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INDIA'S IMPACT ON THE FORMATION  
OF MULTIPOLAR NUCLEAR ORDER

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**Abstract.** India's decision not to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has led to its labelling as a state that is not fully aligned with the global nuclear order. This places it in the same category as other nuclear-armed countries outside these agreements, such as Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan. India's nuclear weapons testing in 1998, followed by a similar move by Pakistan, has been viewed as a challenge to international security and the nuclear non-proliferation regime. This article aims to examine India's stance on these treaties and its choice to become a nuclear-armed state in 1998 within the context of its efforts to influence the establishment of a fair global order that serves the interests of not only the major nuclear powers (China, France, USSR/Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and their allies, but also the rest of the world. Delhi's actions in the realm of nuclear arms control highlight the emerging multipolar world. Although India has refrained from actively participating in disarmament negotiations after the end of Cold War, its previous experiences remain relevant today. The breakdown of the U.S. — Russia nuclear arms control as well as crises over the nuclear non-proliferation and testing banning regimes have given weight to the arguments put forth by Indian leaders and diplomats. These arguments emphasize the urgency of reducing nuclear risks and exercising strategic restraint, including maintaining a moratorium on nuclear testing. Since 1998, India has adopted an approach different from its previous policy on various nuclear disarmament issues. This shift is evident in the country's solidarity with other nuclear powers in opposing the 2021 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. However, India's longstanding support for multipolarity in international security policy, particularly regarding nuclear weapons, remains unchanged.

**Keywords:** India, disarmament, nuclear control, multipolarity, international organizations, nonproliferation, nuclear tests, nuclear weapon.

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ВЛИЯНИЕ ИНДИИ НА ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ  
МНОГОПОЛЯРНОГО ЯДЕРНОГО ПОРЯДКА

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**Аннотация.** Статья прослеживает эволюцию внешней политики Индии в области ограничения ядерных вооружений в связи с внутривнутриполитическими процессам и развитием военной ядерной программы в этой стране. В исследовании рассматривается развитие многополярности в области ядерной политики под влиянием индийских дипломатических усилий.

**Ключевые слова:** Индия, разоружение, контроль над ядерным оружием, многополярность, международные организации, нераспространение, ядерные испытания, ядерное оружие.

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## INTRODUCTION

India's position outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Weapons Ban Treaty (CTBT) defines its treatment as a state not fully integrated into the global nuclear order (like other nuclear-weapon states outside these regimes — Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan). Furthermore, its crossing of the nuclear threshold in 1998, repeated in the same year by Pakistan, is interpreted as a crisis for the nuclear non-proliferation regime and a challenge to international security.

This paper aims to examine India's policy concerning the aforementioned treaties, its decision to become a nuclear state in 1998, and the changes in its approach to the international nuclear order in recent years, within the broader context of efforts to influence the formation of a fair global order that meets the interests of not only the nuclear five (China, France, USSR/Russia, the UK, and the USA) and their allies but also of the broader global community. The outcomes of India's foreign policy in nuclear arms limitation help to highlight the multipolarity emerging during the Cold War and to delineate its features in the current era.

## OPTIONS FOR THE FORMATION OF A MULTIPOLAR NUCLEAR ORDER

In 2016, Michael Krepon, a prominent expert on South Asian nuclear issues, argued that transitioning from bilateral to multilateral strategic arms reductions will be a slow, complex process. According to this author, transitioning to a multilateral process becomes even more challenging if the bilateral process of strategic arms reductions breaks down [1, p. 51]. Several years later, Russian-American nuclear arms control found itself in a deep crisis, marked by the termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF)

Treaty in 2019 and the suspension of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in 2023.

However, Krepon's approach retained its practical significance. First, he proposed a systematization for nuclear-armed states, dividing them into countries with arsenals in the thousands (Russia and the United States) and countries with arsenals in the hundreds (China, France, the UK, Pakistan, and India)<sup>1</sup>. Second, based on this systematization, he formulated a principle of phased reductions, which implied a gradual decrease in the number of warheads in the Russian Federation and the United States while simultaneously implementing policies to limit arsenal growth among other nuclear states.

