



NUCLEAR SECURITY: COMPLACENCY UNWARRANTED

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The conclusion of four Nuclear Security Summits (NSS) with some tangible initiatives, the entry into force of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) with 102 adherents, and the unavailability of any precedent of successful nuclear terror should not germinate a sense of complacency that absolute nuclear security is achievable. As long as nuclear weapon and nuclear energy remains attractive, terrorism is used as a tool in statecraft, and states resort to double standards, the chances of misuse of nuclear technology cannot completely be ruled out.

Any strategy to eliminate the chance of the misuse of nuclear technology must involve two spectrums: first, the possessors' responsibility to ensure absolute control and safe-keep of the material and know-how to make their slippage unfeasible; second, to dissuade rogues by propagating the uselessness of nuclear arsenal

for nefarious designs. Global efforts have so far been confined to the first spectrum only. Even though the main goal of the NSS process is to increase awareness regarding safe-keep of nuclear materials worldwide, the umbilical link between nuclear security and nuclear disarmament cannot and should not completely be sidelined.

The NSS 2016 communiqué has reaffirmed the "shared goals of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy."¹ However, no concrete multilateral step has been undertaken yet to convey that nuclear weapons are not-usable, thereby discourage others not to look for them. Though late, this is another juncture to introspect on the vital link between nuclear security and proliferation of WMDs.

Universal criminalization of WMDs is the key to ensure global nuclear security. While criminalization of chemical and biological

weapons has been the strongest, the same is not the case regarding nuclear weapons. Many commissions have been constituted for arms control, non-proliferation; but none has ever been tasked to inquire into the question of — can nuclear be used to fight and win a meaningful victory? Only the realization that nuclear cannot be used to win a war will take the world towards de-legitimization of nuclear weapons² – a necessary step for strengthening nuclear security. As long as nuclear weapons exist, or states pursue to possess them, nuclear technology, material and know-how will continue to proliferate, and chances of their misuse will remain high.

Praiseworthy is the NNS process for raising global attention on the threat to nuclear material as well as states' obligations thereof. But “the focus on non-state actors should in no way diminish state accountability in combating terrorism, dismantling its support infrastructure or its linkage with WMD”.³ The missing link, therefore, is how to deal with the issue of ‘terrorism as a state policy’; how to stop the covert trade of WMD technology that has been integral part of the foreign policy of some nations, “plotted and supervised by the ruling clique” itself.⁴ Ensuring nuclear security is certainly the sole responsibility of States, which in turn necessitates “responsible behaviour by States.” The clandestine nuclear cooperation between China and Pakistan, not included as a

global concern in the NSS process, dilutes the credibility of all such efforts.

Above all, lesser issues like non-participation of Russia's top leadership, absence of Iran, North Korea, and Belarus, and the prospect of such global efforts post-Obama presidency must factor in any introspection on global resolve on nuclear security.

As far as India is concerned, despite its enthusiastic contribution both financial and national gift basket along with its strengthened nuclear governance set up, it has not been able to silence the coterie that is desperate to pull India's leg in the name of ‘transparency’, indexing, or expansion of nuclear weapons programme.

The current government must introduce early the new Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority (NSRA) bill, which was lapsed with the change of government, to overhaul the *de facto* independence of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB).

Meanwhile, the disgruntlement of a few domestic opinion makers must be diagnosed as their views find many takers abroad for tarnishing India's image.

Given Asia's increasing vulnerability than any other part of the world concerning nuclear terrorism, Prime Minister Modi would like to initiate Nuclear Security Summit Asia (NSSA) series in collaboration with the UN/IAEA

process. Regionalization of NSS should be the logical next step, and India must take the lead.

(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS])

Notes

¹ “Nuclear Security Summit 2016 Communiqué”, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/01/nuclear-security-summit-2016-communic%C3%A9>

² K Subrahmanyam, “Prospect for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World”, *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, vol. 5, no.

2, April-June 2010, pp. 172-180.

³ “Inaugural Address by Amandeep Singh Gill, Joint Secretary, MEA at Seminar on UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004)”, http://www.idsa.in/speech/AmandeepSinghGill_UNSecurityCouncilResolution540

⁴ BD Jayal, “Know Yourself and Your Enemies”, *Indian Defence Review*, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/know-yourself-and-your-enemies/>, 12 Jul, 2014.