

Nuclear Policy, Grand Strategy and Political Values in India

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Air Chief Marshall S.K. Sareen, President of the Air Force Association, Air Chief Marshall A.Y. Tipnis, Chief of the Air Staff, Mrs. Ela Lal, Respected Former Chiefs, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great privilege to deliver the 17th P.C. Lal Memorial Lecture on the subject of *Nuclear Policy, Grand Strategy and Political Values in India*. May I at the outset thank the Air Force Association for its very gracious invitation. It is a considerable – and I must admit, almost overwhelming – honour to be asked to address such a distinguished and expert audience on issues relating to national security and India's political order, particularly at a time when the nature of both security and polity are being momentarily debated and defined.

I have chosen for my lecture a subject – I must admit, virtually *three* subjects! – that Air Marshal Lal would have commented on with the intelligence, verve, and sagacity that were the hallmarks of his career and that are so well exemplified by his writings.

I had occasion to read Air Marshall Lal's memoirs, *My Years with the I.A.F.*, as a post-graduate student in the late 1980s and have just re-read them. What is striking about those writings is the authenticity and meticulousness of description, the economical and elegant use of language, the finely wrought and balanced sense of judgement, the seriousness and clarity of analysis, and the geniality and generosity of temper.

The forensic training and hand that moved this pen is evident, and I can think of no higher commendation, as an academic, than to say it should be required reading for my doctoral students at the School of International Studies – not only for its subject matter but also for the superior quality of its writing.

If I have begun my tribute to Air Marshall Lal by focussing on his writings, this reflects an academic's conceit. We eggheads love other eggheads, and I am happy to claim Air Marshall Lal as a respected member of the fraternity. This audience needs no reminder that the Air Marshall was no *mere* intellectual though. By any standard, Air Marshall Lal was amongst the best of his generation – in mind, body and feeling, in courage and endurance, in his patriotism and his humanism.

I stress these qualities because I admire Air Marshall Lal's generation virtually without reservation and consider it a beacon. To say this is not fashionable, I know. We have got

used to, and are being encouraged to, judge that generation with skepticism, impatience, even harshness.

But the Nehruvian generation, that first post-colonial generation of men and women who shaped our tryst with destiny and led us into a new and challenging era, were giants who brought to bear passion, commitment, reason, integrity, energy, and liberalism in a way that no subsequent generation has brought to bear on social and public affairs.

There is no doubt in my mind that Air Marshall Lal and his generation not only lived *in* but also *made* a time and place that constitutes the best in independent India's history. In honouring him we honour, I propose, not only this great son of India but also the many other sons and daughters of India who made our country the hospitable, tolerant, and secure home that we love.

I say this with some force because if we look into the distance there are dark clouds gathering, both inside and outside India, clouds that seem to be coming in faster than we had ever countenanced. We of the next generation have grown complacent. We can and indeed must draw on that first inspirational generation as we confront the daunting future ahead.

Midnight's Children, to use Salman Rushdie's evocation of the successor generation, have the resources to carry on the legacy of the first generation of free Indians; but we need the *will* to do so and such as these are moments of reflection on our capacity for bold and innovative action and on our dedication to the cause before us.

I. Challenges Before the Air Force

Air Marshall Lal's professional career and his writings were dedicated to the cause of India's defence and in particular to the vital role of the Air Force in that cause. He would have had much to say and do if he were with us today. If there are dark, gathering clouds ahead, the air arm of our Forces have a central role in weathering those clouds.

Consider the challenges ahead for the Air Force. First of all, there is the strategic bombing role of the Force. With the government determined to make India a nuclear weapons power, the new strategic role of the Air Force is strategic deterrence. Second, the Air Force still has the old job of strategic bombing – with conventional weapons. Third, as demonstrated by the Kargil war, the Air Force remains vital in a tactical or ground support role. Fourth, with the advent of nuclear weapons, there is also the challenge as never before of air defence, of interdiction of the enemy's planes and perhaps even of its missiles.

It hardly needs to be said in front of a professional audience such as this that the material and other requirements for these various functions is the challenge ahead. For the foreseeable future, the responsibility for nuclear deterrence will be solely with the Air Force. Until the Navy develops the SSBN (and indications are that this will be a decade or so away), and until a strategic missile force is assembled, the only means of delivering a retaliatory blow will be air-delivered gravity bombs. The appropriate strike force, with sufficient reach to hit vital targets in Pakistan but more importantly in the heartland of China, is the first and foremost requisite of the deterrent.

