Inaugural Dissertation
zu Erlangung der Doktorwürde
der Fakultät für Wirtschafts und
Sozialwissenschaften,
Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

Elite Perception and Biased Strategic Policy Making:
The Case of India's Nuclear Build-up

vorgelegt von

Karsten Frey, M.A.
Am Fürstenweiher 61
69118 Heidelberg

Oktober 2004

C O N T E N T

Tables:

Charts:

List of Abbreviations

AEC	Atomic Energy Commission
AEET	Atomic Energy Establishment Trombay
AS	Attitude Scale
BARC	Bhabha Atomic Research Centre
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BWC	Biological Weapons Convention
CANDU	Canadian Deuterium-Uranium (Reactor)
C^3I	Command, Control, Communication, and Intelligence
CBMs	Confidence Building Measures
CCPA	Cabinet Committee for Political Affairs
CD	Conference on Disarmament
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIRUS	Canadian-Indian Reactor, U.S.
CSIR	Council of Scientific and Industrial Research
CTBT	Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention
DAE	Department of Atomic Energy
DRDO	Defence Research and Development Organisation
FMCT	Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty
GoM	Group of Ministers
H-Bomb	Hydrogen Bomb
HEU	Highly Enriched Uranium
HQ	Head Quarters
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
IB	Intelligence Bureau
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDSA	Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
IGMDP	Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INF	Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Force (in Sri Lanka)
IR	International Relations
IRBM	Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organisation
JCSC	Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
LEU	Low Enriched Uranium
LoC	Line of Control

MAD	Mutually Assured Destruction
MBT	Main Battle Tank
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOX	Mixed Natural Uranium and Plutonium Oxide
MRBM	Medium Range Ballistic Missile
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
MW	MegaWatts
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National Command Authority
NCP	National Command Post
NMD	National Missile Defence
NNWS	Non-Nuclear Weapons States
NPT	Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty
NSAB	National Security Advisory Board
NSC	National Security Council
NSG	Nuclear Suppliers Group
NSNC	National Strategic Nuclear Command
NWFZ	Nuclear Weapons Free Zone
NWS	Nuclear Weapons States
PAEC	Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission
PI	Polarisation Index
PM	Prime Minister
PNE	Peaceful Nuclear Explosion
PSU	Public Sector Undertaking
RAND	Research and Development Corporation
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
R&D	Research and Development
RAPS	Rajasthan Atomic Power Station
Rs.	Rupees
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation
SFC	Strategic Forces Command
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SPG	Strategic Policy Group
SSM	Surface to Surface Missile
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
TIFR	Tata Institute of Fundamental Research
UN	United Nations
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

1. Introduction

India's nuclear build-up, which culminated in the 1998 nuclear tests and India's subsequent self-declaration as a nuclear weapons power, attracted a large amount of academic research trying to explore the motives behind these striking developments. The focus was thus placed upon the strategic environment of the South Asian region, which determined the security imperatives under which India's nuclear armament took place. Right from the beginning, the academic discourse on the pros and cons of nuclear weapons for India's security was polarised, sharply divided between advocates and opponents of the nuclear bomb.

The major flaw inherent to these numerous strategic analyses is their general assumption that strategy and security considerations alone matter in India's nuclear decision-making. Those analysts making the case for India's nuclearisation assume that the Indian government acted along these arguments when it decided to openly go nuclear. However, in view of the pre-test nuclear discourse such assumptions appear flawed, as they retroactively construe India's motives in an ex post fashion. Conversely, those scholars taking a negative position on the strategic value of nuclear weapons for India's security hardly consider it worth while exploring in detail the reason for the suboptimal outcome of India's nuclear decision making.

The main objective of the present study is to remedy this shortcoming of the nuclear discourse by providing an in-depth analytic account of the motives and dynamics of India's nuclear policy making. The question here is not whether nuclear weapons improve India's security. Instead, the central interest in this study is to what extent security considerations factored in to India's nuclear policy development.

The necessary prerequisite for the development of an appropriate explanatory model is a theoretical approach which allows for the coexistence of security related and non-security related motives of state behaviour in the international arena. Neorealist theory, commonly applied to conventional explanatory models of nuclear competitions, defines security–maximisation, equated with relative power-maximisation, as the singularly relevant national interest on top of the lexicographic preference system of any state. As such, Neorealist theory appears insufficient to provide a stringent explanatory model to the present study. The analysis instead falls back upon the classical Realist concept of power politics, in which states' international behaviour is determined by their satisfaction with their position in the international system. States satisfied with the current balance of power act as status quo powers, increasing their respective power capabilities only in reaction to the disruption of the current balance by other states. Those powers dissatisfied with the present situation actively increase their power capabilities in order to improve their respective position within the system.

On the basis of this classical Realist concept of power-maximisation, an explanatory model is developed which allows for the existence of various interrelated interests. The overall compound of national interests determines the degree to which a state acts either as status quo power or as a dissatisfied power seeking a system change. Thus, the model combines explanatory factors on the structural level (power) as well as on the unit-level (interests). This refined Realist approach is referred to as the Balance-of-Interest Theory (also known by the ambiguous term 'Neoclassical' Realist Theory)[1].

Within the model, the structure of the international system in South Asia sets the framework for India's international action. Two major structural factors reflect India's nuclear calculus, one being the threat emerging from a nuclear armed China, and the other rising from Pakistan's nuclear and missile programmes. The so-called "China factor" is largely considered by strategic thinkers as the most clear and convincing incentive for India's nuclear build up. After the Indo-Chinese war of 1962 and China's first nuclear tests two years later, the countries' bilateral relationship remained largely hostile, giving impetus for India to engage in strategies of balancing China's superior military power. In its relations with arch rival Pakistan, the introduction of nuclear weapons was, in contrast, strategically counter productive for India, as the equalising effects of these weapons diminished much of India's superiority in conventional weaponry.

Within the model, these structural conditions of India's regional security environment were permissive to India's nuclear development but not sufficient to make India's nuclearisation imperative for maintaining its self-preservation. The model therefore includes explanatory variables on the unit-level which are outside the classical strategic realm. Such unit-level interests were generally related to political, less strategic values attributed to nuclear weapons. Such values played a significant role within India's domestic political party competition, among certain pressure groups, and impacted India's relationship with other countries on non-proliferation matters.

The interplay between security-related variables, such as the 'China factor' and unit-level variables, account for India's dissatisfaction with the existing international nuclear order. These factors determined India's policy to seek a system change by building up nuclear arms.
In contrast to its nuclear armed neighbours China and Pakistan, India's nuclear policy making is taking place within the country's democratic framework. This structure allows for an exceedingly intensive, protracted, and emotionalised debate on the nuclear issue. This sensitivity of the nuclear debate explains how values other than security, especially those related to the country's status and prestige, are attributed to the nuclear issue. While status seeking is accommodated in the model as a national interest in its own right, the policy of prestige, defined by Hans Morgenthau as instrumentality aimed at displaying rather than using military force to impress other nations with one's power, is the means

[1] Schweller, Randall L: Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest. New York: Columbia University Press 1998.

through which status increase is sought[2]. The concepts of 'status' and 'prestige' are socially constructed and exist only because actors attribute a certain meaning to them. Within the context of India's developing post-colonial society, the norm of equity in the international system has proved to be the crucial element in its socially constructed understanding of a country's status in the world. This strong sense of equity collided with the global nuclear order and its formal manifestation, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), which explicitly restricts official nuclear status to only five powers and thereby denies late-comers international standing. The strong presence of the equity norm within India's society and the inherent perceived injustice with regard to the international nuclear order constitute a major driving force in India's quest for the nuclear bomb.

The scope of the present study is limited to the identification of the main actors within India's nuclear policy making as well as the basic rationales behind their action. This approach contrasts to studies based on institutionalist explanatory concepts, which stress the emergence of military structures and institutions that develop an interest of their own, thereby making security policy shifts towards reconciliation and cooperation in the international arena more difficult.

India's democratic set-up has further amplified its effect upon the country's strategic decision making process. The interaction between the elected leaders and the public is not a direct one but occurs through the intermediation of a limited number of strategic thinkers and opinion leaders, referred to as the strategic elite. This group of strategists has managed to monopolise the nuclear discourse, thereby determining India's nuclear course directly within the government's advisory bodies. More significantly, they indirectly dominate opinion leadership through their extensive media presence and newspaper publishing. The elite's perceptions do not differ from the overall normative disposition of India's society but rather represent a cross-section of it.

The main fora in which the elite's strategic debate on the nuclear issue took place were India's major English speaking daily newspapers. Thus, in order to assess the motives and dynamics behind India's nuclear course, this study focuses on the analysis of nuclear related articles published therein as its units of analysis. The data collection is limited to the five most relevant English speaking daily newspapers. These are: The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, The Hindu, The Indian Express, and The Statesman.
The sample allows for basic quantitative methods of analysis, which give empirical evidence to some general trends within the nuclear debate over time. Quantitative methods alone, however, fail to detect the nuances of the emotionally driven nuclear debate that occurred mainly along intangible arguments based on normative concepts like prestige and status considerations. Understanding these norms and their significance for the process of India's nuclear policy making is the main focus of this study. For this purpose, interpretive methods of content analysis are applied.

[2] Morgenthau, Hans J.: Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, revised ed.. Boston: McGraw-Hill 1993.

Conventional studies on security-related motives for India's nuclear build-up have usually found the 1960s to be the crucial decade within which the strategic parameters for India's nuclear course were set. Several events like the Indo-Chinese war of 1962, the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, and above all, the first Chinese nuclear test of 1964, caused a significant deterioration of India's strategic environment. Surprisingly, the nuclear debate emerging in India during this period was not so much triggered by these events but was instead focused on the international negotiation process on the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, which concluded in 1968. Overall, the disposition among India's strategic elite in this period remained rather dismissive towards the bomb. Policy-makers continued to abstain from any clear-cut decision on the nuclear weapons issue, keeping the nuclear programme in a state of indecisive equilibrium, which was euphemistically labelled a strategy of 'keeping the nuclear option open.' Even the nuclear test of 1974 did not disrupt this course. It was not until the late 1980s that external pressures mounted to such a point as to finally end this state of political indecision. These pressures triggered an intensified debate on India's nuclear future among its strategic and political elite. Taking this delayed debate into account, the period of analysis of this study begins in mid-1986. At this time, the so called Brasstacks Crisis emerged between India and Pakistan and converted the until then modest debate on intangible, moral, and philosophical aspects of nuclear weapons into a debate on more palpable aspects of warfare and strategy. This discourse gradually intensified, reaching its peak in May 1998 when India conducted several nuclear tests and subsequently declared itself a nuclear weapons state. In the years following the nuclear tests of 1998, India's strategic elite turned their attention away from the previously dominating disagreement regarding nuclear weapons states and the unjust non-proliferation regime. After 1998, the international status gained through the acquisition of nuclear weapons was considered a *fait accompli*. The strategists turned their focus to more tangible aspects of the nuclear issue, such as doctrine formulation, institutional reforms, and strategic planning. This phase of India's nuclear course, during which the debate converged to the nuclear discourses in other nuclear weapon states, is termed the period of nuclear consolidation. The period of this analysis ends in mid-2003, five years after the nuclear tests. At this time, the process of ascertaining India's strategic thought regarding the nuclear facts established in 1998 was largely concluded.

The study is structured into three main sections. The prime objective of the first part is to develop an explanatory model of India's nuclear policy making on the basis of the Balance-of-Interests Theory. Therein, all key variables are introduced which contribute to the general understanding of the dynamics of India's nuclear course during the crucial period from 1986 to 2003. A quantitative analysis of the 705 editorial and opinion articles on the nuclear issue selected from India's five major national newspapers is to provide empirical evidence for testing the main hypotheses. Rather than being a self-contained analysis, the quantitative section further aims at informing and, to a certain extent, guiding the interpretive content analysis of parts two and three. In addition, an extended account of the historic development of India's nuclear programme prior to 1986 is given, which is the necessary prerequisite for understanding the dynamics of the debate during the critical years between 1986 and 2003. Finally, the first part concludes with an assessment of the

dynamics and particularities of India's domestic policy arena, as well as the institutional and infrastructural premises in which the nuclear programme is embedded.

The second part of the study deals with the central questions which conventional studies on the topic address, specifically, India's security and the role of nuclear weapons therein. A broad picture of the security environment in which India is placed is thus drawn. Furthermore, the analysis includes an assessment of the role of the two major adversarial powers, Pakistan and China.

Finally, the third part of the analysis explores those motives of the key actors of India's nuclear policy making which are not directly related to security but originate from distinct values attributed to nuclear weapons. The motives are identified by means of combined quantitative measures and interpretive methods of content analysis. Above all, these values of acceptance are based upon the country's prestige and its standing within the international community of states. These intangible motives behind India's nuclear policy making stem from the strategic elite's perception of the international nuclear order. Three different aspects of this normative driven dynamic are illuminated. First, those elite analyses which explicitly address status seeking as the main motive for India's nuclear weapons programme are assessed. The starting point of the prestige-related discourse is the general consent among the strategic elite revolving around India as a rising power (for example, its international status is gradually rising). Disagreement exists about the appropriate means by which India could achieve these gains in international status and prestige. While Nehruvian traditionalists suggest seeking international reputation by heralding global disarmament and peaceful coexistence, others consider nuclear weapons as appropriate devices to arrest international attention and increase the country's standing in the global arena. A second aspect of the normative driven debate is the role the United States played in India's nuclear calculus. America was not considered an immediate threat to India's security (despite sporadic reference to the 'Enterprise' incident of 1971) but rather as the ringleader of the group of Western countries that were perceived to misuse nuclear technology to create, or rather maintain, a discriminatory world order. Consequently, the United States became the prime target of the anti-colonialist sentiments still omnipresent in the political discourse among India's elite. Thirdly, the study evaluates the international nuclear regime as the agency by which the West allegedly maintains its supremacy. The international nuclear regime was created in 1968 by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, giving those five powers official status as nuclear weapons states which conducted nuclear tests prior to the treaty's conclusion. In turn, the treaty excludes India, despite its nuclear tests only six years later in 1974.

The rationale and dynamics behind India's struggle for international recognition and the strong, often obsessive sensitivities of India's strategic elite with regard to perceived acts of discrimination or ignorance by the West towards their country, proved to be one the pivotal driving forces behind India's quest for the nuclear bomb. Despite the obvious importance of these dynamics, they are largely overlooked in the academic appreciation of India's nuclear programme, and a stringent and comprehensive model to incorporate these dynamics into a

general explanation of India's nuclear course is so far missing. The ambition to overcome this academic deficiency is the primary motivation for conducting this study.

PART ONE:

The Model: Nuclear Weapons and National Interests

2. Theory: Balancing Interests

2.1. Defending the Old-fashioned

By drawing on classical Realist theory as the basic underlying theoretical concept, this study might provoke criticism by those who consider the application of a theory, which was laid down more than 60 years before by Hans J. Morgenthau, as outdated and unable to describe interstate relations in the 21st century. Such criticism can be invalidated by pointing to the core nature of Realist Theory, that is, its attempt to make general statements on human nature and basic human interaction. These basic principles of human interaction have not changed since ancient times, and their basic ideas were identified by Thucydides more than 2,400 years earlier. According to Morgenthau, "novelty is not necessarily a virtue in political theory, nor is old age a defect."[3]

By developing the modern Realist Theory, Morgenthau conceptualised these ideas into an analytic framework, fully aware that this framework was not static but had to be adaptive for new developments.
In his seminal work, *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau begins by reminding the reader that the test by which the realist theory of international politics:

> [M]ust be judged is not *a priori* and abstract but empirical and pragmatic. The theory, in other words, must be judged not by some preconceived abstract principles or concept unrelated to reality, but by its purpose: to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible.[4]

Since then, the most significant change in international politics has been the introduction of nuclear weapons and the emergence of the bipolar global balance-of-power system. In Kenneth Waltz' words:

> [B]ig changes in means of transportation, communication, and war fighting, for example, strongly affect how states and other agents interact. Such changes occur at the unit level. In modern history, or perhaps in all of history, the introduction of nuclear weaponry was the greatest of such changes.[5]

The adaptation of these changes led to the development of the structural variant of Realism, termed Neorealism. The prime task of the following section is to debate the question of whether Neorealism, which had been developed in order to describe the nuclear confrontation of the two superpowers during Cold War, is equally suitable to explain the

[3] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p.4.
[4] ibid.; p.3.
[5] Waltz, Kenneth N.: Structural Realism after the Cold War. In: International Security 25, 1, Summer 2000; p.5.

Indo-Pakistani nuclear competition, or whether it requires further refinement to adapt these new developments.

2.2. The Structural Causes of Nuclear Arms Races

2.2.1. Structural Realist Paradigms

Structural theories of International Relations such as Neorealism explain the outcomes of state interaction by focusing on systemic or structural causes. Only broad assumptions are made on unit-level variations in state behaviour as intervening variables. Within his structural realist approach to nuclear deterrence, Kenneth Waltz lists seven major motives for states to develop nuclear weapons:

> First, great powers always counter the weapons of other great powers, usually by imitating those who have introduced new weapons…
> Second, a state may want nuclear weapons for fear that its great-power ally will not retaliate if the other great power attacks…
> Third, a country without nuclear allies will want nuclear weapons all the more if some of its adversaries have them. So China and then India became nuclear powers, and Pakistan will probably follow…
> Fourth, a country may want nuclear weapons because it lives in fear of its adversaries' present or future conventional strength…
> Fifth, some countries may find nuclear weapons a cheaper and safer alternative to running economically ruinous and militarily dangerous conventional arms races…
> Sixth, countries may want nuclear weapons for offensive purposes…
> Finally, by building nuclear weapons a country may hope to enhance its international standing. This is thought to be both a reason for and a consequence of developing nuclear weapons. One may enjoy the prestige that comes with nuclear weapons, and indeed a yearning for glory was not absent from de Gaulle's soul. But the nuclear military business is a serious one, and we may expect that deeper motives than desire for prestige lie behind the decision to enter it.[6]

The third point of this account provides a simple and seemingly convincing reason for India's nuclear weapons programme. In fact, most of the strategic analyses on India's nuclear motives focus on the 'China factor.' The case appears to be clear—India's defeat by China in the war of 1962 highlighted the conventional superiority of its adversarial neighbour to the north. Furthermore, China's first nuclear weapons test of 1964 provided the compulsion for India to build up its own nuclear arsenal. This main course of explanation is occasionally supplemented by motives falling into the fourth category. According to this rationale, the prospects of a future nuclear armed Pakistan to India's West appeared to be a major incentive for India to take precautions by developing nuclear

[6] Waltz, Kenneth: The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better. Adelphi papers, Number 171. London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981; pp. 7-8.

capabilities first. This argument was particularly popular in strategic assessments throughout the 1980s.

Waltz' disavowal of the seventh point is noteworthy, as the idea that explicates the arming behaviour of states may be guided by motives of prestige. Obviously, for Waltz this idea appears to be too absurd to explain such dramatic and far reaching decisions such as the acquisition of nuclear weapons. His mentioning of the French case reflects more about the general image of France in the minds of Anglo-saxon military and strategic thinkers than about Waltz's confidence in the prestige argument. Waltz's disregard of prestige as a motive of arming behaviour, which contrasts to Morgenthau's emphasis on the relevance of the 'policy of prestige' in international relations, marks a major inconsistency with the central paradigm of his own theoretical approach. The main *raison d'être* of (Neo-)Realist Theory is based on its claim to reflect the world as it is, not as it should be. By dismissing motives of prestige as inappropriate to guide such important decisions like the acquisition of nuclear weapons, Waltz describes how arming decisions should be made and less how they are made in actuality. Despite such flaws, Waltz's emphasis on security maximisation--the self-preservation of states--as the first preference within a state's national interest formulation, is widely accepted as the main motive for its nuclear proliferation in the mainstream theoretical approaches to the issue.

Most criticism of Neorealism is not aimed at the above mentioned motives but on the underlying assumptions of the Neorealist model. Three core assumptions can be summarised as follows:

> (1) states are the most important actors (the state-centric assumption); (2) they act like rational individuals in pursuing national interests (the unitary rational-actor assumption); and (3) they act in the context of an international system lacking central government (the anarchy assumption)[7]

Among these, the anarchy assumption attracts the most criticism. According to Waltz, "(s)tates coexist in a condition of anarchy. Self-help is the principle of action in an anarchic order, and the most important way in which states must help themselves is by providing for their own security."[8] Critics usually question the validity of the anarchy assumption, which is particularly difficult to uphold in an increasingly globalised world and with the emergence of international non-state actors. When it comes to the South Asian strategic arena, however, the case of these critics is rather weak. In fact, the South Asian strategic set-up can truly be described as anarchic. Broad security architecture as well as any substantive regional security agreement is missing. Neither India nor Pakistan is a member of the main international nuclear regimes, the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The UN is largely discredited due to its clumsy mediation attempts with the Kashmir question. The agenda of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) as the only institutionalised platform for regional co-

[7] Goldstein, Joshua S.: International Relations. New York: HarperCollins 1994; p.47.
[8] Waltz, Kenneth: op.cit. 1981; p.4.

operation explicitly excludes addressing any bilateral security issues. Intra-regional trade remains minimal so far, mainly due to the similarly structured, non-complementary nature of the economies of the South Asian countries. Further, the state-centric as well as the unitary rational-actor assumption are useful to describe the rationale behind India's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

In sum, most of the core features of the Neorealist approach are adequate in providing the theoretical framework of the present study and are therefore adopted in its explanatory model. The only major Neorealist assumption which is explicitly abandoned within the theoretical framework is the assumption of security maximisation as the top preference of a state's lexicographic preference system *per se*.
Before turning to potential non-security state interests, the effects of nuclear weapons on the security of a state are addressed by introducing the concept of deterrence.

2.2.2. The Concept of Nuclear Deterrence

Within the Realist theory of International Relations, deterrence is commonly defined as the threat of military retaliation to prevent another country from using military force in pursuit of its foreign policy. Deterrence can be directed at a threat of attack against the state's own territory or that of another state. In regional strategic set-ups centering on territorial disputes between neighbouring states the concept of direct deterrence usually applies. An example of this scenario is deterrence directed at an attack against a respective state's own territory only.

Deterrence has three key aims. First, deterrence intends to prevent the emergence of crises. A second goal is to prevent existing crises from escalating into war. In the case of an existing territorial dispute such as the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, deterrence is applied to the latter. A third aim of the concept of deterrence is to prevent the adversary from forcing maximum demands upon the state in the course of bilateral bargaining. The crucial element of nuclear deterrence is the threat potential inherent within nuclear weapons.

Decision-makers select the option with greater expected utility in a clearly defined matrix. According to Realist theory, the matrix usually contains three main sets of variables: the balance of power in the international system, the interests at stake, and the bargaining behaviour of the states. Deterrence threats are meant to reduce the expected utility of going to war for the adversary by increasing the potential costs of doing so. However, deterrence threats pose the dangers of not only reducing the adversary's expected utility of war, but also reduces the utility of inaction and retaining the status quo, in which the deterrence devices are perceived as potentially offensive weapons. In this scenario, pre-emptive war necessities emerge.

Generally, four different types of deterrence failure and outbreaks of war can be distinguished: inadvertent war, war by miscalculation, war by calculation and, catalytic

war.[9] According to the Structural Realist approach, the introduction of nuclear weapons as deterrence devices significantly changes the way in which states seek to provide security but does not transform the nature of the international system itself. All basic Neorealist assumptions about the way in which states act in the international arena remain untouched, especially the assumption of anarchy.

Deterrence stability generally requires four key elements: a sufficient number of nuclear devices to conduct a second strike, survivable C^3I structures to maintain the second strike capabilities, a pre-planned targeting and deployment strategy and a credible, communicated deterrence threat towards the adversary.[10] The fourth element is of particular relevance. In order to gain the maximum utility from its deterrent device, a state is required to send powerful signals to its adversary. To make its threat more credible and to distinguish it from bluffing, the resolved defender needs to engage in 'costly' signals, signals which increase the risk of escalation as well as the costs of backing down from a deterrent posture. However, if signals are too committing, the defender faces the risk of losing domestic political backing. Furthermore, strong threats increase costs for the adversary to give in thereby closing the door for deescalating measures. An effective way of transmitting signals is the strategy of reciprocity. It combines the negative form of leverage as deterrence threats of punishment with positive forms of leverage as promises of rewards.[11] Reciprocity is effective because it is easy to understand.

Finally, domestic political factors play a crucial role in the policy choices of states in deterrence situations. They determine state behaviour by influencing a state's response to deterrence as well as its deterrent response to an evolving threat by another state. The war-prone record of bilateral relations between India and Pakistan leads to the question regarding the role of reputation in the course of mutual nuclear deterrence. Scholars disagree on whether one state's past behaviour influences the opponent's perception of its intentions and resolve, or whether the deterrence outcomes are exclusively determined by the present balance of power and interests at stake.

The most severe challenge to deterrence stability is the existence of a territorial dispute between the two adversaries. Deterrence is most likely to fail when the potential attacker is seeking to seize disputed territory. If the challenger state is viewing the disputed territory as an integral part of its national homeland, the status quo is most likely perceived as costly. This perception thus makes the relatively higher utility of conflict escalation appear as a tempting option. If the expected utility of not using force is deteriorating, deterrence is likely to fail. In contrast to conventional deterrence, nuclear deterrence in regional territorial disputes is not primarily directed at preventing a limited military attack to seize the disputed territory but to instead prevent a large-scale military attack to occupy the disputed territory after decisively defeating the opponent's military forces. Generally,

[9] Kahn, Herman: Thinking About the Unthinkable. New York: Horizon Press 1962; pp. 40-44.
[10] for details, see Tellis, Ashley J.: India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal. RAND Publications 2001; p.19.
[11] Keohane, Robert O.: Neorealism and Its Critics. New York: Columbia University Press 1986.

nuclear weapons are designed to deter either a nuclear attack or a full-scale conventional attack. They prove useless, however, as a device to deter low intensity conflicts such as border skirmishes, as well as conflicts with sub-national actors. This conclusion is of particular relevance in the South Asian case. The hopes of many in India that the acquisition of a nuclear arsenal might deter Pakistan's low key military action in Kashmir, as well as its assistance to Kashmiri rebels, soon proved to be an illusion. Due to the enormously destructive potential of nuclear weapons, nuclear deterrence only works on the national level but not on a limited regional level. As recent studies pointed out, the effect might even be converse to deterrence. Knowing that mutual nuclear deterrence prevents the outbreak of a full-scale war between two adversaries, the inferior power might be encouraged to take advantage of this deterrence stability by launching a limited, low key military attack on the regional level without risking defeat. This strategic dilemma, which is referred to as the 'stability-instability paradox'[12] might have been in place during the Kargil war of 1999.

2.2.3. The Emergence of Nuclear Arms Races

Generally, International Relations theory distinguishes three options which a state has to achieve its international goals according to its national interests and to match a perceived threat: (1) building alliances against the potential aggressor; (2) cooperate with the potential aggressor; and (3) strengthening its own military capabilities by building up arms. An arms race emerges when two or more states interactively decide that their international interests are best served by building up arms. A state's decision to engage in an arms race is therefore not only determined by the state's own national interests and power capabilities, but also by the perceived interests and capabilities of the adversary. According to this basic assumption, the states engaging in an arms race interactively respond to shifts in their relative power equation.

The action-reaction phenomenon which constitutes an arms race is implicitly explained by external causes, the perception of threats from other states, for example.[13] According to defensive Realist theory, states engaging in an arms race are motivated purely by security considerations. Security is exclusively gained by improving relative power capabilities. When both states convincingly signal the defensive nature of their respective capabilities, the emerging arms race might increase both states' security.[14]

The logic of nuclear arms races differs significantly from the logic of conventional arms races. The difference stems from the enormous destructiveness of nuclear weapons:

[12] For details, see Krepon, Michael / Chris Gagné (eds.): The Stability-Instability Paradox: Nuclear Weapons and Brinkmanship in South Asia. Report No.38. Washington D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, June 2001.
[13] Buzan, Barry: The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism. New York: Columbia University Press 1993.
[14] Van Evera, Stephen: Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict. Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1999.

> It is by virtue of that destructiveness that a quantitative increase in nuclear weapons, in contrast to conventional ones, does not of necessity signify a corresponding increase in national power. Once a nation possesses all the nuclear weapons necessary to destroy all the enemy targets it has chosen for destruction, taking all possible contingencies, such as a first strike by the enemy, into consideration, additional nuclear weapons will not increase that nation's power.[15]

Once the potential destruction of the adversary is assured by a state's nuclear arsenal, the state should - at least in theory - have no further incentive to continue the nuclear arms race. Empirical evidence from the Cold War, in which both superpowers tried to establish strategic superiority despite its (theoretical) meaninglessness in terms of security and deterrence, disproves this logic. Reason for this deviation from what theory suggests was, in Morgenthau's view, the intellectual inability of the strategic thinkers to treat nuclear weapons differently than conventional elements of power. Morgenthau writes:

> Kissinger and others have admitted the meaninglessness of the concept of superiority in the conventional military sense while endeavoring to give it a new political meaning. Once a nation has attained the nuclear optimum in terms of assured destruction, so the argument runs, additional nuclear weapons can add significantly to its political power, if what counts in the power calculus is not only the actual power available, but the perception, by other nations, of the power available… . The argument, left at this point, is incomplete: it lacks a qualification centered on the people who are doing the perceiving… . For only ignorant people, unaware of the distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons, will attribute significance – military or political – to the possession of nuclear weapons in excess of the military optimum.[16]

The model of the present study may provide another, yet interrelated motive for states to establish nuclear superiority despite its military-strategic meaninglessness: the quest for status and prestige.

2.2.4. Opacity and Transparency in Nuclear Proliferation

The two-class system of nuclear proliferators created though the NPT in 1968 limited the number of acknowledged nuclear weapon states to those five countries which conducted nuclear tests until 1964. This forced the second-generation proliferators of the past three decades to develop their nuclear programs in opacity in order to avoid international sanctions.[17] The main feature of nuclear opacity is the denial of the possession of nuclear weapons, while, at the same time admitting the capability to develop such sophisticated

[15] Morgenthau, Hans J. :op.cit.; p.137.
[16] ibid; p.284.
[17] The concept of ‚opacity' was first introduced to the theoretical debate by Benjamin Frankel (Frankel, Benjamin: Opaque Nuclear Proliferation. London: Frank Cass 1991).

weapons in a short range of time.[18] The distinction between 'possession' and 'capability' is thereby purely political. In this light, the revelation of both India's and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities in 1998 can be described as a political act, underscored by the technical act of nuclear testing.

The core theoretical question about opaque proliferation is how nuclear weapons can play their assigned role as deterrence device if their possession is denied:

> A deterrent capability to be effective cannot be kept secret. A certain amount of knowledge about it must be communicated to the adversary. If one side deploys additional weapons or modernizes its weapons arsenal in total secrecy, then it has not really upgraded the effectiveness of its deterrent force.[19]

Opaque proliferators usually refrain from openly threatening their adversary with the use of nuclear weapons and do not directly engage in any debate over the costs and benefits of the programme. Moreover, information about the nuclear programme is distributed in a subliminal manner in order to benefit from the expected deterrence security, and, at the same time, avoid international sanctions. Accordingly, threats are formulated in a vague manner to leave the door open for continued denial of possession on one hand, but leaving no doubt about the seriousness of the situation on the other.

The theoretical approach best suited to describe the nature of opaque proliferation is the concept of existential deterrence.[20] Existential deterrence is based on the mere uncertainty about the adversary's nuclear capabilities. Along this concept, the risk that any military action *might* escalate into nuclear war poses an incalculable factor for political decision-makers, and as such, inherently creates a very strong deterrence power. In McGeorge Bundy's words:

> These terrible and unavoidable uncertainties have great meaning for the theory of deterrence. They create what I will call existential deterrence. My aim in using this fancy adjective is to distinguish this kind of deterrence from the kind that is based on strategic theories or declaratory policies or even international commitments... . It rests on uncertainty about what could happen, not in what has been asserted.[21]

---

[18] In the concept of opaque nuclear proliferants developed by Peter Feaver, the term also includes those states that do not have any nuclear weapons program, although they have the basic nuclear knowledge, research facilities and nuclear reactors to build nuclear weapons (Peter Feaver in Carranza, Mario E.: An Impossible Game: Stable Nuclear Deterrence after the Indian and Pakistani Tests. The Nonproliferation Review, Spring-Summer 1999, pp. 11-24).

[19] Dougherty, James E. / Robert L. Pfaltzgraff: Contending Theories of International Relations, 3rd ed.. New York: HarperCollins 1990; p. 396.

[20] Bundy, McGeorge: Existecial Deterrence and its Consequences. In: MacLean, Douglas (ed.): The Security Gamble: Deterrence Dilemmas in the Nuclear Age. Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld 1984.

[21] ibid.; pp. 8, 9.

A state benefits from the deterrent effects of its mere capability to deploy nuclear weapons, not from the number of actually deployed devices. In this context, quantitative arguments become less relevant, and "its deterrent power is unaffected by most changes in the arsenals on both sides."[22] Nuclear asymmetry is not determined by the number of nuclear devices the two rivals deployed but by the perception of whether a state is considered nuclear capable or not by its opponent. Accordingly, the risks of *preventive war* diminish as soon as both rivals consider each other to have passed the nuclear threshold. Conversely, the risks of *pre-emptive war*, the escalating effect of a mutually feared surprise attack, emerge in a state of crude nuclear arsenals without credible second strike capabilities or at least incalculable first strike uncertainties. Generally, the logic of existential deterrence suggests that the overall deterrence stability between India and Pakistan was high even before the 1998 nuclear breakthrough of both states.

Another striking feature of opaque nuclear proliferation is the insulation of the nuclear weapons programme from conventional military command and control structures as well as from transparent decision-making by the political leadership. As proliferation pessimists suggest, this thin chain of command and control increases the dangers of ill-advised decision-making and unauthorized use. Contrastingly, deterrence theorists suggest the prevailing secrecy actually reduces the problem of 'loose nukes.' These theories can only be answered individually by a case-study approach.

2.3. Power Politics and the Balance of Interests

2.3.1. Power, Security, and Interests

According to Neorealist theory, states place security maximising on top of the lexicographic preference system, trying to improve their security through relative power gains vis-à-vis their counterparts within the international anarchic self-help system.[23] Interaction between states is determined by their relative power capabilities as well as their mutual threat perceptions. In the case of India's nuclear build-up, assuming security concerns as the only interest involved would generate more questions than answers. Why did India develop a nuclear weapons capable infrastructure before 1964 in the absence of any nuclear threat? Why did India wait 34 years before it responded to the Chinese nuclear threat which emerged in 1964? Why did India develop the bomb first and only thereafter contemplate how to deploy it and which delivery vehicles to use? Why did India accept the equalising effects of nuclear weapons vis-à-vis Pakistan which voided much of its conventional superiority? These questions cannot be answered by looking at security imperatives alone. Rather, a variety of other national interests determining India's nuclear course must be taken into account.

[22] Bundy, McGeorge: op.cit.. 1984.; p. 9.
[23] for a debate on this assumption, see: Van Evera, Stephen: Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict. Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1999.

To reiterate, security-related motives are considered a crucial determinant of India's nuclearisation. This study departs from conventional explanatory models only with regard to the assumption about the absolute dominance of security in the process of national interest formulation. Instead, this analysis considers a range of interrelated interests at work with security as a primary interest. Its high position within the state's preference system is not assumed *a priori*.

Before addressing various possible factors which might determine a state's decision to acquire nuclear weapons, three interrelated core concepts need to be laid down and put into context: national interest, national power, and national security.
Hans J. Morgenthau defines interests as power and the international politics in which states try to pursue their interests as a struggle for power. He writes, "[i]nternational politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim. Statesmen and peoples may ultimately seek freedom, security, prosperity, or power itself."[24] This abstraction solves the problem of having to deal with the vague, volatile, and inscrutable concept of interests which guide the foreign policy of states. Yet,

> the kind of interest determining political action in a particular period of history depends upon the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated. The goals that might be pursued by nations in their foreign policy can run the whole gamut of objectives any nation has ever pursued or might possibly pursue. The same observations apply to the concept of power.[25]

This abstraction is insufficient if, as it is assumed in the case of India's nuclear build-up, the compound of several interrelated national interests is crucial for the state's acquisition of certain elements of national power, such as nuclear weapons. In this case, a closer analysis of the major interests at stake appears worth the effort. This need further arises from the very special nature of nuclear weapons as an element of military *and* political power.

On the distinction between military and political power, Morgenthau writes:

> In international politics in particular, armed strength as a threat or a potentiality is the most important material factor making for the political power of a nation…. . The actual exercise of physical violence substitutes for the psychological relation between two minds, which is of the essence of political power, the physical relation between two bodies, one of which is strong enough to dominate the other's movements. It is for this reason that in the exercise of physical violence the

[24] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p.29.
[25] ibid.; p.11.

> psychological element of the political relationship is lost, and that we must distinguish between military and political power.[26]

Quantitative increase of military power does usually increase a state's political power proportionally. In the case of nuclear weapons, this proportional relationship does not exist. If a state has acquired a second strike capability and the ability to threaten its adversary with assured destruction, additional nuclear weapons are unlikely to increase its political power.[27] While conventional military power is measurable in a metric scale, the measure of nuclear weapons power takes the form of a dichotomous scale.[28]

Nuclear weapons as elements of power bear a further paradox: due to their destructiveness, these weapons are frequently described as unusable weapons. As nuclear war cannot be limited but always implies the total destruction of the adversary, it reduces the leverage of a state in its interaction with the adversary to an all-or-nothing option. If dealing with issues of less than existential importance, the political power of these unusable weapons decrease to zero. This phenomenon can be seen clearly in India's bargaining strategy with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. In the course of negotiating, India's strategy was to keep nuclear weapons out, using only its superiority in conventional military power as bargaining leverage.

2.3.2. Status Change and Reputation of Power

According to Realist theory, the action of a state within the international balance-of-power system can be distinguished in two fundamental patterns: first, the state is satisfied with its position in the international system and seeks to preserve it, and second, the state is dissatisfied with its position and tries to increase its relative power internationally. To these two patterns of state behaviour, Morgenthau adds a third pattern, which is the acquisition of power for mere demonstration:

> All politics, domestic and international, reveals three basic patterns; that is, all political phenomena can be reduced to one of three basic types. A political policy seeks either to keep power, to increase power, or to demonstrate power. To these three typical patterns of politics, three typical international policies correspond. A nation whose foreign policy tends toward keeping power and not toward changing the distribution of power in its favor pursues a policy of the status quo. A nation whose foreign policy aims at acquiring more power than it actually has, through a

[26] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p.31.
[27] As previously shown, this assumption is challenged by the proponents of the concept of strategic superiority, among them most prominently Henry Kissinger.
[28] As the further study will show, the dichotomy is defined between possession and non-possession of a second strike capability only if security and deterrence stability are considered dominant interests of the state. If the value of nuclear weapons is further defined by prestige or status, the dichotomy is defined between non-possession and possession of a whatever crude nuclear device. In this case, nuclear second strike capaility becomes less relevant as element of political power.

> reversal of existing power relations – whose foreign policy, in other words, seeks a favorable change in power status – pursues a policy of imperialism. A nation whose foreign policy seeks to demonstrate the power it has, either for the purpose of maintaining or increasing it, pursues a policy of prestige.[29]

The state which considers its present position in the international system as optimal is referred to as status quo power. It does not actively increase its national power but only reacts to the increase of power by other states in order to re-establish the previously held power ratio.

Conversely, a state dissatisfied with its current position within the international balance-of-power system actively pursues an increase in its power capabilities. Morgenthau refers to this state behaviour as imperialism, which is defined "as a policy that aims at the overthrow of the status quo, at a reversal of the power relations between two or more nations."[30] While this study adopts the above definition, the use of the expression 'imperialist power' appears problematic in the context of the postcolonial states of South Asia and is therefore dropped. Instead, the term 'dissatisfied power' is used to describe a state which seeks international status change. Further, the term 'imperialism' is misleading because, as this study will show, the status change which India sought within the international nuclear order was itself done in the name of anti-imperialism. Morgenthau notes that the paradox of anti-imperialism is an often used ideological tool used frequently to justify imperialist state behaviour:

> A policy of imperialism is always in need of an ideology; for, in contrast to a policy of the status quo, imperialism always has the burden of proof. It must prove that the status quo it seeks to overthrow deserves to be overthrown and that the moral legitimacy which in the minds of many attaches to things as they are ought to yield to a higher principle of morality calling for a new distribution of power... . The most widely practices disguise and justification of imperialism has, however, always been the ideology of anti-imperialism. It is so widely used because it is the most effective of all ideologies of imperialism.[31]

Next to the preservation of the international balance of power and the change in the relative power equation, states often demonstrate power in order to enhance their prestige. The acquisition of national power for prestige purposes is frequently ignored in International Relation theory, particularly within the Neorealist realm. The emphasis within the present study on prestige as one major pattern of state behaviour in the international balance of power system is based upon the nature of nuclear weapons as particularly 'prestigious' elements of power.

[29] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; pp. 50,51.
[30] ibid.; p. 57.
[31] ibid.; pp. 104, 106.

2.3.3. Bringing Morgenthau's 'Policy of Prestige' Back In

As this study will show, throughout the decades-long incremental advancement of India's nuclear programme, the discourse on the nuclear issue among India's strategic elite focused much less upon the deterrence value than on other, more intangible values attributed to this weapon system. The development of adequate deployment strategies, delivery systems, and other components necessary to make these weapons 'usable' was long neglected. Even after India finally set up its missile programme in the 1980s, it was more characterised by well-staged testings than by effective development of applicable delivery vehicles. According to the widely accepted and officially announced Indian position, this neglect was justified by the nature of nuclear devices as unusable, symbolic elements of political power. Inherent to this attributed symbolism of nuclear weapons is the conceptualisation of nuclear weapons as devices to demonstrate national power and less as elements of military power in the form of force. This conceptualisation is referred to by Hans J. Morgenthau as 'policy of prestige:'

> The policy of prestige has rarely been recognized in modern political literature for that is: the third of the basic manifestations of the struggle for power on the international scene. The reasons for this neglect are threefold. The policy of prestige shares this neglect with the subtle and intangible relationships the understanding of which, as we have seen, has suffered from the predominant theoretical and practical concern with the material aspect of power in the form of force, actual or threatened. Furthermore, the policy of prestige has used as one of its main vehicles the aristocratic forms of social intercourse practiced in the diplomatic world… . Finally, prestige, in contrast to the maintenance and acquisition of power, is but rarely an end in itself. More frequently, the policy of prestige is one of the instrumentalities through which the policies of the status quo and of imperialism try to achieve their ends. This makes it easy to conclude that the policy of prestige is not important and does not deserve systematic discussion.[32]

The distinction between the pattern of demonstrating power and the two other main patterns, the use of power to maintain the status quo of the international system and the use of power to change a state's position in the international system, is the dependence of the former upon the latter. Demonstrating power is hardly ever seen as an end in itself but is used by a state to either try to preserve the status quo, or, much more frequently, to seek a system change.

The policy of prestige is as integral within states' interactions as it is between individuals in everyday life. This view is reflected within the following statement:

> It is ... a necessary and important task to see to it that the mental picture other people form of one's position in society at least represents faithfully the actual situation, if it does not excel it. This is exactly what the policy of prestige is about.

[32] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p. 84.

> Its purpose is to impress other nations with the power one's own nation actually possesses, or with the power it believes, or wants the other nations to believe, it possesses. Two specific instrumentalities serve this purpose: diplomatic ceremonial in the widest meaning of the term, and the display of military force.[33]

Within India's discourse on nuclear weapons, neither its relationship with China nor its relationship with Pakistan figured prominently, despite their being the two major strategic targets of India's nuclear deterrence capability. Instead, India's nuclear debate focused on Indo-US relations and, above all, the international nuclear regime which was vehemently dismissed as discriminatory and imperialist. Using Morgenthau's dialectics, India's 'desire for social recognition' proved to be a 'dynamic force determining social relations and creating social institutions,' as they were now recognized as a nuclear weapons power and as a member of the exclusive 'nuclear club.'

Next to diplomacy, gains in international prestige are sought mainly through demonstrations of military power. Subsequently, "[s]ince military strength is the obvious measure of a nation's power, its demonstration serves to impress the others with that nation's power."[34] In the case of India, next to the afore mentioned occasional missile tests, the ultimate demonstrations of power had been the country's nuclear tests of 1974 and 1998.

The policy of prestige, which values the reputation of power more than its substance, aims at influencing the international perception of the particular state's power within the existing balance-of-power system. The policy of prestige is explained by the following:

> The function the policy of prestige fulfilled for the policies of the status quo and of imperialism grows out of the very nature of international politics. The foreign policy of a nation is always the result of an estimate of the power relations as they exist among different nations at a certain moment of history and as they are likely to develop in the immediate and distant future… . It is the primary function of the policy of prestige to influence these evaluations… . Whatever the ultimate objectives of a nation's foreign policy, its prestige – its reputation for power – is always an important and sometimes a decisive factor in determining success or failure of its foreign policy. A policy of prestige is, therefore, an indispensable element of a rational foreign policy.[35]

It is important to note that the policy of prestige is not driven by mere arrogance or craving for recognition. Rather, it is pursued in a rational and systematic way to achieve its designated objective. India's long-held disregard for aspects of military applicability, which was often perceived by outside observers as irrational policy, clearly followed a rational foreign policy. According to Morgenthau, the ultimate success of the policy of prestige is the actual avoidance of employing military power:

---

[33] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p. 84.
[34] ibid.; p. 90.
[35] ibid.; p. 95.

> A policy of prestige attains its very triumph when it gives the nation pursuing it such a reputation for power as to enable it to forgo the actual employment of the instrument of power. Two factors make that triumph possible: reputation for unchallengeable power and reputation for self-restraint in using it.[36]

The major obstacle to the successful pursuit of the policy of prestige is the degree to which it is used. As India's nuclear policy during the mid-1990s illustrates, its excessive use bears the risk of reversing its effects and leading to an erosion of the state's security, or, as it was in the case of India, its international isolation. Such 'overdosing' of the policy of prestige is likely to occur when the political leaders' policy making is too susceptible to public opinion:

> For a nation to pursue a policy of prestige is, however, not enough. It can do too much or too little in this respect, and in either case it will run the risk of failure. It does too much when, insecure in the awareness of its power, it invests a particular move with a measure of prestige out of all proportion to its actual importance... . Nations must take care not to confound ephemeral fluctuations of public opinion with the lasting foundations of a nation's power and prestige. Prestige in a particular instance, then, like the power in mirrors, must be seen in the context of a nation's over-all power and prestige. The greatness of the latter is reflected in the former, and the deficiencies of the former are compensated for by the latter.[37]

2.3.4. The 'Neoclassical Realist' Approach

The reintroduction of a state's dissatisfaction with its position in the international system is one central motive for its arming behaviour. This insight requires a modification of the above outlined Neorealist explanatory model of the emergence of arms races caused by two security-seeking states which try to improve their security through relative power gains vis-à-vis their counterparts within the international anarchic self-help system,[38] thereby causing a security dilemma in which arms races emerge. Instead of the symmetric model of the arms race, the interaction between a dissatisfied state and its status keeping opponent is one-sided in the sense that the status keeper is reacting to preserve its relative power, whereas the dissatisfied state is actively building up arms.

In an explanatory model which explicitly accepts the existence of interests other than security, the Neorealist exclusion of such interests appears sufficiently adaptive. The 'Neoclassical' variant of Realism seeks to overcome these short falls. Within this realm of Realism, the equation of power-seeking and security-seeking is dropped and replaced by the Classical Realist concept of power-seeking as the ultimate means by which states pursue their national interests.

---

[36] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p. 93.
[37] ibid.; p. 95.
[38] Van Evera, Stephen: op.cit..

Neoclassical Realism gained some popularity in the post-Cold War era among those international relations scholars who perceive the conventional contemporary Neorealist variant as a step backwards. They instead revived the classical Realist ideas that states' interactions determined by the two patterns of status keeping and status change.
Randall L. Schweller[39], who refers to the term 'revisionism' instead of Morgenthau's 'imperialism,' defines the two main patterns of states' interactions:

> [R]evisionist states seek to undermine the established order for the purpose of increasing their power and prestige in the system; that is, they seek to increase, not just to maintain, their resources.... . Revisionist powers are typically those states that lost the last major-power war and / or have increased their power after the international order was established and the benefits were allocated.[40]

This definition provides a suitable frame for the explanatory model of the present study. Since 1968, when the international nuclear order established by the NPT allocated the benefits exclusively to five specific powers, India had significantly increased its power. In this context with the revisionist incentive whereby India demands a fair share of power within the nuclear competition, there appears to be an inevitable outcome of a rational and coherent foreign policy. This study uses the term 'dissatisfied power' as synonymous with Schweller's definition of the term 'revisionist power' and adopts Schweller's and Morgenthau's definition of 'status quo power' as a state trying to preserve the current international system to best match its national interests.[41] While status quo powers are primarily motivated by preserving the level of security achieved through their relative power, the policy of dissatisfied (or 'revisionist') states are much less concerned with national security. Schweller states:

> Preventing relative losses in power and prestige is sound advice for satisfied states that seek , above all, to keep what they have. But staying in place is not the primary goal of revisionist states. They want to increase their values and improve their position in the system. These goals cannot be achieved simply by ensuring that everyone else does not gain relative to them. They must gain relative to others; and throughout history states striving for greater relative power, often driven by prestige demands for their rightful 'place at the table' or 'place in the sun,' have routinely sacrificed their security in such a quest.[42]

[39] Schweller, Randall L.: Deadly Imbalances. New York: Columbia University Press 1998.
[40] Schweller, Randall L. in: Feaver, Peter D.: Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm? International Security, Vol. 25, No.1, Summer 2000; p.177.
[41] The distinction between satisfied and dissatisfied powers was originally introduced by E.H. Carr. (Carr, Edward Hallet: Grundlagen eines dauernden Friedens. Zürich: Steinberg 1943.)
[42] Schweller, Randall L.: op.cit.. 1998.; p. 21.

It is important to note that the incentives for dissatisfied powers to seek a chance in the international order are not necessarily predatory. Rather, alterations might be regarded as necessary to enhance a state's defensive goals within its strategic environment.[43]
Schweller replaces the structural Realist single-dimensionality, in which the state's international action as security seeker is solely determined by the structure of the international balance-of-power system. He instead uses a two-dimensional model in which state behaviour is determined by both power and interests:

> To some readers, it may appear that the pairing between security-maximizing and power-maximizing is illogical, for power is a means to security and other goals; so-called power-maximisers are really maximisers of prestige, economic wealth, and other values parallel to security. Further, as realists correctly point out, the logic of anarchy that power is the fundamental feature of international politics; it is the ultimate basis for any state aim, whether it seeks world mastery or simply to be left alone. I fully concur with the notion that power and security are often complementary goals; but sometimes they are not. Excessive accumulations of power can make a state less secure, and too much emphasis on security can weaken a state's overall power. The distinction I am trying to make between power-maximizing and security-maximizing is a traditional and commonsense one; it is the difference between the goal of making gains and that of avoiding losses.
> By elevating the concept of state interests to an equally prominent position as that occupied by the distribution of capabilities, the model more accurately reflects the twin-pillared of traditional realist theory – its equal focus on both the power and interests of states. Unlike Waltz's theory, which is all structure and no units, the revised theory contains complex unit-structure interactions, such as predictions are codetermined by the power and interests of the units and the structures within which they are embedded. Because neither level is 'ontologically primitive', the theory offers a partial solution to the agent-structure problem raised by Wendt.[44]

Schweller's power-interest model is indeed well suited to solve some of the difficulties conventional international relations theories have with the integration of both structural and unit-level factors of state behaviour. However, Schweller fails to follow his model through and develop an elaborate approach to the incorporation of unit-level factors. Instead, he conceptualises state interests as ordinal variables in which five categories are arranged according to the state's degree of satisfaction within the international system, ranging from 'strongly support status quo' to 'unlimited-aims revisionist.'[45]

For the purpose of the present study, this concept of state interests is insufficient, as it is defined as an attribute rather than the characteristic of the subject. Instead, the present study focuses first on identifying the qualities inherent to the respective interest and only

[43] Schweller, Randall L.: op.cit.. 2000; p.177.
[44] Schweller, Randall L.: op.cit.. 1998; p. 25.
[45] ibid.; pp. 22.

thereafter analyses the effect of the respective interest on the state's satisfaction with the status quo.[46]
The composition of the overall national interest thus determines the strength of revisionist or status-quo oriented incentives of state behaviour. If those interests which favour a change in the international system outweigh the interests satisfied by the status-quo, the state acts as a dissatisfied power.

The model provides the frame for the proper appreciation of unit-level factors next to the structural factors as determinants of the state's international behaviour. This is possible by dropping the single-dimensionality in which Neorealist approaches conventionally define national interests and instead assuming the existence of a compound of various interrelated and often contradicting interests which determine whether a state acts as status quo power or as dissatisfied power.

The relevance of unit-level factors in explaining India's nuclear course is pointed out by George Perkovich:

> The history of India's nuclear policymaking suggests that Structural Realism points in the right general direction by predicting that states in an anarchical international structure in which major rivals possess nuclear weapons will likely seek such weapons for themselves. ... . To answer not only why states seek nuclear weapons but also when and how they will do it requires greater sensitivity to 'unit' or state preferences in time than structural theory allows.[47]

Structural theories do not dismiss the relevance of unit-level factors in international politics completely but rather account these factors for several deviations in a states' foreign policy formulation from those patterns which are set by the structure of the international system. In the Indian case, however, the continuous appearance of such deviations suggests that the systematic incorporation of unit-level factors is necessary in any useful explanatory model. In Perkovich' words:

> Again, theorists such as Kenneth Waltz have acknowledged the need for state-level analyses to explain specific policies, but this has not prevented loose assumptions that the international system decisively shapes the formation of particular policies. To be useful, theorists and analysts must specify more accurately how key

[46] This broader definition of interests circumvents Schweller's problem of incorporating ideology as a state motive into his model. Schweller describes this problem as follows: "To the extent that ideology overrides the logic of structure and interests, my hypothesis will fail to accurately explain and predict national policy" (Schweller, Randall L.: op.cit.. 1998; p. 169.). Within this study, this problem does not materialise, as the particular ideological motive of a state are themselves defined as an interest, which is part of the overall compound of national interests determining the state's international behaviour.
[47] Perkovich, George: India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation. Delhi: Oxford University Press 1999.; p. 453.

> individuals and groups in India have identified, constructed, and followed the state's 'national interest' in nuclear policy.[48]

Neoclassical Realist theories generally accept the supremacy of structural factors, the distribution of relative power for instance, over domestic factors as the main determinants of state action within the international system. However,

> [T]he impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. ... . Neoclassical realists argue that relative power establishes the basic parameters of a country's foreign policy; they note, in Thucydides' formula, that 'the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must'. Yet they point out that there is no immediate or perfect transmission belt linking material capabilities to foreign policy behaviour.[49]

In short, the structure of the international system sets the framework of a state's long-term foreign policy, whereas unit-level variations in state behaviour can be described as interfering variables therein.

The crucial question is thus whether the existing international system is accommodative towards the particular unit-level interests or whether the interests drive the state to pursue a policy of system change.
The interrelation between power capabilities (structure) and state interests (agency) and their link to foreign policy decisions of the respective states as well as the way these states interact are modelled along the Balance of Interests theory:[50]

> The concept of balance of interests has a dual meaning, one at the unit level, the other at the systemic level. At the unit level, it refers to the costs a state is willing to pay to defend the status quo relative to the costs it is willing to pay to modify it. At the systemic level, it refers to the relative strength of status-quo and revisionist states.[51]

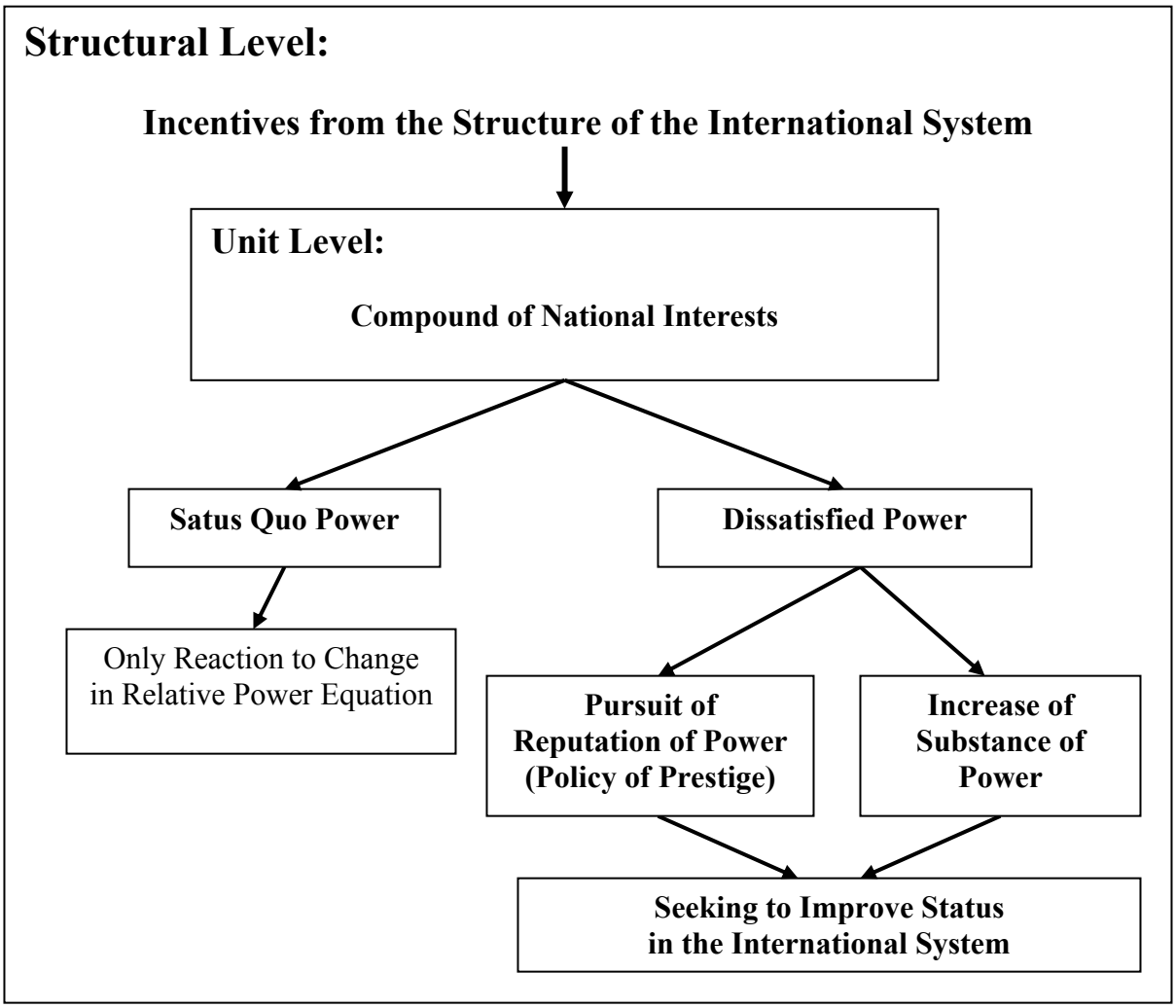
Schweller's approach is explicitly designed to integrate variables both at the structural and unit-level of analysis. In his model, structural conditions are permissive and not deterministic to state behaviour. Structure provides "the conditions that 'let' rather than 'make' things happen."[52] In contrast to mostly systemic theories of International Relation, the Balance of Interest approach allows the combination of both unit-level variables and structural variables. This is explained by the following:

---

[48] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p. 454.
[49] Rose, Gideon: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. In: World Politics No.51, October 1998; pp. 146,147.
[50] The term 'Balance-of-Interest Theory' was first introduced by Randall L. Schweller (Schweller: op.cit.. 1998).
[51] ibid.; pp. 83, 84.
[52] ibid.; p.6.

This theoretical approach departs from the conventional international relations wisdom that cautions against integrating variables at different levels of analysis. ... . The objective ... is to break out of these strictures and develop a theoretical framework that recognizes 'the necessity of both certain predisposing conditions and the actions of certain individuals' – that is, the complex interrelations between structure and agency.[53]

Chart 2.1.: Patterns of Balancing Interests



The structure of the international system, defined as the relative power distribution among states, sets the permissive frame in which state behaviour occurs. The stability of the

[53] Schweller: op.cit.. 1998; p.7.

existing international order is not primarily determined by structural factors but instead by the unit-level incentives of the state to seek a system change. according to Schweller,

> [a]t the systemic level, balance of interest theory suggests that the distribution of capabilities, by itself, does not determine the stability of the system. More important are the goals and means to which those capabilities or influence are put to use: whether power and influence is used to manage the system or destroy it; whether the means employed to further such goals threaten other states or make them feel more secure. In other words, the stability of the system is a function of the balance of revisionist and conservative forces.[54]

Within Schweller's approach, determining a state's power capabilities is mainly done by measuring its military strength, thereby implicitly accepting the supremacy of military power within the national power composition. Accordingly, the main focus of the respective research design is laid on recording and classifying military hardware.

