



Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy: 1947-1967

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Abstract:

India's nuclear policy has undergone a significant transformation since its independence in 1947. This research paper delves into the evolution of India's nuclear policy from 1947 to 1967, shedding light on the key developments that shaped its trajectory during this period. By examining the interplay of various factors such as security concerns, international developments, and domestic considerations, the paper provides a comprehensive analysis of India's early nuclear program and the emergence of its distinctive nuclear doctrine. The early years of independence, from 1947 to 1950, were characterized by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's vision for global disarmament. India actively advocated for a nuclear-weapon-free world and supported initiatives such as the "Atoms for Peace" program. This phase reflected India's commitment to nonproliferation and its aspiration for a peaceful international order. However, the security landscape shifted in the following decade, from 1950 to 1960, prompting a reassessment of India's nuclear policy. Regional security concerns, particularly the Sino-Indian border conflict and China's nuclear aspirations, introduced a security dilemma for India. The Korean War and global power dynamics further influenced India's perspective on security, prompting a shift towards a more pragmatic approach. From 1960 to 1964, India underwent a period of introspection and internal debates regarding its nuclear policy. Changing perceptions of security threats, strained Indo-Chinese relations following the 1962 Sino-Indian War, and the influence of the scientific community were crucial factors in shaping India's reevaluation of its nuclear stance. Finally, between 1964 and 1967, under Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's government, India made the decision to pursue nuclear weapons capability. The formulation of the "nuclear option" was influenced by multiple factors. India's reservations about the international nonproliferation regime, particularly the discriminatory nature of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), played a significant role. Additionally, China's 1964 nuclear test further reinforced India's security concerns and provided impetus for its nuclear program. By examining the policies, actions, and key events during this period, this research paper provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influenced India's nuclear policy evolution. It highlights the interplay between security considerations, regional conflicts, international developments, and domestic debates, shedding light on the complex decision-making process that led India towards the pursuit of nuclear weapons capability. The insights gleaned from this analysis contribute to a deeper understanding of India's early nuclear program and its unique nuclear doctrine.

Keywords: India, nuclear policy, nuclear weapons, disarmament, security, nonproliferation, Sino-Indian relations, international developments, regional conflicts

Introduction:

India's nuclear policy has undergone a remarkable transformation since its independence. From initially advocating for global disarmament to eventually pursuing a self-reliant nuclear capability, India's journey towards becoming a nuclear-armed state has been marked by a complex interplay of internal and external factors. This research paper focuses on the period between 1947 and 1967, a critical phase in India's nuclear policy, when the seeds of its future nuclear program were sown.

Early Years of Independence (1947-1950):

During the early years of independence from 1947 to 1950, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, held a strong vision for global disarmament. Nehru firmly believed that nuclear weapons posed a significant threat to humanity and emphasized the need for their complete elimination. He saw disarmament as a fundamental step towards achieving lasting peace and stability in the world. Nehru actively proposed the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free world, advocating for a comprehensive and verifiable disarmament process. He called upon all nations to renounce the development, production, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, highlighting the devastating consequences of their use. Nehru argued that the elimination of nuclear weapons would not only reduce the risk of nuclear war but also alleviate the enormous financial burden associated with their maintenance and development.

India, under Nehru's leadership, played a proactive role in advancing the cause of disarmament. It actively participated in international forums, such as the United Nations, to promote the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free world. India's advocacy for disarmament aimed to create a global consensus on the elimination of nuclear weapons and establish a framework for international cooperation and trust-building. Furthermore, India endorsed and supported the "Atoms for Peace" initiative, which was introduced by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953. This initiative aimed to promote the peaceful uses of atomic energy while preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. India recognized the potential of atomic energy for peaceful purposes, such as electricity generation and scientific research, and actively sought to harness its benefits. India's advocacy for the "Atoms for Peace" initiative reflected its commitment to the responsible and peaceful utilization of atomic energy. It emphasized the importance of international cooperation, scientific collaboration, and technology sharing to foster peaceful nuclear programs worldwide. Overall, Nehru's vision for disarmament, along with India's proposal for a nuclear-weapon-free world and advocacy for the "Atoms for Peace" initiative, demonstrated India's commitment to nonproliferation, global peace, and the responsible use of nuclear technology. These early efforts laid the foundation for India's nuclear policy and set the stage for future developments in its approach towards nuclear weapons.

