



Vol. 3 No. 4 (April) (2025)

Chinese Factor in Indo-US Nuclear Relations

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Abstract

China has always been perceived as a threat by India in South Asia. Both the countries try to counter-balance each other in the region. The long rivalry between these states has caused them fight the 1962 Sino-Indo War. While USA has also been cautious of Chinese growing influence. This whole scenario has caused India and US to enter into Civilian Nuclear Deal with each other to at least pose a deterrence to Beijing.

Key words: China, India, USA, deterrence, counter-balance, nuclear relation.

Introduction

India and USA have been in cordial relations since the former got independence in 1947. There have been issues in Indo-US relations but that did not halt their durable fraternity. The development of Indian nuclear energy in 1950s got possible only with the help of USA. India was made build a nuclear reactor by USA even New-Delhi was provided with fuel by the United States of America for the development of its nuclear energy. During this era Indian scientists were given access to US laboratories to further their research there. It was only in 1974 that the gulf between India and USA developed because of the former's nuclear bomb test. Though India reiterated that this was for peaceful purposes nevertheless, USA halted its relations with India and tried to induce others to stop assisting India but this did not lasted for long. In 2000, once again both the countries came close to each other and USA extended the move to develop "strategic partnership" with New-Delhi. India has, since then, been assisted in missile defence, space travel and satellite technology. (Jangir, 2012)

Civilian Cooperation Nuclear Deal

The civilian cooperation nuclear deal between India and The United States of America was originated in July, 2005 but due to criticism in both India and USA the deal was concluded in 2010. In India people and academician criticized New-Delhi for entering into pro US camp and in USA it was condemned for awarding unusual nuclear eminence to India.

The nuclear deal besides nuclear heights, binds both the countries to work for mutual economic growth, raise the volume of common trade, establish liberal democracy, and cooperate in high technology, space and security. (Annapurna



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Nautical, 2008)

This deal has been envisioned by China as a counter-balance strategy by India and USA to halt the progress of China in the region and the globe. China is apprehensive of the mutual strategic partnership of India and the United States that threatens Beijing's advancement in nuclear, economic and strategic spheres.(T.V. Paul, 2009)

The Nuclear Arms Race between China and India

China's blast of a nuclear device in 1964 was a terrible setback for India that was defeated by China in Sino-Indo war of 1962. China may have been pursuing nuclear arm race keeping in mind USA or the then USSR, nevertheless, India took China not only as a regional rival but also as an atomic enemy. The nuclear test of 1974 by India was not only to deter Pakistan but also to counter Chinese threat. Similarly, the installation by China of CSS5s, 2145 km medium range missile at Tibet was perceived by India as to be projected against India and not Tibet. Likewise, Indian nuclear tests in 1998 were not demonstrated by Indian security and political experts to threaten Pakistan but to show the arch-rival China that New-Delhi is not behind Beijing in nuclear arms race.

The then Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee said in these words that, "We have an overt nuclear weapons state [China] on our borders, a state that committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists, mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust, that country has materially helped another neighbor of ours [Pakistan] to become a covert nuclear weapons state".(Scott, 2008)

The same approach was adopted by the Indian general (Amarjit Kalkat) who evaluated the purpose of these tests to counter-balance China in the region. He further asserted that political world venerates the most equals and hence it was incumbent upon India to be on equal footing with China.

The 1999 effective test of medium range missile (Agni-II) by India with a range of 3000 km was also hailed by New-Delhi as a sign and symbol of resurgent India. The Agni-II and Pokhran-II were declared by the strategic experts of India as the measures for counter-balancing China. These tests were not directed towards Pakistan rather it was declared to be a peripheral factor. The central and core factor was China in these missiles tests.(Paul K. Kerr, K. Alan Kronstadt, Michael F. Martin, Bruce Vaughn, 2011)

This nuclear rivalry does not stop here. The development of further nuclear arsenals binds the two states to compete each other in these projection in future. Though Indian missile program is China's centric nevertheless, China is seemingly more concerned with Indo-US nexus and taking measures in this direction. The successful test of Dongfeng -31 missile by China in 1999 can annex every nook and corner of not only Indian Territory but may also hit major cities in US as well. This has certainly stirred fear in Indian political psyche and the strategic analysts at the time like Chellaney, pointed out that China was expanding the capability of its missile technology to make it possible to be able to hit any place of the world in time of necessity.

In response to Dongfeng-31, India tested Agni-III successfully in 2007 and 2008 respectively. The intermediary Agni -III ballistic missile with 3500 kilometers range, has the capability to target many of the Chinese states. Similarly, India



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tested Agni IV in 2008 and 2009 with an array of 5000 km. This was the first time in Indian history that it got the ability to hit every part of China. These developments were envisioned by China as the nuclear encirclement of Beijing by India and USA, as the later has helped the former to develop missile technology. In 2007 and 2008 China was threatened by another blow from New-Delhi when India announced effectively its anti-ballistic Missile Defence System. This capability by India was made possible by USA with its technical and financial assistance.

Though India has been striving to equate the power nexus in the region with China nevertheless, it still has to go long way to catch with Beijing. China has excelled India in military and economic ventures but the Indo-US nexus may pose certain impediments to Chinese advancement.

Conclusion

Counter-balancing Beijing, India has pursued USA for strategic and economic assistance. The Indo-US Nuclear Deal is the sign of power equation by India and USA in the region. Both New-Delhi and Washington differ in ideology with Beijing and endeavors to halt the economic and strategic progress of the later. The economic and technological assistance provided to India by USA has prompted the former enter into arms struggle with China which is one of the aggravating element in Sino-Indian relations.

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