The fact that the present study focuses upon nuclear weapons as specific elements of power somehow reduces the relevance of the measuring of power capabilities within the research design. The specific of nuclear weapon capabilities as a unique category of elements of power is twofold. First, their measure is largely dichotomous (non-possession / possession). The second aspect is their 'unusability,' which implies a strong political connotation, next to its meaning in terms of military power. The combination of political and military values attributed to nuclear weapons places them outside the realm of conventional elements of military power.

2.4. Foreign Policy and Domestic Government

According to the concept of balance-of-interest, state behaviour in the international arena is determined by the pursuit of national interest (satisfied/dissatisfied power) and the state's respective power capabilities. It does not, however, preclude the relevance of additional factors in a state's decision to build up arms, like domestic politics. The entrance of domestic factors which originate from the interaction within the domestic polity causes a state to pursue suboptimal foreign policy choices. Foreign policy is regarded as suboptimal when it differs from the policy that decision-makers would "prefer if maintaining power at home were not a constraint."[55]

In the case of India's nuclear decision making, two specific factors seem to be of particular relevance, and are therefore addressed separately in this section: first, the role of psychological dynamics leading to suboptimal policy decisions and, second, the role of public opinion in India's democratic policy process.

---

[54] Schweller: op.cit.. 1998; p. 89.
[55] Fearon, James D.: Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations. Annual Review of Political Science, Vol.1, 1998; p.299.

2.4.1. Psychological Factors in Nuclear Policy Formulation

Among the realm of psychology, Morgenthau distinguishes four basic phenomena which play a crucial role in the foreign policy formulation of states:

> When the human mind approaches reality with the purpose of taking action, of which the political encounter is one of the outstanding instances, it is often led astray by any of four common mental phenomena: residues of formerly adequate modes of thought and action now rendered obsolete by a new social reality; demonological interpretations of reality which substitute a fictitious reality – peopled by evil persons rather than seemingly intractable issues – for the actual one; refusal to come to terms with a threatening state of affairs by denying it through illusory verbalization; reliance upon the infinite malleability of a seemingly obstreperous reality.[56]

Evidence presented in the further course of this study will reveal three different types of psychological phenomena which played a major role in the Indian context, each of which is placed in one of the above categories, the first, second, and fourth, respectively.

The first phenomenon constitutes the recurring sense of India being discriminated in the international arena. This phenomenon stems from a more basic perception which persists particularly in democratic societies, that is the idea of equity. The role of equity as a main theme in India's polity is noted by George Perkovich:

> Most polities, but especially democracies, insist on equity in their international relations, at least among states that they regard as their peers. This is particularly true of large postcolonial democracies whose purposes and internal legitimacy were founded on the achievement of independence and equity... .The downplaying of the equity dynamic in nuclear politics is doubtly ironic insofar as American foreign policymakers promote democracy precisely because equity is seen as a good – because they believe that states that achieve relative equity will be more stable and peace loving.[57]

Within the Indian nuclear debate, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Regime became the epitome of international inequality, as it allocated power to only five specific states while explicitly excluding the others. Inequality is actually the rule rather than the exception within the international arena, and India too, defines the regional set-up of South Asia in unequal terms with itself as the dominant power. However, it was the explicitness of the unequal design of the NPT as a political institution that caused so much resentment in

[56] Fearon, James D.: op.cit.; p.7.
[57] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; pp. 465, 466.

India's polity. The conflicting relationship between the idea of equity and the reality of unequal institutions is described by Morgenthau:

> On the international plane it is no exaggeration to say that the very structure of international relations – as reflected in political institutions, diplomatic procedures, and legal arrangements – has tended to become at variance with, and in large measure irrelevant to, the reality of international politics. While the former assumes the 'sovereign equality' of all nations, the latter is dominated by an extreme inequality of nations… . It is this contrast and incompatibility between reality of international politics and the concepts, institutions, and procedures designed to make intelligible and control the former, which has caused, at least below the great-power level, the unmanageability of international relations.[58]

The perception of America's role in moulding the unequal international structure proved to be most conducive to these psychological dynamics, thereby causing the second, interrelated mental phenomenon, which is the demonological phenomenon. This phenomenon was particularly dominant during the high peak of India's nuclear debate between 1993 and 1996. In this time period, major sections of India's political spectrum perceived India's international interaction on the nuclear issue as a titanic struggle of the righteous underdog against the evil oppressor, with the latter being identified as the United States.

This strongly distorted substitute for reality detached itself from the actual policy of the perceived demon. American non-involvement in the region was considered as arrogant ignorance of the neo-imperialist, reinforcing demands to acquire the bomb in order to receive the kind of attention India deserved. At the same time, American involvement was similarly perceived as an act of neo-imperialism, similarly reinforcing demands to acquire the bomb in order to fend off American hegemonic aspirations. The distorted perception of reality, particularly during the mid-1990s, leads to the third major psychological phenomenon influencing India's nuclear decision making which Morgenthau describes as the "reliance upon the infinite malleability of a seemingly obstreperous reality."[59] This phenomenon is the direct outcome of the generally inward looking, isolated nature of the policy debate within India's polity.

2.4.2. The Problem of Public Opinion

Within the present study, public opinion is defined as an aggregate of individual views and attitudes either shared by a majority ('general public' or 'mass public'), or more frequently, a concerned minority ('special public' or 'issue audience') among India's population. As the further course of this study will show, the general public was concerned with the nuclear issue only in the aftermath of flashy demonstrations of power, such as nuclear or missile testing. Only a special public, mostly among the urban middle and upper classes,

[58] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p.8.
[59] ibid.; p.8.

had a permanent interest in the nuclear issue and its implications for the course of the country's security and foreign policy. The strategic elite play the role of agents instrumental in the creation of public opinion in the field of nuclear policy. The strategists' appreciation of the role of public opinion became apparent in their frequent calls for a 'national consensus' on the nuclear question. These calls were explicitly substantiated with the Lockian concept of public opinion as the standard against which government performance could be measured within the social contract between the state's citizens. However, the fact that an involvement of the general public into the nuclear policy making process was mainly invoked by those strategists taking a pro-bomb position based on affective norms might suggest that the implicit reason for these calls were rather Machiavellian, defining the role of public opinion as a means to achieve power either by accommodating or manipulating it.

In the case of democracies such as India, one of the major factors distorting the process of foreign policy formulation towards suboptimal outcomes is referred to by Hans J. Morgenthau as "the problem of public opinion:"[60] "[e]specially where foreign policy is conducted under the conditions of democratic control, the need to marshal popular emotions to the support of foreign policy cannot fail to impair the rationality of foreign policy itself."[61] Decision makers face the problem of pursuing two fundamentally different interests, one being the formulation of an optimal foreign policy and the other being individual political self-preservation which is assured through the seeking of popular support. To reconcile these two interests is the main task of any democratic government. The government must thereby

> secure the approval of its own people for its foreign policies and the domestic ones designed to mobilize the elements of national power in support of them. That task is difficult because the conditions under which popular support can be obtained for a foreign policy are not necessarily identical with the conditions under which a foreign policy can be successfully pursued. As Tocqueville put it, with special reference to the United States: 'Foreign politics demand scarcely any of those qualities which are peculiar to a democracy; they require, on the contrary, the perfect use of almost all those in which it is deficient.[62]

The successful administration of foreign policy requires a certain degree of long-term strategic planning, the consideration of a complex array of options and conditions, as well as pragmatism and self-restraint. These qualities prove to be incompatible with the dynamics which guide public opinion:

> Thinking required for the successful conduct of foreign policy can be diametrically opposed to the rhetoric and action by which the masses and their representatives are likely to be moved… . The popular mind, unaware of the fine distinctions of the

[60] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; pp.7,8.
[61] ibid.; p.7.
[62] ibid.; p. 160.

> stateman's thinking, reasons more often than not in the simple moralistic and legalistic terms of absolute good and absolute evil.[63]

Throughout India's post-independent democratic history, a certain interrelation between governmental instability on one side and the likelihood of the government's foreign policy decisions causing volatile sentiments in public opinion could be observed. The peak of the nuclear debate in India in the mid-1990 coincided with a period of highly unstable governments. Between 1993 and 1998, India witnessed four changes of government. Some analyses on this causality even go as far as to suggest that the last change in government after the elections of 1998 was brought about to a great extent by the populist nuclear policy of the victorious party. The existence of such complications generally leads to suboptimal outcomes of foreign policy decisions, which are often diametrically opposed to policies aimed at pursuing the genuine national interests. According to Morgenthau,

> [a] foreign policy that is passionately and overwhelmingly supported by public opinion cannot be assumed for that reason alone to be good foreign policy. On the contrary, the harmony between foreign policy and public opinion may well have been achieved at a price of surrendering the principles of good foreign policy to the unsound preferences of public opinion.[64]

Next to the afore mentioned negative effects of public opinion on foreign policy, India's post-independence history also offers evidence as to how these negative effects could be successfully minimised. One obvious option the government has is to influence public opinion rather than being influenced by it:

> [T]he government must realize that it is the leader and not the slave of public opinion; that public opinion is not a static thing to be discovered and classified by public-opinion polls as plants are by botanists, but that it is a dynamic, ever changing entity to be continuously created and recreated by informed and responsible leadership; that it is the historic mission of the government to assert that leadership lest by the demagogue who asserts it.[65]

The second option the government has is to institutionally isolate foreign policy making from the direct influence of public opinion. It is one of the ironic features of India's nuclear path that the BJP-led government from 1998 to 2003, which might have benefited most from its populist nuclear decision making, made the strongest efforts to reform India's nuclear decision making structure in order to isolate it from short-lived sentiments in public opinion.

[63] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p. 161.
[64] ibid.; p. 161.
[65] ibid.; p. 164.

2.5. Nuclear Arms and the Risk of War

The scholarly debate on the effects of nuclear proliferation in the Third World in general, and the nuclear developments in South Asia in particular, oscillates between the two orthodox positions of proliferation pessimists. This group believes that that the spread of nuclear weapons increases the likelihood of nuclear war, while deterrence theorists stress the stabilizing effects of nuclear weapons. This polarised debate is drawn from the Cold War experience and the U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race and has been modified along the specific historical and geopolitical circumstances in which the nuclear arms build-up of the so called second generation proliferants takes place.

The main feature of the process of nuclear proliferation in countries other than the five recognized nuclear powers is the opacity in which it occurs. Prior to 1998, both South Asian governments denied the possession of nuclear weapons while, at the same time, admitting the capability to develop such sophisticated weapons within a short range of time.[66] The distinction between 'possession' and 'capability' is thereby purely political. Immediately after India and Pakistan conducted the nuclear tests in May 1998, both countries moved from their stance of denying any possession of nuclear weapons towards an open acknowledgement of being a nuclear weapons state. The concept of existential deterrence which had prevailed the strategic thinking of both countries so far was replaced by the strategic concept of minimum deterrence.[67] This deterrence posture implies the deployment of "the minimum number of nuclear weapons necessary to inflict unacceptable damage on its adversary even after suffering a nuclear attack"[68] and generally suggests a 'countervalue' instead of a 'counterforce' doctrine. However, both states failed so far to outline how many weapons they actually consider as being the 'minimum' number of devices.

Due to the geographic proximity and the extremely short warning times, aircraft are of little use as secure second-strike delivery vehicles and rather contribute to deterrence instability by increasing the dangers of pre-emptive strikes. Both states therefore foster the development of mobile land-based ballistic missiles. The Indian programme of developing submarines as the potentially best delivery system to secure a second-strike capability is decades away from completion.

The war-prone common history of India and Pakistan, the ongoing dispute over territory in Kashmir, their long common border, and the unstable political set-up in Pakistan as well as the ongoing ethnic conflicts within India are several factors which, according to most

[66] In the concept of opaque nuclear proliferants developed by Peter Feaver, this term also includes those states which do not have any nuclear weapons program, although having the basic nuclear knowledge, research facilities an nuclear reactors to build nuclear weapons (Peter Feaver in Carranza, Mario E.: An Impossible Game: Stable Nuclear Deterrence after the Indian and Pakistani Tests. The Nonproliferation Review, Spring-Summer 1999, pp. 11-24).

[67] see Kampani, Gaurav: From Existential to Minimum Deterrence: Explaining India's Decision to Test. The Nonproliferation Review, Fall 1998; pp. 12-24.

[68] Nicholas Wheeler in Carranza, Mario E.: op.cit.; p.14.

international strategic analysts, severely aggravate the risks of a nuclear exchange in the region. For proliferation pessimists, the development of nuclear capabilities in this unstable environment "poses perhaps the most probable prospect for future use of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons."[69] Deterrence theorists instead point to the fact that no major war was fought between India and Pakistan since both countries started their nuclear programs.[70] In fact, all three wars between the two regional adversaries were fought prior to India's first nuclear tests in 1974.

It is noteworthy that many western scholars who acknowledged the stability of U.S.-Soviet nuclear deterrence deny these stabilising effects in the South Asian case, whereas many e South Asian strategic scholars who bitterly criticise the Cold War nuclear rivalry in best Nehruvian tradition now seem to be much more confident about the peaceful effects of the nuclear competition in South Asia.[71] However, only very few advocates of deterrence theory go so far to suggest that nuclear weapons should be diffused to stabilise the region, and, on the other side, the vast majority of proliferation pessimists acknowledge the existence of a variety of factors other than just the quantity of atomic bombs which increase the danger of nuclear war.

Following are the two diverging logics contrasted along five sets of arguments:[72]
Quantitative arguments: The debate over the significance of quantity in nuclear competitions is embedded between the pessimistic '***n**th* country problem' and the rational choice approach of deterrence theory.
The '***n**th* country problem' stresses the increased number of potential adversarial pairs of nuclear-weapon states. If only two nuclear-weapon states exist, there is only one pair of rival states to fight a nuclear war. With three nuclear weapon states, the number increases to three potential pairs, four states can form six pairs, and so forth.[73] According to this approach, the recent increase in the number of nuclear weapon states from five to seven[74] more than doubles the pairs of potential nuclear rivalries from 10 to 21, thereby increasing the risks of nuclear escalation correspondingly. This outcome, however, seems doubtful as it ignores several important factors. First, the importance of the geo-strategic set-up must be considered. The emergence of India and Pakistan as nuclear powers definitely increased the chances of nuclear war between the pairs India-Pakistan and India-China, and the threat by other potential pairs such as Pakistan-UK or India-France is much less obvious. Second, the approach ignores the significance of asymmetries in the arsenals of nuclear competitors.

[69] Testimony of CIA Director James Woolsey before Senate Governmental Affairs Committee on February 24, 1993. (In: Perkovich, George: India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation. Delhi: Oxford University Press 2000; p.335).
[70] A controversy among historians exists whether the Kargil Conflict of 1999 was actually a war or not.
[71] the most prominent being K. Subrahmanyam (for an overview of the debate between Nehruvian traditionalists and deterrence theorists see: Poulose, T.T.: Viewpoint: Indias Deterrence Doctrine: A Nehruvian Critique. In: The Nonproliferation Review, Fall 1998; pp.77-84).
[72] Hagerty, Devin T.: The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia. Cambridge, Ma.: The MIT Press 1998.
[73] The formula being n(n-1)/2.
[74] The USA, Russia, China, UK and France plus the two self declared nuclear weapons states of India and Pakistan.

Third, the implicit paradigm that nuclear weapons of one state pose a threat to nuclear weapons states only is at least questionable.

The diametrically opposed concept to the above outlined pessimistic logic is the approach developed by Bueno de Mesquita. Here, the main emphasis is laid upon correcting nuclear asymmetries as the major threat to stability. A strategic set-up in which all nuclear-capable states are deterred by their equally nuclear-capable neighbours leads to the most stable situation and is therefore desirable. However, the necessary conclusion that in the ideal scenario all states would deter each other with nuclear weapons is disturbing and is somehow terrifying to most analysts.

In sum, no clear assumption with regard to the quantitative arguments can be made. Neither the oversimplified statement that 'more nukes cause a greater risk of nuclear war' nor the exclusive emphasis on nuclear symmetry seem reasonable.
Geopolitical arguments: The main argument in this category focuses on the political instability which is attributed to the Third World. Several studies on relationships between types of government and chances of war suggest that a crisis between two democracies is most likely to be solved peacefully, whereas adversarial relationship between a democracy on one hand and an authoritarian state on the other is the most unstable.[75] Proliferation pessimists assume that military-led states are more likely to engage in a nuclear arms build-up with an emphasis on offensive options, thereby neglecting adequate safety systems. Recent empirical studies have shown, however, that in contradiction to this opinion the 'positive mechanisms of civilian control'[76] are much less obvious. In fact, it appears that the democratic state usually takes the more confrontational stance in this scenario and is more open to the nuclear option rather than the authoritarian state.[77] In this respect, the constellation in South Asia seems quite unfavourable. However, the empirical evidence in this case is weak, as a deeper analysis of the interdependence between civil-military relations and the course of nuclear proliferation is lacking.

Deficient Command and Control Arrangements: The debate on deficient command and control structures among Third World proliferants emphasises two major dangers: first, the danger of pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons when reliable second strike capabilities are missing, and second, the problem of 'loose nukes.' The danger of pre-emptive war is downplayed by deterrence theorists by referring to the concept of 'first strike uncertainty' instead of 'second strike capability.' As in a nuclear competition among Third World proliferators, neither side usually has the precise knowledge of how many devices the adversary has and where they are deployed. The chances of launching a successful pre-emptive first strike against the opponent's installations then appear minimal. The logic of reciprocal fear of surprise attack leading to a 'use them or lose them' situation would not apply in this case.

[75] see Müller, Harald et.al.: Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Global Order. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994.
[76] Scott D. Sagan in Carranza, Mario E.: op.cit., p.13.
[77] e.g. a study by the Heidelberg Institute of International Conflict Research 1998.

The problems of 'loose nukes' or the danger of nuclear accidents, weapons theft, or unauthorized use can hardly be denied, and pose a significant threat, especially in Third World countries with crude command and control arrangements.

'Undeterrable' leaders: One argument of proliferation pessimists stresses the logic of deterrence as applying only to rational leaders, emphasizing immunity to this logic by certain 'irrational' leaders in the Third World. This orientalist argumentation is not sustained by serious research and can be dismissed in the further course of analysis.
Preventive war imperatives: In contrast to the dangers of *pre-emptive* war along the logic of surprise attack, risks of *preventive* war apply to scenarios of asymmetrical nuclear proliferation. Nuclear capable countries might consider a preventive strike attractive in the period prior to the full-fledged nuclearisation of its adversary. In the case of South Asia, such a scenario was developed (although officially denied) by the Indian military during the Brasstacks crisis in 1987 but categorically rejected by the political leadership[78].

The effects of nuclear proliferation on the strategic set-up remain ambiguous and elusive to any generalization. In the case of South Asia empirical evidence suggests that the nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan deterred full-scale war but obviously failed to deter minor skirmishes and low profile war between these two rivals along their disputed Kashmir border. However, any conclusion about if and how deterrence worked remains vague. As Hagerty pointed out, "[s]ince successful deterrence results in non-events, i.e. continued peace, it is logically impossible to prove that nuclear deterrence has worked in any given situation."[79] In contrast to this dilemma stands the unambiguous conclusion about the non-strategic danger of 'loose nukes' posed especially by the crude nature of the nuclear arsenals among newly emerging nuclear powers.

According to several studies on the relationship between arms races and war, the probability of war is especially high at the beginning of an arms race. Regular increases in military capabilities over a long period of time tend to become accepted by both states and do not further increase threat perceptions, thereby even becoming a stabilizing factor in the bilateral relationship. Empirical research has shown that almost every arms race in recent history resulted in war within five years, with the only exceptions being arms races related to the Cold War and long enduring disputes.[80]
However, this explanation neglects the fact that arms races are not phenomena which independently exist but rather outcomes of a certain bilateral competitive interaction. Thus, arms races have no effect on the probability of war independent from the deeper causes of the bilateral rivalry from which both, the arms race and the dangers of war, arose. The outcome, whether war or peace, cannot be attributed to the arms race itself but rather to the conditions which initially induced the states to engage in the arms race.

---

[78] see Bajpai, Kanti P. et.al.: Brasstacks and beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia. New Delhi: Manohar 1995.
[79] Hagerty, Devin T.: op.cit.; p.37.
[80] Sample, S.G. in Glaser, Charles L.: The Causes and Consequences of Arms Races. Annual Review of Political Science, Vol.3, 2000; p.264.

3. Model: Elite Perception, National Interests and India's Nuclear Policy

3.1. The South Asian Security Environment

National interests are the independent variables and nuclear policy outcomes are the dependent variables of the model. Thus, the model departs from conventional explanatory models by not considering security seeking as monocausal variable for a state's arming behaviour, but instead including a range of other independent variables, defined as national interests. Further, it distinguishes between nuclear weapons as specific element of power and other elements of power. As such, those national interests determining a state's nuclear arming behaviour are not necessarily identical with those national interests determining the state's acquisition of other (conventional) elements of power. As the core hypothesis, the structure of the international (sub-)system accounts for the basic preconditions underlying India's nuclear build-up, but does not account for its immediate incentives to acquire the bomb.

The structural incentives for India to build-up nuclear weapons are commonly explained by either the compulsions of the regional strategic subsystem of South Asia - dominated by India's competition with Pakistan and China—or the global context, namely India's status as an emerging major power. Both approaches are backed by empirical evidence, but neither is able to fully and comprehensively explain India's nuclear policy.

Assuming that both the global nuclear order as well as the regional strategic system matter for India's nuclear policymaking, the question of interrelation arises. Is the regional strategic matrix a subsystem of the global nuclear order?
According to Hans Morgenthau, the global international system is subdivided into several regionally confined subsystems:

> We have spoken thus far of the balance of power as if it were one single system comprehending all nations actively engaged in international politics. Closer observation, however, reveals that such a system is frequently composed of a number of subsystems that are interrelated with each other, but that maintain within themselves a balance of power of their own.[81]

Morgenthau clearly defines these subsystems in geographic terms (i.e. their geographical proximity to the dominating system):

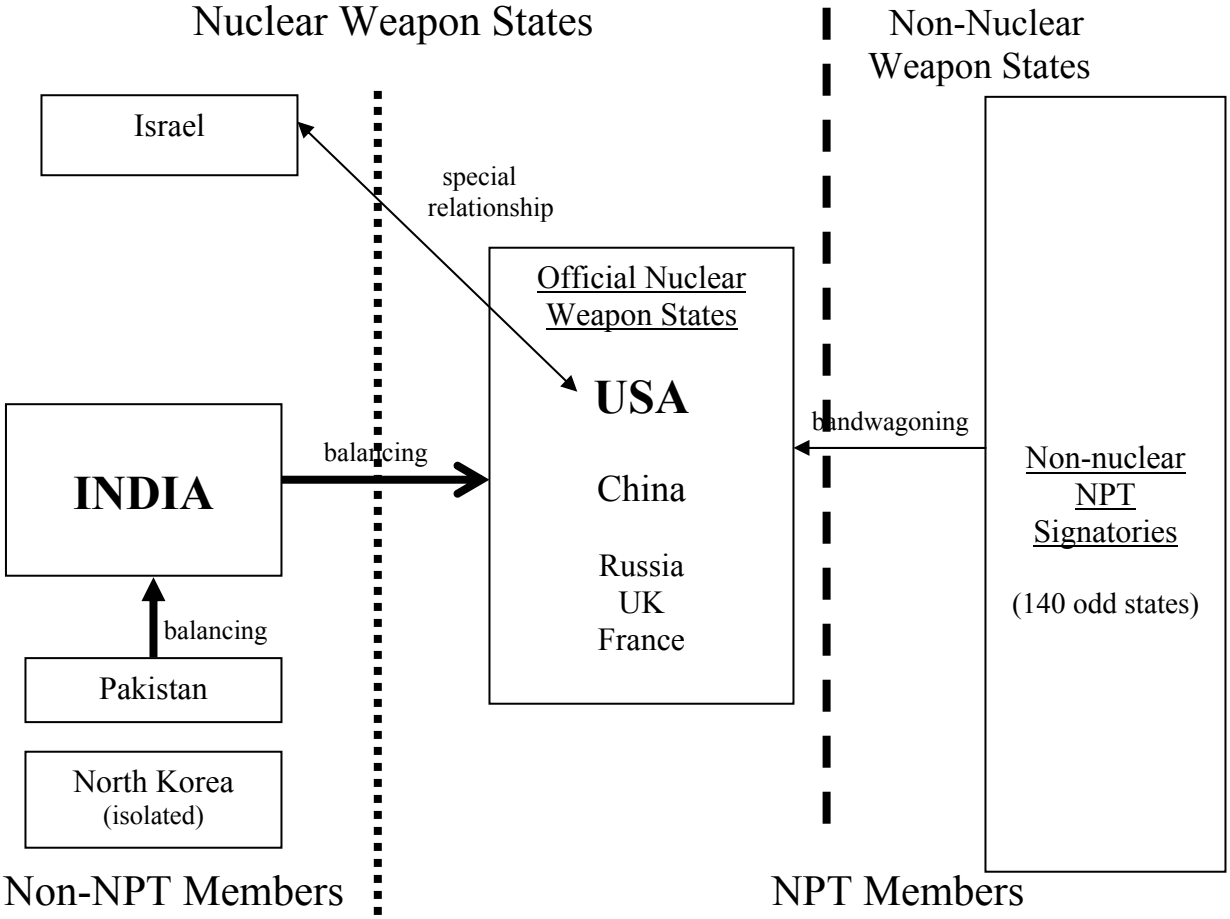
> It is not by accident that the autonomy of such local balance-of-power systems is the greater and their subordination to a dominant system the less noticeable, the more

[81] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p.213.

> removed they are physically from the centre of the struggle of power – the more they operate at the periphery of the dominant system, out of reach of the dominant nations.[82]

With regard to India's interaction with other states on the nuclear issue, this classical definition of balance-of-power systems appears somehow inadequate. Within the nuclear order, the dynamics of state interaction appear detached from compositional shifts in the balance of power system. In other words, the global nuclear order is less defined in terms of geography, but rather in terms of power, its determining element. Naturally, the 'nuclear subsystem' is still closely interrelated with the dominating balance-of-power system as defined in general national power terms (see Chart 3.1.)[83].

Chart 3.1.: The 'Nuclear Subsystem'



[82] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p. 214.
[83] The fact that all five official nuclear weapon states are at the same time the five permanent members and thus veto-powers of the UN Security Council underline this close interrelation.

Within this global nuclear order, India is placed into the regionally defined South Asian strategic subsystem, in which India is neighboured by two nuclear powers in China and Pakistan. The two factors that distinguish power arising from nuclear weapons as unique are its dichotomous character ('possession' / 'non-possession') and nature as an 'unusable' weapons power. This definition basically divides the world in nuclear 'haves' and nuclear 'have-nots'. However, the dichotomy is imperfect due to the widely accepted[84] dominance of the USA within the group of 'haves'.

This simplistic, quasi-dichotomous nature of the 'nuclear subsystem' dominated India's mainstream strategic thinking until 1998. India perceived its pre-bomb position as that of an empty-handed pushover. Within the regionally confined subsystem, the structural causes for India's nuclear build-up are twofold: 1) India's estranged relations with nuclear-armed China and 2) India's antagonistic relationship with Pakistan[85].

With regard to Indo-Pakistani relations, a clear distinction needs to be made between the conventional arms race and the acquisition of nuclear weapons by both states. The main distinguishing factor between the conventional and the nuclear bilateral competition lies in their underlying impetus. In the conventional realm, Pakistan's dissatisfaction with the status quo operates as the driving force while in the nuclear realm, India's fulfils the same function.
Pakistan's revisionist goals towards territory in Kashmir have been one of the major factors in Indo-Pakistani antagonism since independence. Until 1965, Pakistan considered the existing order, in which India holds most of Kashmir, as intolerable, and it was willing risk much to improve it. After the war of 1965 and especially the secession of Bangladesh in 1971, Pakistan, though still a dissatisfied power, became too weak to push its revisionist goals through by military means. While Pakistan's conventional arms build-up along the disputed border in Kashmir and assistance to Kashmiri rebels are caused by its revisionist goals, nuclear proliferation is not. Nuclear weapons are considered to be of little use for Pakistan in the limited territorial dispute in Kashmir, as they would ravage the territory before it could be seized. Rather, Pakistani military planners consider nuclear devices as defensive weapons for deterring the superior Indian military from a large-scale (nuclear or conventional) attack. The main obstacle to the Pakistani nuclear programme is not strategic, but economic: its scarce resources are overburdened by the extreme costs of development. Thus, in contrast to its conventional incentives for arming, within the nuclear arms competition Pakistan qualifies as status-quo power.

For India, the strategic value of nuclear weapons vis-à-vis its troubled relationship with Pakistan is doubtful. At first sight, the introduction of an overt nuclear arsenal appeared

[84] Within the nuclear discourse among India's strategic elite, the recurring call for India to join the ranks of the nuclear haves did not imply the drawing level with the USA, as its supreme position was implicitly recognised.
[85] Some writers add the potential threats by outside powers as a third structural cause, taking reference to the ‚Enterprise' incident of 1971 as historical evidence.

rather disadvantageous for India. It obviously neither deterred the insurgents in Kashmir nor their Pakistani backers. In contrast to conventional deterrence, nuclear deterrence in regional territorial disputes is not primarily directed at preventing a limited military attack to seize the disputed territory, but to deter a large-scale military attack to occupy the disputed territory *after* decisively defeating the opponent's military forces. Due to India's overwhelming superiority in conventional weaponry, the scenario of a large-scale Pakistani attack on India appears unrealistic. The introduction of such immensely destructive devices into the bilateral strategic relationship has had an equalising effect on the Indo-Pakistani balance-of-power, overruling much of India's conventional superiority.

In view of the limited value of nuclear weapons for India in its strategic relationship to Pakistan, the introduction of nuclear weapons into bilateral relations appears to be more a strategic by-product of India's nuclear programme than its incentive. Throughout the four decades of India's nuclear build-up, Pakistan only displayed prominently as causal factor over two brief periods: The first period lasted from 1980 to 1982, when efforts on India's nuclear programme were intensified after rumours spread about Pakistan's progress in the field. The second period commenced with the Brasstacks crisis in 1987 and lasted until the end of the Kashmir crisis of 1990. In this time, overstated fears among the Indian public about Pakistan's looming nuclear threat were fuelled by A.Q. Khan's, Pakistan's leading nuclear scientist, blatant remarks[86]. While India's nuclear build-up was not primarily caused by Indo-Pakistani antagonism, its consequences were nevertheless felt most severely within the bilateral interactions of the two South Asian states.

This causality suggests that the nuclear competition between India and Pakistan is asymmetric in the sense that the incentives for India's nuclear build-up were extra-regional, while Pakistan's incentives were regional, stemming from the Indian threat. While the impetus for the regional nuclear competition was inducted from outside, it triggered an intra-regional action-reaction process between the two adversaries. Within the global nuclear arena, India acted as a dissatisfied power trying to improve its status by building up a nuclear weapons arsenal. Within the regional nuclear competition, Pakistan acted as a satisfied power, reacting to the impetus from India's global nuclear ambitions. Thus, within the model India is *a priori* marked as the dissatisfied, and Pakistan as the satisfied power within the intra-regional nuclear competition. India is seen as the prime actor in determining the course of the South Asian nuclear arms competition. Pakistan is left with a secondary role of a reacting power.

Determining the relevance of the 'China factor' as incentive for India's nuclear build-up is a much more challenging task. After the Sino-Indian war in 1962 and the first Chinese nuclear test in 1964, most Indian strategists felt the need to balance the Chinese threat by equally proliferating nuclear weapons. The Indian government, however, never followed their suggestions and refrained from openly treading the nuclear path before 1998. The tests of 1998 came after a period of significant rapprochement between India and China initiated

[86] At other occasions, like President Musharraf's nuclear threatening in the 2001 crisis, strategic analyses dealt with the consequences of Indo-Pakistani nuclearisation, not with its causes.

by Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1988, culminating in two border agreements signed in 1993 and 1996. Furthermore, prior to the tests the Chinese government sent out strong signals that its strategic interests were limited to the Taiwan and the South China Sea issues, and that it had a strong interest in preserving the status quo at its south western border to India.
In view of these realities, evidence suggests that the 'China Factor' might have accounted for India's long-term decision to keep the nuclear option open and tacitly develop capabilities. Nevertheless, it fails to explain India's shift from opaque to overt nuclear proliferation in 1998, as well as the particular time in which India decided to test and to declare itself a nuclear weapon state.

Thus it can be said that while India's conventional arms build-up is mainly driven by security considerations towards Pakistan and China (the exception being the acquisition of 'prestigious' weapons systems like aircraft carriers), the major driving forces behind its nuclear weapons programme, particularly in the crucial years during the 1990s, appears to originate from outside the region.
Correspondingly, the following working hypothesis applies:

- The two strategic compulsions posed by the nuclear threats of Pakistan and China did influence, but not decisively determine India's nuclear course.

Those studies driven by purely structural theories of international relations would end at this stage, without comprehending the much more complex, unit-level incentives behind India's nuclear programme. Within India's strategic thinking, both Pakistan and China are not exclusively perceived as threats to its security, but also as factors in international status ranking. In particular, the role China plays in India's nuclear calculus appears to be less defined in terms of actual security threats across its common border, but rather by China's membership in the prestigious, exclusive nuclear club. Pakistan, on the other hand, is perceived as the main hindrance to India's rise above the regional limits of South Asia and to joining the ranks of the major powers.

3.2. Status Seeking as a National Interest

According to the working hypothesis developed in the previous section, structural factors, defined in terms of India's regional security environment, were permissive but not imperative to the development of India's nuclear bomb. Therefore, a comprehensive explanation of the motives behind India's nuclearisation must go beyond the narrow focus on security and further incorporate other factors determining the national interest composition[87].

[87] Avoiding the concept of 'national security', and referring to the broader defined concept of 'national interests', which includes non-security interests, is further allowed for the post-modernist criticism of the conventional concept of 'national security'. Post-modernists consider this concept as a social and political construction, and the determination of what issues are included into the sphere of national security itself as a political act.

According to the theoretical approach outlined in section 2.1., a state's foreign policy is determined by a compound of various interrelated national interests. National security is considered one of these interests but, in deviation from conventional explanatory models, is not seen on top of a lexicographic preference system per se.

Due to the previous classification of the international nuclear order as a certain subsystem defined along its distinguishing element of power, a model can be constructed which goes beyond the impact of national interests on a state's general foreign policy, thus further relating the existence of particular national interests to the state's quest for very specific elements of power. That is to say that, while some national interests might cause a state to improve / maintain certain elements of power, other interests might cause a different policy concerning other elements of power. In the case of India, the dominant interest behind its acquisition of conventional weaponry is obviously that of security in general, and its security towards Pakistan in Kashmir in particular. In the case of nuclear weaponry as an isolated element of power, the dominance of security motives is questionable. Status seeking is therefore introduced as a second basic national interest next to security. These two fundamental interests, status seeking and security seeking, are closely interrelated. As defined in section 2.1.2.3., a state's policy of prestige aims at pursuing the reputation of power (status) in contrast to security seeking and its pursuit of the substance of power. While the former is aimed at demonstrating (military) power, the latter aims at actually using it. The ultimate goal of the policy of prestige aims at avoiding the employment of military power. As such, status seeking and security seeking cannot be looked at separately, as the one is an indirect mode of the latter. Furthermore, both national interests are closely interrelated to further national interests downstream on the state's preference system, such as welfare.

Within the discourse of India's strategic thinkers, the proper appreciation of the prestige/security aspects of nuclear weapons was largely prevented by the all-dominant, polarising debate between idealist (or: Nehruvian) and realist worldviews. The idealist/realist divide, however, fails to explain why Nehru, who is usually referred to as the mastermind of India's idealist approach to foreign policy, actually paved the way for the country's development of nuclear weapons by creating the necessary infrastructure. The answer to this puzzle is quite simple: no direct causality exists between the government's idealist approach to foreign policy and the extent to which it is satisfied with its position in the international system. Throughout India's post-independence history, all of its governments--'idealists' as well as 'realists'--regarded India's position within the international system as lower than it deserved. Although the moral high ground inherent in Nehru's idealist foreign policy unquestionably prevented India's early nuclear breakthrough and protracted its nuclear programme for some years or decades, it always considered the nuclear option as a vital instrument to ensure India's international status. Among the very few Indian scholars appreciating this continuity in India's prestige oriented foreign policy was Raja Menon:

> The division of national interests into status quo powers and revisionist powers is too well known to merit repetition here. But it is important in one context: No matter how idealistic a government is it will find itself automatically in one or the other camp. Nehru's idealism would not prevent New Delhi from seeing the world in 1947 as an unequal place with residual colonialism, ideological imperialism and Cold War power politics. In looking at the world and assessing its political state, the idealists and realists don't disagree. They both see it as a place that needs some rearranging; the idealists may believe that the rearranging can be permanent, but this is likely to be a subjective view. Other power who would like some more rearranging will always be a permanent phenomenon, and in that sense, the tussle between the status quo and revisionist powers is the heart and essence of power politics... . Nuclear weapons are all about power politics, and it is most unsettling to any strategist to see the contortions that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) put itself through shortly after Pokhran II in trying to justify the tests on the basis of threats. The USA is today the only pole in a unipolar world with no country actually targeting it with nuclear weapons, but there is no talk of retaining the residual 2,500 nuclear weapons on the basis of threats, for the threats have disappeared. The arsenal is now required for influence and prestige.[88]

Mohan defines nuclear weapons less as devices aimed at enhancing the country's security, and more as instruments of influence and prestige aimed at enhancing the country's international status.
In the following section, this fundamental insight about the nature of nuclear weapons is incorporated into a general model of India's nuclear policymaking.

3.3. An Explanatory Model of India's Nuclear Policy Making

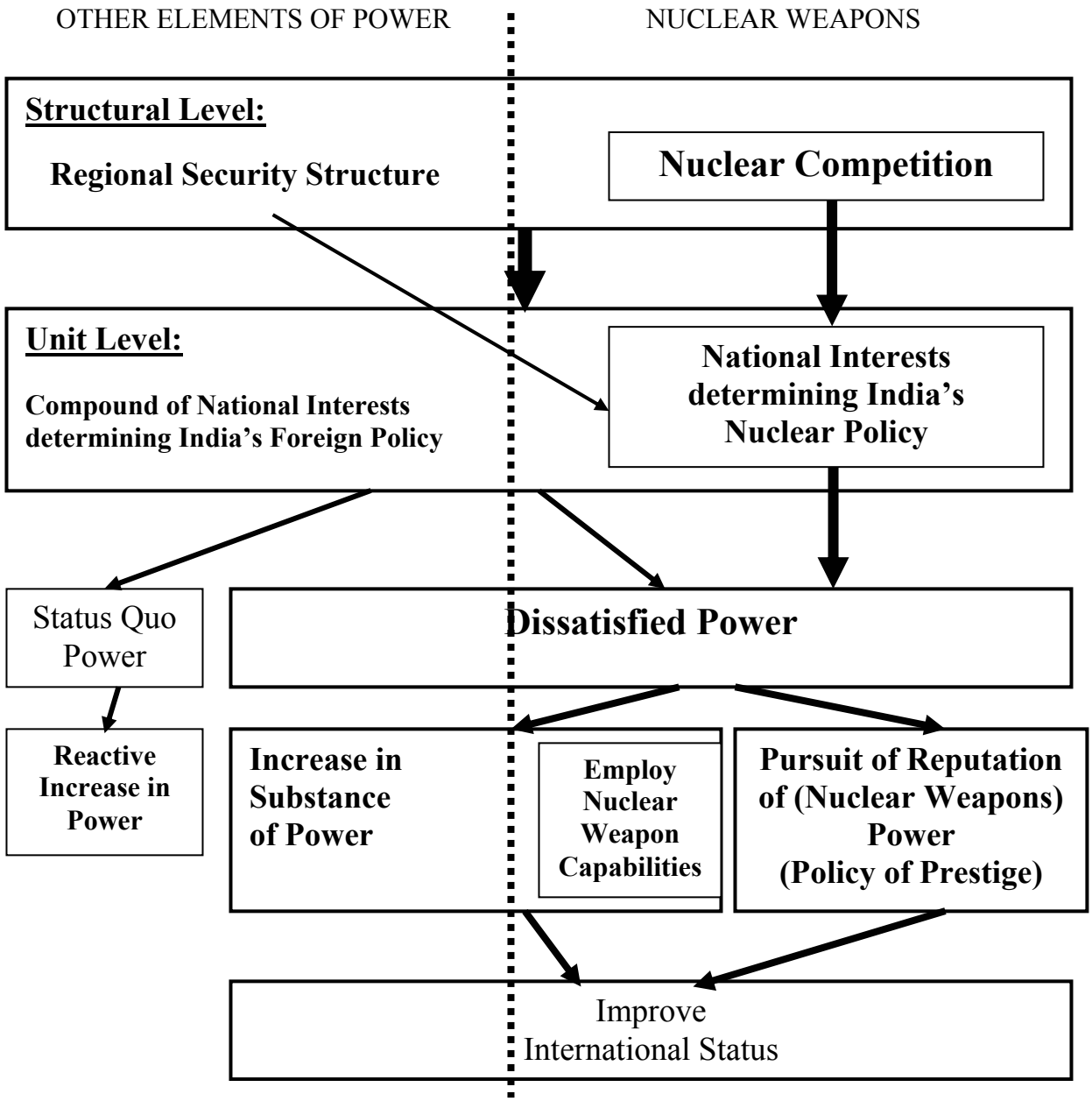
By introducing unit-level variations in the preference system of states and recognizing preferences other than security maximization, the existing system polarity is no longer viewed as independent variable, but rather as dependent along two dimensions: the particular interests states pursue and the power required to satisfy those interests[89].
In the case of India's nuclear course, two basic interests dominated its policy-making: security seeking and status seeking[90].

As outlined before, nuclear weapons power is measured in absolute terms, and its parameter value is dichotomous (possession/non-possession). This, again, departs from conventional explanatory models, according to which states try to improve security through

[88] Menon, Raja: A Nuclear Strategy for India. New Delhi: Sage Publications 2000; pp. 27,28.
[89] see: Schweller, Randall L.: Neorealism's Status-Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma? In: Frankel, Benjamin (ed.): Realism: Restatements and Renewal. London: Frank Cass 1996; p.99.
[90] The impact of welfare as national interest on India's nuclear policy had some significance during the early years of India's nuclear programme, when nuclear technology was considered a pivotal technology for India's development. India's first nuclear test in 1974 was officially justified with potential applications for development projects.

gains in relative power vis-à-vis their competitors in the international system. This modification appears justified in view of the general consensus within the Indian nuclear discourse, i.e. that it is the very existence of nuclear capabilities that serve India's interests, and less the actual number of employed devices.
In Chart 3.2., the general model of Balancing Interests (as illustrated in Chart 2.1.) is adapted to the case of India's nuclear build-up.

Chart 3.2.: Nuclear Weapons and India's National Interests



Within this model, the distinction is made between status seeking, defined as a national interest determining the respective state's dissatisfaction with the international system, and the policy of prestige, which aims at overcoming dissatisfaction by improving status within the international system.

While status seeking through the acquisition of nuclear weapons is the dependent variable, determined by the compulsions of the international nuclear order as the independent variables to the model, the policy of prestige is the independent variable, defined as a means in the pursuit of India's national interests determining India's quest for increased international status. In practical terms, however, these two meanings cannot be treated separately, as the policy of prestige implies both dissatisfaction with the current status as well as the quest for improved status.

In India's regional security environment, Pakistan and China were perceived as the two major challenges to India's security. The perceived threats emanate first of all from conventional weaponry as an element of military power (mainly confined to the limited territory of Kashmir), and secondly from the existence of nuclear capabilities (mainly from China).

In contrast to India's perception of its regional security environment, its main motive in challenging the global nuclear order was less its perception of this order as a source of insecurity than as a source of injustice and subjugation. Accordingly, the security dimension of the nuclear order was less imminent, and the Indian nuclear discourse focused more on the national interest defined in terms of status. This focus accounts for the strong impact that the nuclear issue had on India's self-perception as a dissatisfied power within the global system of states. It further explains why India's nuclear programme was mainly aimed at displaying power, i.e. drawing on the reputation of power, and less on the substantive increase of real power through the actual employment of nuclear weapons and their integration into the country's defence structures.

From this model, the following working hypotheses can be derived:

- India's nuclear policy is determined by a compound of two fundamental, interrelated national interests: security seeking and status seeking.
- While national security is considered one of these two major interests, it is not seen on top of a lexicographic preference system per se.
- Next to the global nuclear order, the impact on India's nuclear policy emanating from the structural compulsions of the regional subsystem, in which Pakistan and China figure as the main threats to India's security, is only secondary.
- Until 1998, the prime focus of India's nuclear policy was on gains in terms of absolute power, the parameter value being dichotomous (possession / non-possession).

3.4. Elite Perception and Nuclear Policy Making

3.4.1. Who are the Elite?

The model developed so far focuses on the composition of the compound of national interests that determine India's nuclear course. Status seeking is thereby viewed as a national interest in its own right, with the policy of prestige as the foremost means to pursue this interest. 'Status' and 'prestige' are thereby socially constructed terms which only exist because the actors attribute a certain meaning to them. Within this study, the normative intuitions underlying the social construction of these terms are identified through the analysis of texts crafted by a group of opinion leaders and strategic experts, referred to as India's strategic elite.

The term 'elite' is defined as a group of persons who are acknowledged by the society as having a superior status with regard to their abilities and expertise in a specific field, and who have a strong influence derived from their superior position. At this stage, a clear distinction has to be made between the terms 'elite' and 'ruling elite', the former exercising informal influence and the latter including organisational position-holders. This distinction appears necessary due to the traditionally non-institutionalised and informal strategic policy making process in India. This peculiar feature enabled the strategic elite to decisively determine the country's nuclear course outside the institutional framework (for the intermediary role of the 'strategic elite' between the government and the public in India's democratic set-up, see Chart 3.3.).

It is assumed, however, that the normative intuitions of the strategic elite differ neither from those of the organisational position-holders, nor from that of the interested public, rather representing a cross-section of it (that is to say that the identification of the norms on which the strategic elite base their perceptions of the country's status allows for a generalisation with regard to similar norms existing in the country's polity as a whole). This simplified assumption is challenged by scholars of subaltern studies, who emphasise the fundamentally different interests between the nationalist elite and the majority of the population. Paradoxically, the nationalist perspective of the elite, who are referred to by Partha Chatterjee as 'Nationalist Bourgeoisie'[91], emerged from their struggle against colonialism, but at the same time, absorbs many of the ideas of colonialism, including the concept of 'nation'. This inconsistency becomes most apparent in the field of strategic policy making. The strategic elite are mostly educated in the West, adopt Western strategic concepts, and publish almost exclusively in English language. Their ideas of a modern nation and its interaction with other nations are based on Western ideas of a Westphalian international order. The question emerges whether the concept of 'nation', which after all is a genuinely Western idea, is shared by the majority of India's underprivileged. Right from its beginning, the nuclear programme was inseparably linked by the elite to the myth of India as a proud and sovereign nation. This metaphoric meaning of nuclear weapons

[91] Chatterjee, Partha: The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

became the major symbolic attribute justifying their acquisition. Empirical evidence is not clear about the extent to which the general public accepts this meaning. While the nuclear tests of 1998 triggered a wave of nationalism which affected all classes within India's society, the general interest in the nuclear issue and the normative values attached to it appears to be rather limited. Despite these flaws, the simplified assumption that the strategic elite represent a cross-section of the society at large with regard to the values and interests expressed, is nevertheless maintained in the model for methodological reasons[92].

Using this assumption, the question about the identity of the strategic elite loses much of its relevance, as it has little effect on the outcome of the analysis. In other words, this study first of all aims at determining the meaning of status and prestige in the perception of the strategic elite and, by inference, in that of India's polity in general. Only to the extent necessary to achieve this aim, the history of certain decisions in the process of India's nuclear policymaking is traced by identifying those individuals who actually participate in the decision-making process and the decision-making structures, including the relationship between organisational position-holders, the actual decision-makers, and the hierarchy within the structure. The existence of the strategic elite is determined *a priori* within the model.

How do the strategic elite interact with the government on one side, and the interested public on the other? Studies on India's nuclear policy usually accept the view that within Indian society, a broad consensus exists that the global nuclear status-quo before 1998 was unjust and neither served India's interests nor reflected India's growing economic and military power. According to Stephen P. Cohen,

> [m]ost Indians, especially those in the Delhi-centered strategic and political community, strongly believe that their country is once again destined to become a great state, one that matches the historical and civilisational accomplishments of the Indian people. This view is encountered at nearly all points along the Indian political spectrum. Over the years, there developed a complex linkage between the greatness of India and the nuclear question.[93]

Even those sections in Indian society that strongly opposed the acquisition of nuclear weapons do not challenge this belief. They just disagree with the mode of how to tackle this injustice: instead of acquiring the bomb, they insist on a policy of global nuclear

[92] Further criticism of this assumptionarises from the disproportional representation of high cast Hindus and religious minorities among the strategic elite. As Stephen P. Cohen writes: "...the aura of crisis and danger that surrounds nuclear weapons demands a powerful political center as well as a correspondingly powerful administrative mechanism to guard them and decide upon their use. This is very appealing to once-powerful regional elites, and the bomb lobby has a disproportionate number of high-caste Hindus, members of religious minorities, and others who have been dispossessed from regional politics by the emergence of mass politics. The bomb lobby is dominated by Indians with a common understanding of the importance of maintaining the political primacy of New Delhi" (Cohen, Stephen P.: Why did India 'Go Nuclear'?. In: Thomas, Raju G. C. / Amit Gupta (eds.): India's Nuclear Security. Boulder: LynneRienner 2000; p.26.)

[93] Cohen, Stephen P.: op.cit.. 2000; p. 17.

disarmament. The dynamics that shape public opinion and create this alleged national consensus on the nuclear issue are rarely analysed in depth.

Generally, explanations focusing on domestic dynamics determining a state's international action point to the crucial role of domestic pressure groups—military services, the military industries and the civilian scientists involved in the research and development of arms—on a state's security decision-making process. Institutionalist explanations stress the emergence of military structures and institutions that develop an interest of their own, thereby making security policy shifts towards reconciliation and cooperation in the international arena more difficult. In contrast to this, electoral politics as a determinant of state behaviour tends to make decision making on security issues much more volatile and unpredictable. Another set of internal explanations of state behaviour, based upon psychological theories, focuses on misperceptions and risk-taking by decision-makers in which cognitive errors make leaders favour confrontation over expected-utility calculations.

The crucial feature of India's nuclear decision making is the democratic framework in which it functions. In no other country has the nuclear policy been so openly, intensely, and emotionally debated across the broader public than in India. These circumstances raise questions about the general relationship between democracy and strategic policy decisions. One approach to this question is laid down in the Democratic Peace Theory, which is based on the general assumption that the governmental form of liberal democracy leads to a more peaceful international behaviour. The essence of this assumption is clear and simple: democracies do not fight democracies. The causes of war, as well as the arming behaviour of a state, are thereby derived from internal dynamics, i.e. the state's form of government. In the case of the South Asian nuclear confrontation, the focus is laid on the interaction of a democratic state (India) with its authoritarian counterpart (either Pakistan[94] or China). The empirical evidence about defensive / offensive state behaviour in this interaction is much less clear than it is between two democracies. Some historical evidence even suggests that democracies are tempted to fight non-democratic states in order to impose democratic structures on them by force and improve their own security. This liberal interventionism by democratic states might be further fuelled by claims of moral superiority and the perceived righteousness / legitimacy of aggressive action. The assumption made by proliferation pessimists, that military-dominated regimes are more likely to engage in excessive nuclear build-up and develop offensive nuclear postures than civilian led governments, lacks empirical evidence in the case of South Asia.

The present study refers to the problem of public opinion as outlined by Hans Morgenthau (see section 2.1.3.2.). For obvious reasons, policy makers in democracies tend to be much more sensitive to the dynamics of public opinion than their counterparts in authoritarian regimes. The appreciation of the effects of public opinion dynamics on India's nuclear decision making oscillates between two poles: many among India's opinion leaders claim that the public exerts a positive influence by keeping the government's strategic policy

[94] nuclear decision-making in Pakistan has been in the hands of the military even in the period of democratic rule.

making in check. As their argument goes, this tempering effect accounts for the very long period of abeyance between India's first nuclear test in 1974, and its nuclear breakthrough and self-declaration as nuclear weapon state in 1998. Others point to the negative effect of India's public sentiments on the government's strategic decision making. In their view, the nuclear breakthrough in 1998 was caused by partisan and electoral considerations of the ruling BJP–led coalition.

While the effect of public opinion – whether tempering or inciting – on India's nuclear course is unclear at this stage, an unambiguous assumption can be made about its positive effect on India's policy of prestige. India's public opinion on the nuclear issue reacted to the inequalities of the existing nuclear order by reasoning "in the simple moralistic and legalistic terms of absolute good and absolute evil"[95]. Based on this assumption, the following working hypothesis can be added to the above:

- The conditions under which the Indian government tried to obtain public support strongly favoured the pursuit of a policy of prestige.

In other words, the fact that India's approach to nuclear weapons was less driven by security considerations and more by considerations of prestige and international standing was caused, to a certain extent, by the strong impact of emotionalised public opinion on the Indian government's strategic decision making process.

The impact of public opinion on strategic decision making is indirect and, as Morgenthau pointed out, not a one-way route. Within the Indian context, the interplay between government decisions and public opinion dynamics are affected by a set of particular conditions.

First of all, strategic decisions were often made by India's Prime Minister in a personalised, ad hoc way, detached from clear institutional procedures as well as systematic input from experts.

Secondly, India's polity is generally inward looking, and foreign policy issues (with the exception of Indo-Pakistani antagonism) receive little attention. Due to this phenomenon, public opinion on issues of foreign policy, above all the on the nuclear issue, proved to be highly volatile and affective.

Thirdly, the organizational position-holders among India's policy making elite traditionally adopted a passive position on the nuclear issue, usually protracting decisions until external pressures necessitated a particular course.

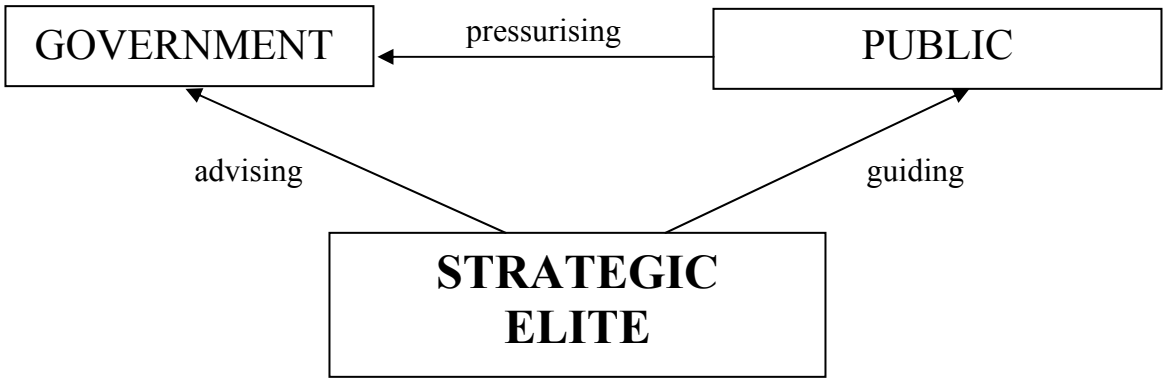
These three basic conditions – lack of institutions, volatility of public opinion, passivity of decision-makers – created a space for the country's strategic elite to set the parameters for India's strategic course. Such strategic thinkers are identified as the key group that managed to monopolise the debate on the nuclear issue as part of the larger security discourse in India. This process of monopolising security policy is thereby not an idiosyncratic one, but follows a general pattern of discourse dynamics:

[95] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p. 161.

> Security becomes a performative act, through which an influential group acquires the monopoly of security discourse. These approaches therefore focus on who is speaking on security and how they acquired the right to do so... . It is certainly interesting to discover who creates the security object and how it is created, but we cannot ignore the fact that these actors must explain these threats and that their reaction to the threats must be justified to their political community... . (T)hose who acquire the monopoly are perceived as legitimate spokespeople able to identify the threat. It is not their capacity to identify the threat that has enabled them to hoist themselves to the rank of spokepeople, but their authority. The threat is therefore invented and the process is pure manipulation... . (I)nternational relations also take place within a domestic public sphere, where explanations are necessary... . Therefore, it appears that though one must acknowledge the role played by elites in shaping the security agenda as well as the competition involved in this process, we must also accept that if this process is successful it is because the discourse echoes values that are important to certain groups in that society. Actors themselves think in terms of values and goods and these motivate their actions.[96]

The strategic elite, which is able to monopolise the security discourse, hold an element of power which, in a Habermasian definition, comprises both the 'communicative power', arising from the successful process of deliberation within the public sphere, as well as the 'administrative power', associated with the functions and institutions of the state[97]. Correspondingly, they were able to determine the government's policy in two ways: first, through directly advising India's policy makers, and secondly, by guiding public opinion and generating public pressures on the government.

Chart 3.3.: The Role of India's Strategic Elite



[96] Marcel, Valerie: The Constructivist Debate: Bringing Hermeneutics (Properly) In. Paper presented at the 2001 ISA conference, 21. February 2001; p. 11.
[97] see: Habermas, Jürgen: Between Facts and Norms: Contribution to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996.

Throughout the history of India's nuclear programme, the advisory role of strategic experts to the Prime Minister was based mainly on a personal relationship. In 1998, the BJP government started a process of institutionalising the government's access to strategic expertise by creating the National Advisory Board, to which several eminent members of the strategic elite became members.

Beyond this direct influence of the strategists on the government's decision-making, their most effective instrument of power marks their 'communicative power', i.e. their supremacy over public opinion—mainly exercised through intensive publishing in India's dailies.
Among these opinion leaders, three main groups are distinguished: the *military-strategists*, the *politico-strategists*, and the *scientific-strategists*.

3.4.2. The Military-strategists

Since Nehruvian times, India's military remained largely excluded from strategic decision making. The reason for this traditional exclusion was the civilian leadership's suspicion of political ambitions within the military leadership. Many among India's policy elite account the exclusion of the military for India's success in maintaining its democratic stability, a feat rare among post-colonial states. The rigor in which this taboo was guarded by the political class also had the negative effect of excluding the expertise of active military servicemen from the country's overall strategic decision making. This deficiency was particularly felt within India's nuclear policy decisions, which often lacked a clear understanding about deterrence postures and employment doctrines. This problem was of particular concern for many outside analysts:

> Worrisome however, is a tradition of near-total exclusion of the military from nuclear planning. Indeed, failure to institutionalize effective service participation in all aspects of the nuclear doctrine could ultimately place the deterrent credibility of the arsenal at serious risk.[98]

After the nuclear tests of 1998, the Indian government acknowledged this shortcoming, and in the course of the institutional reforms of 1999 it created the Strategic Policy Group, which included all three service chiefs. The main task of this body was to assist the National Security Council in developing strategic doctrines and deployment postures. Until the present day, however, India's military leadership has restrained itself from interference in policy making, avoiding for the most part even writing opinion articles or analyses in India's dailies.

[98] Gizewski, Peter: Indian Nuclear Doctrine: A Critical Assessment of the Proposal for a Minimum Nuclear Deterrent. The International Security Research and Outreach Programme, Government of Canada 1999; p.9.

The exclusion of active service members from the political arena has created space for a large community of retired military personnel entering the epistemic community. Several think tanks staffed by retired officers have emerged, most prominently among them the Delhi-based Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). General K. Sundarji (1928 – 1999), India's Chief of Army Staff from 1986 to 1988, was the single most influential individual within this section of India's strategic elite and significantly contributed to India's nuclear course throughout the crucial years of the 1990s.

Other than one might expect, the retired military officers generally took a more diffident stance on India's nuclear build-up than those experts with either political or scientific backgrounds. This relatively restrained position on the bomb had two major causes: the first cause was the fear that the funds allocated to the nuclear programme might cause a budget cut in the procurement of conventional weaponry. The second reason involved recognition of the limited strategic value of nuclear weapons with regard to Pakistan. This is associated with the military's lower estimation of the symbolic value of nuclear weapons in terms of the country's international status and prestige.

3.4.3. The Politico-strategists

The politico-strategist group within India's strategic elite is quite heterogeneous, comprised of journalists, political scientists, political activists, independent intellectuals, members of NGO's and various associations, and active and retired politicians and diplomats. As would be expected of such heterogeneousness, the opinions expressed by this group cover the entire political spectrum, ranging from dogmatic pacifism to militarist-imperialist ideologies.