Targeting philosophies and lists, dispersal and hardening of air bases and facilities, early warning against a first strike, better air defences, air refuelling capacity, escort fighters for the nuclear strike team, jamming devices to ward off enemy interception, crews trained in delivering nuclear weapons, the appropriate wiring of strike aircraft, various software problems, damage assessment capabilities, all these represent some of the other operational requirements of deterrence.

On the conventional strategic role, there is little perhaps to add. Many of the requirements surely are the same. A key question though is this: is the Air Force prepared to carry out a more aggressive – the more popular word is “proactive”! -- role along the Line of Control (LOC) in Kashmir if things hot up in the months and even years to come? What kind of role could the Air Force play if India chose to raise the costs to Pakistan for its support of the militancy? As the situation in Kashmir and along the LOC deteriorates, surely these questions are serious ones and are more than merely speculative.

As for the tactical role of the Air Force, a number of points might be made briefly. The problem that Air Marshall Lal referred to at length in his book – published we should remember in 1986 – remains, namely, coordination between the Air Force, on the one hand, and the Army and the Navy, on the other. In addition, a number of questions have arisen regarding the kind of specialised tactical support in a theatre such as Kargil – and in Kashmir more generally. Is the Air Force equipped to deal with such situations when its traditional preparation has been for military engagements in the plains or over the seas? Does the Air Force need, as some have suggested, slower, more manoeuvrable aircraft with a higher complement of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) to take out reinforced bunkers at high altitudes on mountain slopes along the LOC? Is the Air Force also equipped to conduct air reconnaissance on a long-term basis of areas such as Kargil which are prone to incursions from Pakistan? What are the implications of such a role in terms of equipment, training, and aerial philosophy? I raise these questions not as a way of sidelining more traditional concerns. For example, when is the Air Force finally going to get the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) as also an Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT)? What about the long awaited AWACS?

These and surely a host of other questions and concerns must preoccupy the Air Force in the years to come. To say this is merely to repeat before you what you, as a professional body, appreciate only too well. If, as a layman, I make mention of it, it is mostly to indicate that there *is* an awareness, amongst those outside the Force, of the imperatives and challenges before the country's primary air arm.

II. Nuclear Policy, Grand Strategy, and Political Values

The burden of my remarks this evening, however, are in another area, one that is by no means outside the expertise and attention of this audience. I have chosen to present some ideas here tonight on three inter-related themes that serve as the larger context within which *any* of the services, the Air Force included, must configure its thinking in the years to come. These three areas are: *India's nuclear policy, its grand strategic choices, and its political values.*

Over the past two years, as I have attended seminar after seminar and listened to the deliberations of the strategic community, it has become clear to me that a very concerted, serious, and passionate debate is in process on all three issues – on nuclear policy, on grand strategy, and on basic political values. It is a debate with implications for every facet of our individual and collective existence, and it raises fundamental questions about political preferences, approaches, and pathways ahead.

In brief, what I have to say here tonight is the following: that there are three dominant points of view on nuclear policy; that these are related to three equally basic conceptions of India's grand strategic choices; and that, in turn, what lies behind these three nuclear policy and grand strategic visions are three political philosophies. (As you can see, I rather like the number three!)

If I am right, then the debate within the Indian strategic community goes much deeper than we realise. The implication, I hope, is clear. However much we may wish for a workmanlike consensus to emerge – so that we can all, in our respective spheres, “get on with things” – this is unlikely to be the case. India is churning, and we cannot expect the security realm to be unaffected by that churning.

Let me begin with the churning on nuclear policy. This is a well known area for you, and I shall therefore be brief.

A. Nuclear Policy

So far as we can see, there are three broad approaches or viewpoints or schools of thought contending for dominance in nuclear policy – that of the “rejectionists”, “pragmatists”, and “maximalists”. These three agree on only one thing substantially, namely, that India requires nuclear weapons for its security. Beyond this there is disagreement.

The three schools can be described in relation to three basic questions:

- Are nuclear weapons necessary for India's security?
- Should India join the non-proliferation regime at least to the extent of signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and joining an eventual fissile material cutoff treaty (FMCT)?
- Is nuclear disarmament feasible and desirable?

These schools also differ on other issues, particularly in relation to the nature of deterrence and the nitty-gritty requirements of India's nuclear posture, but my intent here is not to tell you what you, as professional audience, already know, but to paint in the most elemental differences on nuclear policy in order to make a much larger argument.

Rejectionism

The first position in India's emergent debate is closest to India's traditional oppositional stand to nuclear weapons. The rejectionists hold that nuclear weapons are regrettably necessary in a world where there are others with nuclear weapons that refuse to give them up and that may threaten India's security. Nuclear weapons are necessary, in other words, for deterrence. Rejectionists are not greatly interested in force size and structuring and hold that even a

handful of weapons with adequate command and control will suffice for the purpose of deterrence.

