



**IPCS Nuclear Security  
Programme (NSP)**

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### **IPCS Nuclear Security Programme**

Since its inception, the IPCS has been working on various issues related to disarmament, especially Nuclear Disarmament. We are the only research institute in South Asia that focuses on all aspects of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), including Chemical, Biological and Radiological weapons.

The Institute has undertaken numerous projects, both on an individual and collaborative basis, on the issue of WMDs.

The Nuclear Security Programme aims to strengthen the Institute's efforts on the above issues.

This project is supported by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI).

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## **Debriefing the India-China-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue: Towards a Stable Nuclear Order in Asia held at the Fudan University, Shanghai on 8-9 August 2009**

*Report of the IPCS Panel Discussion held on 3 September  
2009 at the India International Centre, New Delhi*

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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.

Following is the report of the debrief.

## Debriefing the India-China-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue: Towards a Stable Nuclear Order in Asia held at the Fudan University, Shanghai on 8-9 August 2009

**Maj Gen Dipankar Banerjee**

The second Trilateral Dialogue between India, China and Pakistan was held in Shanghai, China at Fudan University on 8 and 9 August 2009. The first dialogue was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in December 2008. Participants at the dialogue were former senior-level officials who were closely involved in policymaking. The second dialogue was structured into four sessions where speakers from each country expressed their views through brief presentations. The purpose was to focus our attention on some critical questions of security affecting nuclear weapons and initiate a discussion among participants towards greater security and stability.

The first session was on *'Global Nuclear Strategic Trends.'* It focused on, the START prospects between the United States and Russia, perceptions on the CTBT and FMCT and the NPT Review Conference. The second session on *'Towards Asian Nuclear Security and Stability'* discussed perceptions of threats and concerns from respective states, role of non-state actors as agents of potential threat, North Korean and Iranian nuclear developments, and nuclear non-proliferation beyond the NPT. The third session focused on *'Asian Security in the context of Global Trends: Cooperation or Conflict?.'* It addressed the possibility of an Asian approach towards cooperative security, breaking away from Western doctrines of confrontation and the possibility of these countries to address them constructively. What role do nuclear weapons play in the Asian security? Is there a possibility of harmonizing security doctrines, developing a concept of cooperative security and building confidence through dialogues? Lastly, the purpose of the fourth session *'Steps towards a Secure Global nuclear Future'* discussed additional measures that are needed at the international level to consolidate these steps.

A Track-II dialogue is not an official dialogue, but a dialogue among experts, who may have held official positions earlier, to discuss issues of concern from their personal perspectives. It is not meant to resolve any issue or discuss issues for implementation, which can only be done through official channels; nevertheless it has the potential to open up opportunities.

The dialogue at Fudan University was followed by a brief interaction with the think-tank Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS), where we had a free and frank discussion on three issues: India and China relations, the state of India-Pakistan relations, and the current situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**Amb KC Singh**

This is the first time that China sat down with India and Pakistan in any forum to discuss nuclear issues. The reasons may perhaps flow from the Indo-US civil nuclear deal or because of India's recognition as a de-facto nuclear weapons state. In fact at one stage the Chinese side



interjected by saying that there are three kinds of countries present (at the conference), there is a recognized nuclear weapon state, there is a non-nuclear weapon state with nuclear weapons and referring perhaps to India, there is a country which is in between.

The dialogue took place within a changing global strategic environment. Obama had taken over the presidency of the US, his Prague speech had introduced at the governmental level the concept of global zero, a nuclear posture review of the US is due later this year, the US and Russia have already come to an agreement, which was unimaginable a year ago when it was thought that perhaps they may go in the wrong direction with their differences over Georgia, as well as on missile defence. In this context the dialogue attempted to see how the evolving global environment, where disarmament is being emphasized more than weaponization, impinges on the views of Asian countries.

The general impression was that Pakistan, India, and China still continue to come from their traditional positions, particularly Pakistan. Pakistan continued to emphasize that any change in the bilateral strategic balance, by way of India going for a ballistic missile defence, the launch of India's nuclear submarine, and so on, would impact Pakistan. This is understandable, because Pakistan's nuclear doctrine has always been India focused. The intention from the Indian delegation was to broaden the debate. India's nuclear posture has never been Pakistan fixated, it is a wider nuclear posture, it is not specific to any neighbour and equally ready to go in the other direction as India is a reluctant nuclear weapon state.

