

SVI In-House Seminar, November 2017: Report

Re-visiting Pakistan's Narrative on NSG Membership



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Compiled by: Ahyousha Khan
Reviewed and Edited by: S. Sadia Kazmi

**STRATEGIC VISION INSTITUTE (SVI),
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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized an In-house session on “Re-Visiting Pakistan’s Narrative on NSG Membership” on November 02, 2017. Session was attended by the selected members of academic, strategic and scientific community of Islamabad. The program was inaugurated by the welcoming remarks from President/Executive Director SVI, Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema. During his remarks, he acknowledged Dr. Rizwana Karim Abbasi, Assistant Professor, NDU; for her efforts in organizing the In-house. Moreover, he urged the participants to take part in discussion for generating better narrative for Pakistan’s NSG membership. After that, Dr. Cheema handed over the session to Dr. Rizawan Abbasi for further proceedings.

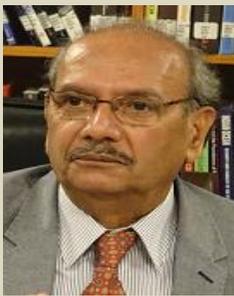
Dr. Abbasi began the debate on “Re-visiting Pakistan’s Narrative on NSG Membership” by raising a question: “what is Pakistan’s policy to secure NSG membership?” In her answer, she explained the current stance of government authorities regarding the NSG membership and asked the audience to examine it critically. According to her, it is the need of time that Pakistan develops new policy to secure membership, based on re-evaluation of what Pakistan could offer in energy sector. During her remarks, she proposed five major points to the audience for discussion, which could provide basis for re-formulation of Pakistan’s narrative on the NSG membership.



Firstly, she emphasized on the need for critical evaluation of linking Pakistan’s NSG membership with India. She acknowledged that the international community is biased towards Pakistan vis-à-vis India. However, associating Pakistan’s case with India is only proving counterproductive for Pakistan. Instead Pakistan should develop its case around nuclear energy projects as the basis to acquire membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group. This will not only help Pakistan to establish itself as a progressive state but will also eliminate the prejudice that it is an Indo-phobic state. However, she was concerned about the lack of support Pakistan is amassing for its peaceful energy projects. Another important factor, regarding peaceful energy projects she highlighted in her proposal was to conduct scientific feasibility report. Furthermore, she was of the view that, Pakistan will achieve nothing by demanding criteria for inclusion in the NSG; what is required is development of criteria not by international community but by Pakistan itself. In support of her argument she said, Pakistan can draft criteria by utilizing its geo-strategic position vis-à-vis the US and its allies to come to the negotiation table. Another significant point in her proposal was regarding receiving International support to secure NSG membership. To illustrate this point further, she said that Pakistan should not block negotiations of FMCT at this stage because that is damaging its reputation internationally. She said although Pakistan’s

position on the issue is legitimate but by blocking negotiations Pakistan is damaging its long term interests. Pakistan should work to get support from likeminded states on FMCT and if reservations prevail, Pakistan can exercise its veto power. Another point, Dr. Abbasi proposed was the idea of “Separation Plan” for future nuclear power plants. In her proposal, she was skeptic of Pakistan’s declaration to the world that it has a potential to produce nuclear power plants indigenously. In the end, she voiced her concern that China’s opposition to India’s NSG membership should not solely be based on the signing of NPT as the same argument could be used against Pakistan for blocking its membership too.

In her concluding remarks, she reinforced the view that Pakistan should mainstream its energy needs to secure membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group rather than only voicing its regional security concerns.



After comprehensive proposal from Dr. Rizwana Abbasi other speakers expressed their views on the need for Pakistan to revisit its narrative on the NSG membership. Dr. Cheema opined that currently Pakistan is demanding criteria based approach free of biasness and be based on merit. However, what Pakistan needs to bear in mind is the fact that the international system never works on merit rather it is based on interests. States align with other states when their interest is catered for. So, to secure membership and develop a criterion that is favorable for Pakistan, it needs to approach the NSG members and should work towards winning their sympathies in favor of Pakistan. In his remarks, he questioned the logic behind Pakistani Policy makers to rely solely on China for blocking Indian membership into the NSG. He insisted that Pakistan’s legislative community should approach other friendly states to seek support and strengthen its case. According to him, another significant factor that could help Pakistan’s case and weaken India’s is to let negotiations go further on the FMCT. By blocking negotiations on FMCT, Pakistan has managed to earn the blame of international community while India has conveniently taken cover behind Pakistan. So, it is necessary for Pakistan to improve its image by allowing the negotiations on FMCT to take place. In his concluding remarks Dr. Zafar Cheema maintained that it is impossible for Pakistan to revisit its position at the moment. However, task at hand is not impossible if support from international community could be amassed.

