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Indian Nuclear Exceptionalism

and South Asian Strategic Stability

Indian Nuclear Exceptionalism and South Asian Strategic Stability

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Abstract

The nuclear non-proliferation and arms control regimes are ineffective due to prejudgment and a selective approach of NPT members. The treaty recognizes only certain countries as nuclear weapon states and has effectively divided the nuclear weapon states between "haves" and "have-nots." This discrimination also extends to the supply of nuclear technology to India, a non-NPT nuclear weapon state (NWS). Inter alia, this special treatment to India will contribute to a lack of progress in achieving global nuclear disarmament. The Indo-US nuclear deal opened the Nuclear Suppliers Group's (NSG) gateways for New Delhi. This is a unique example of double standards. It has not only placed global non-proliferation efforts in jeopardy but is also affecting strategic stability in South Asia. Another example of the West's double standards is giving membership in the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) to India. This paper offers a critical analysis of the inclination of Western states to promote their self-interests as opposed to playing their role in maintaining global peace and stability. Furthermore, the article discusses India's commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the impact of

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exceptionalism on Indian foreign policy, affecting deterrence in South Asia.

Keywords: Strategic Stability, South Asia, Indian Nuclear Program, Indian Proliferation, Nuclear Discrimination.

Introduction

In the initial years of the nuclear age, the possession of nuclear technology prompted the international community to put in place instruments that could regulate the supply of nuclear technology. This led to the devising of the global Non-Proliferation Regime (NPR), a collective set of rules and norms for attaining control over decisions to supply and control access to nuclear technology.[2] The Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) has crossed the fifty-year mark and so will India's rejection of the treaty on the grounds that it divides the world into "nuclear haves" and "have-nots." India remains a privileged country that, despite staying out of the treaty, has been given many favors by the West. This questions the basic principles of NPT and the Indian stance. India has already started to portray itself as a de-jure NWS while pursuing its hegemonic designs in South Asia and beyond, bringing to attention the harsh global judgement and discrimination that other non-NPT NWS face.

The year 2023 marks 25 years since five nuclear tests were conducted by India in May 1998 and 15 years since the US congressional approval of the US-India 123 Agreement, also known as the Indo-US civil nuclear deal. In 2005, the Bush administration lifted the nuclear embargo on India, entering into an agreement with it. Later in 2008, the Indo-US nuclear deal was finalized, which significantly undermined global non-proliferation efforts. In 2016, India was admitted into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Subsequently, in 2018, it was admitted into the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and the Australia Group

2. Schiff Benjamin N, *International Nuclear technology Transfer* (London: Rowman and Allanheld Publishers, 1983), 20.

(AG). The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is currently reviewing India's application for NSG membership. Favors granted to India indicate that few powerful NWS now decide the non-proliferation efforts based on "good" or "bad" proliferation.[3]

India became a declared nuclear state in 1974 and has rejected the NPT since then. It has, however, continued to engage selectively in associated arms control measures. India has gained more from the regime than it has contributed towards revolving rule-based criteria. It is because of the expected geostrategic quid pro quos that India could offer to play a role as a counterweight to China to the US and its allies.[4] New Delhi's willingness to contain China's rise and its lucrative defense market were probably major factors that made powerful states in NPR lower their normative standards.

The nuclear trade of NPT signatory states with India, facilitated by the NSG waiver, is a unique example of Western exceptionalism. It is not only placing global non-proliferation efforts in jeopardy but also affecting strategic stability in South Asia. This exceptionalism eased the way for India to sign approximately 16 nuclear deals with states, including Japan, Russia, France, Australia, the UK, South Korea, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, Argentina, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, and Namibia.[5]

Indian Nuclear Program

India, being a "Democratic Ally"[6] and a "Strategic Partner"[7] of

3. Oliver, Meier, "The US-India Nuclear Deal: The End of Universal Non-Proliferation Efforts? In: International Politics and Society." *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, Number 4 (2006). http://www.fes.de/ipg/inhalt_d/pdf/Meier_GB.pdf.
4. Khan, Sameer, Ali. "The Politics of S-400 Missile Defence System." Strafasia, Strategy, analysis, News and Insight of Emerging Asia. https://strafasia.com/the-politics-of-s-400-missile-defence-system/.
5. Khan, Anum A. "Nuclear India: An Agent Provocateur in South Asia." Pakistan Politico, March 1, 2021. https://pakistanpolitico.com/indianukes/.
6. "U.S. Relations With India." *United States Department of State*. July 18, 2022. https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-india/.
7. "U.S. Relations With India."