The Chinese position fielded a number of different views and it seemed that they were testing them to see the reaction of India and Pakistan. A number of views emerged. One was a kind of spontaneous disarmament on the part of China i.e. at the end of 2025 when it

becomes the predominant global economic and possibly military power, China would no longer have a need for nuclear weapons. Another view was that perhaps there should be a new NPT, because China was protective of its neighbour DPRK and of course its friend and ally Pakistan. They were not so much concerned about Iran. It was clear that China was unwilling to apply more pressure than it already has, on DPRK. It seemed China wants a resolution with the DPRK and Iran in terms of readjustment of existing structures or readjustment of regimes, in a manner where it retains influence in those countries. It was obvious that it is not comfortable with a sanction based-solution where both countries are made to roll back.

There was a general consensus, that for any progress on disarmament, it would be important for the US and Russia, to take the first steps. The last point was that the rising powers, the problem of breakout states are all located in Asia. The economic fulcrum of the global economy is shifting to Asia and therefore, there is need for stability in Asia. Currently Asia does not have an overriding security structure, so what may be required are opportunities for future dialogue or consensus building or focused discussions on disarmament and nuclear issues on an adhoc basis and at different levels.

#### Air Marshal Vinod Patney

The approach towards non-proliferation and the approach towards disarmament have to be different and the approach towards disarmament must lead the approach towards non-proliferation. Non-proliferation and disarmament are not mutually exclusive. Mikhael Gorbachev recently argued that military superiority would be an insurmountable obstacle to ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Unless we discuss demilitarization of international politics, reduction of military budgets, preventing militarization of outer space, discussing the option of a nuclear free world would be rhetorical.

The foreign minister of Norway in the conference, 'Beyond 2010' came out with four requirements that the base camp must satisfy: significant cuts in nuclear arsenals probably in proportion to current holdings, arms control, reducing the role of nuclear weapons and doctrines and altering the operational status. Despite Obama's Prague speech, it does not seem probable that the US will alter its doctrine or strategy in the near future. The US nuclear policy has historically contained elements of both specificity and ambiguity. Though one must remain optimistic that at some point a changed situation will occur, this may not mean disarmament but at least a situation that is safer than the current one. Global nuclear disarmament remains a distant and long term goal. Some questions that need to be addressed are: is such a goal feasible, is it verifiable and enforceable, is it enough to be able to ensure verification and enforcement, is it inherently stabilizing given the vast differences in terms of strength, power, money, and conventional warfare between the various states and if it is not seen as stabilizing then how would it be sustainable in the future. Lastly, is nuclear disarmament desirable? Further, is the journey more important than the destination? Should our focus be on

stability and capabilities rather than just on numbers? Should we view reduction not just as an end in itself but as a means to an end which will further national and international security? Strategies should drive numbers rather than numbers driving strategy.

Some impressions of the trilateral dialogue were that, China continued to view itself as a 'big brother' in the region watching over its siblings India and Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan praised China no end no matter what the topic that was under discussion.

#### Amb. Arundhati Ghose

There was little interaction between Pakistan and China during this meeting, despite Pakistan continuously praising China. The Pakistani interventions were entirely India-centric. It appeared that the Chinese did not see a reason for these three countries to discuss nuclear issues. Their point was that the nuclear issue does not only refer to non-proliferation, but to international peace and security, and clearly there is a link between Asian security and International security. Professor Dingli Shen stated that they were feeling restricted in a group of three and that their interests were much wider. Maj. Gen. Pan Zhenqiang gave an overall impression of the international scenario and the impact of this scenario on Asia and the absence of a nuclear architecture. He further spoke of an incipient arms race and brought up the status of the three outlier nations to the NPT. At one point a Chinese delegate asked, under what circumstances would India sign the NPT?

Another observation is that between India and the other two countries there was a huge trust deficit and for us to even discuss a security architecture was ambitious. One Chinese delegate mentioned that proliferation is natural and inevitable and there was nothing the world could do about it, it is a technological development and non-proliferation is an obstacle to free trade. Another identified the distrust China felt towards India lay in the signing of the Indo-US nuclear deal. The reasons were not elaborated, though they mentioned it was based on the potential military uses of the deal. Overall China felt that India should reassure its neighbours of the future potential of the deal. There seemed to be an agreement among the participants that to bridge the gap between the three countries one needed to have CBM's, but what they should be were not discussed.

On the interaction at the Shanghai Institute of International Studies, the first point was that China was concerned about the negative media coverage that it receives in the Indian press. They spoke of measures to increase mutual trust between India and China. It was noted by a Chinese delegate that discussions with India should focus on issues beyond the bilateral, including shared values.

