



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies  
Islamabad**

## **Repercussions of US-Indian Civilian Nuclear Deal**

*By Ms. Rahat Iqbal*

*Published on 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2019*



The author is a PhD scholar in nuclear studies from department of International Relations, University of Peshawar and presently working as a Research Associate with Center for Global and Strategic Studies, Islamabad.

To enhance the strategic partnership, United States (US) removed the sanctions, imposed on India after conduct of 1974 nuclear tests. The visit of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Washington, in 2005 changed the security dynamics of the South Asia. Indian policies were re-designed after initiation of civilian nuclear deal with US

under President Bush. This bilateral deal was proposed since early 2004, finally commenced in 2008. Both US and India consider it as a land mark for the civilian nuclear cooperation among the two countries and also a turning point for enhancement and maintenance of non-proliferation regime in the world. Hence, the move from nuclear exile to strategic partnership started between US and India. This bilateral deal has empowered India to buy dual-use nuclear technology of US including material for production of uranium and plutonium enrichment plants and also to import fuel for its nuclear reactors.

To achieve its objectives, US has pressurized the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) for exempting India from IAEA safeguards for having nuclear trade. Favour in shape of this deal was given to India while being non-signatory to Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which has adversely affected the norms of the International safeguards. However, the 123 (US-Indo nuclear deal) agreements between PM Manmohan Singh and President Bush had a greater impact on the strategic balance of South Asian region. India, while having access to import fuel and nuclear reactors would not be only using it for peaceful purposes. In order, to become the regional super power, it will utilize this opportunity to strengthen its power capability which in the current days is only possible with development of more advanced nuclear reactors for military purposes. Indo-US nuclear deal under the overall ambit of bilateral strategic partnership is having

many serious repercussions not only on geo-political situation of this region but has adverse effects in global nuclear norms. Few prominent repercussions are discussed in the ensuing paras.

Many analysts opine that US approach of strengthening strategic partnership and providing military assistance to India, is primarily aimed to counter- balance the emergence of China as a rising power in the world. To have a strategic balance against China and to quest for permanent seat in United Nations Security Council (UNSC), India would make all out efforts to enhance its nuclear capability concerning both first and second strike capability.

Under the garb of this nuclear deal, India will further enhance its nuclear weapons capability in near future and will endeavor to become a regional power and leading arms producer. These all capabilities require a strong command and control system, which is lacked by India. The past recorded accidents and incident along with the recent ones reported to IAEA have proven the lack of proper mechanism of security of such arsenal and related material. Moreover, security situation in India can threaten the Indian nuclear weapons program falling into the un-authorized hands. The International regime, instead of signing a deal with India should focus on its command and control system both for civilian and nuclear energy.

India produces more fuel than it is required for its civilian usage. Currently, India requires not more than 3% of energy from nuclear sources. In the coming years ahead, it has planned to produce 20,000 MW via nuclear reactors. US assistance of providing nuclear fuel to India would definitely be utilized for the civilian purposes while diverting its own nuclear fuel production for enhancing the nuclear weapons capability.

Efficient security structure is not only required for nuclear weapons and power reactors but also for related materials as well. Presently, almost 30-armed insurgencies in India are sweeping across the country, which can put the security of its nuclear arsenals at risk. Furthermore, the recent theft of uranium in India as reported in the Indian newspapers has further raised threats to the security dilemma of Indian nuclear program. This cannot only lead to insecurity of nuclear weapons but also to provoke nuclear terrorism not only in the country but in the region, which shall be the matter of concern in International arena.

Despite such happenings, International safeguards regime has failed to restrain the responsible states for engaging with the Indian nuclear programs. Initiating the trend of the nuclear deal by both US and India has been endorsing discriminatory approach in International regime with specific implications on IAEA safeguards. US, mission of making India, a regional giant by stabilizing its market of arms and weapons is itself a

case in point for adopting discriminatory approach, for its vested interests and arms proliferation. Such biased actions nurture questions on the efficacy of the International safeguards including NPT and NSG.

The agreement has brought a drastic change in the South Asian politics as well as in the security dynamics in particular. It embarked on the missile race in the region. Both India and Pakistan are in the continuous phase of developing Inter-Mediate Ballistic Missiles (IBMs), cruise missiles, sea-based missiles and nuclear warheads. Recent testing of Indian, Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) have ensured the arms proliferation. Pakistan, in order to strengthen its security posture, has to follow suit. It also successfully tested few missiles such as Ghauri, a ballistic missile, carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads.

The deal has not only paved the way for arms race in South Asia but also threatens the security regime in many parts of the world such as Middle East, East Asia and Central Asian Republics. According to Balance of Threat (BoT) theory, presented by Stephen M. Walt, states would either align itself or strengthen its security against the perceived threats. Similarly, countries like Iran, have pledged for retaining its nuclear program for security purposes to balance the security in the region who can be under threat in near future.

It is evident that US-Indo civilian nuclear deal has also given birth to the nuclear arms race not only in the region but in the world as a whole. States who feel threatened such as China, Iran, Pakistan and North Korea will follow suit for maintaining the balance of power in the region. Hence, this can pose a serious threat to International security and peace.