Despite this diversity in opinion, two basic features are worth noting: first, more than the two other groups within the strategic elite, the politico-strategists' opinions reflected the *zeitgeist*. Politico-strategists tend to adapt their views to the government's official position. While Indira's decision to test in 1974 found widespread approval among political opinion leaders, the anti-nuclear stance of Morarji Desai was equally supported by the same group only a few years later. Similarly, I.K. Gujral's doctrine of regional reconciliation found as much support as the BJP's pro-bomb policy shortly thereafter. This phenomenon, which might be viewed as opportunism, is often justified by these strategists with the alleged need to create a national consensus behind the government's position for the common good of the country.

The second basic feature of this group's position is its shared understanding of India's inappropriately low international status. Even the anti-nuclear activists largely accept this view, disagreeing only about the appropriate means for improving India's status. Thus, it can be said that while India's dissatisfaction with its position within the international system was unanimously felt by all sections of India's political elite, the potential of nuclear weapons as an antidote—by increasing the country's international status via the national policy of prestige—was controversially debated.

3.4.4. The Scientific-strategists

Throughout the history of India's nuclear programme, the leaders of its nuclear establishment did not, as with many of their foreign counterparts, hide behind professional discretion and secrecy, but actively sought a place in the limelight. Most of the heads of India's Atomic Energy Commission, from Homi Bhabha to Abdul Kalam, were quite successful in attaining national hero status as well surrounding themselves with an aura of genius.
These motives account for the predilection the nuclear scientists acquired for displaying nuclear power, thereby often neglecting the most efficient measures military application development.

The outstanding position of nuclear scientists in India's society, and the consequences of this exhibitionist phenomenon for the course of India's nuclear programme, has two major implications for the further course of this study.
First of all, it proves Morgenthau's basic assumption about the policy of prestige being "as intrinsic an element of the relations between nations as the desire for prestige is of the relations between individuals"[99].

> Here again it becomes obvious that international and domestic politics are but different manifestations of one and the same social fact. In both spheres, the desire for social recognition is a potent dynamic force determining social relations and creating social institutions. The individual seeks confirmation, on the part of his fellows, of the evaluation he puts upon himself. It is only in the tribute others pay to his goodness, intelligence, and power that he becomes fully aware of, and can fully enjoy, what he deems to be his superior qualities.[100]

Secondly, it shows the interrelation between the quest for individual (national) reputation (prestige) as well as more critical interests, such as security (self-preservation):

> It is only through his reputation for excellence that he can gain the measure of security, wealth, and power he regards to be his due. Thus, in the struggle for existence and power – which is, as it were, the raw material of the social world – what others think about us is as important as what we actually are. The image in the mirror of our fellows' minds (that is, our prestige), rather than the original, of which the image in the mirror may be but the distorted reflection, determines what we are as members of society.[101]

[99] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p.84.
[100] ibid.
[101] ibid.

India's nuclear scientists were well aware that neither the rather marginal role of nuclear power production for India's development[102] , nor the controversial contribution of nuclear weapons to the country's security could, in themselves, justify the enormous budget allocations to the nuclear programme. As such, the projection of the symbolist meaning of nuclear technology, preferably through the display of power, was considered an intrinsic part of the scientists' work. In Morgenthau's terminology: The image of the nuclear programme in India's public was more important to the scientific community in their struggle for existence than its actual contribution to the country's development and security.

Since independence, when Homi Bhabha, the founder of India's nuclear programme, became one of Jawaharlal Nehru's key advisors, the nuclear establishment meaningfully contributed to India's strategic policy making. The scientists enjoyed enough public confidence not only to develop nuclear devices but also to contribute to the development of the corresponding nuclear military strategy as well as the broader nuclear policy of the country. This, again, is a unique feature of India's nuclear course.

Due to the nuclear scientific establishment's efforts to direct public opinion on the nuclear issue, its representatives continuously published opinion articles and analyses in India's dailies. This section of India's epistemic community, referred to as the scientific-strategists, generally proved to be the most uncompromising and determined proponents of India's nuclear build-up (compared to the two other sections of India's strategic elite). Unlike the politico-strategists, the scientific-strategist did not view the discriminatory international nuclear regime in reference to India's security needs, but as an unfair attempt to curb India's scientific genius.

3.5. Psychology and Strategic Policy Making

The socially constructed values allocated to the policy of prestige and status seeking play a dominant role in India's nuclear policy making. Status and prestige are thereby defined not in absolute but in relative terms. The essence of the policy of prestige is to influence the impression other nations have from the power of one's own nation. Within the Indian discourse, the reputation inherent to nuclear weapons power was considered the most effective instrument to gain international prestige.

This approach raises three main questions: what made the nuclear issue so compelling for India's struggle for international recognition? Why were Western nations, and particularly the USA, the main addressees of India's policy of prestige? And finally, why were the negotiations with the international non-proliferation regimes the main platform for this struggle?

[102] In 2001, only 3,7% of India's total power production was generated by nuclear power plants. (source: IAEA Country Nuclear Power Profiles: India. 2004).

In order to tackle these questions, a supplemental concept to prestige and status needs to be introduced: the role of perceived equity in international relations. Similar to prestige and status, equity is a socially constructed concept. In the normative context of India's post-colonial, multi-ethnic society, the idea of equity is reflected in the omnipresent sense of being discriminated by neo-colonialist powers in an unjust world system. Along these perceived emotions, the nuclear non-proliferation regime epitomised the unjust world system, and the USA epitomised the neo-colonialist powers dominating it. The power of these emotions proved to be the decisive cognitive bias determining India's nuclear policy making.

The central academic appreciation of this cognitive bias within the framework of the Realist Theory of International Relations was introduced by Robert Jervis[103]. Jervis stated that

> it is often impossible to explain crucial decisions and policies without reference to the decision makers' beliefs about the world and their images of others. That is to say, these cognitions are part of the proximate cause of the relevant behaviour and other levels of analysis cannot immediately tell us what they will be. And even if we found that people in the same situation... behave in the same way, it is useful to examine decision-making if there are constant differences between the decision-makers' perception and reality.[104]

The dominating role of the equity norm in India's perception of the international system, particularly on the global nuclear order, further created several attendant, strongly interrelated psychological effects on the way India interacted with other states. Among these, five major effects are outlined, following Robert Jervis' explanatory model:

Source-message interaction
A negative attitude towards specific countries caused India to perceive their respective policies with similar bias. For instance, when American foreign policy, which had been largely disinterested in South Asian affairs during much of the first four decades of India's independence, proclaimed the South Asian region as one of its foci under President Clinton's administration in the early to mid-1990s, India's perception did not alter immediately. Both America's ignorance as well as its involvement were perceived as acts of neo-colonialism. The negative attitude towards America's involvement (in the early and mid-1990s) was caused less by its substance, but by the simple fact that it was American.

Cognitive-affective balance
A further feature is the tendency to perceive 'the West' as one bloc lead by America, thereby failing to detect deviations that do not fit into this pattern. This is true particularly

[103] Jervis, Robert: Perception and Misperception in International Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1976.
[104] ibid.; pp. 28, 29.

with regard to the vast majority of Western countries, which neither own nuclear weapons nor attribute values of prestige and status to them.

Perceptual defence
The negative affective judgement of Western, or American, actions and intentions by India's elite has proved to be remarkably persistent over time. Psychologically, this phenomenon is explained by the persistence of stereotyped images. Actors do not easily adapt their stereotyped perception to reality but, on the contrary, tend to adjust real facts to their perceptions. "Our stereotyped world is not necessarily the world we should like it to be. It is simply the kind of world we expect it to be"[105]. The persistency of pre-existing beliefs largely detached India's nuclear policy making from short-term policy changes by outside powers.

Irrational cognitive consistency
Once the mainstream discourse on nuclear weapons within India's polity shifted towards affirmation in the mid-1990s, the value of these weapons was attributed to several, logically unrelated issues. In other words, those favouring nuclear weapons for reasons of status seeking also acknowledged their deterrence value against China and Pakistan, not to mention their benefit for civilian applications. Balanced positions, in which some values are affirmed while others are rejected, are the exception. This phenomenon is referred to by Jervis as 'irrational cognitive consistency':

> [P]eople who favour a policy usually believe that it is supported by many logically independent reasons. When a person believes that a policy contributes to one value, he is likely to believe that it also contributes to several other values, even though there is no reason why the world should be constructed in such a neat and helpful manner.[106]

Cognitive dissonance
The nuclear weapons issue was debated in India longer and more intensely than in any other nuclear weapons state. Once the consensus in favour of the bomb was reached in the 1990s, this affirmative position was defended more vigorously, and defectors were more categorically denied than one might expect considering the decade long period of doubt and uncertainty. The shrill and uncompromising call for the bomb in the 1990s was an act of reassuring oneself about the consistency of one's decision. Jervis refers to this phenomenon as 'cognitive dissonance':

> The central contribution of the theory of cognitive dissonance is the argument that people seek to justify their own behaviour – to reassure themselves that they have made the best possible use of all the information they had or should have had, to believe that they have not used their resources foolishly, to see that their actions are commendable and consistent... In constructing defensible postures to support their

[105] Walter Lipman cited in Jervis, Robert: op.cit.; p. 372.
[106] Jervis, Robert: op.cit.; p. 128.

> self-images, people must often rearrange their perceptions, evaluations, and opinions. To see that their decisions were correct may involve increasing the value they place on what they have achieved and devaluing what they sacrificed. By spreading apart the earlier alternatives and heavily weighting sunk costs, inertia and incrementalism are encouraged. Each step in the process of developing a policy adds psychological pressures to take further steps.[107]

The uncompromising stand for the bomb and the repudiation of any doubts was frequently backed by the argument that India had already invested too many financial resources and resisted too many international pressures to step back from the threshold and not go nuclear.

Underweighting the probability of failure
The perception of equity was further dominant in the psychological phenomenon of underweighting the probability of failure[108], i.e. assessing the risks of nuclear escalation as minimal or non-existent. The nuclear confrontation in South Asia, as the underlying logic goes, is as stable as the Cold War nuclear deterrence situation. This logic allowed India's nuclear apologists to reject critical nuclear risk assessments as acts of orientalism.

3.6. Related Explanatory Concepts to India's Rise as a Nuclear Power

3.6.1. India as an Emerging Power

In recent years, a number of studies in this field describe India's new politically and militarily self-confident international action by referring to it as emerging power[109]. Thereby, the general understanding of the concept 'emerging power' is closely related to that of the 'dissatisfied power' used in this study. The distinction between these two approaches lies within the direction of its explanatory aim: while studies on emerging powers focus more on the status a respective state tries to achieve, the 'dissatisfied power' approach focuses on the hitherto suboptimal status which the respective state wishes to surmount. In practical terms, the approaches represent two sides of the same coin. A further distinguishing characteristic is the divergence in the underlying methodologies, as the appreciation of the 'emerging powers' phenomenon remains mostly descriptive.

According to Stephen P. Cohen, the way in which the rank of a particular state within the international system is determined shows some similarities to the distinction between the reputation and substance of power:

---

[107] Jervis, Robert: op.cit.; p. 406.
[108] This phenomenon is subject to prospect theoretic approaches. If the likelihood of failure is small, decision makers tend to neglect their probability all together.
[109] most prominently among these publications: Cohen, Stephen P.: India: Emerging Power. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press 2001.See also: Mitra, Subrata K.: Emerging Major Powers and the International System: Significance of the Indian View. In: Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics, #9, October 2002.

> There are at least three ways to determine India's position in the hierarchy of states. One is to examine the present judgements of other states, as well as of Indians, in order to assess India's reputation as a great power. A second is to look at India's material strengths and weaknesses. Third, one can attempt a 'class' analysis, to determine its rank among other states.[110]

Cohen's definition of 'reputational power' as a determinant of the international hierarchy remains vague: "For the past several decades, India has had a weak or at least highly variable reputation, as judged by the ability to influence without attempting to exercise influence. Such influence flows naturally and silently; it is what Joseph S. Nye Jr. has termed 'soft power'."[111] Similar to the model of the present study, Cohen points out the role nuclear devices played in India's quest for international status and prestige as well as its interrelation with the country's security:

> The 1998 tests increased India's prestige and status, thus indirectly improving its net security. India will always be seen as a 'nuclear weapons state', an accomplishment more politically significant than technically impressive. How long the reputational spin-off from the nuclear tests will last is hard to tell, but if the Indian government can avoid any crisis that demonstrates how weak and superficial its nuclear capabilities really are, and if it can use its nuclear status as a way of leveraging a seat on various arms control fora, then the decision will prove to have been a correct one from the perspective of helping to elevate India to the rank of major power.[112]

This explanation of the motives and goals behind India's nuclear course remains unsatisfactory. First of all, Cohen suggests that the increase in prestige and status through nuclear weapons automatically causes an increase in the country's security without offering any coherent explanation about the causal link between these two aspects.

Furthermore, Cohen's claim that the leveraging of seats on arms control fora was one major motive of India's nuclear build-up is not convincing. The idea that India's considerable efforts to build the bomb had been motivated by its desire to become a member of those fora that discuss the abolition of these weapons appears far-fetched even if, as Cohen suggests, the membership in such fora is a prerequisite for the country to elevate to the ranks of the major powers.

In sum, Stephen Cohen's account of India as an emerging power gives many historic insights into this oft discussed phenomenon. However, he fails to overcome the general weakness inherent to most accounts on this phenomenon: he considers the quest for increased status within the international order as an intrinsic part of state behaviour, thereby

[110] Cohen, Stephen P.: op.cit.; p. 25.
[111] ibid.; p. 25.
[112] ibid.; p.304.

failing to give a more analytic and profound assessment of the motives and dynamics behind the state's status seeking.

3.6.2. The Concept of India's Strategic Culture

Similarly to the balance-of-interests approach applied in the present study, the concept of strategic culture aims at linking balance-of-power theory with unit-level explanations of domestic politics and foreign policy formulation[113]. In his study on India's strategic culture, Rajesh M. Basrur restricts the definition of strategic culture to "a specific congruence of factors: historical context, technological capability, the availability of economic resources and, above all, ethical norms relating to nuclear weapons"[114] The weakness of Basrur's model is the attempt to integrate unit-level variations of strategic culture into the structural realist approach, which posits that the structure of the international system—in which states act as security-maximisers—determines the acquisition of a state's power and level of security. Basrur attempts to solve this contradiction by claiming that "in Neorealism, structure only induces broad outcomes, leaving room for variation in specific choices within a range of possibilities. Thus, while structure impels states toward maintaining armed forces for security, it does not dictate specific choices about the quantity and quality of forces"[115] This explanation, however, undermines the structural nature of neorealist theory.

Strategic culture, as an intermediate variable between the structure of the international system and the unit-level conditions, determines a state's preference for certain foreign policy options:

> Viewed as a set of structured preferences, strategic culture at one level entails fundamental understandings about the nature of the strategic environment, the role of force in that environment, perceptions of threat and the framing of responses. At another level, it involves preferences relating to the organization of those responses in terms of the quality and quantity of military forces considered necessary in order to meet national objectives.[116]

According to Basrur, strategic culture is composed by the level of perception, the operational level, and the structural frame. The first level deals mainly with a state's perception of its relations towards its neighbours and the role nuclear weapons should play. The operational level deals with a state's preferences about how nuclear weapons realize their assigned goals with regards to size, deployment and technical characteristics. The structural frame consists of a state's response to deterioration in its strategic environment,

---

[113] for a debate on this concept, see: Tanham, George: India's Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay. Santa Monica: RAND Publication 1991; and Bajpai, Kanti / Amitabh Mattoo (eds.): Securing India: Strategic Thought and Practice. New Delhi: Manohar 1996.
[114] Basrur, Rajesh M.: Nuclear Weapons and Indian Strategic Culture. In: Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 38, No.2, March 2001; p. 183.
[115] ibid.; pp. 184, 185.
[116] ibid.; p. 181.

its tolerance of ambiguity, and its disposition toward formal and informal negotiation preferences.

In sum, the concept ‘strategic culture,’ acting as an intermediate variable between structure and agency, provides the analytic frame to explain some of the particularities of India’s nuclear course. However, its major weakness is its all-embracing definition, which leads to somewhat fuzzy, arbitrary outcomes.

4. Methodological Aspects

4.1. The Unit of Analysis

According to the model, a limited group of opinion leaders referred to as India's strategic elite, decisively determined India's nuclear course. These strategic elite acted as intermediary between the political office-holders on one side and the interested public on the other side. The most significant means by which the strategic elite exercises its influence on both the public and the government is through extensive publishing in India's print media, primarily in English-written daily and weekly newspapers and journals.

India's news and press media has traditionally shown a remarkable degree of autonomy from governmental influence throughout its more than one century-long history. The major English-language newspapers, in particular, maintained their independence from governmental influence through backing by large non-governmental business companies. In post-independence India, the only structural factor challenging this autonomy was the major newspapers' strong dependency upon government advertising, which allowed the government to exercise some form of indirect control over the newspapers' content. This dependency decreased sharply in the course of the liberalisation process initiated in 1991. India's constitution guarantees a high measure of freedom for the press. Since independence, these legal norms were suspended only during the Emergency from 1975 to 1977.

The total circulation of newspapers in India amounts to 142 million copies per day.[117] Among these, a relative majority of 61 million copies are published in Hindi, followed by 26 million English-language copies. Altogether, India's newspapers are published in as many as 101 languages.[118] While the indigenous language newspapers generally have a rather local or regional outlook, the English-written newspapers focus on national and international issues. Additionally, the English-language press has a widespread appeal among India's upper and middle class, and its readership is mainly concentrated in the country's metropolitan areas.

The readership profile of the English-language press largely coincides with those sections among India's public in which the discourse on India's nuclear build-up is largely taking place. This fact explains why the strategic elite choose these newspapers as their preferred fora to express their views on the subject. In this context, the exclusion of indigenous

[117] 2002/03 figures. Source: Registrar of Newspapers in India: "The 47th Press in India Report". New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2004.
[118] ibid.

language newspapers from the present study appears justified, and the exclusive focus upon English-language newspapers does not invalidate the findings.

The sample is limited to articles from India's four major English language daily newspapers: *The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, The Hindu*, and *The Indian Express*. For reasons of fairness and balance, the sample is further supplemented by articles from the smaller newspaper, *The Statesman*.

Among the best-selling English language newspapers worldwide, *The Times of India* ranks fourth, selling around 2.1 million copies per day: a figure topped only by three British tabloids.[119] India's second largest English language newspaper, ranking 6th worldwide, is *The Hindustan Times* with 1.8 million copies, followed by *The Hindu* with 0.8 million copies and *The Indian Express* with approximately 0.6 million copies.[120] The circulation of *The Statesman* is comparably low at 180,000 copies[121] per day.

The five newspapers represent India's four major metropolitan areas with *The Times of India* and *The Hindustan Times* based in Delhi, *The Indian Express* based in Mumbai, *The Hindu* originating from Chennai, and finally *The Statesman* as Bengal's largest English written daily with its base in Kolkata.

For the collection of the articles, the following guidelines apply:

- The data collection has been limited to those articles in which the author expresses and evaluates a clear string of arguments concerning the acquisition or maintenance of nuclear weapons by India. Simple reports on events in the nuclear field are excluded.
- The articles were generally taken from the following rubrics: 'Front Page,' 'International' or 'World,' 'Opinion,' 'Editorials,' 'Analysis,' 'Column,' and 'Perspective.' Exceptionally, interviews and book reviews are included only if the interviewer / reviewer expresses his own view on the topic.
- Only those articles are included which have a primary focus on a nuclear related topic. This limitation is of particular relevance with regard to Indo-Pakistani relations. The extensive number of articles addressing the Kashmir issue in general without focusing on its nuclear dimension is excluded from this study.

The random sample of articles includes 705 entries which allows for a rudimentary quantitative analysis (as it is done in Chapter 5) and the testing of hypotheses on some major trends within opinion within the elite on India's nuclear course. Beyond these quantitative methods, the main analysis is done by applying the method of interpretive content analysis.

[119] Figures for 2002 from the Wikipedia Encyclopedia (http://en.wikipedia.org)
[120] Figures for 2002. Sources: Wikipedia Encyclopedia: op.cit., and Registrar of Newspapers in India (http://rni.nic.in/pii2002.html)
[121] Figures for 2002. Source: The Statesman (http://thestatesman.org)

4.2. The Period of Analysis

Strategic analysts applying conventional concepts to explain the course of India's nuclear build-up usually consider the early 1960s as the decisive time when the dynamics of India's quest for the bomb were initiated. Along this view, the 1962 war with China and the first Chinese nuclear test in 1964 were the two key events determining India's path towards nuclearisation. In retrospect, this approach lacks empirical evidence, as neither the development of its nuclear infrastructure, which was already set up before these events, nor India's determination to go nuclear appear to have been particularly pushed forward in the immediate aftermath of these events. Rather, the nuclear question remained (politically, less technologically) unanswered for at least the two decades to come.

Alternatively, the present study focuses on the crucial years in which India made its irreversible decision to go openly nuclear. As the study will show, this decision was only seemingly made in May 1998 after the nuclear testing. More likely, the events of 1998 were the final act of a decision making process which had commenced at least a decade earlier. The period of analysis of this study comprising these crucial years of India's nuclear programme begins with the presumed completion of India's first crude nuclear device in 1986, which coincided with the initiation of an intense debate among India's strategists about the security implications of nuclear weapons in the wake of the Brasstacks Crisis. The end of the period of analysis is mid-2003, five years after the nuclear tests. Thus, the period of analysis lasts seventeen years from mid-1986 to mid-2003. It is split into three intervals of five years each and an interval of two years comprising the decisive time between the conclusion of the CTBT in mid-1996 to the nuclear tests in mid-1998. The analysis is further complemented by a detailed description of the pre-1986 developments, as well as an outlook on the post-2003 period.

Table 4.1.: Phases of India's Nuclear Development

Sequence	Time	Interval	Status
pre-1986 Sequence	until mid-1986		infrastructure: since about 1964 capability: no nuclear status: no
I. Sequence	mid-1986 – mid-1991	5 years	infrastructure: yes capability: presumptively nuclear status: no
II. Sequence	mid-1991 – mid-1996	5 years	infrastructure: yes capability: yes nuclear status: no
III. Sequence	mid-1996 – 10.5.1998	2 years	infrastructure: yes capability: yes nuclear status: no
IV. Sequence	11.5.1998 – mid-2003	5 years	infrastructure: yes capability: yes nuclear status: yes
post-2003 Sequence	since mid-2003		infrastructure: yes capability: yes nuclear status: yes

It appears paradoxical that the period considered crucial for India's nuclear weapons programme starts only after India presumptively assembled its first nuclear device, which, according to common sense, appears more like its final act. This temporal delimitation is nevertheless justified due to the fact that the nuclear status was defined by India's policy makers not in technical but in political terms.

Pre-1986 Sequence

Before 1986, India's nuclear scientists advanced the programme to develop the atomic bomb incrementally without the backing of any clear or explicit political decisions. The policy makers adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude, which was euphemistically called the concept of 'keeping the nuclear option open,' thereby obscuring the fact that a true concept was actually non-existent. Within this study, the early period of India's nuclear programme (see Chapter 6) is addressed in detail only to the extent necessary to understand the post-1986 dynamics.

Newspaper articles during the earliest period of India's nuclear programme in the 1950s and early 1960s mainly address the civilian part of the programme. Even after the Chinese nuclear tests of 1964, opinion articles and editorials on the nuclear weapon question were rare. Press coverage of the debate on military aspects of nuclear technology intensified only in the late-1960s in the wake of the NPT negotiations. Still far from common in India's dailies in the 1990s, the nuclear weapons issue was sporadically addressed after the completion of the NPT in 1968, as it was in the aftermath of India's first nuclear tests of 1974 and following rumours regarding Pakistani progress with their nuclear programme expansion in the early 1980s.

I. Sequence

The beginning of the first sequence is timed to the year 1986, when India was considered to have passed the nuclear rubicon by assembling its first crude nuclear device. This instance, however, remained largely unnoticed by India's public. Instead, it was the emergence of the Brasstacks Crisis in 1986 and 1987 which for the first time ever triggered a broader debate among India's elite on the strategic impact of the nuclearisation process in the region. In the course of the crisis, the shift in the bilateral strategic relationship caused by the introduction of nuclear weapons entered the debate and formed part of the rhetoric interaction between both states. Nuclear deterrence was no longer an abstract construct of strategic theorists but an imperative factor in the bilateral interaction. Mutual threat of nuclear retaliation then entered strategic planning. The strategic debate was further fuelled by the deterioration of Indo-Pakistani relations during the Kashmir Crisis of 1990.

II. Sequence

The second sequence comprises the government of Narashima Rao (1991 – 1996). The widespread process of economic reforms and liberalisation initiated by the Rao government in 1991 coincided with the end of the Cold War. Both developments changed India's international relations fundamentally. However, different from what many expected, neither the market orientation of India's economy and India's integration into the world economy, nor the end of the superpowers' nuclear arms race formed an axiomatic disaffirmation of

the nuclear option by the Rao government. The tight scrutiny of government spending introduced by Rao only marginally slowed down the nuclear programme, and the arsenal was further developed towards operational readiness during his time in office.
Evidence indicates that Rao did in fact authorise preparations for nuclear tests as the ultimate manifestation of India's nuclear achievements and was stopped only by the downfall of his government in 1996. The implication of India's nuclearisation for its security, which had been central to the nuclear debate during the 1986-1991 phase, increasingly moved to the background. Instead, the negotiations on the indefinite extension of the NPT, completed in 1995, and the debate on the CTBT, concluded in 1996, became the dominant features of India's nuclear debate, particularly since 1993. The year 1996 marked the high peak of the nuclear debate with almost daily newspaper commentary lamenting India's discrimination by the international nuclear order.

III. Sequence
At the beginning of the third and most eventful phase in mid-1996, two events coincided which turned out to be of major importance for India's nuclear course. First, the BJP took over India's government in mid-1996 but failed to form a coalition and stepped down after only 13 days in office. While this brief period proved to be too short for the BJP to make major decisions on the nuclear front, the advocacy for a powerful nuclearised India in the course of its campaign for the 1996 Lok Sabha elections had a major impact on India's self-image on the international scene.
The election campaign coincided with a heated international debate on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which was largely perceived by India's elite as a discriminatory and humiliating attempt by the nuclear powers to subdue India. As it is argued in the course of this study, the fundamental decision to go openly nuclear was made in 1996. The reason for the two-year delay until India's actual self-declaration as a nuclear weapon state in mid-1998 involved both the governmental instability of this period and the successor United Front government's decision to postpone nuclear testing.
Inder Kumar Gujral, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1996 to 1997, and Prime Minister himself from 1997 to 1998, soon elaborated new guidelines for India's foreign policy based on co-operation and unilateral confidence building measures which came to be known as the 'Gujral Doctrine.' Nuclear tests were postponed as they would have undermined the credibility of this new course in India's foreign policy. The general pro-bomb stance of the Indian government, however, remained intact, and the development of nuclear weapons progressed uninhibited. This period of equilibrium between the informal decision to go nuclear and its implementation ended with the downfall of the United Front government in 1998.

IV. Sequence
The beginning of the fourth sequence is marked by ostensibly the most striking event in the history of India's nuclear programme: the nuclear testing on May 11, 1998 and the Indian government's subsequent self-declaration as a nuclear weapon state. This break in India's nuclear course was preceded by the BJP's return to power a few days before. After the tests, the general outlook of the debate on the nuclear issue changed fundamentally. In its immediate aftermath, a hype of national pride and enthusiasm swept through the country.

Within a remarkably short range of time, the rhetoric of India's strategic elite shifted from a categorical rejection of the status quo of the international nuclear order to support. Prior to the tests, the dominant argument for India's elite to reject the nuclear order was based upon the perceived discrimination of the nuclear club which admitted some countries while closing the door for others. Now that India had broken down the door of this club and entered by force, the main objective of India's strategists was to fix the damaged door and close it behind India. Being a nuclear weapons power soon became the cornerstone of the country's self-perception and its increasingly self-confident actions within the international arena. In the words of one analyst, 'India had learned to live with the bomb.'[122]

4.3. Explanatory Variables

As the first step of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the 705 collected articles are classified according to the main issues addressed within the larger field of India's nuclear path. Eleven major issues are thereby identified which comprise the eleven explanatory variables for the combination of motives behind India's nuclear course.
These variables are:

1. Institutional Framework
Out of the total number of articles collected, 41 deal with the institutional framework in which nuclear policy making is taking place. Several of these critically assess India's decision making process, which was traditionally done in a rather personalised, non-institutionalised fashion by India's Prime Minister.

2. Science and Engineering / Nuclear R+D / Self-Reliance
39 of the collected articles are concerned with technical aspects of the nuclear programme, most of which were authored by members of the nuclear scientific community. These authors preferred to represent nuclear technology as the currency by which India could demonstrate its genius. This recurring theme played a central role in India's nuclear programme during its initial phase in the 1950s and 1960s and has continued to play a (although decreasing) role up to the present day.

3. Domestic Policy Arena
This variable comprises 138 articles on the inter- and intra- party nuclear discourse, Lok Sabha debates on the nuclear issue, the government's nuclear policy with regard to partisan and electoral politics, the moral attitude of the Prime Minister or other key political players towards the bomb, etc.

4. General and Regional Security Threats
Within 69 articles, India's overall strategic environment (excluding articles specifically addressing the threat from Pakistan or from China but including those articles addressing

[122] Rauf, Tariq: Learning to Live with the Bomb in South Asia: Accommodation not Confrontation. Online Publication. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Jan./Feb. 1999; pp. 14-16.

the Sino-Pakistani combined axis as a source of threat) is analysed. Generally, these assessments focus on a combination of strategic incentives to go nuclear, being either a Sino-Pakistani axis, a Sino-Pakistani-American axis, a nuclear threat by several Western states, or the display of any existing nuclear weapon state as potential threat to India's security.

5. India's Nuclear Doctrine
The fact that India's nuclear doctrine was developed largely in a post-hoc fashion is a uniquely Indian phenomenon. Similarly, most of the 39 press analyses commenting on possible doctrine designs reacted to prior nuclear developments instead of anticipating them. This phenomenon suggests that in India, unlike other nuclear weapon states, the nuclear arsenal was less developed according to doctrinal requirements but, on the contrary, that its doctrine was formulated according to the technical *faits accomplits*.

6. Threats from Pakistan
Herein, all 88 articles dealing with Indo-Pakistani nuclear relations are subsumed. Excluded are the articles addressing the Sino-Pakistani combined nuclear threat (see variable 4), as well as those articles dealing primarily with the Kashmir conflict.

7. Threats from China
As few as 16 articles fall into this category, despite mainstream strategic thought that it is mainly the Chinese nuclear threat which accounts for India's nuclear build-up.

8. India's Status
59 of the collected articles are concerned with nuclear weapons as elements to improve India's international status and prestige. These assessments largely ignore the security relevance of nuclear weapons and focus on the reputation of power, not its substance.

9. US American Non-Proliferation Initiatives
A substantive number of 76 analyses deal with India's relations to the United States. America is thereby viewed less as an immediate threat to India's security. Rather, its non-proliferation policy is seen as one of the main obstacles to India's rise to the ranks of a major power. Paradoxically, attempts by the United States to prevent India's nuclear build-up proved to be one of the major driving forces behind India's quest for the bomb.

10. NPT (Extension)
The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, signed in 1968, was perceived as the West's crucial legal instrument to maintain its international supremacy in the discriminatory nuclear world order. The negotiation process, in particular, and its indefinite extension in 1995 fuelled invocations in favour of a strong nuclearised India among its elite. Altogether, 74 articles on the NPT were collected.

11. CTBT
Immediately after the indefinite extension of the NPT, international negotiations on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty began, which concluded in mid-1996. This quick

succession of the Geneva negotiation rounds caused a persistent augmentation of nationalistic sentiments within the nuclear discourse in India, creating a deadlock of India's position on the international nuclear regimes. Consequently, India was on an irreversible path towards nuclearisation. The 66 articles collected on the CTBT were largely published in the time period from mid-1995 to mid-1997.

The set of 11 variables is divided into three main groups which are discussed in each of the three main parts of the present study (see table 4.2.). These comprise: a) the group of variables dealing with domestic factors, b) the group of variables dealing with factors related to India's regional security environment, and finally c) the group of variables dealing with the international nuclear order and India's status therein. Due to the interlinkage between the variables, a clear cut allocation into the three groups often becomes a difficult task.[123] These ambiguities prevent a deeper quantitative analysis of the data, suggesting instead a qualitative analysis on the basis of interpretive methods. However, they do not invalidate quantitative testing of general hypotheses concerning the relative frequency of certain arguments over time.

Table 4.2.: Regrouped Variables

GROUP	VARIABLES
1. Domestic Factors Chapter 7	1. Institutional Framework 2. Science and Engineering / Nuclear R+D / Self-Reliance 3. Domestic Policy Arena
2. Regional Security Chapters 8, 9, 10	4. General and Regional Security Threats 5. India's Nuclear Doctrine 6. Threats from Pakistan 7. Threats from China
3. The International Nuclear Order Chapters 11, 12, 13	8. India's Status 9. American Non-Proliferation Initiatives 10 NPT (Extension) 11 CTBT

These three groups of variables correspond to the three major sets of a state's international behaviour as outlined in the general model of this study (see Figure 2.3). While domestic

[123] For instance, placing those arguments concerning the indigenous development of nuclear weapons as an important step towards India's self-reliance into the group of domestic factors (variable 2) appears problematic, as the issue of self-reliance is directly linked to the issue of self-perception and status perception, which comprises variable 8.

factors determining India's nuclear course are unit-level motives *per se* for or against the acquisition of the bomb, the two other factors represent the two major structural incentives.

The security related factors emerging from India's regional security structure represent those factors which conventionally dominate Neorealist explanatory models. These are supplemented by the third group of explanatory variables, which emerge from the peculiarities of the international nuclear order. Although interrelated, they are not congruent with security aspects. As the qualitative content analysis of this array of variables will show, assessments dealing with the international nuclear order, particularly the existing international nonproliferation regimes, frequently ignore the security aspects altogether and deal instead with aspects of national pride and prestige. Therefore, as it is argued, the variables of the third group drove India's nuclear course more towards the pursuit of reputation of power as a means to increase its international status while the security related factors were seminal for India's increase in the substance of power.

4.4. The Synthesis of Quantitative and Interpretive Methods

The methodology applied in this study combines quantitative measures and interpretive methods. Both methods aim at analysing the sample of collected opinion articles.
Conducting elite interviews was originally part of the planned research design but was dropped after several pre-test interviews failed to produce any utilisable results. The reason for the impracticality of the interview is the delicacy of the issue addressed. This prevented the interviewees from directly expressing their attitudes towards the bomb, particularly with regard to those intangible aspects behind the value and meaning of nuclear weapons (sentiments of national pride, feelings of discrimination, or anti-colonialism) on which the study focuses. The textual distinction between ostensible statements and hidden agendas proved to be impracticable.

Similarly, quantitative methods of content analysis based on word counting failed to bear any useful results. To illustrate the problem behind word counting techniques, the pre-test on the relevance of the China factor on India's nuclear decision making is summarised here.

On the basis of the sample set of articles, the relevance of China in India's nuclear calculus is measured by correlating the frequency of the terms 'China,' 'Chinese,' and 'Beijing' with the frequency of key words like 'threat,' 'threatening,' etc. The result showed a significantly higher correlation in articles immediately before and after the nuclear tests in May 1998, suggesting that the Chinese threat really mattered. A closer look at the articles' content, however, revealed that a large majority of opinion leaders welcomed as a major achievement China's discomposure with being labelled by India as the main cause for its nuclear build-up. India's strategic elite was gratified that India finally received the appropriate attention from China after many years of perceived (and humiliating) ignorance. This is hardly consistent with security considerations. Quantitative methods of

content analysis fail to identify such nuances. Instead, qualitative methods based on interpretative techniques of content analysis form the methodological backbone of this study. Basic quantitative methods, including frequency counts, are applied only to generate some basic trends in India's nuclear discourse over time.

4.4.1. Methods of Quantitative Analysis

Within the quantitative analysis of the randomly collected sample of 705 nuclear-related articles, three different measures are introduced that are aimed at: a) measuring the general attitude of the author towards the bomb (attitude scale), b) measuring the variance of the general outlook of the nuclear debate over time (time series analysis), and c) measuring the degree to which the debate within India's elite was polarised, or, reversely expressed, the degree to which a consensus existed among India's elite on the nuclear issue (polarisation index).

The Attitude Scale
A property, defined as a qualitative characteristic of the object, is attributed to each of the 705 entries. The property, designated as the attitude score, has three different possible values. Value 1 is attributed to the property of those articles in which the author expresses his or her unambiguous opinion in favour of the bomb. Value 0 is attributed to the property of those articles in which the author takes either a neutral opinion on India's nuclearisation or the expressed opinion is not applicable to the dichotomous anti-/pro-bomb scheme. Value -1 is attributed to the property of those articles in which the author expresses his or her unambiguous objection to India's nuclear build-up.
The attitude scale is defined as the mean of the values attributed to the property of a sample of articles. The samples of articles are defined as variable-wise, group-wise, or sequence-wise, or, as a combination of all three, as figure for the total sample of articles collected.
The attitude scale (AS) is defined as:

$$AS = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{Xi}{n}$$

where
n = number of unit in the sample
X_i = attitude score from each sample unit

The range of possible values for the attitude scale is between the minimum of -1 (a consensus among the authors against India acquiring / maintaining the bomb) and the maximum of +1 (a consensus among the authors in favour of India acquiring / maintaining the bomb). The value of 0 marks the equilibrium of indetermination among the authors' aggregated attitude.[124]

[124] The value of 0 does not imply a neutral attitude, as the attitude scale only measures the mean aggregate attitude, not the polarisation within the compound of attitudes.

The Time Series Analysis
The time series analysis aims at measuring the arrangement of a series of observations (for example, the number of articles observed) of a variable (or group of variables) in the sequence of their occurrence at successive points of time (as defined in section 4.2). Measurements are made at irregular time intervals t_i (with $1 \leq i \leq 4$).
The main objective of the time series analysis is to illustrate the change of the outlook of India's nuclear debate over time.

The Polarisation Index
The polarisation index is defined as the standard deviation of the attitude score ($-1 \leq X \leq +1$) of the sample. It aims at providing an indication of the average amount by which the scores deviate from the mean (termed as the attitude scale) of the distribution.[125]

The polarisation index (PI) is defined as:

$$PI_x = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (Xi - \overline{X})^2}{n-1}}$$

where
n = number of units in the sample
X_i = attitude score from each sample unit
$\overline{X}$ = sample attitude scale

The range of possible values for the polarisation index is between the minimum of 0 (a consensus among the authors exists) [126] and the maximum of +1 (the number of authors is equally divided between bomb advocates and bomb opponents, the discourse is entirely polarised).

4.4.2. Positivist Epistemology and Interpretive Methods

The study's central object of investigation is the discourse on nuclear weapons among India's strategic elite during the central years of India's nuclear build-up. Quantitative methods, as introduced above, are able to provide some general indications on the nature of the debate as well as some general trends about the changes of the debate over time. These quantitative methods nevertheless fail to highlight the nuances within India's nuclear debate, particularly during its peak in the mid-1990s. At this time, security considerations were pushed to the background and other, less tangible motives dominated the debate, such

[125] It is important to note that the polarisation index indicates the average deviation from the attitude scale within a sample, and not the average deviation from neutrality. Given the hypothetic case of a wide consensus among the sample in favour of the bomb, each neutral unit increases the polarisation index.
[126] It is irrelevant whether this consensus is in favour or against the bomb, or whether it exists on the authors' consistently neutral position.

as excessive bouts of national pride, bashed national self-esteem, and banal emotions like conceitedness and defiance.

The dynamics of the nuclear debate in the Indian context along intangible, emotional arguments inevitably raise the question about the distinction between the natural and the socially constructed reality in which some facts exist because the political actors attribute a certain meaning to them. Within this rather complex compound of motives, political action, particularly the interaction with other states, becomes meaningful and comprehensible only in relation to its underlying normative intuitions.

In light of the difficulties to detect these normative intuitions by quantitative methods, the introduction of qualitative methods to this study appears necessary. While the correlations derived from quantitative analysis allow for a certain degree of generalisation, it is the qualitative approach which gives meaning to these correlations and contributes to the understanding of the political processes and phenomena. The term 'understanding' is thereby defined in a hermeneutic sense. It implies the interpretation of the actors' motives and the meaning of their action. The correct interpretation of political action, according to Max Weber, requires the identification of its process and its underlying motive, as well as the historic context in which it is placed. The interpretation of typified action, political action which follows a certain typology, further implies the need to identify its suitability in terms of the meaning attributed ('*Sinnadäquanz*'), and its causal suitability ('*kausale Adäquanz*').[127] Interpretation alone does not suffice to identify the meaning of action but merely allows for the construction of hypotheses. Its scientific validity can only be achieved through hypothesis testing, its confirmation through empiric data.

This approach moves beyond the positivist epistemology of conventional approaches and includes elements of hermeneutic epistemology:

> A hermeneutic constructivism will focus on the actor's perception of this normative and material environment and will evaluate the ensuing political action within this context. As such, hermeneutics offers an interpretative approach similar to post-modernism. It does not, however, conceive of an agent's behavior as determined by his normative structures, nor does it conceive this behavior as determined by material factors, as would have positivist approaches. A hermeneutic constructivism is therefore a thick-but-not-too-thick constructivism. It offers a nuanced view of the relations between agent and structures and leads us to a contextual analysis of political behaviour.[128]

[127] "Eine richtige kausale Deutung eines konkreten Handelns bedeutet: daß der äußere Ablauf und das Motiv zutreffend und zugleich in ihrem Zusammenhang sinnhaft verständlich erkannt sind. Eine richtige kausale Deutung typischen Handelns (verständlicher Handlungstypus) bedeutet: daß der als typisch behauptete Hergang sowohl (in irgendeinem Grade) sinnadäquat erscheint wie (in irgendeinem Grade) als kausal adäquat festgestellt werden kann" (Weber, Max: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre. Edited by Johannes Winckelmann. Tübingen: UTB 1967; p. 512.

[128] Marcel, Valerie: op.cit.

The focus on 'understanding' rather than 'explaining' within hermeneutic epistemology appears adequate considering the centrality of cognitive aspects of the identified motives, beyond material aspects like security seeking, within the explanatory model of the present study. The meaning of such aspects for political action can only be understood within the normative context in which the subject is placed.

This normative context determines the elite's interpretation of events and political action on which their definition of national interests is based. According to Marcel,

> when decision-makers define the national interests they wish to promote, they offer an interpretation that will be judged by their society and the international community. This interpretation will be subject to a (formal or informal) debate from which new norms may emerge. And, in reaction to new international events, this first interpretation may be challenged by another that will attempt to recast the national interests in a different light. As such, we see that interpretations can be subject to small changes as well as upheavals.[129]

Within this feedback process, norms are not independent variables to the model but change themselves. Nothing illustrates the changing nature of norms better than the normative approach to nuclear weapons within the Indian discourse over the past decades.

The method applied in this study to describe the nuclear discourse in India draws on the identification of specific features of the debate within a certain time sequence. In a second step, a limited set of showcase press articles containing elite analyses on these features are identified, analysed, and interpreted.
By applying hermeneutic – or interpretive – techniques, the author is fully aware of how the study implies subjectivity, the significance of the context of time and space in which the author himself is placed, including his own convictions and beliefs, for the outcome of the analysis.[130] The author's interpretation is itself part of the above feedback process between international events and their normative interpretation, blurring the conventional differentiations between actor and observer, object and subject, or objectivity and subjectivity. Lifting the clear-cut boundaries of these spheres causes a weakening of the overall explanatory power of the model. This loss of explanatory power is compensated by gains in the power to 'understand' the actors' motives within their historic and normative context along the Gadamerian epistemological tradition. The introduction of elements of interpretivism is done as a methodological necessity that does not at all exclude positivist, hard empirical methods but rather supplements them, just as the Weberian *Wertrationalität* does not exclude the *Zweckrationalität* but is rather implicated therein.[131] By applying this

[129] Marcel, Valerie: op.cit.
[130] Hans-Georg Gadamer referred to this phenomenon as 'merger of horizons' ('Horizontverschmelzung'). (Gadamer, Hans-Georg: Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1960).
[131] for an overview of this debate, see: Gerring, John: "A Normative Turn in Political Science?". online publication, June 14th 2004, to appear in: Lebow, Richard Ned / Mark Lichbach (eds.): "Theory and Evidence"; forthcoming.

combined epistemological approach based on textual exegesis,[132] the author deliberately brings in his own normative beliefs and his interpretation includes his own normative conclusions.[133]

[132] The textual exegesis, despite its limitation to a small number of units (the strategic elite), allows for the design of general hypotheses on existing norms and motives in the Indian polity (see Chapter 3.4.). Further empirical determination of the number, interrelation and hierarchy of the individuals involved is therefore beyond the scope of this study. Methods allowing for this determination, such as decisional methods, positional methods, or the reputational approach do not cope adequately with the underlying norms and the meanings of the motives behind the decisions made, and are therefore inappropriate for the main research objective of this study.

[133] For the distinction between self-interpretation and second-order interpretation (referred to as double hermeneutics), see: Guzzini, Stefano: "A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations". In: European Journal of International Relations, Vol. 6 (2), 2000; p. 162.

5. Elite Perception and India's Nuclear Course: Tracking Empirical Evidence

5.1. India's Elite: Between Diversity of Opinion and Bomb Lobbying

As expressed within India's daily newspapers during the period of analysis, India's strategic elite was generally in favoured acquiring the bomb. Using a value scale for the attitudes expressed in the sample of 705 articles, the 0.45 value delineates a clearly positive value. Furthermore, the respective values for each of the eleven variables are also positive without exception. As presented in Table 5.1., the degree to which the strategic elite favour India's nuclearisation significantly differs, depending on the main issue addressed in their respective analyses.

Table 5.1.: Attitude towards the bomb (issue-wise)
(scale: from – 1 (anti bomb) to + 1 (pro bomb))

Rank	Variable	Value
1.	Threats from China	0.81
2.	India's Nuclear Doctrine	0.69
3.	India's Status	0.69
4.	US American Non-Proliferation Initiatives	0.64
	av. International Nuclear Order	**0.63**
5.	NPT (Extension)	0.62
6.	CTBT	0.59
	total average	**0.45**
7.	General and Regional Security Threats	0.42
	av. Regional Security	**0.42**
8.	Science and Engineering / Nuclear R+D / Self-Reliance	0.36
9.	Institutional Framework	0.32
	av. Domestic Factors	**0.27**
10.	Threats from Pakistan	0.25
11.	Domestic Policy Arena	0.22

Experts addressing the Chinese nuclear threat most unanimously favour the nuclear option with the attitude scale showing the value of 0.81. In other words, a general consensus exists among India's strategic experts that nuclear weapons are of some value for India in deterring its nuclear armed northern neighbour. The articles concerning India's nuclear doctrine formulation ranked second highest with an attitude scale of 0.69. This outcome is

not surprising, as opponents of India's nuclearisation usually do not concern themselves with doctrine formulation.

While the strategists clearly regard India's own nuclear capabilities as necessary to counter the Chinese nuclear arsenal, they show much less enthusiasm for the nuclear bomb with regards to more general aspects of India's regional strategic environment at an attitude scale of 0.42. Even less support is given when relating to specific threats to India's security posed by Pakistan, as displayed by the attitude scale of 0.25. This outcome is very consistent with the experts' understanding of the strategic value of nuclear weapons for India vis-à-vis China and its limited strategic value vis-à-vis Pakistan. Despite the strong pro-bomb attitude in the China related articles, the overall attitude scale value for the group of security related variables[134] at 0.42 is still below the average attitude scale for the total sample of articles.

As compared to the group of security-related variables, those variables dealing with the international nuclear order show a much stronger pro-bomb tendency with an attitude scale of 0.63. The respective value for each of the four variables comprising this group[135] is well above the overall average of the total sample. Among the four variables comprising the group, articles focusing on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty ('CTBT' variable) show a comparably modest inclination towards India's nuclearisation. The value of 0.59 clouds the strong effect that the CTBT debate during the years 1995 to 1997 had on India's final decision to go nuclear. The reason for this modest value is the fundamental shift in India's stance on the CTBT in late 1993. The positive position of the Indian government on the tentative CTBT prior to this shift generated several articles on the issue making the case against India's nuclearisation. However, the dismissive position of the Indian government on the CTBT after 1993 caused the strategic elite to equally oppose the treaty and consequentially favour India's nuclearisation instead.

The failure to capture the several shifts in India's nuclear policy clearly shows the limited explanatory power of the attitude scale, as well as the need to further introduce methods of time series analysis (as it is done in section 5.2.).

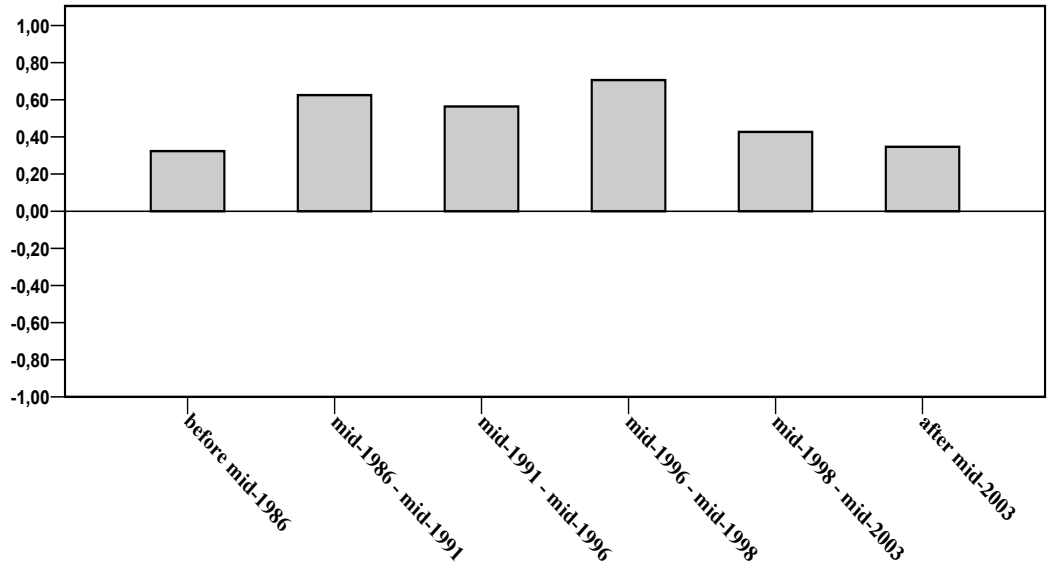
Finally, the group of domestic factors reflects an overall modest pro-bomb attitude. The respective attitude scale value for each of the three variables comprising this group[136] is below the total average. Thus, the analyses dealing with domestic policy issues show the lowest approval rate for India's nuclear build-up among all eleven variables.

Throughout the period of analysis, a majority of analyses on the nuclear issue published in India's daily newspapers reflected a rather pro-bomb attitude, reflecting a positive value in the attitude scale. Changes of the attitude scale do nevertheless reveal significant variances

[134] Comprising the four variables: 'General and Regional Security Threats,' 'India's Nuclear Doctrine,' 'Threats from Pakistan,' and 'Threats from China.'
[135] 'India's Status,' 'US American Non-Proliferation Initiatives,' 'NPT (Extension),' and 'CTBT.'
[136] 'Institutional Framework,' Science and Technology / R+D / Self-Reliance,' Domestic Policy Arena.'

over time. As presented in Chart 5.1., the pro-bomb attitude among India's opinion leaders was particularly high over the two-year period from the conclusion of the CTBT in mid-1996 to the nuclear tests in May 1998. After the tests, this large scale consensus in favour of the bomb decreases significantly.

Chart 5.1.: Attitude Scale Time Series Comparison



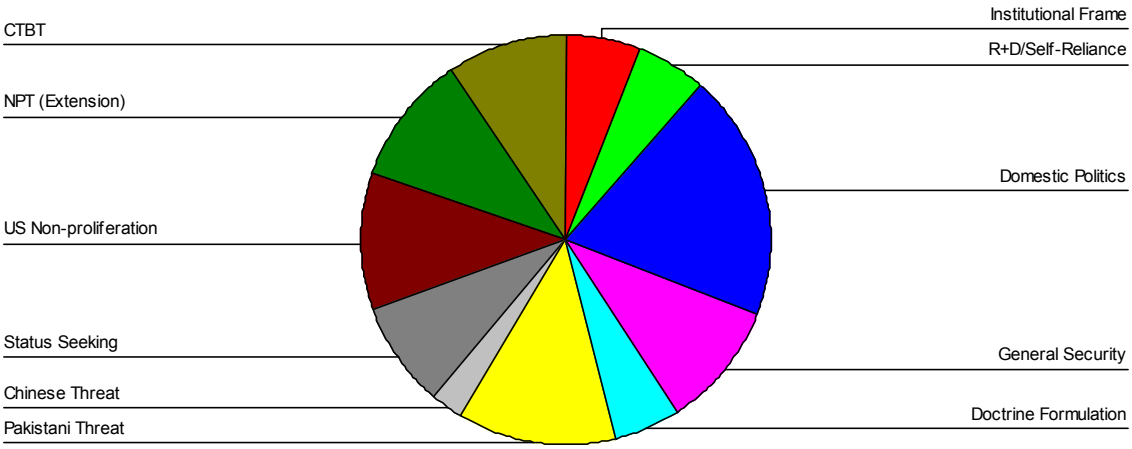
In the following section, the time series analysis is further refined by looking at the variance in the frequency of the specific issues addressed throughout the four sequences of the relevant time period.

5.2. The Crucial Years: Changing Attitudes on the Bomb

5.2.1. Debating Nuclear Issues: Some General Trends

The analyses concerned with the Chinese nuclear threat are the most resolute in supporting India's nuclear build-up. Considering the widely accepted understanding among strategic scholars that India's nuclear capabilities are aimed at deterring the Chinese nuclear arsenal, this result appears to offer confirmation. A look on the variable-wise breakdown of the total sample of articles (see Chart 5.2.), however, reveals a much more puzzling picture.

Chart 5.2.: Issue-wise Nuclear Reporting (N=705)



The articles dealing with China comprise only 2.27% of all nuclear related articles collected. While the analyses on China reflect a largely pro-bomb attitude, the China factor plays only a marginal role in the general debate on the nuclear issue within the Indian context. This dilemma raises the following question: if, as most strategists claim, India's nuclear build-up is mainly motivated by the Chinese nuclear threat, why is this issue largely ignored in the Indian nuclear debate?

A relative majority of around one-fifth of all articles analysed in this study (19.57%) deals with the domestic policy arena, in particular the role of nuclear weapons in India's political party competition. Additionally, six variables comprise about one-tenth of the total number of articles each: threats from Pakistan (12.48%), American non-proliferation incentives (10.78%), the NPT debate (10.50%), general and regional security threats (9.79%), the CTBT debate (9.36%), and India's international status (8.37%). Three rather technical issues comprise around 5% each: institutional framework (5.82%), science/R+D/self-reliance (5.53%), and India's nuclear doctrine (5.53%).

Overall, the group of variables dealing with the international nuclear order comprise 39.0%,[137] while the security related variables and the variables related to domestic factors comprise 30.1% and 30.6% respectively.
In the following sections, an issue-wise distribution of nuclear reporting is made for each of the four time segments within the period of analysis.

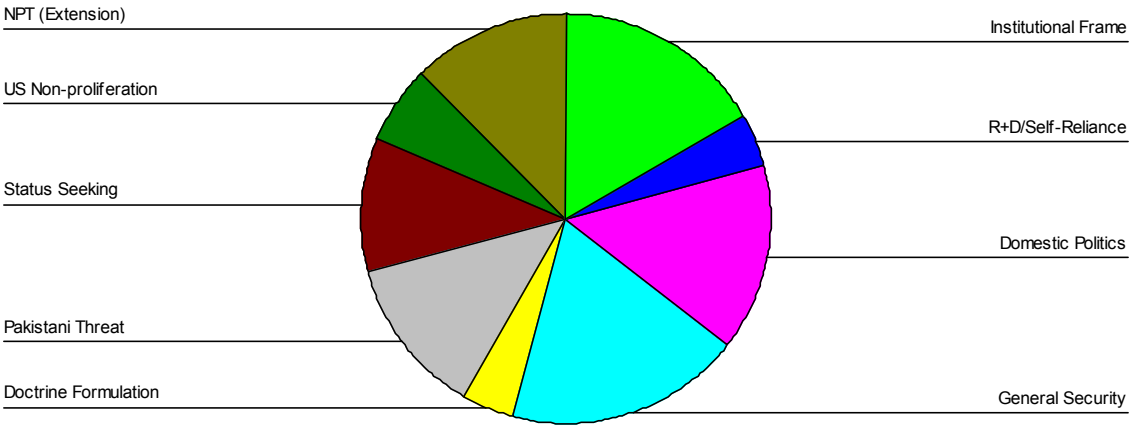
[137] Among those articles in which a clear pro-bomb attitude is expressed, the overall share of this group is even higher (45.1%), as compared to the group of domestic factors (25.7%), and the security related group (29.1%).

5.2.2. Phase I: The Strategic Debate

In the course of the Brasstacks crisis of 1986 and 1987, newspaper analyses on India's nuclear developments generally shifted from the normative, abstract debate of the early years towards addressing more tangible aspects of nuclear weapons. Deterrence and nuclear strategy were no longer issues only addressed by a small group of specialists, but were thrust into the larger public debate. The single most frequently addressed issue in the time segment from mid-1986 to mid-1991 was India's security, thus addressing implications of the introduction of nuclear weapons for India's strategic environment in general (18.75%) and for the antagonistic relationship to Pakistan in particular (12.50%). Further, domestic factors such as the adjustment of India's strategic decision making structure (16.67%) and the attitude shift on the bomb among India's policy making elite (14.58%) were frequently analysed by India's opinion leaders.

Remarkably, not a single recorded article addressed the Chinese nuclear threat exclusively. In India's nuclear debate between the years 1986 and 1991, China was displayed only as a nuclear supplier to Pakistan, not as an independent international actor in its own right.

Chart 5.3.: Issue-wise Nuclear Reporting (mid-1986 – mid-1991) (n=48)



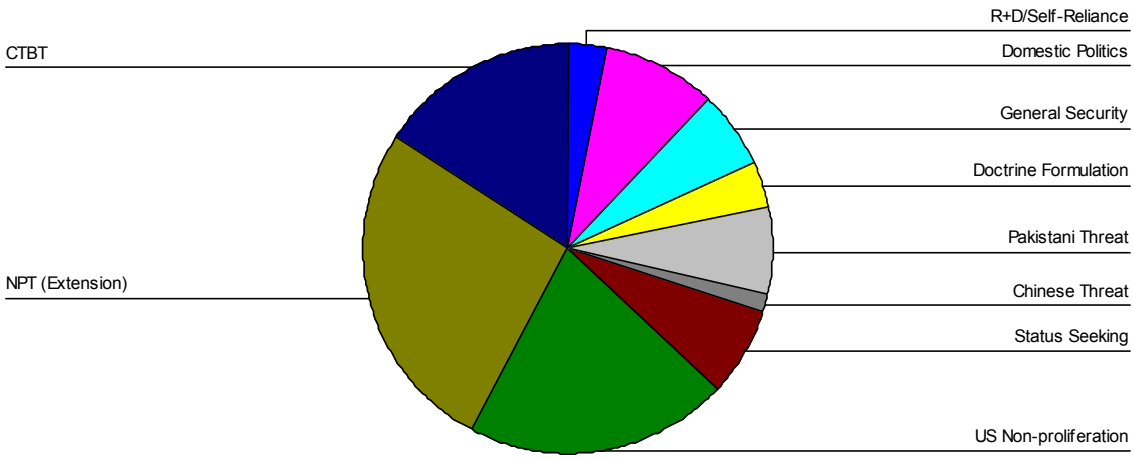
As compared to the other three time segments, the nuclear debate during the five years from the emergence of the Brasstacks Crisis to the re-emergence of the Congress rule in mid-1991 was the most balanced, least heated, and most diverse in terms of the range of issues addressed.

5.2.3. Phase II: The Non-proliferation Debate

In the early 1990s, the nuclear debate in India changed fundamentally. While security related issues as well as domestic issues dominated the debate in the previous time segment, these two sets of issues lost much of their relevance as soon as the Kashmir crisis of 1990 was over. In the time segment from 1991 to 1996, these two sets comprise only 18.05% and 12.03% of all articles, respectively. Instead, issues related to international attempts to prevent nuclear proliferation began to dominate the debate (69.92%).

