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Political Reactions to the Agreement in India

- Hailed as historic by most parties
- Left Parties vehemently oppose it; would inhibit future testing (*ironic because they had opposed the 1974 and 1998 tests*)
- Most academic circles welcome it; enables demise of nuclear isolation imposed by USA in 1974
- Mainstream newspaper columnists support it
Reactions of Industry and the Scientific Community

- Large industrial houses (e.g., Tatas, Reliance) would like to enter the nuclear electricity sector – provided enabling legislation is passed; would like to sign deals with foreign majors.

- Criticism by retired atomic energy chiefs that it curtails autonomy to conduct tests in the future; bulk of the community is reported to welcome the deal.

- Nuclear industry professionals believe prospects of nuclear electricity have been brightened by the deal because US opposition in the NSG to imported turn-key power reactors has now vanished.

- Given India’s current uranium deficit, its import from uranium-rich nations is enabled.

- India’s ‘strategic’ programme is unaffected by the agreement.
Need for Testing and Testing Methods

- Principle of `Trust by Verify” applies; assurance of performance is more important than confidence in design - especially to the armed forces

- Spectrum of testing procedures ranging from `full scale’ tests to simulation, modelling, sub-system tests; not in violation treaty or other obligations

- Even USA has its Stockpile Stewardship Program; not surprising that others would have similar programs

- If changes have been made to nuclear core or the trigger system, the need would arise for a confirmatory test or tests; however, the green signal would be given by the political authority only while taking account of politico-economic-diplomatic repercussions
Need for Testing and Testing Methods

- Nuclear tests could be used to `signal' adversaries not to cross some Red Signals (or the Nuclear Rubicon)

- A nuclear debutante will have to conduct a test to convince the world of its `arrival'; no statements or declaratory postures would suffice

- Some countries (eg North Korea) could use nuclear tests, or the threat to go nuclear, as bargaining chips in international affairs
On the Indo-US Nuclear Agreement

Six features need highlighting:

1) It reveals more of statesmanship on the part of USA and less of politics.

2) Both would create a “strategic fuel reserve” to guard against any supply disruption over the lifetime of power reactors and USA Would work with countries like France, Russia and UK; plus the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

3) Reprocessing of spent fuel from such imported power reactors will Be permissible. India would build a new, safeguarded facility for this purpose.
Six features Contd...........

4) If India’s security environment changes adversely advantage and the need for nuclear tests arises in the future, both countries would enter into `consultations'. These would be ‘prompt’; could arise if there is a nuclear test by any country.

5) The validity of the agreement is 40 years; extendable by 10.

6) Agreement termination will need a year’s notice; no automatic fall of the guillotine
Political Reactions in India

Opposition from Left Parties

Their demands:

a) Do not `operationalise’ the agreement

b) Agreement should be debated in parliament and cleared

c) Impose a 6-month freeze

d) Any abridgement of India’s right to conduct future tests not acceptable
An Analysis of the Left/Opposition Demands

- Appears driven by archaic ideology and genetic dislike of USA as the sole Super Power

- No politico-economic-technological rationale presented, so far

- Ignores tradition that the government of the day has the right to enter into bilateral/multilateral treaties without prior debate in Parliament; (eg the Indo-USSR Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of 1971)
An Analysis of the Left/Opposition
Demands (contd)

- There are 2 just remaining bastions of Communist power and ideology in India: West Bengal and Kerala; insignificant in the other States of India
- The present coalition government in New Delhi depends on Left support
- But the Indo-US nuclear deal is *not likely to be a make-or-break* issue. Reason: no political party is ready for premature parliamentary elections; mid-term elections not favoured
What If India’s Security Environment turns Adverse and the Need to Test Arises?

A nuclear *modus vivendi* exists with China and Pakistan; plus CBMs

A nuclear Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal or Myanmar could call for a re-think

Then, likely impact on the Indo-US Agreement could be:

a) Prompt consultations; the Agreement provides for such “consultations”

b) Moves towards more regional CBMs

c) If the political and technical need exists for more tests under the changed circumstances; unlike 1974 and 1998, USA would not be “surprised”
Other Measures

As part of its Minimum Credible Deterrence (MCD), India may be expected to:

- Continue R&D and upgrades to avoid obsolescence.
- Repackage and clear payloads for new delivery vectors as they emerge in the future.
- Continue bilateral and multilateral engagements to ensure that a nuclear exchange is not triggered by misperceptions, ignorance or worse.
- Cooperate in efforts to ensure that nuclear weapons or technology does not fall into the hands of non-State actors.
- Work towards the elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound frame-work.
The deal is largely perceived in India as being in India’s national interests.

- It ends the nuclear isolation of India, mainly by USA, since 1974.
- It removes hurdles for countries like Russia and France to vigorously participate in turn-key power reactor projects.
- Criticism of the deal by India’s Left Parties could be handled within the democratic space.

Summing Up