

Indo-US Nuclear Deal and Non-Proliferation

Rajesh Kumar Mishra

Abstract

Different views have been expressed by the American non-proliferation lobbyists on possible loss or gain from the Indo-US nuclear agreement. Would the agreement complicate global non-proliferation efforts as the critics argue or would it lead to a stronger front to deal with emerging non-proliferation challenges? To answer these questions it is necessary to examine the merits of the arguments put forward by the US non-proliferation lobby carefully. Two of the principal arguments – one, that it would encourage nuclear proliferation by threshold states such as North Korea and Iran, and two, that it would lead to China claiming exceptional treatment for Pakistan similar to what India might receive under the US-India nuclear deal – are inappropriate and hollow, given India's non-NPT status and positive non-proliferation record that the countries mentioned do not possess.

There is almost unanimous support within the American non-proliferation lobbyists for long-term strategic relationship between US and India. They are, however, critical of the nuclear deal on four grounds: first, by relaxing US non-proliferation laws for India as an exception outside the NPT framework, the deal would weaken the fundamental goal of US non-proliferation policy – to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons beyond the five recognized nuclear weapon states under the NPT. Second, the problems of nuclear proliferation would be compounded in the face of current challenges posed by North Korea and Iran. Third, US-India cooperation could prompt other suppliers, like China, to justify its proliferation and support for Pakistan. Finally, in the process of accommodating India in the larger international non-proliferation regime, the resulting gains for US in its efforts towards non-proliferation may be relatively less than gain for India. In view of these positions a few fundamental issues need to be examined from the perspective of the

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international non-proliferation order. These are: Why has the proposed deal been linked by some arms control specialists in the US to the crisis in the global non-proliferation order? Are the apprehensions among American lawmakers and analysts genuine? What are the real challenges to the global nuclear non-proliferation regime? How can India contribute to the efforts of the international community to stabilise the global non-proliferation order? What responsibilities does India intend to assume in order to be a part of the potential counter-proliferation strategies?

Review of the Public Debate in the US

In order to declare their resolve to transform the relationship between the two countries and establish a global partnership, the Indian Prime Minister and the US President issued a joint statement on July 18, 2005 in Washington. In the joint statement, both the leaders outlined a roadmap for full civil nuclear energy cooperation between the two countries. While acknowledging India's strong commitment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the US President noted that as a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology India should acquire the same benefits and advantages as other such states. President Bush told the Indian Prime Minister that he would seek approval from Congress to adjust US laws and policies, and that the US will work with friends and allies to adjust international regimes to enable full civil nuclear energy cooperation and trade with India. On the other hand, the Indian Prime Minister said: "India would reciprocally agree that it would be ready to assume the same responsibilities and practices and acquire the same benefits and advantages as other leading countries with advanced nuclear technology, such as the United States."

The responsibilities and practices that India would assume consist of identifying and separating its civilian and military nuclear facilities and programmes in a phased manner and filing a declaration regarding its civilian facilities with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). India has also offered to voluntarily place its civilian nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards; sign and adhere to an Additional Protocol with respect to civilian nuclear facilities; continue its unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing; work with the US and others on the conclusion of a multilateral Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty; not transfer enrichment and reprocessing technologies to states that do not have them, and support international

efforts to limit their spread. India has also taken the necessary steps to secure its nuclear materials and technology through comprehensive export control legislation and adhere to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) guidelines.

Many analysts in America look at the Indo-US Joint Declaration positively as a step necessitated by the mutual interests of both the states in balancing the rising strategic power of China.¹ However, there is a concern within some segments of the US Congress that the willingness of the Bush Administration to seek changes in the existing laws and multilateral agreements would undermine US national interests in regard to nuclear non-proliferation.² As opposed to the preference of the Bush Administration to treat India as a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology, a counter view has emerged that sees the Indo-US nuclear deal as a compromise that bypasses rules applicable to others.³ In addition, there is a cautionary note: "The NPT faces a number of problems more severe than India's nuclear programme. But these problems can be compounded by how we handle India. The rules we change on India's behalf can also weaken the rules we want other nations to abide by."⁴

