

Rhetoric to Action: Can India change world nuclear reality?

New Delhi, 6 April 2009: On the issue of nuclear disarmament, India has been walking a fine line between being a responsible nuclear state and realpolitik and its words in the global nuclear debate are largely considered a sham. Ironically, the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan proposed by India remains one of the most comprehensive initiatives on nuclear disarmament. In a recent issue brief published by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), New Delhi, Rekha Chakravarthi discusses India's position between nuclear rhetoric and reality, throwing light not only on the global disarmament debate and India's position in it, but also the utopian idea of a nuclear weapons free world.

Highlighting the fact that post the 1998 Pokhran nuclear tests India has not seriously debated the disarmament issue at the domestic level, Chakravarthi also points out that India, unilaterally cannot change the global situation even if it chooses to take the first step towards disarmament. "...the US and Russia are at the top of the nuclear chain and they will have to lead the process of weapons elimination before other states can follow suit. India cannot lead the process nor can China because their nuclear arsenals are nowhere close in size to those of the US and Russia, and it would not make much difference if they did give up their weapons," she writes.

Chakravarthi further discusses the bleak possibility of nuclear weapons being used, the dilution of the nonproliferation regime and the pitfalls in the path of verification of disarmament should the nuclear powers decide to walk that path. Any positive movement in the direction of the latter will have to originate from the power centres of the world she writes, adding that, "...what India needs is not a debate on disarmament but a decision on where India sees itself as an aspiring power. One of the biggest steps in this direction will be a break from its idealist-realist struggle, but this is not applicable to only its nuclear policy."

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Rekha Chakravarthi's complete Issue Brief – **India and Nuclear Disarmament: Chasing a Dream** - is available on the IPCS website www.ipcs.org.

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