In today's context, this principle appears unlikely to be realized. Active nuclear modernization programs among many of these states, China's presumed nuclear arsenal expansion in response to perceived regional threats, and Russia's view of the combined nuclear capabilities of the US, UK, and France collectively indicate that reductions or freezes are improbable. Nonetheless, Krepon's approach reflects a possible pathway to move from bilateral relations to a multilateral nuclear order, emphasizing the roles of Russia and the United States as central pillars of the nuclear order and elevating other nuclear states from passive observers to active participants in arms limitation efforts.

In 2019, RAS Academician Arbatov proposed a five-phase roadmap for multilateral nuclear order development. The initial three phases involved the nuclear order's core (Russia and the United States); the fourth phase aimed to include China in negotiations, while the fifth sought to extend Russian-American transparency measures to the other P5 members and initiate bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan on nucle-

<sup>1</sup> Krepon does not include Israel in this category, although he devotes several pages to its problem in the mentioned text.

ar arms limitations [2, p. 163]. Although recent nuclear developments have necessitated adjustments to this roadmap, Arbatov acknowledges its utility as an illustrative approach to addressing these issues. The role of the nuclear order's core, consisting of two or three states — potentially including China, given that China's arsenal likely surpasses those of the UK and France — remains unchanged.

Among Indian experts, the notion of all nuclear-armed states adopting limitations is seen as more reflective of Cold War-era US-USSR relations. According to influential author and former diplomat Rakesh Sood, one of the barriers to establishing a multilateral nuclear order was that during the Cold War, nuclear arms control implied nuclear disarmament [3, p. 16, 17]. Sood argues that the real goal of control was to reduce the likelihood of a nuclear catastrophe. Under the modern multilateral order, he suggests shifting focus from catastrophe prevention, which appeared less imminent in 2019 when his analysis was published, to maintaining various taboos around nuclear policy, such as rejecting destabilizing systems or doctrines that lower the nuclear-use threshold.

One such taboo is the moratorium on nuclear testing, observed by all states within the NPT framework and those outside of it (except North Korea, which last conducted a nuclear test on September 3, 2017). This includes India and Pakistan, both of which have, at different times, proposed regional and global nuclear test bans. The analysis of India's various proposals below reveals a consistent commitment to shaping a multilateral nuclear order. It outlines critical elements of India's vision for ensuring such an order from a historical perspective.

## CALL FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

India's initiatives have been global and comprehensive from the outset (rather than regional and selective, as in the case of Pakistan<sup>2</sup>). In

<sup>2</sup> In the mid-1980s, Pakistan offered India support for its initiatives to create a nuclear-free zone in South Asia, joint accession of India and Pakistan to the NPT as non-nuclear states, extension of full International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards to all nuclear facilities in India and

1954, following the United States' largest atmospheric thermonuclear test in the Marshall Islands on February 28, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru proposed a ban on nuclear testing. This test exceeded anticipated power levels and contaminated 13 atolls [4, p. 44, 59].

These events allowed India to assert itself as a voice for Asia and a key player in global politics. On April 2, 1954, Prime Minister Nehru delivered a speech in the Lok Sabha (India's lower house of Parliament) that brought India onto the global nuclear diplomacy stage, according to researcher Priyanjali Malik [5]. Nehru proposed four steps to form the Stand-Still Agreement. These included, first, the cessation of nuclear testing. Nehru acknowledged that suspending the production and stockpiling of fissile materials of weapons quality would require separate negotiations and agreements. Second, disclosing nuclear effects by the nuclear weapons-states and the UN. Third, immediately commencing meetings within the UN Disarmament Commission to negotiate the production suspension of fissile materials. Fourth, encouraging non-nuclear states to exert influence on nuclear powers to halt nuclear weapons development [7].

