

# Mainstreaming a nuclear Pakistan

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*India should offer conditional support to a civilian nuclear deal between the U.S. and Pakistan while insisting that Islamabad signs the 'No-first-use treaty' and clamps down on home-grown terror. It is in India's interest to ensure that Pakistan's nukes are under international supervision.*

What should New Delhi's response be to a potential nuclear deal between the United States and Pakistan that could eventually mainstream the latter into the global nuclear order? New Delhi's initial reactions to media reports about a possible deal indicate that it would unambiguously resist any such move by the United States. In a recent Washington Post column, David Ignatius wrote that "the United States might support an eventual waiver for Pakistan by the 48-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group, of which the United States is a member... the issue is being discussed quietly in the run-up to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to Washington on October 22".

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs quickly responded to what Mr. Ignatius called a potential U.S.-Pak "diplomatic blockbuster" in the following words: "We've seen these reports and it is not for the first time this issue has surfaced. Whosoever is examining that particular dossier should be well-aware of Pakistan's track record in the area of proliferation. When India got this particular deal it was on the basis of our own impeccable non-proliferation track record. That is the reason the U.S. gave us 123 Agreement in 2005 and that is why we got a NSG waiver in 2008. Pakistan's track record is completely different, so we hope that will be taken into account in making any such decision".

The Ignatius piece should be seen in the context of a number of important developments which should be taken on board by India while evaluating the merits of Pakistan's admission into the nuclear order. The NSG has been organising outreach meetings with Pakistan regarding nuclear exports for sometime now. Pakistan has also reached out to the international community to help end its status as a nuclear outcast and to be treated on par with India.

At the Hague Nuclear Security Summit in March 2014, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called for "Pakistan's inclusion in all international export control regimes, especially the Nuclear Suppliers Group." Pakistan also holds the key to the commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) at the Conference on Disarmament.

## **Chinese support**

Moreover, China, whose consent is necessary for admitting new members to the NSG, has consistently supported Pakistan's entry into the NSG. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited China in May this year, the Sino-Indian joint statement had an interesting sentence: "The Chinese side took note of India's aspirations to become a member of the NSG, in a bid to strengthen international non-proliferation efforts". A month later, the Chinese Foreign Ministry carefully balanced its support for India: "China has noted Pakistan's aspirations for NSG membership". Given that Beijing has previously opposed Washington's efforts at helping New Delhi to get the NSG membership, the Chinese willingness today to

consider membership for both India and Pakistan will influence the thinking in Washington and key Western capitals.

Pakistan-watchers in Washington do not think that the proposal for a nuclear deal for Pakistan would fructify anytime soon, and even if it does materialise, it will come with a number of conditionalities, many of them unacceptable to the Pakistan Army, the custodian of the country's nuclear arsenal. Moreover, even if the negotiation process between the U.S. and Pakistan eventually leads to a civilian nuclear deal, there is absolutely no reason for New Delhi to lose sleep over it, unless, of course, New Delhi wants to get back at Islamabad for crying foul when the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal was being negotiated over a decade ago.

Critics of the U.S.-Pakistan deal advance a number of arguments why Pakistan should not be offered a nuclear deal by the United States. One, they point out that Pakistan has a terrible track record of nuclear proliferation and that a nuclear deal would be seen as rewarding such irresponsible behaviour. Two, they argue that it would enable Pakistan to enhance its nuclear arsenal which, of course, is directed against India, making the latter more insecure. Third, they feel a U.S.-Pakistan nuclear deal will hyphenate India and Pakistan once again in the international discourse, something New Delhi viscerally detests.

Yet another objection is an emotional, if not substantive, one. Consider, for instance, the following remark of a senior Indian commentator on the potential U.S.-Pak deal: "it will show how hollow is the strategic relationship between India and the U.S., and why it would not be wise to trust the U.S. The India-U.S. nuclear deal will be eroded of much of its strategic importance bilaterally as result."

Issues of national interest and strategy should be approached with clinical logic and incisive reasoning and pursued keeping in mind the long-term interests of the country. Rhetorical questions like "How can the Americans treat India and Pakistan in the same way?" do not meet the above criteria. To my mind, there are at least four sets of reasons why a 'conditional nuclear deal' between U.S. and Pakistan would be in India's national interest.