For the last several decades the relationship between India and the US has remained hostage to their respective nuclear policy perspectives. In the realist framework the bilateral and multilateral relations are configured in terms of achieving or advancing national interests. The basis of the new emerging strategic partnership between US and India clearly reflect the changing international realities. Strategic cooperation, in both the security and economic fields, requires that the two countries shift from some of their previous political positions. While speaking before the House International Relations Committee, Undersecretary Nicholas Burns reinforced President Bush's remark – "after years of estrangement, India and the United States together surrendered to reality. They recognized an unavoidable fact – they are destined to have a qualitatively different and better relationship than in the past. The purpose of addressing the realities is to achieve success of American foreign policy in South Asia and around the world".⁵ On the Indian side, the Prime Minister in his reply to the Lok Sabha debate on his US visit stated – "our objective is to work together with other like-minded countries to manage and promote equitable management of the global inter-dependence of nations which cannot be avoided in this one world that we are living in today ...relations with the United States are of great importance in achieving that objective."⁶

The issue of nuclear energy cooperation is a key component of deepening relations between the two countries. But while looking at the possible changes in US non-proliferation laws for facilitating this new evolving relationship, the critics have sought to link Indo-US bilateral relationship with larger international non-proliferation problems. In fact, the revelations over the last couple of years related to the Pakistan-based A.Q. Khan international proliferation network have exposed the weaknesses and loopholes in the entire international nuclear non-proliferation order. Several discrepancies have been reported by the IAEA in the nuclear activities of the NPT member-states such as North Korea, Libya and Iran. The revelations made by Libya have confirmed the proliferation activities of Pakistan and China. Therefore, the counter-arguments surfacing in the US Congress against the Bush Administration need to be analyzed on the basis of facts.

The Indian Nuclear Programme

India's nuclear weapons, as part of a large military force, are under democratic civilian command and control. Its nuclear posture is guided by a defined doctrine of no-first-use and the principle of minimum credible deterrence. The future of India's efforts towards creating minimum credible deterrence should be viewed primarily in the context of its security requirements in the changing nuclear security environment in the region and at the international level. In its immediate neighbourhood it has China whose nuclear arsenal is significantly ahead, both in terms of the quantity and quality of nuclear weapons. Moreover, China's emphasis on force modernization poses a continuing challenge to the 'credibility' of India's own deterrence. Pentagon itself believes that, "China is qualitatively and quantitatively improving its strategic missile force. This could provide a credible, survivable nuclear deterrent and counterstrike capability. It is fielding more survivable missiles capable of targeting India, Russia, virtually all of the States, and the Asia-Pacific theatre as far south as Australia and New Zealand."⁷ Not surprisingly, China defines its security needs in terms of nuclear policies of the other P-5 states, especially the US. But, the international nuclear security environment is even more complex. The nuclear posture review of the US for new weapons and missile defence systems, Russia's plan to introduce new long range missiles, the ongoing programme of France for a new generation of nuclear-powered ballistic submarines and Britain's potential plan of reviewing a replacement of the

Trident systems – all reflect the potential complexities of future world nuclear security order. India cannot remain unaffected by such changes in the nuclear security environment. The Bush Administration, departing from the position taken by earlier US presidencies, has acknowledged India as a ‘responsible state with advanced nuclear technology’. It also implicitly recognises the *de facto* nuclear weapon status of India corresponding to its security requirements.

It is important here to examine the non-proliferation lobby’s argument that “if nuclear weapons are the great equalizer, why would not China seek to use similar inducements to balance US power”,⁸ in case of competing interests in West Asia and Northeast Asia? Such an argument tends to equate the case of a transparent nuclear deal between two responsible states with the possibility of its replication by another NPT state with doubtful record of proliferation and its non-transparent deals. The Chinese effort to balance out US, within or outside the NPT obligations, will clearly continue in spite of the India-US deal. Moreover, before joining the NPT, China had enabled Pakistan to acquire nuclear weapon capability. Even after China joined NPT, its role in nuclear wheeling-dealing in the case of North Korea, Pakistan and Iran has been evident. To prevent nuclear weapon countries such as China from clandestine proliferation acts is a problem essentially related to the enforcement of international regimes and has nothing to do with India-US nuclear agreement.