Nehru's initiative was comprehensive and pursued the ultimate goal of eliminating weapons of mass destruction (WMD). He recognized the insurmountable obstacles to achieving this goal and therefore called for efforts to end nuclear testing, which would stop the world from sliding toward a nuclear catastrophe. The Indian leader was confident that "all these bombs that are being made and collected, and all these tests... are gradually bringing the probability of an explosion nearer" [8]. The achievement of India's policy was Resolution 1762 (XVII), adopted

Pakistan, exchange of inspections of nuclear facilities between India and Pakistan, and adoption of a legally binding declaration by South Asian countries on the renunciation of the acquisition or development of nuclear weapons [source 1]. In 1998, Pakistan offered India a Comprehensive Agreement on the Limitation of Conventional Armed Forces, which, together with confidence-building measures in the nuclear field, was supposed to create a regime of strategic restraint in South Asia [6, p. 115]. India rejected all the initiatives of the neighboring state.

by the UN General Assembly on November 6, 1962, "The Urgent Need for Suspension of Nuclear and Thermo-Nuclear Tests" [source 2]. In addition to condemning nuclear testing, the resolution called for a suspension of all testing from January 1, 1963 and a treaty banning tests in the atmosphere, outer space, and under water. India was one of the few countries that led in drafting this resolution [9, p. 23]. With Burma (present-day Myanmar), Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, the United Arab Republic, which consisted of present-day Egypt, Syria, and Yemen, as well as Sweden and Ethiopia, India prepared a memorandum dated April 16, 1962. This document influenced the above-mentioned resolution and the international debate on banning underground nuclear tests, thus laying one of the building blocks of the future CTBT.

As a result of this period in foreign policy, modern Indian nuclear diplomacy has gained, first, a focus on global issues rather than just regional ones; second, a comprehensive approach aimed at achieving multilateral progress in nuclear weapons limitation rather than a narrowly focused one; and third, a preference for leveraging the UN and participating in various international groups to enhance the effectiveness of its initiatives.

### FIRST NUCLEAR TEST

During this period, India's nuclear diplomacy, as communicated to the global community, faced regional challenges. In accordance with the position proclaimed by Jawaharlal Nehru, on August 8, 1963, India ratified the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, Outer Space and Under Water. However, China, which had recently emerged victorious from the Indian-Chinese border conflict of 1962 and conducted its first nuclear test in 1964, did not join the treaty.

This prompted India to reassess its nuclear diplomacy, ultimately leading to its refusal to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which came into effect in 1970. The NPT restricted nuclear testing, prohibited non-nuclear states from developing nuclear

weapons (Article II), and promised nuclear powers would assist non-nuclear states with peaceful nuclear explosions (Article V) [source 3]. Following China's example as a recognized nuclear power under the treaty, the document's discriminatory nature was evident for India. The NPT prohibited the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons while allowing vertical proliferation, i. e., the build-up of arsenals by states that already had nuclear weapons [10, p. 43]. At the same time, on July 20, 1973, India joined the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil, signaling its continued engagement in nuclear arms limitation efforts.

India's shift in policy was made clear through its underground nuclear test on May 18, 1974, which it described as peaceful. Although the Soviet Union publicly supported this characterization, in closed meetings the Soviet diplomats expressed concern about the direction of India's nuclear program [11, p. 252]. Paradoxically, this nuclear test helped the United States convince several states that had signed the NPT in the 1960s to ratify the Treaty, thereby strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime [12]<sup>3</sup>.

After 1974, India was considered part of a group of threshold states [14, p. 53] along with Israel, Pakistan, as well as South Africa (ratified the treaty in 1991), Argentina (1995), and Brazil (1998). During the Cold War, however, Russian authors distinguished India from Israel, Pakistan, and South Africa, perceiving aggressive intentions in the latter countries' actions [15, p. 83].

