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Review of the Shanghai Meeting and the Future Agenda

*Report of the Panel Discussion held on 16 October 2009 at
the IPCS Conference Room, New Delhi*

Rapporteurs

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The IPCS Nuclear Security Programme (NSP), with support from the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), held its second trilateral dialogue between India, China and Pakistan in Fudan University, Shanghai on 8-9 August 2009.

This is the first time, even at Track II level that India, China, and Pakistan met to discuss substantive issues relating to a stable nuclear order in Asia including the possibilities of nuclear weapons elimination. In continuation with the path breaking trilateral dialogue first held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in December 2008, experts from the three countries continued their deliberations in Shanghai. The conference participants included prominent strategists, military persons, policymakers and academicians from India, China and Pakistan.

Following the trilateral dialogue in Shanghai, the IPCS organized a panel discussion for debriefing the trilateral dialogue at the India International Centre, New Delhi on 3 September 2009. Members of the Indian delegation to the trilateral dialogue in Shanghai—Amb. Salman Haidar, Amb. Arundhati Ghose, Air Marshal Vinod Patney, Amb. KC Singh and Maj. Gen. Dipankar Banerjee—shared their views/observations of the deliberations that took place in Shanghai.

The IPCS proposes to hold the third round of India-China-Pakistan trilateral dialogue in January 2010. Apropos, a panel discussion was held on **16 October 2009** wherein members of the Indian delegation to Shanghai reviewed the trilateral dialogue held in Fudan University and discussed the agenda for the upcoming third trilateral dialogue.

Following is the report of the panel discussion held on 16 October 2009.

Review of the Shanghai Meeting and the Future Agenda

Introduction: Maj. Gen. Dipankar Banerjee

Many issues arose at the debriefing of the “India-China-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue: Towards a Stable Nuclear Order in Asia” held at India International Centre on 3 September 2009. The main purpose of today’s dialogue is to discuss those issues that were left out and to see how we can take this process forward in the future. What additional steps need to be implemented?

This meeting will be in the form of a discussion and the speakers will make an assessment of the dialogue and raise the principle issues that they were requested to speak on. Based on this, at the end of the presentations we will continue with a discussion which will identify the next steps that need to be taken for the upcoming third trilateral dialogue.

Session I: Global Nuclear Strategic Trends

Amb. Arundhati Ghose

The issue of global nuclear strategic trends refers to cooperation among India, China and Pakistan at the multilateral level. They never really addressed the issues and each of them stated their positions. First, there needs to be some kind of bilateral trust as a basis for the trilateral dialogue, which has to be built between India and China, India and Pakistan; because between China and Pakistan there is perhaps a bit too much interaction. There needs to be some kind of a basis before one can consider cooperating, at a tactical level it may be possible but not on an overall strategic level. This one meeting was not sufficient because the assessments were very different.

Pakistan sees the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) as an India and Pakistan issue. This is one of the explanations they gave for having altered the discussions on the FMCT on a procedural matter when India signed the nuclear deal with the United States. Pakistan was not ready to accept the FMCT, due to their perception that the US was giving India a better deal than Pakistan was getting.

The Pakistani side seemed to be confused about the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), but China was not. Contrarily China announced the use of a general plan which says: should the US ratify (the CTBT), it would be a consequential step for China to do so; the Chinese ratification would be a consequence of the US ratification. The continuing question is, where is India on the CTBT, should we or should we not go with it, or whether India will accept being the only country to hold up the entry into force?

On none of the major multilateral discussions was there a meeting ground and it was not tried to achieve one either. Although the three countries do cooperate in multilateral fora at a tactical level, the work is limited up to a point



and when push comes to shove they move separately. It is not only on arms control, whether it is at the World Trade Organization (WTO) or any other thing, China, Pakistan and India usually are in it together at a multilateral level. Thus it should not be very difficult to translate what is a local or tactical cooperation, into an understanding of each others’ positions. However, the question is whether they can go further than that. The assessment is that it is worth a try, but unless there is a greater understanding between India and China, India and Pakistan seriously on this issue, the rest of it is not likely to jell. Even if there is no official convergence between Pakistan and China, the coordination between the two already exists. When the discussion shifted to bilateral India and Pakistan issues, China kept quiet. However, on global issues, China took a strong non-proliferation stand on the NPT. In fact, China stated that it does not see India as a nuclear threat; rather it sees it as a proliferation problem. India raised issues on whether there is a qualification in the Chinese No First Use (NFU) policy. Pakistan says it does not accept the NFU and therefore it did not even attempt to discuss it. There is normally room for disagreement, but Pakistan was unwilling to even agree to disagree. China has recently, in 2007, come out with caveats on the NFU. Therefore, when this was raised, it did not respond. One of the four caveats is that the NFU will not stand if any territory claimed by China is attacked.

