distinguished delegates from outside Asia assures us of the benefit of their experience of social revival.

But how are we going to go about the task we have accepted? One of the fundamental lessons humankind has learnt after centuries of tribal and tribulation is that peace, democracy and human rights are indivisible and interdependent. If you do not respect human rights of all people, regardless of their belief or gender or social status, you will have neither democracy nor peace. It is only under the banner of peace, democracy and human rights that we must begin to restructure our states, to revive our egalitarian ideals, and to re-establish the authority of civil society versus the state, as party to party, to use a phrase Mr. Jinnah could employ decades ago to question the conduct of imperialist rulers.

It would be presumptuous on my part to suggest what we should be doing during the two days of our deliberations, but allow me to stay that the eyes of the long suffering millions of the sub-continent are on us. They no longer deserve to be treated as they have been by humpties and dumpties of different hues. Neither strength of rhetoric nor abstruse theories will move them. It will be necessary to look closely at everything that is of concern to them in Pakistan, in India, and in the region as a whole - whether it is Kashmir, or persecution of minorities, or negation of womanhood, or threat to security of life, or joblessness, or hunger, or corruption of the elite.

Fortunately there is a huge mass of people in our countries who have not yet come under the spell of the tiny minority that occupies the commanding heights in politics and economy. If we are not prepared to mobilize them into powerful movement for peace, if we are not capable of joining hands across national frontiers and across continents, we may go home to rest our heels. But if we are true to the sentiment that has brought us here, there is a promise of glorious fight and of rewards history will thank us for. Let us then pool our resources, forge links among the large number of activist groups, and underwrite peace and with it the future of life on this land of ours.

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The Struggle for Nuclear Disarmament

Praful Bidwai

The principled, non-jingoistic response of a cross-section of society to India’s nuclear tests indicates the beginnings of a powerful nuclear disarmament movement by citizens, which is long overdue.

The tide has turned. The manufactured “consensus” over the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government’s decision to cross the nuclear threshold now stands exposed for what it was: flimsy, uninformed, reluctant acceptance of the fait accompli that a particular political party with a unique nuclear obsession had inflicted upon us all without the fig leaf of a security rationale or a strategic review. Today, there is sharp political polarisation on this issue. The Left has taken a principled stand opposing nuclearisation. Large chunks of the political centre have demarcated themselves from the BJP. At least three former Prime Ministers have questioned the decision, or expressed reservations about it.

Even the seemingly mandatory salutation to our scientists’ “achievement” has given way to a sharply critical debate on the ethics of developing weapons of mass destruction. Over 300 scientists have questioned this “achievement”. The disclosure that the defence and nuclear scientific lobby had repeatedly demanded
the tests (see former Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda's press statement) has drawn strong condemnation from ethically-minded scientists.

The signs on the street are encouraging. There have been over 30 demonstrations and meetings in at least eight Indian cities, involving diverse groups of people such as scholars, scientists, social activists, human rights campaigners, feminists, trade unionists and environmentalists, besides political activists. Highly regarded former generals and admirals have joined this growing mobilisation. Those who have taken a clear stand include former Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral, N. Ramdas, Lt. Gen. Gurbir Mansingh, Air Marshal J. Zaheer and Lt. Gen. V. R. Raghavan. Among nuclearisation's critics are former Atomic Energy Commission Chairman M. R. Srinivasan, former Supreme Court Judge V. R. Krishna Iyer, Gandhians such as Y. P. Anand (former Chairman of the Railway Board) and Sidharaj Dhaddha, besides artists and writers. No one dare accuse this movement as that of some kind of a lunatic fringe of peaceniks unconcerned about India's security.

A movement devoted primarily to disarmament and peace has a number of invaluable functions: conducting public education on the evil of nuclear weapons, working as a clearing house of information and ideas, cross-sectoral mobilisation of protest, organising public agitations, providing a clear focus for unorganised groups and citizens, and advocacy and lobbying. Such a movement must be broad-based and inclusive; yet it must be lucidly clear about its goals lest it strays from its main functions. It must recognise that people will come to the disarmament platform out of a range of considerations and motives, and from different social and ideologi- cal backgrounds. But at the same time, it must carefully articulate principles -and doctrines in such a way as to retain its identity, integrity and effectiveness.

At least nine such premises and principles are essential.

The first premise is that nuclear weapons are uniquely evil instruments of mass destruction, with the potential to exterminate all life from this planet. They are incomparably more destructive than any other weapons. Their use or threat of use violates all criteria of jus in bello (justice in the conduct of war) because they kill mas- sively, indiscriminately, without distinguishing between combatants and civilians, and in barbaric ways. They are simply incompatible with the notion of proportionate and legitimate use of force.