#### Amb. Salman Haidar

On the nuclear matter it seems that the tripartite discussions were premature, despite being an important and relevant issue. There was not enough common ground between the three countries. It is worth noting some of the issues which came up on the Chinese side. The



Chinese welcomed the Obama initiative on the global zero and expected the US to take the lead. They recognized that this is the current global mood and were prepared to go along with it. The Chinese mentioned that their nuclear programme is moderate, meaning that there is no rush for rearmament, it has reached a stable level, and it is progressing slowly and would only advance with care. Non-proliferation remains their prime goal, though their response to the question of the DPRK was quite clear, they would not push harder for sanctions against them. China projected the feeling of a satisfied power rather than an aspiring power. The scale of China's ambition was interesting. The real strength of China lies in its economic capacity and not necessarily matching the US or other potential rivals' bomb for bomb. If a threatening situation emerged China felt that it was possible for them to sanction whoever was threatening it, including the US. They felt they could rely on their economic weapon as opposed to brandishing their nuclear weapons.

Some passing talk of the G2 occurred, mainly from the Indian side, but no show of interest from the Chinese interlocutors. They seemed to have other ideas, and may find the concept limiting as far as their aspirations are concerned. Their economic capacity and their threat of imposing sanctions are projected as liberation from petty entanglements that impede their grand vision. China has already solved its regional entanglements and believes that the remaining issues it has with India, including the border issue, will not take long to solve. For the Chinese the Indo-Pak matter is not relevant to their larger aspirations. Pakistan is not seen as key to Chinese ambitions in Asia. When a new Asian security structure is being envisaged, Pakistan will have to be included. Subtle shifts are taking place.

At the Shanghai Institute of International Studies, a novel notion was advanced, that of Asian unity as a long-term, concrete aspiration for the region, something that would, in fact, outweigh the European Union. We talk about the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the Asian century, in this projection; this concept takes a particular shape. This has not been addressed seriously until now, and it is a formidable projection, not an airy notion.

#### Maj. Gen. Dipankar Banerjee

From the perspective that this was the second trilateral, it may be considered a substantial success as we managed to discuss serious issues, of course with major differences. It is not easy to discuss strategic issues with Pakistan as their focus and their thinking is limited entirely to India. Hence it is difficult for them to conceive of global issues or perspectives that will detach them from India.

Despite these limitations, we managed to exchange a number of good ideas and views. For example on the Chinese nuclear policy, their Defence White Paper of 2006 December, as well as Maj. Gen. Pan Zhenqiang's latest monograph under a Stimson Center project, clarifies the Chinese official position on all these questions. Specifically on the question of DPRK, a Chinese delegate listed out ten points as to why DPRK has reasons to adopt a nuclear posture and therefore, why we need to



understand that. He didn't say that they supported it, but clearly gave an indication that they have a limited ability to influence DPRK and perhaps others too need to think about their rationale for DPRK's position. By and large the Chinese delegation was competent to speak on nuclear issues, but many of them were not.

The Shanghai Institute of International Studies meeting was cordial and brief, but it was apparent how biased they were in favour of Pakistan. Therefore, any issue that was raised was seen by them from a pro-Pakistani angle. There was some discussion on the question of the internet conflict going on between India and China on various issues that began two or three months ago on over Indian defence plans in Arunachal Pradesh. A large portion of this correspondence is usually by uninformed sources on both sides. Yet, there are strong nationalistic sentiments in China expressing more readily their anti-India bias.

There is obviously greater need for serious dialogues of this nature to try and understand each other's views and positions. This was the purpose of interaction with China this time. The trilateral will continue in the future as well. One must be conscious of the limitations of the process and the progress that can reasonably be made. Nevertheless, as a method of generating a better understanding of each other's positions as well as concerns, this dialogue was particularly useful and relevant and need to continue.

#### Discussion

##### Comments/Questions

- In reference to the title chosen for the dialogue, there are two elements that can be drawn out, one is a stable nuclear order, and the other is Asia. What does a stable nuclear order mean? Can one compartmentalize a stable nuclear order to Asia or should it have a broader international context? How can it be achieved?
- Is there a softening or hardening of China's position, firstly, vis-à-vis the India-China border dispute and secondly, in reference to India's

increasing role in Afghanistan, did they express any appreciation or resentment?