Most prominently among these was the excessive debate on the extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which was finalised in 1995, as well as the pressures applied by the US government upon India to sign the treaty and to abstain from developing a full-fledged nuclear arsenal. Both issues triggered a large amount of commentary in India's daily newspapers, accounting for 26.32% and 21.05% of all nuclear analyses during this period. These articles were often written in a highly emotionalised and polemic fashion, deploring Western attempts to keep nuclear weapons away from India and to impose a discriminatory regime to maintain its supremacy. In this period, the nonproliferation debate gained a momentum which proved to be unprecedented in other countries, and in which tangible security aspects of the treaty were largely replaced by emotional arguments related to aspects of dignity, national pride, anti-colonialism, and collective defiance. Within the logic of this debate, opposition to the international nonproliferation regime was largely accepted as the legitimate raison d'être for India's nuclear programme as a whole.

Chart 5.4.: Issue-wise Nuclear Reporting (mid-1991 – mid-1996) (n=133)



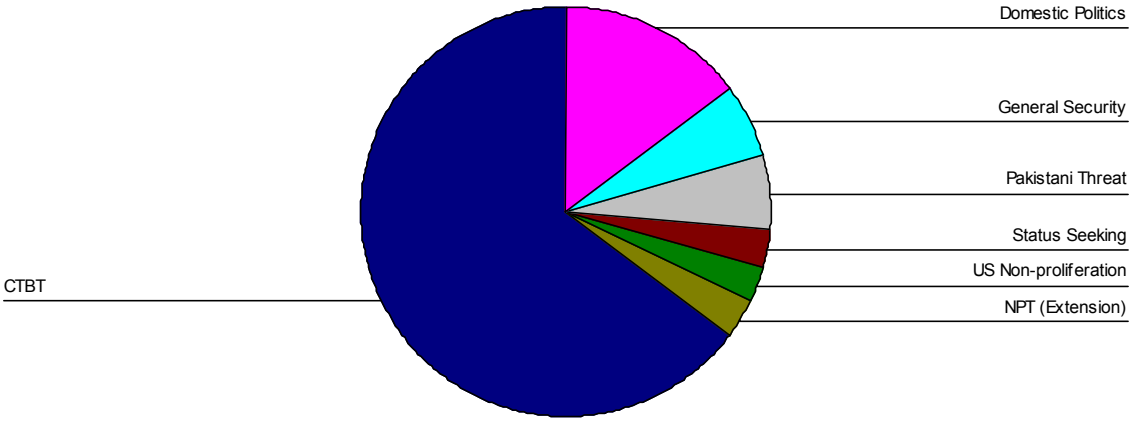
Subsequent to the indefinite extension of the NPT in mid-1995, the over-heated debate turned its attention to the negotiation process of the CTBT that followed immediately after the NPT negotiations and was finalised in mid-1996. Articles on the CTBT comprise 15.79% of all nuclear related articles during the second time period.

5.2.4. Phase III: The Determined Debate

The downfall of the Narashima Rao government and the takeover by Atal Behari Vajpayee's BJP-led government as the successor to the Congress government in mid-1996 coincided with the final negotiations on the CTBT in Geneva. Thus, it is one of many ironic occurrences that just as India's only major party to unconditionally propagate India's nuclear build-up came to power for the first time, the intensity of the debate on the nuclear issue reached its peak. It is therefore not surprising that the two most frequently discussed issues in the period from mid-1996 to mid-1998 were India's stance on the recently concluded Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the fundamental attitude shift among India's policy makers with regard to nuclear weapons. What is surprising, though, is the extent to which the former issue dominated over the latter within the discourse. An overwhelming 64.71% of all nuclear related articles dealt with India's stance on the CTBT, while 14.71% were concerned with the domestic policy debate on India's new nuclear course. In other words, the heated debate on the CTBT overshadowed all other aspects of India's nuclear course.

Even the assumed paradigm shift in India's nuclear policy after the BJP's came to power, first in a brief thirteen-day period in mid-1996 and finally in early 1998, received comparably little attention, clearly being sidelined by the dynamics of the CTBT debate. This empirical evidence weakens the popular perception that it was mainly the paradigm shift on the nuclear issue after the BJP's emergence in the government and its subsequent self-declaration as a nuclear weapon state that accounts for India's nuclear testing in 1998. More plausible than the BJP argument are those explanations which view the developments in Geneva in 1995 (NPT extension) and 1996 (CTBT) as crucial for India's nuclear decisions in May 1998. According to this view, the governmental instability during the period between 1996 and 1998 accounts for the two year delay of the tests which would have otherwise been conducted in the immediate aftermath of the CTBT finalisation in summer 1996.

Chart 5.5.: Issue-wise Nuclear Reporting (mid-1996 – mid-1998) (n=34)



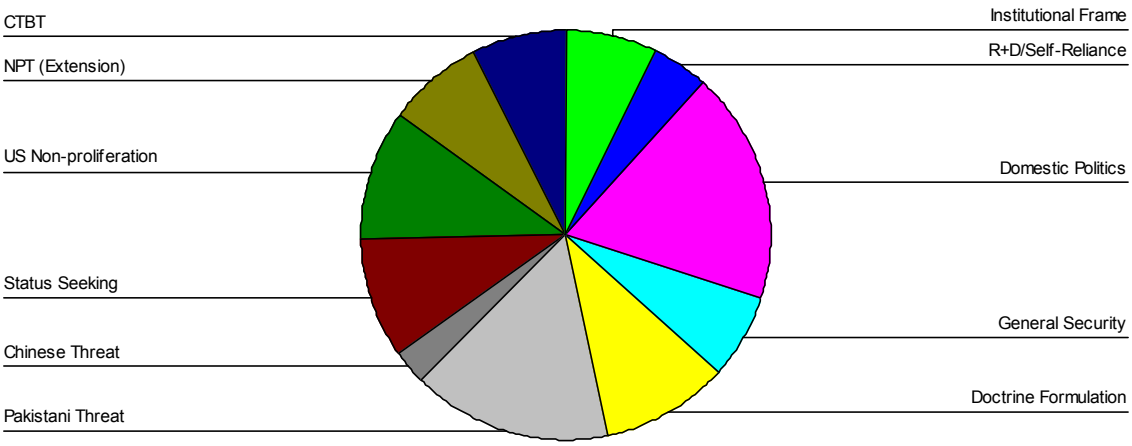
The evidence presented here suggests that the overall decision to go nuclear was made before the BJP's rise and was therefore not a decision specific to this party. Instead, it was rooted in a wider consensus among India's elite, its major parties, and most sections of Indian society at large. As shown in Chart 5.1., the attitude scale during the period from mid-1996 to mid-1998 had the highest value (0.71) of all four time sequences, supporting the above assumption about the early point of time in which the decision to go nuclear was made.

5.2.5. Phase IV: The Liberated Debate

After the nuclear tests, articles concerned with India's nuclear course again shifted to its pre-1991 outlook in terms of their relatively modest attitude as well as the diversity of issues addressed.
The share of the articles commenting on India's stance towards the CTBT dropped from 64.71% prior to the tests to only 7.62% after the tests.

The two most frequently addressed issues were – similarly to the pre-1991 period – aspects related to domestic politics (18.54%) as well as those articles addressing the Pakistani nuclear threat (15.89%). While in the previous two time segments articles addressing issues related to the international nuclear order comprised more than two thirds of the total articles, the share of this group shrinks to only 34.77% in the period from mid-1998 to mid-2003.

Chart 5.6.: Issue-wise Nuclear Reporting (mid-1998 – mid-2003) (n=302)



More remarkable than this drop in numbers was the change in the rhetoric applied within these articles. While prior to the tests the *leitmotif* was the blatantly unjust and discriminatory nuclear order, this theme more or less disappeared from the strategic elite's attention. Instead, India's opinion leaders shifted their influence from fierce rejection of the international order towards a cautious approval of it. In other words, by acquiring the bomb, India transitioned from a strongly dissatisfied power within the international nuclear order into a modest status quo power within a remarkably short range of time. The writing style changed in the same manner from emotionally overblown to a more prosaic style in the post-May 1998 period. This general trend in nuclear reporting was suspended only when Pakistan's president Pervez Musharraf played the nuclear card during the Indo-Pakistani tensions in Kashmir in 2001 and 2002, explicitly including the first-use option as a threatening device in the course of both countries' sabre-rattling rhetoric. This incident accounts for the relatively high number of articles addressing Pakistan's nuclear threat during this time segment.

5.3. Towards a "National Consensus"

India's opinion leaders frequently called for a national consensus on the nuclear issue, which was considered a prerequisite for India to pursue an effective and credible negotiating strategy on the international scene. Within this study, the polarisation index is introduced in an attempt to measure the degree to which this consensus existed. As defined in section 4.4.2., the polarisation index is the standard deviation of the attitude scores of a sample by the respective authors of the articles representing the units of the sample. They have been coded as follows: +1 for a clearly expressed opinion in favour of the bomb, 0 for

a neutral or inapplicable position, and -1 for a clearly expressed rejection of the nuclear option. The polarisation index is measured between 0 for a maximum consensus on the issue and +1 for a maximum heterogeneity among the opinions expressed.

The overall polarisation index (PI[138]) for the total sample of 705 articles shows a value of 0,82. This high value leads to the conclusion that a consensus among India's opinion leaders on the nuclear issue has never existed. However, no statement on the degree of polarisation within certain specific issues of the nuclear field can be made on the basis of the overall figure.[139]

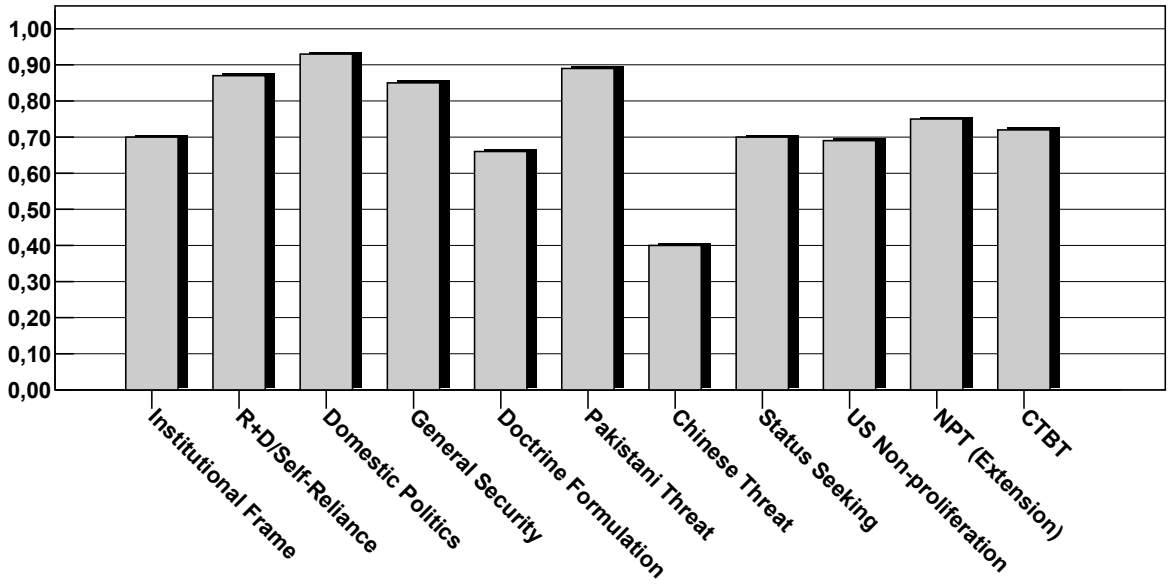
The comparison of the respective polarisation indices of the three groups of variables shows the expected outcome. The degree of polarisation is highest among the group of domestic variables (PI = 0,88), followed by the compound of security-related variables (PI = 0,84). Among the three groups, those articles dealing with the international nuclear order show the lowest PI (0,72). Thus, the consensus among the strategic elite was highest on issues related to the international nuclear order. This outcome is in line with the elite's ambition to maintain a controversial debate on domestic aspects of the nuclear issue, while at the same time trying to speak with one voice with regards to India's interaction with the international community, particularly those states leading the international nonproliferation discourse.

This picture is further corroborated in the comparison of the respective polarisation indices for each of the eleven variables (see Chart 5.7.). The PI for articles on India's domestic policy arena shows a remarkably high score of 0,93, indicating a polarised fragmenting of the authors into supporters of the government's nuclear policy and its opponents. The fact that the set of articles dealing with the nuclear threat by Pakistan ranks second with a polarisation index of 0,89 reflects the doubts on the strategic value of nuclear weapons for India with regard to the Pakistani threat. The group of opinion leaders considering nuclear weapons as inadequate to counter the Pakistani threat is thereby quite heterogeneous, ranging from peace activists who generally reject any form of armament, to military-strategic hardliners who favour a strong armament in conventional weaponry instead of nuclear weaponry.

[138] on the Polarisation Index (PI) see Chapter 4.4.1. and Appendix A.

[139] The polarisation scale is not an aggregate scale, and a high degree of polarisation of the total sample does not necessarily result from equally polarised sub-samples. A general consensus among each of the eleven variables might still produce a high degree of polarisation when collapsed into a total sample.

Chart 5.7.: Polarisation Index of 11 Variables



As expected, the sample of articles dealing with the Chinese nuclear threat shows the lowest polarisation index of 0,40. Therefore, throughout the period of analysis, a large scale consensus existed on the necessity of acquiring the bomb to counter the Chinese nuclear capabilities.

5.4. Findings of the Quantitative Analysis

The above quantitative analysis of the sample of 705 collected articles on the nuclear issue revealed some general trends within India's nuclear discourse. The major findings are summarised in the following set of statements:

- The group of articles dealing with the role nuclear weapons played in India's domestic policy arena forms the single largest among the eleven variables, indicating the inward-looking nature of India's nuclear debate. Additionally, articles on domestic aspects of the nuclear issue showed the highest degree of divergence of opinion among their authors, and, in their aggregation, the lowest degree of support for the acquisition of nuclear weapons.
- Analyses on the Chinese nuclear threat were generally the most affirmative for India's nuclear build-up. Furthermore, China-related articles showed the highest degree of consensus among their authors. Throughout the period of analysis, however, as few as sixteen out of 705 articles were primarily concerned with China, indicating the widespread disinterest of India's strategic elite in the so called 'China factor' and the marginal role it played in India's nuclear debate.
- The analysis of Pakistan-related articles gives a rather inconsistent picture. Within the extensive reports and comments on India's conflicting relations with Pakistan, a large majority of authors considered nuclear weapons to play only a secondary role therein (these articles are excluded from the study). Those articles focusing

primarily on the nuclear dimension of the Indo-Pakistani conflict are deeply divided in their assessment of the strategic benefits of nuclear weapons for India. The Pakistani threat figured prominently in India's nuclear debate during the Brasstacks Crisis of 1986 and 1987, during the Kashmir crisis of 1990, and during the tensions in Kashmir in 2001 and 2002, when President Musharraf asserted Pakistan's nuclear first use option. In the decisive years from 1991 to the tests in 1998, as well as in the aftermath of the tests during the years 1998 and 1999, threats from Pakistan played a rather minor role within the nuclear discourse.

- Extensive commentary on the international nuclear order, particularly on the NPT and the CTBT as the two pillars of this order, clearly dominated the nuclear debate during the crucial years of India's nuclear course in the mid-1990s. In the time segment from 1991 to 1996, these articles addressed three distinct but interrelated topics: the negotiations on the NPT extension, the CTBT negotiations, and American non-proliferation efforts. In the subsequent period from 1996 to 1998, the conclusion of CTBT negotiations, which were finalised in mid-1996, dominated as the single most addressed issue. These articles comprised two thirds of all articles while the NPT-debate as well as American non-proliferation policy lost most of their relevance.
- The United States was the second most addressed country behind Pakistan in connection with the nuclear issue, which was well ahead of China. America was thereby not viewed as an immediate threat to India's security but rather as the ringleader of those Western countries attempting to maintain their supremacy though the discriminatory international nuclear order.

In sum, the quantitative analysis has provided some indications about the general outlook of the discourse on nuclear weapons among India's strategic elite. Most importantly, it has given a clear picture of the main issues addressed within the broader nuclear field. Issues relating to the international nuclear order dominated the debate during the crucial years. These issues, which were particularly prevalent during the time of the Geneva negotiations on the NPT in summer 1995 and on the CTBT in summer 1996, were hardly debated in terms of their immediate implications for India's security. More accurately, they were concerned with the implications of nuclear weapons for India's international standing. The dominance of such issues in the nuclear debate during the crucial years suggests that nuclear weapons were generally perceived by India's opinion leaders as tools to increase India's reputation of power rather than the substance of power. This assumption is further supported by the fact that the China factor, which was seen by India's elite as the major security-related motive for India's nuclear build-up, played only a marginal role within the nuclear debate overall.

For a more detailed analysis of the dynamics behind India's nuclear course, however, quantitative methods appear insufficient. They fail to detect the often subliminal discourse on the rather intangible motives of national pride, prestige, and status seeking behind the ostensible issues addressed by the authors of the collected articles. For the purpose of assessing these motives, methods of interpretive content analysis are applied in the further course of the study.

6. The Origins of India's Nuclear Weapons Programme

6.1. Preconditions for India's Nuclear Development

6.1.1. Nuclear Weapons and the Nation-building Process

At the time of India's independence in 1947, the commercial use of nuclear energy was still no more than a dream of the future. Nuclear power for civilian purposes made its debut on the world stage (in the Soviet Union) only in 1954. Until then, the leading countries pursued the technology almost entirely with an eye towards its military applications. Within the relatively stable context of India's early post-colonial period it is puzzling that the Indian government showed such a great eagerness to devote huge amounts of its scarce financial resources to the development of nuclear technology. While its rapidly increasing demand for electric power provides a good explanation (bearing in mind that nuclear technology for electrical production was at this time still relatively unproven), we find the cart leading the horse in that as a general principal the development of nuclear technology for military purposes preceded (and in fact, drove) the development / adaptation of the technology for civilian purposes.

In the midst of the process of nation-building – in this case, the emergence from the paternal relationships of the colonial period into peer nation status – the great and ongoing enthusiasm of India's elite for nuclear technology makes sense. Part of the significance of having "mastered the atom" is as a national monument on the road from traditionalism to modernity, showing forth to all the world India's mastery of high science and its powers of self-determination.
As M. V. Ramana states:

> In the case of India, where the bulk of financial support for science came directly or indirectly from the state, it has been argued that science, through its association with 'freedom and enlightenment, power and progress' contributed in a major way to the Indian state's efforts at legitimizing itself.[140]

According to Stephen P. Cohen,

> the nuclear program is one in a series of important symbolic projects that the centre has undertaken to develop a sense of Indian nationhood and identity. The content of that nationhood is, when projected through the prism of the bomb, a scientifically adept, multicultural people capable of achieving great things with minimum

[140] Ramana, M. V.: La Trahsion des Clercs: Scientists and India's Nuclear Bomb. In: Ramana, M.V. / C. Rammanohar Reddy (eds.): Prisoners of the Nuclear Dream. New Delhi: Orient Longman 2003; p. 212.

> resources. Originally, the symbolic meanings were attached to the civilian nuclear program, and its leadership often boasted of the way in which Indian talent and innovativeness thrived under the adverse conditions brought about by Western economic sanctions and technology restraint regimes. Tamils, Telugus, Parsis, Punjabis, Bengalis, high-caste and low-caste, Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu all contributed to the effort. The underlying philosophy is that no single Indian state is capable of such a project and that only by working together can the diverse peoples of India accomplish such great deeds.[141]

In short, nuclear energy stood for the Nehruvian vision of India as a modern, developed and proud nation state. This close linkage between the vision of India and the symbolic meaning of high science is tellingly described in Itty Abraham's work 'The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State'[142]. Therein, Abraham describes nuclear technology as a modern fetish of the Nehruvian state:

> For the Indian citizen to become truly modern, s/he would need to internalise the norms of science, the so-called 'scientific temper' much beloved by Nehru, but this was obviously less amenable to state dictates. What the state could do was install massive, modern, awesome technological artefacts – dams, steel mills, new cities, nuclear reactors – objects embodying a different rationality, which would transform traditional landscapes through their sheer power; the hope was that the technological artefact would stand in relation to the people as a modern fetish[143].

And elsewhere,

> The postcolonial vision of India, summarised by Chatterjee[144] as the 'discourse of development', was crucially dependent for its articulation on the idea of science. The idea of science, epitome of and metaphor for the modern, was a recurrent theme in anti-colonial nationalist thought as well, especially as it grappled with the seemingly opposed categories of 'tradition' (the authentic present) and 'modernity' (the desired future) while seeking to remain 'Indian'.[145]

Typical for the teleological worldview among elites in post-colonial societies, Nehru's vision of a modern state implicitly accepted Western societies as being 'modern'. India's practice of secretly acquiring nuclear expertise from the West while publicly emphasising the indigenous development of high technology reflects the course of its modernisation: a process vacillating between emulation of and competition with the West.

---

[141] Cohen, Stephen P.: op.cit.. 2002; p. 16.
[142] Abraham, Itty: The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State. London: Zed Books 1999.
[143] ibid.; p. 20.
[144] Chatterjee, Partha: op.cit.. 1993.
[145] Abraham, Itty: op.cit.; p.26.

While clandestine scientific cooperation was indispensable, the official understanding of the nuclear issue as a national endeavour made it suitable as an ideal global playing field for inter-state competition. As such, nuclear technology symbolised the form of modernity to which India aspired. Nuclear development proved to be a compelling device for nation-building; India cast itself as a solitary state actor engaged in an international competition,

The dynamics of this inter-state competition set two basic parameters for the Indian nuclear programme: excessive secrecy and immanent urgency. Furthermore, the nature of the competition, in which India sparred with other (particularly Western) states for supremacy in the rather abstract field of high science, necessitated symbolic, emblematic forms to demonstrate technological achievements. India's first major opportunity to demonstrate its avant-garde position in the nuclear field was at the first UN Conference on Atomic Energy, which took place in Geneva in 1955. In a move to avoid a deadlock caused by Cold War rivalry, a majority of the delegations to the conference chose Homi Bhabha, the head of India's Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), as the potentially most neutral and least objectionable president. This nomination was enthusiastically welcomed by India's media. However, it was not celebrated for what it really was: a great success for Nehru's policy of non-alignment. Instead, it was widely perceived as world recognition of India's scientific advancement and growing importance as a modern, powerful member of the international community. This form of demonstration, which would eventually be ritualised through regular events praising and reassuring India's prowess, already showed some of its specific features in 1955: the scientific community's self-portrayal as the spearhead of India's transition to modernity, the uncritical and enthusiastic coverage of these events by India's media, and the bandwagoning of India's political elite in order to profit from the scientists' popularity. In the course of this competition, mastering the atom became an end in itself and nuclear technology developed along lines far removed from those originally intended; namely, as a tool to either improve India's development through the production of cheap power or to enhance the country's security through the manufacture of nuclear weapons.
In view of these dynamics, a clear-cut distinction between the civilian and the military nuclear programme was only relevant for outside governments, strategic analysts and IR specialists. For Indian decision-makers this distinction was of minor relevance, as both applications subserved indistinguishable goals.

6.1.2 Nehruvian Moralism

Nehru's moralist approach to foreign policy is summarised by Sreeram S. Chaulia as follows:

> All of Nehru's salient foreign policy tenets – non-alignment, Panchsheel, anti-colonialism, disarmament and One World – were premised upon two central Gandhian paradigms of *tolerance* and *means justifying ends*. Nehru reiterated in foreign policy pronouncements that India was 'essentially a gentle and peace-loving country' and hence incapable of aggressive power-political actions. Bloc rivalries and Cold Wars were inedible to the Indian psyche since they cultivated hatred and demonised one half of the world as sub-human and evil. India would crusade

> against arms races and nuclear proliferation as they were manifestations of a 'crisis of spirit' negating the dignity of human life and a 'strange way to ensure security by adding to every conceivable danger'. Instead of inaugurating a 'new civilisation' based on tolerance and international co-operation after two devastating wars, the Superpowers had betrayed the peoples of the world by continuing to deal in *realpolitik* terms.[146]

As further analysis will show, a certain gap existed between Nehru's sublime rhetoric and his actual policy decisions – above all those concerning the nuclear course of the country. Whatever practical meaning Nehruvian moral postulates might have had for the course of India's nuclear build up, they greatly influenced the discourse on the nuclear issue as well as the attitudes of the elite involved therein. The concept 'keeping the nuclear option open,' which dominated the nuclear discourse for more than three decades, was nothing more than a rhetorical attempt to overcome the contradiction between India's development of nuclear weapons capabilities and Nehruvian moralism. Another dominant feature of India's nuclear discourse, the perception of its 'victimisation' in international affairs, emanates from Nehruvian moralism as well. Up until the present day, a wide consensus exists among India's elite on the historiographic view: India was forced to build up nuclear weapons because of outside pressures — either from the cynical nuclear policies of the imperial West or from security threats by malicious and aggressive neighbours. Any proactive nuclear proliferation efforts by India itself are still largely denied within the Indian discourse — even after its self-declaration as a nuclear state in 1998 – as acknowledging an active Indian role in the nuclear competition would break the Nehruvian moral taboo.

The decisive impact of Nehru's moral postulates on India's foreign policy debate benefited from the fact that India's foreign and security policy has been predominantly determined by the Prime Minister. His or her moral beliefs and personal identity shaped the Indian nuclear policy more than informed strategic analysis.
Since the nuclear question emerged in the early 1950s, India's Prime Ministers were agonising over two contradicting ideas about India's role within the community of states:

> Two vital norms coexist uneasily within this identity: one, India should achieve major power status in the international system and, two, India should demonstrate moral superiority over the world's dominant states, which have been perceived as exploitative, overly militarised, and insensitive to the needs and aspirations of the world's majority of poor people. These two norms have clashed in the nuclear policy arena.[147]

The difficulty in accommodating both norms became apparent in Nehru's speeches in the early 1960s, in which he explicitly announced India's intention to capable of manufacturing nuclear weapons while simultaneously declaring that India would never build them. This

[146] Chaulia, Sreeram S.: BJP, India's Foreign Policy and the 'Realist Alternative' to the Nehruvian Tradition. In: International Politics, Vol. 39, June 2002; p 218.
[147] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p.448.

stance has often been misunderstood by Western listeners as hypocritical rhetoric. It was nevertheless Nehru's attempt to uphold his moral stance and, at the same time, find India's place in an international system that encouraged possession of (practically unusable) weapons for determining standing and power.

Although rhetorically Nehru maintained that India's nuclear infrastructure served purely civilian purposes, he maintained India's right to develop the nuclear weapons option, i.e. to construct the nuclear installations necessary to build a bomb. Until 1962, the anti-bomb rhetoric was most outspokenly applied by Nehru's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Krishna Menon. Stephen P. Cohen summarised Nehru's and Menon's attitudes on the issue as follows:

> Nehru was strongly opposed to an Indian nuclear weapons program, although he did not foreclose the possibility of the 'option' strategy. His closest confidant and adviser, V. K. Krishna Menon, was even more anti-bomb... . Nehru and Menon could keep Bhabha and the scientists in check by diverting their energy to the civilian (i.e. 'peaceful') program with a bit of fudging on the side.[148]

In the first fifteen years after Independence, Nehru's idealistic foreign policy put India into a well established and often admired position within the international community. Its commitment to non-alignment and morality (instead of power) set a rather narrow range for the course of India's nuclear programme. The civilian nuclear industry was the prototype of large-scale, state-run industrial sectors, which formed the backbone of Nehru's socialist economic strategy that aimed at transforming India into a modern and industrialised nation. The heavy investment in the nuclear sector by the Indian government and the *carte blanche* it gave to Homi Bhabha, the leader of the nuclear establishment, inevitably got Nehru into a tight spot concerning potential military applications of the new technology. Until 1962, the gravity of the established moral standards overshadowed all pro-bomb dynamics in India's national interest composition and kept its foreign policy on a strictly negative attitude towards the nuclear option. Any shift in this rigorous declaratory stance would have been perceived as a personal loss of face by Nehru.

6.1.3. Development and Security

Throughout the history of India's nuclear programme, the idea of equality among states as a characteristic of a just and fair world order proved to be one of its central driving forces. This idealistic motive was inherent in the social justice and equal opportunity embodied by India's civilian nuclear power production as well as in India's struggle against the discriminatory nuclear world order laid down in the NPT. The emergence of the principle of equality and its significance for the states' interaction with each other is described by Hans J. Morgenthau:

[148] Cohen, Stephen P.: op.cit.. 2002; p. 16.

> Throughout history, mankind has been divided by drastic differences in standards of living. What sets the present situation apart is the awareness of these differences by the advantaged and disadvantaged members of mankind owing to the modern technologies of communications. That awareness coincides with the ascendancy of the principle of equality, both of opportunity and condition, throughout the world. Hence the aspirations of the disadvantaged to a narrowing of the gap between rich and poor – and the moral embarrassment of the rich in the face of these aspirations. It goes without saying that these aspirations and the attendant moral embarrassment – both incapable of satisfaction or relief on a worldwide scale – are extensively used as ideological justifications and rationalizations for specific political aims in the service of concrete national interests.[149]

When the USA and the Soviet Union launched their respective nuclear programmes in the context of the ongoing Second World War, their prime objective was to develop an ultimate and decisive weapon. This centrality of military applications continued to play a crucial role throughout the emergence of the Cold War. The events at Hiroshima and Nagasaki had proven the effectiveness of these weapons, creating a myth of ultimate omnipotence. The technology's complexity and the fact that it was mastered only by a limited circle of advanced states further fuelled the aspirations of other powers to go for the bomb. Britain and France soon followed suit.

Starting with China, several Third World countries initiated their nuclear programmes not only for military purposes, but above all as a potential source of energy which would satisfy their growing power demands in the course of industrialisation. After Dwight D. Eisenhower launched the 'Atoms for Peace' initiative in 1953, promoting the civilian use of nuclear energy, several so-called second generation nuclear powers initiated their own civilian programmes. These either rejected any military potential or considered such it only as a by-product.

In the case of India, the nuclear programme is often referred to as a prime example of a second generation power's programme, in that producing large quantities of cheap energy for India's economic development remained paramount, and the nuclear weapons option was developed only later, on top of the existing civilian nuclear infrastructure. The latest publications considerably weaken this interpretation[150]. In this view, the potential for military applications has been an inherent part of the nuclear planning of India's scientific community right from the outset. India's nuclear installations were designed to suit both civilian and military purposes, and construction of facilities for manufacturing nuclear devices had already been started in the 1950s – well before the two incidents commonly referred to as the incentives for India's nuclear weapons programme: the Sino-Indian war of 1962 and the first Chinese nuclear test in 1964. Despite public denegation, the Indian leadership under Jawaharlal Nehru appeared to have approved, or at least tacitly tolerated this course.

---

[149] Morgenthau, Hans J.: op.cit.; p. 107.
[150] see: Abraham, Itty: op.cit.. 1998; and Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999.

For India's elite, and particularly for Jawaharlal Nehru himself, the nuclear issue was rarely assessed for its true potential to solve India's energy problem alone, nor was its potential to improve India's security given any careful thought. Rather, it was more regarded as a symbolic instrument to show India's progress towards modernity to domestic as well as foreign audiences. This attitude explains Nehru's relative disinterest in the technical details of the programme. He restricted his authority in the nuclear field to an easy-going supervision of its broader course, and largely abstained from interference. Only sporadically was India's leadership forced to drop its comfortable aloofness and make clear decisions about either pursuing the optimal development of atomic energy capacities or those with the option for military applicability – less optimal for civilian energy production. Jawaharlal Nehru always chose the second option. Thus, despite widespread belief, the initiation of India's nuclear weapons build-up was not a secondary effect of its civilian nuclear programme, but the expression of the elite, and therefore Jawaharlal Nehru's, political will. For instance, the AEC's decision to base its nuclear programme on both plutonium reprocessing and breeder technology at a time when the development of this technology was only in its beginnings – its success in producing nuclear energy was more than uncertain – could not be explained purely in terms of economic rationality. The only existing applications for plutonium in the 1950s were military in nature.

The Indian case illustrates the inadequacy of the common distinction between civilian and military applications when it comes to tracing the motives behind a state's decision to launch a nuclear programme. For Nehru, the nuclear question has never been a dichotomous choice between economic development and security. Nor is the academic debate about whether security is a necessary precondition for economic development or vice versa of much practical relevance for India's nuclear course. Instead, nuclear technology and its accompanying myths presented an attractive device to symbolise the vision Nehru had for a proud and strong nation: modernity, scientific advancement, self-reliance, prowess, international prestige and respect. National welfare though economic growth and national power through military might were thereby two interrelated objectives of the same Nehruvian vision.
The nuclear energy sector fitted perfectly into Nehru's economic model, which aimed at self-sufficiency, central planning and state monopoly of key economic sectors. This concept of a strong state reflected the *zeitgeist* of the early post-war era. Further, central planning was considered crucial for the nation-building process India was struggling with after decolonisation and partition in 1947.

The linkage between military prowess, symbolised by nuclear technology, and India's efforts to develop into a modern, self-sufficient, and proud nation state was not as openly discussed among India's elite as the omnipresent issues of nuclear energy, economic development, and modernisation. Similarly to the modernisation-through-economic-growth theme, the simple logic of increased security through increased power capabilities reflected the *zeitgeist* of the early Cold War era. The Realist idea of a monocausal relationship between the build-up of national power capabilities and the increase of national security emerged in the 1950s, just at the time when the nuclear issue began entering the Indian

domestic discourse. The historical context in which this idea is rooted is described by Itty Abraham:

> National security, which officially takes as its purpose the strengthening of the military might of the state, the protection of the territories claimed in its name, and the conservation of the way of life identified as the cultural norm, is as much a time-dependent and place-specific ideology as national development. Again a post-War phenomenon, national security has a number of genealogies, but is probably most influenced by the histories of the United States, aptly symbolised by the translation of the Department of War into the Department of Defence in 1947. National security in this mode can be summarised as a totalising condition of civilian militarization beyond simply border defence or even inter-state war, the indistinguishability of war and peace in relation to the practices of state security institutions and the panoply of legal instruments that support their activities, the militarisation of information and the enormous growth in intelligence agencies, related to which can be observed ever increasing degrees of state surveillance, deeply dependent on technology, which identify social threats to established order both within and without the formal territories of the state, and the increasing scientisation of the practices of war to such an extent that the battlefield has become increasingly a virtual space. In short, 'national security' expresses the paranoias of the modern state; it remains a major contradiction within democratic states; indeed the extent of the technological penetration of society by the national security apparatus is usually in direct proportion to the wealth of the state.
>
> While national security can be said to be a truly global phenomenon at this point, the modular form was imported into the third world along with national development in the early post-War period, which gives this combination a distinct history from that moment on[151].

The emergence of Realist paradigms as the widely acknowledged rules of the game in the international arena posed an enormous challenge to Nehru's vision of an order based on norms of peaceful co-existence, not on military capabilities. While he opposed any large scale military build-up, he nevertheless fostered the development of nuclear capabilities. This contradiction, which puzzled the community of staunch Realists, can only be understood by looking at the symbolic value that mastering nuclear technology had for Nehru's vision of India. The inter-state competition for scientific excellence in the nuclear field was India's 'virtual battlefield', and Nehru's permanent argument with his Western counterparts along normative, abstract ideas was his preferred form of shadow boxing therein. As inherent to most contests, the nuclear competition soon gained a dynamic of its own, in that India continued to develop nuclear energy capacities even after it became clear that they could not be produced in an economically efficient way or satisfy India's increasing energy demand. Similarly, the development of nuclear weapons capabilities continued largely detached from changing international conditions. The nuclear competition thus grew out of the concept of 'national security' in its narrow sense.

[151] Itty Abraham. 1998; pp. 12, 13.

6.1.4. Pre-Independence Developments

The initiation of the Indian nuclear energy program, which can be traced back to the pre-independence period of the early 1940s, is closely linked to the name Homi Bhabha, the leading figure in the nuclear scientific community until his death in 1966.
Returning from Britain in 1939, where he had studied nuclear physics at Cambridge University, he started efforts to set up an indigenous Indian institution to promote fundamental research in the natural sciences. While his efforts were often displayed in retrospect as an act of idealism for the cause of India, his true motivations are better looked at in terms of the global and domestic political compulsions of the times. Britain encountered hard times while facing an existential threat from Nazi Germany and a powerful independence movement in India, its major colony. In these desperate times, British patriotism caused a strong nationalisation in all key areas of economic and social life. In British academia, and particularly in the disciplines that were considered as being of strategic importance for national security, no space was left for a young, aspiring scholar of Indian origin. Thus, Bhabha's promising career within Britain ended before it had started. His commitment to the creation of an indigenous research infrastructure after his return to India was less an act of patriotism, but rather acknowledgement of India's lack of adequate research institutions that could enable him to continue high-level research in his field.

As the leaders of the forthcoming independent Indian government were overwhelmed with difficulties, the only way for Bhabha to generate the substantial funds and to achieve the necessary institutional backing for his cause was to give it a more attractive meaning than the banal goal of promoting physics research. Attaching a symbolic meaning to the nuclear programme – displaying it as the spearhead of India's quest for modernity and self-reliance – was its inherent and existential part right from the beginning.

In 1944, Bhabha founded the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, which became the main research centre for fundamental physics and the nucleus of India's nuclear programme. In the same period, the pre-independent government set up the Board of Atomic Energy Research, with Bhabha as its chair, which would eventually become India's Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in 1948.

At the time of independence in 1947, Bhabha was acting as India's unofficial representative in various negotiations on scientific cooperation. His strategy was to offer barter deals in which India traded its rich stocks of minerals (crucial for a nuclear chain reaction) in exchange for nuclear knowledge transfers.

6.1.5. The National Endeavour

According to India's official historiography, its civilian nuclear programme developed military applications only after India's leadership recognized the Western tendency to rely on nuclear weapons for national prestige and international advantage. Many scholars

challenge this view by claiming that the military component was inherent to the nuclear programme right from its beginning.

> The early years are interesting for a researcher because they lay the ground for any subsequent theory on whether India stumbled towards a bomb, or made deliberate progress towards it. Most government sources adopt a distinctly ambivalent attitude to this question. They aver that they were pushed into making the bomb by the cynicism and indifference of the international order, which ignored India's cry for an ethical and moral approach to nuclear weapons and disarmament. At the same time the very same sources point with pride and satisfaction to the sagacity and statesmanship of Nehru, Bhabha, Shastri, etc., in safeguarding India's security by encouraging the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) to work surreptitiously on the bomb. There is also a splinter group in India which believes that the scientific community was and is a virtual sub-government. This is not entirely without basis, since the scientific community could hardly be directed by a group of grassroot politicians.[152]

Right from its outset, Bhabha was aware of the dual-use nature of the nuclear programme. In the early 1950s, he not only accepted the potential military use of the programme, but also sought to create the means and know-how to acquire nuclear capabilities for military purposes. India's strong opposition to the growing efforts of the international community to establish restrictions and safeguards on fissile material reflected Bhabha's stance.

Bhabha's plans for acquiring nuclear capabilities were carried out in a rather clandestine fashion, and it is unclear to what extent Nehru knew about it in detail. His doctrine of achieving status for India strictly through peaceful means and his view of nuclear weapons as highly immoral devices did not allow him to pursue their development – at least in his official statements. He nevertheless recognised the fact that other states actively used nuclear weapons as tools to gain international status and advantage. Nehru discerned the contradiction between his quest for international status – necessitating keeping the nuclear option open – and his moral concept of a peaceful world order. As George Perkovich wrote:

> Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that Nehru also accepted, albeit reticently and ambivalently, the potential military deterrent and international power embodied in nuclear weapon capability. ... . The moralist visionary Nehru abhorred the wanton destructiveness of nuclear weapons and saw them as anathema to the unique spirit of India. ... At the same time, however, there was another Nehru, the ambitious, realist prime minister who recognized that nuclear weapon capability could enhance India's status and power in the West-dominated world... .[153]

Nehru's undisputed position as India's leader and his great moral authority within the Indian polity combined with his and Bhabha's informality and secrecy in determined the

[152] Menon, Raja: op.cit.. 2000; pp. 66, 67.
[153] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p.14.

course of the nuclear programme and in preventing the emergence of a broader, more informed public debate on the issue. Within parliament, the nuclear issue was debated only twice during the first fifteen years of independence. The first time was in 1948, when the Constituent Assembly passed the Atomic Energy Bill. The second time was fourteen years later when the Lok Sabha debated and passed the amended Atomic Energy Act of 1962. Due to the absence of any informed and committed debate among parliamentarians, in the media, or in the public as a whole, the democratic mechanisms of checks and balances did not function effectively. Decisions on the nuclear issue were, trusting in their moral integrity and technical expertise, left to Nehru and Bhabha. Both men made decisions grounded in moral convictions, status orientation and awareness of the technically possible.

Table 6.1.: Chronology of India's Nuclear Course, 1947 – 1960

Year	International Events	Domestic Events	Technological Achievements
1947		Independence	Cooperation on Nuclear Technology with UK, Canada
1948		Atomic Energy Act, 1948, Creation of Indian Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)	
1949	First nuclear test by Soviet Union Victory of Communist Party in Chinese civil war		
1950	First test of a Hydrogen bomb by the USA		
1951			UK agrees to deliver construction plans for 1MW Apsara research reactor
1952	First British nuclear test		
1953	'Atoms for Peace' Program by President Eisenhower First test of a hydrogen bomb by Soviet Union		
1954	Commissioning of first nuclear power plant by Soviet Union	Creation of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) Creation of the Atomic Energy Establishment at Trombay	
1955	UN Conference on Atomic Energy, Geneva		Purchase of 40MW CIRUS research reactor from Canada
1956			1MW Apsara research reactor goes critical, no IAEA safeguards
1957			
1958			Construction of plutonium reprocessing plant at Trombay
1959	Chinese Occupation of Tibet and Aksai Chin		

Table 6.1. (continued)

1960			CIRUS 40MW research reactor goes critical, no IAEA safeguards Purchase of 2 light-water LEU 200MW reactors from USA at Tarapur Purchase of 2 natural uranium 200MW RAPS reactors from Canada at Kota

Nuclear weapons were not seriously considered as strategic devices until 1959. In this year, information about the secret Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin coincided with rumours of progress in the Chinese nuclear weapons programme, leading to a halting debate among India's strategic elite about whether it should pursue a nuclear weapons option to counter the perceived Chinese threat, or adhere to the principle of peaceful coexistence. The calls for open acquisition of nuclear weapons were yet rare, as the moral stance of Nehru was still strong enough to uphold the nuclear taboo. At this time, a characteristic feature of the future nuclear debate was already visible, that is, its cautious rhetorical distinction between acquiring a nuclear option and acquiring nuclear weapons. In 1953, the initiation of the 'Atoms for Peace' programme by Dwight D. Eisenhower gave a boost to India's quest for nuclear technology. The technologically advanced countries put their efforts at limiting the spread of nuclear expertise on the backburner and started to promote its peaceful uses in Third World countries, including peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs) for mining or canal digging. This policy shift had several motives: extensive lobbying efforts by the nuclear industry; a naive belief in the benefits of modern technology; a gross misjudgement of the usefulness of PNEs; and misleading claims about the technical distinctiveness of PNEs and nuclear warheads.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the development of nuclear capabilities by the Homi Bhabha-led scientific establishment was progressing incrementally and independently from political directives, as well as strategic considerations. Political legitimisation of this progress was given in a rather post hoc manner.

6.1.6. Institutional Developments

The basic institutional structure of India's nuclear programme was laid down in the Atomic Energy Act passed by the Constituent Assembly in 1948. Although the Act did not explicitly mention the development of a nuclear weapons structure as one of the programme's objectives, its careful wording avoided any provisions that would exclude it in the future:

> ... the Bhabha paper (Atomic Energy Act) put up to the government in 1948 was not entirely innocent. The background to it and reading between the lines leaves

> posterity with no doubt that Bhabha realised that a national nuclear programme would eventually acquire certain military objective.[154]

The 3-person Indian Atomic Energy Commission was created as a supreme supervisory body, with Homi Bhabha, K.S. Krishnan and S.S. Bhatnagar, the former serving as chairman. Next to their membership in the AEC, all three held several other leading positions in the nuclear establishment. The AEC reported only to the Prime Minister, while Parliament had no control over its decisions. The AEC was the key institution of the emerging, highly opaque nuclear decision-making structure. The smooth transfer of institutional authority from the main nuclear decision-making body, the Board of Research on Atomic Energy (within the CSIR, or Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) to the AEC in 1948 was assured by the twin capacity of S.S. Bhatnagar as member of the AEC and director-general of CSIR.

As illustrated in the previous section, India's elite perceived the nuclear build-up as a national endeavour within a global competition, one in which success depended on time-efficiency and, above all, secrecy. India's nuclear decision-making institutions were designed along these two central requirements. It was put in the hands of only a few decision makers who led in an autocratic, informal, and opaque fashion. These nuclear policy elite carefully kept their decisions out of parliamentary or public debate, as this would, in their view, contravene their objectives, secrecy and urgency.

As chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Bhabha held the key position of the nuclear establishment. However, his enormous influence derived not from his office, but from his close friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru. Both men shared the same vision of India: a modern, strong, and respected member of the international community. In accordance with the *zeitgeist* of their times, this status was to be achieved above all through economic modernisation and technological advancement in general, and the 'mastering of the atom' in particular. From the start of the nuclear programme in the 1940s until Nehru's death in 1964, virtually all major decisions in the nuclear field were made by Bhabha and sanctioned by Nehru. In a move to align the institutional framework to the supreme position of Bhabha, the government changed the constitution of the AEC in 1958: Its chairman was given a veto right, enabling him to overrule any decision made by the board of the AEC. Secrecy was further reinforced by introducing severe punishments for the circulation of classified, nuclear-related data.

Accordingly, the Prime Minister managed the allocation of funds in a somewhat autocratic and highly opaque manner. Immediately after the Atomic Energy Bill had passed the Constituent Assembly in 1948, the CSIR recommended to Nehru the allocation of Rs. 80 lakhs to the nuclear sector for the construction of a reactor and supplementary facilities. Bhabha then contacted Nehru with a request for Rs. 100 lakhs over four years, to be made

[154] Menon, Raja: op.cit.. 2000; p. 66.

available to the AEC[155]. Nehru fully accepted Bhabha's demands. This informal financing practice continued thereafter.

In sum, until 1961, the institutional foundations laid down in the formative phase of the Indian nuclear programme reflected the preferences of the nuclear scientists around Homi Bhabha and India's leadership under Jawaharlal Nehru. The institutional arrangements guaranteed a maximum of secrecy, an essential prerequisite for maintaining the myth of nuclear technology as the symbol of India's path to modernity.

The ineffective checks and balances by either the parliament or the public, and the exclusion of other scientists outside Bhabha's clique, however, proved to be the major structural flaw of India's nuclear development in the time to follow. As George Perkovich wrote:

> There was no system of checking and balancing Bhabha, no open means by which scientists could inform political decision makers of costs and benefits of particular policies. This lack of mechanisms for independently evaluating the AEC's claims and proposals would handicap India for decades.[156]

6.1.7. Self-Reliance and International Cooperation

The high-flying rhetoric and the immoderate attribution of various symbolic meanings to the nuclear issue sent public expectations to unrealistic heights, increasing the urgency for the group around Bhabha to demonstrate its progress in the nuclear field. Quick progress, however, was only possible for the scientists if they could fall back on existing expertise from Western programmes. On the other hand, making this dependency on knowledge transfers of Western knowledge public would severely damage the nuclear issue's image as an indigenous, national endeavour within the global competition, as such destroying much of its symbolic value. Therefore, the primary strategy of the scientists was to use the secretiveness in which the nuclear programme was embedded to acquire the necessary knowledge from the West, while simultaneously displaying any progress in the nuclear field as an indigenous achievement. The success of this policy was facilitated by the euphoria among the media and public at large, in which any doubt about the indigenousness of the programme would have been perceived as unpatriotic.

Homi Bhabha started his tour through various Western capitals as early as the mid-1940s, prior to India's independence. He conducted the negotiations in the name of the Indian government despite his lack of any official status. His barter strategy – to offer India's rich mineral resources in exchange for the transfer of Western expertise – proved to be quite attractive for his Western counterparts, and soon he was able to meet agreements with the British, Canadians, and French. The prime objective of the Indian nuclear programme in its initial phase was to set up a nuclear reactor. As a matter of urgency, the reactor was to be

[155] Abraham, Itty: op.cit.; p.60.
[156] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p. 94.

established as soon as possible and at all costs. Only after the installations necessary for its indigenous operation were complete would further infrastructure follow (e.g. facilities to extract fissile material, to manufacture fuel rods, or to produce heavy water).

The time pressure under which the scientists worked had significant influence on their decision to choose natural uranium as the basis of their reactor design; it was the best known and most accessible technology of its time. While the natural uranium reactor technology was used by India's main cooperating partners (UK, Canada, and France), the alternative technology, based on enriched uranium, was mainly developed by the USA and Soviet Union. Cooperation with these two states was rather delicate for India. Until Eisenhower's fundamental policy shift in 1953, the US administration aimed at preventing, or at least tightly controlling the spread of nuclear technology. Addressing the USA on the nuclear issue not only appeared to have little benefit, but would surely be debated within the US Congress and American public, thereby causing the kind of publicity the Indian government was eager to avoid. The US decision to drop its restrictive policy and open its technology to the world, Eisenhower's 1953 'Atoms for Peace' programme, came too late, as India had already opted for natural uranium technology as the basis of its nuclear programme. Approaching the Soviet Union, on the other hand, appeared similarly delicate, as it would alienate India's Western partners.

In 1954, Homi Bhabha managed to strike a deal with his former colleagues in the British nuclear establishment, eventually enabling him to fulfil his aim of setting up India's first atomic reactor. Bhabha purchased the blueprints of a small and rudimentary 1 MW research reactor, based on medium-enriched uranium, from the British Atomic Industry. The 'Apsara' reactor was built at India's nuclear centre at Trombay in Maharashtra, north of Bombay. Its commissioning in August 1956 was well staged as a forceful demonstration of India's indigenous brilliance. The enthusiastic media coverage of the event reflected the widely accepted role of nuclear technology as source of national pride within the context of the global competition for high science and modernity.

In 1955, one year before the commissioning of the Apsara reactor, Homi Bhabha reached an agreement with Canada over the acquisition of blueprints for a 40 MW research reactor. The design of the so called 'CIRUS' reactor differed from the Apsara reactor in two fundamental aspects. First, it was fuelled with natural uranium instead of medium enriched uranium. As stocks of natural uranium were abundant, India was no longer dependent on the import of enriched uranium fuel rods. Secondly, the CIRUS reactor was moderated with heavy water instead of light water, forcing India's nuclear scientists to hastily set-up installations for heavy water production. Construction on the first production site of heavy water was started at Nangal in 1958 and commenced operation in 1962, two years after the commissioning of the CIRUS reactor at Trombay. Despite the operation of the Nangal plant, indigenous heavy water production did not cover India' demands, making it dependent on supplies from Western -- particularly US American -- sources[157].

[157] Jones, Rodney W.: op.cit.. 1998; p.112.

After having set up two research reactors at Trombay, India's scientists still did not start work on reactors to actually produce nuclear energy, which had been the original and nominal *raison d'être* of their programme. In 1960, negotiations started with various potential suppliers of commercial reactors. The USA agreed to build two 210 MW reactors fuelled with low–enriched uranium as well as mixed natural uranium and plutonium oxide (MOX) at the Tarapur site, in northern Maharashtra. While Bhabha was hoping to satisfy public expectations of the nuclear programme by quickly setting up facilities that could economically produce nuclear energy, the acquisition of these reactors nevertheless came with two main structural weaknesses. First, full IAEA safeguard provisions applied on imported reactors, putting the Tarapur reactors under tight international control. Secondly, India had no uranium enrichment capabilities and would not be able to construct the necessary ultracentrifuge plants in the near future. This meant that India continued to depend on US supplies of enriched uranium fuel rods for decades to come. Despite these problems, the US-American reactors were commissioned in 1969.

In 1964, India further signed an agreement with Canada to built two 220MW CANDU[158]-type reactors at Kota, Rajasthan. The reactors, fuelled with natural uranium and moderated with heavy water, would eventually become the forerunners of indigenously built reactors. While these two reactors were commissioned under full IAEA safeguard provisions in 1972 and 1980, respectively, their indigenously built successors were not subject to such provisions.

6.2. Establishing the Nuclear Weapons Option

6.2.1. Nuclear Energy for India's Development: The End of a Myth

When did India opt for nuclear weapons? Scholars of International Relations generally allude to China's first nuclear test in 1964 as the key event that drove India to go nuclear. They agree on the assumption that in a regional or global strategic set-up in which one power acquires nuclear weapons, a strategic compulsion emerges for the rival power to follow suit and build a nuclear arsenal of its own. This strategic compulsion was thought to be even more imperative for India in 1964, especially considering the hostility in the bilateral relations with China after India's defeat in the Sino-Indian war two years earlier. In this context, the fact that India abstained from a clear course towards nuclearisation is a major puzzle for IR scholars.

Instead, one major pattern of India's nuclear development gradually emerged during the 1960s from within the domestic realm. India's elite and interested public started to realise that nuclear energy would not meet the expectations put on it (i.e. the magic potion for India's transformation into a modern state). Consequently, India's policy-makers were confronted with increasing pressures to legitimise the generous funds allocated to the

[158] Canadian Deuterium-uranium; after the reactors' commissioning, the reactors were renamed into RAPS-I and RAPS-II.

programme. Even after the acquisition of four commercial reactors in the early 1960s, the programme was decades away from providing the substantial amount of energy needed to satisfy India's growing demands.

In view of the severe structural problems of the nuclear programme's civilian aspect, the nuclear scientific community, which had been overwhelmed with praise at the 1956 commissioning of the Apsara reactor, was only a few years later facing increasing pressures to vindicate its avant-garde position in India's modernisation. The prospect of losing their status as national heroes, instead becoming the managers of badly functioning, inefficient, and uneconomic power plants, appeared unimaginable. This difficult situation is described by Itty Abraham as follows:

> The AEC's hard-won ability to produce effective scientific results was irrelevant when its principal objective was producing cheap electrical energy for national development. ... . The reactor's performance ratios had to be extremely high in order to service consumers adequately; mistakes or breakdowns in the supply of electricity would be immediately evident. If here were repeated failures, the public would soon realise that atomic energy was not he great panacea it had been given to understand. The criterion governing the activities of the atomic engineers was now something called 'efficiency', and evaluations of performance were made on the relative cost per atomic energy unit produced versus other sources of energy such as coal, oil, or hydro-power. It is this last development that most vividly illustrates the enormity of the changes being introduced"[159].

Both political and scientific leaders had strong incentives to perpetuate the nuclear programme's symbolic value over and above the mere production of energy.

During the first fifteen years of independence, the multiple and interrelated meanings of nuclear technology were equally attractive for various sections among India's elite:

> Until this moment, a great source of strength for the Indian atomic scientists had been the multiple valences of atomic energy. It had meant a source of cheap electrical energy to developmentalist, a means of overcoming neo-colonial domination to nationalists, a sign of masculinity and intellectual prowess to scientists, a resource for state power to socialists, and an instrument of foreign policy to realists and militarists. The overdetermined meaning of the sign 'atomic energy' was precisely the source of its immense influence in postcolonial India.[160]

But as soon as the nuclear programme mythical status as a cornerstone of India's development was fading during the 1960s, both nuclear scientists and nuclear policy makers increasingly focused on its value as an instrument of foreign policy, i.e. its potential to increase the nation's military power. In this context, the emerging nuclear threat from

[159] Abraham, Itty: op.cit.; p. 103.
[160] ibid; p. 104.

China was less an immediate security imperative – turning India's nuclear programme towards military applications – but rather a catalyst for its reorientation from the civilian to the military realm.

> The small likelihood of carrying out the development project combined with potential loss of what was distinctively Indian about the atomic energy programme could only be resolved by recombining the interests of the atomic complex and the state around the foundations of state identity: it meant an alliance with national security. This functional reason – redefining atomic energy in order to save the postcolonial state – is framed slightly differently when seen from the point of view of the AEC. For the scientists, redefining the atomic energy project meant retaining their identity as scientists, rather than technologists, giving them a new lease of life while they grappled with a new scientific problem. But how would they do this? Their response ... was to situate atomic energy within another realm of state activity, equally central to the state's ideological mission, equally justified in terms of raison d'état: they decided to build bombs.[161]

Concurrent to this gradual paradigm shift, the target figures for nuclear energy production issued by the scientists became increasingly quixotic. In the late 1950s, the AEC issued a plan to install 1000 MW of nuclear energy in the period between 1960/61 and 1965/66. When one assumes a minimum construction time of 5 years for a large commercial reactor, which would then produce 200 MW at best, this figure was far out of reach. India's Planning Commission – the authoritative body for the allocation of funds to the AEC – finally approved a capacity of 675 MW[162]. This figure was no less absurd. It reveals the extent to which the AEC was able to control information on the state of the nuclear programme. During the five-year plan from 1964 to 1969, the funds allocated to the nuclear programme increased by 100% to 2 billion US$, or 5 % of India's national income[163].

6.2.2. Institutional and Political Adjustments

During the first half of the 1960s, Nehru gradually changed the direction of his rhetoric. He developed the formula that was to determine India's nuclear ambiguity for the next three and a half decades by claiming that India had the know-how to develop nuclear weapons indigenously, but would not do so under any circumstances. This position differed from his earlier statements, as it implicitly acknowledged that India was in fact seeking to develop the infrastructure necessary to build the bomb, though he still maintained his posture that India would not go all the way and actually produce it. This position was only partly in accordance with the facts. To be sure, the build-up of the nuclear infrastructure had made some progress since 1956, but the necessary installations and expertise for plutonium production, as well as the ability to assemble plutonium into weapon cores, was not

[161] Abraham, Itty: op.cit.; pp. 105, 106.
[162] ibid; p. 96. Nuclear energy production would eventually start only in 1969 with the commissioning of India's first commercial nuclear power reactor.
[163] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p.62.

achieved in Nehru's lifetime, but only in 1965 or 1966. Furthermore, Nehru's claim that India was able to manufacture nuclear weapons indigenously was overstated considering the programme's strong dependency on the transfer of Western know-how and hardware.

The general paradigm shift in India's nuclear course, away from its developmental mission towards one of national power, was framed by a reform of the nuclear decision-making institutions. In 1962, a new Atomic Energy Act replaced the legal framework established in 1948 by the Constituent Assembly. The power of the AEC, as well as the secrecy surrounding nuclear decision making, was further tightened. This legislative action appears inconsistent with the justification for the authoritarian and secretive institutional framework established in 1948, which Nehru rationalized as necessary for India's unstable constitutional situation in the immediate post-colonial period. In 1962, however, India's democratic and constitutional structure was largely stabilised, thereby dispelling such fears. Despite the dubious intentions behind the reform of the Atomic Energy Act of 1962, India's parliament approved the bill without objection.

Moreover, the preamble of the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 avoided the explicit exclusion of military applications as stated in the Act of 1948. Instead, the preamble remains vague: "An Act to provide for the development, control and use of atomic energy for the welfare of the people of India and for other peaceful purposes and for matters connected therewith"[164]. No further explanation is given to clarify *what* those matters connected with other peaceful purposes could be. In effect, the Act of 1962 created the legal and institutional basis of India's ambiguous policy of 'keeping the nuclear option open'.

By openly asserting that India had the infrastructure to build the bomb, Nehru had at least partly lifted the nuclear taboo. As a consequence, the premises on which the nuclear issue was debated among India's strategic elite shifted correspondingly. The question was no longer whether India should go the costly and time consuming route of building up the infrastructure necessary for the nuclear option. Rather, the nuclear option had now become a fact, as the necessary infrastructure had already been established (or was about to be established). This shift significantly reduced the nuclear threshold.

Table 6.2.: Chronology of India's Nuclear Course, 1962 - 1974

Year	International Events	Domestic Events	Technological Achievements
1962	Sino-Indian War	Atomic Energy Act 1962	
1963			
1964	First Chinese nuclear test	Nehru dies, Lal Bahadur Shastri new Prime Minister	Completion of the plutonium reprocessing plant at Trombay
1965	Indo-Pakistan War		
1966	Tashkent Agreement	Shastri dies, Indira Gandhi new Prime Minister Bhabha dies, Vikram Sarabhai new chair of AEC	

[164] Preamble of the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, No.33, of 1962; 15th September 1962.

1967	First test of a hydrogen bomb by China		
1968	Conclusion of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)		
1969			2 light-water LEU 200MW reactors at Tarapur go critical
1970			
1971	Indo-Pakistan War, Creation of Bangladesh	Vikram Sarabhai dies	
1972	Simla Agreement	Homi Sethna new chair of AEC	1 natural uranium RAPS reactor at Kota goes critical
1973			
1974			Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE)

In 1964, two major events had a fundamental impact on India's strategic course: The first event was the death of Jawaharlal Nehru on May 27th, leaving behind a huge leadership vacuum in the country's foreign and security policy. The second event was China's first nuclear weapons test only five months later on October 16th, thereby significantly changing the strategic constellation in Asia.

