

International Seminar

on

Rajiv Gandhi's Disarmament Initiatives: Global and South Asian Contexts

Centre for South Asian Studies (MISARC)

Pondicherry (Central) University, Puducherry – 605014

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Concept Paper

A great visionary and dynamic Prime Minister of India Mr. Rajiv Gandhi during the late 1980s', more particularly on 9 June 1988 presented a time bound action plan for achieving nuclear weapon free world at the Special Session on Nuclear Disarmament at the United Nations. It was a strong reiteration on part of India to usher into nuclear disarmament. The action plan had envisaged to achieve the objective of complete elimination of nuclear weapons by 2010 AD. Unfortunately, the action plan did not receive the required and adequate attention of the acknowledged nuclear weapon states (US, Russia, UK, France and China). The plan had specific time framework under which the acknowledged nuclear weapon states were supposed to forego the nuclear weapons. There was a lack of genuine commitment and seriousness on part of the nuclear weapon states to commit to any time framework despite the fact that the Article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty sought to de-legitimise nuclear weapons as instruments of national policy.

There is however, a general consensus that India has made significant contributions to disarmament in the UN. India has made significant contributions to disarmament in the UN in terms of ideas, resolutions, amendments, action plans; etc. But, ironically, the UN has not so far contributed to meaningful disarmament despite the fact that the very first resolution passed by the UNGA in early 1946 mandated "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons". India was the first to call for ban on nuclear testing in 1954 (till then only three countries (US, the former Soviet Union and the UK) had gone nuclear, for a non-discriminatory treaty on non-proliferation in 1965, for a treaty on non-use of nuclear weapons in 1978, for a nuclear freeze in 1982, and for a phased programme for complete elimination in 1988.

The 1988 Action Plan also suggested that if the nuclear weapon states engage in negotiations with the objective of achieving complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework, the threshold states should undertake not to cross the threshold. Unfortunately, many of these initiatives were not accepted by the nuclear weapons states, who continue to hold these weapons essential for their own security. What has emerged in consequence has been a discriminatory and flawed non-proliferation regime.

There seems to be a quantum shift in terms of approaches of strategic thinking in the US. In January 2007, four influential thinkers, Henry Kissinger, William Schultz, Sam Nunn and William Perry wrote a seminal piece in "the Wall Street Journal", arguing for a nuclear weapon free world. They again repeated the argument in January 2008. This piece in particular has reinvigorated the debate on

nuclear disarmament among the members of academic and strategic community worldwide. India celebrated the 20th anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan this year during 9-10 June 2008 by hosting an international conference on nuclear disarmament.

Under this backdrop, it would be timely to convene an important seminar on “Rajiv Gandhi’s Disarmament Initiatives: Global and South Asian Contexts”, among the members of academic and strategic community of India. The momentum has already been built and such a significant seminar would add and strengthen to the existing momentum. It would also help in understanding the current thinking in India and how shall India initiate such idea with a renewed vigour and new thinking.

1. Role of Nuclear Weapons in International Relations
2. Revitalizing Interest in Nuclear Disarmament
3. Towards a Nuclear Weapon Free and Non Violent World Order
4. Debates on Disarmament Proposal by the Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, William Perry and George Schultz of the US
5. Relevance of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in the 21st Century
6. India’s Approach to Disarmament and NPT
7. Rajiv Gandhi’s Disarmament Action Plan and its Contemporary Relevance
8. Rajiv Gandhi’s Peace Initiatives in South Asia and the World
9. Prospects of India’s Cooperation with Major Powers of the World regarding Checking Weapons of Mass Destruction
10. Nuclear Disarmament and Regional Security
11. NPT Review Conference, 2010 and Nuclear Future: Perspectives of US, Russia, China, France, India and Her Neighbours

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