- The Chinese are sensing the global mood and showing signs of some kind of a commitment towards disarmament. The impression the Chinese left on India is that they are a satisfied nuclear power and have no further aspirations, what sort of an impression would they have about India, are we satisfied or still aspiring?
- What is new in this dialogue? It seems as if this dialogue is a type of play, where all the players are playing the part that they have been playing all the time. It seems that China is interested in playing the role of 'big brother,' in trying to remain above the play, while the two South Asian neighbors quarrel with each other; the Pakistanis are obsessively concerned with India and at the same time they feel the need to be somewhat servile to China. Based on this scenario, has the perception that when we speak of nuclear disarmament we are really dealing with nuclear weapons, creep in anywhere? That when even one nuclear weapon is used, it is one too many. Did this understanding come up? Were the implications of a failed NPT Review Conference discussed? China seems to be reconciled with a nuclear North Korea, are they also reconciled that this has serious implications for Northeast Asia, which may lead to a loosened US commitment to the security of Japan or South Korea and pressurize these two countries to exercise their own nuclear options thereby impacting China the most?
- Now that three states, US, Russia and China, have tested anti-satellite weapons, did anything on crafting space security regime come up at the dialogue? Was the FMCT brought up?
- Isn't the statement about China-US technological parity in contradiction to China being a medium sized nuclear power?
- The Chinese are clear about what issues they want to have a discourse on and the fact that they are comfortable now in discussing a nuclear strategic structure shows that they have certain concerns on this issue at this point in time.

### Responses

- Each country has different perceptions and competing visions, for instance, China recognizes the need for a stable nuclear order and is not fighting it. For the three countries to be effective in initiating this new order it must be seen within a global perspective.
- There was no discussion of the India-China border issue either at Fudan University or the Shanghai Institute of International Studies. Further, it does not seem as if China's vital interests are involved in Afghanistan and therefore they seem detached about India's role in Afghanistan.
- China as a satisfied power refers to the achievements they have to their credit, both economically and militarily and now they are looking in a more serious way at what the next step is for them, particularly in Asia. Additionally, they have technological parity with both the United

States and Russia. India was certainly not diminished by Pakistan's attempt to reduce the dialogue to an Indo-Pak bilateralization. China recognizes that India has vast achievements to its credit and that they have to come to terms with it. One must take note of the context and timing of this dialogue, Pakistan was understandably defensive as their nuclear programme is currently under attack internationally and the obvious response is to go on the offensive against India.

- Disarmament was discussed in terms of where the challenges are likely to come from, but not in terms of numbers or architecture. China stated that there is no general consensus on the concept of deligitimization of nuclear weapons and that the base camp idea would take too long to realize. In the Chinese context, the concerns they felt regarding nuclear disarmament were that because the US does not have an NFU policy, how can the US initiate a disarmament policy, as well as support the issue of extended deterrence? The idea of a failed NPT Review Conference was not brought up and the Chinese only noted the problem of the outliers. China spoke of the priority for non-proliferation but tended to see reasons for DPRK to go nuclear because it was unprotected and under pressure. They also expressed their unwillingness to put further pressure on DPRK and provided justifications for it. This was not discussed as a specific issue. China is looking at the evolving situation; they are aware of some negative factors, modernization of all nuclear weapons states, break-outs and chain reactions, non-state actors, concerns about how far the US administration will go on the Obama pledge and the impact of the US nuclear doctrine on the US allies. They realize that the international system is in flux and are waiting on the sidelines to respond appropriately.
- Space security was not brought up specifically, except that one of the Chinese delegates mentioned that it was important that there was no militarization of outer space. Despite it being part of the agenda, there was no specificity on the FMCT. Delegates, however, seemed confident that the CTBT would be ratified by the US.
- Medium sized nuclear power is in terms of the numbers of nuclear weapons they have. China's nuclear arsenal is much larger than India's, as well as that of UK and France, but it does not compare to the US and Russia. In terms of technological development they are on par with US and Russia.
- A projection of a notion of Asian unity in direct comparison with the emerging Asia, where clearly China would have a lead role, compared with the EU and something that would overtake the EU is a striking formulation and has not been encountered earlier.
- The fact that the Chinese agreed to discuss nuclear issues with India and Pakistan is a positive development, earlier we were treated as outliers or as pariahs. China is looking at an Asian solution and does not want to be caught suddenly in a rush where the two principle powers start moving in the reverse direction and they get caught in the middle ground with their outliers and the nuclear monsters they have created. They have a sense that they have the instruments of being a great power, but that there are moral gaps in terms of their past behavior and they need to sit down to decide how to fill those gaps.