India nor Pakistan is a party to the NPT, and they are not expected to renounce their nuclear-weapon capability and form a zone free of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Both countries have tested nuclear weapons, both are involved in producing more of them and improving them, both have announced military doctrines based on deterrence, and both are also developing different types of long range missiles to deliver such weapons.

This does not mean that nothing can be done – or is being done – by India and Pakistan and others to reduce the risks linked to the tension between the two countries and to the WMD they possess. Both countries maintain unilateral nuclear-testing moratoria. They should both ratify the CTBT. Both support the goal of concluding an international fissile material treaty, although they differ on whether it should cover stocks of such material. They should join other states possessing

nuclear weapons in declaring a moratorium on the production of further fissile material for weapons, pending the conclusion of an FMCT. The two countries have in recent years made some progress in mutual confidence building. They have concluded some high-level agreements to renounce attacks on nuclear facilities, to implement other measures to improve the transparency of military activities (including missile tests) and to reduce the risk of nuclear attacks. They should continue on this path.

Iran – nuclear weapons and the threat of US pre-emptive war

There are two major players in the Middle East – Israel (who possess nuclear weapons). Israel has an aggressive policy towards the Palestinians and other neighbouring countries which is not conducive to the security of the region and is a supplier of arms to India. The other player is Iran (who is thought to possess weapons but the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been unable to confirm Iran's nuclear weapon programme). Furthermore Iran's programme of civil nuclear energy is perceived as a threat by Israel that Iran may soon become the second nuclear power in the region. This threat has led the US and Israeli governments to aggressively lobby for pre-emptive war before it is too late.

As the Iran issue threatens to turn critical, India is faced with a serious challenge from its policy of promoting a "strategic partnership" with Washington. Efforts are on to push Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government to play a significant support role in case the Pentagon unleashes another "pre-emptive" war in the Middle East.

India had been under pressure to play such a role in the first "pre-emptive" war as well. Massive popular protests, however, had stopped former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's (BJP) government from sending troops to Iraq and, indeed, led to a Parliamentary resolution opposing the aggression on that country. The Singh government (Congress Party), on the other hand, has already paved the way for a pro-Washington role on Iran - not only as a strategic partner, but also as a semi-recognized member of the "nuclear club."

The latest pressure has come in the form of a demand for India signing a US-India Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), and amid discussion for quite a while, without any further delay. On February 27, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, one of the many American emissaries to descend on New Delhi over the recent period, reportedly pressed for early conclusion of the LSA, under which the two countries would provide logistic support to each other's military. New Delhi, according to official accounts, is said to have asked for "more time to consider all aspects of the matter."

The facility offered then was nothing compared to what the LSA envisages for US forces engaged in military operations in the region (extending from Pakistan and Afghanistan to Iran and Iraq). Under the LSA, according to experts, India will be obliged to provide services including refuelling and port facilities to US warships, bombers, aircraft etc., and billeting of troops and storage of food for them. The LSA has been compared to a similar agreement the US signed in 2002 with the Philippines, converting the country into an almost American base, according to protesters there.

Global perspective on nuclear disarmament

The accumulated threat posed by the estimated 27,000 nuclear weapons, in Russia, the United States and the other NPT nuclear-weapon states, merits worldwide concern. However, especially in these five states the view is common that nuclear weapons from the first wave of proliferation somehow are tolerable, while such weapons in the hands of additional states are viewed as dangerous.

So long as any state has nuclear weapons, others will want them. So long as any such weapons remain, there is a risk that they will one day be used, by design or accident. And any such use would be catastrophic.

Nuclear, biological and chemical arms are the most inhumane of all weapons. They are rightly called weapons of mass destruction and weapons of terror. Designed to terrify as well as destroy, they can, in the hands of either states or non-state actors, cause destruction on a vastly greater scale than any conventional weapons, and their impact is far more indiscriminate and long-lasting.

Can South Asia and the Middle East be free of nuclear weapons?

The answer is yes if civil society can keep the momentum of lobbying for nuclear disarmament. India, Pakistan, Iran and Israel need to follow the difficult path of carrying forward the recommendations below for a nuclear weapons-free region:

- These countries with the help of the international community should work towards phasing the elimination of nuclear weapons. For decades nuclear non-proliferation treaty has saved the world from extinction. We should ensure and cooperate with other countries to maintain the nuclear disarmament and restrict the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- In the area of prevention of nuclear proliferation and to achieve a nuclear weapons free world, they should work on promoting measures such as comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, an end to the production of fissile material, further reduction in the nuclear stockpile, the establishment of nuclear-weapons-free-zone, prevention of an arms race in outer space, and the abolition of nuclear weapons through a verifiable treaty or a package of treaties.
- Prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons by adhering to the disarmament commitments made under the Non-Proliferation Treaty
- Prevent nuclear terrorism
- Reduce the threat and the number of existing nuclear weapons
- States should seek to establish a universal system of export controls, via international assistance and non-governmental actors
- Strengthen the role of the United Nations in compliance, verification and enforcement of treaties, abolishing nuclear weapons and establishment of the rule of law.