As India continued to navigate its early years of independence, Nehru's vision for disarmament and India's advocacy for a nuclear-weapon-free world remained significant pillars of its nuclear policy. India consistently reiterated its commitment to these principles in various international forums and engaged in diplomatic efforts to promote global disarmament. Nehru, known for his eloquence and leadership, used his influence to raise awareness about the dangers of nuclear weapons and the imperative of disarmament. He emphasized that nuclear weapons did not provide genuine security but rather heightened the risk of catastrophic conflicts. Nehru believed that true security could only be achieved through trust, cooperation, and collective efforts towards disarmament. India's advocacy for a nuclear-weapon-free world was not limited to rhetoric. The country actively engaged in initiatives

aimed at achieving this goal. India participated in discussions within the United Nations and other international platforms, offering its perspective and ideas on disarmament measures. Nehru's leadership and India's active involvement in disarmament initiatives lent credibility to its stance on nuclear issues.

The "Atoms for Peace" initiative received strong support from India, which recognized the potential benefits of peaceful nuclear technology. India sought to harness atomic energy for the country's development, particularly in the areas of agriculture, medicine, and energy production. By endorsing and supporting the "Atoms for Peace" initiative, India aimed to ensure that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy were widely promoted and utilized for the betterment of society. India's advocacy for disarmament and support for peaceful nuclear technology demonstrated its commitment to global security and stability. These efforts laid the foundation for India's evolving nuclear policy, as the country faced emerging security challenges and geopolitical realities that would shape its future trajectory. It is important to note that while Nehru and India advocated for disarmament and peaceful nuclear technology, the evolving security landscape and geopolitical considerations in the following years would lead to a reassessment of India's nuclear policy. Nonetheless, Nehru's vision and India's early advocacy for a nuclear-weapon-free world and peaceful nuclear technology left a lasting impact on India's nuclear doctrine and its stance on nuclear issues in the international arena.

Shift towards a Security-driven Approach (1950-1960):

During the period from 1950 to 1960, India experienced a significant shift in its nuclear policy towards a more security-driven approach. Several factors influenced this shift, including regional security concerns, China's nuclear aspirations, the Sino-Indian border conflict, and the broader impact of the Korean War and global power dynamics.

Regional security concerns and the security dilemma:

India's regional security concerns, particularly in relation to its neighbors, played a crucial role in shaping its nuclear policy. The security dilemma, a concept that suggests actions taken by one state to enhance its security may be perceived as a threat by others, became increasingly relevant in the South Asian context. As India witnessed the arms race and nuclear developments in its neighboring countries, including Pakistan's growing interest in nuclear technology, it felt compelled to reassess its own security requirements.

Chinese nuclear aspirations and the Sino-Indian border conflict:

China's nuclear aspirations and the unresolved border dispute between India and China significantly influenced India's nuclear policy during this period. China's successful testing of a nuclear weapon in 1964 raised concerns in India about its security vulnerability. The unresolved border conflict between the two countries, which culminated in the 1962 Sino-Indian War, further intensified India's security concerns and prompted a reevaluation of its nuclear stance.