the US, has invested heavily in developing its nuclear capabilities in the military domain since it signed a nuclear deal with the US. While India cites security concerns (China and Pakistan) as the primary drivers for its acquisition of nuclear weapons, a more credible rationale for its development of nuclear weapon capability is the prestige factor.[8] India continues to support nuclear disarmament internationally but is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal at the same time. It is developing long and short-range missiles to cater for counterforce and counter-value targeting, and reconfiguring its Agni V Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) so that it can be modified into Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRVed) missile.[9]

For years, India hid the possible range of the Agni V ICBM. In December 2022, it openly demonstrated that Agni V had an increased range – far exceeding 7000 kilometers.[10] Many pre-existing Indian missiles already cover China and Pakistan; a substantial increase in Indian missile range should have been concerning for the international community. Yet no eyebrows were raised in the major world capitals.

India has also tested Anti Satellite (ASAT) weapons. This new acquisition will not only increase space debris and endanger international space stations, but also encourage other states to follow suit because ASAT weapons are considered offensive

8. Tellis, Ashley J. "India - Striking Asymmetries: Nuclear Transitions in Southern Asia." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 2022. https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/07/18/india-pub-87397.

9. Keck, Zachary. "India's Agni-V ICBM to Carry Multiple Nuclear Warheads." *The Diplomat*, May 31, 2013. http://thediplomat.com/2013/05/indias-agni-v-icbm-to-carry-multiple-nuclear-warheads/.

10. "What is Agni-5, the long-range nuclear capable missile that India has tested?" Economic Times, November 2022. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-test-fires-nuclear-capable-agni-5-missile-2nd-test-in-six-months/articleshow/67023684.cms?from=mdr; Kazmi, Zahir. "India: Agni-5 Nuclear Capable Missile can Strike Targets Beyond its Range Drdo Acknowledged Agni-5 Can Strike Targets Beyond Its Range…Beyond 20% …Beyond 7,000 Kms" (Economic Times, 17 Dec)," Tweet, *Twitter*, December 19, 2022, Https://Twitter.Com/Zahirhkazmi/Status/1604717309628518402.

weapons as they can destroy other countries' satellites thereby jeopardizing their intelligence and communication systems. This will also fuel an arms race in space.[11] Furthermore, a muted response of the US on Indian ASAT tests grants tacit support to India for furthering its global ambitions and encourages it to carry out more of such tests.[12]

India has also added short-range missiles like Prahaar, Prithvi, and Dhanush and increased its Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities that complement counterforce targeting.[13] It has further destabilized the region by the canisterization of Agni V missile, which will shorten warning time and enhance India's launch-on-warning capability.[14] India is also adding Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBNs) and Submarine-launched Ballistic Missile (SLBMs) to its arsenal. It can opt for Submarine-launched Cruise Missiles (SLCMs) in the future. New Delhi is shifting from liquid to solid fuel for its missile inventory[15] as it is much easier to handle such missiles and decreases reaction time.

India is also augmenting its missile inventory with its BMD program with the help of US, Russia, and Israel.[16] India's own BMD program is in the preliminary phase. However, when deployed, it can intercept Pakistan's cruise missiles and some inventory

11. "Indian ASAT Test Raises Space Risks | Arms Control Association." January 6, 2022, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-05/news/indian-asat-test-raises-space-risks.
12. "Indian ASAT Test."
13. "#Nukefest2017 Hot Takes: Potential Indian Nuclear First Use?," South Asian Voices, March 20, 2017. https://southasianvoices.org/sav-dc-nukefest2017-potential-indian-nuclear-first-use/.
14. "Agni-V's maiden canister trial a roaring success." The Hindu, January 31, 2015. http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/maiden-canister-trial-of-agniv-a-roaring-success/article6841942.ece.
15. Panda, Ankit. "An Indian Nuclear-Capable Ballistic Missile Test Failed Shortly After Launch. What Happened?" The Diplomat, June 22, 2017. http://thediplomat.com/2017/05/an-indian-nuclear-capable-ballistic-missile-test-failed-shortly-after-launch-what-happened/.
16. "The Pokhran Legacy." *The Nation*, June 21, 2020. http://nation.com.pk/columns/21-Feb-2017/the-pokhran-legacy.

of ballistic missiles in the terminal phase within the range of 60 kilometers.[17] Analysts are of the view that BMD may give India a false sense of security and incentivize pre-emptive counterforce nuclear targeting.[18] Hence, BMD will further erode the balance of power between India and Pakistan.

