

Who is telling the truth on the US-India nuclear deal?

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There seems to be a political game going on to bamboozle public on the nitty-gritty of US nuclear deal with India, in which the US has agreed to provide India nuclear fuel and technology, to make it “a great power”. The agreement is subject to the approval of the US Congress and India’s Parliament.

The US says that if India conducts nuclear tests, the agreement will be suspended, while India asserts that it is free to conduct nuclear tests in terms of the agreement and the agreement does not curtail the sovereignty of the country in conducting nuclear trusts. Both cannot be right in their assertions.

Who is telling the truth?

It is difficult for a common person in both countries as to who is right. The statements have confused ordinary people and there is a speculation that one party tends to hide the fact from public.

.One thing is sure that the deal will not be easy sailing in both the US Congress and India’s Parliament for different reasons altogether.

While the Administration is determined to halt nuclear proliferation for Iran and North Korea, it allows India, a non-party to the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1970, to accelerate its nuclear programme both civil and military.

Some of the US Congress lawmakers find the deal inconsistent with the US law and the Bush administration’s stance against nuclear proliferation.

.Meanwhile, Indian newspapers on 16th August reported the US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack as saying that the US reserved the right to cancel the deal if India carried out a nuclear test.

Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha - the two houses of parliament - witnessed angry protests by members of the opposition parties.

"Stop speaking lies. Stop selling the country and save India," the opposition members chanted.

One fact clearly emerges that many of India’s nuclear plants would be open for the first time to UN inspections as a result of the nuclear deal. The UN agency IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), based in Vienna, will ensure that nuclear fuel does not go to military nuclear plants. The nuclear fuel provided by the US would be used for peaceful purposes, meaning generating domestic energy.

Another hurdle to cross:

Even if the deal is adopted by the lawmakers of two countries, there is another hurdle to cross. The deal is subject to the approval of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) that includes China.

The NSG is a multinational body concerned with reducing [nuclear proliferation](#) by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials that may be applicable to [nuclear weapon](#) development and by improving safeguards and protection on existing materials.

The NSG was founded in 1975 in response to the [Indian nuclear test](#) of 1974. The test demonstrated that certain non-weapons specific nuclear technology could be readily turned to weapons development. Nations already signatories of the [NPT](#) saw the need to further limit the export of nuclear equipment, materials or technology..

Implications:

An international nuclear non-proliferation research and advocacy group, the Arms Control Association, accused the Bush administration and other potential suppliers of nuclear fuel or uranium (Australia) to India of flagrantly contradicting their stance on nuclear non-proliferation. They suggest there cannot be one rule for India and another for others including Iran and North Korea.

Meanwhile Pakistan joined in with the chorus of opposition to the deal. It took the view that in the interests of non-proliferation and strategic stability in South Asia there should be a “package approach” where both India and Pakistan get the same deal.

Pakistan is pained to see that despite President Musharraf’s alignment with the US on war on terrorism, the Bush administration does not see India and Pakistan in the same light. It gives an edge to India over Pakistan, because India and the US are democratic countries while Pakistan is not and the US is worried that Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal may eventually fall in the hands of religious extremists.

Australia’s Prime Minister John Howard, an ally of President Bush, said that “we want to be satisfied that the uranium will only be used for peaceful purposes.” He announced strict conditions on any uranium sales to India after a telephone conversation with India’s Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, according to a media report.

With Australia having 40% per cent of the world’s known uranium reserves, Australian leaders think that they have an advantage to strike a deal with India.

One fact that has been ignored is that if India gets nuclear fuel or uranium from the US and Australia, they can easily divert their total domestic supplies of uranium to military atomic plants for catching up with China’s nuclear capability.

American current drive to make available nuclear fuel to India is to make it a counter-weight to China’s influence in the region..

The implications of the nuclear deal may not be lost to China. The deal is likely to accelerate arms race in Asian-Pacific region with disastrous consequences.

Conclusioin:

Many strategists suggest contemporary American military doctrine is designed to rattle and confuse an adversary. The US is pursuing dominance over China across the military spectrum—building up its conventional-warfare, space-warfare, and information-warfare technologies as well as missile-defence and offensive nuclear-strike systems.

Observers believe this growing American counterforce is deemed to be counter-productive in the long run if the goal is to prevent nuclear escalation.

Observers suggest that China is neither a foe nor a friend of the US. The current US policy of considering China a “strategic competitor” is misconceived and should regard China as “strategic partner”. Such shift of policy may usher in cooperative relations between the US and China.

Optimists may contend the economic dependence of the US and China on each other is a factor that may encourage not to consider each other a competitor and this will lead to peace and stability in the region.