Securing India’s Strategic Autonomy

What is the issue?

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- Though China had largely refrained from commenting over India’s missile programme, when India conducted the fourth test of Agni-V, Chinese foreign ministry came out with a statement
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- It stated that the UNSC has explicit regulations on whether India can develop ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons.
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What is the resolution that china talked about?

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- China was referring to the **UNSC Resolution 1172, 1998**.
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- It was passed in the aftermath of the nuclear tests conducted by both India and Pakistan in May 1998.
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- The resolution had urged India and Pakistan not to develop nuclear weapons delivery platforms like ballistic missiles, to cap their nuclear weapons programmes and cease all fissile materials production.
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- This resolution was approved under Chapter VI of the UN Charter and is **non-binding**.
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- Therefore there are no constraints on India pertaining to its weapons and missile programmes.
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- But the Chinese media accused India of breaking the UN's limits on its development of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missile.
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- India affirmed that India's strategic capabilities are not targeted against any particular country and India abides by all the applicable international obligations.
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Why China reacted?

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- The media coverage of the successful test-firing of the two long-range missiles by India.
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- Despite not being a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), is getting **preferential treatment** from the rest of the world.
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- India had recently joined the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR),** whereas China’s credentials to be in the grouping were found lacking.
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- These are the reasons for China’s discomfort.
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- Therefore apart from raising objections to India’s missile testing, it also stalled India’s entry into the NSG and acted against Indian interests on the issue of terrorism emanating from the Pakistani soil.
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What India should have done?

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- India, however, does not appear to be giving a strong response to such Chinese actions.
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- Globally military parades have been observed that countries use such ceremonial parades **to display their military capabilities to the world.**
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- During the 2013 Republic Day parade, India had displayed Agni-V.

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- It appears that India avoided displaying its nuclear might after 2013 for obvious geopolitical reasons.
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- Nuclear deterrence is also about demonstration and display of capabilities.
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- Such strategic signalling is often necessary to send a strong message to those questioning India's **'strategic autonomy'.**
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\n**Source: IDSA**

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