Rejectionists also argue that India should not sign the CTBT or join a fissile material cutoff, even if joining the non-proliferation regime does not affect the Indian deterrent. For rejectionists, the non-proliferation regime is a leading part of the "new world order" which is fundamentally unequal and hegemonistic and which must therefore be resisted. Their opposition to the nuclear regime is not so profoundly related to technical issues such as whether India needs more tests for the reliability of the deterrent or whether it needs more fissile material. It is much more about a political resistance to an unequal global system which rejectionists feel is dominated by the U.S.-led concert of Western and industrial powers.

Finally, rejectionists insist that nuclear disarmament is both desirable and feasible. It is desirable because nuclear weapons could someday be used. Nuclear weapons use anywhere would be catastrophe not just for the immediate victims but for the rest of the world and would therefore endanger India's security. Disarmament is also desirable because nuclear weapons are ethically repugnant if they are not illegal under international law. A multilateral, verifiable abolition of nuclear weapons, as proposed by India, is feasible and requires in the first place that the present nuclear weapons powers commit themselves to its achievement. Once they do, rejectionists propose, India should join the process of abolition. Rejectionists underline the feasibility of disarmament by saying that if the world could abolish biological and chemical weapons, there is no technical reason why it cannot be rid of nuclear weapons as well.

Pragmatism

The second position in the Indian debate over the future of nuclear weapons is that of the pragmatists. Pragmatists also believe that nuclear weapons are vital for Indian security in a world which shows no signs of moving towards abolition. Pragmatists, like rejectionists and maximalists, note that the nuclear weapons states continue to reaffirm the fundamental importance of nuclear weapons in their security postures.

However, pragmatists argue that since India has achieved nuclear weapons status and since there is no going back on New Delhi's declaration regarding the irrevocability of its new nuclear status, it is possible to do a deal with the international community led by the United States. India can join the CTBT and a possible "fisban" in return for de facto if not de jure recognition of its nuclear status. Such a recognition would allow India to deploy its nuclear weapons and would lift the ban on nuclear-related technologies presently denied to India because it has not signed the NPT.

Finally, pragmatists are skeptical about the desirability and feasibility of global nuclear disarmament in any foreseeable future and insist that India should be realistic rather than "normative" and "moralistic" about nuclear weapons. Pragmatists urge India to think more about arms control than about disarmament. Some pragmatists go so far as to argue that given the growing lead of the U.S. and its allies in conventional military technologies – the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) – India should hang on to nuclear weapons even if those powers were someday willing to disarm. This would represent a complete reversal of India's traditional stand on disarmament.

Maximalism

The third position on nuclear weapons is that of the maximalists. The maximalists want India to arm itself as quickly as possible with nuclear weapons for security reasons. In contrast to the rejectionists and pragmatists, maximalists want India to equip itself with the whole range of nuclear weapons and is not satisfied with the relaxed, "minimum deterrence" posture of the rejectionists and pragmatists who would be satisfied with a small arsenal of Hiroshima-type bombs. Maximalists want an arsenal the size of China's and a classical deterrence posture with a triad and sophisticated command and control.

Maximalists, like rejectionists, think that India must refuse to join the non-proliferation regime, partly for political reasons but more importantly so that it has enough time to put together a credible deterrent which would be impossible if India acceded to the CTBT and a fisban. Maximalists, in this sense, are closer to nuclear rejectionists.

Finally, nuclear disarmament is regarded by maximalists as both unattainable and undesirable on technical and strategic grounds. It is unattainable because the challenges of a verifiable abolition of nuclear weapons is technologically and perhaps even economically not practicable. Historically teaches us, maximalists claim, that disarmament cannot be achieved. States won't give up an advanced weapon system until a replacement comes along or it becomes useless militarily. Disarmament is undesirable because nuclear weapons provide security, indeed they do better than conventional weapons in deterring attack.

B. Grand Strategy

Behind these three rather difference nuclear policy choices are three equally distinct grand strategic choices. Grand strategy has been defined as "the policy governing [the use of military force] and combining it with other weapons: economic, political, psychological." Some have said that it is "the adaptation of domestic and international resources to achieve security for a state". Let us take, as a good working definition, the following: grand strategy is a plan that "considers *all* the resources at the disposal of the nation (not just military ones), and it attempts to array them effectively to achieve security in both peace and war."

How can we think about India's grand strategy in a simple but systematic way for purposes of comparison? Let me use some good old Kautilya and his conception of *mandalas*. In the *mandala* conception, you will recall, a prince or ruler conceives of security in a series of concentric circles around his or her domestic realm. At the core of India's security concerns therefore is internal security. In the next circle there are India's neighbours and the security relationships with these contiguous states. In the outermost circle, there are the great powers. Any grand strategy must deal with these three circles.