The reason for singling India out of the list of threshold countries, as one might assume, was not only due to the Soviet-Indian friendship. In the 1980s, India was still in the early stages of developing potential nuclear weapon delivery systems. In contrast, Israel, South Africa, and

<sup>3</sup> In 1975, under pressure from the United States, which used Indian nuclear tests as an argument in support of the NPT, the treaty was ratified by Belgium, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, Germany, in 1976 by Japan, and in 1977 by Switzerland [13, p. 226].

Pakistan already had such capabilities: Israel by the early 1960s [16, p. 78], South Africa by the late 1970s [17, p. 100], and Pakistan by the 1980s [18].

This period defined critical aspects of contemporary Indian diplomacy: first, China's positioning as the primary influence on India's nuclear policy; second, the perception of nuclear disarmament initiatives by nuclear powers as discriminatory, reflected in the NPT; and third, India's rejection of a threshold state identity and its ongoing efforts to impact global nuclear limitation efforts.

### DISARMAMENT PROGRAM

Following the 1974 test, India's active nuclear diplomacy influenced many international actors' perceptions of its nuclear ambitions. Domestic political developments further energized India's foreign policy on nuclear disarmament. 1977 following an anti-corruption wave, the Janata Party won the general elections<sup>4</sup>, and its leader, Morarji

Desai, became the first Indian prime minister outside of the Indian National Congress (INC).

At the First Special Session of the UN General Assembly on June 9, 1978, the new Prime Minister called for outlawing not only the use of nuclear technology for military purposes but also research and development in this area. His speech included a four-point program, which Desai had presented in parts at international events since 1977, including an official reception in his honor in Moscow on October 21, 1977 [source 4, p. 200, 201].

The program's first point, presented at the UN in 1978, proposed a declaration on the illegality of military uses and research of nuclear technology. The second point called for qualitative and quantitative limitations on nuclear weapons and an immediate freeze on stockpiles under international inspection. The third point proposed a plan for significant reductions

<sup>4</sup> The Janata Party experienced a decline in the late 1970s and early 1980s, becoming a minor party. Some of its prominent members joined the newly formed Bharatiya Janata Party in 1980, which went on to achieve a string of political victories in general elections in 1996, 1998, 2014, 2019, and 2024.

in global nuclear arsenals within ten years, followed by complete elimination. The fourth point advocated for a general ban on nuclear tests based on a system of international inspections [source 5, p. 237, 238, 239].

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Foreign Minister under Desai from 1977 to 1979 and later Prime Minister from 1998 to 2004, under whom India conducted military nuclear tests in 1998, significantly promoted this program internationally [19, p. 72]. The latter may serve as an argument to consider Desai's program potentially propagandistic, concealing India's nuclear ambitions. Moreover, many of Desai's proposals were overly ambitious to gain support from nuclear powers.

However, reducing this program to simple propaganda would be an oversimplification. First, Desai was a genuine advocate of nuclear disarmament. Although prior governments had left the door open for further nuclear tests post-1974, in 1978, he declared a unilateral moratorium on such tests, even for peaceful purposes [9, p. 23]. Second, despite Pakistan's belief that India's 1974 test marked its commitment to military nuclear development [18, p. 50], prominent authors suggest that until the early 1990s, India maintained a nonweaponized nuclear policy of keeping options open without actively developing nuclear weapons [20, p. 723, 724].

Third, India's commitment to nuclear disarmament extended beyond national policy. As a leader in the Non-Aligned Movement, India leveraged the disarmament agenda to pressure nuclear powers on behalf of states seeking to avoid Cold War entanglements and reform global governance in favor of non-aligned countries. At the First Special Session in the summer of 1978, during which Desai presented the four points of his program, the Non-Aligned Movement submitted a document advocating not only for the renunciation of first-use doctrines and nuclear reductions but also for the withdrawal of foreign military bases and a reformation of the UN's disarmament mechanisms. This reform, partly realized post-1978, aimed to create a more multilateral framework, diminishing the influence of Cold War superpowers [source 6, p. 11, 12].

