

Arun Kumar Banerji (ed), **Non-proliferation in a Changing World : India's Policy and Options**, Allied Publishers Limited, Calcutta , 1997, pp.xv+163, Rs. 170.00

The book under review is a collection of papers presented at a seminar on India's post-Cold War nuclear policy and options organized by the School of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Jadavpur University, in March 1995. It sets out to discuss India's nuclear stand in light of the changes in the international operational environment and purports to highlight on the possible alternatives the Indian decision-makers may ponder.

The book, as a whole, contains eight well-written articles by eminent Indian experts with vast experience in the field. The articles are preceded by a lucid and informative preface by Arun Kumar Banerji, the editor of the volume. The first article titled "The Non-proliferation Treaty and the Changing International Environment: India's Policy and Options" by Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya attempts to review India's nuclear policy from a decision-making perspective highlighting on the comprehensive changes in the global order. Referring to Chinese and Pakistani nuclear threats he advises India not to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), put into operation in 1968, and not to be a member of the proposed fissile materials cut-off treaty which, according to him, is as discriminatory as the NPT. This view is also shared by the editor in the preface. Both Bandyopadhyaya and the editor rule out the common logic that India has consistently refused to be a party to the NPT because it was discriminatory. They,

however, tenaciously subscribe to the belief that India's refusal to sign the NPT was actually conditioned by China and Pakistan factors. In the preface the editor writes: "The real reason was that the Indian government did not want to give up the nuclear option in view of the threats posed by China and, in later years, also by Pakistan" (p.viii). Nuclear threats posed by China, evidently after the 1962 Sino-Indian War, and lately by Pakistan have undoubtedly worked as critical justification points for India's continuous hold on to the nuclear option but that is not the total story.

India's nuclear policy has a much deeper ground, as we understand, beyond the above-mentioned simplistic notion. It takes roots from the Nehruvian conception of modern India and his nationalistic outlook that subsequently left deep imprint on Indian statecraft. Nehru was quite clear in his perception that India's march into the modern age must be accompanied by tremendous advances in modern science and technology with nuclear energy being the dominant symbol. Thus the first Legislative Assembly of Independent India in its very first session passed laws to set up the Indian Atomic Energy Commission in 1948. It was later converted to the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 that still regulates India's nuclear activities. By the time India passed the Atomic Energy Act of 1962, there was a global debate on setting up an international authority to regulate the development of nuclear energy. Nehru termed it 'atomic colonialism' outright. His opposition to a nuclear energy regulating mechanism actually points out that he was in no way ready to compromise India's autonomy in decision-making related to nuclear matters or any other fields. Although in terms of economic progress and military achievements, India was not equal to any great powers of the day, Nehru was still determined that it would be so treated. That was the basic premise of his foreign policy and nuclear policy too. It is clearly on this ground that India has decidedly

kept its nuclear option open and despite occasional moral overtures the post-Nehru Indian decision-makers have never deflected from this nuclear position. Initially China and later on Pakistan emerged as situational factors which they readily used to justify the Nehruvian nuclear position.

Bandyopadhyaya's article, however, points out a hard but unavoidable reality that nuclear weapons cannot be abolished for good since the technology is known to mankind; but the alternative suggestion he puts up for India is coloured with moralistic overtones. India should not, as he thinks, give up the nuclear option until and unless the goal of complete nuclear disarmament is achieved and as long as this goal remains unrealized India should continue to mobilize public opinion for democratization of the UN and centralization of control over nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. It sounds good but no one knows whether light at the end of the tunnel will ever be seen.

The papers by K. N. Bagchi and Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri attempt a threadbare discussion on the NPT, the underlying motives behind its indefinite extension and suggest policy guidelines for India on the NPT and CTBT. Bagchi's article on "The Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty: A Critical Perspective" while giving us a critical analysis of the nature and other dimensions of the NPT also provides us valuable documentary information with five appendices attached to it. Chowdhuri's article, "The NPT and India's Options", on the other hand, while pointing out the discriminatory nature of the NPT rules out the right of the existing nuclear powers to exhort other states to give up their nuclear options. The nuclear powers defend their large nuclear arsenals on national security reasons but it is surprising to note that they blindly reject the security reasons of other states to acquire nuclear weapons. Chowdhuri, in this respect, very rightly questions whether the security of nuclear powers is

more important than that of the non-nuclear states. This is perhaps an unassailable question one can never hope to get an answer from the states armed with nuclear weapons. But his contention that the support of 173 states to the indefinite extension of the NPT implies that the international community has given legitimacy to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by the nuclear powers does not conform to the security perceptions of the concerned states. May be his contention is right in one dimension but the point remains that the 173 NPT supporters do not want that their threat structures should be expanded further by the new emerging nuclear powers, and that nuclear weapons production by aspirant states be prevented.

