November 7, 2012

Undermining S Asian nuke deterrence — I
(Pakistan Observer)

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/shams_zaman/18/
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World politics mostly functions within the realist paradigm which pivots around state interests rather than personal friendships or emotional biases. Pakistan, even after lurking for long in a deep slumber, has yet not completely woke up to the reality. Indians however few years ago acknowledged to this global norm and succeeded in galvanizing the foreign investors as well as Military Industrial Complex (MIC) of the west through their strong economic and industrial base.

Various state heads’ visit to India including USA, France, Germany, Japan and Russia last year and of Australian Prime Minister last month, profoundly endorses this paradigm shift from geo-politics to geo-economics since last few decades. Some of these visits culminated in signing of nuclear and defence agreements which would have serious implications for the regional peace and stability besides the nuclear stability in South Asia. The latest Australian decision of selling Uranium to India, reasserted by Australian Prime Minister during her recent visit to India, has further added to the risks of undermining South Asian nuclear deterrence. A logical outcome of these nuclear and defence deals coupled with Indian quest to develop nascent missile defence capabilities, with the help of US and Israel, would result in the emergence of a triad based Indian nuclear deterrence and possibly offensive posture with implied prospects of undermining Pakistan’s nuclear capability and thus could fuel a nuclear arms race in the region.

Responsibility of this virtual nuclear asymmetry spiralling into a nuclear arms race not only rests with the NSG (Nuclear Suppliers Group) but also with the ex-President Musharraf who myopically paved the way for Indo-US nuclear deal by lifting the objection at IAEA merely to secure his personal relationship with George W. Bush. Unfortunately, strategic blunders neither can be put right by tactical brilliance nor can be undone. Therefore, now is not the time “cry over spilt milk” but to move forward and take into account, the possibilities and prospects of emerging scenario which lies ahead. The main concern for Pakistan is not of emerging Indian global stature but its de-jure nuclear status. A hostile India, member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) club, would not only deny opportunities for Pakistan to explore peaceful nuclear initiatives but would also put a discerning psychologically strain on Pakistan’s nuclear deterrent by rapidly enhancing its nuclear capabilities.

It is extremely unfortunate that the group (NSG) which was originally created in response to Indian betrayal and violation of global nuclear norm through “not so peaceful nuclear explosion” in 1974, has now become an extremely discriminatory and monopolized institution promoting a nuclear apartheid which would seriously undermine the global nuclear non-proliferation efforts. Although in the plenary meeting of NSG held in June 2011, some countries have shown their reservations over
the special waiver given to India regarding Enrichment and Reprocessing (ENR) technology, but behind the scenes USA and France have assured India that they would oppose introduction of any new guidelines aiming to circumscribe the nuclear cooperation with India.

And now the latest Australian decision to sell Uranium reveals that the pacifists’ voices on nuclear issues would not be headed at the NSG forum. This approach would not only seriously undermine the nuclear non-proliferation efforts but would also permanently stall the negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) treaty. This was reiterated by Pakistani representative in CD (Conference on Disarmament) Zamir Akram’s statement that, “Pakistan will be forced to take measures to ensure the credibility of its deterrence.”

Some scholars in Pakistan believe this co-operation as a consequence of US obsession to contain China while others argue that it is aimed at exhausting Pakistan economically to strike a grand bargain for its nuclear capability in a quid-pro-quo. Whatever the case, but a certain corollary of this western policy would be a destabilised South Asia with profound nuclear and conventional asymmetries which may end in a nuclear cataclysm.—To be continued

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