Parallel to the three different views of nuclear policy are three quite distinct views of grand strategy. I have called these *Nehruvianism*, *modernism*, and, for want of a better term, *hyperrealism* or *hypernationalism*. I am sure that some of you are not happy with these names. I concede that they are not the happiest set of terms. For instance, India's first prime minister, the most self-consciously modern of Indian leaders, would be dismayed at a categorisation that put him in a camp apart from modernism. Nor should one infer from the categories I have drawn up that the Nehruvians and modernists are not good nationalists!

But please grant me my purpose if not my names, and my purpose is to be evocative and to give us some shorthands.

At any rate, Nehruvians, modernists, and hyper-realists/-nationalists have quite different prescriptions with regard to internal security, regional security, and great power relations, and this is what I want to now address.

Nehruvianism

Nehruvianism is familiar enough to most of us, but let me recall its central tenets. First of all, Nehruvians base internal security on a secular, democratic, and socialist order. The use of force to regulate internal order is in this view an absolute last resort. Peace at home, in a vast and plural nation, requires enlightened social, political, and economic policies. Secularism, liberal democracy built along federal lines, and socialist economics constitute such policies.

The Nehruvian formula for managing a large, heterogeneous country with religious, linguistic, caste, and regional differences consists of various elements: constitutionalism and civic nationalism; the devolution of power in a layered federalism, the granting of group rights (e.g. a differentiated civil code in practice, linguistic states and the three language arrangement, and reservations for backward castes); and the calibrated use of force when necessary. In addition, Nehruvianism relies on a mixed economy to deliver a measure of social justice so that disadvantaged social groups have a stake in being loyal to the Indian state. In sum, the Nehruvian view is that social resilience is the surest path to internal security.

With respect to regional security, Nehruvianism prescribes a set of policies that are well known. At the most general level, of course, Nehruvians believe in security in peace and war by means of regional cooperation. Regional cooperation includes economic cooperation, people to people contacts, cultural interactions, sports links, and what we today call track-two diplomacy. Nehruvians argue that India would solidify its relations with its neighbours by using all these instruments. In addition, wherever necessary, India should play an active role in safeguarding the security of these states from external threats. Thus, with all its smaller neighbours, at one time or another, India has had defence and security treaties – Pakistan being the one exception. Finally, India has more or less insisted that it has a role, even a forceful role, in safeguarding the internal security of its neighbours. In the Nehruvian view, though, force, once again, can only be a last resort.

In respect of India's great powers, the Nehruvian prescription is non-alignment. Non-alignment has fallen on hard times and connotes something warm and fuzzy – rather like a nice furry pet that is good for a cuddle but for very little else! In reality, non-alignment, for Nehruvians, embodies a sophisticated policy built around the refusal to be permanently attached to any great power and alliance system. It also embodies a more positive stance, that of active mediation between rival great powers, so that the international system as a whole is made safer, to the benefit primarily of the smaller powers.

Non-alignment connotes much more besides. It is an insistence that international institutions, organizations, and law matter and are particularly important for the protection

of weaker powers. Finally, Nehruvians believe in non-alignment as an alliance of the developing countries against the big powers. Nehru himself scorned the “trade unionism” of the Third World, but his successors certainly saw non-alignment as a form of collective resistance against imperial powers.

Modernism

Modernists are quite distinct from Nehruvians, although there are things they share with the latter. On internal security, modernists have no serious disagreement with the Nehruvians. For them, as much as for the Nehruvians, secularism and democracy are touchstones. Modernists are in agreement with the Nehruvians on issues such as constitutionalism, a layered federalism, group rights, and the restrained use of force against one’s own people.

However, the modernists have two rather sharp differences with the Nehruvians on internal order. First, modernists think that the mixed economy in India went too far and became overly regulative. The claims of social justice were sadly not achieved by the licence and permit raj. What was achieved was corruption and stagnation. Without steady and high rates of growth, the economy did not have enough steam to pull the poor up and away from their destitution. Secondly, modernists think that reservations are destructive beyond a point. Reservations, they concede, serve the cause of social justice, but India has exceeded the sustainable limits of a quota system. The tensions generated by the new reservations policy are doing more harm than any good that might have been achieved by the policy.