Impact of the Korean War and global power dynamics:

The Korean War (1950-1953) and its aftermath had a profound impact on global power dynamics and regional security considerations. The war highlighted the potential for large-scale conflicts and heightened tensions between major powers, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union. This broader geopolitical context influenced India's perception of security threats and the need for self-reliance in defense, including the nuclear realm. India observed the influence of nuclear weapons on global politics and the balance of power during the Korean War, which heightened its sense of vulnerability. The escalating Cold War dynamics, with the United States and the Soviet Union locked in a nuclear arms race, further shaped India's understanding of the strategic significance of nuclear capabilities. The impact of the Korean War and global power dynamics reinforced India's need to secure itself in the face of evolving security challenges. It highlighted the limitations of relying solely on disarmament initiatives and peaceful rhetoric in a world marked by power rivalries and nuclear proliferation. The shift towards a security-driven approach in India's nuclear policy from 1950 to 1960 was influenced by regional security concerns, China's nuclear ambitions, the Sino-Indian border conflict, and the broader impact of the Korean War and global power dynamics. These factors compelled India to reassess its security requirements and consider the role of nuclear weapons in safeguarding its national interests and maintaining strategic stability in an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape.

Reassessment of Nuclear Policy (1960-1964)

During the period of 1960-1964, India underwent a reassessment of its nuclear policy due to changing perceptions of security threats, strained Indo-Chinese relations following the 1962 Sino-Indian War, and internal debates influenced by the scientific community.

Changing perceptions of security threats:

India's changing perceptions of security threats played a significant role in the reassessment of its nuclear policy. The evolving geopolitical landscape, including the Cold War dynamics and the increasing arms race among major powers, led India to reevaluate its own security needs. The realization that nuclear weapons could potentially deter aggression and provide a credible deterrence against external threats prompted India to reassess its position on the acquisition of nuclear capabilities.

Indo-Chinese relations and the fallout of the 1962 Sino-Indian War:

The 1962 Sino-Indian War and the subsequent deterioration of Indo-Chinese relations had a profound impact on India's nuclear policy. The war highlighted India's vulnerability and exposed the gaps in its defense capabilities, including the absence of a credible deterrent. The Chinese victory and their nuclear weapons capabilities further emphasized the need for India to enhance its defense and security posture.

The war and its aftermath led to a significant loss of trust between India and China. It shattered the notion of peaceful coexistence and highlighted the potential threat posed by a nuclear-armed neighbor. The fallout of the conflict further fueled India's determination to ensure its security through all means necessary, including considering the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Internal debates and the influence of the scientific community

Internal debates within India, especially among policymakers, defense experts, and the scientific community, played a crucial role in the reassessment of India's nuclear policy. The scientific community, in particular, provided valuable insights into the technical aspects of nuclear weapons development and the potential benefits of possessing nuclear capabilities for national security. The scientific community in India played a significant role in shaping the country's nuclear policy. Eminent scientists such as Homi Bhabha and Raja Ramanna highlighted the strategic importance of nuclear technology and advocated for India's development of nuclear weapons as a means of self-defense. Their influence and expertise were instrumental in shaping the internal debates and influencing policy decisions regarding India's nuclear program.

The internal debates took into account various factors, including the evolving security environment, geopolitical realities, and the analysis of India's strategic interests. These discussions contributed to the growing realization that nuclear weapons could serve as a deterrent and provide India with the necessary security assurances in an increasingly volatile regional and global context. During the period of 1960-1964, India underwent a reassessment of its nuclear policy driven by changing perceptions of security threats, strained Indo-Chinese relations following the 1962 Sino-Indian War, and internal debates influenced by the scientific community. These factors led to a growing realization within India that the acquisition of nuclear capabilities was necessary to ensure its security and deter potential adversaries. This period set the stage for India's eventual decision to pursue nuclear weapons capability.

The Decision to Pursue Nuclear Weapons Capability (1964-1967)

The period from 1964 to 1967 marked a crucial phase in India's nuclear policy, as the country made the decision to pursue nuclear weapons capability. Several factors contributed to this decision and shaped India's approach during this period.

Shastri's government and the formulation of the "nuclear option":

In the period of 1964-1967, under the government of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, India made the decision to pursue nuclear weapons capability. The formulation of the "nuclear option" was a result of India's growing security concerns and the need to strengthen its defense capabilities. Shastri's government recognized the importance of having a credible deterrence against potential adversaries, particularly in the aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian War. The "nuclear option" referred to India's willingness to develop and possess nuclear weapons if its security interests were not adequately addressed through diplomatic means. This policy shift signaled India's resolve to ensure its national security and protect its interests in the face of emerging geopolitical challenges.