A Harvard University study estimates that India has enough fissile material to produce around 2600 nuclear weapons.[19] Pakistani scholars have also estimated India's conservative and optimal capacity that can be used to build nuclear weapons from Weapon Grade Plutonium (WG Pu) and its unsafeguarded Reactor Grade Plutonium (RG Pu).[20] These calculations suggest that India has the capacity to produce, approximately, a minimum of 356 nuclear weapons. Besides meeting fuel needs for its 500 MW Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR), India can optimally produce approximately 493 weapons. India will have six FBRs by 2039, which will further add to its nuclear weapon capability.[21] These scholars suggest that once all these 500 MW FBRs are operational, each will be able to contribute to making 28 weapons annually.[22] As these estimates were made back in 2016, the aforementioned capacity of India to produce nuclear weapons would have increased now.

Once operational, India's Challakere Nuclear Complex is poised to become South Asia's largest military facility comprising nuclear centrifuges, research laboratories, and weapon testing facilities.[23] Also, the Indian submarine program with the INS Arihant now

17. "Indian Missile Crisis: One Step from Nuclear War? | Asia-Pacific Leadership Network." June, 2022, https://www.apln.network/analysis/commentaries/indian-missile-crisis-one-step-from-nuclear-war.
18. Ehtesham, Hasan. "Indian BMD Will Offer False Sense of Security." The Express Tribune, September 12, 2017. https://tribune.com.pk/story/1503613/indian-bmd-will-offer-false-sense-security.
19. Ahmed, Mansoor. "India's Nuclear Exceptionalism." Discussion Paper, 2017.
20. "India's Nuclear Exceptionalism."
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. "India and the Non-Proliferation Paradox." The News, June 21, 2017. https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/155730-India-and-the-non-proliferation-paradox.

in service, and India's plans to build thermonuclear weapons in Karanataka will have a negative impact on strategic stability in the region.[24] The modernization plans of nuclear program also suggest that India is moving from No First Use Policy (NFU) and massive retaliation to graduated response. If true, India risks continuously destabilizing nuclear deterrence and balance of power in the region, leading to possible future misadventures.

To sustain strategic stability in South Asia, Pakistan has opted for a restrained response. Nevertheless, time and again Pakistan is asked to cap its nuclear program[25] as a condition for mainstreaming it in the international nuclear order, despite having an excellent non-proliferation record. Emerging strategic inequalities can only be addressed when the international community ceases turning a blind eye toward the Indian nuclear program.

Indian Civilian and Military Facilities

In February 2015, the Australian expert, John Carlson, indicated that India's major components of its civilian nuclear program remained outside IAEA safeguards. The language used in India's Separation Plan of 2006 hinted at the overlapping of its civilian and military programs. The Plan stated, "India will add to the civilian list only those facilities that, after separation, will no longer be engaged in activities of strategic significance." Anwar Iqbal points out that, as per its separation plan, India will make the judgment to decide which of its civilian nuclear facilities will be subjected to IAEA safeguards for national security reasons. Furthermore, India would keep a facility outside of the civilian list if its location was in an area of strategic significance, whether or not it was normally engaged in activities of strategic significance. "A civilian facility would, therefore, be one that India has determined not to

24. "The Peril of Admitting an NPT-Outlier to the NSG." South Asian Voices, July 11, 2016. https://southasianvoices.org/the-peril-of-admitting-an-npt-outlier-to-the-nsg/.
25. Sanger, David E. "U.S. Exploring Deal to Limit Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal." The New York Times, October 15, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/us-exploring-deal-to-limit-pakistans-nuclear-arsenal.html.

be relevant to its strategic program."[26]

India allows IAEA safeguards at only a handful of foreign-supplied nuclear facilities. This leaves space for it to use unsafeguarded military nuclear facilities to produce fissile material that can be used to produce nuclear weapons. The Indo-US nuclear deal has liberated Indian domestic nuclear material from being used for civilian purposes. Consequently, it will allow India to expand its nuclear stockpile and further destabilize the region.

