

# US-India Nuke Deal May Spark Asian Arms Race

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NEW YORK (IPS) - The U.S. decision last week to proceed with a controversial civilian nuclear deal with India has triggered strong negative responses from peace activists, disarmament experts and anti-nuclear groups.

"The development of a nuclear/strategic alliance between the United States and India may promote arms racing between India and Pakistan, and (between) India and China," says John Burroughs, executive director of the New York-based Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy.

The deal, he told IPS, also undermines prospects for global agreements on nuclear restraint and disarmament.

An equally negative reaction came from former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Jayantha Dhanapala: "It has the dangerous potential of triggering a nuclear arms race among India, Pakistan and China, with disastrous consequences for Asian peace and stability and Asia's emerging economic boom."

But the Indian government argues that the nuclear agreement would neither destabilise the region nor prompt an arms race.

Nor will it trigger a "copycat deal" between Pakistan and China, India's national security adviser N.K. Narayanan told reporters last week.

"This agreement was not an excuse to enhance our strategic capabilities," he told a press briefing in New Delhi.

Zia Mian of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University says the United States sees strategic and economic benefits in the nuclear deal with India.

"But the people of India and Pakistan will pay the price, since the nuclear deal will fuel the India-Pakistan nuclear arms race," he added.

The deal will allow India to increase its capacity to make nuclear weapons materiel, and Pakistan has already said it will do whatever it can to keep up with India.

"This means nuclear establishments in both countries will become more powerful, drain even greater resources away from social development, and increase the nuclear danger in South Asia," Mian told IPS.

Nicholas Burns, the U.S. undersecretary of state who led the negotiations, denied the deal was a clear example of political double standards by an administration which has been trying to punish Iran for its nuclear ambitions but gives its blessings to India.

"This agreement sends a message to outlaw regimes such as Iran that if you behave responsibly, you will not be penalised," he told reporters last week.

India — along with Pakistan and Israel — has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but Iran has.

Called the "123 agreement", last week's nuclear deal will help create a civil nuclear enrichment facility in India, mostly with U.S.-made reactors and expertise.

Still, in a major speech in February 2004, U.S. President George W. Bush said that "enrichment and reprocessing are not necessary for nations seeking to harness nuclear energy for peaceful purposes." "The details of the so-called '123 agreement' are still shrouded in secrecy but, on the basis of what has been disclosed, it is clear that the U.S.-India nuclear cooperation deal is an example of crude realpolitik trumping nuclear nonproliferation principles in total disregard of the NPT," Dhanapala told IPS.

He warned that it sends "a bad signal to the overwhelming majority of NPT parties who have faithfully abided by their treaty obligations."

Last week Burns told reporters that the deal would not act as an incentive for other countries to develop nuclear weapons outside the NPT.

Burroughs said that India made it clear when the NPT was negotiated that it could not accept a world divided into nuclear haves and nuclear have-nots, and stayed out of the treaty.

"The problem with the deal is not that it acknowledges that India has nuclear weapons," Burroughs told IPS. "The problem is that both India and the United States are showing no signs of working towards the elimination of their arsenals together with other states possessing nuclear weapons."

Under the deal, neither country agrees to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

"And while India agrees to work with the United States towards a treaty banning production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, India is not required to stop producing materials for weapons now or to refrain from building additional weapons from existing material," he added.

Nor does India assume the obligation the United States has under the NPT, to negotiate in good faith cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and the elimination of nuclear arsenals.

In short, the deal seems to certify India as a member of a permanent nuclear weapons club, Burroughs declared.

Mian of Princeton University pointed out that the deal is also a clear violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1172, adopted on 6 June 1998, which was passed unanimously, and called upon India and Pakistan "immediately to stop their nuclear weapon development programmes, to refrain from weaponisation or from the deployment of nuclear weapons, to cease development of ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons and any further production of fissile material for nuclear weapons." That resolution also encouraged all States to "prevent the export of equipment, materials or technology that could in any way assist programs in India or Pakistan for nuclear weapons," said Mian who along with M. V. Ramana co-authored

"Wrong Ends, Means, and Needs: Behind the U.S. Nuclear Deal With India", in the January/February 2006 issue of Arms Control Today.

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