The next two papers by Prasanta Kumar Ghosh and R. Chakraborti provide us the obtaining nuclear perspectives of two extra-regional powers - the US and China and highlight their nuclear policies towards South Asia. Ghosh's paper "Nuclear Non-proliferation and South Asia: US Policy Option" is a nice analysis, as the readers would find it, of US nuclear concern and non-proliferation objectives in South Asia. He argues that since India and Pakistan, the two South Asian adversaries, are already believed to have produced nuclear weapons, non-proliferation is no longer a feasible goal in South Asia. The US, according to him, should acknowledge the reality in South Asia and encourage India and Pakistan to move in the direction of a nuclear freeze. But what he perhaps misses here is the need for nuclear transparency by the two countries. Strict secrecy concerning nuclear programme and activities, as India and Pakistan are currently practicing, will only breed and feed misperceptions between them and make mutual confidence a daunting task to be undertaken on an urgent basis. Chakraborti's paper, "China's Nuclear Posture and India's Options", on the other hand, while elaborating the various factors influencing Chinese nuclear policy delineates

the apprehensions its growing nuclear arsenal, military modernization programme and the quest for a blue water navy have created among the neighbours. Whatever might be China's nuclear ambitions, Chakraborti argues, it is primarily interested in a peaceful environment in its vicinity and a recognition of its overriding interests in the region from its potential rivals; but he brushes aside what implications it might produce in Beijing's relations with the lone super power - the US with discernible interests in the East and Southeast Asian region. He, however, thinks that India should not treat the 'China factor' with overseriousness as far as its future nuclear calculation is concerned and advocates patient diplomatic negotiations on India's part to settle differences with China. But he seems to lead the readers to believe that the recent progress in Sino-Indian relations, mostly influenced by changes in the global order, is of permanent nature and international relations is not necessarily fraught with dangers and uncertainties - a proposition that has been squarely belied by the collapse of the socialist Soviet Union.

Arun Kumar Banerji's paper, "Nuclear Proliferation in West Asia: A Tale of Connivance, Deceit and False Alarm" and Shibashis Chatterjee's paper "Nuclear Proliferation: The North Korean Nuclear Programme - A Case Study" deal with nuclear programme in regions having remote implications for India. Banerji very neatly depicts the different dimensions of Israeli nuclear programme and shows how it has acted as a reactive factor to fuel nuclear thinking in Iraq and Iran. In the process, he also points out the inherent contradictions in American non-proliferation objective in the Middle East. While the US mercilessly destroyed all Iraqi nuclear installations in the aftermath of the Gulf War and strongly opposes the same by Iran and any other states elsewhere in the world it did everything to arm Israel with nuclear weapon

having dubbed it a 'special case'. This has led, as Banerji points out, to a highly asymmetrical power structure with Israel having overwhelming military edge over its Arab adversaries. What impact Israel's military superiority propped up by unequivocal US support is making on the current Middle East Peace process Banerji does not address this question to himself. Shibashis Chatterjee's paper, on the other hand, delineates the prelude and associated developments to the nuclear crisis in the Korean peninsula. He nicely elaborates how a post-Cold War socialist state with a fragile economy and middle ranking military capability could pose stiff challenges to the US and ultimately succeeded in getting concessions from the Americans by signing an agreement in October 1994. He is of the view that a Gulf War like military encounter between the US and North Korea could be averted primarily because the US allies were non-committal to finance the hegemon's ego-battle. But the answer to the question he poses at the end of the article whether India and Pakistan would be the next target of US nuclear emasculation campaign must be in the negative since India and Pakistan are already undeclared nuclear powers and they would by all means resist pressures for a nuclear roll back whatever cost it may incur.

The last paper by Jyotirmoy Banerjee on "Indo-Pakistani Missile Race" touches upon a very serious issue as far as the basic tenets of South Asian security are concerned. Missiles, with high mobility, fast speed and target accuracy are not only major conventional weapons but they become matters of serious concern as they are also capable of carrying nuclear war-heads to targets in enemy territories. Banerjee reminds us that the proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia is closely connected to missile proliferation. The region is

already witnessing an open missile race between India and Pakistan aided by extra-regional powers - Russia and China and like nuclear proliferation it also negates US non-proliferation strategy in South Asia. It would be, however, hard for Indian and Pakistani decision-makers to accept Banerjee's proposition that India and Pakistan should not have great difficulties in joining multilateral or global talks on non-proliferation under the auspices of the US. It would be also naive to believe that responses from the US or India to multilateral talks for global non-proliferation would be forthcoming as desired by Banerjee.

The volume, as readers with interest in South Asian nuclear problematique would find it, adds a valuable contribution to the proliferating literature in the field. It brings out many critical issues and questions concerning proliferation in South Asia to the light in a new global dispensation free from Cold War rhetorics. The readers will undoubtedly find it highly interesting, informative, and necessarily provocative. Yet more justice to the readers could have been made if the editor were careful enough to avoid some minor defects an intelligent reader would definitely point out. For example, a majority of the authors take Pakistan as a very crucial factor in the shaping of India's current nuclear policy but it contains no article on Pakistani nuclear perspectives having unavoidable implications for India. Secondly, while India and Pakistan are engaged in an undeclared nuclear competition the smaller states of the region -Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, for example, who are signatories to the NPT, are concerned about Indo-Pak nuclear competition. An elaboration on the nuclear postures, perspectives and outlook of the smaller states could have made the volume more valuable to the readers. The editor and the

authors, the minor defects notwithstanding, deserve special appreciation since it represents distinct perspectives on India's nuclear thinking from the East outside the Delhi-based centre.

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