India, on the other hand, has not violated any international commitment either in the making or testing of its nuclear weapons. Its nuclear safety and security record has been internationally appreciated. As an established democracy there is absolutely no danger of India’s nuclear arsenal falling into the hands of any rogue elements. Also, in sharp contrast to countries like Pakistan, North Korea and China, India has never used proliferation as a tool of foreign policy. In fact, many of the nuclear proliferation problems of today are directly linked to the A.Q. Khan network. The uninterrupted involvement of Western suppliers in the Khan-led nuclear grey market, underlines the fact that US and other European governments failed to control these suppliers. The proliferation links of numerous non-state actors in Europe prospered along with Khan’s international nuclear black bazaar. The underground network of commercial black marketing involved a large number of countries, including the US, Germany, Britain, Canada, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey, Japan, and South Africa. The

Director-General of IAEA has been quoted as admitting that Khan had commercial contacts with at least 20 different countries and large companies.⁹

As far as proliferation of nuclear weapons, technology or material is concerned, the future intention of a country is generally evaluated by its past behaviour. In this regard too India has an impeccable record of non-proliferation under an elaborate system of domestic export control mechanisms. It has also been conscious of the concerns of the international community. India's vote against Iran, based upon IAEA's findings, indicates that India expects everyone to honour accepted obligations and international commitments. India has adopted an overarching WMD domestic legislation, i.e., "The Weapons of Mass Destruction and Their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities)". The procedures set in the new law are in tune with the UN Resolution 1540. The UN Security Council had adopted resolution 1540 on April 28, 2004 with the affirmation that proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitute a threat to international peace and security. India has also taken conscious decisions to harmonise its legal arrangements with international export control regulations. Therefore, it is inappropriate to assume that "several countries, including Iran, North Korea, and perhaps Pakistan, would be expected to seek such (dual-use technology) items illicitly in India with its weakly enforced export laws."¹⁰

Thus, attempts to raise nuclear proliferation concerns regarding India, even for the future, may therefore be quite misplaced. Out of all the three nuclear states outside the NPT regime, India's case is unique. Israel, for example, has neither officially declared its weapons capability, nor has any nuclear energy plan like India. Pakistan's non-proliferation credentials are questionable and the Pakistan-based Khan network has turned out to be the root cause of the proliferation problems today. The global nuclear proliferation challenges are gradually but significantly unfolding with the disclosures on the extent of the Khan network. Can the US and the NSG members afford to 'turn a blind eye'¹¹ towards the proliferation linkages of China and Pakistan and the damage done by them to the non-proliferation regimes? Alternatively, what could be the reasons to be apprehensive of India gaining a special treatment under the prevailing international rules?

Dimensions of Global Non-Proliferation Challenges

The unfolding events in Libya, North Korea, Pakistan and Iran reflect the various dimensions of non-proliferation challenges, particularly the proliferation activities of states in collusion with the non-state actors. China and Pakistan have for quite some time been the primary actors in global proliferation. The commercialisation of nuclear technology by the European firms has added further complexity to the problem. Though clandestine procurement of sensitive technologies has occurred over several decades,¹² the disclosures related to A.Q. Khan network in last couple of years provide details of brazen retailing of nuclear technology, equipment and materials in defiance of international rules. Khan's own admissions and the accounts of interrogation of his proliferation associates provide a picture of what technical experts and strategic analysts describe as a nuclear grey *bazaar* spread across Africa, through US and Europe to Asia. This *bazaar* is swarming with middlemen and money launderers ranging from government agents to organised-crime syndicates, scientists to entrepreneurs to manufacturers, and terrorists.¹³ It is now an established fact that both Iran and Libya imported the centrifuge technology from the Pakistan-based Khan network. Therefore, to doubt the Bush Administration's decision to provide exceptional treatment to India for its non-proliferation record, based on the assumption that "US-India cooperation could prompt other suppliers, like China, to justify supplying non-nuclear weapon states, like Pakistan,"¹⁴ is questionable.

For more than two decades, Khan played a crucial role in the proliferation supply chain and he widely travelled to different parts of the world on nuclear business. Khan was allowed by the Pakistani government machinery to establish the clandestine nuclear enterprise initially to facilitate its own nuclear weapons programme and subsequently to utilise the same network to proliferate nuclear technology and equipments to other states. Parallel with Khan's efforts, China also provided Pakistan with key nuclear technology, equipments and materials.

Various reports and studies suggest that in spite of the fact that China joined the NPT in 1992, the missile and nuclear cooperation between the two countries continued unabated through the subsequent years undermining its international commitments, including the pledge given to US in 1996 not to transfer prohibited technologies. The dangerous consequences of China-Pakistan collaboration surfaced in Libya. The details

following the seizure at the Toronto port of a freighter owned by a German company, BBC China, starting from Dubai and destined to Libya with five containers of components for uranium centrifuges on October 4, 2003 and the subsequent admissions by the Libyan government, have now revealed the extent of China-Pakistan proliferation collaboration.