Nehru's successor as India's Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri (1964-1966), though inexperienced in international affairs, was immediately confronted with the urgent and difficult task of finding an appropriate answer to the Chinese test. To the surprise of many, the low expectations stemming from his inexperienced leadership as well as the lack of institutionalised decision-making structures spurred Shastri's international ambitions. His manoeuvring room was unimpeded by the tight (and often impracticable) ideological principles and the complex network of insider relationships that had grown out of Nehru's opaque decision-making structure.

In the nuclear field, Shastri was confronted with the intransigent, though small group of nuclear scientists around Homi Bhabha. Having Nehru's fierce public condemnation of nuclear weapons in mind, Shastri was not aware of the ambiguity of the nuclear programme and Nehru's tacit acceptance its military dimension. At that time, Shastri's normative aversion to the bomb was beyond doubt. His naiveté as well as his disinterest in the matter nevertheless allowed a framework in which nuclear scientists could continue the military programme without much interference. Despite his personal beliefs, Shastri allowed the scientists to start preparations for a 'peaceful nuclear explosion' in 1965. Even considering his profound lack interest, it is difficult to imagine that he believed in the solely peaceful character of the test. Rather, his approval of the preparations for a PNE appeared to be a move to accommodate those voices demanding a tougher stance in the nuclear field after the Sino –Indian war of 1962, and the Chinese nuclear tests of 1964.

Shastri developed a plan to solve India's security problems by approaching the USA for security guarantees in the case of a Chinese nuclear attack. This strategy posed a challenge to both Nehru's principles of non-alignment/self-reliance and to the individual interests of the nuclear oligarchy. Shastri's offer to stop the Indian nuclear programme in return for a

US guarantee made the scientists' opposition a matter of vital importance. Homi Bhabha, the most exposed critic of Shastri's policy, brought his objection to the point by stating that "India needed to make some dramatic peaceful achievement to offset the prestige gained by Communist China among African and Asian countries [after exploding their bomb]"[165]. This statement demonstrates Indian scientists' perception of the nuclear programme. In their view, India was in direct competition with China for prestige and leadership of the Third World community. The discipline through which this prestige should be achieved lay in the mastery of atoms. The statement further reveals what, in the perception of its scientists, India's nuclear programme was not about: it was not seen as a device to enhance the country's security. His demand for an open demonstration of India's achievements in the field was an implicit call for nuclear testing. This call shows his understanding that the symbolic nature of the nuclear game would require corresponding symbolic demonstrations. Nuclear tests were the ultimate currency in which countries could display their achievements. A large section of India's strategic and policy elite followed the scientists' argumentation and called on Shastri to change his policy. Shastri reluctantly gave in and authorised the AEC to start with preparations for a 'peaceful nuclear explosion'.

The 1965 war with Pakistan revealed the superiority of the conventional Indian armed forces. As such, one could expect a calming effect on India's nuclear proliferation efforts. In strategic terms, nuclear deterrence towards Pakistan became somewhat irrelevant, as conventional power capabilities proved effective to do the job. Paradoxically, pressures demanding a more determined course of nuclear proliferation increased after the war. The reason was the Tashkent Peace Declaration in 1966. Shastri's morally driven, ineffectual conduct of the negotiations was held responsible for the modest tone of the declaration, which was seen by India's foreign policy elite as much less beneficial than India had hoped. Particularly, the fact that Pakistan was not explicitly mentioned as an aggressor caused widespread disenchantment.

6.2.3. Creating A Nuclear Weapons Infrastructure

The change in India's strategic environment, caused by the Sino-Indian war of 1962, China's first nuclear test in 1964, and the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, as well as the change in India's leadership by the death of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964, had a strong impact on the way the nuclear issue was discussed among India's strategic elite. However, the nuclear weapons programme as such, i.e. the actual infrastructure development that allowed India to build nuclear weapons, occurred largely apart from the historic events as well as the surrounding debate.

While the applicability of the nuclear programme for military purposes played a crucial role in the design of the civilian nuclear programme right from its beginning, the build-up of a self-contained nuclear weapons infrastructure became visible for the first time in 1958, when construction began on a plutonium reprocessing plant at Trombay. This early timing

[165] Homi Bhabha, cited in Abraham, Itty. op.cit.; p. 126.

appears puzzling considering India's international and strategic position at the time, for Nehru's policy of peaceful co-existence was still domestically unchallenged. India's relationship with China, which was referred to as Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai (Indo Chinese friendship), still appeared to be untroubled, as the future Chinese occupation of Tibet, the Sino-Indian war, and the first Chinese nuclear tests were unforeseeable. Domestically, Nehru's position in the late 1950s was undisputed, and government stability was at its highest point in the history of independent India[166].

Central to India's nuclear weapons programme was the production of plutonium, an end-product of the fuel spent in atomic reactors. In combination with thorium[167], plutonium was usable in a breeder reactor to produce nuclear energy. This technology, however, was embryonic in the late 1950s, and its feasibility was too uncertain to justify the arduous efforts scientists had in producing plutonium[168]. Rather, plutonium was regarded more for its decisive significance for the military programme than as a component for nuclear energy production. Thus, it came into the focus of global non-proliferation and safeguard efforts.

The plutonium yield appeared to have been the determining factor[169] for India's nuclear scientists to opt for the development of natural uranium fuelled, heavy-water moderated reactors[170]. The first reactor to produce unsafeguarded plutonium was the Canadian CIRUS research reactor at Trombay, commissioned in 1960. It provided enough plutonium for the production of two rudimentary nuclear devices annually. The Phoenix plutonium reprocessing plant, which had been built based on US-American blueprints, was commissioned in 1964 and started production of weapon-grade plutonium the same year. India was – at least in theory – able to build its first rudimentary plutonium core nuclear device between mid-1965 and early 1966[171]. This timing suggests that India's policy makers would have been able to give a commensurate response to the Chinese test of 1964 within a few months. Correspondingly, after news of the Chinese test spread, Homi Bhabha claimed that India would be able to give the appropriate answer within 18 months. Bhabha persuaded Shastri to initiate preparations for a 'peaceful nuclear explosion'.

6.2.4. Indira Gandhi's Rise

As a tragic coincidence, the two key protagonists of India's nuclear course of the mid 1960s, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Homi Bhabha, both died within few days of each other in January 1966. Still at the Soviet city of Tashkent, where he had signed the Tashkent

[166] Government instability is thought to have been one of the main factors determining nuclear decision making in the mid-1990s, including the decision for nuclear testing in 1998.
[167] Large deposits of this rare mineral were discovered in India in the early 1950s.
[168] India's first (and only) Fast Breeder Test Reactor was commissioned only in 1985. (see: Jones, Rodney et.al.: op.cit.. 1998; p. 128).
[169] A second factor being self-reliance, as the technology of enriching uranium was non-existent in India.
[170] In contrast to the enriched uranium light-water moderated reactor design, this reactor type produced sufficient plutonium for a tentative weapons programme.
[171] This year was given by the scientists themselves, and confirmed by the CIA. Other sources raised doubts that India's scientists had acquired the necessary design knowledge of the atomic bomb at this early time.

declaration ending the war between India and Pakistan only hours before, Shastri unexpectedly died of a heart attack on January 11th, 1966. Less than two weeks later, on January 24th, 1966, Homi Bhabha died on his trip to Geneva when his airplane crashed in the Savoy Alps on approach to Geneva airport.

When Indira Gandhi took office as India's third Prime Minister in 1966, the domestic discourse on the nuclear issue was well underway. The debate was dominated by the question of whether India should join or decline the upcoming Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Opinion was divided among Indira Gandhi's advisors.

> On the balance, it would appear that there were more officials in favour of the NPT than against it. Eventually the cabinet rejected signing it on the grounds of possible public criticism that the opposition could garner from accepting 'foreign' demands. The situation in the country in 1968 that led to the rejection of the NPT is very different from the situation in 1996 when the entire nation actually debated the CTBT openly in the press.[172]

While public debate on the issue was still underdeveloped, the motives for the Indira Gandhi government in opposing the NPT illustrate that those dynamics of public opinion making that dominated India's nuclear course in the 1990s were already in place in 1968.

Indira stood in the Nehruvian tradition by opposing nuclear weapons on moral grounds. She nevertheless avoided a clear anti-bomb policy due to several emerging pressures. First, the growing social and ethnic unrest in several parts of India forced her to pay attention to the change of atmosphere within public opinion. Calls for a strengthening of military capabilities (as the supposed prerequisite for a strong and proud nation) were quite popular. Her pragmatic sense of power politics was favourable to the pursuit of a more vigorous nuclear policy. Under these circumstances, one could easily assume that Indira's popularity would have benefited and her power would have consolidated had she announced India's goal to acquire nuclear weapons. Remarkably, she did not. She still felt committed to reject the nuclear option and use nuclear technology for civilian purposes only. Obviously, the moral norms set by her father were strong enough to prevent her from taking the opportunity. Considering the Machiavellian ruling style with which she was tackling the numerous domestic conflicts, her restrained nuclear course appears even more notable. Morarji Desai, who was the leading figure and main opponent of Indira within Congress, took an even more rigorous anti-bomb position. As with Indira, he withstood the temptation to explore the nuclear issue in order to gain popularity, astonishing when one considers his failed attempts to topple the Indira government and succeed her as Prime Minister.

> The position of the two competitors, Desai and Indira Gandhi, indicated the unusual character of Indian political culture and of the nuclear issue within it. Desai maintained a strict moral stance shared by only a minority of the political elite at a time when he could have been expected to press every advantage to unseat the

[172] Menon, Raja: op.cit.. 2000; pp. 80, 81.

> prime minister. ... . The forbearance displayed by both competitors in not exploiting the 'bomb' for political gain was remarkable and reflected the determination to maintain India's moral posture[173].

The Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 and the subsequent creation of Bangladesh greatly enhanced India's strategic superiority vis-à-vis Pakistan. India emerged as the single dominating regional power in South Asia. Similarly to the 1965 war, strategic rationale would have suggested that the pressures to proliferate nuclear weapons would thus decrease, as the conventional superiority of the Indian forces in South Asian was beyond doubt after 1971. But as in 1965, these predictions failed to materialise.

During the height of the Bangladesh war, the USA deployed its aircraft carrier *Enterprise* into the Bay of Bengal. This was a rather symbolic act, as the warship had no plans to interfere in the ongoing conflict. It was meant by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as a gesture to reassure China, and at the same time, deter the Soviet Union from interfering. Unfortunately, neither US President Nixon nor his Secretary of State was able to comprehend the consequences of their decision. India's decision makers felt deeply humiliated by the nonchalant way in which the USA was trying to bully their nation. In the Cold War grand strategy, Kissinger was building on the new Sino-American axis to counter Soviet influence in Asia. India as a non-aligned, militarily weak Third World country had only a minor role to play in this gambit. This evident attitude triggered strong anti-colonialist sentiments within the Indian discourse. The second of the two fundamental norms of Indian foreign policy now came to the fore. The sensitivity towards any alleged neo-imperialist attitudes of the major powers, particularly the USA, improved the position of those promoting a foreign policy based on power politics instead of moral superiority among India's elite. As a response to this great powers' game, Indira Gandhi authorised increased efforts to prepare for the test explosion of a nuclear device.

6.2.5. Vikram Sarabhai: Realism not Symbolism

In search of a successor for Homi Bhabha, Indira Gandhi, who had been appointed India's new Prime Minister only few days earlier, chose Vikram Sarabhai as new chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission. Although Sarabhai had been a member of the AEC, he was not directly involved in the nuclear explosives programme. Prior to his appointment as head of the AEC, Sarabhai had been a physicist in the field of missile and space research and the leader of the Indian National Committee for Space Research. His election caused severe discontent and jealousy among the leaders of the nuclear establishment.

Vikram Sarabhai's ideas about India's nuclear course proved to be a remarkable exception to the way it was understood by the majority of nuclear scientists and strategic elite. His position is often mistakenly described as pacifist in contrast to the hawkish mainstream position of the nuclear establishment. This was not at all the case. Sarabhai was a fervent advocate of extending the nuclear programme for both civilian and military purposes. What

[173] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p.126

made his position unique was his rejection of the symbolist meaning which was generally allotted to the nuclear issue. In his perception, the sole purpose of the civilian nuclear programme was to produce cheap energy. Similarly, the sole purpose of any military application was to manufacture functioning nuclear deterrent devices. This understanding might be regarded as a simple matter of course in different national set-ups, but in the Indian context, it meant a radical departure from the nuclear programme's previous direction. The symbolist value of the nuclear issue with regard to India's quest for modernity and national power was largely brushed off by Sarabhai. Consequently, he was highly contemptuous of the programme's many characteristics, such as its secrecy, its mystification, its pseudo indigenous status and its orientation towards symbolic demonstrations, as he saw these features as impediments to efficient progress.

Sarabhai's realist position severely clashed with the symbolist understanding of the leading nuclear scientists over the question of nuclear testing.

> Sarabhai's reputation among the pro-bomb lobby might not be high, but it would appear that he, more than anyone else, understood the complexity and magnitude of creating a nuclear deterrent and how far Indian infrastructure had to go to build a world class deterrence capability... . If India needed a nuclear capability, and if Sarabhai had remained Chairman of the AEC as well as head of the space division, it seems likely that he would have put together a composite technical capability that went beyond calling an underground explosion a nuclear capability; but until he could visualise such a creation he was not going to be hurried.[174]

Since the mid-1950s, scientists had actively pursued the construction of the necessary infrastructure to manufacture explosive devices. The 1964 commissioning of the plutonium reprocessing plant as the final step towards this goal coincided with the first Chinese nuclear tests in the same year, which may have provided motivation for the scientists. At this stage, they felt the need to prove their achievements through a forceful demonstration, consequently starting preparatory work for a nuclear explosion. For Sarabhai, on the other side, a nuclear explosion just for the sake of demonstrating India's greatness was meaningless. He approached the issue in a technocratic way: The reason for testing, as he saw it, was to gain information in order to optimise the nuclear chain reaction, which would help the weaponeers to construct effective nuclear warheads. For this purpose, he developed appropriate delivery vehicles, installed the necessary C³I infrastructure[175], and last but not least, drafted stringent employment strategies to be adopted before the testing. This could not be achieved in the short term, however, as by the late 1960s only few thoughts were spent on how to actually use nuclear explosive devices once they would have been built.

To a certain degree, Sarabhai was able to create a critical awareness among India's political elite about the complexity and ambiguity of the nuclear issue. However, he was not able to

[174] Menon, Raja: op.cit.. 2000; p. 82.
[175] Command, Control, Communication, and Intelligence

keep in check the clique of scientists working on nuclear explosives at the Trombay nuclear complex. This failure had its cause in the deficient institutional set-up of the nuclear programme. At the time of his death, Bhabha maintained complete personal control over the programme, holding all key positions tightly in his own hands. This concentration of power was dissolved by Indira Gandhi, who split up Bhabha's accumulated power. While Vikram Sarabhai was appointed new chairman of the AEC, the directorship of the research site in Trombay, which was renamed the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), was given to Homi Sethna, a representative of the nuclear establishment. Due to the erstwhile merger of the two positions in Bhabha's hands, a clear chain of command did not exist, giving Sethna a substantial amount of autonomy and allowing him to resume work on the nuclear explosives project in 1968 over Sarabhai's objections.

Furthermore, Sarabhai's policy faced yet another major obstacle: In the late 1960s, the failure of the civilian nuclear programme to back up India's economic development by providing cheap energy had already become apparent. To ensure continued government funding to the programme, he had no choice but to side with the nuclear establishment's efforts in justifying its work through the programme's military component. This basic paradigm shift – from development to security – was officially announced by Sarabhai in early 1970 in the so called 'Sarabhai Profile'. This document outlined the increasingly military outlook of India's nuclear programme. Moreover, it focused not only on the development of nuclear explosives as such, but emphasised the necessary components to make such devices usable, above all delivery vehicles. One result of Sarabhai's strategy paper was the reinforcement of India's space programme. Despite the nuclear programme's turn towards military applications, Sarabhai could not resist the temptation to emulate his predecessors funding methodology by grossly overstating the nuclear programme's civilian potential. In his outline, he projected an unrealistic capacity of 43.000 MW of installed nuclear power by the year 2000 – over a hundredfold increase of 1970 capacity[176]. Clearly, this was a political figure without any realistic base[177].

Just when Sarabhai started to implement his plans by redirecting the programme's focus away from flashy demonstrations towards the build up of efficient power capacities in the civilian realm, and usable nuclear weapons systems in the military realm, he unexpectedly died of a heart attack on December 30th 1971 at the age of only 53 years. Similarly to Homi Bhabha's death six years earlier, the loss of Vikram Sarabhai in 1971 decapitated India's nuclear programme at a time of significant regional and international changes. After the Indo-Pakistani war and the creation of Bangladesh earlier in the year, India emerged as the undisputed regional power with overwhelming conventional superiority. This regional supremacy reduced the country's strategic need for a nuclear deterrence device, causing a shift in international attitudes towards India's nuclear programme: While an Indian nuclear test in the mid-1960s would have been understood by the international community as a

[176] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p. 133. In 1985, the target for the year 2000 was reduced to less than a quarter of the 1971 predictions to 10.000 MW. (Source: Jones, Rodney W.: op.cit.. 1998; p. 113.).
[177] according to official figures, India's nuclear power production in the year 2000 was 2.720 MW (little more than 6 percent of Sarabhai's predictions). (Source: Department of Atomic Energy. Government of India.).

legitimate act of self-defence against the emerging Chinese nuclear threat, the international repercussions for India's continued efforts in the nuclear field in the early and mid-1970s was largely negative. The inward-looking Indian strategic elite, however, missed this shift in the international community's attitude.

Vikram Sarabhai was succeeded by Homi Sethna as chairman of the AEC, and Raja Ramanna was appointed new director of BARC. Thus, the two key positions returned to the hands of the nuclear establishment and the nuclear programme was set back to its pre-1966 track.
In sum, the period from the early 1960s to the early 1970s set most of the basic conditions under which India's nuclear programme developed until 1998. In 1964, the nuclear scientists are thought to have reached their final goal by completing the infrastructure necessary to build the bomb. Strategic justification of the test was provided by China's first nuclear test later the same year. However, just as it seemed that no obstacles for India's nuclear weapons programme remained, the leadership of the nuclear programme shifted into the hands of Vikram Sarabhai, an outspoken opponent of testing. Then, six years later, India's geo-strategic environment changed, diminishing the international assessment of India's nuclear course. Ironically, it was just at this time when the leadership of the Indian nuclear programme shifted back into the hands of the pro-bomb nuclear establishment.

These changes in leadership partly explain why India did not immediately react to the Chinese test of 1964 by conducting a nuclear test itself, as strategists expected. Furthermore, they clear up why India embarked on a clear course towards testing after 1972, a time when the international conditions were much less favourable. Obviously, individual leadership mattered more for India's nuclear course than strategic analysis. Alternatively, domestic, unit-level factors dominated over international, systemic factors.

6.2.6. The Ritual of Demonstrations

The use of nuclear technology as a symbolic device to generate national pride and self-confidence, as well as to bring international prestige, made it imperative to display India's achievements in a flashy and spectacular manner. This show of force became conspicuously apparent for the first time at the commissioning ceremony of the Apsara research reactor in 1956[178]. Contrary to what the reactor really was about – it had been built using British blueprints and technology components while being equipped with British enriched uranium fuel rods – it was celebrated as the first indigenously built atomic reactor in Asia (excluding those of the Soviet Union). According to widely accepted public belief at that time, it was to the merit of the nuclear scientists that India had caught up with its colonial masters less than a decade after independence. Overwhelmed with public praise, the scientists were able to consolidate their power position within the nuclear and strategic

[178] To a certain extent, the features of this show were already apparent in 1955, when Homi Bhabha was appointed chairman of the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The instrumentalisation of Bhabha's nomination as a demonstration of India's international importance and prestige followed similar dynamics, as could be observed during the commissioning of the Apsara reactor.

decision-making process. This success ensured continued large-scale government spending on the nuclear programme for the years to come. As public enthusiasm gradually abated, pressures on the scientists increased to stage another demonstration of their abilities. These dynamics would eventually create what this study refers to as the ritual of demonstrations. The more the civilian nuclear programme failed to perform, the more the need for such demonstrations climbed.

Similarly, when doubts about the strategic benefits of a nuclear deterrent device increased in the early 1970s, the pressures on the nuclear scientists to conduct a test did not decrease, as one might expect; on the contrary, they appeared more vital for the continuation of the programme than ever before.
Preparations for the test intensified immediately after Homi Sethna took over as chairman of the AEC in early 1972.

In 1974, these preparations were concluded, and the nuclear device was installed at the Pokhran test site in the Rajasthan desert. The scientists now awaited the final decision of the political leadership to detonate the device. This *modus operandi* reflected the institutional and political conditions under which the Indian nuclear programme developed: The *laissez faire* attitude of the political leadership gave the scientists the manoeuvring room they needed to shape the programme according to their interests and beliefs. The scientists pushed the programme forward to such an extent that the political decision-makers' had little choice but to hold course. When Indira Gandhi was faced with the decision whether to go for the nuclear explosion or cancel the testing plans, there was nothing left to do but to push the button. At this stage, stepping back from the threshold would have been much more costly in political terms than to go ahead and conduct the test. Several foreign policy advisors strongly attempted to dissuade Indira from crossing the threshold. The expected international repercussions, as they saw it, were not compensated for by any benefits the test could bring to the civilian or military nuclear programme. Obviously, they did not appreciate the symbolic meaning of the nuclear issue. The political leadership finally approved the testing for exactly this purpose. "Mrs Gandhi decreed that the experiment should be carried out on schedule for the simple reason that India required such a demonstration"[179].
Indira Gandhi emphasised the 'peaceful' nature of the testing, and any deployment strategy or doctrine that would be the necessary precondition for the military use of the data gained through nuclear explosions was missing.

On May 18th 1974, India conducted an underground nuclear explosion at the Pokhran test site in the Rajasthan desert. After the test, Indira claimed that the test had served purely civilian purposes, such as canal digging and mining. Her critics, particularly among the international press, saw this as an obvious pretence. As no clear technical distinction between peaceful and military nuclear tests could be made, they considered the explosions as part of India's clandestine nuclear weapons programme. In all honesty, the future for civilian applications of nuclear explosions was more than doubtful. In stressing only the

[179] Raja Ramanna cited in Abraham, Itty: op.cit.; p.142.

military context, however, critics erred to a similar degree. Considerations about possible applications, whether civilian or military, were largely irrelevant for the decision to go ahead with the test: It was an end in itself, a demonstration of India's prowess. The nuclear field was ideal for this purpose, for in the view of India's elite, nuclear technology symbolised what it wanted to achieve – modernity, international prestige, and strategic leverage:

> Unlike a transistor radio, a ship, or a hospital, a nuclear explosive represented the harnessing of the greatest physical power known to humankind, a physical power that the greatest nation on earth had imbued with transcendent political power as well. The Indian nation – at least in urban centres – believed that its aspiration for global greatness had been achieved.[180]

These considerations were above all shaped by the dynamics of the domestic debate. As expected, the event was glorified as milestone on India's path to modernity, and the involved scientists were elevated to the ranks of national heroes. For a short time, Indira Gandhi could distract public attention away from a host of domestic difficulties (widespread ethnic unrest, the erosion of central power, etc.). The boost of self-confidence from the domestic discourse contrasted to the largely negative international reactions. Even the responses from those Third World countries which had welcomed the Chinese nuclear tests in 1964 were lavish, despite India's rhetorical representation of the test as an act of emancipation for all Third World countries.

This episode revealed a general dilemma in India's foreign policy formulation. The debate on international issues within the Indian polity followed largely domestic dynamics which were widely detached from the international discourse. The actors shaping India's foreign policy were generally inward looking in that their aspired to national prestige within the community of states was a mere projection of their personal prestige in the domestic arena. Thus, the domestic debate on international issues regularly lead to certain perceptions and expectations which then clashed with the actual conditions in the international system. India's elite reacted to these adversities defiantly. When international pressures to comply with the Nonproliferation Treaty increased after the test, India was more determined to oppose it than ever before. The Chinese reaction to India's demonstration of prowess was – in the elite's perception – much worse than the expected outcry: They more or less disregarded it.

While the cold reaction from Third World countries caused some consternation among India's elite, the fierce reaction by Western countries was expected and answers to them were well-prepared. Western criticism was regarded as the implicit recognition of India as a new and serious competitor among the world's leading countries. Almost routinely, India's elite rebuffed Western criticism as hypocritical and discriminatory. After the test, the international community expected India to declare itself the world's sixth nuclear weapon

[180] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p.181.

state and develop nuclear weapon capabilities. However, similarly to 1964, India contravened these expectations by, at least temporarily, halting its nuclear programme.

6.3. The Period of India's Nuclear Slow-Down, 1974 - 1979

6.3.1. Which Course after Pokhran I?

After the PNE in 1974, the nuclear programme in India came to a temporary halt. The time immediately after the test might best be described as the hangover after an excessive party. During the celebrations of the successful test, the involved scientists, their political mentors, large sections of India's elite and the public gave free rein to personal and national pride. Once the high-flying rhetoric surrounding the event slowly abated, more and more questions were raised about the actual benefits of the test beyond the merely symbolic. This state of fatigue was particularly apparent among the political leadership. In the medium term, the nuclear issue failed to pay its hoped-for dividends in terms of domestic popularity. Disappointed by the few positive effects to her own popularity, Indira Gandhi soon returned to dealing with the deteriorating internal security situation in the country. Throughout the 1970s, she categorically rejected the scientists' requests for further testing.

In June 1975, Indira Gandhi imposed the state of Emergency, suspending the democratic process in India for 18 months. During this period of domestic turbulence, foreign affairs did not place highly on her agenda. Her main objective was not to further fuel international criticism of her authoritarian rule (i.e. by advancing the disputed nuclear issue), but to avoid monitoring of India's proliferation efforts.

In technical terms, the test was of very little value for both military and civilian applications, as it did not provide enough data for the scientists to improve the effectiveness of the atomic chain reaction significantly. As one direct outcome of the test had been the increased reluctance of the Western supplier countries, above all Canada, to transfer nuclear technology to India, the overall effect to India's nuclear programme was more negative than positive. For the scientists, the Pokhran test nevertheless brought positive results, as the leadership of the nuclear programme was able to portray itself as the spearhead of India's modernisation, thus significantly consolidating its position within India's policy making process.

Although India's foreign policy elite had expected negative reactions from the Western countries, they were not fully able to apprehend the paradigm shift underlying this criticism. The naive enthusiasm of the Eisenhower era, which had driven the international nuclear competition, had given way to a far more critical approach. The Cuban missile crisis, large scale student unrest, the rise of leftist and environmental movements, and the Vietnam War were some of the events that fundamentally changed the way in which Western societies, and particularly its intellectual elites, looked at nuclear technology. While the Western public may have been appreciative of an Indian test in 1964, the

unrestrained and celebratory rhetoric that characterised the 1974 test caused severe consternation. Despite the public outcry, Cold War considerations prevented most Western governments from taking tough measures against India. In particular, the realist orientation of the US administration under Henry Kissinger, bound by its Cold War grand strategy, prevented any measures to isolate India internationally. India's continued flirtation with an Indo-Soviet alliance and the Soviet willingness to cooperate with India in the nuclear field[181] intensified Western courtship.

While the overall backlash from Western governments was modest, India's scientists found access to nuclear technology much more difficult. Even before the tests, India's refusal to join the NPT and its rejection of IAEA safeguards for its enrichment facilities resulted in a decrease of sensitive technology transfers. The nuclear test significantly increased Western reluctance to supply India's nuclear programme. It led to the creation of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), a cartel of the leading supplier states, to coordinate and upgrade nuclear export control policies.

On top of this, several unfavourable geo-strategic developments in the 1970s drove India's nuclear programme into further isolation. In 1971, the signing of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty and, at the same time, the breakthrough in Sino-American relations, caused a significant shift in the Cold War constellation. In the simplified perception of American policy-makers, India's position shifted that of a neutral state to an adversary. Correspondingly, the 'Enterprise' incident triggered anti-American feelings among India's elite. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution – both in 1979 – Pakistan emerged as an indispensable American ally. The strategic partnerships of both countries, as well as the large-scale American military assistance to Pakistan, further deepened Indo-American animosities.

In 1979, the U.S. Congress passed additional legislation to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons known as the Pressler Amendment. It forced the U.S. President to verify that certain countries did not possess nuclear weapons; otherwise, economic and military sanctions would automatically be imposed. This certification would play a crucial role in American relations to South Asian states throughout the 1980s.

6.3.2. Domestic Turmoil

Next to severe technical set-backs[182], the most pressing problem for India's nuclear programme was the indifference and lack of support of the political leadership from 1975 to 1979. In 1975, Indira Gandhi imposed the Emergency, suspending basic civil rights and crushing opposition groups by arresting several thousand activists. In certain ways, the nuclear competition has always been perceived as a playing field in which national standing and prestige mattered more than security considerations or existential fears. Now, in times of severe hardship and national distress, busying oneself with the nuclear issue would have

[181] in 1976 the Soviet Union provided India with 200 tonnes of badly needed heavy water.
[182] India's only plutonium-reprocessing plant at the Maharashtran site in Trombay was shut down in 1975.

been dismissed as decadent and insensitive to the true concerns of the people. Indira Gandhi was more aware of public sentiment than any other member of her government.

In the following two years, pressures on Indira increased to the extent that she had to lift the Emergency and announce general elections, which promptly lost to the Janata party and its leader, Morarji Desai. Desai represented the old guard of political leaders who started their careers in the independence movement; accordingly, he felt committed to the ideas of India's founding fathers as regarded foreign policy. He condemned nuclear weapons as symbols of an international system which was determined by military power, thereby appearing somewhat more Nehruvian than Nehru's had ever been. The particularities of the Indian nuclear policy process enabled him to assert his position against his pro-bomb political environment. With his government becoming increasingly unstable, Desai softened his rhetoric while still adhering to the exclusion of further nuclear testing. After he resigned in 1979, his successor, Charan Singh, was more preoccupied with domestic issues. His indifference towards international issues gave the nuclear scientists and the strategic elites the room to manoeuvre in shaping India's nuclear policy. Rumours about the progress of the Pakistani nuclear programme renewed India's determination in the nuclear field.

6.4. Developing Nuclear Weapons Capabilities

6.4.1. Changing International Patterns

During the enthusiastic celebration of the 1974 Pokhran test, and even during the programme's slow down in the mid-1970s, the crux of the test was largely ignored by the political leadership as well as the public: its strong impact on the Pakistani nuclear programme. While the nuclear programme of Pakistan had been launched in the 1950s, until 1974 its military application was rather ineffectual. This pattern changed after India's 'peaceful nuclear explosion'. After Pakistan's defeat in the 1971 war, the Indian nuclear test of 1974 further contributed to the strategic imbalance between India and Pakistani. The determination with which Pakistan sought to catch up with India's nuclear programme began to seep into the broader public debate in the late 1970s and greatly contributed to the renewed engagement of the Indian political leadership since 1980. In retrospect, India's first nuclear test might be assessed as the major – if not the first – impulse in the action-reaction dynamic driving India and Pakistan towards nuclear (and missile) capabilities. This emerging competition was one of several factors contributing to a fundamental change in India's security environment. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution in 1979 altered the geo-strategic power balance in the region and caused a revision of the superpowers' involvement. For US American strategists, the abrupt loss of Iran, its main outpost in the region, and the simultaneous expansion of Soviet power into Afghanistan created the exigency of a renewed military alliance with Pakistan, despite recent attempts by the Carter administration to follow a tougher line against Pakistan in the course of its strict nonproliferation policy. In the eyes of the Indian elite, the US government's

pragmatic approach to power politics discredited its nonproliferation efforts on moral grounds.

India found itself in the comfortable position of being able to fend off Western criticism of its nuclear programme by pointing to US military assistance to Pakistan. Parallel to the US-Pakistani rapprochement, news of large scale Chinese assistance to the Pakistani nuclear programme influenced the Indian nuclear debate. These developments ended the cautious reconciliation process between the two countries that had emerged in the mid-1970s. The public debate on national security became increasingly discomposed, in some instances even paranoid, descrying a threatening Sino-Pakistani-American axis surrounding India. After having been ignored until the late 1970s, the state of the Pakistani nuclear weapons programme was now exaggerated. Pakistan was thought to be able to test a nuclear device in 1982[183]. Indira Gandhi, who had returned to power in 1980, responded to this perceived strategic dilemma in two ways: First, she sought a revitalisation of Indo-Soviet ties, and second, she reinstated the priority of India's nuclear weapons programme on her agenda.

6.4.2. The Return of Indira

India's nuclear programme was not revived until Indira Gandhi's return to power in 1980, after rumours spread about Pakistan's increasing progress in the nuclear field. This was somewhat ironic, as Pakistan's nuclear programme had been greatly intensified after India's nuclear explosion in 1974 and had grown rapidly since the mid-1970s -- just as India's programme lost steam. Then, in 1980, India resumed its programme under the impression of an increased nuclear threat from Pakistan. This episode shows the fatal action-reaction dynamics that were set in motion once the Pandora's Box of nuclear proliferation had been opened.

When Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, she was confronted with widespread social unrest. Secessionist movements in Punjab and in the Northeast threatened India's integrity. The resumption of the nuclear programme was welcomed by Indira in order to gather public support for the troubled central government using the perceived threat from Pakistan. However, similarly to 1974 and 1998, this strategy failed to have much effect: Domestic issues continued to remain paramount.

During the early 1980s, Indira's normative aversion to nuclear weapons was steadily replaced by her pragmatic sense of power politics. For the domestic audience, she rhetorically assumed the position of a determined leader of a proud and powerful nation. The nuclear build up was again instrumentalised as the key symbolic issue within this depiction. To the outside world, Indira preferred more cautious language and downplayed the nuclear issue. She was obviously trying to avoid similar repercussions to the aftermath of the 1974 test.

[183] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p. 218.

With the Realist argument on their side, the nuclear scientists regained their self-confidence and relaunched the nuclear weapons programme in 1981. Clearly, India did not want to miss the opportunity again, as it did in the mid-1960s, to advance its programme at a time when the international attitude towards India's nuclear efforts was particularly favourable.
In 1983, Indira Gandhi formulated the basic paradigms of India's foreign policy in what came to be known as the 'Indira Doctrine'. The cornerstone of this doctrine was the self-definition of India as the regionally dominant power of South Asia. The main objective was to limit the influence of the super powers and China in the region and establish a network of bilateral relationships with the other South Asian states.

Table 6.3.: Chronology of India's Nuclear Course, 1980 - 1986

Year	International Events	Domestic Events	Technological Achievements
1980		Indira Gandhi returns to power	Commissioning of safeguarded Rajasthan-II nuclear power reactor
1981			
1982			
1983		Homi Sethna to Raja Ramanna	Launching of India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) Commissioning of unsafeguarded Madras I nuclear power reactor
1984		Indira Gandhi is assassinated. Rajiv Gandhi new Prime Minister	
1985			Commissioning of unsafeguarded Madras II nuclear power reactor Commissioning of unsafeguarded plutonium reprocessing plant at Kalpakkam Commissioning of unsafeguarded ultracentrifuge uranium enrichment plant at BARC Commissioning of unsafeguarded Dhruva research reactor at BARC Commissioning of unsafeguarded Fast Breeder Test Reactor at Kalpakkam
1986	MTCR announced in 1987		

At the same time as Indira's new guidelines for India's foreign policy were implemented, the idealistic interlude of the Carter administration ended and tough power politics was reintroduced by his successor, Ronald Reagan. By rhetorically maintaining India's non-aligned and neutral status, Indira skilfully played off both superpowers. In 1982, the nuclear scientists were prepared for further nuclear testing in Pokhran, and though Indira approved

the tests in late 1982 or early 1983, she revoked her decision less than 24 hours before they were planned to take place[184].

While the nuclear programme gathered momentum, domestic political turmoil again superseded the nuclear issue on the agenda of India's political leaders. As before, the lower political priority did not cause a slow-down of the nuclear build up, but instead gave the scientists more room to shape the programme without interference from decision makers[185].

6.4.3. Towards Technological Breakthrough

After the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984, her son Rajiv Gandhi took office as Prime Minister. Rajiv largely inherited his mother's general position on the nuclear issue. Like Indira, Rajiv Gandhi avoided openly proclaiming India's intentions in building the bomb. Instead he maintained the 'nuclear option' rhetoric – that India did not have a nuclear weapons programme as such, but simply engaged in developing the option to acquire capabilities if needed. He insisted on India's commitment to nuclear disarmament on moral grounds, and at the same time, projected India's self-styled image as a strong regional power. The semantic distinctions made in the 'nuclear option' rhetoric, albeit without any practical meaning, allowed him to maintain at least nominally the high moral standards of his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru.

The most significant change occurred in the technical status of India's nuclear build-up. To understand this change, one has to look at the differences in personality between Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. Indira was, at least in the second phase of her reign, a skilled leader in the Machiavellian vein who knew exactly what the nuclear issue was about – in both strategic and politico-symbolic terms. Rajiv was, on the contrary, rather unaware of the shrouded nature of the nuclear issue. His interest in the technical over the political side of the nuclear issue corresponded to his personality. Until the death of his younger brother Sanjay in 1980, he was rather disinterested in political affairs and committed to his job as a pilot. The death of his brother, designated by Indira Gandhi as the heir of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, in a plane crash abruptly ended Rajiv's aviation career and pushed him into the political arena. After his mother's assassination in 1984, he found himself (almost involuntarily) Prime Minister of India.

Under Rajiv Gandhi, the programme moved from mere symbolism towards actual applicability; that is, towards its weaponisation. His passionate interest in technological innovation, while contributing to the increasing modernisation of India's armed forces, collided with several of his political interests. Being a novice in international affairs and facing an overwhelming quantity of domestic problems, he tried to avoid any international discord.

---

[184] For this episode in India's nuclear decision-making see: Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; pp. 446.

[185] In fact, the period after India's first nuclear test in 1974 was the only time when political disengagement did slow-down the programme. This was because the political decision to lower the priority of the nuclear issue was connected with an explicit directive to the scientists to stop the programme for the time being.

The cornerstone of the new direction for the nuclear programme was the development of delivery vehicles for nuclear warheads. India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP), which had already been initiated by Indira Gandhi in 1983, witnessed substantial progress in the mid-1980s. In February 1988, the first test of the indigenously developed 'Prithvi' missile, a liquid-fuelled short-range ballistic missile with a range of 150-250 km, was successfully conducted. One year later, India tested the first version of the 1500 – 2500 km medium-range 'Agni' ballistic missile[186]. The technological breakthroughs for the development of both missile systems had been achieved in 1985 and 1986, respectively, just before the supplier countries of missile technology agreed on the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 1987, aimed at restricting global proliferation of missile technology[187]. The regime was motivated by the signatory states' understanding that the main difficulties of the proliferating states involved not so much the construction of the nuclear warhead itself, but rather the development of appropriate delivery vehicles. Effective non-proliferation measures would therefore require the control of missile technology. However, the conclusion of the MTCR came too late to slow down India's missile programme significantly, as the development of its Prithvi and Agni missiles was already well underway. At the same time that India's missile programme produced its first results, the development of nuclear capable aircraft intensified, creating an airborne nuclear delivery system by the late 1980s[188].

The progress in India's nuclear weapons programme benefited from Rajiv's ideologically unprejudiced approach to international politics. He was one of the few state leaders in the polarised world of the 1980s able to maintain good relations with both the USA and the Soviet Union. Due to his adeptness on the international scene and low-key, non-provocative handling of the nuclear issue, India was able to procure nuclear technology from both blocs. Technological cooperation with the US further benefited from the change in government that saw the Reagan administration come to power in 1982, resulting in a paradigm shift in U.S. American nuclear policy. Rather than pursuing a strict nonproliferation course, the new administration focused on export promotion of the nuclear industry and Cold War geo-strategy. Throughout the 1980s, the U.S. government certified Pakistan's non-possession of nuclear weapons in compliance with the Pressler Amendment, despite increasing doubts among American legislators. In addition to large scale conventional arms exports to Pakistan since the early 1980s, the Indo-American arms trade also bloomed after Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Washington in 1985, particularly in the field of scientific and technological cooperation.

In sum, India's nuclear programme witnessed a clear turn towards the development of actual applications in the mid-1980s. These developments paved the way for a more

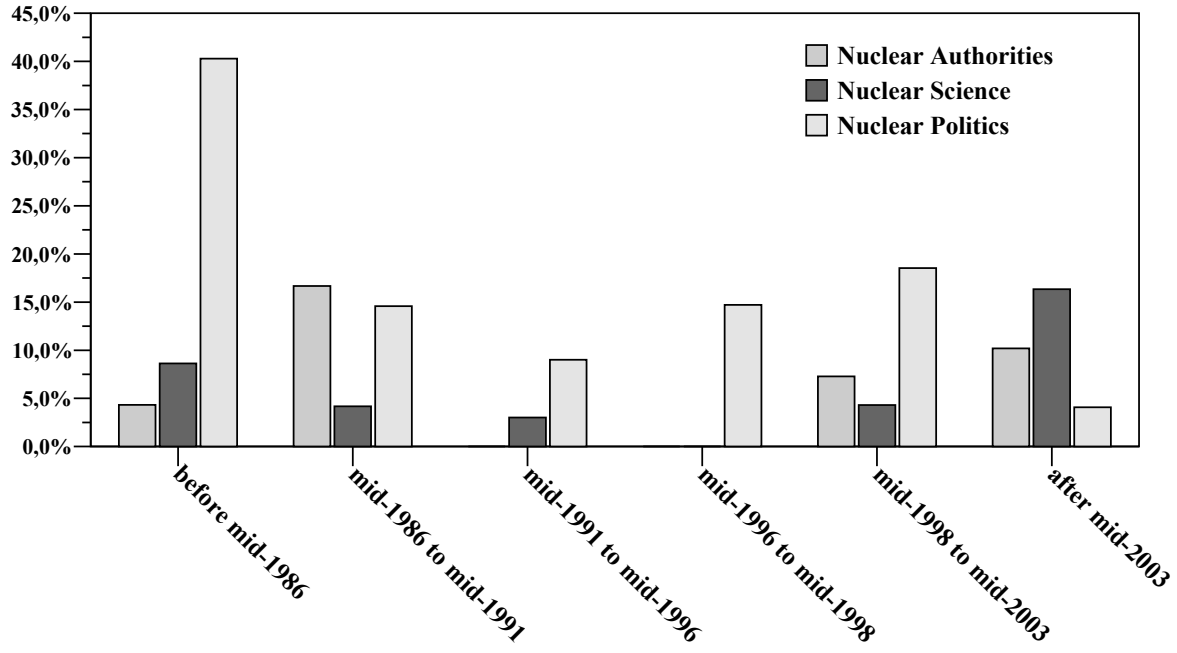
[186] Jones, Rodney W.: op.cit.. 1998; p. 111.
[187] The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) set export restrictions on technology of missile with a range of more than 300 km and a payload of more than 500 kg.
[188] based on British-French Jaguar, French Mirage 2000 and Soviet MiG-27 and MiG-29. (source: Jones, Rodney W.: op.cit.. 1998; p. 115).

security-oriented debate, which was about to emerge in the course of the upcoming Brasstacks Crisis in 1986.

7. Structure and Process of India's Nuclear Policy Making

In the following chapter, the complex system of domestic factors and decision-making processes within the Indian polity as are addressed as intervening variables to India's international behaviour. The chapter is structured into three sections: nuclear authorities[189], nuclear science[190], and nuclear politics[191].

Chart 7.1.: Frequency of Articles on Domestic Issues (in % of total sample)



As Chart 7.1. shows, domestic issues played only a marginal role during the decisive years of India's nuclear course between 1991 and 1998.

While issues dealing with the domestic policy arena enjoyed a high degree of attention before mid-1986, its overall significance gradually decreased thereafter. Aspects of the scientific and technological realm within the nuclear field are frequently addressed before 1986 and after 2003, but hardly play any role during the narrowly defined period of analysis from 1986 to 2003.

Those articles concerned with nuclear authorities, or for that matter, with the institutional framework in which formal nuclear decision making takes place, include either reform

[189] corresponds to variable 1 'Institutional Framework' (see table 4.2.)
[190] corresponds to variable 2 'Science and Engineering / Nuclear R + D / Self-Reliance' (see table 4.2.)
[191] corresponds to variable 3 'Domestic Policy Arena' (see table 4.2.)

proposals (usually heralding processes of institutional reforms) or include a wrap–up of completed institutional reforms. As Chart 7.1. indicates, three major institutional reforms took place during the period of analysis: the first in the aftermath of the Brasstacks Crisis of 1986, the second in the aftermath of the Pokhran tests of 1998, and the latest in 2003.

7.1. Nuclear Authorities

7.1.1. Formal Nuclear Decision-Making

According to the Indian Constitution of 1951, Part V, §53 (2), "... the supreme command of the Defence Forces of the Union shall be vested in the President and the exercise thereof shall be regulated by law"[192]. However, no law exists which defines the extent to which the President executes his power as formal Supreme Commander of the Indian forces, leaving it unclear whether his position has a merely representative function bound by decisions of the Cabinet / Prime Minister, or whether it carries some authority and power itself. In practical terms, the authoritative position of the Prime Minister in nuclear and strategic policy making has never been challenged by the President.

The most important advisory body to the Prime Minister is the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, consisting of four key cabinet ministers. After the nuclear tests of 1998, the National Security Council was established in an effort to institutionalise the decision-making process in the strategic realm further.
The legislative branch of the government has little formal power in the state's strategic policy-making. Since the mid-1960s, few Lok Sabha plenary sessions on this issue have taken place. Overall, and parliament has proven rather ineffective in checking and balancing government decisions.
The institutional framework of the nuclear programme was laid down in the Atomic Energy Act of 1948, amended in 1962 and 1987. The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was established as the main body responsible for the development of the nuclear energy sector.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs never had much influence on nuclear decision making, but it played a crucial role in presenting India's nuclear policy to the international public, as well as representing India in international non-proliferation and arms control bodies. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), mainly in charge of the missile programme, is allocated to the Defence Ministry. In both the DRDO and the Defence Ministry, all key positions are strictly in civilian hands.

The most remarkable feature of Indian nuclear decision-making is the almost complete exclusion of the military. Similar to most democratic countries, the Indian constitutional framework puts the military under tight civilian control. Many scholars regard these rigid constitutional provisions as one of the reasons why India has been able to maintain its democratic order since independence, in contrast to most other post-colonial states.

[192] The Constitution of India, Part V, §53 (2).

However, the exclusion of the military from Indian strategic affairs goes far beyond the normal democratic constraints. Until 1998, no (effective) institutionalised military advisory body existed. Strategic thinking was mainly done by bureaucrats of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the community of scientists and engineers involved in arms development. This institutional structure partly explains why India's nuclear programme was designed to simply 'build the bomb', with few thoughts on how to actually use it.
The BJP government created the Strategic Policy Group in 1999, which included all three service chiefs. Its main task was to assist the newly created National Security Council in developing strategic doctrines and deployment postures.

7.1.2. Institutional Flaws and Imprudent Nuclear Decisions

Until 1998, policy-making in the nuclear realm had been traditionally dealt with in an ad hoc, personal manner by India's Prime Minister. His or her decisions were based on the advice of key cabinet ministers, the leaders of the defence scientists' community, and strategic policy advisers. In addition, a limited group of civilian bureaucrats within the Indian government had been vested with substantive institutionalised power. This group comprised what Ashley Tellis describes as "India's civilian security managers – i.e. India's elected political leadership and the senior bureaucrats who occupy critical institutions such as the Prime Minister's Office, the Cabinet Secretariat, and key ministerial departments (e.g. Finance, Defence, and Home)."[193].

Formally, supreme strategic decision making was done by the Cabinet Committee for Political Affairs (CCPA), supported by the Cabinet Secretariat and the ad hoc Secretaries Committee. Within the nuclear realm, short and medium term decisions were predominantly made within the Atomic Energy Commission. In M. V. Ramana's view,

> [u]nlike most policy matters where the cabinet has the ultimate authority, the agency in charge of nuclear affairs is the Atomic Energy Commission, which was constituted under a special act of parliament, and is composed primarily of scientists and dominated by the top leaders of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE). The DAE was set up in 1954 under the direct charge of the Prime Minister. In addition to the head of the DAE, it has 'been a tradition for several years to have the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Secretary, Chairman & (managing director of the) Nuclear Power Corporation and Director, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) as members of the AEC'. Further, the structure of the DAE is hierarchical and not conducive to open dissent. Thus, even if junior scientists had qualms about working on some project, they would have few alternatives.[194]

[193] Tellis, Ashley J.: "India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal" RAND Publication 2001; p.6.
[194] Ramana, M. V.: op.cit.. 2003; pp. 213, 214.

Beyond these institutional structures, the chain of informal decision making was basically non-institutionalised and remained prone to personal motives and perceptions. The weaknesses of this kind of policy making became obvious during the preparations and aftermath of nuclear and missile testing, when India's *corps diplomatique* -- members of parliament and even members of the cabinet -- were often found to be uninformed and unprepared. Their unintentionally fallacious statements caused substantial displeasure in other capitals. In particular, the incoherent public appearance of the Indian government after the nuclear tests in 1998 made the need of reform in those institutions concerned with the nuclear issue apparent. Further, the almost complete exclusion of the military from nuclear decision making put India into an exceptional position within the community of nuclear weapons states. Pressures emerging from the public debate and partisan considerations of political actors had had a growing effect on the policy making process since the nuclear issue entered the broader Indian polity in the late 1960s.

Due to the excessive secrecy in which the nuclear programme was embedded, the public debate on the issue proved to be rather uninformed and, as a consequence, highly volatile. Therefore, most criticism of the institutional framework for nuclear decision making (before the Brasstacks Crisis of 1986) focused on the problem of secrecy, as shown by an Indian Express article in April 1986:

> [o]ne of the most significant points to emerge from the Defence debate in the Lok Sabha this year was the Prime Minister's statement that it is proposed to review and rationalise the system of classification so as to avoid excessive secrecy on security issues. This is overdue, as an informed public is a great asset which can enhance security by making it possible to ask the right questions, critically evaluate policy, and ensure true accountability.[195]

This commentary, made in early 1986 before the outbreak of the Brasstacks Crisis, shows that policy makers did have insight into the disadvantageous effects of secrecy on the efficiency and accountability of the country's nuclear decision-making institutions. In 1986, however, the willingness to reform these institutions did not go beyond the empty formulation of good intentions. Next to the problem of secrecy, the ineffectiveness of defence planning and weapons procurement was a further point of criticism.

The lack of military and strategic expertise in India's defence policy-making, which would eventually become the focus of criticism in the mid-1990s, barely attracted attention in pre-Brasstacks times. Sporadic and contentious commentary disputed creation of a single Commander-in-Chief for the three services. The 1947 abolition of the post was motivated by fears that a powerful Commander-in-Chief could develop political ambitions, thereby endangering India's young and still fragile democratic structure. The longer India's independence remained intact, the more experts demanded the reintroduction of a top position in order to improve the efficiency of military strategic planning. A. L. Venkanteswaran summarised caveats of the opposition as follows:

[195] N.N: "Stronger Sinews". In: Indian Express, April 11th 1986.

> Service requirements cannot be decided purely from the military angle. There are administrative and financial considerations too, besides foreign policy implications, all of which cannot be left to professional Service officers alone... . Defence Ministry officials cannot certainly have the military knowledge possessed by their counterparts in the Services. It is not necessary – it may even be fatal – for them to have it. For a similar reason, nobody has suggested that the Ministry of Civil Aviation should be officered by pilots and air traffic controllers; the Home Ministry by police officers, intelligence experts and crime detectives; and the Health Ministry by doctors and nurses. The officers in these ministries – which are also vital for the sustenance of the Armed Forces in peace or war – have not been doubted as unwanted thick layers.[196]

Venkanteswaran's case for the continuation of strict civilian control over military affairs reflects the attitude of the majority of strategic thinkers and policy makers in the 1980s. When it comes to the role of nuclear weapons in India's strategic policy making, however, his recommendations do not offer any expedient solutions. As a consequence (and cause) of the weapon system's uniquely external status to the armed services, the effective development and implementation of integrated deployment strategies was prevented. Even worse, it severely complicated the effective technical development of these weapons for military strategic requirements.

7.1.3. The Post-Brasstacks Debate on Institutional Reforms

In the late 1980s, several major events and changes in India's strategic environment took place, including: the Brasstacks Crisis (including its nuclear dimension) in 1986-87, the IPKF debacle in Sri Lanka in 1987, and the looming cessation of the Cold War, a wider debate on necessary reforms to adjust India's strategic policy making was thus triggered, allowing adaptation to the international system. The need to institutionalise strategic decision making became particularly apparent during the Brasstacks Crisis, where these deficiencies almost unintentionally caused the outbreak of a war with Pakistan. In Perkovich' view,

> [t]he Brasstacks crisis also revealed the danger in India of excessively centralized and personalized prime-ministerial decision making. Rajiv Gandhi had intensified the centralization of power begun by his mother. As the authors of Brasstacks and Beyond concluded, during the crisis he made 'major decisions in a personal capacity, without the concerned bureaucracy properly examining the issues involved'. Once matters got dicey, Rajiv took over and largely excluded military, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of External Affairs officials from his deliberations. This led to moves that exacerbated the danger. The liabilities of this type of decision making are greater in nuclear policy, where prime ministers and top scientists tend to exclude others from deliberations. This has generally led to

[196] Venkateswaran, A.L.: "Why a defence ministry?" In: Indian Express, May 25th 1984.

> cautious policies, but at the exceptional moments when major decisions were made, as in 1974 (and 1998), the lack of analysis and strategy led arguably to negative outcomes. Some defence scientists and experienced civil servants in the prime minister's office began to professionalize nuclear decision making after 1982, but India still lacked a durable system.[197]

The impetus of the emerging debate came from General K. Sundarji, the former Army Chief responsible for the Brasstacks manoeuvres and the handling of the subsequent Crisis. In 1989, Sundarji suggested the creation of a National Security Council (NSC) as the central strategic policy making body.

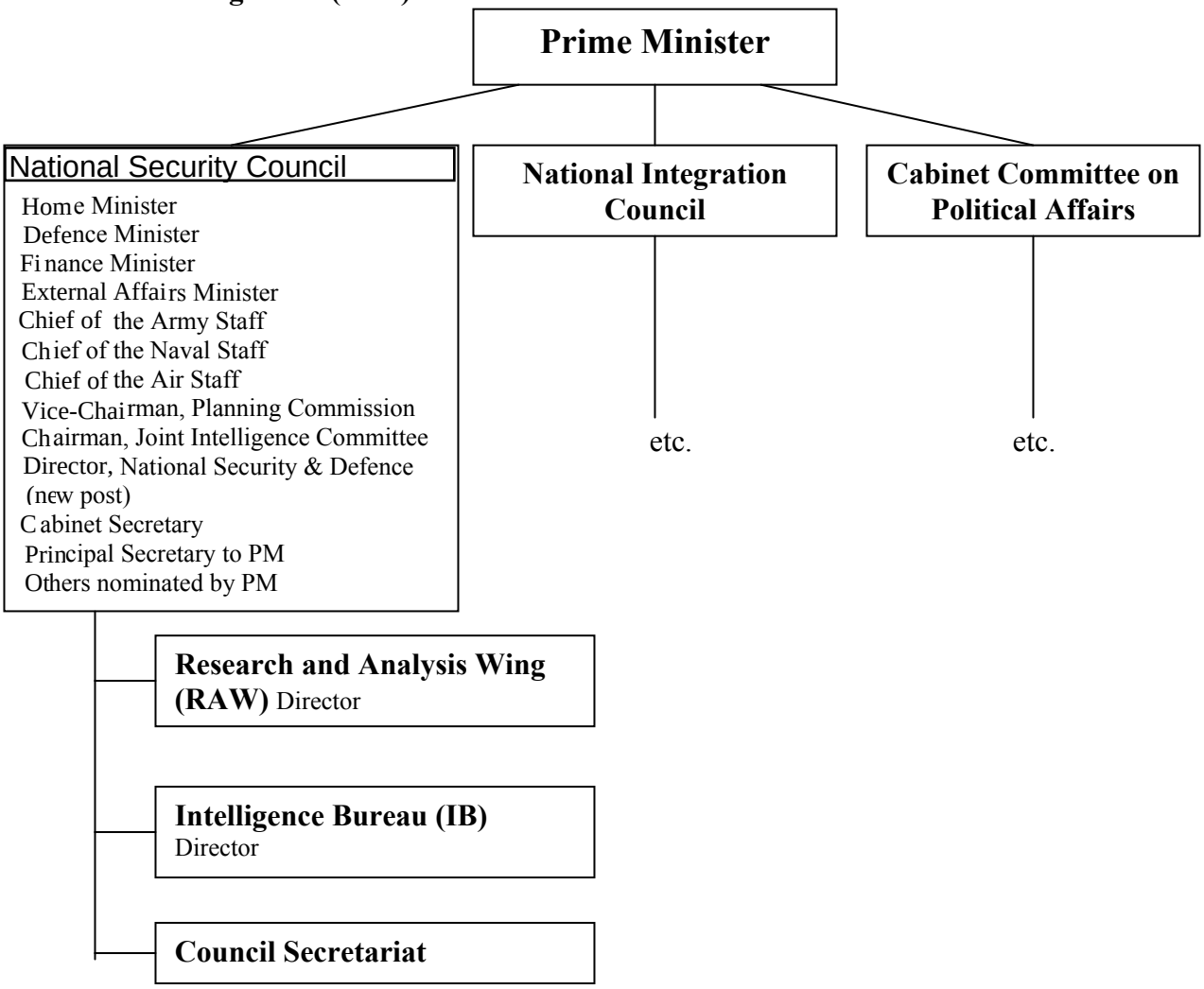
Sundarji's suggestions were seized on by several strategic commentators, most prominently B.S. Raghavan, K. Subrahmanyam, and Manoj Joshi.
Raghavan suggested the creation of a National Security Council, thereby stressing India's enhanced international status;

> The need for integrated security policy planning arises, particularly in the case of India, from some of the concomitants of the role of the region's policeman rubbing off on it (the Defence Minister, Mr. K.C. Pant's disclaimer notwithstanding) and the outside world's perception of it as an emerging great power with only the superpowers and China as real challenges to it.[198]

Raghavan's estimation of the international perception of India's status appears to be (at for the time of its publication) wishful thinking, as the dominant image of India remained that of a poor, underdeveloped Third World Country that was economically, technologically and militarily backwards. The effort to redefine India as an emerging power was still confined to certain sections of India's strategic and foreign policy elite.
In a follow-up article, Raghavan draws a blueprint of a modified structure of India's security policy making institutions. The cornerstone of his reform proposal is the creation of a National Security Council.

[197] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1998; pp. 281,282.
[198] Raghavan, B.S.: "Security Policy Planning – filling in the gaps". In: The Hindu, August 11th 1989.

Chart: 7.2.: Reform Proposal of India's Security Making Institutions by B.S. Raghavan (1989)



Source: Raghavan, B.S.: "National Security Council – format and charter to suit Indian conditions." In: The Hindu, August 12th 1989.

Raghavan's blueprint already showed several structural features of the NSC which would be created a decade later. Two aspects of his proposal are noteworthy: First, he does not mention the creation of a Joint Commander-in-Chief of all three services, thus ignoring the main feature of the pre-Brasstacks-Crisis' discourse. Second, he suggests introducing a law under which the President would decide whether India should acquire nuclear weapons on the advice of the Cabinet, following the recommendations of the NSC.

In reference to K. Sundarji's and B.S. Raghavan's call for the creation of a NSC, K. Subrahmanyam explains why the government has so far failed to implement the necessary reforms:

> It is not for want of submission of proposals to the authorities concerned. The reasons are to be traced to the country's political culture and the structure of its Cabinet Government, the civilian bureaucracy and the armed forces and their methods of functioning.[199]

Subrahmanyam continues to illustrate how India's 'political culture' has caused suboptimal strategic policy decisions by referring to historic events:

> There was no discussion on the international implications of carrying out the peaceful nuclear explosion [PNE] of 1974. The result was the Prime Minister developed cold feet after the only test and yielded to the arguments of her aid-addict advisers who hardly understood the game of international tradeoffs between economic and strategic considerations... . This political culture of secret, personalised functioning without members of the Cabinet sharing responsibility or exerting their weight on Cabinet decisions which is the crux of collective Cabinet government reached its nadir on June 25, 1975 when Emergency was declared without any justification being offered and without the members of the Cabinet with one exception asking a question. A political culture in which Cabinet Ministers act as dummies cannot have a viable National Security Council to take long-term security and foreign policy decisions.[200]

K. Subrahmanyam's frequent writings on strategic affairs in India's main dailies proved invaluable for their straightforwardness as well as their impact on the ongoing elite discourse. He criticises India's strategic policy making culture by presenting anecdotal evidence from Morarji Desai's tenure as Prime Minister:

> The Private Secretary [of Morarji Desai] conducted his own foreign policy and nuclear policy such as dealing with Israel and initiating a proposal for a joint Indo-U.S. study on fullscope safeguards. These were gross violations of the principle of joint Cabinet responsibility.
> Just on the eve of his departure to attend a U.N. special session on disarmament Mr. Morarji Desai in the course of a Cabinet meeting, without the item being on the agenda, just read out a few lines from his forthcoming U.N. speech, renouncing all future nuclear tests. As usual no one else said anything. However before he reached New York the President, Mr. Sanjiva Reddi, sent him a message telling him that it would not be appropriate to make such an announcement in the U.N. special session. Mr. Desai ignored it and delivered his lines renouncing any future Indian tests. Subsequently under pressure from Parliament he tried to make some distinction between nuclear t."[201]

---

[199] Subrahmanyam, K.: "Why no National Security Council." The Hindu, August 22nd 1989.
[200] ibid.
[201] ibid.