Indian Nuclear Safety and Security

There have been documented security lapses in the protection of sensitive material and facilities in India. The incidents of nuclear theft date back to the seizure of nuclear fissile material as early as the 1980s. There have been several accidents at nuclear power plants in India that point to inadequate safety and security arrangements in these facilities. In September 2019, Indian Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant's (KKNPP) control system suffered a cyber-attack. Even if this attack was on the computers having administrative documents, any attack on the power plant should be deemed a serious lapse. These types of attacks reflect lack of a security culture practiced by employees at the power plants.

In 2012, Indian specialists from the US National Academy of Sciences Workshop on Nuclear Security revealed that, to date, many security incidents occurring in nuclear facilities were due to insider involvement, putting in personnel reliability in question.[27]

26. Iqbal, Anwar. Pakistan Defence, "Analysis: NSG Unlikely to Admit India without Proper Safeguards." https://www.dawn.com/news/1385316/analysis-nsg-unlikely-to-admit-india-without-proper-safeguards.

27. "India-United States Cooperation on Global Security: Summary of a Workshop on Technical Aspects of Civilian Nuclear Materials Security." NAP, June 21, 2017. https://www.nap.edu/read/18412/chapter/1.
Also, Adrian Levy and R. Jeffrey Smith On 2/14/16 at 4:38 PM, "India's Rock 'n' Roll Approach to Guarding Its Nuclear Sites." Newsweek, February 14, 2016. http://www.newsweek.com/india-nuclear-sites-rock-roll-426134.

Also, in 2008, US officials visited Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC), where India uses plutonium for nuclear weapons. The US officials' observations reflected that the security practices followed at BARC were below mark.[28] An industrialist, who gives regular advice to Indian Prime Minister, argued that he noted the vulnerability of the nuclear sector due to poor infrastructure of transportation, including roads and rail links.[29]

Indian Proliferation History

In 1974, India was under strict obligations not to divert fuel or misuse the Canadian-supplied reactor, CIRUS, for military purposes. India, as is well known now, used the plutonium extracted from this reactor for its so-called peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE) in 1974.[30] In May 2021, seven kilograms of uranium were seized from two individuals, who reportedly had tested its purity in a private lab.[31] In 2013, North Indian leftist guerillas were reported to be involved in illegally obtaining uranium ore from a government owned milling complex located in northeast India. They later strapped it with high explosives with the intention of making a crude bomb. However, they were caught in the act.[32]

In 2005, the US levied sanctions on two Indian companies for trading sensitive nuclear technology with Iran.[33] In 2003, a report by CNN indicated that NEC Engineers, a company of Indian origin, was involved in shipping ten consignments of sensitive equipment comprising titanium vessels and centrifuge pumps

28. Levy and PM. "India's Rock 'n' Roll Approach to Guarding Its Nuclear Sites."
29. Ibid.
30. "India and the NSG." June 21, 2017. https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/115098-India-and-the-NSG.
31. "Two Men Arrested with 7 Kg Radioactive Uranium in Mumbai - India Today." 2022, https://www.indiatoday.in/cities/mumbai/story/two-men-arrested-with-7-kg-radioactive-uranium-in-mumbai-1799552-2021-05-06.
32. Levy and PM, "India's Rock 'n' Roll Approach to Guarding Its Nuclear Sites."
33. "Discriminating a Nuclear Power." June 21, 2017. https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/104334-Discriminating-a-nuclear-power.

to Iraq. India has also been acquiring nuclear technology from international smugglers operating in Western black markets.[34]

On 23 December 2006, at least two containers of radioactive material were stolen from a well secured nuclear research facility in eastern India. These containers of radioactive material had uranium which could have spread radioactivity over a radius of 1.5 kilometers (0.93 miles). In 2005, another incident occurred where Indian police arrested two uranium thieves from Assam, the northeastern state of India.[35]