First of all, Pakistan's admission to the global nuclear order is good news for the international non-proliferation regime. An isolated nuclear Pakistan would not be in the interest of the international community or India. Critics of the deal would argue that given Pakistan's well-known history of engaging in external nuclear proliferation, we should be wary of inviting it to be part of the global normative framework. To me, that is precisely the reason Pakistan should be mainstreamed rather than kept out. I am not sure having a terror-infested nuclear-armed state for a neighbour — operating outside the reach and supervision of the global nuclear institutions — is in India's best interests.

Second, it is in India's interest to ensure that Pakistan's nuclear programme is under international safeguards, if not control. It is indeed better for the international community to be in the know of Pakistan's nuclear programme, as far as possible, than having absolutely no clue about what it is doing with its nuclear material and technology. The only nuclear relationship that Pakistan has today is with China. How can such an exclusive and obscure nuclear partnership be better for India than having a Pakistan whose nuclear programme is under continuous international supervision?

More importantly, the long-drawn-out process of mainstreaming will have a great deal of impact on Pakistan's nuclear behaviour and will most certainly bring the Sino-Pak. nuclear relations under international scrutiny.

Let us not confuse a nuclear deal with status alone. A nuclear deal is primarily about undertaking responsibilities and the constant demonstration of good behaviour in exchange for an ability to engage in nuclear commerce and energy production. In short, the more the international control over Pakistan's nuclear programme, the better it is for India.

Third, if India's experience of inking the nuclear deal with the U.S. and other states, besides getting the NSG waiver and signing the India-specific Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is anything to go by, the road to nuclear normalcy is not going to be a smooth one for Islamabad. It would most certainly mean passing the non-proliferation regime's 'admission tests' as well as jumping through a number of hoops imposed by strategic conditionalities.

### **Pakistan should meet conditions**

The international community will place a number of demands on Pakistan, given the latter's negligent nuclear history and the offensive nuclear posture today. For one, it would have to separate its civilian and military facilities, like India did, as part of a potential deal with the IAEA, leading to a less feverish production of fissile material by Pakistan, thereby producing fewer nuclear warheads. Second, it may be asked to accept restrictions on its weapons programme, materially and doctrinally — such as giving up the policy of early use of nuclear weapons in a conventional conflict with India. Third, Pakistan will have to give up its opposition to FMCT negotiations as a precondition for the deal.

A recent Stimson-Carnegie report on a potential U.S.-Pak nuclear deal identified five initiatives that Pakistan may have to undertake to mainstream itself into the global nuclear order: shift declaratory policy from a "full spectrum deterrence" to "strategic deterrence"; commit to a recessed deterrence posture and limit production of short-range delivery vehicles and tactical nuclear weapons; lift Pakistan's veto on FMCT negotiations and reduce or stop fissile material production; separate civilian and military nuclear facilities; and sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), without waiting for India to do the same.

Reports also indicate that there is a great deal of concern in Rawalpindi about a nuclear deal with the U.S. since the Pakistan Army considers many of the preconditions conveyed to Pakistan to be harmful to its interests.

Finally, unlike what some Indian analysts argue, a U.S.-Pakistan civilian nuclear deal will make absolutely no difference to India's national security interests. Indeed, if some of the conditions identified above can be imposed on Pakistan in the process of the negotiation process, which is likely to happen, that would be a bonus for us. One concern is that such a deal will enable Pakistan to make more nuclear warheads. But even without a nuclear deal, Pakistan has more nuclear warheads than India. India, if it chooses to, can outpace Pakistan, but it has wisely chosen not to. However, if New Delhi's concern is about a 'status equivalence' with Pakistan, it should note that the India-U.S. deal imposes hardly any conditions on India, unlike what is likely to be the case with a U.S.-Pakistan deal.

New Delhi should therefore, offer conditional support to Pakistan's inclusion in the global nuclear order. We must, however, ask the U.S. and other stakeholders to press Islamabad to stop stalling the FMCT negotiations, and agree to a nuclear 'No-first-use' agreement with India, which is already part of the Indian doctrine. Firm commitments should also be sought from Pakistan on clamping down on terrorism in the country in order to reduce the likelihood of nuclear terrorism in the region. Moreover, India should insist that Pakistan, as part of the deal, should be asked to negotiate nuclear confidence building measures (CBMs) with India without linking them to conventional arms control.

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