



Pledge and Hedge

Threat of nuclear terror attacks by Jihadi groups seem to be on the rise

THINGS NUCLEAR SEEM TO BE THE current flavor of the season. US and Russia signed an arms reduction agreement in Prague on 8th April, 2010. The delayed Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) setting out the nuclear doctrine of the Obama Administration was published, allegedly reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in the strategic policy of the US. President Obama convened a 47-nation summit in Washington on 12-13 April, 2010 to enhance global nuclear security. On 17-18 April, Iran convened a global conference on disarmament in Teheran. All these events do not portend that nuclear disarmament is around the corner. In fact, they are meant by various nations to position themselves advantageously in the forthcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference scheduled to start in New York on 03 May, 2010.

President Obama in his opening remarks on the Nuclear Security Summit said on 13th April, 2010, "Two decades after the end of the Cold War, we face a cruel irony of history — the risk of a nuclear confrontation between nations has gone down, but the risk of nuclear attack has gone up.... Terrorist networks such as al Qaeda have tried to acquire the material for a nuclear weapon, and if they ever succeeded, they would surely use it. Were they to do so, it would be a catastrophe for the world — causing extraordinary loss of life, and striking a major blow to global peace and stability."

With his argument that the risk of nuclear confrontation between states has gone down and that of attack by nuclear terrorists has gone up, there will be an attempt by US in the Review Conference to focus the attention of the non-aligned, non-weapon nations on the new heightened threat. That would logically mean attention to non-state terrorist actors and proliferation through illicit networks. The largest stockpilers of nuclear weapons, US and Russia will highlight their recent agreement to cut their weapons by a third and their

declared intention to carry out further cuts. US will draw attention to their latest NPR and the negative security assurances for NPT-compliant non-nuclear states contained in it and the new doctrinal formulation of reduction in the salience of the role of nuclear weapons in US security posture in the NPR. These developments and the rising risk of nuclear attack by terrorists, it will be argued, call for non-nuclear weapon states focusing attention on their own obligations in regard to fissile material cut-off and safety of fissile materials.

Similarly, Iran has come out with its roadmap for nuclear disarmament by proposing an amendment to article six of the NPT with a time deadline to negotiate and conclude a treaty on elimination of nuclear weapons. Iran's purpose is to focus the attention of the majority of the NPT members in the Review Conference on the failure of the nuclear weapon powers to fulfil their obligations under Article VI of the NPT and thereby deflect the campaign bound to be mounted in the Review Conference by US, UK, Russia, France and Germany on the perceived clandestine Iranian attempt to acquire nuclear weapon ca-

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pability. This overall background should be borne in mind in assessing the above four developments.

The new START treaty signed between President Obama and President Medvedev in Prague is a follow-up of the START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) signed after the end of the Cold War in 1991 between President Bush and President Gorbachev. It limited the delivery vehicles, ICBMs, SLBMs and

bombers for both sides to 1600 and the deliverable nuclear warheads to 6000. This was followed by the Strategic Offensive Arms Reduction Treaty (SORT) signed in 2002 in Moscow. That limited the nuclear arsenals to both sides to 1700-2200. The START expired in December 2009 and SORT is due to expire in December 2012. The present treaty reduces the warheads to 1550 and the delivery vehicles to 800, of which only 700 are to be deployed at any one time. Though the reduction from 2200 to 1550 is claimed as 30 per cent reduction since a bomber with multiple bombs is counted as one, the real reduction is likely to be closer to 20 per cent. Even after these reductions both US and Russia will each have more warheads than all other nuclear weapon states of the world, both NPT and non-NPT states. In that sense, though the reductions are to be welcomed, they cannot be claimed to be significant enough to persuade other states to follow the example of these two nations — over armed with nuclear weapons.

The US in its new Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) released on 6th April, 2010 has made some dramatic changes in its traditional nuclear strategic policy. Attempting to lessen the role of nuclear weapons, it has declared that the US would use nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the US, its allies and partners. It emphasises that the fundamental role of US nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack on US, its allies and partners. The above formulation in the NPR is in conformity with the Obama worldview that the risk of nuclear confrontation among states has gone down. It also reflects the reality that in terms of conventional military capability, US spends more on defence than the rest of the world put together and has converted many of its long range missiles to carry accurate non-nuclear war heads. This will enable US to adopt a conventional Prompt Global Strike posture against any conventional attack.



WALKING TOGETHER The heads of India and US seem to be on the same side

While US refers to future negotiations with Russia to carry out further reductions in nuclear arsenals, the signals from Moscow indicate a distinct lack of enthusiasm for further cuts. While US has switched on to a policy of reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in their strategic posture, the Russians are doing just the opposite. The Russian conventional defence capability has deteriorated significantly since the collapse of the Soviet Union. They are unable to keep up their conventional defence R&D at levels they did during the Soviet days. They have relied on Indian financing of their R&D in respect of some of their frontline fighter aircraft and short range

missiles programmes. At the same time, they face increased military pressure on the West because of the expansion of the NATO and US ballistic missile defence programmes and in the East due to the Chinese military modernisation. Consequently, the Russians tend to emphasise more on the role of nuclear weapons. In the Eighties, the Soviet Union under Indian pressure supported 'no first use' doctrine. In the light of their present strategic predicament, they no longer do so. Within the US administration, after an intense debate, they decided to stop short of adopting 'no first use' and came out in favour of the formulation of use only in extreme circumstances.