Subrahmanyam's anecdote vividly illustrates the political dynamics behind the often intriguing semantics in India's nuclear debate, from Desai's distinction between 'nuclear tests' and 'nuclear blasts', over Indira's distinction between 'nuclear tests and 'peaceful nuclear explosions'[202], to the distinction between 'developing nuclear weapons' and 'developing a nuclear weapons option', by all Indian Prime Ministers from Jawaharlal Nehru to I.K. Gujral.

The core problem for long-term strategic decision making in India is, according to Subrahmanyam, that policy makers are unwilling to concern themselves with the issue:

> [I]n spite of efforts by individual Ministers, service chiefs and senior bureaucrats it has not so for [sic.] been possible to have an integrated decision making structure for long term national security policy making. The underlying reason is that no Prime Minister, from Jawaharlal Nehru down to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, had felt the need for such a structure... . That ad hoc decision making is costlier than coherent long term policy making does not seem to have worried Prime Ministers and most of the Defence Ministers. It is also quite possible that Prime Ministers who have seen their Cabinet colleagues approve decisions without bothering to study their implications or even knowing what it is they are agreeing to ... may have developed a cynical attitude towards structured decision making.[203]

In contrast to the widespread consensus among India's strategic elite about the benefits of a democratic structure for strategic decision making, Subrahmanyam takes a remarkably critical position, breaking a taboo from the security afforded him by his status:

> It is not being argued that nothing can be done to improve our decision making procedures and structures in national security. While it is possible and necessary to undertake various steps in that direction it has to be recognised that there are very serious constraints arising out of the limitations of our democratic system at its present stage of evolution and the kind of leadership it produces.[204]

Unlike K. Subrahmanyam, Manoj Joshi expresses his strong confidence in India's cabinet government. He explicitly warns about placing the NSC outside of parliamentarian control, as it would bear the risk of 'extra-constitutional functioning'. The blueprint Joshi develops for a tentative NSC resembles Raghavan's earlier draft. More than other commentators, Joshi focuses on the newly emerging pressures for nuclearisation in the South Asian strategic environment:

> [s]ince 1985, various official pronouncements have declared that Pakistan has the nuclear bomb. Whether or not it does, the fact is that it has a programme that has

[202] actually K. Subrahmanyam himself confidently adheres to the euphemistic expression 'peaceful nuclear explosion'.
[203] Subrahmanyam, K.: op.cit; The Hindu, August 22nd 1989.
[204] ibid.

> been worked upon for quite some time now and India cannot but work with the assumption that Pakistan is a nuclear armed country. The proliferation of missiles in South-West Asia and the Pakistani tests last year only strengthen the argument that the Indian security environment is rapidly undergoing a change. What this means for the country or the world cannot be determined by an individual or a group. It requires deliberation within the institutional framework of the Government. Unfortunately such a framework does not exist. This is one of the many qualitatively complicated tasks that the new National Security Council has to address itself to.[205]

Because of the strategists' debate on the issue, the government finally picked up on the idea of a NSC. However, the design for such a body, as envisaged by Prime Minister V.P. Singh, did not improve the existing structures significantly. As Manoj Joshi commented,

> [t]he NSC (as planned by V.P. Singh) is new wine in old bottle. The NSC itself is nothing but the CCPA (Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs), the Strategic Policy Group nothing but the Secretaries Committee with a new hat and the NSC Secretariat nothing but the good old JIC (Joint Intelligence Committee). The Prime Minister, Mr. V.P. Singh, has strongly defended his proposal and has said that it will not violate the principles of Cabinet Government and supremacy of Parliament. However, he may have missed the central point. The decisions of the NSC will be as good or as bad as the policy options that are placed before it.[206]

The downfall of the V.P. Singh government stopped the reform initiative in its tracks. After the 1991 Lok Sabha elections and the return of the Congress Party to power, his successor Narashima Rao put any reforms of India's strategic policy making institutions on ice, instead continuing the traditional ad hoc, informal approach. When Rao caved in to the scientists' request to prepare for nuclear testing, he did so without any formal declaration and apparently without consultation of any strategic advisory body.

The failure of the institutional reform debate in the post-Brasstacks period to produce any results illustrates the general dilemma of India's strategic decision making: the *laissez-faire* attitude of the political leadership in their refusal to make clear decisions as long as they were not pressured to do so. Consequently, a situation arose in which the political decision-makers did not determine the dynamics of India's nuclear course, but only reacted to them.

7.1.4. The Post-Pokhran Institutional Reforms

During the reform debate of the late 1980s / early 1990s, the strategic analysts had recommended setting up institutional bodies that would develop white papers for India's strategic planning. Based on their recommendations, the Indian government would then decide whether to go nuclear. However, the Indian government did exactly the opposite: It

[205] Joshi, Manoj: "Framework for Security Planning." In: The Hindu, January 29th 1990.
[206] Joshi, Manoj: NSC: "Form, not Substance." In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1990.

made (purely on political grounds) the final decision to conduct the test and only afterwards created a body that would review India's strategic policy making. The task force was created exactly one month before the actual testing on April 10th 1998, yet after the go-ahead had already been given. While many scholars interpret this chronology as an indication of the government's indifference towards strategic aspects, this study goes one step further and suggests that the government intentionally waited until the political decision to test was irreversible before setting up the task force. The fear was clearly that a profound strategic review would suggest something different. In other words, it was less an act of careless indifference, but an act of systematic preclusion.

The three-person task force assigned to review India's strategic policy was chaired by K. C. Pant, a former Defence Minister in the Congress government who had rejected all reform initiatives and had left the Congress Party in early 1998. The time between the creation of the task force and the nuclear tests was mainly used by Pant to smooth the way for the events to come. When India's Defence Minister George Fernandes made his anti-Chinese remarks a few days before the tests, (grossly distorting the threat scenario of Chinese missile, naval and air wing preparations around India[207]), K. C. Pant added:

> We are surrounded by missiles and there is no reason why the work that our scientists have done to develop missiles should not be carried forward... . There is a need for this country having a minimum credible nuclear deterrence. And this option is growing at the time.[208]

These remarks reveal two important features of the nuclear discourse immediately before Pokhran II. There was a strong tendency among a significant portion of India's strategic elite to see India as being 'surrounded' by a threatening regional environment. The Indo-Chinese rapprochement of the previous years did not decrease these fears, but on the contrary, it increased the threat perception: the process was viewed as part of a malicious Chinese strategy to subdue India. Additionally, Pant's perception of the scientists' work illustrates the general way in which strategic planning was done in India: Nuclear weapons were not developed to satisfy India's strategic needs, but the other way around: In 1998 India's strategic planners demanded a strategic assignment of their nuclear weapons after development. In the semantics of India's strategic discourse, now that India's 'nuclear option' existed, K. C. Pant urged the government to 'exercise this option'.

Next to K. C. Pant, the task force included the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission (future foreign and defence minister Jaswant Singh) as well as Jasjit Singh, the director of India's leading government-sponsored strategic think-tank, the Institute for

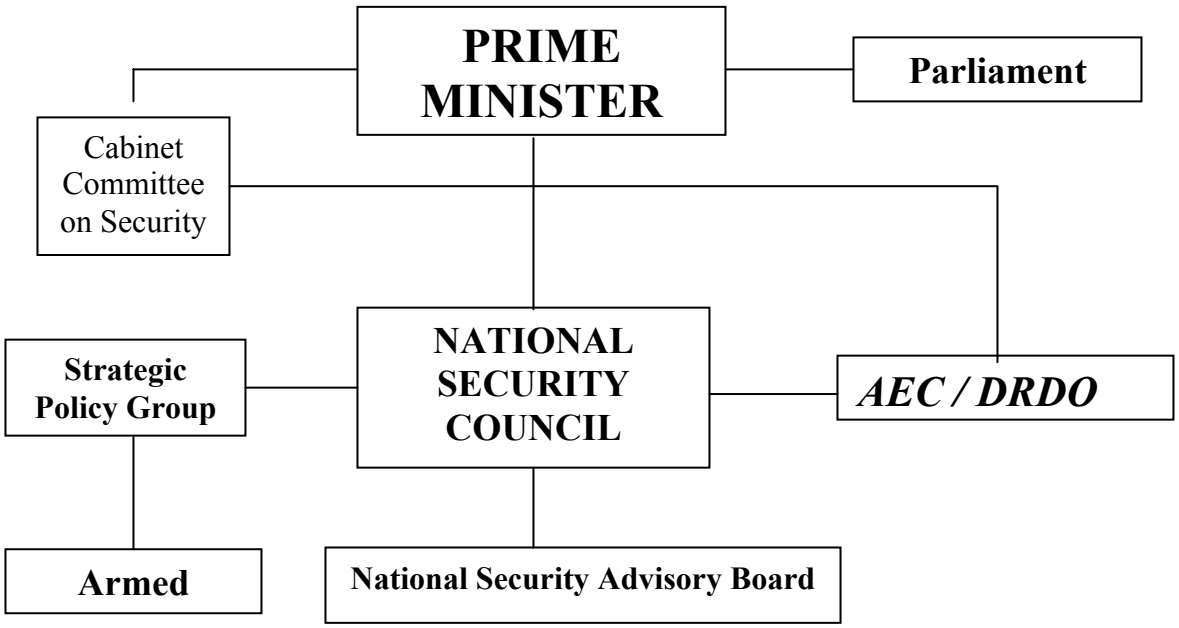
[207] It remains unclear whether K. C. Pant and George Fernandes knew about the pending nuclear tests. While it is somehow hard to believe that the defence minister did not know about the nuclear tests one month before the event, several scholars plausibly suggest that this was actually the case. George Perkovich claims that Fernandes was informed only two days before the tests, while the three service chiefs learnt about the decision in only 24 hours before the tests. (see: Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1998; p. 415.).

[208] Interview with a private TV network, cited from N.N: "China bigger threat to India than Pakistan: defence minister". In: Agence France Press, May 3rd 1998.

Defence Studies and Analyses. The prime task of this group was to design a blueprint for the National Security Council (NSC), which would then work out a strategic defence review.

On the recommendations of the task force, a National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) was established next to the creation of the National Security Council in late 1998. The advisory board, consisting of several members of India's strategic elite, soon submitted a Draft Report on the Indian Nuclear Doctrine[209], which became the basis of India's strategic policy planning. The creation of these bodies contributed to an increased transparency in India's strategic discourse. Furthermore, it increased the strategic expertise informing policy decisions.

Chart 7.3.: Strategic Decision Making in India after the Institutional Reforms of 1998/99



The Strategic Policy Group (SPG) was established to assist the National Security Council, consisting of all key cabinet members, , in which political administrators on the secretary level and the chiefs-of-staff of the three services, in assessing India's defence requirements. The creation of the SPG was an attempt to increase military-strategic expertise in the government's decision-making and to improve the effectiveness of interaction between political decision making and the military. Many strategic thinkers criticised this structure as inadequate for India's newly emerging strategic challenges. Alternatively, K. Subrahmanyam suggests merging the HQs of the three services with the ministry of defence:

[209] "Draft Report of National Security Advisory Board on Indian Nuclear Doctrine", http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/CTBT/nuclear_doctrine_aug_17_1999.html .

> The Indian system is not a satisfactory one. The chiefs are not able to do justice to both their roles as operational commanders of forces and chief planners of future requirements of the services and its long-term preparedness. There is a good case to separate the two functions, devolve the operational responsibilities to theatre commanders and merge the service headquarters with the ministry of defence. In that set-up, the civilian defence secretary will deal with budget and accounts, coordination with other ministries and states and foreign procurement. The service chiefs will look after housekeeping of the services, professional advice to the defence minister and long-term defence planning.[210]

Interestingly, Subrahmanyam reverses the main argument of those opposing the merger of civilian defence making institutions with the military command. According to them, such an action would carry the risk of the military interfering in political affairs and endangering India's democracy. Subrahmanyam counters these fears by claiming that the control (in Subrahmanyam's words: 'subjugation') of the armed forces by the civilian bureaucracy and its political leadership leads to a politicisation of the forces, which would likewise pose serious risks to India's democracy:

> Any resourceful defence minister should interact intensively not only with his civilian bureaucracy but also his service chiefs and senior officers of the armed forces on a day-to-day basis. Only then would he be able to function effectively without being influenced unduly by one or the other. Our democracy has been safe because of the apolitical nature of our! armed forces. If armed forces were to be politicised because of civilian ineptitude there are serious risks to our democracy.[211]

While the basis of these fears appears questionable, Subrahmanyam's claims nevertheless prove to be quite effective for invalidating his opponents' main argument.

In the weeks and months following the tests, the government was preoccupied with repairing the diplomatic damage caused by the inapt handling of the test and its aftermath, particularly continuous abusive commentary by its lugubrious defence minister. During this time, the foremost task of the National Security Council was to adjust the parameters of India's strategic policy making to the enhanced international status India was thought to have achieved through its self-declaration as a nuclear weapons state. According to V. Sudarshan,

> [t]he review will undoubtedly take into consideration that India's role in the region will have to be redefined in a manner that is consistent with New Delhi's claim to its altered nuclear status. This status no doubt should affect its perception of its altered strategic frontiers. It would be illogical to suggest that the strategic frontiers

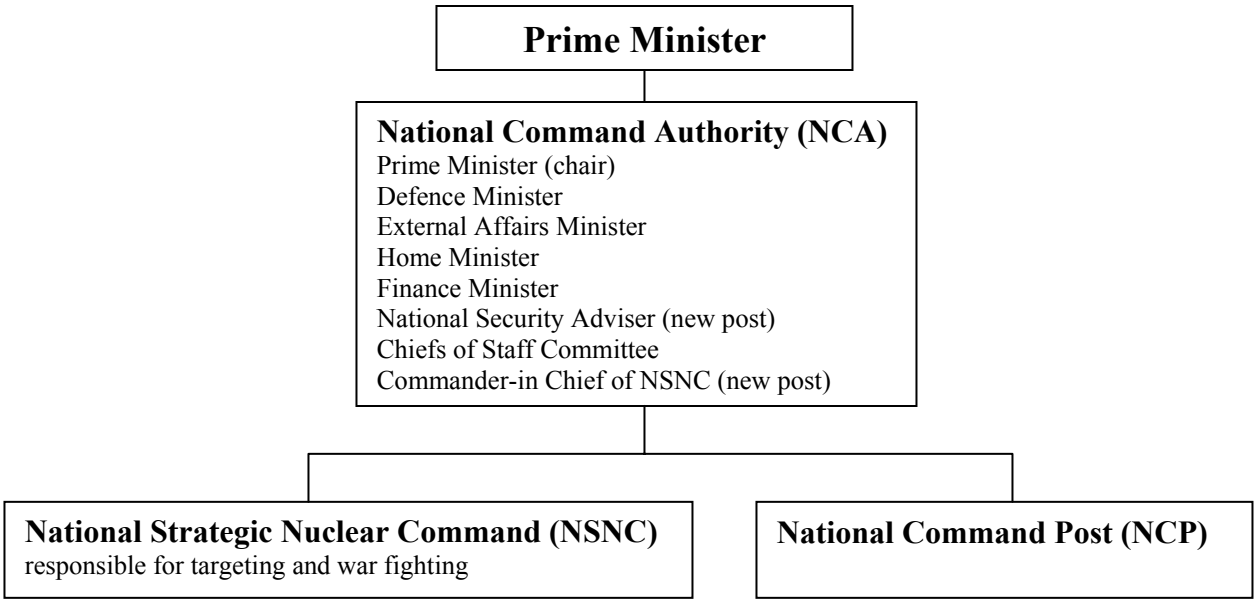
[210] Subrahmanyam, K.: "Chain of Command – Insulate armed forces from politics." In: The Times of India, December 21st 1998.
[211] ibid.

of the country have not changed in any material and political manner after the nuclear tests.[212]

Next to the need for an official nuclear doctrine, the possession of nuclear capabilities implied the need for an institutionalised chain of command and control. For this purpose, the Planning Directorate of the Armed Forces developed a white paper that was subsequently approved by all three services.

The guiding principle of the white paper was the absolute control of nuclear weapons by the political leadership. Furthermore, the paper suggested the creation of a National Command Authority (NCA), chaired by the Prime Minister that would bear sole authority over the use of nuclear weapons.

Chart 7.4.: Suggested Nuclear Command and Control Structure (1998)



Source: Singh, Manvendra: "Who should control nuclear button? Armed forces have a proposal." In: Indian Express, September 1st 1998.

7.1.5. Consolidating Nuclear Command and Control

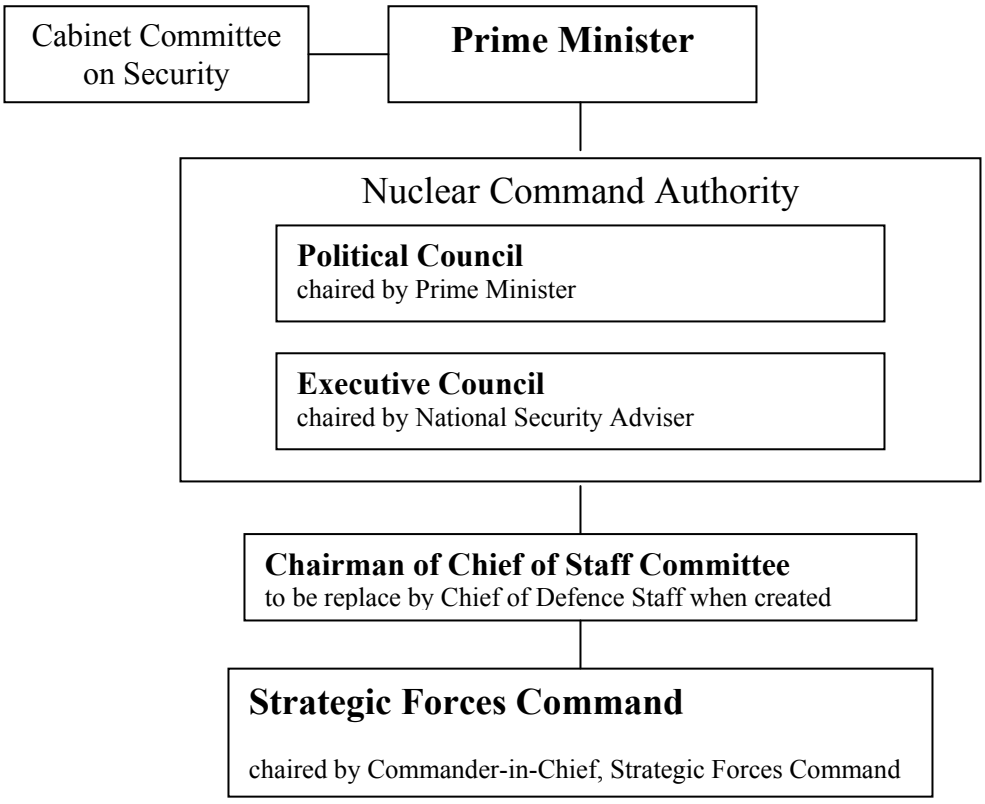
The Planning Directorate' recommendations were implemented gradually. In late 2000, the task force submitted its final report. In early 2001, the Group of Ministers (GoM), comprised of the four key ministers of Defence, External Affairs, Home, and Finance, submitted its own report to the Prime Minister that summarised several reform proposals proposed since 1998. On the suggestions of the GoM report, the government created an

[212] Sudarshan, V.: "The strategic review that never was: Freelance policy makers." In: Indian Express, April 14th 1999.

Integrated Defence Staff as well as a Defence Intelligence Agency. In its attempt to create a Chief of Defence Staff, it faced some resistance from the services, who feared a loss of authority.

In January 2003, the government finally decided to establish a Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) with the highest competency for nuclear weapons. The NCA is structured into the Political Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, and the Executive Council, chaired by the National Security Adviser to the Prime Minister. Next to the Nuclear Command Authority, the post of a Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Forces Command was established as the responsible decision maker for nuclear deployment and warfare.

Chart 7.5.: Nuclear Command Structure established in January 2003



Sources: Pandit, Rajit: "India all set to set up nuclear forces command." In: The Times of India, December 30th 2002.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Nuclear Command Authority comes into being." In: The Hindu, January 5th 2003.
N.N: "Nuke button rests in the PM's hands." In: Indian Express, January 5th 2003.

The reform of the command and control structure was largely welcomed by India's strategic elite as a necessary, long overdue step for consolidating India's strategic institutions and increasing the deterrence credibility of its nuclear capabilities. According to V. R. Raghavan,

> [t]he creation of the Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) brings into effect a longstanding requirement. The Government has done well to announce its coming into being. It formalises what was essentially a set of unstructured arrangements among senior member of the politico-military-scientific establishment. An increasing number of doubts were being expressed about the commitment of India's leadership to effective nuclear weapons management. The announcement sets at rest some doubts over nuclear issues, reiterates the promises made by the Government internationally and incorporates doctrinal issues listed in the draft nuclear doctrine.[213]

Parallel to the introduction of the NCA, the government gave official status to the Nuclear Doctrine drafted by the National Security Advisory Board in 1999. With a single exception, the official doctrine remained unchanged from its draft version: The comprehensive no-first-use posture of the draft was softened by introducing the option of a nuclear first strike in the case of an attack with biological or chemical weapons. This mitigation of the no-first-use option, one of the cornerstones of the defenders of India's moral exceptionalism, went unnoticed by most strategic analysts, and even deliberately ignored, such as by K. Subrahmanyam: "New Delhi is not going to plan a nuclear attack and under its 'no first use' doctrine will only respond to an attack"[214]. Considering the accuracy with which Subrahmanyam addresses every detail of the doctrine in his article, it is difficult to fathom why he avoids explaining the most important aspect of the doctrine, that is, what kind of attack would trigger India's nuclear response.

Jasjit Singh goes one step further by indirectly questioning the validity of the no-first-use option:

> We also must objectively assess what would be the scenarios where India would need to use nuclear weapons first, warranting a first-use strategy and its attendant costs? A significant military setback, if not a decisive military defeat, or surprise breakthrough by the enemy with conventional forces, are two possible theoretical contingencies. But these could happen only if we allow our conventional military capability to go down to unacceptably dangerous levels.[215]

In other words: The no-first-use option is valid only as long as India has superior and victorious conventional forces. This logic reduces the concept of no-first-use to absurdity. Despite its flaws, the idea of a 'valid-until-revoked' no-first-use option gained some popularity among the hawkish sections of India's strategic elite:

---

[213] Raghavan, V.R.: "Nuclear building blocks." In: The Hindu, January 7th 2003.
[214] Subrahmanyam, K.: "Essence of Deterrence." In: The Times of India, January 7th 2003.
[215] Singh, Jasjit: "A no-first-use doctrine for better security: Controlling the nuclear genie." In: The Indian Express, January 8th 2003.

> [T]he 'no first use' policy is indicative of strength for the same reason that reserving the option to strike first is a sign of weakness. Again, a 'no first use' policy does not reduce our inherent capacity or capability to strike first if so warranted. The option to hit first always remains if the circumstances have so altered as to force a major change in our nuclear policy.[216]

The only critical assessment of the redefinition of the no-first-use option came from W.P.S. Sidhu:

> The most troublesome aspects of the SFC and the accompanying doctrinal pronouncements, however, are the ones related to the use of nuclear weapons to counter even a biological or chemical attack.... . [I]t is not clear which of India's potential adversaries are likely to use chemical or biological weapons in preference to nuclear weapons. Almost all of India's neighbours and potential adversaries have signed and ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) which not only prohibit the possession but also ban the use of these weapons.[217]

7.2. Nuclear Science

7.2.1. Between Science and Politics: The Scientific Establishment

As the previous section has shown, the structure of nuclear decision making in India underwent fundamental changes, going from a basically informal, non-institutionalised mode under Nehru to a sophisticated, full-fledged nuclear command and control structure under the Vajpayee government of 2003. Correspondingly, the role of the nuclear scientists changed significantly. Generally, the less institutional bonds existed, the more the scientific establishment was able to shape India's nuclear course and determine the country's strategic and international policy. The scientists were thus able to shape the direction of India's nuclear development for most of the post-independence era. This caused, according to M. V. Ramana, caused a certain degree of continuity in nuclear policy making:

> At the level of setting up the necessary infrastructure and the activities of the scientific and technological establishment one can discern continuity and a steady progression over the decades. This continuity is possible because nuclear scientists have been able to pursue programmes that diverge in subtle ways from proclaimed policy; this ability, in turn, is related to the structure of nuclear policy making and implementation in India.[218]

---

[216] Patney, Vinod: "Cutting through the nuclear fog." In: The Indian Express, January 15th 2003.
Patney overlooked the irony behind his remarks by suggesting a hidden first-use option just after having marked it as an expression of weakness in the previous sentence.
[217] Sidhu, W.P.S.: "A strategic mis-step?" In: The Hindu, January 13th 2003.
[218] Ramana, M. V.: op.cit.. 2003; p. 213.

Table 7.1.: India's Scientific Leadership

years	AEC*	DRDO**	BARC***
1947-1966	Homi Bhabha	Suri Bhagavantam	Homi Bhabha
1966-1971	Vikram Sarabhai	B.D. Nag Chaudhuri	Homi Sethna
1971-1983	Homi Sethna	B.D. Nag Chaudhuri	Raja Ramanna
1983-1987	Raja Ramanna	V.S. Arunachalam	P.K. Iyengar
1987-1990	M. Srinivasan	V.S. Arunachalam	P.K. Iyengar
1990-1993	P.K. Iyengar	V.S. Arunachalam	Rajagopala Chidambaram
1993-2000	Rajagopala Chidambaram	A.P.J. Kalam	Anil Kakodkar
2000-	Anil Kakodkar	Vasudev K Aatre (until 2004)	B. Bhattacharjee (until 2004)
		M. Natarajan (since 2004)	S. Banerjee (since 2004)

* Atomic Energy Commission
** Defence Research and Development Organisation
*** Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, prior to1967: Atomic Energy Establishment Trombay (AEET)

The unique position of defence scientists in India's strategic policy-making has its origins in the congenial relationship between Jawaharlal Nehru and Homi Bhabha. Bhabha successfully created the myth of nuclear science as the symbol of India's path to modernity:

> [w]ithout much sense of irony, Indians worship science, particularly nuclear science. The adulation of scientists is widespread among the Indian strategic elite. The Nehruvians see science as salvation, and the more rustic backwaters of the political and security elite agree and argue, as did Nehru, that India was a supremely advanced scientific state when the West and the Islamic world were mired in ignorance. For both groups, the nuclear program only reclaims India's birthright.[219]

The scientists' unique role further benefited from several favourable features of India's institutional set-up. The ad hoc decisions characteristic of India's Prime Ministers relied heavily on advice from experts. As an effective institutionalised advisory body for decision-making institutions (strategic advice from military personal was largely absent) did not exist until 1998, this gap was filled by the nuclear scientists and engineers, despite limited expertise in strategic and international affairs. The scientists profited from the enormous respect and authority they enjoyed among the political elite and the public. Their image perfectly fit the anti-colonialist and status-oriented principles of India's foreign policy.

India's nuclear scientists did not define their work in the context of security as part of the country's economic development. Showing an immense degree of hubris, they portrayed

[219] Cohen, Stephen P.: op.cit.. 2002; p. 16.

their nuclear achievements as one of the most substantial contributions to the greatness Indian civilisation. This attitude is reflected in a comment by Raja Ramanna, the chairman of India's Atomic Energy Commission from 1983 to 1987:

> There was never a discussion among us over whether we shouldn't make the bomb. How to do it was more important. For us it was a matter of prestige that would justify our ancient past. The question of deterrence came much later. Also, as Indian scientists we were keen to show our Western counterparts, who thought little of us those days, that we too could do it.[220]

Ramanna's statement contains all major features that contributed to India's nuclear build-up: the crucial role of prestige thinking, the 'historic' mission of by the nuclear scientists, the strong sense of inferiority and perceived discrimination vis-à-vis the West, and the extent to which nuclear achievements were seen as emancipation from the West. Throughout most of the history of India's nuclear programme, the scientists were able to set its agenda with little outside interference.

The scientists' role as single source of advice to the political decision makers was further strengthened by the complexity of the issue and the general indifference of India's political elite towards details of nuclear technology[221]. Homi Bhabha epitomised nuclear scientists as the avant-garde of India's scientific elite, leading the country on its path to modernity. This heroic depiction left little room for critical self-reflection on their work. Accordingly, self-doubts were nearly non-existent. Even until the present day, India's nuclear scientists are largely absent from those international fora in which science is critically debated, such as the Pugwash Conference. Dhirendra Sharma critically remarks that

> [it] is unbelievable that no Indian scientist signed the Pugwash declaration. Originally, Betrand Russel, the convenor of the conference, was invited by Jawaharlal Nehru to hold the first meeting in India. But Dr. Homi J. Bhabha, the chief science adviser to Nehru and the first chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), was not keen to be associated with the movement, which was believed to be inspired by 'fellow-travellers'. Consequently, India lost the honour of being the host of the conference. Later it was held at Pugwash, a village in Nova Scotia in Canada. Indian scientists still suffer from the Bhabha legacy and are allergic to all critical science movements.[222]

What is described by Sharma as a 'disease' afflicting Indian scientists is nothing than the scientists' own self-image, the basis of their self-defined *raison d'être*.

---

[220] Ramanna, Raja, quoted in Chengappa, Raj: Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to be a Nuclear Power. New Delhi: HarperCollins 2000; p. 82.

[221] This indifference can be observed during Parliamentary decisions on foreign and security issues, in which decisions are often prorogued due to too many absentees.

[222] Sharma, Dhirendra: "It is neither unscientific nor unpatriotic to oppose the bomb." In: Indian Express, January 1st 1986.

The *ad libitum* shaping of India's nuclear policy by its scientists remained largely unfettered by strategic or diplomatic qualifications. In 1966, when both Lal Bahadur Shastri and Homi Bhabha passed away within days of each other much of the basic knowledge of India's nuclear planning simply vanished. "It is impossible to know what the new prime minister believed the actual nuclear policy was. Shastri as prime minister and Bhabha as AEC chairman had shaped it, but there is no evidence regarding who else knew the whole agenda"[223].

When Indira Gandhi took over as India's Prime Minister in 1966, she did not have much idea of how to handle the nuclear issue. Her first decision was to choose Vikram Sarabhai, then head of the Indian National Committee for Space Research, as the new Chairman of the AEC. Sarabhai's exceptional approach to the nuclear issue, combined with Indira Gandhi's lack of knowledge, disrupted the previous course. An unusual period of nuclear restraint lasted until 1971, when Homi Sethna, a representative of the traditionalists among the nuclear scientific establishment, succeeded Sarabhai as chairman of the AEC. Further, the 1971 Bangladesh war -- considered a personal success for Indira Gandhi -- had significantly increased the Prime Minister's international profile and self-confidence. These new conditions returned India's nuclear programme to its pre-1966 track. Homi Sethna and Raja Ramanna, his successor as head of BARC, intensified preparations for a nuclear test explosion.

Sethna and Ramanna designed the nuclear test of 1974 as a mere show of force to demonstrate the genius of the individual scientists involved as well as the greatness of the nation as a whole. A wide consensus existed among international observers that India's claim of a 'peaceful nuclear explosion' was hypocritical, a cover for the nuclear weapons programme. This understanding clearly misses the point. While the main purpose of nuclear weapons testing is the optimisation of warhead designs for missiles, the Indian test of 1974 did not include such designs, nor were the scientists' plans for developing missiles in the near future. It was not conceived for the development of new ways to dig canals or mines. Its single motive was the demonstration of power.

A further expression of the scientists' self-depiction was their exclusion of political decision makers from the test preparations. Obviously, a formal approval by the political leadership was considered unnecessary; for the scientists, it was more a matter of informing the government rather than them for permission.
The Prime Minister's green light was solicited only few days before the actual test. P.K. Iyengar, one of the scientists involved in the test preparations and later the leading figure in BARC and the AEC, confirms the scientists' autonomy from political interference: "A couple of days before the event, the decision-maker in Delhi, Indira Gandhi, gave the green signal. Very few dignitaries were invited to witness the event. The team-spirit was high and the scientists were sure of their success"[224]. Interestingly, Iyengar speaks of the decision-maker as a single individual, ignoring the legislative branch altogether. After the test, Indira

[223] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p. 113.
[224] Iyengar, P.K.: "Twenty years after Pokhran". In: Indian Express, May 18th 1994.

Gandhi's decision to bring the scientists under political control caused quite a bit of disconcertment within the nuclear scientific establishment.

In the early to mid-1980s, two institutional developments further limited the AEC's ability to shape India's nuclear course. First, the development of further components for military applications, above all the missile programme in begun in 1982, was taken over by the Defence and Development Organisation (DRDO), which subsequently emerged as the second institutional pillar of the programme. The DRDO was institutionally placed within the Ministry of Defence, thus under much tighter governmental control than the AEC. Second, Indira Gandhi had learned from the 1974 experience and included consultation with a much broader group of experts and policy makers before making final decisions on the nuclear issue.

The ten years between 1983 and 1993 witnessed the coming and going of three AEC chairmen: Raja Ramanna, M. Srinivasan and P.K. Iyengar. After completing their respective tenures, they became very active in shaping public opinion through extensive publishing and commentary in India's media. They successfully maintained the 'nuclear scientists as national heroes' myth throughout the crucial 1990s in the face of continued setbacks in the civilian nuclear programme.

In 1989, Rajiv Gandhi was unseated by a corruption scandal on the acquisition of conventional military weaponry, ending the rule of Nehru-Gandhi dynasty for the time being, and paving the way for the emergence of a multi-party system in India. This system change had several ramifications for the country's nuclear programme as it amplified two of its major structural weaknesses: Firstly, governmental instability and shorter election periods made long-term strategic planning even more difficult than it had been in India's past. Secondly, the increasing frequency of elections further strengthened the politicians' tendency to instrumentalise the nuclear issue for electoral purposes, causing a further emotionalisation of the nuclear debate and increasing the myth's hold on the public imagination.

In 1991, government spending on the nuclear programme came under scrutiny over the course of the new government's economic reforms and its efforts to consolidate India's overburdened national budget. These changing conditions increased the pressure on the nuclear scientific establishment to justify its work. In effect, Rao's economy-first policy slowed down but did not stop the nuclear programme. With the collapse of the fragile coalition government looming and the opposition BJP openly playing the nuclear card for electoral purposes, Rao finally dropped his reticent stance and gave the scientists free hand to develop the nuclear programme. The scientists proceeded with the development of missile delivery vehicles and concluded preparations to conduct further nuclear tests. These were considered necessary for optimising the atomic chain reaction and making nuclear warheads suitable for missile delivery. Rao appears to have authorised these preparations personally, but stopped short of actually authorising the detonations[225]. While accepting

[225] on Rao's alleged authorisation, see: Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p. 365.

India's need for a nuclear deterrent, Rao nevertheless refrained from testing out of fear that negative international reactions -- including the imposition of sanctions -- would cause a major blow to the slowly recovering Indian economy and thereby endanger his programme of economic transformation. He followed the dual strategy of accommodating popular domestic sentiments by fiercely opposing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty while simultaneously calming the international audience by not stepping forward in the nuclear field. In 1993, R. Chidambaram succeeded P.K. Iyengar as chairman of the AEC. Chidambaram clearly moved preparations for nuclear testing, including the test of a hydrogen bomb, to the top of his agenda for the nuclear programme.

After the downfall of the Rao government in 1996, his successor Atal Behari Vajpayee authorised nuclear tests immediately, but withdrew his authorisation as soon as it became apparent that his government would not survive the upcoming vote of confidence. The following governments, led by Deve Gowda (1996-1997), and Inder Kumar Gujral (1997-1998), marked an exception in India's foreign policy. During Gowda's term, foreign policy for the first time ever was made not in the Prime Minister's office, but within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Then Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, who would himself become Prime Minister in 1997, developed a new doctrine for India's foreign policy based on regional co-operation and unilateral confidence building efforts. His careful diplomacy increased India's stature in and around the South Asian region. Towards Pakistan, his policy had the potential of breaking the vicious circle of mutual provocation, allegation, and misperception. Furthermore, he enjoyed increasing respect the new foreign policy among the domestic audience, disproving the conventional belief of the Indian political class that only an aggressive stance towards Pakistan could win domestic approval.

By 1997, this cautious policy had become increasingly ambivalent, particularly in the nuclear field. As late as 1996, Gujral reaffirmed that India had no intentions to weaponise its nuclear capability. As the head of an increasingly unstable coalition government and with fierce opposition from the scientists around Chidambaram, however, he was soon forced to revise his policy. While still rejecting nuclear tests publicly, he was not able or willing to stop or significantly slow down the scientists' work on the nuclear programme. When Gujral left office in 1998, preparations for the nuclear tests had already been completed. There was nothing left for his to do successor but push the button.

In the election campaigns of 1996 and 1998, the BJP's manifesto appealed heavily to national pride and prestige. India's self-respect, international status and military prowess were linked to the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Once in place, this instrumentalisation of the atomic bomb barred manoeuvring room on the nuclear issue. As he did in 1996, Prime Minister Vajpayee authorised nuclear tests immediately after his assumption of office in 1998.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1998 tests, public admiration of the nuclear scientific establishment reached its peak. The DRDO and AEC leaders in charge of the tests received the country's highest honours. Few voices raised critical questions about their work. Among these was Ramachandra Guha, who considered the hype surrounding the nuclear

scientists as a betrayal of the traditional values to which India's scientists were once committed. He starts his lament by comparing two quotes, one by Mahatma Gandhi in the aftermath of the Hiroshima tragedy, and the other by Atal Behari Vajpayee in the aftermath of the 1998 tests:

> " '*He who invented the atom bomb has committed the greatest sin in the world of science*' – Mahatma Gandhi, after Hiroshima.
> '*I extend my felicitations to all scientists and technologists who have made this possible, and say to them, 'India is proud of you*' ' – The President of India, after the recent tests at Pokhran."[226].

Guha continues his line of questioning: "[S]hould we shout 'Jai Vigyan' only when science makes a terrific noise, when it announces to the world that India yields to no one in the manufacture of weapons of mass execution?"[227]. Guha's reintroduction of Gandhian moral values remained unheard in the wave of public jubilance.

Once the dust had settled in the Rajasthan desert, the public celebration of the nuclear scientists gradually abated. During this phase of India's nuclear consolidation, a more realistic assessment of the strategic and international impact of India's nuclearisation began to cool the ardour for scientific achievements. Only in mid-2002, with the nomination of AEC Chairman Abdul Kalam for President, was unrestrained public enthusiasm revived. Public and political support for Kalam's candidature was overwhelming. "Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam is not only a brilliant scientist, but also a national asset as far as building India's nuclear capability is concerned. If Pakistan is at all scared of India, it's because of Kalam and his team"[228]. This comment, made by a commentator not belonging to the strategic elite as defined in this study, reflects the Pakistan-centric *vox populi* with regard to the role of nuclear weapons. Moreover, it gives a good impression of the extent to which the *vox populi* attributes the elevation of India into a respected and feared position to the heroic work of the nuclear scientists (despite their actual hesitation to develop militarily effective nuclear devices).
The pitfalls of this popular myth became apparent only a few days later. Kalam, himself a believer of the myth, claimed that during the recent crisis in Kashmir, only the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons had prevented war, thereby (unintentionally) corroborating Pakistani President Musharraf's similar belief. Kalam's remarks irritated many among the moderate strategic commentators:

> In endorsing General Musharraf's claim, our presidential candidate has done grave damage to the national cause when he stated that nuclear weapons – in Pakistan and India – have deterred war. If he has been misquoted, he must clarify it for public benefit. But if this is his scientific, objective assessment, then we all have a lot to worry about... . As the prospective constitutional head of this country, Kalam seems

[226] Guha, Ramachandra: "An incomplete iconography." In: Indian Express, June 1st 1998.
[227] ibid.
[228] Shukla, Rajiv: "One name for President to silence them all." In: Indian Express, June 15th 2002.

> to have undermined the very rationale of the policy of this government and the governments before this. He is, of course, entitled to his personal views. Bu, keeping in mind the position he is to assume, he needs to be careful when his public statement rationalises Islamabad's mythodology that nuclear weapons neutralise the conventional superiority of India and hence deters war... . We are a nuclear weapon state, and we need to ensure that people assuming new responsibilities in high positions are adequately briefed. Kalam, the humble man that he undoubtedly is, will need to remind himself that you do not ascend Vikramaditya's throne after filing nomination papers for the post of the head of state of the largest democracy in the world. Hence it would be important for him to get himself fully briefed on national security issues and the strategy to deal with the most complex challenge that the country is facing since independence.[229]

This remark shows the extent to which the nuclear discourse in 2002 had changed since 1998. Far from the submissiveness of earlier times, the commentator clearly points to the limited expertise of nuclear scientists in strategic affairs. His analysis reflects the strategic elite's increasing efforts to overcome the emotional, mainly prestige-oriented approach to the nuclear issue and engage in a more sober analysis of the impact of nuclear weapons on India's security. Following this newly emerging trend, the strategic elite appeared to be much less willing to accept the mythic position of the nuclear scientific establishment uncritically.

7.2.2. Self-Reliance and Indigenous Development

As previous sections of this study have shown, the nuclear scientists' *raison d'être* was strongly bound up with the symbolic meaning of nuclear technology, specifically India's aspirations to compete with Western countries in the fields of high technology and military power. This psychological phenomenon, which might be referred to as 'occidentalism' (orientalism is still seen by many of the elite as a major determinant of Western behaviour) was instrumentalised by the nuclear scientists in order to further their own aspirations. Crucial for the success of this instrumentalisation were the myths of self-reliance and indigenous development. Only if progress in the nuclear field could be achieved without help of the West would it prove India's technological equality. The more apparent it became that civilian nuclear power production would never become the advertised magic-potion for India's economic development, the more the scientists focused on military power as the tool with which India could join the ranks of the world's major powers.

The interrelation between the scientists' failure to contribute to economic development, their personal and national ambitions, and their creation of this myth, is expressed best by M.V. Ramana:

> Added to this is the fact that the DAE, like the larger scientific community in India, has had relatively few notable accomplishments. There have been, for example, no

[229] N.N.: "Unguided missile man." In: The Indian Express, June 21st 2002.

> Nobel Prices awarded to any scientist for work conducted in post-independence India. An important study of the scientific community in India found that most scientists were troubled by the marginal position of scientific activity in India in general, and of their own scientific research in particular. The lack of relevance, perceived or real, of scientific research to the actual problems of India further accentuates the peripherality of scientists and results in widespread demoralisation. The shrill rhetoric, especially on the part of the nuclear and missile establishments, about self- sufficiency and indigenous development is indicative of the desire for wider recognition. Building nuclear weapons and thereby being seen as serving a national priority by the elite has, therefore, been an answer to the larger failure on the part of the DAE to either produce world class science or provide cheap and reliable electricity.[230]

In the 1990s, the single most active member of the nuclear scientific community to propagate the myth through extensive publishing was M. R. Srinivasan, who chaired the AEC from 1987 to 1990 and served as secretary to the Department of Atomic Energy. In the following, Srinivasan's assessments and comments during this period are analysed in order to clarify the postulates and characteristics of the scientists' myth creation.

In an historic account of the early phase of India's nuclear programme, Srinivasan describes the high esteem India's nuclear scientists (including himself) enjoyed among their colleagues in Western countries:

> Looking back to the Fifties and Sixties, it is truly amazing how important India's presence was on the international nuclear diplomatic front. It was certainly due to the commanding personality of Homi Bhabha whether at the meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the U.N. Secretary General and later to the IAEA Director General or at the bilateral level with countries then most advanced in nuclear technology namely the U.S., U.K., France and Canada... . The principal reason why the scientists and technologists from these nuclear advanced countries had high regard for India arose from the rapid and dramatic progress in nuclear science and technology that was being made in India.[231]

Next to a high measure of self-confidence, these remarks betray the scientists' skewed take on the nuclear issue; that the interaction with other countries was not the business of India's political leadership, its diplomatic corps, or its military, but solely within the responsibility of the nuclear scientists.

More revealing of Srinivasan's understanding of the scientists' supreme position unclear diplomacy is an anecdote about an event that occurred in the wake of the NPT negotiations in the late 1960s:

---

[230] Ramana, M. V.: op.cit.. 2003; pp. 214, 215..
[231] Srinivasan, M.R.: "India's nuclear diplomacy I." In: The Hindu, June 25th 1993.

> L.K. Jha who was then Secretary to the Prime Minister accompanied Vikram Sarabhai to a number of important capitals for high level discussions. Jha had nearly succeeded in convincing Vikram Sarabhai that India should sign the NPT. Vikram Sarabhai had had a strong Gandhian influence in his early upbringing. However the early associates of Homi Bhabha, who were in influential positions in the nuclear establishment, prevailed upon Sarabhai not to support India joining the NPT.[232]

As an international treaty affecting India's security, one might expect the NPT to be signed by the executive (on the advice by experts in security and diplomatic affairs) and ratified by the legislative. In the India of the late 1960s, these procedures were reversed: The political leadership vainly tried to persuade the scientific leaders to sign the NPT, who nonetheless rejected it, taking very little time to weigh its strategic advantages. This illustrates the actual state of affairs at the time.

Srinivasan's account ends with a rather ambiguous statement on the general outlook of the nuclear programme:

> India's nuclear energy programmes have from the beginning been geared towards peaceful uses. These include electric power generation, use of radio isotopes and radiation in industry, medicine and agriculture. Much of the programme has been open at all times to visits from Indian and overseas scientists. Nearly all of his work is open for public scrutiny by way of publications of conferences and seminars, apart from reports placed before Parliament and those released to the public. The nuclear community has never hidden the fact that acquisition of peaceful nuclear technology also confers a certain degree of nuclear capability for national defence.[233]

Srinivasan's deliberations did not particularly correspond to reality, especially considering the excessive secrecy in which the nuclear programme was embedded, and the consistent efforts to deny a national defence aspect. At this stage, one might speculate on why Srinivasan, after initially repeating the myth of civilian intentions, softens this (almost categorical) claim by hinting at possible military applications. Two motives might have been at work. First, Srinivasan might have been aware of the rather poor performance in electric power generation and that the application of radiation in industry, medicine and agriculture might not be seen as sufficient to legitimise the enormous government spending on the nuclear programme. One of primary reasons for the setbacks in nuclear energy production had been the scientists' and engineers' overriding emphasis on indigenous development, a more cost intensive approach that constantly resulted in delays and shutdowns. Self-reliance was also induced by the increasing reluctance of Western suppliers to transfer their knowledge (due to India's refusal to co-operate in international safeguards and control regimes). In 1981 India's actual nuclear power capacity was less

[232] Srinivasan, M.R.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, June 25th 1993.
[233] ibid.

than one tenth of the originally envisaged target of the ten-year plan of 1971; by the mid-1990s, the output of India's nuclear power plants was only a quarter of 1981 targets[234]. Additionally, Srinivasan's comments, made in 1993, might have been aimed at paving the way for events to come, particularly the nuclear tests of 1998[235].

In subsequent accounts, Srinivasan gradually shifted his focus away from peaceful nuclear development towards weapons research. In 1995, he reinterpreted India's nuclear course to be a national endeavour of paramount importance aimed at providing security[236]. Within this reinterpreted account, self-reliance becomes the most crucial theme. Referring to the construction of India's first research reactor in the 1950s, which, due to the lack of indigenous expertise, had to rely on the importation of blueprints for British reactor designs and British fuel rods, Srinivasan writes:

> When India built its first research reactor, Apsara, in 1955-56, Bhabha decided it would be designed and built in India. All the equipment, including the control system, was fabricated in India. It is true that the fuel elements were obtained on lease from the U.K., but it was an Indian reactor.[237]

This reinterpretation of the origins of India's nuclear programme marks a gross distortion of reality. The motives behind this deception can only be understood in the context of the nuclear discourse of 1995, in which India's strategic elite reacted with humiliation and defiance to the conclusion of the (allegedly discriminatory and colonialist) NPT. Srinivasan concludes his account with a clear avowal of nuclear weapons for India:

> Can anyone really believe that India would have sought U.S. help in so important a matter as nuclear weapon capability?... . When the strategic analysts in Washington were busy studying U.S. responses to a nuclear China, the scientists and technologists in India were busy in the laboratories, workshops, manufacturing facilities and project sites to build up comprehensive nuclear capabilities. India would never have contemplated, nor will it in the future, to acquire status and power by riding piggyback on anyone. The task of the present generation of political leaders is to ensure that the capabilities created in the past are consolidated and further extended to other areas of high technology, especially where they are concerned with national security.[238]

By categorically denying that India would ever 'acquire status and power by riding piggyback on anyone', Srinivasan brings the *leitmotif* of the nuclear myth to a point. The whole purpose of nuclear technology, according to the nuclear scientists', was to bring

---

[234] Jones, Rodney W. et.al: op.cit.. 1998; p.113.
[235] Only five years after Srinivasan's cautious hint at possible military applications, Rajagopala Chidambaram, one of his successors as chairman of the AEC, was overwhelmingly lauded by an enthusiastic public for having brought nuclear weapons to India.
[236] Srinivasan, M.R.: "Self-reliance is the key." In: The Hindu, December 7th 1995.
[237] ibid.
[238] ibid.

status and prestige to the country. This purpose could only be achieved if India based its achievements exclusively on its indigenous genius. This logic explains Srinivasan's strong efforts in disavowing technology transfers even if such a claim appears doubtful, as in the case of the Apsara reactor.

Srinivasan's remarks also illustrate the gradual but fundamental change in the scientists' rhetoric during the crucial 1990s. While the scientists initially denied intentions to create military applications, in 1993 they cautiously admitted that military applications might have been created as a kind of by-product of the civilian nuclear programme. Finally, in 1995, Srinivasan et al. began to reinterpret the nuclear programme, now claiming that they had been wise enough to create a nuclear weapons option from the beginning in anticipation of the international events, which would eventually have forced India to take the step anyway. It is important to note that the nuclear scientific establishment was only able to make this rhetoric U-turn without a loss of face because of the nature of the Indian debate. In the mid-1990s, playing the nuclear weapons card was almost a necessity. In 1995, the rhetorical realignment was completed and the nuclear scientific community concentrated on preparing for tests, including that of a hydrogen bomb, and increased pressures on the government to finally declare India a nuclear weapon state.

Once the nuclear hype of the 1998 tests had abated, the appeal of the nuclear scientists' rhetoric started to fade. Two major developments hurried its decline. Next to the aforementioned evolution of the nuclear discourse towards a more level-headed appreciation of the issue, the reforms of 1991 not only gave new dynamic to India's economy, but also caused a fundamental change in India's society as a whole. Among India's elite, catch phrases like 'self-reliance' and 'indigenous development' which had been so successfully applied by the nuclear scientists until 1998, gradually lost much of their appeal, being too closely associated with the outmoded 'swadeshi' era.
Srinivasan wistfully laments the beginning of a new epoch:

> Until about a decade ago, all of us were proud that India produced its own power plants, petrochemical plants, refineries etc. All of a sudden, India has lost its commitment to self-reliant development. Now our newspapers and commentators are euphoric about how India is an attractive market for industries from the developed countries. Gone is the objective that we would be exporting capital goods and engineered products to other parts of the world. Let us by all means increase our software exports but let us not lose the gains made by the mastery of producing high technology products in the classical industries.[239]

Paradoxically, once the myth had lost much of its appeal, the debate on the future of civilian nuclear power gained new momentum. Unleashed from the ideological constraints that had refused international safeguards out of national pride, and considered technology imports humiliating, the cost calculations of nuclear energy production suddenly appeared much more beneficial. This renewed Indian interest in imports of nuclear technology

[239] Srinivasan, M. R.: "Our nuclear industry." In: The Hindu, April 14th 2000.

coincided with a relaxation of export controls by the member countries of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), as the nuclear industry faced a severe recession due to the gradual renunciation of nuclear energy by several Western governments. As Manpreet Sethi states,

> (n)o new nuclear plants have been built in the US over the last decade, despite a rekindling of interest. Consequently, a recession-ridden nuclear industry is trying to influence the government to tone down its proliferation concerns for the sake of better nuclear commerce. Market forces could compel Western governments to accept a certain laxity in export controls. This is even more likely since in several reactor-exporting countries. The present confluence of domestic needs and international factors, therefore, demand a fresh and serious look at nuclear power as a viable alternative source of energy.[240]

Manpreet Sethi's account shows the extent to which India's strategists had moved their focus away from the symbolist approach towards a market-orientation guided by cost-benefit analyses and problem-oriented thinking.

Yet another shift in elite perception involves the almost subliminal change in attitude towards Western non-proliferation policies. Once seen as the epitome of discrimination, colonialism , and unfairness, joint non-proliferation efforts -- such as the export control measures by the Nuclear Suppliers Group -- were now looked at much more favourably. Clearly, post-1998 India had increasingly identified itself with the 'nuclear haves', a change in perspective from outsider to insider. This change in attitude is best observed in Jasjit Singh's view on the matter:

> The irony is that our concerns regarding non-proliferation, environmental degradation, nuclear safety, and so on, are no different from those of the NSG. What comes in the way is the issue of our nuclear weapons acquired for our security without violating any international law or our own commitments to it. But if human development of a billion people (and the market it represents for developed economies) has to progress with any sense of priority, then a fresh look at the question of access to clean affordable nuclear energy becomes an imperative. This would require some changes in the working guidelines of NSG to deal with issues on a case-by-case basis. India obviously would have no objection to placing such reactors under international inspection and safeguards at best.[241]

Interestingly, the newly emerging debate on the benefits of nuclear energy was largely dominated by the strategic thinkers in and around the IDSA. That the nuclear scientific establishment was largely marginalised illustrates their overall loss of influence and weight in the nuclear debate during the nuclear consolidation in the new millennium

[240] Sethi, Manpreet: "Nuclear power can bridge the gap." In: The Indian Express, August 20th 2002.
[241] Singh, Jasjit: "Get clear about nuclear." In: The Indian Express, December 10th 2003.

7.3. Nuclear Politics

7.3.1. Nuclear Weapons and Partisan Politics

The pros and cons of nuclear weapons have been subject to public debate in India to a greater extent than in any other nuclear weapon state. This unique feature explains not only the strong emotionalisation of the debate, but also its lack of strategic depth. It further explains the 'keeping the nuclear option open' policy designed to accommodate various divergent views among the various parties and sections of India's polity.
When a broader public debate on the nuclear issue emerged in the mid-1960s, Nehru's vision of a morally superior foreign policy was supported by a vast majority of the public. The discrepancy between Nehru's restrained nuclear rhetoric and the progress of nuclear achievements created the space for several parties and political leaders to break the nuclear taboo and demand an open nuclear arsenal for India. Still smarting from the debacle of the Indo-Chinese war, the opposition BJS party launched an initiative in favour of the bomb. Because they controlled only 14 of 394 seats in the Lok Sabha (compared to 361 Congress seats) it was quite clear that the initiative would not enjoy a majority. It nevertheless had a significant impact on the general discourse on the matter, also signalling the end of Nehru's unchallenged position in foreign policy making. Within Congress, several members favoured the creation of a nuclear arsenal, but refrained from joining the opposition.

After Nehru's death in 1964, Lal Bahadur Shastri faced even stronger opposition to his continuation of Nehru's policies. The main reason that additional political parties did not play the nuclear card was the worsening economic situation in the country, particularly the severe food crisis of 1964 and its aftermath. Considering the desperate situation endemic of large portions of the Indian population, calls for generous spending on the development of nuclear weapons would have been highly immoral. The counter argument by the proponents of a nuclear weapons build up, that it is a state's top responsibility to provide security as a precondition for economic progress, was considered cynical by the majority of the public.

For parties within the mainstream political spectrum, the nuclear question was a two edged sword. Anxious to avoid criticism that they were ignoring the security needs of the country, they did not rule out the acquisition of nuclear weapons. On the other side, taking a clear pro-bomb attitude appeared equally unalluring, as it would have generating criticism that they were neglecting the economic hardship of the people. This ambiguity, as well as the fact that foreign and security matters traditionally played a marginal role in the voting decisions of India's electorate, caused most mainstream parties not to take any clear position on nuclear weapons at all.
Shastri finally, similarly to his predecessor and successors, maintained the state of nuclear ambiguity / indecision known collectively as 'keeping the nuclear option open'. This concept was fuzzy enough to appease the anti-bomb moralists as well as the pro-bomb nationalists alike, and allowed the nuclear scientists to ignore the political debate. It also

proved to be ambiguous enough to accommodate the rather pro-bomb course by Indira from 1971-1974 as well as Morarji Desai's anti-bomb course during the 1977-1979 period.

The parties' broad disinterest in the nuclear topic ended in the mid-1980s with the rise of the Atal Behari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani-led BJP. The party's success in increasing its of seats in the Lok Sabha, from 2 in the 1984 elections to 86 in the 1989 elections, was facilitated by a Hindu nationalist agenda that propagated a strong and powerful India. Nuclear weapons were the crucial element in manifesting India's increased ambitions internationally. According to M. V. Ramana,

> [t]he rise of Hindu nationalism or *Hindutva* in recent years is due to a new 'elite insecurity' arising from the increasing social and political assertion of marginalised groups and the uncertainties associated with economic liberalization. *Hindutva*'s answer to this is a quest for 'international status', through the deployment of symbolic gestures of 'great power status' such as the ability to acquire and test nuclear weapons. The May 1998 tests, or for that matter the destruction of the *Babri Masjid*, a 16th century mosque, in 1992, are acts that demonstrate how it envisions masking India 'strong'.[242]

In the mid-1980s, the objectives of the nuclear scientists and those of the Hindu nationalists converged. The nuclear weapons myth appeared to an appealing device for both achieving international recognition in high science and international status in military potency.
In July 1985, the BJP National Executive passed an unambiguous resolution at its meeting in Bhopal that demanded the immediate acquisition of a nuclear deterrent for India. While the Congress Party maintained its explicit course of nuclear ambiguity, the Janata Party, the Congress' main rival party at the time, acknowledged the BJP's success and sharpened its rhetoric on the issue. The Janata Party's response, however, did not clarify the ambiguity behind the nuclear weapons stance of the traditional parties. In its attempt to distance itself from Congress' obvious inaction, the party passed a resolution:

> While the Congress (I) is trying to divert the attention of the people away from their life of misery, poverty, unemployment and inflation by alluring them with post-dated cheques on the next century prosperity, it continues to mislead them by referring time and again to the possibility of invasion from across our frontier. It might be that the Congress (I) in order to hide its failure on the economic and social front, feels the need to cry wolf. But one might cry wolf too often.
> The Janata Party never indulged in this game and maintained the friendliest relations with Pakistan as well as China but it did not slacken its guard even for a moment. In all the sectors of defence, the Janata Party Government's constant endeavour was to keep our defence forces fully equipped. The party, however, feels that being a sovereign nation, India has the right to exercise its nuclear policy in full freedom.[243]

[242] Ramana, M. V.: op.cit.. 2003; p. 216.
[243] N.N.: "BJP, Janata, Lok Dal favour N-option. » In: The Statesman, October 16th 1985.

That the Janata resolution aims at clarifying the party's position on nuclear weapons, illustrates the dilemma in which most mainstream political parties were trapped. The Janata party first tries to satisfy the moralists' concerns by criticising the Congress government's failure to improve the situation of the poor. It then tries to accommodate the pacifists by demanding that India maintain 'the friendliest relations with Pakistan and China'. Finally, it tries to adopt the pro-bomb notion. The tricky question of why India needed nuclear weapons when it could neither afford them, nor justify them through its security environment, remained unanswered.

Generally, the transformation of India's political landscape into a competitive, multi-party system and the formation of large coalition governments affected the nuclear discourse. More and more parties instrumentalised the nuclear issue for partisan purposes, thereby increasing pressure to acquire the bomb openly. According to Stephen P. Cohen,

> [t]he medium-range political calculations seemed to have made it easier to reach a decision to go nuclear. It was not just that the BJP had come to power (both a Congress and a Janata government were apparently on the edge of ordering tests and certainly authorized the preparations for subsequent tests), but that all political parties from 1990 onward were more vulnerable to pressure on a variety of different issues from within their ranks and from coalition partners. This development, coupled with a larger shift away from opposition to nuclear weapons per se and the growth of militant 'nuclearism' (the belief that nuclearisation could solve a wide range of national, cultural, and strategic problems) created an environment in which the decision to go nuclear was domestically politically acceptable and, perhaps, politically essential for those on the Indian right.[244]

Until 1998, the only major political party that could credibly claim to have an unambiguous, clear-cut nuclear policy was the BJP. The Congress as well as the subsequent governments continued the policy of ambiguity. Nuclear decisions making was either non-existent, leaving the nuclear course in a state of political indecision, or it was made in a post-hoc manner to catch up with the *fait accompli* created by the scientists.