This era emphasized the need for reformed international institutions, where dominant states obstructed equitable nuclear policy — a stance that continues in modern Indian diplomacy. Through the Non-Aligned Movement, India significantly contributed to establishing a multipolar world order during the Cold War's bipolar confrontation.

### CULMINATION OF INDIA'S DISARMAMENT EFFORTS

India's approach of advancing military technology without crossing the nuclear threshold, combined with its deep involvement in international discussions on nuclear arms limitation, explains the continuity of this policy even after the Janata Party's crushing defeat in the 1980 general elections and the Indian National Congress's return to power.

Until 1984, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two of her bodyguards, India's nuclear disarmament efforts balanced promoting a constructive agenda with condemning the policies of nuclear powers. Narasimha Rao, India's External Affairs Minister, reflected this stance in his speech, full of tirades against the nuclear powers, at the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly on June 11, 1982. For example, he countered the argument that nuclear weapons had preserved peace in Europe after 1945, saying, "This logic, in addition to being basically flawed, is also macabre. It implies that peace should forever remain hostage to nuclear weapons, and that the perceived security of some nations is to be equated with peace in the whole world" [source 7, p. 166]. Rao further criticized the nuclear powers for using arms control to dominate other states, calling disarmament in the nuclear age a "modern version of colonialism and imperialism": "One wonders then," he stressed, "whether the game of disarmament in the nuclear age is, *inter alia*, an effort by the Great Powers to control smaller countries — shall we call it one of the modern versions of colonialism and imperialism?" [source 7, p. 169]. While these critiques took a strong tone, they overshadowed the speech's

proposals to ban nuclear tests, freeze nuclear weapons production, halt the production of weapons-grade fissile materials, and ban the use and threat of nuclear weapons.

The Indira Gandhi government's major disarmament initiative was a multilateral appeal to the nuclear powers, published on May 22, 1984. Supported by the leaders of Argentina, Greece, Mexico, Tanzania, and Sweden, it urged the nuclear-armed "big five" to freeze nuclear weapons testing, production, and deployment of new delivery systems and to begin meaningful reductions in nuclear arsenals. The appeal was based on several arguments: first, the crisis in Soviet-American arms control talks and the inadequacies of existing regimes to reduce nuclear threats; second, the increased risk of nuclear catastrophe with shrinking warning times and more accurate, deadly weapons, "The probability of nuclear holocaust increases and the weapons become swifter, more accurate and more deadly" [source 8, p. 166]; and third, the argument that genuine security must be shared globally and not limited to a few states.

In the general elections of 1984, the INC retained power, with Rajiv Gandhi, the son of the assassinated Prime Minister, heading the government. This period was marked by the culmination of India's diplomatic efforts in the field of multilateral nuclear disarmament, which were not limited to non-aligned countries. Rajiv Gandhi supported the development of the above-mentioned six-party peace initiative, which was distinguished by the inclusion of not only two European countries, Greece and Sweden, but also a NATO member state, Greece<sup>5</sup>. In addition, with the support of the Soviet Union (one of the five nuclear powers), the Delhi Declaration on the Principles of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free and Non-Violent World was adopted on November 27, 1986. The declaration called for the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals by the end

<sup>5</sup> The Group held four meetings, which included the participation of the general public in addition to the heads of states: New Delhi, India (January 28, 1985); Athens, Greece (January 31, 1985); Iztapa, Mexico (August 6, 1986); Stockholm, Sweden (January 21–22, 1987) [21, pp. 6–13].

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the prevention of the deployment of any weapons in space, the prohibition of creating new types of WMD, the prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles, and the reduction in conventional forces. It proposed an international convention banning the use or threat of nuclear weapons until complete disarmament could be achieved. The initiative was grounded in recognizing global unity and indivisible security [source 9, p. 381].

