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Amber Jamil
Atlantic Council

Megan Goyette
Atlantic Council

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Gift Baskets for South Asia: Nuclear Risk Reduction and Crisis Management

Amber Jamil and Megan Goyette
Atlantic Council

Abstract

Gift Basket diplomacy is an interest-based approach to negotiation that encourages voluntary commitments as incentives for cooperation. International diplomats used this approach during the Nuclear Security Summits (NSS), and it is the new standard for international cooperation. This model was successfully replicated in climate talks and led to a global effort to combat climate change. The use of house presents, and gift baskets encourages leadership and team building, to excel beyond intractable consensus-based stalemates. The Gift Basket Diplomacy model may reduce South Asia's nuclear risk and enhance crisis management by increasing diplomatic efforts during regional party talks and cooperative engagements, by keeping negotiators on a focused path to substantive counterterrorism and border security cooperation.

Keywords: South Asia, diplomacy, multi-party talks, Nuclear Security Summits, Centers of Excellence, Pakistan, India, technical cooperation, nonproliferation

I. Background

Nuclear security cooperation advances through multi-party negotiations, among disparate states, with far reaching implications for security and growth. The process is affected by a variety of factors including the existence of a state's weapons program, treaties, regional security, subnational politics, military-civilian relations, and the uncertainty of other parties' motives. Together, these and other elements added a daunting complexity to the negotiation process that led to the first Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC in 2010. Before the high-level assembly, binding agreements were obstacles that prevented multilateral cooperation and communication. A central question for the NSS was the future of United Nations (U.N.) Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540), a binding requirement for states to secure nuclear material as a sovereign responsibility. The resolution established principles for international cooperation to deter non-state actors from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring, or using nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their means of delivery

with subsequent extensions intended to advance implementation through collective action and negotiations [1]. While it set up legally binding obligations, its implementation was challenged because many states did not meet their targets. Since its adoption in 2004, the resolution's implementation was limited by two to three-year incremental extensions.

Leading up to the first summit, negotiators recognized that earlier negotiation tactics had run their course with minimal desired outcomes. In response to the need for collaborative negotiation dynamics, diplomats encouraged interest-based bargaining to find common goals that allowed states flexibility in pursuing solutions that best accommodated their unique interests and priorities. This negotiation approach also encouraged team-building based on national priorities and common goals. Subsequently, the international community agreed to this dramatic evolution in thinking, communicating, and working so to prioritize the potential of reaching nationally determined goals and breaking stalemates.

Negotiation strategies were critical to the success of the NSS talks, which fostered interest-based bargaining through coalitions. These strategies established a sense of shared urgency, flexibility, and confidence building which led to negotiations closing with a landmark 10-year extension to UNSCR 1540, among other unprecedented international cooperation regimes in nuclear security.

The NSS talks also built a foundation for the *Convention to Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials* (CPPNM). After eleven years, the CPPNM finally gained the number of ratifications required for its amendment, which provided a framework for rules and regulations that govern physical protection against nuclear threats and serves as a critical tool for accountability in nuclear security [2].

II. Interest-Based Negotiations

If parties continued to work within a narrow interest perspective during multiparty talks, the dominant strategy would be to 'free ride' the international system while others bear the cost of strengthening the regime. This deficiency of trust and dominate-focused strategy led to suboptimal long-term outcomes at the expense of collective rationality; consensus-based rules allowed spoilers to derail talks. To correct the legacy of earlier negotiations, NSS re-structured the summit to encourage interest-based bargaining within a principled negotiation framework.

States were called on to develop voluntary commitments before the negotiations, based on individual institutional abilities called "house presents" and "gift baskets." Gift basket diplomacy is a process that circumvents the need for group consensus by bringing like-minded parties together to form smaller groups, which work to develop a concise and similar language in documents and create agreements to fulfill specific positions and goals. The resulting commitment served as a baseline at the onset of the negotiation process. Blocs are encouraged to develop voluntary commitments and regional initiatives to build coalitions around central issues. It allowed states flexibility to pursue solutions that best accommodated their unique interests and priorities. The result was a push-pull dynamic in NSS talks wherein model states strived to deepen collective commitment by working together around key areas of agreement, while consensus-based deliberation encouraged baseline cooperation around areas of disagreement.

Advanced signaling and communication is critical to building confidence and success. During NSS, designated officials, known as Sherpas, worked between summits to create incremental momentum to encourage innovation and team building. As change by one party impacts decisions for others, and outcomes become more indeterminate, implementing advance commitment requirements enhances communication and information sharing as a critical element of collaborative negotiation. To break historical stalemate, it is necessary to enhance communication that provides information about other parties' goals and balances conflictual and cooperative motives.

Through NSS, a total of 30 states, with competing mandates, risk exposure, and access to resources, worked toward agreements on nuclear security. They overcame political and economic power imbalances which threatened to entrench party positions at the expense of identifying shared interests. Team collaboration fostered the discovery of collective interests to countervail domestic pressure by bolstering the moral force of like-minded states. The NSS created momentum for statements to be made on bilateral nuclear security between key countries. Notably, China and the United States committed to increasing cooperation on nuclear terrorism prevention and established an annual dialogue on nuclear security [2]. The NSS also spurred other national contributions. Argentina committed to eliminate its highly enriched uranium (HEU), which established Latin America and the Caribbean as the first HEU-free region, and Morocco committed to establishing the “Moroccan Agency for Safety and Security in Nuclear and Radiological Fields” [3].