7.3.2. Pokhran II: Electoral Politics BJP Style?

Due to the aforementioned paralysis among the political class with regard to nuclear policy making, the discourse on nuclear weapons largely occurred outside the parliament as well as the party competition until 1998. India's opposition to the NPT and CTBT, as well as the general realization that the country should at last declare itself a nuclear weapon state, was not guided by a political directive, but grew out of the strategic elite's debate on the issue.

As in previous elections, the BJP was again the only major party to campaign with a clear and unambiguous position in favour of the bomb. The BJP position was openly supported

[244] Cohen, Stephen P.: op.cit.. 2002; p. 28.

by an increasing majority among India's strategic thinkers, particularly in the military, which considered the government's indecision as one of the major causes for India's poor performance on the international scene.
In an account of the BJP's position on India's security, published between the election in March/April 1998 and the nuclear tests in May 1998, Ashok K. Mehta states that

> while other parties were ambivalent about exercising their nuclear option, Brajesh Mishra, the BJP's spokesman for foreign affairs, was unequivocal: 'My party will make the bomb'. He derived the authority to go nuclear from the BJP's election manifesto – re-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons... . There could yet be many hiccups in exercising the nuclear option given that the Congress and United Front want to retain the softer option of ambiguity – to have the cake and eat it too.[245]

Taking difference to the 1996 manifesto, which had attached India's nuclear breakthrough to international developments, the BJP's 1998 election manifesto carried the clear and explicit message that, once in power, India would 'exercise the nuclear option'.

In the immediate aftermath of the tests, India's commentators identified dual motives behind the BJP's nuclear policy: one being its attempt to raise the country's status and prestige in the international arena, and the other in the domestic policy arena. These motives are summarised by Harish Khare:

> Now that the Pokhran bangs have been heard, it is obvious that the Prime Minister's own prestige stands enhanced. The troublesome allies will now be expected to show the Prime Minister the defence that is due to him... . The BJP leadership has reason to believe that the none of the political parties, particularly the Congress (I), would be able to frontally oppose the tests. Today's tests are of a piece of a thinking that aggressively believes in pursuing the BJP agenda, forcing the country and the political parties to oppose or support the BJP line. The tentativeness in the Congress (I) reaction is indicative of the dilemma faced by most political parties; the BJP will hope to capitalise on the new mood, first by consolidating the unity of the alliance and then by trying to take over the centrist political space.[246]

Harish Khare's comment exposes the dilemma in which the Congress party had manoeuvred itself. The Congress could rightfully claim credit for having advanced India's nuclear programme to a ready-to-use stage. However, this would unmask its decade long policy of nuclear ambiguity as a farce. On the other hand, due to the overwhelming public euphoria, it appeared politically prohibitive to criticise the BJP for having conducted the tests, thereby leaving public praise exclusively to the BJP.

[245] Mehta, Ashok K.: "Securing national interests, BJP style." In: The Indian Express, April 4th 1998.
[246] Khare, Harish: "A repudiation of nuclear apartheid policy." In: The Hindu, May 12th 1998.

In effect, the tests ended the ambiguists' muddling though and forced them to take a position either for or against the bomb. As Achin Vanaik commented,

> [i]n one fell swoop, the bomb tests have dramatically altered the terrain of discourse on the nuclear issue. The biggest victims of what has happened are not the anti-nuclearists. Though small. they remain an inescapable part of the debate and will not disappear as long as the nuclear weapons themselves do not. It is the ambiguists whose ranks have been decimated. Their perspective have been rendered meaningless, their future is non-existent, and its practitioners have simply been swallowed up. A few who are appalled may move towards the anti-nuclearist side, most will join the more ardent nuclearists. Yet amazingly, for decades and right up to May 11, the ambiguists represented both the large majority and the sober middle ground of decision-makers and decision-shapers on the issue. All it took was, in effect, a violent political coup by a party ruthlessly determined to transform the total character of Indian society to destroy their position.[247]

Achin Vanaik, one of the few critics of the nuclear tests, hoped that some of the 'ambiguists' might chose to join the nuclear opponents, though this was guided more by wishful thinking than a realistic account of their motives. The Congress party, as well as most of the United Front coalition, finally felt impelled to follow the BJP line and to welcome the tests as a national achievement. Most of India's commentators, still under the sway of national enthusiasm, did not view the Congress' turnabout as an act of political opportunism, but as an unselfish act of solidarity for in a time when India was facing large scale international repercussions. This view is reflected in K.K. Katyal's account:

> The government was well within its right to take credit for a decision which others could not or did not take. But it did not resist the temptation of taking political, partisan mileage out of the tests. This confirmed the fears of other parties. They could not be blamed that count but did they conduct themselves responsibly? Even before the offensive overtones in the BJP's post-test posture became known, they sought to question the 'timing' of the tests. They, it was clear, hesitated to align themselves with the pride that could, justifiably, be experienced by all Indians. Fortunately, the Congress (I) was prompt in correcting its stance. As the party president, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, told the Working Committee, the nuclear issue was a national, not partisan matter. The Congress (I), according to her, was not interested in the political fallout of the tests and the entire country, unitedly and solidly, supported the initiative. 'We recall with equal pride that successive Congress Governments have ensured that India's nuclear capability remains up-to-date so that our security is not compromised'. With the Congress (I) choosing not to strike any jarring note and a section of the United Front aligning itself with the national mood, almost the entire political establishment, it is hoped, will be in tune with the popular sentiment.[248]

[247] Vanaik, Achin: "Drawing new lines." In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1998.
[248] Katyal, K. K.: "Need for restraint." In: The Hindu, May 19th 1998.

The satisfaction of the majority of India's strategic elite with the Congress' admittance into the pro-bomb ranks stems from the widely expressed demand for a national consensus. This was thought imperative for effectively fending off international, post-test pressures on India, once again betraying the widely accepted of the nuclear breakthrough as a national act of emancipation and resistance against Western discrimination. "There are times when the main political parties have the duty to arrive at a national consensus through informal consultations and avoid public bickering"[249].

Other commentators, such as Subramanian Swamy, rejected the all-for-one rationale and offered instead a one-dimensional explanation for the events: "In the case of Pokhran-II, Mr. Vajpayee's purpose is his desire for political advantage"[250]. Representing the anti-bomb faction of India's strategic thinkers, Achin Vanaik indicates a conspiracy of India's nationalist right:

> The Sangh Parivar has shown by this act not only that it means what it says when it comes to the pursuit of its vision of Indian nationalism but that it has no democratic scruples whatsoever. The decision to test was (apart from Mr. Fernandes) not discussed or even shared beforehand with its coalition partners. An act of such momentous import was undertaken by the BJP alone, although on its own it has no public mandate even to rule... . Yet a powerful political force (which pretends to be only cultural) and which is not in government and is not democratically accountable to the Indian voter was privy to this decision and information – the RSS... . The implication of this secretive contempt for all fundamental democratic norms and the revealed closeness with which the RSS-BJP work together is nothing short of frightening. We have been forewarned. A battle for the very soul of Indian nationalism is being fought. They are out to usurp the nationalist discourse and dominate it with their communal, belligerent and Hindutva-related constructs of national security, national interests and national greatness.[251]

Vanaik's conspiracy theory illustrates the confusion in which the anti-nuclearists found themselves after the tests. Having taken an anti-Western (better: anti-American) position himself, Vanaik is unable to tackle the BJP's main argument for India's nuclearisation: its importance for the country's emancipation from Western dominance. Instead, he portrays India's nuclearisation as an act masterminded by the Hindu right, thereby neglecting not only the decade-long involvement of the Congress and most of India's mainstream political establishment, but also the leading role of the nuclear scientists and India's strategic community -- each of which group had followed its own agenda.

The Hindu-bomb theme was central to several other accounts on the issue. Kuldip Nayar saw a parallel between the destruction of the Babri Masjid and the nuclear tests: "The BJP

[249] Mohan, C. Raja: "Playing football with nuclear weapons." In: The Hindu, May 25th 1998.
[250] Swamy, Subramanian: "National security or Govt. security?" In: The Hindu, May 22nd 1998.
[251] Vanaik, Achin: "Drawing new lines." In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1998.

has never been straight. Its old habit is to bludgeon the nation into accepting a *fait accompli*. With the Babri demolition, it harmed India's image of a pluralistic society. This time they have detonated the bomb and pushed the country into an arms race"[252].
While criticism of the BJP's policy was rather lukewarm among most of India's strategic elite, their reticence ended after Pakistan conducted its own nuclear tests. Home Minister L. K. Advani's attempt to brand those strategists who considered Pakistan's policy as inevitable consequence of India's prior testing as 'the enemy from within', was largely disapproved even by those who had initially taken a favourable position to the BJP's nuclear policy.

In the perception of many, the BJP's attempt to exploit the post-test jingoism for its own partisan purposes had gone too far. V. Krishna Ananth even draws a comparison with the methods applied by Nazi propagandists:

> The war-mongering that the senior Ministers in the Vajpayee Cabinet resorted to and the manner in which the treasury benches heckled all those who spoke of the ominous signals from Pokhran vis-à-vis the normalisation of ties with Pakistan have for long been the language of the Sangh Parivar and are now becoming the language of the Government. These resemble so much the manner in which the Nazi brigade behaved in the *Reichstag* (German Parliament) in the early years of Adolf Hitler's rise to power... . The hysteria that is being built up, with the Prime Minister making it part of his everyday routine to address crowds in front of his residence and the public display of 'patriotism' by the Sangh Parivar's ranks through such exercises as signing in blood in support of the bomb resemble scenes witnessed in the streets of Berlin in the initial years after Hitler captured power.[253]

During the following weeks and months, the BJP toned down its jingoistic rhetoric as it became aware of its counterproductive effects. Instead, Prime Minister Vajpayee adopted a more statesmanlike attitude on the nuclear issue. Consequently, the Hindu-bomb argument -- was so emphatically advocated by the anti-bomb section of India's strategic elite in mid-1998 -- lost much of its sheen during India's nuclear consolidation.

In retrospect, the Hindu-bomb explanation appears too simplistic to explain the 1998 tests. In the aftermath of the tests, the BJP certainly tried to play the jingoistic card in order to gain popular support for its fragile coalition government. But considering of the large scale consensus in favour of the bomb, which emerged in India's nuclear debate throughout the 1990s, it becomes apparent that the support base for India's nuclear breakthrough was much broader than the Hindu right. As the further course of this study will show, domestic political developments might even have protracted, rather than accelerated India's decision to claim nuclear status.

---

[252] Nayar, Kuldip: "A critical nuclear divide." In: The Indian Express, May 26th 1998.
[253] Ananth, V. Krishna: "Jingoism, not nationalism." In: The Hindu, June 4th 1998.

PART TWO:

Nuclear Weapons and India's Security

8. Systemic Proliferation Incentives within the South Asian Region

8.1. The Structure of India's Regional Strategic Environment

Analyses exploring security-related incentives for India's nuclear build-up comprise either non-specified security threats in general or threats emanating from a specific neighbouring power as possible motives.
As shown subsequently, the group of security related articles is categorised into four variables: a) articles addressing non-specific threats; b) articles addressing India's nuclear doctrine formulation; c) articles addressing the nuclear threat from Pakistan; and finally d) articles related to the Chinese nuclear threat.

Chart 8.1.: Frequency of Articles on Security Related Issues (in % of total sample)

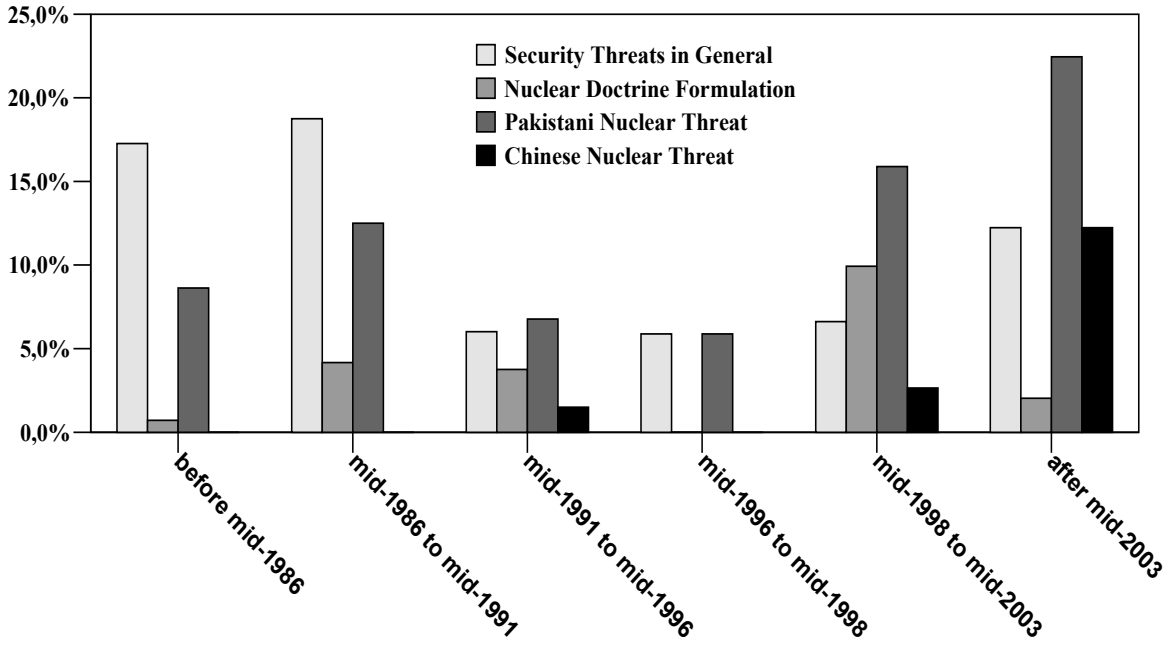


Chart 8.1. shows the relative frequency of articles on security-related issues. In the aftermath of the Brasstacks Crisis of 1986 and 1987, one out of three articles dealing with the nuclear issue was mainly concerned with the security dimension, as compared to the ratio of one-fourth during the pre-1986 period. Then, in the crucial stages of India's nuclear course during the 1990s, security aspects of India's nuclear programme largely disappeared from the nuclear discourse. From 1991 to 1996, only one out of six nuclear articles focused on security-related issues, and in the 1996-1998 sequence, this ratio further shrunk to one

out of ten. Once India had conducted its nuclear tests and declared it a nuclear weapon state, security considerations re-emerged into the focus of wider public attention. These concerns then comprise one-third of the nuclear-related articles in the 1998-2003 period and half of the articles in the post-2003 period.

Chart 8.1. further reveals that threats to India's security were perceived by the strategic elite in a more general and abstract way in the early phase, while after the nuclear breakthrough of 1998, these threats were mainly attributed to the two specific powers, Pakistan and China.
The strategic requirements for India's nuclear doctrine received little attention prior to the tests and were largely debated only thereafter, again giving some empirical evidence to the inherent post-hocism which appears to be an idiosyncratic phenomenon of India's strategic debate.

Much of India's impetus to proliferate nuclear weapons can be traced to prior proliferation dynamics in either Pakistan or China. The first broader debate on the nuclear issue within India's polity emerged in the mid-1960s, shortly after China had conducted its first nuclear test in 1964 and only a few years after India's defeat by China in the border war of 1962. After a period of nuclear slow-down, the Indian nuclear programme again accelerated in the early 1980s after rumours spread that Pakistan was putting forth strong efforts in fostering its nuclear capabilities. As they followed Pakistan's test firing of the medium-range Ghauri ballistic missile which are capable of targeting main cities in India, the Indian nuclear tests in 1998 were again interpreted by many as reaction to prior proliferation dynamics within Pakistan

8.1.1. Pakistan's Nuclear Threat

In the perception of India's public as well as most of its political leadership, the prime objective for the country's nuclear weapons was to improve its security vis-à-vis Pakistan. In strategic terms, this position produces several puzzles. India began its nuclear programme (or, in official language, created the nuclear weapons option) well before the emergence of the Pakistani threat. At this early stage, it must have been clear to India's strategic planners that the initiation of an Indian nuclear programme would make it strategically imperative for Pakistan, the conventionally inferior power, to follow suit and equally develop the bomb. The launch of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme was thus inevitable and unambiguously emanated from security considerations. Pakistan set its nuclear programme on a clear course towards weapons development in the mid-1970s following two events which significantly altered its security calculus: first, Pakistan's defeat in the war of 1971 and its subsequent disintegration, and second, India's first nuclear test of 1974. The progression of these events show a remarkable similarity to the emergence of the security threat to India by China one decade earlier, which was similarly triggered by a lost war in 1962 and subsequent nuclear testing of the adversary in 1964.

This causality did not, however, fit into the *weltanschauung* of the apologists of India's nuclear course, in which the contrast between India's fundamentally defensive strategic

policy and Pakistan's genuinely aggressive international action is a fixed dogma. In their accounts, it was singularly Pakistan's defeat in the Bangladesh war of 1971 rather than India's development of nuclear capabilities that triggered Pakistan's nuclear proliferation.[254] With this view, it was India that had no choice but to react to Pakistan's proliferation and equally build up a nuclear arsenal to protect its security interests.[255] Even if some accept this historically distorted interpretation of the causalities behind the South Asian nuclear rivalry, the strategic imperatives for India's nuclear build-up are not at all manifest. The overwhelming superiority of India's conventional armed forces would have been enough to deter Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, thereby superseding the strategic deterrence value of its nuclear weapons.
While Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons might be considered appropriate to equalise India's superior conventional force, it is hard to imagine that economically dependent Pakistan would have been able to resist international pressures against building the bomb if India would have joined the NPT and abstained from acquiring the bomb.

In other words, India would have been able to avoid Pakistan's nuclear breakthrough prior to 1998 if it would have taken appropriate steps on the international scene. After 1998, the open introduction of nuclear weapons in both countries' bilateral relationship was strategically disadvantageous for India. Ashely Tellis states the following:

> Pakistan's nuclear potential, as exemplified both by its weaponry and by the plethora of delivery systems it is developing or has already acquired, is certainly problematic in that for the first time in India's post-independence history, its immediate – and weaker – rival has acquired the ability to hold at risk significant national assets such as major population and industrial centres, critical military facilities, and strategic infrastructure assets located great distances from the frontier. This new vulnerability to standoff attack by weapons of mass destruction represents a dramatic change in the strategic balance vis-à-vis Pakistan. Whatever the minutiae relating to this balance traditionally may have been, the one single and incontrovertible manifestation of New Delhi's superiority was India's ability – however notional – to threaten assets throughout the depth of Pakistan's territory while remaining immune to any comparable attack directed against India. To the degree that Pakistan could mount any credible threats at all, these were restricted to challenges levelled at the frontiers, with the vast depth of India's heartland remaining a protected sanctuary lying beyond Pakistan's reach. The addition of long-range missile-delivered nuclear weapons to Pakistan's arsenal, however, has overturned this traditional Indian advantage... . In effect, then, Pakistan – the

[254] For a concise example of this view, see: Ganguly, Sumit: India's Pathway to Pokhran II: The Prospects and Sources of New Delhi's Nuclear Weapons Program. In: International Security, Vol.23, No.4, Spring 1999; pp. 148-177.
[255] Other determinants of this dogmatic view are i) the understanding that India's nuclear achievements until the late 1970s, including the nuclear test of 1974, were civilian; ii) the denial of the defensive security rationale behind Pakistan's nuclearisation; iii) the careful semantic distinction between 'nuclear proliferation,' describing Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear know-how through theft and illegitimate Chinese technology transfer, and 'nuclear build-up,' describing India's supposedly indigenous nuclear achievements.

> traditionally weaker adversary – has now neutralized India's conventional and geo-strategic advantages, while India remains weaker than its other major adversary, China, by most indices of strategic capability – including geopolitical importance, economic growth, and nuclear capacity.[256]

Furthering the effect of making India's heartland vulnerable to a Pakistani attack, the introduction of nuclear weapons might cause what is referred to as the 'stability-instability paradox.' With this reasoning, Pakistan might be encouraged by the stability of the overall nuclear deterrence situation to engage in a low profile war across the disputed Kashmir line of control without fearing a major Indian counter attack.[257]

The disarray caused by the disputable strategic value of nuclear weapons against Pakistan among India's political elite became apparent in the course of the 2002 bilateral crisis in Kashmir. This episode was summarised in the SIPRI Yearbook 2003 as follows:

> First, Prime Minister Vajpayee claimed that the recent crisis showed that India had, in effect, successfully called Pakistan's nuclear bluff. Next, President Abdul Kalam claimed that nuclear weapons had averted any kind of war. (Embarrassingly, this was in essence the same claim as that made by President Musharraf and contrary to what Prime Minister Vajpayee was saying). Finally, General V. P. Malik, former Chief of Army Staff, stated that nuclear weapons were largely irrelevant for conventional warfare and played no deterrent role during the Kargil War or in the 2002 crisis.
>
> Indian views on the role of Pakistani nuclear weapons are even more puzzling. A section of the Indian nuclear policy-making community has had a tendency to belittle Pakistan's nuclear capability. In the past, for example, leading scientists have declared that Pakistan could not have enriched uranium to the levels required to make a bomb. The nuclear tests by Pakistan ended such speculation. However, the idea reappeared in a different guise during the 2002 crisis. K. Subrahmanyam, an influential Indian strategist, suggested that, if Pakistan were to deploy any nuclear missile the USA would destroy them. Pakistan would not therefore be able to use its nuclear weapons – a comforting, if fallacious, idea.[258]

The above paragraph of the SIPRI Yearbook 2003 summarises the four major interpretations of Indo-Pakistani nuclear relations commonly followed by India's political and strategic elite. All four approaches are guided by their respective advocates' attempts to vindicate India's nuclear policy rather than by the impartial will to assess the effect of nuclear weaponisation in the bilateral relationship. By calling Pakistan's deterrence posture a 'nuclear bluff,' Prime Minister Vajpayee suggests that nuclear weapons are of little

[256] Tellis, Ashley J.: op.cit.; p. 45, 46.
[257] See: Krepon, Michael / Chris Gagné (eds.): The Stability-Instability Paradox: Nuclear Weapons and Brinkmanship in South Asia. Report No.38. Washington D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, June 2001.
[258] Ramana, M. V. / Zia Mian: 5. The nuclear confrontation in South Asia. In: SIPRI Yearbook 2003: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003; pp. 210, 211.

relevance in the bilateral relationship. The downplaying of the Pakistan factor in India's nuclear calculus aims at supporting the official position, according to which India's nuclear arsenal is directed principally against the Chinese nuclear threat. The statement by India's President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam reflects the general ambiguity inherent to the position mainly advocated by India's nuclear scientists. By stating that the introduction of nuclear weapons prevented war, Kalam attempts to highlight the scientists' contribution for regional peace and stability. This logic, however, implies the acceptance of the equalising effects of nuclear weapons, which diminishes India's strategic benefits with regard to its superiority in conventional weaponry. Kalam thereby involuntarily supports Musharraf's claims that the nuclearisation of the South Asian region actually benefited Pakistan rather than India. Yet another inconsistency in the position commonly expressed by the nuclear scientists is the emphasis on

The scientists' commonly expressed position further includes the inconsistency of emphasising Pakistan's exigent nuclear threat, which had to be balanced by India, and the scientists' frequent questioning of the technological maturity of the Pakistani arsenal, which aimed at pointing out its inferiority with regard to India's nuclear achievements. This contradiction stems from the conflicting nature of the two underlying motives, the exigency for nuclear weapons for India's security vis-à-vis Pakistan as justification for the nuclear programme and the role nuclear weapons play for the country's (and the involved scientists') international prestige.
In contrast to Vajpayee's categorical denial of any existing deterrence effects, General V. P. Malik carefully distinguishes between the overall deterrence relationship between the two countries, which he implicitly accepts as a matter of fact, along with the failure of deterrence in the limited conventional confrontation in Kashmir. Within the domain of strategic thinking, Malik accordingly takes a middle position between those claiming that the overall Indo-Pakistani deterrence relationship reduces the risks of conflict escalation in Kashmir and those suggesting the contrary by pointing to the stability-instability paradox.

Ultimately, K. Subrahmanyam's view reflects the mainstream position of the politico-strategic community. It combines Vajpayee's approach of downplaying the Pakistan factor in India's nuclear calculus and the nuclear scientists' view of Pakistan as an aggressive, vicious, but nevertheless inferior neighbour.

8.1.2. The Chinese Nuclear Threat

Due to the strategic inadequacy of nuclear weapons for India in its relation to Pakistan, many strategic thinkers turned to the role of the so called 'China factor' as the major strategic incentive for India's nuclear build-up, despite public preoccupation with arch rival Pakistan. In their academic back-up of India's nuclear course, these pundits focus on the threat posed by the Chinese nuclear arsenal and on the rival nature of the national interests of these two major Asian powers. In their view, it is a strategic imperative for India to acquire an equally strong (nuclear) power capability to balance China just as the Balance-of-Power theory suggests, thereby creating an equitable Asian and global balance of power

system. The official government statements issued after the tests of 1998 explicitly followed this line.

The two groups of bomb advocates and bomb sceptics assess the strategic relevance of the Chinese nuclear arsenal to India's security in a fundamentally different manner.[259]
Of major concern for India's pro-bomb strategists are Chinese missile sites in Tibet, which allegedly target major northern Indian population centres with nuclear capable intermediate-range ballistic missiles. In Ashley Tellis' view:

> It is China's land-based ballistic missile force, together with the kinds of warheads this component can assuredly carry to target, that remains India's principal concern in the near term. The exact nature of this threat, however, seems to have been misconstrued by Indian policymakers and analysts who claim that it derives, among other things, from Chinese IRBMs deployed in Tibet.[260]

While the deployment of nuclear capable missiles at the aforementioned Tibetan sites remains unconfirmed at present, few experts disagree with the fact that China is actually in a position to target India with nuclear capable missiles from other sites in Sichuan, Qinghai or Yunnan Province. While in technical terms, the Chinese nuclear threat to India can easily be viewed as a matter of fact, its validity in political terms is much more ambiguous.
Internationally, the will to accept India's acquisition of nuclear weapons as a counter to the Chinese threat decreased significantly after the end of the Cold War. During the late 1960s, most strategic analysts throughout the world expected India to acquire nuclear weapons as a reaction to its defeat against China in the war of 1962 and the first Chinese nuclear test two years later. Assessing India's strategic situation in the mid-1960s, Itty Abraham writes:

> Under the implicit codes of the contemporary international system, an Indian nuclear test would have been read as a straightforward and appropriate response to Chinese nuclear tests from 1964 onward. Additionally, given the state of American and Soviet relations with China, an Indian nuclear test at that moment would have hardly had the international response it was to have a decade later; indeed, an Indian test in 1966 would have been conducted with tacit superpower approval. Yet no Indian bomb followed.[261]

Different than expected, India's policy makers at that time did not see a strategic necessity to deter China through nuclear weapons. Even when India detonated its nuclear device in 1974, its political leadership insisted on the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme and consequently negated any deterrence purpose. Paradoxically, most of the reasons that would have legitimised India's nuclear breakthrough in the 1960s appeared to have been overcome when India finally decided to reveal its nuclear weapons programme

[259] For a comprehensive overview of these two distinct approaches, see: Jones, Rodney W. / Sumit Ganguly: Debating New Delhi's Nuclear Decision. International Security, Vol.24, No.4, Spring 2000; pp. 181-189.
[260] Tellis, Ashley J.: op.cit.; p. 59.
[261] Abraham, Itty: op.cit.; p. 127.

in 1998. At this time, most international strategic thinkers considered India's nuclear revelation to be rather counterproductive in security terms vis-à-vis China. First of all, a credible nuclear deterrent towards China would have necessitated secure second strike capabilities as well as appropriate ballistic missile delivery vehicles to reach key strategic targets located in far distance at China's east coast. Both were far from combat-ready in 1998 and also not on top of India's priority list, according to official statements in this period. Secondly, the 1998 tests came after a period of significant rapprochement between India and China, which was initiated by Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1988. These dealings culminated in two border agreements signed in 1993 and 1996. Prior to the tests, the Chinese government sent out signals that its strategic interests were limited to the Taiwan issue and the South China Sea and that it had a strong interest in preserving the status quo at its south western border with India. The Chinese move to overcome old rivalries and fundamentally improve its relationship with India appeared to be less motivated by perceived pressures emerging from India's growing military capabilities but instead by the growing economic attractiveness of the Indian market for Chinese goods and services.[262]

In fact, the only persistent conflict of bilateral interests is the still unresolved demarcation of the common Himalayan border. However, the two border agreements and the mutual understanding to solve this problem peacefully made the repetition of a border war similar to 1962 highly unlikely. A scenario in which such potential open conflict would escalate into a nuclear war thus appeared unthinkable in the short and medium term future. Strong improvements within India's conventional military capabilities at its border with China would have prevented a recurrence of the events of 1962 in any case, since the potential costs of such open conflict for China would outweigh its potential benefits, as there were rather minor Chinese interests at stake. Next, those who consider a nuclear deterrent to be an appropriate tool to match the Chinese threat still fail to explain the timing of the nuclear tests. Moreover, the necessity to reveal India's nuclear programme at all remains unanswered, as the concept of opaque nuclear deterrence which dominated India's strategy prior to the tests would have been sufficient. Continued opacity would have further avoided the risks of pre-emptive strikes and an unleashed nuclear arms race.

During the crucial years of India's nuclear programme in the 1990s, India's strategic and foreign policy elite's opinion on the China factor could be roughly divided into three main lines of thought. First was the large section of pragmatists who did not view the Chinese threat as acute, instead suggesting engagement with China in a process of bilateral rapprochement to work out a *modus vivendi.* This would foreclose the risk of a future emergence of a critical Chinese threat. This approach was followed by Rajiv Gandhi's policy of reconciliation initiated in 1988 and was further promoted by the successor

[262] As the further course of this study will show, these Chinese signals had the contrary effect of what China was hoping to achieve. India's strategic elite perceived these signals as humiliation, again showing the ignorance of the major powers towards India's increasing status. Accordingly, in the immediate aftermath of the tests of 1998 most analysts expressed their confidence that China will finally have to pay attention to India.

governments of Narashima Rao and Deve Gowda. The second section comprised those strategic thinkers who found it imperative for India to counter China's nuclear arsenal with an arsenal of its own. This was simply because China was technically able to target India, irrespective of how realistic this nuclear threat scenario actually was. The position was widely accepted among India's military, analysts who focused upon the military-strategic aspects of nuclear weapons, and those who were less concerned with its political dimension. The third section comprised a group of policy-makers who traditionally adopted an anti-Chinese attitude. This group, under the informal leadership of then-Defence Minister George Fernandes, had acquired a particularly influential position in the National Front government in 1998 and was largely responsible for the government's anti-Chinese declaratory policy in the aftermath of the tests. This anti-China faction instrumentalised the military-strategists' pro-bomb arguments for its own political agenda and excessively overplayed the alleged nuclear threat emerging from the Tibetan missile sites.

8.1.3. Pakistan-China Threatening Axis

Finally, Chinese assistance to Pakistan's nuclear programme attracted widespread attention by India's bomb advocates, drawing an alarming scenario of an axis of two nuclear capable adversaries threatening India from the north. In fact, Chinese technical assistance to Pakistan's missile programme appeared to be substantial. Further, some credible although unproven allegations were raised about Chinese transfer of sensitive nuclear know-how. Claims by some sceptics that Chinese assistance had largely commercial motives appear to be somehow naive. While China's strategic interests behind its nuclear assistance to Pakistan are quite evident, its impact on India's nuclear discourse was nevertheless mainly psychological. While the Sino-Pakistani cooperation undoubtedly accelerated Pakistan's nuclear programme significantly, it was not the decisive factor in rendering Pakistan's nuclear breakthrough possible. In other words, the strategic imperatives for Pakistan to develop the bomb by all means and with any available assistance was simply too compelling.

In sum, regional security threats from Pakistan, China, or a combination of both, proved to be permissive but not imperative for India to develop nuclear weapons. However, the apologists' logic of nuclear weapons being necessary for India to be prepared for any imaginable threat scenario, no matter how unlikely, is consistent with the paradigms of the prevalent (neorealist) strategic thought. They therefore proved to be adequately convincing. Despite its seeming consistency, this rationale nevertheless implies two major flaws.

First, the question needs to be raised "whether India's nuclear and missile activities have had a self-fulfilling logic and stimulated external reactions that were painted as threats to India and used to justify its nuclear weapons programme."[263] Such dynamics became obvious during the initiation and continuation of Pakistan's nuclear programme. They were further apparent in India's strategic policy towards China, particularly in the period between 1988 and 1998.

[263] Jones, Rodney W. / Sumit Ganguly: op.cit.; p.183.

A second major flaw is the application of double standards with regard to the security needs of the three state actors involved. In fact, the security arguments given by Pakistan to justify the acquisition of nuclear weapons bear some analogies to the Indian case. Both states' strategic planners assert the threat posed by a superior and genuinely hostile nuclear armed neighbour as its main incentive to go nuclear. This argument appears to be somehow more tangible and existential in the case of Pakistan vis-à-vis India than in the case of India vis-à-vis China. This reasoning is why many Indian strategists generally accept Pakistan's security rationale behind its nuclear decision. When it comes to certain aspects of both countries' nuclear course, however, India's strategists tend to adopt a more differentiated position. For instance, China's no-first-use declaration as well as its unambiguous declaration not to threaten non-nuclear weapon states was largely dismissed by India's strategists as a mere paper tiger, which could be revised by China immediately in case of crisis. A wide consensus existed that India as the inferior power could not trust China's assurances on this matter. On the other hand, Pakistan's dismissal of India's assurances on similar grounds when India made its no-first-use declarations after the nuclear test of 1998 was largely interpreted by India's strategists as an indicator of Pakistan's genuinely aggressive intentions. Similar double standards were applied regarding intentions behind missile testing or both countries' occasionally launched arms control initiatives.

8.1.4. Extra-Regional Nuclear Threats

Next to China and Pakistan, no other existing or potential nuclear power is perceived as a strategic threat to India's security. While the Soviet Union or present day Russia is a perceived as strategic ally and supplier of essential technology throughout India's post-independence history, the two minor nuclear weapon states of France and Great Britain were considered largely irrelevant for India's security.

In the case of the United States, it is a more complex task to determine the relevance of its nuclear force for India's security, as perceived by most of India's strategic analysts. In several analyses, India's nuclear test of 1974 is described as a consequence of the deployment of the allegedly nuclear-armed US aircraft carrier USS Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal during the Bangladesh War of 1971. This incident created much fear among India's elite of being blackmailed through American gunboat diplomacy. Many Indian opinion leaders considered nuclear weapons as an appropriate deterrent device to fend off American interference into South Asian affairs, particularly into the ongoing conflict over Kashmir. However, a look into the media comments and analyses on this episode reveals that the Enterprise incident did not generate fears in terms of a perceived threat to national security, but rather triggered vehement feelings of humiliation and indignity. Again, the debate centred on national pride and less on national security. American military intervention is hardly considered a realistic threat scenario among India's strategic planners. This distinct motive is described by Ashley Tellis:

> Clearly, India's strategic managers – in contradiction to some of New Delhi's vociferous elites – do not view the United States as posing a nuclear threat to India today... . It is also unlikely that India will view the United States as a nuclear opponent in the future, even though India will at some point acquire the capability to target U.S. facilities and forces at various sites along the Asian periphery. Whether India actually acts in accordance with its capabilities here will therefore be determined by New Delhi's perception of U.S. attitudes toward India and, more particularly, by its assessment of America's willingness and desire to intervene militarily in South Asian affairs to India's detriment.[264]

An American presence in the Indian Ocean would most likely have the effect of avoiding outside intervention by deterring China from large scale meddling into the region, just as it had aimed at deterring Soviet involvement during the 1970s and 1980s. In a future scenario in which China emerges as the major strategic rival to the U.S., the following has been theorized:

> U.S. efforts to deter China will inevitably provide a measure of safety to the various smaller states in Asia, including India – none of which may actually contribute to the sustenance of that larger goal. Since the United States would most likely seek to preserve the security of these states in the face of Chinese blandishments or aggression in efforts to prevent the balance of power in Asia from deteriorating to its disadvantage, it is possible that states like India would not find it necessary to develop the panoply of deterrent capabilities they might otherwise have had to cultivate.[265]

There is some evidence in support of the hypothesis that the American presence to a certain extent deterred involvement of other powers. Tellis' prediction that this deterrent effect might be appreciated by India's decision makers, leading to a more cautious build-up of indigenous deterrent capabilities, is, however, unlikely to materialise considering the above mentioned negative emotional patterns towards American involvement in South Asia.

8.2. India's Strategic Thinkers

8.2.1. The Military: Politics of Self-Restraint

Being aware of the dangers a politicised military would have for its young democracy, the first generation of India's post-independence political leadership carefully kept servicemen out of the policy-making process. The gap in strategic policy making was filled by nuclear scientists despite their limited insight into military-strategic as well as foreign policy affairs. In the mid-1960s, two crucial events slowly initiated a process of rethinking of this

[264] Tellis, Ashley J.: op.cit.; pp. 30-32.
[265] ibid; p.34.

adamantly defended principle. First, the fiasco in the Sino-Indian war of 1962 made the deficits of India's strategic policy apparent. Second, the death of Homi Bhabha in 1966 significantly weakened the leadership of the nuclear scientific establishment, which subsequently lost much of its dominant position within India's strategic policy making.

An immediate outcome of the lost war of 1962 was the creation of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) three years later in a move to create a strategic think tank culture that would enable the government to draw on strategic expertise in its medium and long-term strategic planning. By integrating retired military officers into the IDSA, the government further hoped to reduce pressures from the strategic community demanding the involvement of the military in the country's strategic policy making. In its effort to keep the military out, the government benefited from the changed course of the nuclear establishment under its new leader Vikram Sarabhai, who, unlike his predecessor Homi Bhabha, did not regard nuclear weapons as mere symbols of international prestige but as practical devices with an immediate strategic value. This new policy and the victorious war of 1971 suspended the debate for the time being. The continued exclusion of the military from the nuclear debate was further caused by the military's initial indifference towards such symbolic, non-usable weapons of prestige. The military's disinterest in the matter was only overcome in the mid-1980s due to three major developments: first, India began to develop the necessary components, such as missiles and C^3I structures, to make these weapons militarily applicable; second, the emerging Brasstacks Crisis of 1986 and 1987 made the development of a stringent nuclear strategy and doctrine a matter of urgency; and third, the rise of General K. Sundarji, who became India's Chief of Army Staff in 1986 and encouraged the military leadership to adopt a more active role in the country's policy making process.

For the first time, India had a leading military officer who actively and intensively participated in the country's strategic policy discourse, thereby breaking the military's self-imposed exclusion from the policy-making process. Until his resignation in 1988, Sundarji pressurised the government to abandon its ambiguous nuclear policy and to finally decide on the nuclear question. After his resignation, Sundarji became one of India's most active and influential writers on a wide range of strategic and defence matters. From 1988 until his death in 1999, Sundarji acquired the position of being the unofficial voice of the Indian armed forces on defence policy matters.

Sundarji disagreed with the nuclear scientists and most of the political leaders who defined nuclear weapons as mostly political devices in what were posited as indigenously Indian approach to strategy. Instead, he referred to explicit Western concepts of strategic thought, above all the Realist concept of 'balance-of-power.' Based on the Realist paradigms, Sundarji developed a strategic policy of minimum nuclear deterrence, which in his view would lead to a stable nuclear deterrence situation in South Asia.

In late 1990 and early 1991, Sundarji engaged in an acrimonious debate with Pran Chopra, a proliferation pessimist and defender of India's traditional course of nuclear ambiguity.

This debate led to the publication of several articles and counter articles in *The Hindu*. Therein Sundarji's vision of India's future nuclear course became fully visible.
Sundarji was clearly aware that the acquisition of nuclear weapons would inevitably cause Pakistan to follow suit; this was a move that he thought was legitimate and rational for Pakistan to do. But he dismissed the fears of many that this mutual nuclear build up would trigger a perpetuating nuclear arms race on the subcontinent. In reply to Pran Chopra's respective objection, Sundarji states:

> The first wrong assumption is that once countries like India and Pakistan go overtly nuclear, they are in for an unending nuclear arms race restrained only by the economic difficulties faced by both countries. [Pran Chopra] does not make the distinction between 'war fighting' and 'war deterring' capabilities.[266]

By dismissing Chopra's assumption of a perpetuating arms race, Sundarji ignores the crucial question: do India's nuclear policy makers comprehend the distinction between 'war fighting' and 'war deterring' capabilities? In other words, Sundarji develops a minimum nuclear deterrence posture which satisfies its strategic task, but he ignores any possible motive other than strategic behind India's nuclear build up. Similarly, Sundarji rejects the nuclear critics' objection that it was impossible for India to ever catch up with the advanced Chinese nuclear programme. In his view, the critics' objection was irrelevant as a minimum nuclear deterrence posture would enable India to deter China without matching its nuclear arsenal in numbers. Sundarji claims:

> [T]o deter the Chinese nuclear capability, we need not have superiority or equivalence, but only a retaliatory capability in the second strike mode; that this should be capable of inflicting unacceptable damage, with unacceptable damage defined sensibly. I had also suggested that for minimum deterrence, the ability to hit a few cities would constitute unacceptable damage.[267]

Sundarji's published assessments on the nuclear question were undoubtedly the most sophisticated of all newspaper commentary in India in terms of expert knowledge. However, he failed to comprehend the dynamics of India's nuclear debate, which centred on motives other than mere strategy. This misinterpretation led to policy outcomes not envisaged by Sundarji. This deviation was most obvious in 1998 when India tested a hydrogen bomb that Sundarji explicitly considered unnecessary for minimum nuclear deterrence. India subsequently declared itself a nuclear weapon state without having developed second strike capabilities, despite Sundarji's explicit claim that a nuclear arsenal without such capabilities was strategically useless as deterrence device against China. Despite his strong objections to hesitant politico-strategists like Pran Chopra, Sundarji nevertheless avoids taking an uncompromising stance in the polarised debate between the bomb advocates and their critics. In a remarkably aloof analysis of the nuclear discourse

---

[266] Sundarji, K.: " 'In the nuclear trap': wrong assumptions." In: The Hindu, December 11th 1990. Sundarji takes reference to: Chopra, Pran: "In the nuclear trap." In: The Hindu, November 29th 1990.
[267] Sundarji, K.: "Where third world differs from the West." In: The Hindu, January 11th 1991.

among India's journalists and commentators, he criticises the polarised nature of India's debate. In his words, "[t]his 'us against them' syndrome – the pro-bomb and the anti-bomb, the uniformed and the un-uniformed, this kind of approach scares me."[268] According to Sundarji, the emotionally overloaded and largely uninformed debate is mainly caused by the secrecy in which the nuclear programme is embedded:

> These issues are too serious to be dealt with emotionally or by rhetoric. In every other non-communist country, this kind of exercise has been going on in academic circles and professional circles. Perhaps this is where the true analysts are. Then, the commentators or pundits and the rank and file journalists get into the act, and take the facts and figures, and their arguments to the people through the media and informed debate ensues.
> In India the academic analysts are largely absent or busy re-inventing the Western 'wheel.' The professionals, even those who are serious about their profession and do some work are generally hamstrung by the Official Secrets Act. The journalist/ commentator/ pundit is forced to take on all roles. There is paucity of indigenous literature on the subject and a proliferation of Western and specially U.S. literature, which is naturally oriented towards superpower equations. Some are even slanted towards anti-proliferation goals. The Soviet and Chinese literature in this field are few and language is a barrier. These unfortunately lend themselves to a benign acceptance and to a local propagation of the U.S. views; thoroughly understandable under the circumstances. This may lead to uncharitable attribution of motives. The only answer is therefore a thorough liberalisation of information to activate the professional and academic communities to get an informed debate going. Meanwhile, we must say, 'Thank you' to the pundits who have kept the debate alive, however imperfectly![269]

Sundarji's comment is a rare reflection on the shortcomings of the nuclear debate by one of its most active participants. However, suggesting that the quality of the emotionalised debate could be improved by simply cutting back the secrecy provisions of the nuclear programme appears too short-sighted. It again reveals Sundarji's failure to comprehend the full complexity of the dynamics behind the debate.

In sum, Sundarji's assessments contributed to a general improvement of the nuclear debate in terms of expert knowledge in military and strategic affairs. His approach to nuclear weapons reflected the views of a majority among the upper ranks of India's military. However, his failure to accept the multiple political motives behind the elite's debate on the issue as well as the nuclear policy making of the political class and his naive assumption that nuclear decisions were made on the basis of strategic considerations alone weakened his influence. Additionally, this misinterpretation impeded the effective implementation of many of his elaborate recommendations.

---

[268] Sundarji, K.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, January 11th 1991.
[269] ibid.

8.2.2. The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA)

The absence of the military in Indian strategic policy-making created space for a group of strategic specialists, who exercised strong influence on the elite's understanding of strategic affairs. The most influential group of strategic specialists convene in the government-funded Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) in Delhi, whose published expert reports often reflect a semi-official assessment of the current state of strategic affairs in India.

The crucial event after which the government realised the need for a professional strategic policy advisory body was the humiliating defeat in the 1962 war with China. Prior to this event, the military-strategic perspective of India's policy makers was confined to the South Asian neighbourhood, which was a familiar and predictable ground for most among the first generation of India's post independence politicians. The fiasco of 1962 abruptly widened the scope of India's strategic thought. According to D.K. Palit:

> The Chinese confrontation caught not only our armed forces off balance, both in the field and at headquarters, but also the policy-making machinery in government. There was a realisation in some quarters that national security as long-range problem required a wider approach to strategic concepts than could be followed by agencies which were intimately involved with day-to-day conduct of national defence. This realisation was intensified after China exploded her atom bomb and started on her course towards operational nuclear capability. Perhaps as a result of this, it was decided that the time had come to establish an independent cell in government machinery which, unencumbered by the immediacy of contemporary policy, would be in a position to initiate discussion on, and conduct research into, problems of national security on a wider and more long-range basis. Under the sponsorship of Mr. Chavan, then Defence Minister, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) was established in November 1965.[270]

The structure and functions of the IDSA were modelled after the American RAND Corporation. During its initial phase under its first Director, Major General Som Dutt, the institute defined itself first and foremost as an advisory body to the government, consulting the Defence Minister and occasionally drafting reports the Standing Committee on Defence of the Parliament. Dutt eventually became the IDSA's only director opposing India's nuclearisation. In his careful assessments of India's strategic environment, he challenged the widely held belief among India's strategic elite in the late 1960s that China's conventional superiority would still enable it to intrude into India's northern territory as it did in 1962. Further, he considered the possibility of Chinese nuclear blackmail against India as an unlikely scenario, as its consequences in terms of superpower pressures would outweigh any benefits China would have from such a policy. Dutt argued that the financial costs to build up nuclear deterrence capabilities on a counterforce basis would be

[270] Palit, D.K.: "Institute For Defence Studies: A Decade Of Progress." In: The Hindustan Times, November 24th 1975.

prohibitively high. With regard to Pakistan, he foresaw the self-fulfilling logic India's nuclear build up would have on the initiation of Pakistan's nuclear programme, therefore suggesting India's nuclear self-restraint.

The course of the IDSA radically changed when the sceptical Som Dutt was replaced as director by the fervent bomb advocate K. Subrahmanyam in 1970. In retrospect, this change in the leadership of India's strategic elite might be considered as significant for India's long-term nuclear course as the change in leadership of the nuclear scientific community from Vikram Sarabhai to Homi Sethna in 1971.

Stephen P. Cohen describes Subrahmanyam's position as follows:

> Subrahmanyam is a secularist but spent much of his career trying to prove that Nehru really would have favoured nuclear weapons. Like many of his generation he respected Nehru's commitments to a democratic, secular state but felt that Nehru had been too weak and pliable, and bore some of the responsibility for India's defeat in the Sino-Indian war of 1962 and India's failure to deal decisively with Pakistan (and Kashmir) at an early stage. More recently, Subrahmanyam has tried to make the case that Mahatma Gandhi, also, would have favored nuclear weapons. The formula he and others developed thirty years ago has now become fairly widely accepted: India would acquire nuclear weapons in order to pressure the nuclear 'haves' to disarm (a theory reminiscent of the notion that the village in Vietnam had to be destroyed to be saved). Indians could have their nuclear cake and eat it: an Indian nuclear program came to be seen as an instrument of resistance to the blackmail tactics of the nuclear weapons states and thus entirely justified. Further, if nuclear weapons were evil, then the so-called disarmament plans by the nuclear weapons states (whose hands were dirtied by their use or threat of use of nuclear weapons) were also evil, and such arrangements as the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and even the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) could be opposed on moral grounds.[271]

After taking office as director of the IDSA, Subrahmanyam dismissed Dutt's fears of a self-fulfilling logic with regard to Pakistan's programme and contributed his alternative logic of South Asian nuclear dynamics. Therein, India's nuclear programme was peaceful because India's government said it was peaceful. Pakistan's claim that peaceful and military applications could not be distinguished was, in his view, false and misguided.[272] Further, the fact that Pakistan's government denied that civilian and military purposes could be distinguished showed that Pakistan's own claim about the peaceful intentions of its programme was false, and that its nuclear programme had purely military motivations.

[271] Cohen, Stephen P.: op.cit.. 2002; pp. 18, 19.

[272] Ironically, one of Subrahmanyam's main arguments for developing the bomb was that it would be an irresponsible waste of resources by the Indian government not to exploit its cost-effectiveness, considering the fact that all components necessary to develop the bomb already existed due to the civilian nuclear programme.

Subrahmanyam concluded that India had no choice but to counter Pakistan's nuclear threat with a nuclear weapons programme of its own:

> What concerns Indian security planners is the simple fact that Pakistan is going in for nuclear capability which cannot be related to a peaceful programme. There can be differences of opinion on how we should respond to this contingency, but what are difficult to understand are the attempts to explain away the entire Pakistani nuclear programme, ignoring its relevance to India's security. Debating points may be scored by raising the question of whether our Pokharan test did not have a similar impact on Pakistan's security, but it does not help us to evolve a meaningful response to the possibility of a nuclear Pakistan. Negotiations with Pakistan may be the preferred strategy for some people, but that does not absolve security planners of the responsibility to provide for the failure to find a mutually acceptable negotiated solution.[273]

Subrahmanyam further elaborated a conservative approach to strategy, according to which India should be prepared for any imaginable contingency. This approach included threat scenarios posed by Pakistan above all, but also the U.S. and Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, a potential presence of nuclear armed Chinese submarines in the Indian Ocean, US military assistance to various littoral states, and so forth.[274] The hidden agenda behind a militarily strong India, that is, the increase in international status as a recognised major power, is only vaguely insinuated by Subrahmanyam:

> While regional arrangements have developed in various parts of the world, in all cases without exception there is a big power guarantor and enforcer of security behind them. In India's case, as a big nation it is unrealistic for this country to look for such guarantees from an external source without its having an adverse impact on our unity and development. Hence there is a certain loneliness among big nations – such as the US, USSR, China and India – for whom easy security options are not open.[275]

Subrahmanyam's almost romantic 'lonely on the top' view of India's position among the four world leading countries proved to be a highly seductive idea for large parts of India's elite. His views greatly influenced India's self-image as a leading power in the world, explaining for instance the absence of any self-doubt among India's strategic elite when India became completely isolated during the NPT and CTBT negotiations in Geneva in the mid-1990s.

After K. Subrahmanyam was succeeded by P.R. Chari as the head of IDSA in 1975, he nevertheless continued to dominate India's strategic discourse in the decades to come. His

[273] Subrahmanyam, K.: "Mature View of Defence: Preparedness Is Not Militarism." In: The Statesman, August 12th 1981.
[274] For an overview of the many threats India is facing in this period, see: Subrahmanyam, K: "Threat perceptions and defence preparedness: International and national security." In: Indian Express, February 17th 1984.
[275] ibid.

influence on India's strategic thinking mainly stemmed from extensive publishing, particularly in *The Times of India*.

By 1986, K. Subrahmanyam had prepared the ground for the emergence of a broader strategic debate in India, which was subsequently dominated by the bomb advocates under the opinion leadership of the IDSA and ultimately led to India's nuclear revelation in 1998. In one of his authoritative publications of that time, he summarised India's need for nuclear weapons as follows:

> If India does not exercise the nuclear option and thereby acquire the nuclear deterrence at marginal additional cost, there may be two penalties. First, we may face a nuclear Pakistan or a nuclear China or the coercive diplomacy of a nuclear super-power without having the countering capability. Secondly the full cost-effectiveness of the nuclear capable system will not be exploited.[276]

Next to Subrahmanyam, two further directors of the IDSA were able to significantly contribute to the nuclear discourse in India, namely P.R. Chari and Jasjit Singh.
Unlike Subrahmanyam, Jasjit Singh, who directed the IDSA during the crucial years of India's nuclear course in the 1990s, focused less upon the political dimensions of nuclear weapons and instead emphasised its military-strategic value as deterrence devices. Initially lacking Subrahmanyam's omnipresence in India's media, Jasjit Singh was mainly concerned with doctrinal and deployment aspects of nuclear weapons, particularly its integration into the armed services.

Interestingly enough K. Santhanam, who directed the IDSA in the years from 2001 to 2004, did not have the military-strategic background that all of his predecessors had, but was himself a former nuclear scientist who developed much of his career at BARC and in the DRDO. His impact on India's nuclear discourse, however, remained limited during the time of his directorship. In August 2004, he was succeeded by officiating director Uday Bhashkar.

[276] Subrahmanyam, K.: India and the Nuclear Challenge. Delhi: Lancer 1986; cited from N.N.: "The bomb: to have or not to have." In: The Hindu, June 10th 1986.

9. The "Diabolic Enemy" Stereotype: Indo-Pakistan Relations

9.1. The Roots of Indo-Pakistani Antagonism

9.1.1. Regional Balance of Power

The root causes of the hostility between India and Pakistan can be ascribed to four major structural factors:[277] first, the lack of institutional structures resulting from the British 'Cut and Run' policy in 1947; second, the conflicting ideology of both states, with Pakistan defining itself through its Muslim identity and India defining itself as secular state; third, the clash between strong irredentist pressures in Pakistan and anti-irredentism in India towards the territory of Kashmir; and, fourth, the geo-strategic importance of the disputed territory in Kashmir. While the first factor was dominant in the first years after independence, the second and third factors played a crucial role during the period from the mid-1950s to 1971. After the Bangladesh War of 1971 and the subsequent disintegration of Pakistan, structural factors lost much of their relevance, and ethnicity as determining factor came to the fore[278].

During their almost six decades' long antagonistic relationship, India and Pakistan fought three major wars as well as several minor border wars and clashes.[279] The first Kashmir war of 1947 and 1948 was mainly caused by the overhasty departure of the British Raj. However, a second factor, which was to determine the course of antagonism between both states for the following decades became apparent: the concurring nature of both countries' ideologies. Prior to independence, the Muslim majority in the north western and north eastern regions of British India fought their struggle for a separate state along religious lines. Thus, Muslim identity featured as the central motive in Pakistan's nation-building process after 1947. In this context, giving up the claims over the Kashmir valley with its vast Muslim majority would endanger the *raison d'être* of Pakistan as a sovereign state. In Nehruvian India, on the other hand, Kashmir was viewed as the test case for its secularist ideology. India's leadership feared that a failure of the secularist state order to accommodate the Muslims of Kashmir would become a precedent for several other ethnic

[277] For a systematic overview of the structural factors, see: Ganguly, Sumit: The Origins of War in South Asia: Indo-Pakistani Conflicts since 1947. Boulder: Westview Press 1986.
[278] This account on the origins of Indo-Pakistani antagonism is based on Western strategic though, particularly with regard to the concept of inter-state relations and the underlying images of Self and Others. Scholars of subaltern studies might question the validity of these ideas in the context of the relationship between the two South Asian neighbours (see: Chatterjee, Partha: op.cit.. 1993.) (for the adoption of Western strategic thought by India's strategic elite, see chapter 3.4.1.).
[279] There is a question whether the Kargil conflict in 1999 was the fourth Indo-Pakistani war (this view is widely accepted by India's historians) or whether it does not meet the criteria of being a 'war' (as most Pakistani scholars claim).

and religious minorities in the periphery of the Indian heartland. This would, in turn, endanger the existence of the Indian multiethnic state as a whole.

This ideological competition was the main structural cause for the second Indo-Pakistani war in 1965. The institutional integration of Kashmir into the Indian Union up to 1965 increased the irredentist pressures in Pakistan, which finally caused it to take action in the Kashmir question.

Six years after the 1965 war, the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 was triggered by the secessionist uprising in East Pakistan and therefore did not originate from the structural causes of Indo-Pakistani antagonism. The outcome of the war nevertheless changed the nature of Indo-Pakistani relations more than any other previous event. Firstly, the loss of its eastern territory cemented Pakistan's geo-strategic inferiority. Next, the Pakistani ideological pillar of being the homeland of all Muslims on the South Asian subcontinent became obsolete. The Simla Agreement signed between India and Pakistan after the Bangladesh war further weakened the Pakistani position and blocked its efforts to counter Indian military superiority through alliance building.

After the Bangladesh war, India emerged as the undisputed regional power within South Asia. However, Indian power politics during the era of Indira Gandhi estranged its smaller neighbour states and thus obstructed the establishment of a 'Pax Indica' despite the country's vast regional superiority in terms of power capabilities and power resources.
After 1971, no major war was fought between India and Pakistan. Several proxy wars including the Brasstacks Crisis in 1987 and the Kashmir Crisis in 1990, as well as low intensity wars such as the Kargil insurgency in 1999, marked the continued hostility between both states along the unstable Line of Control in Kashmir.

9.1.2. Introducing the Nuclear Dimension

Pakistan had established an Atomic Energy Commission in 1956, which was preoccupied with civilian application during its first decade. The development of nuclear weapons capabilities is closely associated with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who emphatically demanded Pakistan's nuclearisation during his tenure as Pakistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs in the late 1960s and then initiated its nuclear weapons programme in 1972 after he had become Pakistan's Prime Minister. The nuclear issue turned increasingly relevant in both countries' bilateral relations only after India's first nuclear test in 1974. This event established Pakistan's governmental and military understanding that India had unambiguously embarked on a path towards full-fledged nuclearisation. It also strengthened the resolve of Pakistan's leadership to counter the emerging nuclear threat by equally developing atomic bombs. Immediately after the test of 1974, Pakistan reinforced its nuclear weapons programme, which made a great leap forward in 1975 as Pakistan's AEC was able to illicitly secure Dutch blueprints of an ultracentrifuge for uranium enrichment through A.Q. Khan. Eventually, Khan would become chairman of the AEC and the 'father of the Pakistani bomb.'

The first rumours about the fast advancing Pakistani programme entered the strategic debate in India in the late 1970s. An article in *The Statesman* in late 1979 summarised the official position on nuclear weapons by quoting India's Defence Minister C. Subramaniam: "India would have to reconsider its policy if Pakistan were to go nuclear."[280] Next to the Pakistani threat, the author discusses five further obstacles to India's nuclear course: the two superpowers' continued arms race; the other three nuclear powers' continuation of their respective programmes; Israel's continued proliferation efforts; continued clandestine proliferation in countries such as South Africa and Taiwan; and access to nuclear capabilities by so called crypto nuclear nations. The time frame in which India should develop its nuclear arsenal would depend on "[w]hether the interventionist tendencies of nuclear weapon powers get strengthened further."[281] This list of incentives reflects the mainstream perception of India's strategic elite on the threat environment in which the country's nuclear build-up was taking place. It shows that the emerging nuclear threat from Pakistan remained paramount within India's nuclear calculus, while the Chinese threat, like the one from the UK and France, was perceived to be rather academic. The vague mentioning of 'interventionist tendencies of nuclear powers' reflects the psychological impact caused by the 'Enterprise' incident of 1971 among India's strategic elite.

What becomes apparent in the *Statesman* article is the very low threshold set by these conditions, which make the acquisition of nuclear weapons by India appear like an almost inevitable next step. The author leaves no doubt that India's nuclear build-up is the only passable option to meet Pakistan's nuclear threat. The idea of creating a nuclear weapon-free zone in South Asia is dismissed, as such a zone would, in the cited words of the defence minister, urge "the recreation of joint paramountcy of U.S.-USSR and China over the old British India and persuade the nations in this part of the world to accept less than full sovereignty vis-à-vis the nuclear paramount powers."[282] Second, the introduction of full scope safeguards by the IAEA would "impose 'technological hegemony' over developing nations and this was totally unacceptable to India."[283]
The *Statesman* account illustrates the shift of the mainstream nuclear discourse in the late 1970s and early 1980s period in which the Nehruvian nuclear taboos were gradually lifted.