India's multitrack nuclear diplomacy — involving the UN, the Non-Aligned Movement, the six-party initiative, Soviet-Indian dialogue, and other avenues — culminated in the Action Plan presented by Rajiv Gandhi at the Third Special Session of the UN General Assembly on June 9, 1988. This plan included the phased elimination of all nuclear weapons by 2010, with each phase yielding specific results, the engagement of all nuclear powers, participation of non-nuclear states, and changes in doctrines and institutions to ensure a nuclear-free world. To achieve this, the plan also envisioned creating a comprehensive global security system under UN auspices. Gandhi's Action Plan was well-structured and ambitious. The first phase was remarkably detailed, suggesting parallel negotiating tracks to address specific issues. Gandhi proposed that, following the elimination of missiles under the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the USSR and the USA should reduce their strategic nuclear forces by half. He also called for a moratorium on nuclear tests and an end to the production of nuclear weapons and weapons-grade fissile materials. A key component of the Indian plan was the proposal to begin discussions on a new treaty to replace the NPT after 1995, which would impose legally binding obligations on nuclear powers to reduce all nuclear weapons by 2010 and on non-nuclear states to abstain from developing them [source 10, p. 174].

In preserving its established nuclear diplomacy, India successfully extended its influence beyond Asia and the Non-Aligned Movement. Of the nuclear powers, Russia (as the USSR's successor and aligned with international policy on nuclear limitations) displayed the greatest un-

derstanding of India's approach, setting it apart from the other nuclear states. Both countries view global security as an interconnected whole, encompassing all aspects.

### CROSSING THE NUCLEAR THRESHOLD

Despite positive responses from many non-nuclear and some nuclear states to India's nuclear disarmament plan, this initiative was not continued, partly due to Rajiv Gandhi's departure from office. In 1989, he lost power, and in 1991 he was assassinated in a terrorist attack. Global changes at the end of the Cold War further diminished India's influence in international affairs. The Non-Aligned Movement's relevance declined as the bipolar world order dissolved, and the United States, now significantly more influential, worked in 1995 to extend indefinitely the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which India viewed as discriminatory, raising concerns about a unipolar world [16, p. 73].

A key aspect of Indian diplomacy involved linking the NPT, which, after its indefinite extension, effectively "made the possession of nuclear weapons by the nuclear weapon states immutable," with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which India had supported until the 1990s. As External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee stated at the UN General Assembly on September 18, 1995: "Developing new warheads or refining existing ones after a CTBT is in place, using innovative technologies, would be as contrary to the spirit of the CTBT as the NPT is to the spirit of non-proliferation" [source 11, p. 280]. The Indian diplomat notably referenced China, which conducted two underground nuclear tests in 1995 alone.

In the post-Cold War world order, the nuclear status of the "big five" nuclear powers was permanently fixed, the CTBT did not take into account India's proposals, China expanded its nuclear capabilities, and Pakistan pursued an advanced missile program, presumably nuclear weapons. These developments compelled India

to abandon its longstanding policy of retaining a nonweaponized nuclear policy<sup>6</sup>.

India's emergence as a nuclear weapons state was accompanied by efforts to integrate into various non-proliferation mechanisms, excluding the NPT and CTBT. Following the 1998 nuclear tests, it acceded to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Nuclear Facilities (12 March 2002), the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (22 April 2003), signed the Additional Protocol with the IAEA (15 May 2009), became a party to the Missile Technology Control Regime (27 June 2016), the Wassenaar Arrangement (8 December 2017), and the Australia Group (19 January 2018). The country sought membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group, established after India's 1974 nuclear test to provide a conducive environment for peaceful nuclear cooperation, but faced resistance from China, which advocates a unified approach to India and Pakistan as non-NPT states.