If the modernists are fairly close to the Nehruvians on internal security, they are not so close on regional security. For the modernists, India’s neighbours are best dealt with by something approximating benign neglect. Contrary to the Nehruvian strategy of close and continuous engagement in the neighbourhood, the modernist strategy is to spread India’s wings and to take it *out* of the region as much as possible – to West Asia and Central Asia for energy supplies, and to Southeast and East Asia for economic profit. The region is a set of ties that holds India down, in this view. Modernists, ever alert to economic opportunities, see little in the region from the point of view of resources or markets. India should be avuncularly benign towards South Asia. New Delhi should cooperate whenever it is possible to do so without any great effort. But for the rest, South Asia being a backwater in global terms, it is deserving only of neglect.

It is on the issue of how India deals with the great powers that modernism really defines its differences with both the Nehruvians and the hyperrealists and hypernationalists. For the modernists, relations with the great powers represent opportunities as much as threats. India will be a full-fledged great power, in the modernist view. This is more or less inevitable. While Nehruvians do not disagree with the modernists on India’s destiny as a great power, for them India’s great power aspirations must be built on autarky, that is, on self-reliance. Modernists argue by contrast that in the contemporary world this is not possible. India can only become a great power by raising its economic growth rates, and this is feasible if India works not against, but rather with, the great powers as a way of sourcing technology and finance.

Non-alignment and everything it represents therefore seems dreadfully old-fashioned to modernists. The great powers are no longer in fundamental conflict. There are no alliance

blocs vying for India's membership. Indian mediation between the great powers is no longer required. And resistance to the great powers is futile and, in any case, tantamount to cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. India must, in effect, cut a deal with the great powers – pragmatically and with dignity.

Hyper-realism/Hyper-nationalism

The hyper-realists/hyper-nationalists offer a third set of prescriptions on grand strategy. On internal security, the hyperrealists and hypernationalists differ significantly with the Nehruvians and modernists. Hyperrealists do not reject the role of secularism, democracy, and socialism. Those are necessary but not sufficient conditions of internal order and stability. For hyperrealists, the willingness to use force against those who are undermining internal peace must not be shunned. Indeed, a strong hand is a good deterrent. Hard, dissuasive actions early and promptly will promote lawful behaviour.

Hypernationalists go further. They regard secularism, democracy, and socialism as part of the problem and not part of the solution. Secularism, for them, has become appeasement of minorities. Democracy can become licence. And socialism at its worst is godlessness. What India needs is cultural coherence, and Hindu society is what gives India its fundamental unity. Internal security is therefore achieved by promoting the idea and practices of a Hindu realm in which minorities will be treated with tolerance and respect.

On regional security, hyperrealists and hypernationalists have quite different views from both the Nehruvians and modernists. Hyperrealists argue that South Asia is important to India but not as important as the Nehruvians think. In this respect they are closer to the modernists. But hyperrealists recognise that it is very difficult for India to *escape* the region – and in this they *differ* from the modernists. Their answer, therefore, is that India should quite properly and without apology dominate the region and its preferences should hold sway. Hyperrealists argue that this is justified because India represents 80% of the region's people, and the preferences and concerns of the vast majority of the region should prevail. That is a democratic and just outcome.

Hypernationalists, like hyperrealists, also think that India should be dominant in the region – and for rather similar reasons. But they add a vital twist, a cultural twist to the argument. It is not just numbers that count here; it is the fundamental cultural unity of the Subcontinent which, for the hypernationalists, is Indic if it is anything. The implication of what the hyperrealists and hypernationalists is saying is simply this: India's neighbours must adjust and accommodate themselves to the facts of life – the birds and the bees of international life! – and the sooner the better, for everyone concerned. Perhaps a blunter way of putting this is to say that hyperrealists and hypernationalists do not reject cooperation in the region; but they want it on India's terms.

It is on the issue of relations with the great powers that the hyperrealists and hypernationalists are significantly different from the Nehruvians and modernists. The Nehruvians want to stay aloof from great power entanglements; to mediate between the great powers; and to resist the domination of these powers. The modernists want to cut a deal with the great powers in order to graduate India to the club of the great.

Hyperrealists and hypernationalists, by contrast, want India to break into the club of the great powers, to bust into the inner circle, willy-nilly. Their view of India's relations with the great powers does not completely reject the Nehruvian and modernist approaches. It does not reject the Nehruvian non-aligned view of India's role vis a vis the great powers – aloofness, mediation, and resistance – nor does it turn its back on cutting deals with other great powers, as advocated by the modernists.

But these are relatively minor concerns. The hyperrealist and hypernationalist view is that India is already, or will through its exertions be, a great power itself. It will sit at the table as a complete and assertive equal, whether the other great powers like it or not. Sitting at the table, India will fundamentally help shape the world order commensurate with its preferences. This is, to use an old term, *machtpolitik* – not the *idealpolitik* of the Nehruvians or the *realpolitik* of the modernists, but simple assertion or *machtpolitik*. Critics might even call it “macho-politik”, but I shall resist doing so! That would take us into another – albeit very interesting – discussion.