Libya's Linkages

The nuclear weapon design that was transferred to Pakistan by China subsequently found its way to Libya. The package of documents unearthed by the team of inspectors in Libya included Chinese texts, containing step-by-step details of instructions for assembling the nuclear weapon.¹⁵ While complete information of Khan's international connections is not yet available, one cannot rule out for sure that the same weapon design could have not been passed on to North Korea or to any other country.

Officially, though not yet confirmed, China, North Korea and Pakistan are suspected as the major sources of clandestine trade for Libya. It was confirmed in January 2004 that Libya's nuclear technology and designs came from Pakistan, when Libya provided evidence of receiving assistance from Pakistani scientists including A.Q. Khan and Mohammed Farooq (in-charge of overseas procurement at Khan Research Laboratory).¹⁶ While investigating into Iranian nuclear activities, the Director-General of the IAEA in his February 2004 report stated: "...the timelines of conversion and centrifuge programmes of Iran and Libya are different, they share several common elements. The basic technology is very similar and was largely obtained from foreign sources."¹⁷

North Korean Proliferation Trails

In the case of North Korea, it had diverted enough spent fuel to make one or two weapons by early 1990s, with Chinese support of various kinds for over two decades.¹⁸ Pakistan played a vital role in the alleged enrichment programme of North Korea through the Khan enterprise. Khan himself disclosed that the Pakistan Army was privy to his acts of proliferation. During the investigations, Khan reportedly disclosed that in addition to Musharraf, two other army chiefs, Abdul Waheed and his successor, Jehangir Karamat, knew and approved of his nuclear dealings with North Korea.¹⁹ The news report also explained that the then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had travelled to North Korea at the request of General

Abdul Waheed, and that General Karamat also secretly visited North Korea in December 1997. Musharraf was then in charge of military operations under Waheed.

Benazir Bhutto admitted that she had gone to North Korea in 1993 to bring blueprints of North Korean missiles. Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf admitted subsequently that Khan provided uranium enrichment centrifuge designs and machines to North Korea, but he denied having any knowledge of nuclear material transfer to that country. An exhaustive report on clandestine networks quoted one of the Pakistani officials involved in Khan's investigations as saying that Khan had transferred P-1 and

P-2 machines to North Korea along with drawings, sketches, technical data and uranium hexafluoride gas— the feedstock for gas centrifuges.²⁰ The shipments to North Korea were flown directly from Pakistan using chartered and Pakistan Air Force planes.²¹ Ironically, Pakistan denies involvement of government agencies in bartering nuclear technology for North Korean missiles.

The disturbing aspect of North Korean linkages with outside world is that, like Pakistan, North Korea has also emerged as a source of global proliferation for missiles and nuclear material transfers. The North Korean missile transfers to Pakistan, Iran, Libya, Syria and Yemen are widely known. It is also believed that the North Koreans had in 2002 set up a company, New World Trading Slovakia, in Bratislava, to buy materials for their own nuclear programme and to sell missile technology to countries such as Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iran and Vietnam.²² The Slovakian police raided the company, which was run by two North Koreans. Another source disclosed that US intelligence had evidence of North Korea having produced several tonnes of a uranium compound that landed in Libya.²³

Controversies in Iran

The most controversial of the nuclear supplies in recent years has been the Chinese material exports to Iran. The US State department and Iranian officials confirmed that China exported one tonne of UF₆ (uranium hexafluoride), 400 kg of UF₄ (uranium tetrafluoride), and 400 kg of UO₂ (uranium dioxide) to Iran in 1991.²⁴ It is believed that China also provided Iran with the blueprints and equipment for the uranium conversion facility at Isfahan.²⁵ Iran attempted to buy two 300-megawatt power reactors from

the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) by signing an agreement in 1992,²⁶ similar to what China supplied to Pakistan for the Chasma nuclear power plant. Because of US opposition China could not finally go through the deal. However, the disclosure by the US National Security Agency, that China was negotiating the secret sale of millions of dollars worth of material used to process uranium to weapon grade (anhydrous hydrogen fluoride - AHF) to the Isfahan Nuclear Research Centre in Iran in 1998,²⁷ casts serious doubts on Chinese intentions to respect international non-proliferation commitments.