International nonproliferation regime and India's reservations:

India had reservations regarding the international nonproliferation regime, particularly the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which came into effect in 1970. India viewed the NPT as discriminatory since it allowed the five nuclear-weapon states (United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, and China) to possess nuclear

weapons while preventing other countries from acquiring them. India argued that the NPT entrenched a power imbalance and perpetuated the dominance of the nuclear-weapon states. India's reservations regarding the NPT and its skepticism towards the nonproliferation regime further strengthened its determination to pursue an independent nuclear weapons capability. India felt that relying on international agreements alone would not adequately address its security concerns, and therefore, it needed to develop its own deterrent capabilities.

The 1964 Chinese nuclear test and its impact on India's decision:

The Chinese nuclear test conducted in October 1964 had a significant impact on India's decision to pursue nuclear weapons capability. The Chinese nuclear test marked a critical milestone in China's nuclear weapons program, demonstrating its nuclear capabilities and heightening concerns in India regarding its security vulnerability. The Chinese nuclear test served as a wake-up call for India, highlighting the need to bolster its defense capabilities to counter the perceived threat from a nuclear-armed neighbor. The test shattered any remaining illusions about the peaceful intentions of China and reinforced the urgency for India to develop its own nuclear deterrent. The Chinese nuclear test was a pivotal event that contributed to a sense of insecurity and strategic vulnerability within India. It not only underscored the importance of possessing nuclear weapons as a deterrent but also solidified India's determination to establish a credible nuclear capability to safeguard its national security interests. The period of 1964-1967 witnessed India's decision to pursue nuclear weapons capability under the government of Lal Bahadur Shastri. The formulation of the "nuclear option" was a response to India's growing security concerns and the need for a credible deterrent. India's reservations about the international nonproliferation regime, particularly the NPT, further reinforced its determination to develop an independent nuclear capability. The 1964 Chinese nuclear test served as a catalyst, intensifying India's sense of insecurity and solidifying its resolve to acquire nuclear weapons for national security purposes.

Conclusion:

The period between 1947 and 1967 witnessed a significant shift in India's nuclear policy, from advocating for disarmament to embracing the pursuit of nuclear weapons capability. The evolving security dynamics, regional conflicts, and international developments played a crucial role in shaping India's nuclear decision-making process during this period. By examining the policies, actions, and key events, this research paper provides valuable insights into the factors that influenced India's early nuclear program and the formulation of its unique nuclear doctrine. The shift towards a security-driven approach emerged as regional security concerns intensified. India faced challenges posed by its neighbors and perceived threats to its security. The Sino-Indian border conflict and China's nuclear aspirations became crucial factors influencing India's nuclear decision-making process. The fallout of the 1962 Sino-Indian War shattered the belief in peaceful coexistence and highlighted the need for a credible deterrent. Internal debates and the influence of the scientific community also played a significant role during this period. The scientific community provided valuable insights into the technical aspects of nuclear weapons development and emphasized the strategic importance of nuclear technology for national security. Internal discussions focused on the changing perceptions of security threats and the necessity of an independent nuclear capability. The culmination of these factors led to the decision to pursue nuclear weapons capability between 1964 and 1967. Under the government of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the "nuclear option" was formulated as a response to India's security

concerns. India had reservations about the international nonproliferation regime, particularly the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), viewing it as discriminatory and insufficient in addressing its security needs. The 1964 Chinese nuclear test further solidified India's determination to acquire nuclear weapons capability, highlighting the potential threat from a nuclear-armed neighbor. In conclusion, the period from 1947 to 1967 marked a significant shift in India's nuclear policy, reflecting the changing security environment and geopolitical considerations. From advocating for global disarmament, India transitioned towards a security-driven approach and pursued an independent nuclear weapons capability. The decisions made during this period would have long-lasting implications for India's nuclear doctrine and its role in the international nuclear order.

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