India's current stance on the multilateral nuclear order is reflected in the working paper "Nuclear Disarmament," presented at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on February 20, 2007. Though published years ago, this document continues to guide Indian diplomacy. For instance, while declining to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (effective January 22, 2021), the Ministry of External Affairs reaffirmed India's commitment to a nuclear-free world, achievable through phased universal commitments and agreed-upon mechanisms, as outlined in the paper [source 12].

The document details the multilateral nuclear disarmament process, emphasizing the UN General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament as primary forums for achieving consensus. Key Indian proposals include the following provisions:

- Nuclear-weapon states reaffirming their unconditional commitment to complete nuclear disarmament;

<sup>6</sup> The result was India's underground nuclear tests on May 11 and 13, 1998, after which it declared itself a nuclear power [22, pp. 294-297].

- Reducing the level of operational readiness of nuclear forces to avoid errors and technical malfunctions that could lead to an accidental launch of nuclear weapons;

- Negotiating a no-first-use agreement among all nuclear-armed states;

- Negotiating a universal and legally binding agreement on the non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states;

- Negotiating a Convention on a Comprehensive Ban on the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons;

- Negotiating a Nuclear Weapons Convention banning the development, production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons and establishing a time frame for the non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons [source 13].

A crucial emphasis is placed on reducing the role of nuclear weapons in the policies of nuclear-armed states, as nuclear disarmament cannot be achieved otherwise. India proposes universal commitments to non-first use of nuclear weapons (currently, only China and India have pledged to this policy, with certain reservations) and guarantees of non-use against non-nuclear states. Based on this document, India has maintained a consistent nuclear policy, embodying the core characteristics of previous periods while adapting diplomatically to contemporary challenges, such as the breakdown of bilateral nuclear arms control between Russia and the United States and heightened nuclear risks amid tensions between Russia and the West over the Ukrainian conflict.

In line with its previous advocacy, India continues to support a Convention on a Comprehensive Ban on the Use of Nuclear Weapons. On October 10, 2023, India introduced a related draft resolution at the UN General Assembly First Committee meeting with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Laos, Kiribati, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Indian diplomats actively engage with UN institutions to further nuclear disarmament, evidenced by the December 2023 visit of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Izu-

mi Nakamitsu to New Delhi. Among the topics discussed with the Ministry of External Affairs was India's upcoming chairmanship of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on May 14, 2024. Thus, India's reliance on UN institutions remains central to its efforts to shape a multipolar nuclear order.

Simultaneously, India engages through bilateral and multilateral frameworks. For instance, the tenth round of India-Japan consultations on disarmament, non-proliferation, and export control took place in Tokyo on April 24, 2024. India is also a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which it joined alongside Pakistan in 2017. At the SCO Council of Heads of State meeting in Astana on July 4, 2024, India endorsed the Astana Declaration, which emphasized "strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, continuing the nuclear disarmament process, promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in peaceful atomic energy uses," and "keeping outer space free of weapons of any kind" [source 14].

## CONCLUSION

India's crossing of the nuclear threshold in 1998 did not signify an abandonment of its active disarmament diplomacy from the Cold War era.

A historical perspective reveals that India's nuclear tests followed the same logic central to its nuclear diplomacy for decades, namely, the pursuit of a non-discriminatory, multipolar nuclear order. The crisis phenomena associated with the *de facto* destruction of Russian-American nuclear arms control, international nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear test ban regimes underscore the relevance of India's longstanding positions. These crises highlight both the urgency of measures to reduce nuclear risks and the importance of strategic restraint, as demonstrated by India's continued moratorium on nuclear tests. At this present stage, India aligns with other nuclear powers on specific issues, as shown by its stance on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which took effect on January 22, 2021. However, India's commitment to multipolarity in international security and nuclear policy remains unchanged. This is evident in two ways: first, through India's active participation in the Conference on Disarmament and the UN General Assembly; and second, through its enduring emphasis on a multilateral process for nuclear arms limitation and elimination, as reflected both in the 2007 Nuclear Disarmament Report and its current bilateral and multilateral initiatives.

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