On 28 August 2003, a ship initiating its journey from India, that was transporting missile making material destined for North Korea, was intercepted by Taiwanese custom authorities.[36] Indian Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) also arrested three scientists from Chennai who were in possession of 8 kilograms of stolen uranium. This nuclear material was stolen from a nuclear research center.[37] There is suspicion of proliferation of sensitive information and nuclear technology due to increased cases of kidnapping and death of nuclear scientists in uncertain circumstances in India. According to India's Department of Energy (DAE), from 2009 to 2013, there were approximately 11 unnatural deaths of Indian nuclear scientists, of which eight died because of a blast or by drowning or hanging themselves. The three others died in suspicious circumstances, including suicide and road accidents. Similarly, thirteen more lives of nuclear scientists were lost in mysterious circumstances.[38] In June 2009

34. Ayesha Abbasi. "The NSG in a Bind." The Express Tribune, June 24, 2016. https://tribune.com.pk/story/1129644/the-nsg-in-a-bind/.
35. "Uranium-Carrying Container Stolen in India." Dawn News, June 21, 2017. https://www.dawn.com/news/224862.
36. "Pakistan's Nuclear Programme and US Concerns." June 21, 2017. https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/147445-Pakistans-nuclear-programme-and-US-concerns.
37. "Discriminating a Nuclear Power."
38. Vandita, "26 Indian Nuclear Scientists Die Mysteriously. Why Is The Country Quiet?" *AnonHQ*, October 10, 2015. http://anonhq.com/26-indian-nuclear-scientists-die-mysteriously-why-is-the-country-quiet/.

Lokanathan Mahalingam, a scientist working at the Kaiga atomic power station, was reported missing under unexplained circumstances.[39]

Two prominent nuclear scientists from India, Dr YSR Prasad and Dr Surinder Chaudhary, were apprehended for being part of the proliferation of dual-use equipment and technology to Iran. The US sanctioned them under the 2000 Non-Proliferation Act.[40] Such large numbers of nuclear related incidents show that Indian nuclear safety and security measures are not aligned with the commitments of non-proliferation that India made. Perceptions about India's poor nuclear safety and security is also supported by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) report. NTI has ranked India 20th, below Pakistan, in nuclear security practices out of 22 countries having fissile material which can be used for building a bomb.[41]

Nuclear Exceptionalism for India

Generally, exceptionalism is termed as a condition of being unique or exceptional.[42] A state's exceptionalism is rooted in its confidence that it is above the norms of international system. Such exceptionalism has been seen in other states also, including the US and Israel. Israeli exceptionalism has been widely accepted and supported by the West.[43] Israel considers itself above international rules and norms as it has oppressed Palestinians with impunity for decades.[44] Moreover, Israeli nuclear exceptionalism is reflected in

39. Vandita. "26 Indian Nuclear Scientists."
40. "NSG Membership Should Be on Merit." Pakistan Observer, June 22, 2016. http://pakobserver.net/nsg-membership-should-be-on-merit/.
41. Matthew G. Bunn et al., "Preventing Nuclear Terrorism: Continuous Improvement or Dangerous Decline?" 2016. https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/27306735/BunnPreventingNuclearTerrorismfinal.pdf?se.
42. "Definition of Exceptionalism" January 22, 2023. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/exceptionalism.
43. "Challenging Israel's Exceptionalism in American Politics." Middle East Institute, January 26, 2021. https://www.mei.edu/blog/challenging-israels-exceptionalism-american-politics.
44. Alam, M. Shahid. Israeli Exceptionalism: The Destabilizing Logic of Zionism. New

its covert nuclear weapon program. The US has turned a blind eye towards it, despite knowing about the existence of the program since 1960s.[45] Till today, Israel enjoys nuclear exceptionalism. American exceptionalism views itself as uniquely virtuous, on the pretext of the US playing an extraordinary role in leading the world to peace and prosperity on the principles of liberty, human rights, and laissez-faire.

The US also considers that it has a legitimate right to give special treatment to certain states.[46] Its Atomic Energy Act bestowed the US administration with exceptional powers over the production, regulation, and proliferation of nuclear science and technology.[47] The US and the West have monopolized worldwide nuclear uranium reserves for decades. Similarly, the US used American exceptionalism to share advanced technology with some (India) and not others (Pakistan), thereby, creating haves and have-nots in nuclear, information technology, and military domains regionally.

India took the lead from American and Israeli exceptionalism and considered itself unique, with special entitlement in South Asia.[48] It has used this exceptionalism to violate international rules and norms by carrying out atrocities in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) for decades. Such Indian behavior became firmly entrenched in Indian strategic thinking after the US gave it exceptional treatment in the nuclear domain as well.

