

Strategic Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program for Accelerating Brain Circulation
Dispatch Report

Year: 2013

Place of fieldwork: Washington, DC, USA

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- **Research background**

The author has examined changes to India's nuclear armaments and energy policies since 1998, focusing on multidimensional factors on both domestic and international levels. The first research trip under the program was conducted in India between February and March 2013. As a result of that trip, the following two points were clarified: 1) the point of convergence in debates on development and deployment of nuclear armaments in India is a restrained nuclear policy and 2) the Indian government and the NPCIL are being aggressive in building internal and external acceptance of India's development of high-tech nuclear technology, such as the enrichment and reprocessing of uranium and even thorium.

- **Research purpose and aim**

The research analyzes the dynamics of the transformation of nuclear armaments and energy policies from multidimensional angles, including development and democracy in contemporary India. In this way, the research aims to clarify what goals India is pursuing in its utilization of nuclear power. The purpose and aim of this second research trip to Washington, DC is to achieve an understanding of the Indo-U.S. Nuclear Deal and the current security environment of the South Asian region, as shared by some influential American scholars.

- **Fieldwork results and achievements**

1) Appraisal for India's nuclear armament policy

The Senior Associate of the Brookings Institute, S.P. Cohen, has described in his co-authored book *Arming without Aiming* (2010) that India is a reluctant nuclear weapons power, which means that the nuclear armament policy is not assertive but that it maintains a restrained posture. Asked why India maintains this restrained posture, Cohen answered that the cause may be a lack of strategic thinkers who can describe a clear strategic vision, like K. Subrahmanyam who died in 2011 did.¹ He has given a very critical review of India's current policy in the book written by the Retired Vice Admiral, Verghese Koithara, titled, *Managing India's Nuclear Forces* (2012). In it, Cohen puts forth that "India now lacks a credible theory of how nuclear weapons might be used other than as an instrument of national pride and propaganda." This quote was referred to by the Chairman of the National Security Advisory Board of India (NSAB), Sham Sharan, who led the negotiation for the 2008 Indo-U.S. Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement as the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of India, in his lecture titled,

¹ This information is based on a personal interview with S.P. Cohen (March 18 2013).

“Is India’s Nuclear Deterrent Credible?” given on the 24th of April 2013.² There is no doubt that the purpose of the lecture was criticising the discourse advocating that India’s nuclear deterrent is not practical and is merely a political tool. On the other hand, Bharat Karnad, a professor of the Centre for Policy Research who is well known as a nuclear hawk and a former member of the NSAB when the Draft Report on Indian Nuclear Doctrine (1999) was written, has criticised Koithara’s publication on his blog, as follows:

I was particularly struck, moreover, by how closely Koithara adheres to the official US viewpoint, now subscribed to by the powerful non-proliferation lobby in Washington as well that India does not need (1) to resume nuclear testing, (2) proven, reliable, and upgraded, nuclear and thermonuclear armaments, (3) a force elastic enough to keep pace with the qualitative and quantitative Chinese strategic force augmentation (continue to keep the deterrence minimal, he advises, in effect), and (4) delivery options, such as MIRVs, etc!!³

To conclude, the American side believes that India’s current nuclear armament policy maintains a restrained posture, and has encouraged such posture.

2) Appraisal for the Indo-U.S. Nuclear Deal

The Senior Associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Ashley Tellis, who served as an advisor on the Indo-U.S. Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation, argued that India’s nuclear armaments are restrained in their operational capacity, saying that, for instance, the number of nuclear warheads is less than 50.⁴ He also clarified that India’s commitment of not conducting further nuclear explosive tests was already agreed upon between India and the United States in 2005 when the Joint Statement of Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation was issued.⁵

There is a negative view of the Indo-U.S. Nuclear Energy Cooperation without India’s accession to the NPT and CTBT. The Co-founder and Senior Associate of the Stimson Centre, Michal Krepon, argues that ongoing Pakistani radical nuclear weaponization even after the deal indicates that the special exemption of India is not contributing to stabilizing the South Asian region.⁶ Furthermore, asked about the possibility of radical nuclear weaponization on the Indian side like the development of MIRV technology, he answered that the message of the Former Chief of the Defence Research and Development Organisation saying that they are actively conducting such research would see political assentation, and that this should therefore not be taken seriously.⁷

To conclude, on the American side, the destabilisation of the South Asian region such as Pakistani radical nuclear weaponization may be the main concern.

² See Shyam Saran, “Is India’s Nuclear Deterrent Credible?” India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, April 24, 2013, available at

http://ris.org.in/images/RIS_images/pdf/Final%20Is%20India%27s%20Nuclear%20Deterrent%20Credible-%20rev1%202%202.pdf [accessed on 2 August 2013].

³ <http://bharatkarnad.com/2012/08/13/managing-indian-nuclear-forces/> [accessed on 2 August 2013].

⁴ This information is based on a personal interview with Ashley Tellis (March 21, 2013).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ This information is based on a personal interview with Michal Krepon (March 21, 2013).

⁷ *Ibid.*

- **Implications and impacts on future research**

In order to clarify the dynamics of India's nuclear policy since the Indo-U.S. Nuclear Deal, the following two points should be considered:

- The broader shared understanding on the American side is that India's current nuclear armament policy maintains a restrained posture, but that the South Asian security environment still remains unstable in terms of Pakistan's radical nuclear weaponization, despite (or because of) the Indo-U.S. Nuclear Deal.

This study cannot conclude that the official American policy to India and the South Asian region is as summarized above. Further elaborative analysis is required.