In relation to Iran, it has been reported that US officials have shared classified intelligence with the IAEA on the capability of Iran's missile systems to carry nuclear warheads.²⁸ The credibility of such information is open to further clarification because despite the claims of existence of a nuclear weapon programme in Iraq the Bush Administration failed to prove it and has accepted it as a mistake. However, enough details are available in the public domain regarding Beijing's support for the missile programme of Iran, apart from the Iranian import of North Korean Nodong missiles. China first began exporting missiles to Iran in 1985²⁹ and Tehran's missile inventory includes several types of Chinese systems.³⁰

Iran's missile infrastructure not only includes a Chinese-built missile plant,³¹ but according to intelligence reports, China continues to work on Iranian missile projects.³² A senior legislator of Ukraine, Grigory Omelchenko, has claimed in the Ukrainian parliament that both Iran and China have in 2000-2001 bought from it air-to-ground cruise missiles (code named Kh-55 or known in the West as the AS-15), which has a range of 1,860 miles and is designed to carry a 200-kilotonne nuclear warhead.³³ These missiles were designed originally for use in the Russian Tupolev long-range bombers. They were stored in Ukraine and following its renunciation of nuclear weapons were to be shipped to Russia under US supervision. How they landed up in China and Iran remains a mystery.

For US in particular and the international community in general, Iranian missile imports and outside assistance for the development of delivery systems have been less controversial than its nuclear programme. The most controversial feature of past Iranian nuclear activities has been the source of various imports related to its nuclear enrichment programme. The latest disclosure about the documents found in Iran show a drawing of layout of

6 cascades of 168 machines each and a small plant of 2000 centrifuges arranged in the same hall.³⁴ Among the documents found in Iran, one is related to the casting and processing of enriched, natural and depleted uranium metal into hemispherical forms.³⁵ The papers also indicate Teheran's interest in pursuing a nuclear weapon programme.³⁶ Refuting such allegations, Mehdi Akhuzadeh, the Iranian representative at the IAEA, was quoted as saying: "The information contained in one-and-a-half pages is simple and non-sophisticated information which could be found in (public) literature and on the Internet."³⁷ Most of the documents are, however, related to the offers made by the clandestine nuclear supply network, and this raises concerns. The IAEA intends to get more details on Iran's procurements and past nuclear activities.

In January 2005, Iran showed the IAEA officials a handwritten one-page document reflecting an offer said to have been made to Iran in 1987 by 'a foreign intermediary'. The offer included the delivery of a sample machine (disassembled), drawings, descriptions and specifications for production; drawings, specifications and calculations for a complete plant, and materials for 2000 centrifuge machines.³⁸ It also included a starter kit, components and centrifuges, auxiliary items, and the conversion facility. The details of 1987 offer were covered in the Western media on the basis of reports of a meeting between the Iranians and Khan's associates that had taken place in Dubai to finalise a five-point phased plan of supply to Iran. It is also said that the Dubai meeting was attended by as many as three Iranian officials, including Mohammad Eslami,³⁹ a top official of the Revolutionary Guards, as well as a Sri Lankan businessman named Mohamed Farouq and a German named Heinz Mebus (now deceased).⁴⁰

Farouq's nephew and Khan's chief lieutenant, B.S. Tahir himself has admitted before the Royal Malaysian Police that he was asked by Khan to execute the shipments of components including the entire centrifuge units for Iran directly from Pakistan during 1994-1995.⁴¹ Apart from the receipt of P-1 drawings in 1987, Iran has already admitted to the IAEA, as mentioned in the November 2004 report by the Director-General, that between 1994 and 1996 it received another duplicate set of drawings for the P-1 centrifuge design, along with components for 500 centrifuges and that it acquired P-2 centrifuge drawing around 1995. In addition to the available information, the IAEA awaits further details from Iran.

The Unknowns of Khan Connections

A large section of media reports at the beginning of 2004 quoted US and Pakistani officials as confirming that US intelligence had intimated to Musharraf sometimes in 2000 about Khan's proliferation connections. If one is to believe such reports, then who should face accountability for the proliferation activities in subsequent periods? Musharraf must be aware as to how 'the transfer of weapons design took place in 2001-2002 to Libya'⁴² and how the enrichment related transfers to North Korea continued till 2002. Again, if the transfer of missiles from North Korea to Pakistan continued as late as March 2003⁴³ and Khan visited North Korea in June 2002,⁴⁴ it is unlikely Musharraf was unaware of the purpose of Khan's visit to North Korea. Lack of information in public records relating to verification of such disclosures is bound to raise doubts on Musharraf's recent promises on non-proliferation and the way US is handling Musharraf or the interrogation issue of Khan.