Session II: Towards Asian Nuclear Stability and Security

Rear. Adm. Raja Menon

Before discussing this topic, some issues have to be clear to everybody. Actually, it was assumed that a number of things were so glaringly obvious that it was neglected to even put them on the table. Namely four things: one is that there have been some very authoritative writings that have come up, saying, how

limited the Chinese arsenal will eventually be. There have been speculations on where the Chinese arsenal would end, and it apparently will end well short of that. China has not reached there yet, which means that it is, like India, still building. Second was that there is a possible scenario where the CTBT and the FMCT could come in, in as little as three years. The third was that the Pakistani arsenal is going through a monumental revolution with increasing its plutonium stock. Pakistan is a uranium production weapon state, but it is completely revolutionizing its nuclear weapons and it has been given this dangerous cruise missile. The fourth is the US denial for a similar nuclear deal to Pakistan. These four developments are rubbing up against each other. This was the background in which we went to the Shanghai dialogue, but in Shanghai the agenda of each participant turned out to be completely different.

There were some people on the Pakistani side who took India on a bilateral leather hunt and there were some Chinese who took India on a bilateral leather hunt, as well. Pakistan brought in issues which are true, but completely irrelevant to this overall situation. One was the question of why India has a Cold Start doctrine. Pakistan certainly has a lot to worry about with Cold Start, but it had nothing to do with the conference. They were implying that India resorting to Cold Start would push Pakistan towards a first use policy, basically undermining their deterrent. The other leather hunt was that India has a nuclear deal which was unfair to Pakistan. According to Pakistan, India broke all international, bilateral and nuclear rules. Therefore, the conference tended to become bilateral with Pakistan on these issues.

The Chinese took India on a leather hunt in a different direction. China stated that the world is being unfair to North Korea; in fact, one Chinese participant defended North Korea by listing ten specific reasons why North Korea was going nuclear. According to the Chinese, everybody is looking at the proliferation issue, but the real issue is to bring North Korea back into the NPT. The next leather hunt was that if North Korea comes into the NPT, it would be a very fine idea if India and Pakistan also come into the NPT. Furthermore, China brought up the fact that Russia has a huge number of weapons and that it is located at the Chinese border. China also claimed that the NPT has virtually been killed by the nuclear deal because of the US making a special exemption for India with the nuclear deal. It has virtually taken the NPT and turned it upside down. That is really something that needs to be looked at, and is the biggest issue. The heavy threat to international relations came up where the US is being unfair to China when all it is trying to do is to reunite its country with Taiwan.

As a result, what happened there was that the nuclear issues got almost replaced by international relations and this is the constant danger. While talking about nuclear issues anybody can hijack the discussion by saying man is evil, and therefore he possesses nuclear weapons. In the end, the agenda becomes completely useless. There is only one way and that is for maybe the

chairman to take it along a set route with no digressions. For instance we accept that men are evil, and states will do mean things to each other and therefore they possess nuclear weapons. Let us just take it from there as a given fact and decide what should be done about nuclear weapons.

Session III: Asian Security in the Context of Global Trends: Cooperation or Conflict? Amb. KC Singh

First, the impression one got overall is that the Chinese are comfortable where they are with the US and Russia having to take the mantle to deliver and of course, they have two of their allies, DPRK and Pakistan. The sense one got was that China wants to see where India is going at the moment. The universal consensus today is that the Chinese behaviour vis-à-vis India has shown some alteration since the Indo-US nuclear deal. There is some correlation between the Chinese behavior vis-à-vis India. The Track II dialogue, talking to India and the global trends in which they are participating in, shows that the Chinese have one leg at the high table in the United Nations Security Council, one in Asia and they are keeping their Asian assets in play. Therefore, they are seen as the good guys who are working with the US at the six-party talks. They may nudge and push DPRK, but they will not strangle them and they have a good alliance with Pakistan.