C. Political Values

India's grand strategic thinking cannot and does not occur in a vacuum. It is embedded in a much larger and more basic debate about the proper ends and means of political and social life. Put simply, our individual preferences on what India should do about its security – internal security, regional security, and with respect to the great powers – are influenced powerfully by our basic political values – how we see politics, how we would like politics to be, what we would like to achieve through politics. Three perspectives dominate in India: ***left liberalism, libertarianism, and conservatism***. What I would like to do briefly here is to show how nuclear policy choices and grand strategic preferences relate to fundamental beliefs about political values. This is a much bigger subject and deserves much better treatment than I am going to give it, but I want to share some initial thoughts on the subject.

Left Liberalism

What is left liberalism? No two left liberals would probably altogether agree on what they mean by the term, but the basic idea is a political doctrine which attempts to reconcile liberalism with socialism, a doctrine which includes a commitment to both individual rights, liberty, and freedom and to the cause of equitable distribution and social justice.

So left liberals believe in the pursuit of individual liberty and freedom but suggest that there is also a larger obligation, namely, the achievement of social justice without which individual human rights cannot make much sense. India's leftist and left of centre political parties and formations – including perhaps the old Congress Party – are usually thought of as left liberals.

How is left liberalism related to nuclear rejectionism and the Nehruvian perspective on grand strategy? Fundamental to the left liberal approach is the striving for individual goals but also collective ones within which individual objectives can best be realised. Let us recall that nuclear rejectionists affirm nuclear weapons not just for deterrence purposes but also as an expression of strategic autonomy or freedom for India vis a vis the great powers and as a blow on behalf of all the weaker states against an imperial world order.

Rejectionists get their name from the fact that they *reject* the CTBT and FMCT – and they reject it because it does not meet India’s individual security needs but also because it is part of a world order that they consider unequal and therefore unjust.

Left liberalism is evident too in Nehruvian grand strategic prescriptions and preferences. Nehruvian grand strategy in its insistence on internal security through the constitutional protection of rights, on the devolution of power, and on the granting of group rights fits in with the left liberal’s insistence on the protection of individual freedom and the sanctity of the group to which individuals belong. A large part of the Nehruvian support for regional and Third World cooperation stems from the desire to protect India, to be sure, but also to protect the freedom of the weak, emergent, postcolonial states from the imperialism of the strong, particularly Western states.

Left liberalism can be seen as a shadow behind the conception and practice of non-alignment. Non-alignment is fundamentally about India asserting its freedom and sovereign equality in the international system. It is a refusal to be sucked into the strategic games of the great powers and is a doctrine of self assertion. But non-alignment was also a collective endeavour within which India and others could be more free. The collectivity gave each member a greater degree of freedom to choose its friends and enemies and even to take the initiative in mediating between the stronger powers. Non-alignment’s insistence on collectively resisting the great powers and on promoting an agenda of global economic redistribution also fits very nicely with the left liberal commitment to social justice.

Libertarianism

Like left liberalism, libertarianism is a term that signifies many things politically. However, for convenience, let us think about it as a political doctrine that is committed to emancipating the individual from institutions and ideas that constrain one from realising one’s full potential. Institutions such as religion, custom, and other forms of conformity (e.g. caste loyalties and associations) are particular social villains for libertarians. Libertarians, in contrast to left liberals, are usually also believers in *laissez faire* or market economics and argue that social justice is achievable only by expanding the economic pie. This can only happen if individuals are freed from needless state regulation in their business activities and if they relentlessly pursue their own good.

In India, libertarianism was best articulated by political parties that have basically disappeared from view. The Raja Rajgopalachari-Piloo Mody-Minoo Masani Swatantra Party of the 1950s and 1960s is probably the best-known libertarian party. Today, those liberals who strongly support individual liberty and emancipation and free market principles, from whatever political party, represent libertarianism.

Libertarianism seems to be the bedrock of nuclear pragmatism and a modernist grand strategy. Removing constraints on individuals and allowing individuals to pursue their personal development and good is basic to libertarianism. Nuclear pragmatists in India, we have seen, argue the case for nuclear weapons not only for deterrence purposes but also as a way of allowing India to break out of the technology-related, international institutional constraints that are entangling Indian development prospects.