As the Government of India itself has argued for 50 years, until May 11, not only the use of nuclear weapons, but even the threat of use, must be declared unacceptable and illegal. In its submission before the International Court of Justice in 1995, the Government pleaded: “Use of nuclear weapons in any armed conflict... even by way of reprisal or retaliation... is unlawful.” More, even their manufacture and possession “cannot under any circumstances be considered as permitted.” India's classical position was that such manufacture and possession be declared a “crime against humanity.” The BJP has committed just that crime.

The second premise is that nuclear weapons, no matter who possesses them, do not provide security. Indeed, as the Government itself consistently argues, nuclear weapons degrade security both for nations and internationally. Such weapons are strategically irrational. The celebrated December 1996 statement of 60 former generals and admirals, including Commanders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact, says: “We, military professionals, who have devoted our lives to the national security of our countries and our peoples, are convinced that the continuing existence of nuclear weapons in the armories of nuclear powers, and the ever present threat of acquisition of these weapons by others, constitute a peril to global peace and security and to the safety and survival of the people we are dedicated to protect... Long term international nuclear policy must be based on the declared principle of continuous, complete and irrevocable elimination of nuclear weapons.”

The third premise is that the concept of nuclear deterrence must be categorically rejected on moral, political, legal and strategic grounds. This has a powerful resonance in India's own past policy, which continued to oppose nuclear deterrence as an “abhorrent” and “repugnant” doctrine. Deterrence theory is a mere article of faith, an unfalsifiable, unverifiable dogma. It contradictorily assumes that states will act both rationally (by making hard nosed calculations) and out of fear simultaneously. It also assumes that those making decisions on nuclear weapons are accountable and
hence act responsibly. This is demonstrably false in situations of conflict.

The "theory" also assumes that non-nuclear weapon states will be deterred from militarily engaging nuclear weapon-states (NWSs) and that NWSs will not fight conventional wars with one another. This had been repeatedly disproved: during the Korean and Vietnam wars, the Falklands war, in conflicts over the Ussuri between China and the former Soviet Union, the war between China and Vietnam in 1979, in Afghanistan in the 1980s... Deterrence is unstable and quickly degenerates into an arms race, which has a profoundly irrational character. That alone explains why the five permanent members of the Security Council (P-5) amassed an overkill-level arsenal of 69,000 weapons during the Cold War enough to destroy the world 50 times over.

There is no such thing as "minimal deterrence." One man's "minimum" is another's "maximum". Both could be ruinous. There is no significant period in the past 50 years when an NWS did not stockpile weapons when others were also doing so. What was a "minimum deterrent" for China in 1965 became unacceptable in less than seven years.

Equally important, deterrence is prone to breakdown. There were over 100 cases of false alerts, weapons activation and near-hits between NATO and Warsaw Pact members despite elaborate risk-reduction measures, PALs (permissive action links or codes for authorising use of weapons), hot lines and early warning systems. A Brookings Institution study says it was sheer luck, not deterrence, that prevented a nuclear conflict between the two blocs during the Cold War. The world came far, far closer to it during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis than imagined, indeed even known, by the two sides. Nuclear deterrence does not, cannot work reliably. It legitimises the possession and threat of use of nuclear weapons. It must be rejected.

The fourth premise is universal nuclear disarmament. True security lies only in a nuclear weapon-free world. The P-5 countries have resisted serious nuclear restraint, and failed to fulfil their obligations under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They have also tried to impose unequal treaties upon others. This won't do. The Nuclear Club is a group of hypocrites. India has now put in its application for joining this club, albeit as a junior member.

The fifth premise is that the present Government's policy represents a radical, dangerous and unacceptable break with all the sane and sensible components of India's past nuclear doctrines, including opposition to deterrence. India opposed the premise that nuclear weapons provide security. Thus, even during the peak of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) debate, Foreign Secretary Salman Haidar told the Conference on Disarmament: "We do not believe that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is essential for national security, and we have followed a conscious decision in this regard. We are also convinced that the existence of nuclear weapons diminishes international security. We, therefore, seek their complete elimination."

The sixth premise is that the BJP's nuclear policy is inseparably linked to a toxic, belligerent, male-supremacist, hate-driven beggar-thy-neighbour nationalism and a notion of nationhood that is anti-pluralist, communal and militaristic. Underlying it is opposition to disarmament and peace. The Sangh ideology castigated Gandhi's secularism and ahimsa for "emasculating" Hindu "manliness". That is why Gandhi had to be eliminated.