China is trying as much to understand where India is going as to understand where the allies will go. Some of the formulations at the trilateral dialogue were very interesting. A solution China bounced off was suggesting a new NPT. The three nations have different degrees of relationship with the NPT (India is 50 per cent in, Pakistan is completely out and China is a P5). Furthermore, China had a very defensive assessment of DPRK, stating that DPRK will blackmail the former. China would like any evolving structure to keep its assets alive, and keep them structured in. The global approach comes in for China, with the NPT, the FMCT and the CTBT. The question remains if the approach of the United States alters from administration to administration, then how will all this play out? So in the next four to eight years this will all be tied down, or the status quo will remain. The Chinese are quietly sitting in the middle and observing, and in fact simultaneously adding to their arsenal.

For this reason this dialogue is quite important. However, nothing new will come from Pakistan in this. Pakistan is basically interested in utilizing nuclear assets to increase its leverage for either using terrorism against India, or in combination with the nuclear to get some sort of a favorable settlement on Kashmir. They seem to be losing control over the game and a fear is setting in Pakistan. The Kerry-Luger bill is making the Pakistan army very nervous, because for the first time the oversight of the aid is bringing in the entire plethora of terrorists assets in Pakistan. This time the determination that the US President has to make, includes access to AQ Khan, the terrorist network (including the LET and so on), and the promotions in the army. We, however, don't know how

this will all take shape. At some point this will impinge on the nuclear capability of Pakistan. How exactly the US would encircle Pakistan and how it may apply pressure is not decided yet. Of course Pakistan would try to hold on to its capability.

If you discuss an Asian structure or security dialogue, the Chinese have minimum concerns vis-à-vis Russia. China has its global concerns and that is why it is looking at the reductions in US numbers. In terms of regional concerns, India is not really a factor. China will likely be a part of the international posse chasing India through the Security Council, with the Americans, the NSG and so on. China wants to sit down with India to understand where India is exactly going; it wants to pursue it through the regional assets. China seems to be working at different levels and in the meantime it will strengthen its assets and improve capabilities. With this in mind, what type of dialogue can emerge? China suggested the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), but it hasn't been successful. Do we then do a plus three and enlarge the trilateral dialogue? One hint coming from China was to enlarge the trilateral dialogue. In essence it makes sense, because you cannot limit the dialogue as all these issues affect all nations in the region. Do you then bring in the US? This is seen as being uneven where the US is overseeing what is happening. One could potentially bring in Russia. They are leaving the door open on the debate to possibly include more actors. Or one can go the other way and bring in DPRK and Iran; this would increase the leverage of India in having a voice. Would this be useful under an Asian dialogue? The idea should be to create an Asian structure, minimize international interference and expand the Asian dialogue from there.

Session IV: Steps towards a Secure Global Nuclear Future

Maj. Gen. Dipankar Banerjee

The primary aim is to look at the possibilities of this trilateral dialogue and where we can go from here. One of the first issues that came up was that nuclear security can not be delinked from conventional security. This is a reality that needs to be addressed and the linkage has been accepted internationally. The second is the need for an Asian Security Order. There is no forum or an Asian security architecture where issues such as this can be discussed. Third, is the question of which countries should be included in such a dialogue? Only Asian nuclear powers (including Iran and North Korea) or other international players such as the US? This is where the question of US nuclear presence in Asia remains relevant. The question of new outliers also comes up; Myanmar may be one of them. If you consider enlarging the forum, the issue that will arise is how can India, China and Pakistan contribute to the process and to the ultimate objective of global nuclear weapons elimination?

Two distinct approaches emerge on global nuclear weapons elimination. One is to address elimination within a fixed time frame. The other is the Base Camp approach, addressing issues as we go along without a clear end period in mind. One view is that unless we have a clear



statement or a fixed time frame, then we are not seriously addressing the issue. Should we follow one of the approaches or do we follow both simultaneously? On the issue of what measures these three nations can address, in Track II or Track I dialogues- develop confidence building measures (CBMs), address nuclear risk reduction measures, and avoid wrong nuclear signaling by key actors? These are a few of several issues that may be considered.

On the stability factor are any of these issues relevant, for example, statements and measures regarding freezing of current arsenals, the FMCT or CTBT dialogues as a preparatory measure, commitment on not strengthening missile defences, support the non-weaponization of outer space, and modify the NPT to include both India and Pakistan? Regarding future steps, is a stable nuclear order a possibility? How should we proceed? What issues may be addressed? How should this particular round of dialogues be structured? What possible outcomes should we look for?