York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

45. "The US Discovery of Israel's Secret Nuclear Project." Wilson Center, January, 2020, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-us-discovery-israels-secret-nuclear-project.

46. Khan, Minhas Majeed. "The Myth of Indian Exceptionalism and the Concept of Strategic Autonomy: Attempts to Isolate Pakistan." Pakistan Defence. Pakistan Defence, November 18, 2016. https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/the-myth-of-indian-exceptionalism-and-the-concept-of-strategic-autonomy-attempts-to-isolate-pakistan.461309/.

47. Jonathan E. Helmreich. "Gathering Rare Ores: The Diplomacy of Uranium Acquisition." 1943-1954 (Princeton University Press, 1986), https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7zvxb7.

48. "Limits to Indian Exceptionalism." The Hindu, February 18, 2016. https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/Limits-to-Indian-exceptionalism/article62120331.ece.

India had illegally diverted nuclear fuel exported from Canada by extracting plutonium from the spent fuel for its nuclear test in 1974. India's violation of an international agreement led to the creation of NSG. As a rule, the participating governments (PGs) of the NSG usually admit those states into the group which are party to the NPT or have signed Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).[49]

For over thirty years, the US too did not sign any nuclear deal with non-NPT states. In 2005, the US's geostrategic priorities however changed, and the Bush administration agreed to have nuclear trade with India. Additionally, in 2008, India was given an NSG waiver under US pressure. It is important to note that India still does not allow full inspections of IAEA safeguards to all its civilian nuclear facilities.

India applied for NSG membership on 12 May 2016. Pakistan followed suit and submitted its membership application on 19 May 2016. Pakistan advocated a "non-discriminatory criteria-based approach" for NSG membership. There was a deadlock on India's admission bid in NSG, which persists to date. It is believed that Pakistan's NSG membership application and strong credentials have been the reason for delay in India's NSG membership decision, even when powerful states like the US, UK, France, and Russia are favoring India's NSG bid.[50]

NSG exemption by the US for India from its full-scope IAEA safeguards condition has paved the way for the selective treatment of India, raising suspicions of bias within the nuclear NPR. The double standards of Western states' application of NSG guidelines for India and other states have undermined NSG's legitimacy and the effectiveness of nuclear export control measures, which

49. Malik, Ayub, Sumbal. "India and the Nuclear Suppliers Group." *The Diplomat*, February 14, 2015. http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/india-and-the-nuclear-suppliers-group/.
50. Stewart, Ian, Sultan, Adil. "India, Pakistan and the NSG." Project Alpha at King's College London, June 10, 2019. https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/india-pakistan-and-the-nsg.

were primarily put in place to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the first place after the Indian 1974 test. Indo-US nuclear deal has damaged the global non-proliferation regime, exacerbated nuclear tensions in South Asia, and incentivized other states, like Iran and North Korea, to pursue their nuclear weapon programs.

If the decision to extend NSG membership is colored by politics, India will continue to gain further benefits from its NSG membership as it already has access to nuclear technology under the nuclear waiver of 2008. However, by its inclusion into the group, India will be able to affect the future decision making about nuclear exports by NSG as well as become a supplier of nuclear technology. India's future inclusion into NSG, without considering Pakistan's membership, will further erode non-proliferation norms. Moreover, it is high time that the non-proliferation pundits investigate the reasons why India has not yet fulfilled its commitments made by it as quid pro quo to Indo-US nuclear deal and NSG waiver.

In 2010, President Barack Obama announced US support for the inclusion of India into MTCR and other export control regimes[51] and, on 27 June 2016, India was accepted as a MTCR member. Soon after, it increased the range of its supersonic cruise missile, BrahMos, to 450 kilometers (from 290 kilometers) to underpin its status as equal to other major powers.[52]

Other states, including China, are viewed from a different lens. In 2004, China applied for membership in MTCR and offered to voluntarily abide by its guidelines. However, China's membership continues to be rejected mainly by the US, stating that it does not

51. The White House, Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Singh of India, 2010. https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/08/joint-statement-president-obama-and-prime-minister-singh-india.
52. "No Cap on Range, Supersonic Cruise Missile Brahmos Hits 450 Km Target in Test." The New Indian Express, June 22, 2017. http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/mar/11/no-cap-on-range-supersonic-cruise-missile-brahmos-hits-450-km-target-in-test-1580308.html.