Central to the pragmatist worldview is the notion of a nuclear bargain or compact. A nuclear India, pragmatists argue, gains leverage with the major powers. With this leverage, it is in a position to strike a bargain, a bargain by means of which the constraints on technology transfers to India are removed and by which India in return agrees to restrict its nuclear activities – by joining the CTBT and an eventual FMCT. Notice that the pragmatist argument is solely about India's interests and objectives and advancement. The pragmatist does not care much about international society and the welfare of others; he or she assumes that everyone looks after themselves and that that is good – an Adam Smith view of international politics!

In grand strategy, modernists stress secularism and democracy as the true basis for internal security, just as the Nehruvians do. But let us recall that modernists are against an overly regulative state in the economy and they think that caste reservations have gone too far. This is the classic position of libertarians who adopt a *laissez faire*, free market approach to the economy and who want to free individuals from the constraints of social institutions such as caste. Libertarians would argue that caste reservations in the end will tend to reinforce the caste system and that social justice can only be truly served by freeing individuals from their caste affiliations.

Modernists are very skeptical that regional cooperation and non-alignment offer any advantages for India. This skepticism, I would argue, is rooted in a libertarian view of the world. So, just as individuals must seek out and pursue their own good, according to libertarianism, so India must proceed along its own path internationally, according to modernists. There is no advantage in India tying itself to the collective good of South Asia or the Third World. Economic and technological power, which is vital to India's progress, cannot come from either the region or the developing countries as a whole. It can only come from regions other than South Asia and from the great powers, the very powers that non-alignment spurns. Self interest must come before collective interest, although everyone pursuing their self-interest will produce a collective good. Once again, this is Adam Smith- libertarianism at its best.

Conservatism

Conservatism, as the name suggests, is a political doctrine which emphasizes the need to *conserve* those social values, institutions and practices that have come to a people historically and to be suspicious of radical or utopian proposals for fundamental change such as espoused by liberal and socialists. Traditional values, inherited social organizations, and established ways of doing things are the best guarantors of orderly human interaction in what must always be an imperfect world. They therefore deserve respect and must be defended. Modern conservatives very much believe in the importance and authority of the state. They also believe that state institutions should be closely linked with the historically-constituted society within which the state functions: the state should not over-ride society and its wishes.

The Jan Sangh and its successor the Bharatiya Janata Party and its Sangh Parivar allies are the most important conservative force in India. Some segments of the Congress Party have also traditionally represented political conservatism.

Conservative political values very much undergird the stance of nuclear maximalists and hyperrealist/hypernationalist grand strategists.

Conservatives are traditionalists: they believe in sticking to tried and true methods and ways. When nuclear maximalists argue that India needs the full panoply of nuclear weapons for deterrence, they scorn what they regard as new-fangled thinking about deterrence. They point to the works of the classical deterrence thinkers and illustrate credible deterrence by the postures adopted by the five nuclear powers. These represent, for maximalists, tried and tested methods, and maximalists validate their support for a well-rounded arsenal by invoking the authority of experience, the experience of the “classical” nuclear powers. Not surprisingly, maximalists oppose India’s signing the CTBT because they believe that, like the other nuclear powers, India must test a good deal more in order to validate its arsenal.

Nuclear maximalists also reject the idea of disarmament. The traditionalism of the conservative, his or her belief in the importance of the lessons of history, shows in the maximalists rejection of disarmament. Maximalists argue that disarmament is untenable because history shows that no one ever gives up a major weapon system until it has been supplanted by a better system. Conservatives spurn utopian ideas to remake society and human beings. Maximalists spurn disarmament, arguing that it is utopian, idealistic, some fuzzy, feel-good thing out of touch with reality. The reality, as revealed by history, is that states will cultivate any and all instruments of force. Tradition and experience are testimony to that, and it is irresponsible to disarm.

Hyperrealist and hypernationalist grand strategy has its roots in political conservatism. Conservatives think of the state and its authority as virtually an end in itself. Anyone who flouts its decrees and edicts must be dealt with firmly, even harshly. Hyperrealist and hypernationalist grand strategists, as I noted earlier, believe that in matters of internal security tough and coercive measures are not necessarily a regrettable, last resort. Those in India who turn against the state and its laws should be punished in exemplary fashion for their transgressions.

Conservatives set great store by the idea of society which in their view is the product of hundreds, even thousands of years of human endeavour. Society represents, as it were, the best that a people can come up with over great spans of time. Society’s ways, its cultural products, are not to be cast aside by wild-eyed reformers, liberal or leftist, who are johnny-come-latelys in the great unfolding that is history. We can see these values below the surface of hyperrealist and hypernationalist prescriptions in grand strategy. We can see it most clearly in the case of hypernationalists.