Gains from India on Non-Proliferation

In view of the non-proliferation challenges from both state and non-state actors that the US has been facing, it is important to discuss the role India can play at the international level to strengthen the non-proliferation efforts.

In the post Cold War phase, the Bush Administration is of the belief that nuclear proliferation is the greatest threat to the US and the international community. The dwindling confidence over the fact that a determined state can circumvent international laws to acquire nuclear weapons prompted George W. Bush to state in his speech at the National Defense University on February 11, 2004: "The world's leading nuclear exporters should ensure that states renounces enrichment and reprocessing. Enrichment and reprocessing are not necessary for nations to harness nuclear energy for peaceful purposes." There is a growing recognition and concern that the acquisition of enrichment or reprocessing facilities by a non-nuclear weapon state for peaceful purposes can alternatively also be used for a nuclear weapon programme. The US policy-makers and strategic analysts have been struggling for decades to find ways to prevent access to such technology to countries that do not have them. There has however been no tangible result in addressing this tricky issue under the prevailing non-proliferation regime.

In explaining India's position in this regard, the Foreign Secretary categorically stated in October 2005: "India is today a rapidly expanding industrial economy with a wide array of technologies that are relevant to proliferation. That in itself makes a case why our export controls and their effective implementation will matter more and more for global non-proliferation efforts."⁴⁵ As a country with an exceptional non-proliferation record, even without being a member of the NPT, India maintains a policy of non-transfer of enrichment and reprocessing technologies. Reaffirming India's position before the international community, the Indian Prime Minister reiterated this longstanding commitment in the US-India Joint Statement of July 18, 2005 for the future too.

The pre-eminence of US power in the global security system is quite apparent after the collapse of the Soviet block. However, it is difficult and even impossible for the US to successfully tackle security issues like terrorism and WMD proliferation without cooperation from other major countries such as India. Any future cooperation on the issues that have an effect on the core national interests of the two countries has to be durable and reliable. India has already demonstrated its willingness to contribute to the international struggle against terrorism. For example, at the crucial early stages of the global war on terrorism, in 2002 and 2003, the Indian Navy escorted US ships transiting the Malacca Straits with high value military cargo.⁴⁶ As a victim of terrorism, India well understood American concerns.

India has a shared interest with the US on the issue of non-proliferation. The source of proliferation in the neighbourhood has been of grave security concern for India as much as it is a cause of worry for the US and the international community. Illegal nuclear and missile transfers by China and Pakistan have not only made the task of successive US administrations difficult, they have also had serious consequences on international security. It would be therefore unwise for India and US to continue to fight such threats independent of each other.

Conclusion

India as a nuclear weapon state, with an impeccable record of non-proliferation, has not sought to destabilize the nuclear order under the NPT, nor has its decisions in the nuclear field harmed US interests. Therefore, it would not be prudent and profitable to link US-India nuclear

cooperation to the larger problems of international nuclear non-proliferation. Instead, the US lawmakers should consider the merits of the deal and allow the Bush Administration to build a long-term strategic partnership with India. The assumptions of any potential claim by China to accord a similar special status to Pakistan should also not come in the way of the US-India nuclear deal. The primary purpose of the Indo-US deal is to strengthen non-proliferation and not to scuttle it. China and Pakistan, on the basis of past records, can hardly make a similar claim.

At another level, full cooperation in the nuclear energy sector between US and India will help remove mutual misperceptions flowing from the hardline positions of the past that were based on principles and values regarding the nature of the international nuclear order. The attempt made by some eminent American non-proliferation experts in their testimonies at the US legislative bodies to bracket India with the countries of nuclear proliferation concern, such as Pakistan, North Korea and Iran, are bound to draw criticism in India as efforts to drag the Indo-US nuclear deal into unwarranted, unfortunate and absurd comparisons. As a state with a large nuclear programme that is outside the NPT, India's intention to assume additional responsibilities, as proposed in the Joint Statement of July 2005, would clearly strengthen the international non-proliferation systems and not undermine them. India's participation in global non-proliferation efforts would therefore be of great advantage to the US and other concerned states.

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Rajesh Kumar Mishra is Associate Fellow at IDSA.