fulfil the requirements of this regime.[53] The efforts to mainstream India and give it a higher seat at the table has seriously undermined the core objectives of export control groups. To correct the path, as India is now a member of Australia Group (AG), Wassenaar Arrangement (WA), and MTCR, these export control cartels must be used to pressurize India to put the brakes on its nuclear weapon program. This is the right time to push India to abide by the rules and stress that international law and norms are above Indian ambitions to become a major power.[54]

The international community can make amends to the selective approach it adopted by admitting Pakistan into MTCR, AG, WA, and NSG, as per its strong credentials in non-proliferation and nuclear safety and security. Whilst US has contracted a nuclear deal with India, it is important to note that India is mainly responsible for stalling the debate on the entry into force of CTBT.

India's External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, stated in 2008 that India could resume the testing of its nuclear weapons. He said, "India has the right to test; others have the right to react."[55] Thus, the nuclear selectivism of the West has encouraged India's irresponsible behavior in the nuclear domain. It is significant for the US to devise a comprehensive strategy for ratification of CTBT and to persuade other NWS to sign this instrument.

Regarding FMCT, in June 2009 Ambassador Rao contended, "India is willing to join only a non-discriminatory, multilaterally negotiated, and internationally verifiable FMCT as and when it is concluded in the CD, provided our security interests are fully

53. "Missile Regime Puts Off China." Arms Control Today, Arms Control Association, November 2004. http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2004_11/MTCR.
54. Khan, Anum A. "Nuclear India: An Agent Provocateur in South Asia." Pakistan Politico, March 1, 2021. https://pakistanpolitico.com/indianukes/.
55. "India will abide by unilateral moratorium on N-tests: Pranab." The Times of India, October 3, 2008. May, 22, 2017. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-will-abide-by-unilateral-moratorium-on-N-tests-Pranab/articleshow/3556712.cms.

addressed…"[56] It is obvious from this statement that India does not want to join FMCT because it bans only further production of fissile material.

The proposed FMCT will not only freeze the asymmetries in fissile material stockpiles between India and Pakistan but will target Pakistan's modest nuclear program directly. The proposal of FMT, which also takes stock of the issue of existing stockpiles and future production of fissile material, must be given serious consideration. India has expressed a renewed interest for nuclear testing to validate its new and advanced nuclear weapons. It has also been propagating the narrative that its 1998 nuclear tests were not a complete success, hence it needs to resume nuclear testing.[57] India is hoping to use the political space generated by the US obsession with containment of China to conduct tests of its advanced nuclear weapons on the pretext that it would strengthen deterrence against China.

Indian nuclear exceptionalism has paved the way for it to craft an offensive national and international foreign policy and nuclear strategy. India's special treatment is directly fueling its posture as a regional hegemon. Its aggressive policies may spark a conflict with Pakistan with disastrous consequences.

Discrimination Against Pakistan

India has a strategy of full-spectrum dominance by developing conventional war-fighting options to dominate all rungs of escalation ladder, including limited nuclear use options

56. Kazmi, Zahir. "Pakistan, US and the FMCT." The Express Tribune, August 23, 2011. https://tribune.com.pk/story/237766/pakistan-us-and-the-fmct.
57. Bommakanti, Kartik. "Influencing Chinese Behaviour: A Need for a Strategic Shift in India's Policy." ORF, January 19, 2022. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/influencing-chinese-conducts/.

against Pakistan.[58] It is using cross-domain strategic coercion by employing economic, political, diplomatic, terrorism, nuclear, military superiority, and unrest in Kashmir as tools of compellence against its adversary. In 2019, after the Pulwama-Balakot incidents, Pakistan's strategic deterrence was put to test by India. In February 2019 crisis, Pakistan also detected Indian SSBN Arihant, possibly having nuclear weapons, near Pakistani waters.[59] It was an offensive move of trying to carry out surgical strikes while stationing nuclear naval assets near Pakistani shores. Stationing nuclear naval assets near Pakistani coasts was an offensive move that led some scholars to maintain that India may use SSBNs to blockade Pakistan during future crisis.[60]