Civil society can make it happen by the following actions:

- Write to your MP and to key decision makers and put pressure on government ministers.
- Ask your MP to sign the parliamentary motions.
- Write letters to world leaders and the editor of newspapers.
- Educate the public and organise a forum.
- Hold a meeting or run a workshop.
- Call a radio talk show.

- Contact your local interfaith group to discuss the issue.
- Make paper cranes to send to decision makers (they have become a symbol of disarmament).
- Find out about nonviolent initiatives such as Faslane 365.
- Attend a "Dialogue with decision-makers" training workshop.
- Get involved in your local disarmament group and lobby against the replacement of the Trident system.
- Promote complete and general disarmament by distributing information about 13 Practical Steps taken from the final document of 2000 Review Conference of the (NPT) Nuclear-non Proliferation Treaty.
- Contact one of the organisations working against Trident replacement.

STUDY....EDUCATE....ADVOCATE....ORGANISE !

Conclusion

Both India and Pakistan and their political parties have no policies or intentions for carrying forward the reduction and the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons. Instead they are developing new and more powerful nuclear weapons. As they are not signatories to the NPT or CTBT, they regularly test fire nuclear weapons to gauge the capability of its strength. India has announced that it is going to test fire the next intermediate-range ballistic missile AGNI 3rd at the end of this month. This destabilises the whole region and in the event of a mad person having controls of the government can unleash a nuclear weapon killing hundreds of thousands of people in an instant.

The strange irony of India and Pakistan is that they cannot feed their population who are among the poorest in the world, while their leaders spend billions on the development of nuclear weapons which can better used for food, healthcare and education.

How can the reduction of nuclear warheads take place in a substantial way in our world whose priorities are twisted? The answer is by visionary leaders who are prepared to take bold steps like the programme of reducing nuclear weapons carried forward by Gorbachev / Reagan during the 1980s. At this moment in time, Gordon Brown, the UK Prime Minister, is giving the right signal and saying the right words for carrying forward the nuclear disarmament agenda. If he is serious, he should send a delegation at the ministerial level to the NPT PrepCom in Geneva to kick start the failing negotiations on the reduction of nuclear arsenal and carry them forward with momentum up to the review conference in 2010 in New York, for the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons.

Asia's future at the opening of the twenty first century holds both promise and risk. The challenge to leadership in all countries is to manage differences and find political framework that will enhance peace, common interests especially economic and social development. The history of the twentieth century of South Asia does not give great confidence in such a future, but the costs of mismanagement are equally evident. No country in Asia, the Middle East or, for that matter elsewhere, can afford to go forward if it does not leave its past behind.

Thank you for listening

Disarmament quotes:

"I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."

Albert Einstein

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, represents, in the final analysis, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, who are cold and are not clothed."

Dwight Eisenhower, General Commander Allied Forces, World War 2 and US President, 1952-60.

"Ultimately, we must end our reliance on weapons. Ending our trust in arms is the only way to bring trust among us. The solidarity and action of common people can bring about total disarmament."

Vijay Mehta

"If you think you are too small to change the world, try sleeping with a mosquito."

Dalai Lama, Spiritual Leader of Tibet



The full version of this speech can be downloaded from:

- VM Centre for Peace www.vmpeace.org
- Action for UN Renewal www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk

Vijay Mehta is an author and global activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment. Some of his notable books are The Fortune Forum Summit: For a Sustainable Future, Arms No More, and The United Nations and Its Future in the 21st Century. He is president of VM Centre for Peace (www.vmpeace.org), co-founder of Fortune Forum Charity, Chair of Action for UN Renewal, and co-Chair of World Disarmament Campaign.

He along with his daughter Renu Mehta founder of Fortune Forum (www.fortuneforum.org) held two summits in London in 2006 and 2007. The summits attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage. The keynote speakers for the first and second summit were Bill Clinton, former US President and Al Gore, former US vice-President, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2007.

Vijay Mehta has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Ajtak-24 hour Indian news channel, Iranian national TV, Friction TV and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

He is at present writing a book on climate change jointly with, Renu Mehta.