Nuclearisation promotes secrecy and the militarisation of everyday life. National nuclear arming creates a false sense of pride and imposes continuing and rising economic, social and political costs. The social and economic costs of nuclearisation can be crippling. Nuclear weapons are incompatible with rational development goals.

The seventh premise is that the Indian bomb is neither "anti-imperialist" nor meant to promote disarmament. As Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee told U.S. President Bill Clinton in his May 11 letter, India's intention is not to challenge the unequal global nuclear order but to join it, on the side of the biggest discriminator, the U.S. This Government craves that India be recognised as an NWS. Achieving that, not promoting nuclear disarmament, is its goal. It's actions with Pakistan reacting quickly with its own tests have set back the global disarmament agenda. You cannot blow a hole into the disarmament agenda and then say you only wanted peace. As Gandhi said: "The moral to be drawn from the supreme tragedy of
the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs..." It is futile to cite "sovereignty" here. This Government talks of sovereignty only in respect of the "right" (which no one has) to make weapons of mass destruction, while violating sovereignty in remedying the unequal international economic order in the interest of the people.

The eighth premise is that nuclearisation has created an unacceptably dangerous situation in South Asia. The chances of a nuclear attack/conflict breaking out in this region are far higher than they were at any point of time during the Cold War except perhaps during the Cuban missile crisis. This is so not because South Asian leaders and generals are more irresponsible, but because South Asia is the only part of the world to have had a relentless hot-cold war for 50 years. It bristles with mutual hatred, suspicion and hostility on many counts, Any of them could turn into a flashpoint Kashmir, the eastern border, military exercises getting out of hand, as in 1987.

The two states continue to sacrifice hundreds of men in fighting an insane war at Siachen the world's highest-altitude conflict, where it costs Rs. 1.5 lakh to reach one chapati. Today, their politicians are actually talking about using nuclear weapons witness Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Faroq Abdullah's June 8 statement and Pakistan Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan's on June 10. Equally worrisome, both are working on battlefield-level tactful nuclear weapons (hence the sub-kiloton tests), which considerably lower the danger threshold.

At the height of the Cold War, the lag time for missiles between NATO and the Warsaw Pact group was never less than 30 minutes. In the case of India and Pakistan, the flight-time would be just two to three minutes inadequate for war prevention. Given that virtually no interception of missiles is possible, a nuclear warhead could almost certainly be delivered across the border with devastating results. This devolves a particularly onerous responsibility upon those living in South Asia.

The ninth and final premise is that India must never test or make or deploy nuclear weapons again. It should declare it will never use nuclear weapons under any circumstances, regardless of the status of the adversary or nature of the threat. It must also seek similar assurances from others. This alone can redeem the horrible wrong India committed against its stated policy and its own people. It alone can help us return to the global disarmament agenda with a modicum of credibility. Or else, no one will take India's protestations of peace seriously. Once you deceive the world and yourself so massively, you have to do more than just offer vague promises of "responsible" conduct as an NWS.

More, the Government must clearly reiterate its sensible past doctrines opposing nuclear deterrence and revive the Rajiv Gandhi plan for step-by-step disarmament. This can help it reshape the disarmament agenda with support from South Africa, Mexico, Egypt, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Japan and Sweden and, perhaps, Pakistan.

Beyond these premises, a disarmament movement may have legitimate internal differences. For instance, on the relationship between nuclear power and nuclear weapons, on the policy transition from Jawaharlal Nehru to Lal Bahadur Shastri to Indira Gandhi and beyond, and on the CTBT. For instance, some members may believe that the only guarantee of a real freeze on weaponisation is a freeze on nuclear power. Some others might not. But they should still be able to work together. Again, some may have misgivings about the CTBT in keeping with the official posture of 1996. Others may believe that it is, unlike the NPT, non-discriminatory and imposes equal and fairly effective obligations on all states; under the circumstances, India should sign it while fighting for total disarmament. But it should still be possible to debate the issue dispassionately and in an informed way.

Historically, such differences have never prevented disarmament campaigns from becoming effective. What has crippled them is lack of clarity on the point that nuclear weapons are wholly evil, unacceptable and indefensible, that is, the failure to mobilise enough moral force internally. Moral force is all-important when you are rolling back an epochal injustice. Without it, India could not have achieved independence, nor South Africa liberation from apartheid. On such morality, there can be no compromise.