The February 2019 airstrikes by India against Pakistan were an example of India perceiving itself as a regional hegemon. Had Pakistan not shown strategic restraint, the conflict could have escalated to a major war. Indian leadership also believes that its air force can target Pakistan preemptively and it would not allow Pakistan to strike first.[61] The situational awareness and technologies that India will get via India-US Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) and Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) will facilitate it to carry out such strikes. It could also use this situational awareness to plan counterforce conventional or nuclear strikes

58. "Keynote Address by Lt. General Khalid Ahmed Kidwai – Seminar on 'Strategic Stability in South Asia: Is India a Responsible Nuclear State?" Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad," 2020, https://issi.org.pk/remarks-by-lt-general-khalid-ahmed-kidwai-seminar-on-strategic-stability-in-south-asia-is-india-a-responsible-nuclear-state/.
59. Ibid.
60. Perkovich, George, Dalton, Toby. "Not War, Not Peace? Motivating Pakistan to Prevent Cross-Border Terrorism." (Oxford University Press, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199467495.001.0001.
61. "India's 'Non-Military Pre-Emptive' Strike on Pakistan: What We Know, What We Don't Know." January 19, 2022, https://thewire.in/security/iaf-airstrikes-in-pakistan-what-we-know-what-we-dont-know.

against Pakistan's strategic assets.[62] Moreover, with access to US supplied geospatial intelligence, Indian military will be able to enhance the accuracy of its cruise and ballistic missiles and the drones that India is looking forward to purchasing from the US.

Conclusion

A state is considered a major power when it has the ability to influence regional order. It can do so as and when it has sufficient military power, economic resources, and national cohesion. The treatment of Muslims, other minorities, and its lower caste Hindus indicates that Indian social structure is weak and hence will remain under stress. Its growing military power will further add to social tensions within Indian society.[63] To attain major power status, the main factors include cultural, economic, military, and political power coupled with ample resources.[64]

India is presently placed in the category of developing countries; it may take many years before it is counted amongst developed ones. Although India is fourth on the list of having billionaires in the world, a large portion of its population lives in abject poverty and can barely eke out a living. India is not a major player at the international political stage for these and other reasons. Economically, India is still in 68th position regarding ease of doing business.[65] Furthermore, the rule of law in India is constantly undermined by political corruption.[66]

62. "India-US Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA): Implications for the South Asian Region." Strategic Vision Institute, November 11, 2021. https://thesvi.org/svi-webinar-panel-discussion-india-us-basic-exchange-and-cooperation-agreement-beca-implications-for-the-south-asian-region/.
63. Sergey I. Lunev and Ellina P. Shavlay. "India as a Global Power: The Strategic Culture Problems." India Quarterly 77, no. 4 (December 1, 2021): 525–41, https://doi.org/10.1177/09749284211047750.
64. "Global Interactions and Global Power." The Geographer Online, May 6, 2022. https://www.thegeographeronline.net/1-global-interactions-and-global-power.html.
65. "Doing Business 2020: Reforms Boost India's Business Climate Rankings; Among Top Ten Improvers for Third Straight Year." World Bank, April 20, 2020, https://doi.org/10/24/doing-business-india-top-10-improver-business-climate-ranking.
66. "BTI 2022 India Country Report," BTI 2022, June, 2022. https://bti-project.org/en/

Despite its nuclear and military modernization plans and offensive doctrines, like Cold Start Doctrine (CSD), India has not overcome the problem of inter-organizational rivalries within the military and between civil and military leadership, which is a hindrance in the implementation of this offensive doctrine.[67]

India is still not in a position to influence international politics. Despite its best efforts, it could not isolate Pakistan or project it as a state sponsor of terrorism. Although India has been working to get permanent membership in the UNSC for decades, it has not yet succeeded. The US merely considers India as a "swing power or a balancing power rather than a major power."[68] Although India will not be able to become a global power in near future, its hegemonic behavior will undermine deterrence stability in the region.[69]

reports/country-report?isocode=IND&cHash=4d507ce6e7280fbd996bd0dd58122962.
67. Ibid.
68. Ashley J. Tellis, "India as a Leading Power," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/04/india-as-leading-power-pub-63185.
69. Anum A. Khan, "India: Contextualizing the World's Fastest-Growing Nuclear Program" *One World*, July 10, 2020, http://oneworld.press/?module=articles&action=view&id=1572.