Ambassador (R) Ali Sarwar Naqvi, Executive Director, CISS; he mentioned that in the early days of NSG, the cartel used to seek members and now states are seeking its membership. It shows that the situations in international system keep on changing with time. He slightly differed with Dr. Abbasi's view on the need for criteria. According to him, it is responsibility of the NSG members to develop criteria for entry into the export cartel. He criticized members of NSG for dodging



their responsibility and taking decision in view of their own biasness and interests. Furthermore, he stated that NSG is comprised of 48 member states divided into three groups (US led group, group that upon pressure will follow the US, and the purists). He elaborated further on these groups by stating that China falls in the purist group and its stance on NPT clause for NSG membership should be viewed from that perspective. However, he agreed that relying solely on China for blocking India's membership is a

dangerous endeavor by Pakistan. Amb. Naqvi also deliberated on the policy of non-intrusion by Pakistan, which stops Pakistan from letting negotiations proceed further on FMCT. However, he agreed that getting support from likeminded states on FMCT would be a better option.



Mr. Zeeshan Hayat, IRA, ACDA said that Pakistan is effectively projecting its green energy prospects and is doing whatever it can to propagate its green energy vision.

He stated that Pakistan has rightly revealed its self-sufficiency in nuclear power plants making. This stance will help Pakistan come across not just as a seeker of membership but also as a country that could readily contribute something to the export cartel. He concluded by supporting China's stance, declaring that it was the only option available to Pakistan to stop India's membership at that time.

Ms. Maryam Baba, IRA, ACDA, also added to the discussion by supporting Mr. Hayat's views on why it is important for Pakistan to reveal its capabilities to the international community. According to her, this will help Pakistan get some



leverage from the international community.



Ms. Saima Sial, Senior Research Fellow, CISS shared her views on how Pakistan can re-visit its policy. She considered lack of criteria by NSG a good option for Pakistan and suggested that Pakistan should develop its own criteria according to its needs and should present it to the world. She agreed with Dr. Abbasi on importance of

Green Energy Projects and on not blocking FMCT negotiations. But, at the same time she endorsed the views of Mr. Hayat and Ms. Baba regarding the importance of China's stance on the NSG and what indigenously could mean for Pakistan in the future. She concluded with very important contribution that Pakistan should work towards mainstreaming its actions regarding non-proliferation along with the vision of green energy to gather support for NSG membership.

In response to the points raised by other speakers Dr. Abbasi defended her opinion by stating that today's world is the world of narratives. Moreover, in this war of narratives Pakistan has not done enough to present its narrative. Therefore Pakistan needs to present its views on green energy more forcefully. In addition to that, critical evaluation and pros and cons should be considered thoroughly before revealing Pakistan's capabilities to the world.



Mr. Pervaiz Butt Former Chairman, PAEC, stated his opinion by highlighting the importance of self-sufficiency for the development and growth of a nation. However, he expressed that complete self-sufficiency in nuclear power plants is not possible as it would be costly. He added that precaution is required in building nuclear plants, as in case of embargoes, the US and its bandwagoning states may stop the supply of small equipments required in nuclear plants.

Mr. Qasim Mustafa, Senior Research Fellow/Editor, ISSI shared his valuable thoughts stating that Pakistan, by focusing on its economy and by working towards the improvement of its economic sector, might eventually not need the criteria at all. If Pakistan somehow manages to establish its position as a strong economic power, the situation will reverse and the international community will come seeking Pakistan's membership for the NSG.



Mr. Shams-us-Zaman, Assistant Director, ACDA was critical of what criteria should be established for the NSG membership by Pakistan. He was of the view that developing criteria is not an easy task rather it is a slippery slope as there are no guarantees that despite all the efforts, Pakistan will be given the NSG membership.



Mr. Atiq ur Rehman, Assistant Professor, NUML presented some broad contours on the line of which Pakistan's stance could be reformulated. He stated that changing of stance on issues like FMCT without sub sequential benefits will not be productive for Pakistan. So, Pakistan should not stand down on its views on FMCT. Moreover, Pakistan should seek allies and expand its horizon beyond China for blocking India's NSG membership.



Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, in response to Mr. Rehman's points stated that Pakistan's stance regarding faults in FMCT is not wrong but by blocking negotiations Pakistan is taking pressure of International community. Dr. Rizwana Karim Abbasi opined that criterion is necessary and should be deliberated upon because it would be in favor of Pakistan to develop one for it-self. Moreover, economic growth is essential but it is also a long-term plan and India is already way ahead of Pakistan in securing approval from a large number of countries for its NSG membership. So, to stop India and strengthen Pakistan's case, she suggested that Pakistan should link its energy demand with the CPEC project as doing so will add credibility to its case and will also earn it international attention.

Dr. Cheema opined that Pakistan is facing an adversary that is shrewd and very ambitious. He was of the view that India is aspiring to be a global strategic power. So, Indian claims of keeping civil nuclear plants out of military use are quite a grey area and separation is nothing but a façade. Moreover, Pakistan needs to understand that answering Indian ambitions is necessity but till which level it should be answered requires an estimated view. With that Dr. Rizwana Abbasi concluded the session by highlighting the need for better narrative building not only through public institutions but also by utilizing indirect mediums (military-to-military, academia-to-academia & industries-to-industries). Moreover, this narrative should be built upon the basis of Clean Energy Projects and non-proliferation measures.

In the end Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema thanked all the worthy participants for their valuable input on the topic. He urged the participants to discuss these narratives with people inside security and strategic field to develop better arguments in favor of Pakistan's membership for NSG.