Discussion

Comments/Questions

- This trilateral dialogue can only be successful if India, China and Pakistan start to trust each other. China starts with the premise that it has not assisted Pakistan at all in its nuclear business. But the fact is, everything that Pakistan has, the plutonium, the reactors and so on, have been provided by China. The problem is that there is an element of mistrust. Unless trust is achieved on a bilateral level, it is difficult to build a trilateral agenda.
- If there is such a large lack of understanding of positions - then all three have to come together. Different positions are understandable but it is important to discuss these. Even initiating such a process is an important step. As the process is just starting, no major expectations can be made; perhaps even a reiteration of positions is sufficient.

The agenda has an extremely ambitious goal, which is too diverse and too detailed. For example, CBMs may be discussed in the next trilateral and hence it might be better to select only one issue to move ahead. With a limited agenda the advantage would be that every participant of the dialogue would have to prepare a clear idea or opinion on the set agenda. This would lead to more constructive discussions on the issues and hopefully to additional trilateral talks.

- Responsible members of the media should also be included into this dialogue, instead of keeping it as a closed door meeting with analysts, former bureaucrats, and military personnel. The discussions can be enlarged to create a broader understanding of the issues at hand. It would also provide a kind of check to prevent any derailing of the agenda.
- Is it possible to negotiate with China on a bilateral level in this trilateral dialogue?
- This is obviously a very difficult exercise, because this trilateral can turn into several bilateral ones. The Chinese are backing the Pakistanis and the Pakistanis are backing the Chinese, thereby isolating India. If it turns into an India and China talk, it may be good from an Indian point of view, but neither from the Chinese, nor from the Pakistani point of view. That would threaten Pakistan's special relationship with China.
- There are some fundamental questions that should be answered: Is disarmament a good or bad thing? Is it feasible, is it desirable? All these questions are basic and they should get answered before proceeding with the next trilateral. Is there a possibility that there will be a nuclear threat by China against India, India against Pakistan, Pakistan against China or India? What kind of a nuclear threat? What kind of nuclear crisis is likely to arise between these three countries?
- The fundamental point is the need to develop trust. This trilateral dialogue should essentially establish trust. Maybe there could be three sessions: first, hegemony or threat perceptions by India, Pakistan and China. Second, CBMs and third, the respective positions and interests towards non-proliferation and disarmament.

Responses

- The Chinese defence is that after having signed the NPT in 1992, they have strengthened their export control regimes and, since then they have not assisted Pakistan's nuclear programme. Looking for nuclear stability is one objective, and it does not necessarily mean getting rid of nuclear weapons; there is no instability caused by nuclear weapons. Is instability due to nuclear weapons or due to proliferation of nuclear weapons? What comes up as a priority is the need to control proliferation in the region. Building up trust requires new CBMs. Pakistan's instability was caused by their fear that India might attack them and by India's conventional arms superiority. China says that it was contributing to stability by fulfilling the fear deficit of Pakistan,

but Pakistan in fact used it as an umbrella for a clandestine terrorism network.

- The media is an important element in the dialogue. The first problem is that discussions of this sort are difficult to convey to the masses. The idea is to build stable nuclear relations among the three countries and for that, there is no need to actually display it to the world. It is important that these discussions get the attention of the governments concerned. It would be problematic if it is revealed to the public, particularly in a country like India, where there are such enormous diversity of views. It will not get anywhere and the objective of establishing a stable nuclear order among the three countries will become an exercise in futility.
- The media is no expert on nuclear issues; the media is an expert on communication, reporting on what is happening in the outside world. Is it really eligible to take the trilateral meeting to the outside world if the dialogue is only in its infancy? The media must be very clear as to what agenda it is working for. If it is working for stable understanding of nuclear issues between the three countries, then there is not necessary to include the media directly in such a meeting.
- No, it is not possible to have a bilateral goal in a trilateral dialogue.
- Why not consider splitting the agenda into four sessions? Is it possible to think in terms of narrowing down the issues but at the same time retain continuity of the original structures? In the global nuclear strategic trends, which are multilateral, the focus could lie on discussing CBMs in terms of multilateral treaties. Because the meeting is scheduled to occur before the NPT conference, there has to be a discussion about non-proliferation and disarmament to develop a common position. What are the NPT approaches and the non-NPT approaches? How to deal with the problem of proliferation?
- Some basic suggestions included, holding the next meeting within the next three to four months and potentially in New Delhi, or another location within India, and including some responsible members of the media in the dialogue and lastly narrowing the agenda to focus on some key topics. The essential string that ties this discussion together is the concept of the trust deficit and somehow bridging it, perhaps by selecting some specific CBMs to work on.