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## ‘Be prepared for irrational nuclear war’

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Students’ perspectives of nuclear empowerment and what India’s nuclear doctrine ought to be, came to the fore at a forum organised at Stella Maris College | P Ravikumar

“We cannot expect political leaders to be rational all the time, especially those with nuclear weapons,” former Ministry of Defence bureaucrat P R Chari warned young researchers, urging them to go beyond their ‘neat analyses’ of Asia’s nuclear policies, and take into consideration the irrational and unpredictable causes of nuclear war. Quoting Winston Churchill’s views, Chari said, “What if a political leader with nuclear weapons developed the attitude of Hitler in his bunker? What if they fall into the hands of someone who has nothing to gain and everything to lose,” he asked the students, observing that ‘perfect models’ like those shown in their sterile presentations, may not work in the real world. “While creating multiple scenarios, you must also discuss the possibility of accidents involving nuclear weapons, and the necessary disaster management. Also consider the consequences if these nuclear were to fall into the hands of extremists; especially since there is the worry that the entire state of Pakistan may fall under the control of extremists,” Chari pointed out.

Chari was speaking at a workshop on ‘Nuclear Asia’ organised by the Department of International Studies at the Stella Maris College here on Tuesday. Presenting their fresh ideas and ‘what-if’ scenarios concerning nuclear warfare, young students from colleges across Chennai and Bangalore impressed the panel of experts with their mature and radical ideas.

The panel consisted of P R Chari who is currently a research professor at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies(IPSC),and Rajaram Panda, an authority on the security architecture and policies in the Asia-Pacific and professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Interacting with the young researchers , P R Chari urged them to look up the IPSC website for an ‘unofficial’ review report on what India’s nuclear doctrine should be in 2013. He said, “India’s nuclear doctrine was formulated in 1999, and is terribly outdated now, especially in the wake of traumatic incidents like the 9/11 attacks. Ideally, it should be renewed, if not revised, every five years; but this has never been done.”

Commenting on the students’ perspectives of the strained relations between India, Pakistan and China, Chari urged them to look at the situation from Islamabad’s point of view. “In the conflict between India and Pakistan, Pakistan knows it is the weaker nation, facing a country seven times it’s size , with a GDP 10 times higher than its own. Pakistan has not forgotten that India was the cause for its partition from Bangladesh in 1971. So, it looks for some kind of compensation in the conflict and nuclear weapons comes to its rescue. Pakistan looks at nukes as some kind of magic, something that protects them,” explained Chari.

The workshop also featured paper presentations on the nuclear policies of Japan and North Korea, with students intently taking notes and asking serious questions. The best ideas and suggestions from the young researchers will be published as a report, said Prof S Aarti, head of department of International studies at Stella Maris College for Women.