Critics who oppose gift basket diplomacy argue that the method promotes an uneven approach to nuclear security; countries who participate will advance their nuclear security while the remaining countries will fall further behind – for a field like nuclear security, this can be dangerous. However, this perspective misses the point: for the method to work, the negotiations’ overall goal must include strengthening the global nuclear security framework through a deepened collective commitment [4].

III. South Asia

One key gift basket, centered on the Joint Statement on Nuclear Security Training Centers, signals states’ intent to form the International Network for Nuclear Security Training and Support Centers (NSSCs) [3]. NSSCs was designed to train nuclear security personnel, provide technical support, and collaborate in detection and response to nuclear security events, as well as build a strong nuclear security culture and promote coordination among those involved in nuclear security efforts. The outlook for South Asian nuclear security improved when India and Pakistan’s participation led to the development of highly regarded Centers of Excellence (COEs) in partnership with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Initially, efforts to harmonize COEs, spurred by faculty exchange, co-curriculum development, and complementary programming in physical protection and response in the event of nuclear events, may serve to increase technical cooperation. The COEs also presented an opportunity to build on other joint commitments and contributed to efforts for securing nuclear material, the transport of nuclear and radiological material, and strengthening international instruments of nuclear security. The role of COEs is broad, ranging from building the technical capacity for measuring nuclear materials and sharing best practices, to ensure the adequate protection of nuclear materials [5].

Gift basket diplomacy can expand and strengthen regional nuclear stability through counterterrorism and border security. The membership of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are diverse forums of states’ interests suited to regional multiparty talks and currently engaged in security cooperation. SAARC must be understood in the context that two of the four non-Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty nations are members in SAARC—India and Pakistan [6]. Future regional crisis management may be bolstered by improving transparency through the development of common equipment and operating procedures and could include the exchange of information about nuclear facilities, imagery information, remote monitoring, and sensing, as well as site inspections. Conducting simulation exercises can help identify critical gaps and address weak links. Greater technical cooperation today lowers the miscalculations of states during crisis flashpoints in the future.

Using gift basket diplomacy and nationally-determined commitments within a coalition framework in South Asia could drive the development of national plans to secure nuclear material and strengthen international instruments for nuclear security while establishing flexible, resilient policies based on the

institutional capacities of each state. One way to understand the NSS negotiations is to see them as an overarching umbrella and the first in a series of escalating commitments that create a shadow for the future. This perspective of the progressive nature and underlying need for reciprocity may work to counterbalance underlying disagreements between parties.

Both Pakistan and India participated in the four nuclear security summits and subsequently established concrete achievements. The NSS was instrumental in building the nuclear security abilities and establishing individual COEs in both countries. India also supported the “Joint Statement on Strengthening Nuclear Security Implementation” along with 37 other countries in 2016 [8].

Future negotiation tactics requiring parties to state redlines and find practical solutions may foster fresh dynamics in the intractability of South Asia. To prevent talks from collapsing, mediators should encourage parties to know their counterparts on a personal level, others’ interests, and underlying needs. This process de-neuters zero sum approaches to negotiations by challenging the definition of success and allows an optimal non-zero-sum approach to emerge.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in ensuring policy pressure and public visibility during talks. To end South Asia’s historical stalemate, think tanks and universities serve to lay the groundwork for dialogue, while key NGOs are positioned to lead concerted policies designed to rebalance interest-based coalitions and consensus-based decisions, forcing a shift toward immediate, contextualized, and tangible solutions. NGOs can put pressure on governments and drive sustained international negotiations and strengthen multilateral institutions to enhance national level measures. They are in a unique position to build meaningful relationships with both governmental and non-governmental parties and engage with new stakeholders who have not yet been included in the nuclear security dialogue [7].

IV. Conclusion

The NSS contributed to the 10-year extension of *UNSCR 1540* in 2011 and brought states into agreement based on historic, current, and future responsibilities. The NSS talks also led to the ratification of the 2005 Amendment to the CPPNM [citation] to establish a framework for rules and regulations governing physical protection against nuclear threats and serve as a critical tool for accountability in nuclear security. The negotiation process promoted cooperation where consensus was difficult because of divergent interests, enabled by the emergence of blocs with common interests. Ideas influence policy by supplying road maps to shared goals. In the case of nuclear security, the ideas of shared and sovereign responsibility affect strategic solutions where equilibrium was lacking. The beliefs led to cooperation in global situations where consensus was difficult to sustain. These ideas are now embedded in the political institutions of the United Nations to ensure flexible solutions will continue to be the key for breaking the stalemate in international negotiations. In a new era of global cooperation, on one of the most complex issues facing humanity, the gift basket diplomacy approach should be replicated in regional talks in South Asia and beyond.

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