In the light of these developments, the possibility of a near term further cuts in the arsenals of the two leading nuclear powers is not very bright.

After the new START agreement, the two leading powers will still have more than eighty per cent of world's nuclear arsenals. That is not going to be a shining example for medium and smaller nuclear powers including China to follow — in respect of cutting down their arsenals. We shall hear more about it in the forthcoming NPT Review Conference.

The new START treaty does not deal with ballistic missile defence. The Russians are opposed to US developing missile defence while some of the East European countries (former Soviet bloc countries) are keen to have it. President Obama cancelled a Bush plan to have a missile defence to be deployed ostensibly as a defence against potential Iranian threat in Poland and Czech Republic. This conciliatory gesture helped the two countries to reach the new START treaty. The US intends to pursue the missile defence research. There are proposals by some influential Americans for having joint development of missile defence with Russians. This issue is likely to dominate future US-Russian discussions. The Russians are bound to raise the question if in President Obama's opinion the risks of nuclear confrontation among states has come down, why should there be a missile defence which could downgrade Russian deterrence. The NPR also cites the modernisation of Chinese nuclear force as one of the considerations influencing the US policy and that modernisation is of concern to China's neighbours. Russia is China's largest neighbour and Russia will be facing a China which will be growing increasingly powerful both in conventional and nuclear terms

The nuclear security summit dealt with only one of the two pincers that go to make up a non-state terrorist nuclear attack, the possibility of which Obama rates as increasing it dealt with the pincer of the security of fissile materials. But the summit was silent on dealing with the other pincer, terrorist organisations though Obama specifically mentioned al Qaeda and other such networks. It would appear his strategy is to use the summit to increase pressure on Pakistan in respect of its opposition to start the discussion on the Fissile Missiles Cut off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva and step up the pressure on Pakistan Army



THE WINNING HAND Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in charge of nuclear issues

to act against al Qaeda and its associate organisations in Pakistan — which is recognisably the epicenter of terrorism in the world today.

A two-day nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation conference titled 'Nuclear Energy For All, Nuclear Weapons For None' was held in Teheran on 17-18 April and was attended by representative reportedly from about 60 countries. President Ahmadinejad called for more rigorous action than that outlined by the US summit and for the destruction of all atomic weapons, starting with those in the US arsenal. He further called on the US to end its 'blind support' for Israel. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, who had earlier issued a religious edict against the use of all nuclear weapons and called the nuclear arsenal of the US 'tools of terror and intimidation'. In the statement issued at the end of the conference, the following points were made:

- ▶ Emphasis on nuclear disarmament as the highest priority of the international community and the necessity for the total elimination of such inhumane weapons in accordance with the NPT, and the final document of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conference in particular, complete realisation of the 13 nuclear disarmament practical steps com-

mitted by nuclear weapons.

- ▶ Emphasis on the necessity for concluding a comprehensive, non-discriminatory and legally binding Convention on the total ban on development, production, transfer, stockpiling, use or threat to use such weapons, in order to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons, taking note of the experience of the concluding of two Conventions namely the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1992 and the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, as well as providing comprehensive and non-discriminatory security assurances pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Affirmation of the inalienable right of the NPT State Parties to use nuclear energy in all its aspects and the necessity to promote international cooperation as a pillar of the NPT in accordance with the commitments under Article IV.
- ▶ Expression of the grave concern over the weakening of the non-proliferation regime due to implementation of double-standards and discriminatory approaches by certain Nuclear Weapon States, in particular, the co-operation of certain Nuclear Weapon States with the NPT non-parties and neglecting the nuclear arsenal of the Zionist Regime.

It is obvious that the last point is a criticism of the waiver given by the Nuclear Suppliers Group to India and the Indo-US nuclear deal. Following this conference Iran has also offered to discuss its nuclear fuel swap deal with the 15 members of the Security Council. These steps are designed to reduce the pressure on Iran in the forthcoming NPT Review Conference where its suspected efforts to acquire nuclear weapon capability are likely to be focused on by US, Russia, UK, France and Germany, especially in the light of Washington nuclear security summit.

While all these conferences had the NPT Review Conference as the focus, there was no discussion on the issue why countries like Pakistan, and North Korea acquired nuclear weapons and Iran are attempting to go nuclear. All of them fear vulnerability to externally induced regime change and nuclear weapon is an insurance against such attempts at regime change. In the case of Pakistan and North Korea use of terrorism as state policy behind the shield of nuclear weapons also enable them to extort economic aid. Pakistan and North Korea are able to get away with their blackmailing due to their special relationships with US and China respectively. Attempts by other countries like Syria and Myanmar to acquire nuclear weapons as an insurance against external pressure for regime change have been reported.

The new START agreement, the Washington nuclear security summit and the new NPR are positive developments though not of path-breaking significance. The Teheran Conference was a counter move by Iran to ward off pressure on it. The net outcome is the world-wide recognition of the fact that while the danger of interstate nuclear confrontation has diminished, the threat of nuclear terroristic attacks by jihadi organisations has increased. The primary targets for such attacks are likely to be US and India with Pakistan as the source. While perhaps there is recognition of this common threat at the level of Obama, Hillary Clinton, Biden and Gates, there is a disconnect between them and significant sections of the Pentagon, State department and Intelligence bureaucracies of Washington who have been conditioned to look away from real threats over the decades through various means, by the Pakistan Army and its Inter-Services Intelligence. II

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