Thus, hypernationalists propose that internal security is best served by cultural coherence and that coherence rests on the unity and dominance of Hindu society – and not on the dubious doctrines, in their eyes, of secularism and socialism. Hypernationalists justify a regional security order built around India’s dominance by suggesting that it is India which gives the region its coherence. India is the source of regional coherence, in this view, because it is the “mother civilization” of South Asia, that India’s various neighbours are offsprings of Mother India.

Finally, hyperrealists and hypernationalists paint India's relations with the great powers in terms of *machtpolitik*, what I referred to earlier as busting in to sit at the high table. This view rests, I suggest, also on a deeply conservative view of the world. Conservatives think that those who rule and regulate societies are those who embody power, authority, and virtue. This is at it should be, in the conservative view, because obviously those who have power, authority, and virtue have got those qualities by means of history, tradition, or talent.

When hyperrealists and hypernationalists propose that India is fated to be a great power, they do so on the basis of their belief that India self-evidently possesses the qualities of a great power, and it is only a matter of recognising what is immanent in the Indian nation-state, what is already *there* if only we and others cared to look. Just as India "naturally" is the power of South Asia, is "naturally" one of the pivotal powers of Asia, it is also "naturally" a global power fit to sit with a handful of other powers.

III. Conclusion

Let me conclude with a question and some tentative answers or quasi-answers. A question that follows logically enough from what I have said is: how will the debate between these different nuclear policy/grand strategic/political ideological schools resolve itself? How can the differences between rejectionists-Nehruvians-left liberals, the pragmatists-modernists-libertarians, and the maximalists-hyperrealists/hypernationalists-conservatives be reconciled? I am afraid this is where all my certainties leave me! It would take a far braver fool than me to essay a definitive answer – and let history prove him or her hopelessly wrong!

It seems to me that we can all wager some bets though, but I am no betting man! Perhaps that's the definition of an academic: someone who is loath to take risks, to roll the dice, to let the chips fall where they may! What I shall do here is to play chicken a bit and, rather than take the issue head on, I will instead address the question: What are the ways in which the debate can be resolved?

There are four ways that the debate between these three schools of thought can resolve itself, if resolve is the word. First of all, clearly, one way that the debate will be resolved is if one side scores what boxers call a "haymaker", a political knockout punch. In the pugilistic metaphor, the three fighters will slug it out until only one is left standing. I don't pretend to know who will be left standing, but perhaps I can essay a negative judgement: who may not be left standing! I must say that it appears that the first school, the rejectionists-Nehruvians-left liberals are on the ropes! I say this with great personal regret because this is the school I feel closest to and admire the most.

A second way in which there may be resolution of the debate is through a synthesis, where bits and pieces of various schools are joined and jammed together. Perhaps the metaphor of bricolage, of making collages (that my children these days regale me with!), is apt here. Unlikely parts and elements of one school are somehow juxtaposed and *made* to fit into a whole. The trouble with this kind of synthesis is that it is unlikely to last: you cannot make incommensurate things commensurate.

Yet another way of achieving resolution between the different schools of thought is through a deeper synthesis, a synthesis of opposing elements. This is the kind of synthesis that the German philosophers G.W.F. Hegel and Karl Marx conceptualised in the idea of a thesis and an antithesis being brought into confrontation and producing a synthesis. This synthesis is not bricolage but a transcendent thing, a transformation that is not altogether predictable from the vantage point of the present. This is a possible resolution of the debates, and its implication is of a fundamental transfiguration of the Indian political landscape in a way that none of us can predict from where we stand today. Let me call this the alchemical resolution of the debate. Some social analysts are predicting that an alchemical change is on the Indian political horizon – and that there may be great pain ahead.

Finally, the debate may resolve itself by *not* resolving itself! That is, the various schools will continue, as far as we can see into the future, to slug it out or live side by side more or less uneasily. The analogy of muddling along comes to mind here. While we are taught to be suspicious and impatient with muddle along approaches and policies, muddling is not necessarily a bad social strategy. It connotes incremental change and adaptation, trial and error, almost random modification. Darwinists tell us that that is the way of all species development. A safe bet – the only kind I take! – is to say that we shall muddle along on questions of nuclear policy, grand strategy, and political values, with tilts this way and that way over time.

Soothsaying is a serious and important endeavour, but let me make a more genial and I hope no less important concluding remark. The debate is here to stay. There are other points of view on these issues that I have not even mentioned – Gandhian, Marxist, feminist, environmentalist, pacifist, to name some of the more prominent. To that extent the debate is even larger and more complex and contentious than I have portrayed it. This is all to the good. A big, loud, even abrasive debate is a sure sign of, and vehicle for, increasing participation in national security affairs. In a democracy, this is vital. We will all be better off for it. The great pluralistic Indian security debate is in our collective interest. I, for one, would have it no other way.

Thank you very much.