It shows several key elements. First, in the perception of India's elite, the imminent threat to India's security within the regional strategic set-up came from Pakistan, not China. Second, efforts by outside powers or international organisations to stop the emerging nuclear arms race were dismissed on anti-colonialist grounds. Third, the use of key words such as 'nuclear paramount powers' and 'technological hegemony' appeal to emotions of national pride and dignity. This is similar to the language used in the debate on the discriminatory international regime, as well as in the debate on self-reliance and indigenous development.

[280] N.N.: "Decision On Bomb Depends on Pak Moves." In: The Statesman, October 30th 1979.
[281] ibid.
[282] ibid.
[283] ibid.

The discourse on India's response to Pakistan's nuclearisation continued along these lines throughout the 1980s with little variations.[284]
In this period, two events further heightened fears of a Pakistani nuclear threat: Pakistan's return to military rule in 1977 and the outbreak of a massive ethnic and religious uprising by the Sikh minority in the Indian state of Punjab. The psychological impact of both incidents exceeded their actual importance for India's security by far.

Pakistan's civilian leaders, above all Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had adopted a much more bellicose and threatening rhetoric on nuclear matters than their counterparts in the military. This change in rhetoric weakened the widely held belief among India's elite that a military controlled Pakistan would establish a much more unpredictable, potentially aggressive nuclear policy. Further, the alleged assistance of Sikh insurgents by Pakistan, which had a common border with the Indian state of Punjab, appears to have been grossly overrated by India's political elite. In its attempt to avoid any unnecessary provocation, Pakistan's military ruler Zia ul-Haq resisted actively interfering in the conflict but instead only passively supported the insurgents by turning a blind eye on cross border arms smuggling.

In April 1981, G.K. Reddy suggests that India's nuclearisation was a reaction to American assistance to rearm Pakistan conventionally.[285] In strategic terms, Reddy's argument is doubtful, as conventional proliferation efforts by an inferior power do not cause nuclear proliferation incentives for the superior power per se.
One of the most outspoken proponents of an immediate nuclearisation was Krishan Kant, a former member of parliament who lost re-elections in 1979. During his lobbying efforts, he put forth an image of a hostile Pakistan with grim intentions. Once Pakistan acquired nuclear capabilities, he proposed, they would not dare to use them. In a May 1981 article, Kant expressed his view that the only way to prevent the looming disaster was to "speedily develop the infrastructure for the bomb without further ado so as to acquire a superior deterrent capacity."[286]

In an August 1985 article, G.C. Katoch raises the question about the costs of India's response to Pakistani nuclearisation. While stating that if India does not acquire nuclear weapons, it would have to respond to Pakistan's nuclear capabilities with an intensive conventional rearmament, Katoch comes to the conclusion that extensive spending, either nuclear or conventional, is imperative for India. Katoch's reasoning is simple: "When a nation's security is at stake, there is, of course, no such thing as spending too much on

[284] Some of the more extended analyses are: Das Gupta, Amalendu: "India and the Bomb – II: Myth And Reality About An Option." In: The Statesman, April 21st 1981; Thapan, M.L.: "Debate on the Bomb: What A Nuclear Attack Can Do." In: The Statesman, September 30th 1981; one of the rare articles critical on India's nuclear course: Antia, S.N.: "India's Nuclear Policy: Reactions to Pakistani Advance." In: The Statesman, April 20th 1984; N.N.: "India must maintain military superiority." In: Indian Express, April 26th 1984; Sinha, S.K.: "Threats Facing Us – II: Pakistan And Those Nearer Home." In: The Statesman, May 30th 1984;.Vas, E.A.: "Nuclear India v nuclear Pakistan: South Asia's Day After." In: Indian Express, August 20th 1985; Jaisingh, Hari: "Indian options to Pak bomb." In: Indian Express, October 16th 1985;
[285] Reddy, G.K.: "Renewed pressures to build nuclear capability." In: The Hindu, April 7th 1981.
[286] Kant, Krishan: "Why the bomb." In: Indian Express, May 2nd 1981.

defence."[287] This assessment reflects the general shift in mainstream opinion in the course of the 1980s, which gradually turned away from the highly moralistic Nehruvian rhetoric towards a much more demure evaluation of the economic costs of nuclearisation.

9.2. Indo-Pakistani Nuclear Shadowboxing

9.2.1. Getting Down to Brasstacks

Between May 1986 and March 1987, the Indian army under its Commander-in-Chief General K. Sundarji conducted a large scale combined manoeuvre in the Rajasthan desert along its border to Pakistan, which was named operation 'Brasstacks.' The military leadership failed to inform Pakistan about details and did not make any reassuring statements about the non-aggressiveness of this exercise. The Pakistani army, which conducted its annual military manoeuvres at the same time in neighbouring Sindh province, reacted to this perceived acute threat with military mobilisation and troop deployments to the common border, triggering an action-reaction dynamic that increased tensions close to war.

The causes behind the escalating Brasstacks Crisis were complex and manifold. The crisis revealed a lack of confidence-building measures, a failure of crisis management, and a disturbing lack of sense of responsibility among military and political leaders.[288] In terms of both countries' nuclear relationship, the crisis marked a crucial turning point. To begin with, nuclear deterrence played a role in Indo-Pakistani antagonism, though the true impact of nuclear deterrence on the outcome of the crisis is controversially debated among scholars up to the present day. While the direct impact of deterrence is arguable,[289] its indirect effect on both countries' strategic planning was incisive. After the experiences of 1986 and 1987, a nuclear exchange was no longer a vague future scenario, but was perceived as a real threat which had to be dealt with in a promptly manner. Soon after the tensions reduced in 1987, several official bodies as well as think tanks began conceptualising improvements of nuclear safety as well as possible bilateral nuclear risk reduction measures, such as an agreement not to attack each other's nuclear facilities.

A second major aspect of the nuclear dynamics during the Brasstacks crisis was India's apprehension of a Chinese involvement in the escalating hostilities. During the winters of 1986 and 1987, India as well as China deployed troops along their common border. Then, in early 1987, false rumours spread in India's media that China was deploying nuclear

[287] Katoch, G.C.: "Defence And The Bomb: Imperative Need For Economizing." In: The Statesman, August 18th 1985.
[288] For a comprehensive assessment of the Brasstacks crisis, see: Bajpai, Kanti P. et.al.: Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia. New Delhi: Manohar 1995.
[289] Claims of the eccentric leader of Pakistan's nuclear programme, A.Q. Khan, that only nuclear deterrence prevented India from attacking Pakistan since 1984, are certainly overstated.

capable missiles at several sites in Tibet. The Chinese government dismissed these allegations.

The accounts of India's strategic elite with regard to the emerging nuclear threat from Pakistan became more virulent in the course of the Brasstacks crisis in 1987. The changing rhetoric becomes apparent in the alarmist threat assessment by wing-commander Amar Zutshi in May 1987, in which he accuses Libya's Colonel Gaddafi of having financed Pakistan's nuclear programme.[290] Zutshi draws a scenario whereby a nuclear armed Pakistan would promote disloyalty and confrontation among Muslim subversives in India, as well as intensify infiltration across the border.

These developments would finally lead to a military adventure in Kashmir. According to Zutshi's account, a Pakistan-China-US axis was likely to undermine India's position in South Asia by establishing hegemony in South-East Asia, therefore subjugating Nepal and Bhutan, and eventually thrusting into India with the help of small bullies such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. India's commanders would not be able to sustain the morale of the troops vis-à-vis nuclear armed Pakistan. Pakistan would then occupy Kashmir and Rajasthan, and "install a vassal 'Khalistan' in Punjab".[291] Pakistan's action would be sanctioned by a conspiracy in the Security Council, in which Russia joins the US and China, stopping India before it could strike back. As the only option India has to avoid such disastrous scenario, Zutshi suggests the creation of a balancing axis with Iran and Japan (which would part from its alliance with the US and instead join its "spiritual home" of India).[292] If the need emerges, India's option would include fighting a nuclear war with Pakistan, as "[o]ne small bomb each on Rawalpindi and Lahore would be enough to eliminate the Republic of Pakistan for good. But India will survive even with ten nuclear bombs."[293] Surely, Zutshi's bizarre account reflected the stance of only a minority within India's strategic community. But the simple fact that he was at that time an active officer who published this article (and continued to publish articles thereafter) in one of India's most respected dailies reflects a certain degree of confusion among the strategic thinkers as to how to deal with the emergence of the Pakistani nuclear threat.

Many among Indian opinion makers referred to Pakistan's nuclear capabilities as the 'Islamic Bomb,' thereby insinuating assistance from other Islamic countries. Pakistan, as their argument went, would have never been able to develop the bomb without the financial and technological help of outside powers, namely the Arab countries. In an October 1989 account, Sanat Biswas emphasised Pakistan's alleged dependency from a range of foreign countries in military, technological and financial terms:[294] "During the first three decades of its existence, Pakistan collaborated with the imperialist powers."[295] According to Biswas,

[290] Zutshi, Amar: "Pakistani Nuclear Aims: Need For Pre-emptive Indian Response." In: The Statesman, May 13th 1987.
[291] ibid.
[292] ibid.
[293] ibid.
[294] Biswas, Sanat: " Nuclear Peril – II: The Threat From Pakistan." In: The Statesman, October 19th 1989.
[295] ibid.

Pakistan acted as agent of these 'imperialist' powers by introducing the idea of a "regional weapon free zone," which served only the interests of the USA and China. Biswas continues by stating that "it is necessary to mention a common theme, often put out by the U.S. Administration and the Western media, that the Pakistan nuclear venture is a direct outcome of the Indian nuclear explosion of 1974. This is only part of the propaganda to induce India to sign a full-scope safeguard agreement."[296] He then offers an alternative explanation to the origins of Pakistan's programme by introducing the concept of the 'Islamic Bomb:'

> … [T]here was no way that Pakistan could have got together on its own a multiple-routed nuclear weapon programme based only on a security requirement vis-à-vis India. It simply does not have the financial resources. It is only with lavish Arab funds that such a programme could have been undertaken, and since the prime concern of the Arab states is Israel, it is not the Indian nuclear blast that should be cited as the inspiration for Pakistan. … . It was to Pakistan's advantage to obtain 'approval' – and the funds – for an 'Islamic Bomb' by projecting the Arab-Israel conflict and the advantages to be gained by injecting an Arab nuclear argument into the confrontation. It is also clear that once Pakistan has acquired a minimum nuclear armoury, it will switch the focus of its strategic thrust from Israel to India, whatever the Arabs might say.[297]

The massive financial and technological foreign aid to Pakistan's nuclear programme has always been a core conjecture by India's strategic thinkers. While most analysts name China as the first highest provider and the U.S. as second, Biswas is much more cautious about the incentives for Chinese involvement in the region. Along his version, the Arab countries rearmed Pakistan. The 'Islamic Bomb' motive, although lacking much empirical evidence, was a very popular theme among India's strategic community during the late 1980s as it offered convenient answers to the two major puzzles: how could Pakistan build up nuclear weapons in much shorter time with significantly less financial resources than India and has India's initiation of the nuclear arms race on the subcontinent caused a self-inflicted strategic dilemma. By claiming that Arab states provided the necessary financial resources, and that Israel, not India, was the foremost incentive for Pakistan to go nuclear, these two questions could be answered in a much less self-critical way.

In the years from 1988 to 1990, India's push towards a full-fledged nuclear arsenal accelerated. According to unofficial sources it had increased the number of crude nuclear devices to around twenty. It had further modified Jaguar S and Mirage 2000 aircraft as appropriate delivery vehicles. Its missile programme achieved a major breakthrough in February 1988 with the first test flight of its SSM Prithvi, followed by a test flight of the IRBM Agni one year later. While still being far from maturity, the Prithvi missile launch was nevertheless lauded as a major demonstration of India's progress.

---

[296] Biswas, Sanat: op.cit.. In: The Statesman, October 19th 1989.
[297] ibid.

Due to these developments, India's strategic elite regained its self-confidence and sense of superiority vis-à-vis Pakistan. India's nuclear discourse overcame its irritation about Pakistan's capabilities and accepted them as a given fact, with which India had to deal. As Manoj Joshi asserted, "[w]ho or what is to be blamed is not the issue. The fact of the matter is that today India has the 'unique' distinction of having two nuclear armed neighbours with whom, it has or has had strained relations and has fought a total of four full-scale wars."[298] While hawkish strategists like Biswas dismissed the idea that India's nuclear test of 1974 had caused an intensification of Pakistan's nuclear efforts as Western propaganda, moderate strategists like Joshi instead took the fatalistic position that once the nuclear dynamics in South Asia were set in motion, the questions of what or who had caused it had simply lost their relevance. This stance proved to be quite appealing to most Indian elite because it prevented them from asking uncomfortable questions about India's self-defeating policy with regard to the initiation of the nuclear competition on the subcontinent.

According to Joshi's prosaic analysis, India now has three basic options: do nothing and rely on the little deterrent value of the 1974 Pokhran tests; sign a verifiable non-proliferation agreement; or, assemble nuclear weapons and send unambiguous signals to Pakistan.[299] A growing number of opinion leaders during the early 1990s adopted the position, that as things stood, India had no choice but to acquire a credible nuclear deterrent. While in the late 1980s most strategic commentators considered the introduction of nuclear weapons into the South Asian region as unavoidable, few developed strategies to stop these developments. One interesting suggestion for averting a regional nuclear arms race is provided by Pran Chopra, who invokes the recent cessation of the nuclear confrontation between Argentina and Brazil as a loophole for India and Pakistan out of the nuclear dilemma.[300] Most other commentators emphasise approaches to stabilize rather than reverse the Indo-Pakistani nuclear relationship. These include the intensification of (bilateral) dialogue, the establishment of confidence-building measures, etc.[301]

In 1989, an insurgency in the Kashmir valley began, which would eventually determine the hostile relationship between India and Pakistan for the years to come, bringing both countries to the brink of war on several occasions. In spring 1990, tensions increased after India accused Pakistan of supporting rebels advancing across the Kashmiri high altitude border after snowmelt. As in 1987, tensions mounted to a full-blown crisis in which both countries' imperfect nuclear arsenals posed an omnipresent threat. Perceived threats were fuelled by alarming news about large scale Chinese assistance to Pakistan in the nuclear field. The Kashmir Crisis of 1990 differed from the 1986 and 1987 Brasstacks Crisis in its attendant rhetoric. The nuclear discourse after 1987 had increased the awareness among both countries' political and strategic elite concerning the dangers and strategic implications of nuclear capabilities. Accordingly, the nuclear rhetoric of 1990 was less provocative than in 1987. Several academic accounts of the 1990 episode suggest that

[298] Joshi, Manoj: "India's nuclear dilemma." In: The Hindu, October 29th 1990.
[299] ibid.
[300] Chopra, Pran: "Escaping the trap." In: The Hindu, December 8th 1990.
[301] Mohan, C. Raja: " South Asia's nuclear spring." In: The Hindu, April 1st 1993.

nuclear capabilities in fact deterred both countries from going to war.[302] In 1991, India and Pakistan finally ratified and implemented the agreement which had been signed three years earlier, whereby attacking one another's nuclear facilities was prohibited.

9.2.2. The Hidden Nuclear Competition

From the early to mid 1990s, several more detailed analyses on the strategic rationale behind India-Pakistan nuclear relationship were published.[303] One of these analyses deserves special attention here. In a review article published in 1993 on a recent publication by former Chief of Army Staff, General K. Sundarji, M.R. Srinivasan, himself former Chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission, gives a comprehensive and balanced overview of the current state of strategic affairs in the Indo-Pakistani nuclear rivalry.[304] He begins by lamenting the institutional shortcomings that prevent India from pursuing a more effective nuclear policy towards Pakistan:

> Some of us involved in dealing with matters of high strategic policy certainly recall discussions with the highest political leadership, almost always on a one to one basis. Though this practice may have been justified on grounds of secrecy, many of us have felt the grave inadequacy of the absence of appropriate institutional structures to discuss and decide on these vital issues. Ad-hocism is endemic with the government of India.[305]

This statement appears remarkable considering the fact that the nuclear establishment, led for several years by Srinivasan, was able to secure its influence on strategic affairs mainly due to this lack of institutionalised strategic decision-making structures.

Similarly noteworthy is Srinivasan's more than demure stance on the aspect of self-reliance, which had been the backbone of the nuclear scientists' displayed self-image:

> Some of my colleagues in the nuclear community place an important distinction on the fact that India has developed its nuclear capability with its own efforts while Pakistan has greatly benefited through clandestine acquisition of sensitive technologies and materials. It is a matter of great pride and satisfaction that we in India have depended on our own efforts and this experience will stand us in good stead for the future also. We can, however, place no value judgement on Pakistan

[302] Among these: Hagerty, Devin T.: The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia. Cambridge, Ma.: The MIT Press 1998.
[303] e.g. Mohan, C. Raja: "An Indo-Pak bomb count". In: The Hindu, September 19th 1992; Sundarji, K.: "A non-nuclear India: Can Pakistan with its nukes be taken on in a conventional war?" In: Indian Express, June 8th 1993; Chari, P.R.: "Pakistan's bomb: A strategy of deterrence crafted on make-believe." In: Indian Express, August 29th 1994; Dixit, J.N.: "India's nuclear options: Pakistani smuggling underlines non-proliferation shortcomings" In: Indian Express, August 30th 1994.
[304] Srinivasan, M.R. " Sundarji's wargames." In: The Hindu, October 23rd 1993.
[305] ibid.

> breaching the embargoes placed by the supplier countries. We must take note of its present capabilities and tailor our policies accordingly.[306]

Srinivasan rejected the idea that China played any prominent role in pushing India towards nuclear build up, as both countries have more conjunctive than diverging interests. Rather, India's nuclear course was, according to Srinivasan, monocausally determined by Pakistan's moves: "It was only in the late 1980s that the new element, namely acquisition of a limited nuclear weapon capability by Pakistan, created a new situation."[307]

He dismissed the view of some strategic theorists who noted that a conventionally superior power can live with a nuclear armed but conventionally inferior neighbour without seeking nuclear equation:

> Gen. Sundarji is right in suggesting that no self-respecting Chief of the Indian Army would want to lead his men into a war with Pakistan when he knows that the enemy possesses nuclear weapons and he himself does not. This is notwithstanding any level of superiority in conventional weaponry and forces India may enjoy. To use Gen. Sundarji's words 'only nuclear weapons can deter nuclear weapons' (quoted from K. Subrahmanyam).[308]

While the careful assessment of M.R. Srinivasan contrasts the usually flamboyant, highly emotionalised calls for nuclear prowess issued by the nuclear scientific community, its implied policy recommendations were nevertheless unequivocal. Srinivasan suggested a determined effort to develop a full-fledged nuclear arsenal, including nuclear-propelled submarines. Further, he suggested goal-oriented reforms of defence planning and institutional strategic decision-making.

The overall number of nuclear related articles on the Indo-Pakistani relationship declined significantly in the early to mid-1990s, as the international nuclear non-proliferation issue began to dominate India's domestic debate. In the final two years prior to the tests in 1998, Pakistan almost disappeared from the scope of nuclear related publications. The few exceptions unanimously called for an immediate acquisition of a nuclear deterrent as the only viable option to counter the Pakistani nuclear threat.[309]

---

[306] Srinivasan, M.R. op.cit.. In: The Hindu, October 23rd 1993.
[307] ibid.
[308] ibid.
[309] e.g. Chowdhuri, Satyabrata Rai: "Nuclear Option: Why India Must Go Nuclear." In: The Statesman, February 5th 1996; Mohan, C. Raja: "Working with nuclear reality." In: The Hindu, October 10th 1997; Dutt, J.K.: "Chanakya would understand." In: The Hindu, November 22nd 1997.

9.3. After Pokhran II: Learning to Live with Pakistan's Bomb

9.3.1. Redefining Indo-Pakistani Nuclear Relations

Immediately after the nuclear tests in May 1998, several government statements emphasised the Chinese nuclear threat as the primary cause. Next to the China factor, there was no doubt that the test flight of the MRBM Ghauri by Pakistan in April 1998 induced the element of urgency into India's test preparations. After India's nuclear tests, many of its strategists perceived the tests as a symbol of dominance over Pakistan. Their triumph ended on May 28, when Pakistan itself conducted five nuclear tests. While Pakistan's catch up was expected by most, it surprised many among India's political and strategic community. Many commentators reacted sullenly. Their attempt to downplay Pakistan's achievements was misinterpreted by some international observers as a negation of Pakistan's deterrence capabilities by India's elite.[310]

The authoritative assessment of the Pakistani tests reflecting the mainstream strategic thought among India's elite was published by its central figure K. Subrahmanyam in *The Times of India* on May 30, 1998.[311] Subrahmanyam begins his account of the strategic implication of Pakistan's tests by claiming that "[t]he Pakistani nuclear test has brought into the open that country's nuclear weapon which has been in existence for 11 years."[312] In his view, the only significant change in both countries strategic relationship was the introduction of a more stable mutual deterrence, which would calm down the Kashmir conflict and make any high-intensity conventional war, as well as a nuclear war, much less likely. His appraisal, which in retrospect appears to have been too optimistic considering the emergence of the Kargil crisis a few months later,[313] Subrahmanyam states:

> If one were to compare the eight years of Indo-Pakistan nuclear coexistence with the first eight years of US-USSR, US-China and Sino-USSR nuclear relationship, the former has been much more stable. There was no arms race between Pakistan and India though the leadership of each knew that the other had nuclear weapons. … . Both countries exercised restraint in a tacit framework of low-intensity conflict in a situation of mutual deterrence. Developments on the ground have totally disproved western predictions about this region being the world's nuclear flashpoint, which it has not been and is not going to be. Most prognostications about an India-Pakistan nuclear arms race are purely speculative and merely a mechanical extension of the behaviour pattern of the three nuclear weapon powers; and this pattern ignores the history of the last eight years.[314]

---

[310] See on this episode: Tellis, Ashley J.: op.cit.. 2001; p.40.
[311] Subrahmanyam, K.: "Arms race myth." In: The Times of India, May 30th 1998.
[312] ibid.
[313] Recent publications on the so called stability-instability paradox in Kashmir have come to the diametrically converse evaluation of nuclear deterrence and Kashmir.
[314] Subrahmanyam, K.: op.cit.. In: The Times of India, May 30th 1998.

By suggesting that Indo-Pakistani nuclear coexistence has a history of eight years, Subrahmanyam implicitly dates the initiation of the bilateral deterrence situation to the Kashmir Crisis in 1990. This suggestion, as well as Subrahmanyam's claim that Pakistan had assembled its first nuclear device in 1987, is mentioned nine times throughout the article. His very strong emphasis on this chronology reflects his strong effort to avoid by all means the impression that India was the driving force behind South Asia's nuclearisation. This again reflects India's strategic elite's difficulties in accepting India's negative role within the nuclear dynamics in South Asia in the 1970s. Despite the widely accepted fact that India assembled its first device in either 1985 or 1986 around three years before Pakistan, Subrahmanyam dates this achievement to 1988, which is one year after Pakistan's alleged breakthrough.

The subsequent comparison of India's strategic situation with those of the three major nuclear weapons states, USA, USSR, and China, indicates the ranks that nuclear India has joined following the nuclear tests, according to Subrahmanyam.
His assertion that India's eight year record as a nuclear weapons state has been much more successful in terms of stability and self-restraint as compared to the three major nuclear powers lacks empirical evidence. This argument, which is repeated three times throughout the text, is underpinned by the same highly emotionalised theme that guided the symbolically overloaded debate on the NPT, CTBT, and international non-proliferation issue at large: the categorical rejection of any attempts by 'the West' to withhold from India the right to have nuclear weapons on the high grounds of national pride and dignity.

Who is the 'West?' Subrahmanyam uses this key term in a similar fashion to most other members of India' strategic elite in a rather abstract, almost metaphoric way. It is used to project the ugly face of some powers in terms of their neo-imperialist, self-serving attitudes. The main intention of the authors is thus to contrast India's high moral standing to these attitudes. This rationale guided the highly emotionalised rally of India's strategic elite against the international non-proliferation regime, as well as any perceived 'Western' attempts to curtail India's nuclear sovereignty at large. The term 'West' as used in this context does not encompass the geographic entity to which is usually referred. Rather, non-nuclear Western states as well as France are largely excluded from the attention of India's elite. When referencing these alleged attitudes, the authors usually refer to statements from either the political or the strategic elite in Washington, or, to a lesser extent, their counterparts in London. When denoting 'Western' concerns about the region of South Asia being the "world's nuclear flashpoint,"[315] the authors usually reference either CIA director James Woolsey's testimony before the US Senate Governmental Affairs Committee on February 24, 1993, according to which the South Asian region "poses perhaps the most probable prospect for future use of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons," or one of President Clinton's sporadic replications of this statement in the following years. Beyond this very limited array of references that fit into the projected

[315] Subrahmanyam, K.: op.cit.. In: The Times of India, May 30th 1998.

stereotypes, a deeper assessment of the diversity of 'Western' attitudes is hardly ever carried out by India's strategic elite.

Another noteworthy feature of Subrahmanyam's general assessment is his categorical negation of any existing nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. This main theme appears inconsistent with his effort to display India's nuclear build-up as a reaction to prior progress in Pakistan's nuclear proliferation. This inconsistency becomes even more apparent when Subrahmanyam assesses the quality and prospects of Pakistan's nuclear programme:

> There are limits to the Pakistani capability to acquire nuclear weapons and missiles. It is totally unrealistic to talk of Pakistan starting a nuclear arms race against India since it is not an independent self-sufficient producer of arms. Therefore, there is no cause for worry about an arms race being triggered by the Pakistani nuclear test.[316]

Subrahmanyam's ambivalent explanation reflects two contradicting aspects of India's self-perception: first, its morale ethos as a peaceful, principally anti-nuclear power, which had to acquire the bomb only because of imminent nuclear threats from its neighbours; second, its aspirations as an emerging major power and fully accepted member of the nuclear club. India's obsession with Pakistan is part of the first aspect but is seen as major obstacle to the second objective. These dual motives explain why Subrahmanyam first claims that India's nuclear build-up had been a reaction to the Pakistani nuclear threat, then claims that India (not Pakistan) had now joined the three other major nuclear powers, and finally ends by stating that Pakistan is no match to India, and as its nuclear capabilities pose no incentive for India to engage in an arms race.[317]

The reason for this pessimistic assessment of Pakistan's capabilities is, according to Subrahmanyam, its lack of self-sufficiency. In the aftermath of the Pakistani tests, many of India's commentators pointed to the prestigious value of India's nuclear weapons as indigenously crafted devices, in contrast to the 'imported' - and as such much less worthy - Pakistani capabilities. According to mainstream understanding, Pakistan's nuclear breakthrough had been facilitated by a joint effort with technology provided by China and political backing from 'the West.' According to Subrahmanyam:

> [T]he US deliberately looked away even as Islamabad assembled the weapons in 1987. India, which had observed unparalleled restraint from 1974 to 1988, and was the only country which did not build an arsenal following its nuclear test, was compelled to develop its nuclear deterrent in the light of Sino-Pak collaboration and US indulgence of proliferation.[318]

---

[316] Subrahmanyam, K.: op.cit.. In: The Times of India, May 30th 1998.

[317] This position is reflected in several further articles, some of them suggesting a policy of Pakistan's total nuclear disarmament as a realistic option with regard to Pakistan's assumed difficulties in maintaining its nuclear status. (see Mohan, C. Raja: "Denuclearising Pakistan." In: The Hindu, September 3rd 1998).

[318] Subrahmanyam, K.: op.cit.. In: The Times of India, May 30th 1998.

In sum, K. Subrahmanyam's in depth account of Indo-Pakistani nuclear relations after the tests provided a meaningful insight into the various dynamics and conditions in which India's strategic though was embedded. At first sight, Subrahmanyam's article induces more questions than offers stringent explanations. Subrahmanyam nonchalantly negates the existence of an Indo-Pakistani arms race just two days after both countries had conducted their nuclear testing in an action-reaction mode. Further, he explains in a triumphant undertone that India has finally proven the 'Westerners' wrong who had expressed fears about the Indo-Pakistani nuclear confrontation. This, too, appears negligent to the international mood at the time of his publication; the bellicose rhetoric of mutual accusations and allegations between India and Pakistan reached a peak in the immediate aftermath of the tests, thereby increasing international concerns about the dangers of nuclear escalation in the region. Finally, he explicitly ridicules Pakistan's nuclear capabilities just two days after Pakistan surprised most Indians by conducting nuclear tests only two weeks after India, and thereby demonstrating that it had acquired the nuclear technology effectively through massive technology transfer. This scant regard for Pakistan's nuclear achievements appears even more remarkable considering Subrahmanyam's 26-year long unremitting call for India's nuclearisation as the only way to counter Pakistan's looming nuclear threat.

What becomes obvious in Subrahmanyam's article is the instrumentalisation of the Pakistani threat by the nuclear bomb lobby, first by generating domestic support for the bomb among the anti-Pakistani sections of India's public, and then by justifying India's nuclear advancement internationally while allowing India to maintain its high moral posture.
Once India had passed the nuclear threshold, the Pakistan argument lost its attractiveness. On the contrary, the obsession with Pakistan was now regarded as a major obstacle for India to achieve major power status. Subrahmanyam's seemingly contradicting argument illustrates this shift.
Subrahmanyam's account shows a strong inclination of the author with the object of his analysis. This inclination is inherent in most nuclear articles in the immediate aftermath of the tests.

Among the very few exceptions in which the author successfully kept a distance to the object of analysis in the heated post-Pokhran atmosphere is Amrita Abraham's account of the Indo-Pakistani nuclear relations one month after Pokhran II.[319] Abraham systematically dispels several myths that had become dogmatic truths among mainstream opinion leaders including Subrahmanyam. First of all, Abraham questions the popular view that Western imperialistic states' sole purpose through the international non-proliferation regime was to deter India from achieving its merited status and prestige. According to Abraham:

> The containment of regional conflict and rivalry has always been the central argument for international non-proliferation regimes. Non-weapon states, who are

[319] Abraham, Amrita: "One month after Pokharan-II: A fine imbalance." In: Indian Express, June 12th 1998.

> no less conscious of the biases in the NPT and CTBT, have accepted them as the price of peace in the neighbourhood while they concentrate on improving standards of living.[320]

Abraham continues by questioning a cornerstone of India's foreign policy up until 1998, which is the bilateralist approach to the Kashmir issue and its rejection of any third party involvement: "[t]he facts are Pakistan's vulnerability in economic and military terms and the unpredictability of India's intentions. The assumption is that international engagement in South Asia will reduce any military threat and produce political openings in Kashmir."[321]

Finally, Abraham notes the hypocrisy behind India's offer of a no-first-use agreement to Pakistan by mentioning India's rejection of similar offers by China:

> (T)he offer of a no-first-use agreement is inappropriate for the new situation in South Asia. China made a no-first-use declaration after its first nuclear test in 1964 and has repeated it several times since. Having proved, by citing China as justification for Pokhran-II, how little confidence such declarations create, New Delhi cannot expect Islamabad to be enthused.[322]

Unfortunately, Abraham asks uncomfortable questions but does not offer any substantive solutions.

In the immediate aftermath of both countries' nuclear testing, the anti-nuke movement almost disappeared from the public scene. The difficulties of the nuclear critics to create an awareness of the nuclear dangers among the euphorised public in the aftermath of the tests, is illustrated by V.R. Krishna Iyer's [323]. Iyer started by providing an imbalanced account of the origins of the nuclear curse:

> The Manhattan project was the beginning of a nuclear empire established by the U.S. The first bomb was an experiment on the coloured part of the globe – Hiroshima, (not a city in Germany which is white but in Japan which is yellow). Frankly, after the war de facto ended, the American military demons did not want to miss the satanic opportunity to know the quantum of destruction an atom bomb, in their hands, was capable of [sic.].[324]

He continues by summarising India's record of responsive, anti-nuclear international policy, which, in his view, had been disrupted by the tests:

---

[320] Abraham, Amrita: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, June 12th 1998.
[321] ibid.
[322] ibid.
[323] Iyer, V.R. Krishna: "Adversarial Adventurism – II." In: The Hindu, 21st July 1998.
[324] ibid.

> By conducting nuclear tests Indian scientists may have become great but the nuclear bomb raises issues of the humanitarian obligation of science in the shape of nuclear disarmament as against global cannibalism. The radioactivity in Pokhran and other consequences, when sequential steps are taken, violate the compassionate quintessence of cultural Bharat.
> All nuclear powers have, together in a large conspiracy, brought the world to the brink of a catastrophe while paying lip service.[325]

His solution to India's self-inflicted dilemma was as overloaded with moralism as it was trivial. According to Iyer, "[w]e must have the courage and vision to uphold humanity in its solidarity. Make Indians united, contented, socialistic, and bound together in one fraternity by using all its resources, not to kill, but to promote life and abolish inequalities."[326]

Segments of India's political class, scientific community, and strategic opinion leaders found the high degree of indigenous technology in India's nuclear weapons systems to be a major source of national pride. This is compared especially to Pakistan's 'imported bomb.' The value of India's indigenous course was therefore mainly symbolic. The strategic balance between the two rivals began to change, however, as Pakistan's nuclear equalizer compensated for much of its conventional inferiority. The fact that Pakistan was now able to threaten India's heartland, and above all its power centres Delhi and Mumbai, posed a major dilemma for India's strategic elite and required a fundamental rethinking of its strategic postures.

While the causes of India's nuclear build up may have been related mainly to the Chinese threat, its consequences were felt most severely in India's relationship to Pakistan. The relative analytic importance of Pakistan and the strategically less significant role of China are explained by the two-dimensionality determinants of the strategic relationship between two states, consisting not only of the relative power capabilities but also of the respective state's intentions. China surely has the capabilities to pose a nuclear threat to India, but it lacks substantial conflicting interests which would substantiate threatening intentions. Pakistan's intentions, however, are clearly defined against India, giving its communicated deterrent threat a high degree of credibility despite doubts among some sections of India's enclave about the effectiveness of its nuclear arsenal. These strategic circumstances were brought to the attention of India's strategic elite during the Kargil conflict in spring 1999, less than one year after the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan.

9.3.2. From Pokhran to Kargil

The incident in Kargil in 1999 marked a turning point in the strategic appreciation of nuclear weapons among India's elite, abruptly changing the general disposition of nuclear reporting within India's media. Subsequently, several more balanced assessments of the

[325] Iyer, V.R. Krishna: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, 21st July 1998.
[326] ibid.

strategic and economic costs and benefits of India's nuclear arsenal were published.[327] The effect of nuclear weapons on the Kashmir conflict was evaluated more critically than it had been prior to Kargil:

> Contrary to India's expectations that the testing of nuclear weapons by the two countries would result in stability, the ground situation shows otherwise.
> After testing its nuclear weapons, Pakistan … inferred that its nuclear arsenal would now be enough to deter India from taking military action against it using its conventional forces. Consequently, it concluded that acquisition of nuclear weapons had given it more room to expand the scope of covert war in Jammu and Kashmir.[328]

Even those authors who were generally supportive of India's nuclear policy no longer limited their analysis to complaisant commentary but instead engaged in an open debate on the pros and cons. In his assessment of Indo-Pakistani nuclear relations after Kargil, Arun Kumar Banerji counters some of the mainstream views on the benefits of nuclear weapons for India by stating that "[c]ontrary to conventional wisdom, the possession of nuclear power by India and Pakistan will not lead to the prevention of proxy war; rather such wars may increase, with the advantage of the nuclear 'umbrella.'"[329] He generally criticises the lukewarm justification for the testing given by the Indian government by saying that "[i]t was argued by the government, after the Pokhran tests, that these were necessary for India's 'national security,' though no convincing explanation was given about any sudden change in India's security environment that made the nuclear tests necessary."[330] He then cautiously indicated what Subrahmanyam and others were so eagerly denying in the immediate aftermath of the tests: by testing first, India was the main driving force behind the regional nuclear arms race. In his words, "India's decision to go for nuclear tests triggered Pakistan's decision to go for similar tests, thereby initiating the possibility of a nuclear arms race in the region which, if not checked, will be ruinous for the economics of both the states. India's post-Pokhran diplomacy contributed to the increase in tensions in the region."[331] Since the tests, as Banerji argues, the nuclear policy of the Indian government had gradually become much more responsive and mature. Despite the developments in Kargil, he retained a positive appraisal of Vajpayee's bus diplomacy and the Lahore declaration of February 1999. He further appreciated the positive turn in Indo-U.S. relations in the course of the eight rounds of the Talbot-Singh dialogue, and the general rapprochement in Indo-Chinese relations, which had reached bottom when Vajpayee's letter to Clinton was leaked to the press in mid-1998. This letter claimed that the Chinese threat was the main reason for India's testing.

---

[327] Among these: Banerji, Arun Kumar: "Pokhran & Kargil: Peace Wanted, Not An Arms Race." in: The Statesman, June 5th 1999; and, Raghavan V.R.: "South Asian nuclear dialogue." In: The Hindu; September 1st 2000.
[328] Aneja, Atul: "Limited war between India, Pakistan can lead to nuclear conflict." In: The Hindu, March 26th 2002.
[329] Banerji, Arun Kumar: op.cit.. In: The Statesman, June 5th 1999.
[330] ibid.
[331] ibid.

Banerji's assessment clearly illustrates the strategic elite's efforts since mid-1999 to emancipate themselves from the government's nuclear policy. While most members of India's strategic community gave unqualified support to the government's nuclear policy when the wave of patriotism swept through the country in the immediate aftermath of the tests in 1998, this unconditional loyalty, which was euphemistically referred to as 'national consensus' by the elite themselves, ended with the Kargil conflict in June 1999.

9.3.3. The Period of Consolidation

After Kargil, a whole string of analyses from Pakistani or international authors were published,[332] which caused a broadening of the domestic debate among the traditionally inward looking strategic community.
The traditionalists among the bomb lobby nevertheless adhered to their views that were largely isolated from any input from the internationalised debate. One of their leading figures, M.R. Srinivasan,[333] former chairman of the AEC and member of the National Security Advisory Board, expressed his views in August 2001 and maintained the fundamental dogma of India's idiosyncratic discourse. He explains why the nuclear rivalry between India and Pakistan was an invention of the 'Western' media:

> For about 50 years, the Western media has managed to convey the impression of an equivalence between India and Pakistan in spite of the big difference in size, population and economic strength... . Now the Western media is up to its old tricks referring to India and Pakistan as the South Asian nuclear rivals. Simply because Pakistan conducted six tests at Chagai in May 1998, there is certainly no parity in nuclear capabilities between Pakistan and India.[334]

In Srinivasan's view, India's superiority in the nuclear realm existed not only because of its larger number of weapons and its superior infrastructure, but also because of its ability to survive a nuclear strike due to its larger size, which is why it would surely "come out the winner (sic.)."[335] According to Srinivasan, the blame for the military dictatorship in Pakistan as well as for the persistency of the Kashmir conflict rested on America. He explains this with the following:

> The American leaders during the last five decades have actually encouraged military dictatorships all over the world. They find it easier to deal with dictators than the raucous politicians who have to satisfy the expectations of diverse constituencies and win elections in democratic states. … . The 50 years of U.S. handling of global disputes has virtually frozen nearly all of them and carries them over to the present.

[332] Among these: Krepon, Michael: "Nuclear Risk Reduction." In: The Hindu, June 30th 2001; Main, Zia / A.H.Nayyar, Sandeep Pandey / M.V. Ramana: "What they can agree on." In: The Hindu, July 10th 2001; and a review article on Mian, Zia, Smitu Kothari: "Out of the Nuclear Shadow." In: The Hindu, 19th August 2001.
[333] Srinivasan, M.R.: "Indo-Pak nuclear asymmetry." In: The Hindu, August 1st 2001.
[334] ibid.
[335] ibid.

> It is arguable that some of the disputes such as the one between the two Koreas, that between Taiwan and China and that between India and Pakistan would have reached some resolution if external interventions had not taken place.[336]

Besides the inconsistency of these two arguments (in the Korean dispute and the Taiwan issue, the US supported the democracies against their autocratic rivals), these remarks reflect the previously discussed metaphoric concept of 'the West,' or, for that matter: 'America.' Srinivasan finally illustrates the great superiority of India's nuclear achievements vis-à-vis Pakistan and China by looking at the civilian nuclear power sector. According to Srinivasan, China had built so far only one power reactor indigenously and imported two others from France. Pakistan had acquired one reactor from Canada and one from China, while India was operating fourteen reactors, four imported and ten indigenously built: "The Indian Government and even the Department of Atomic Energy have unfortunately not been very enthusiastic is (sic.) stressing the great progress made by India in nuclear power technology on a self-reliant basis."[337] This assessment appears problematic in three ways. To begin with, it is factually unsustainable.[338] Secondly, it is inconsistent as it first attempts to describe China's nuclear installations as imported, then states that Pakistan's installations were equally imported from China. Thirdly, there is no contextual link between the main theme of the article, which is Indo-Pakistani nuclear relations and the civilian nuclear power programme.

While the description of the Indo-Pakistani nuclear relationship shows all elements of the idiosyncratic world view – including generalisations such as 'Western' maliciousness, Indian moral and cultural exceptionalism, Pakistan's technological inferiority – the main theme of the second part of his assessment reflects a view that is traditionally adopted by India's community of nuclear scientists. A crucial element of this view is the myth of India's (civilian) nuclear achievements as symbols of national pride and the genius of its people. This theme, which is labelled by Itty Abraham as the 'myth of modernity,'[339] dominated India's nuclear discourse in the initial phase of its nuclear programme during much of the 1950s and 1960s. In 2001, however, it ha largely disappeared from the debate. It was weakened by the devastating cost-performance ratio of the civilian nuclear programme which swallowed enormous funds while contributing only 3.7% of India's power consumption.[340] Given these facts, Srinivasan's adherence to this antiquated myth appeared anachronistic. In fact, the nuclear myth narrative gradually disappeared during India's nuclear consolidation in the first years of the new millennium.

---

[336] Srinivasan, M.R.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, August 1st 2001.
[337] ibid.
[338] In fact, China is operating seven nuclear reactors, producing more nuclear energy than India's fourteen reactors. Srinivasan's claim that '[t]en reactors operating at present were all designed and built by India' is doubtful, considering that six of them are based on the Canadian CANDU design, and the other four are at least partly based on Russian designs.
[339] Abraham, Itty: op.cit.. 1999.
[340] Source: IAEA Information System, 2003.

9.3.4. The Stability-Instability Paradox

In 2002, two additional incidents significantly altered the Indo-Pakistani nuclear relationship. First, in the course of mounting tensions along the Kashmir LoC in spring 2002, General Musharraf threatened publicly to conduct a nuclear first strike in case Indian troops would cross it. The second occurrence was the publication of an alarming US study on the consequences of a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan, which would presumably cost twelve million lives in both countries.[341] So far, the scenario of a nuclear holocaust was hardly ever seriously discussed in India's media; a phenomenon which is referred to by Robert Jervis as the 'underweighting of the probability of failure' typically arises in morally driven debates on a state's arming decisions.[342]

The lack of consciousness about the consequences of a nuclear exchange among India's public was addressed by Shekhar Gupta in an *Indian Express* article in June 2002:

> [H]ow come there is so little fear over a nuclear war in the subcontinent? Are the people of India and Pakistan trapped in self-denial? The answer, for now, was simple. It isn't just denial that makes our people so nonchalant. It is a more dangerous cocktail of denial, anger and ignorance laced with a selective understanding of a bitter history.[343]

The U.S. report triggered a broad debate on the nuclear risks among India's elite, in which four major different views emerged. First, several commentators decried the leaders' ignorance towards the dangers of nuclear war and the consequences such a war would have for the civilian population. In the second approach, some opinion leaders downplayed the dreadful consequences of a nuclear exchange while maintaining the notion that a nuclear war could be won by India. The third group comprises those strategists who acknowledge the dreadful consequences but maintain the position that the risks of nuclear war were minimal due to the existing deterrence stability. Finally, a relative majority among India's strategic elite acknowledged the risks as well as the consequences of a nuclear war but put the blame on Pakistan.

On the ignorance of the political leadership in India and Pakistan towards the risks of a nuclear war, P.R. Chari states:

> [I]rresponsible persons occupying high office in India and Pakistan have been strident that a conventional war can be fought and won in South Asia; that it could escalate to a nuclear conflict has been dismissed as showing the pusillanimity of the faint-hearted and the flawed logic of the weak-headed. Faith, instead, has been placed in the maturity of the two leaderships and their doctrinal belief that nuclear

[341] Krishnaswami, Sridhar: "Nuclear war will claim 12 million lives." In: The Hindu, May 28th 2002.
[342] Jervis, Robert: op.cit. 1976.
[343] Gupta, Shekhar: "Turning nukes on their head." In: The Indian Express, June 8th 2002.

> weapons are designed not for use but for deterring nuclear attack; hence limited non-nuclear wars can be contemplated.[344]

The second category comprised mainly members of India's political leadership, among them most prominently India's will-be President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. In response to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's statement on a possible first use of nuclear weapons, Kalam affirmed India's posture of no-first-use, as well as his confidence in the stability of deterrence given the superiority of India's nuclear capabilities:

> Pointing out that India's nuclear policy continued to be 'no first use', the father of the country's guided missile technology [A.P.J. Abdul Kalam] said such a policy stemmed from 'confidence'. India could adhere to such a policy because of its confidence it could reply four-times stronger if nuclear weapons were ever used against it by Pakistan.[345]

Inherent to Kalam's view is the belief in the usability of nuclear weapons and the feasibility of winning a nuclear war.

The third approach of downplaying the risks of a nuclear escalation is best illustrated by the *Indian Express* article from Sumit Ganguly. He repudiated the term 'ignorance' when referring to the leaders' position and instead favoured to call it 'equanimity' given the extremely low risk of nuclear confrontation. His view of the 'doomsday reporting' as a mischievous invention of 'the West', or for that matter, America, was widely shared among the mainstream strategic elite in India in 2002. According to Ganguly:

> Political leaders on both sides have exacerbated tensions with saber-rattling public statements. The doomsday reporting that has predominated in the US news media and the overblown rhetoric of US policymakers, however, would have us believe that decision makers in New Delhi, India, and Islamabad, Pakistan, do not understand the strategic significance or the terrifying properties of nuclear weapons or the ruinous consequences of even a limited nuclear war. Rest reassured: They do understand... .
> If Indian and Pakistani leaders meant to use their nuclear weapons, they would have built shelter for their critical decision makers and formulated elaborate plans for post-attack recovery.
> There is no evidence that either side has so prepared. The lack of panic on the streets and in the government buildings of Islamabad and New Delhi, cited with such disdain by Western reporters, is a sign not of naivety but of equanimity. … .
> Nonetheless, the possibility of nuclear war in the region remains exceedingly small. The energy and rhetoric that the news media and policy makers are devoting to conjuring doomsday scenarios would be better spent addressing the root causes of

[344] Chari, P.R.: "Costing an Indo-Pak. War" In: The Hindu, February 9th 2002.
[345] Dasgupta, Manas: "Our nuclear policy stems from confidence: Kalam". In: The Hindu, April 12th 2002.

> the current crisis: Pakistani support for terrorism in Kashmir and, underlying it all, the legitimate grievances of the Kashmiri people.[346]

The logic of Ganguly's main argument is not convincing, as he deduced the modest risks of nuclear escalation from the fact that the leaders did not prepare for it. This logic does not at all weaken those 'doomsday reports' which described the leaders' ignorance as one of the most disturbing sources of the heightened nuclear dangers.

The fourth category of assessments – acknowledging the dangers of nuclear war and blaming Pakistan for the critical situation – included the alarming reactions to President Musharraf's threat to use nuclear weapons if regular Indian troops cross the LoC in Kashmir.

Despite the fact that there was nothing new in Musharraf's statement, as Pakistan's strategists always considered the first-use option as crucial to its nuclear doctrine, Musharraf's emphatic rhetoric had the effect of a wake-up call for the whole spectrum of India's elite.
Balakrishnan Rajagopal attempted to place the rhetoric escalation between India and Pakistan into a broader, global framework:

> Ours has become the age of threats. India threatens Pakistan with a 'limited war' and a complete nuclear annihilation if it uses nuclear weapons first. Pakistan openly threatens India with a 'first strike' nuclear option if it as much as moves its forces one inch across the Line of Control... . The United States President, George Bush, the originator of all threats, threatens the entire world – 'if you are not with us, you are against us' – and specific countries and groups through his 'axis of evil' framework. And terrorists threaten innocents and their governments around the world. Threats have then become a routine way of conducting international affairs.[347]

Rajagopal's subsequent deliberations about the illegality of nuclear threatening according to international law are obviously a helpless objection which was lacking much practical relevance in 2002.

Several opinion articles challenged two of the central beliefs of the Indian nuclear policy makers about the effects of nuclear weapons in Indo-Pakistani strategic relations. First, there is a belief that India's superior nuclear capabilities would surely deter a Pakistani first strike, and second, there is also the perception that the introduction of nuclear weapons would keep the conflict in Kashmir in check, preventing its escalation into a major war.

[346] Ganguly, Sumit: "Nuclear cloud' is full of hot air." In: The Indian Express, June 12th 2002.
[347] Rajagopal, Balakrishnan: "War talk and law talk." In: The Hindu, June 2nd 2002.

Many analysts urge the Indian government not to take the deterrence effects of India's nuclear capabilities for granted, and instead take Pakistan's first use threat seriously. Their view holds the following:

> [E]ven if a second strike is certain, it does not follow that Pakistan would necessarily refrain from a first strike. It would be naïve to expect nuclear decisions in a war situation to be based on a rational assessment of the consequences. Further, suicide is not incompatible with rationality.[348]

With the Indian no-first use doctrine in place, "Pakistan … could be the only introducer of nuclear arms into an Indo-Pak conflict."[349] Manpreet Sethi distinguishes two possible scenarios through which the conflict could become nuclear. In her view:

> [T]here could possibly be two scenarios in which the Pakistani leadership – political, military or whoever else has control over the nuclear trigger – could resort to nuclear use:
> a) In desperation, if the conventional military might of India appears to totally overwhelm Pakistan as to put its survival as a national entity in danger.
> b) In despair, if the Pakistani leadership finds itself in such a hopeless situation, domestically and internationally, that it finds greater sense in self-annihilation than life after war.[350]

Sethi's further deliberations foreshadow a change in the strategists' general understanding of how to best deal with the Pakistani threat. While the policy of containment and predominance have dominated India's strategic thinking since independence, more strategists have begun to contemplate the dangers that a destabilised and harried Pakistan would pose for India's security. In 2002, however, this process of rethinking was still in its fledgling stages, and yet only very few voices went as far as to suggest a policy change towards an active assistance to stabilise Pakistan's state structures.

In the first years of the new millennium, those who saw Pakistan as the evil empire still dominate India's mainstream strategic thinking. Among them, two different interpretations of Musharraf's threat could be distinguished: the first applied the expression 'blackmail' to express the ruthlessness of Pakistan's action, while the other termed it a 'bluff' to express its triviality with regard to India's superior capabilities.
Shekar Gupta's view reflects the 'blackmail' line of thinking. In his view, "(t)he past six months have seen a decisive unravelling of Pakistan's strategy of nuclear blackmail. I will bleed you through a thousand cuts and, if you hit back, I shall nuke you. Then you may nuke me back in return, but I'm so mad I don't care."[351] These remarks describe, although in quite demagogic and tendentious words, what is referred to in IR theory as the stability-

[348] Dreaze, Jean: "The warped logic of nuclear gambles." In: The Hindu, May 27th 2002.
[349] Sethi, Manpreet: "Nailing the moving finger on the N-button." In: The Indian Express, June 13th 2002.
[350] ibid.
[351] Gupta, Shekhar: op.cit.. In: The Indian Express, June 8th 2002.

instability paradox.[352] Noteworthy in Gupta's further deliberations is the complaisance towards American involvement, which, in his interpretation, helped to bring the irrational Pakistani leadership to terms. This view reflects yet another paradigm shift in India's mainstream strategic thought towards a more balanced assessment of outside involvement beyond the stereotyped approach expressed in the mainstream idea of imperialist objectives by 'the West.'

In a rather hawkish approach to counter Pakistani nuclear 'blackmail,' Premvir Das suggested in November 2002 increasing India's military superiority, and as a second option, go to war. In his view:

> [T]o argue that war is not an option makes even less sense. To make or threaten war is one of the instruments of power of a nation state and to rule it out as an option is both unwise and irrational. The business of statecraft is to make this instrument usable, if necessary. If war was an option in 1971, and let us not confuse ourselves by believing that it came about in response to Pakistan's pre-emptive air strikes, then it must be available as an option now.[353]

Das' claim that wars and the threat of wars were a legitimate instrument of power of a nation state is concordant with conservative IR theories. Deterrence theory even suggests that the credible threat of using nuclear weapons is integral part of a stable nuclear deterrence relationship. His argument is problematic, however, as he obviously asserts the right of fighting wars or threatening with war only to India but not to Pakistan. In his view, Musharraf's first use threat was not a legitimate 'instrument of power of a nation state' but a condemnable act of blackmail by an irresponsible leader. This attitude reflects the inherent double-standard thinking by the hawkish section of India's strategic elite, which creates a fundamental distinction between the ranks of Pakistan and India within the international system. This distinction could be observed in the hawks' position on several further issues, most obviously within the debates on the general reliability of no first-use options, as well as the NPT and CTBT debates.

In his account on Pakistan's alleged attempt of blackmail, C. Raja Mohan suggested the build-up of missile defences as a simple solution to India's dilemma. According to Mohan:

> Gen. Musharraf's refusal to end cross-border terrorism and his threat to use nuclear weapons in the very first stages of a military conflict should make the early deployment of missile defences an urgent national priority for India.
> The central lesson from Gen. Musharraf's nuclear blackmail is simple. Without neutralising Pakistan's nuclear calculus based on the first use of nuclear weapons,

[352] On the stability-instability paradox in indo-Pakistani relations, see: Krepon, Michael / Chris Gagné: op.cit.. 2001.
[353] Das, Premvir: "The war that never was." In: The Indian Express, November 18th 2002.

> New Delhi will not be able to bring effective military pressure on Islamabad to give up cross-border terrorism.[354]

The logic behind Mohan's suggestion to build up a missile defence as the potentially best solution to India's security concerns follows the same logic as the call for nuclear weapons by India's strategic community throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The appealing nature of the missile defence stems from two myths: the myth of invulnerability and the myth of modernity. Precedent to this idea is the launching of the American NMD programme, which was the expression of the American neo-conservatives' pursuit of their dream of invulnerability. This programme had replaced nuclear weapons as the symbolic epitome of the world's ultimate and most modern weapon. In Mohan's view, "every argument that has been used by Washington to justify its missile defence project applies with greater urgency to New Delhi."[355] Despite its appealing character, Mohan's vision lacked much practicability. First of all, he does not make any distinction between the missile defence system envisaged for India on the basis of the Israeli Arrow system and the technically more sophisticated and financially more costly American NMD system. Second, he ignores the technical limitations that the introduction of such a system would face due to the geographic proximity, the short warning times, etc. Third, he overlooks strategic difficulties, such as pre-emptive strike imperatives and nuclear arms race incentives.

At first sight, Mohan's rejection of American regional involvement appears to be in line with the long held mainstream position of India's strategic thinkers. A closer look, however, reveals a crucial alteration to the traditionally anti-American narrative: Mohan does not reject American involvement as a matter of principle on the grounds of anti-imperialism and national dignity. Rather, he accepts the general legitimacy of the American global war on terrorism as well as its quest for a national missile defence system but asserts its failure in the case of Pakistan. According to Mohan, India was confronted with similar terrorist threats as the US and could therefore expect American sympathy and assistance. In his view, "[t]he U.S. department, which has been unable to get Gen. Musharraf to deliver on his promises to end cross-border terrorism, has little credibility in opposing the transfer of missile defence technologies to India."[356]
Das' position on America's regional involvement is similar but worded in a much more radical manner:

> First, America must disengage from our neighbourhood and turn its attention elsewhere in its fight against terrorism. This alone can give us the political space for exercising a military option. Second, we must create a decisively stronger military capability versus the adversary.[357]

[354] Mohan, C. Raja: Countering Pak.'s nuclear blackmail." In: The Hindu, January 1st 2003.
[355] ibid.
[356] ibid.
[357] Das, Premvir: op.cit.. In: The Indian Express, November 18th 2002.

While the hawks among India's strategists were still in the process of adjusting their world view to the new reality of nuclear threats, or, at times, adjusting their interpretation of the new reality to their world view, a majority of India's strategists engaged in an intensive debate on how to stabilise Indo-Pakistani strategic interaction under the new conditions.

The strategists' search for solutions is illustrated by an article in *The Hindu* in July 2002. The article was written by V.R. Raghavan, then director of the Delhi Policy Group and a retired Lt General and India's director general of military operations.[358]
Raghavan emphasises the significance of nuclear weapons in the Indo-Pakistani conflict:

> Nuclear weapons remained the central determining factor in the standoff between India and Pakistan. The deterrence effect of nuclear weapons has played a major part in both the creation and management of the crisis being played out between the two states. Public focus has remained on the steps taken by the two countries and the role played by the United States. The reality is that nuclear weapons with India and Pakistan determined the parameters of both the crisis and its containment. Nuclear deterrence was manipulated by all three countries to serve their individual needs.[359]

He increasingly draws up the particular interests the key players, India, Pakistan and the United States, had in the standoff. While maintaining that deterrence played a crucial role in the conflict, he nevertheless refrains from clearly stating who deterred whom and who benefited more from the deterrence relationship. Instead, he reflects upon the different opinions on this question among India's strategic decision makers and analysts.

> There are divergent voices in India about who deterred whom. The Prime Minister said war was imminent at a point of time, and that his Government was prepared for a nuclear war, if it were to come about. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has stated that without nuclear weapons on the scene, war would have been a certainty. The former Army chief, V.P. Malik, disagreed and asserted that nuclear weapons neither eliminated nor reduced the risk of outbreak of hostilities. Some of India's strategic analysts are divided between two divergent positions. One group advocates getting out of the defensive trench mentality and calling the Pakistani nuclear bluff by going on the military offensive. Others point out that nuclear war cannot be a bilateral affair and would impact on other countries, who in turn will insist on a role in the standoff.[360]

In contrast to most other analysts, Raghavan did not a priori commit himself to one of the three interpretations of Pakistan's policy – bluff, blackmail, or legitimate deterrence – but instead contemplates all three. He finally considers the 'bluff-version as the most plausible:

---

[358] Raghavan, V.R.: "Manipulating Nuclear Deterrence." In: The Hindu, July 3rd 2002.
[359] ibid.
[360] ibid.

> Whether India and Pakistan bluffed or blackmailed or deterred each other, and did the same to major powers, would be speculated upon for a long while. This question is reinforced by India and Pakistan recently stepping back from their earlier positions. There are claims being put forward that war was never part of the plan in New Delhi. In Pakistan it is claimed that its military capability alone was adequate to deter India from going to war. After manipulating nuclear deterrence to raise fears of a nuclear exchange to gain a relative advantage, both sides have portrayed themselves as rational nuclear states.[361]

Finally, Raghavan raises concerns about the damaging effects of the unabashed 'manipulation' of the nuclear issue in Indo-Pakistani interaction to India's international reputation and credibility. According to his view:

> Attempts by India and Pakistan to repeatedly work up crises with nuclear underpinnings will lead to a range of adverse spin-offs. India can ill afford to be seen as unpredictable or irrational in nuclear matters. Its claims to being a stabilising influence in and outside the South Asian region will come under doubt. Its ability to manage its strategic interests in cooperation with other major powers will be questioned.[362]

In sum, Raghavan's analysis illustrates a general trend towards more careful and balanced reporting and commenting on the nuclear issue. He deliberately avoids the 'us-against-them' approach, depicting India's relationship to Pakistan and the United States, but instead emphasises the distance between him as the observer and India's political actors involved. His account of the motives, interests, and gains of the three states was a priori uncommitted. Merely his concluding remarks on India's relations with 'other major powers' illustrates the traditional distinction by India's strategists between India as member of the major powers' club and Pakistan as pariah state.

Nonetheless, the application of double standards remained inherent to most assessments of the 2002 crisis between India and Pakistan, particularly within the debate on the first-use option and the alleged intentions of the Pakistani leadership. According to Amit Baruah:

> Indian perception of Pakistan's nuclear intention must err on the side of 'use' – not that of 'non-use.' The steadfast refusal of the Pakistanis to give a commitment of 'no first-use' says enough about Islamabad's 'intentions'. … . Pakistan was recognised the world over as the aggressor, but it took some time for this to happen. Islamabad will not have that much 'time' to respond to any Indian provocation. Given the manufactured paranoia about India in Pakistan, any little action from New Delhi will be construed as a big threat by the 'faujis' sitting in Rawalpindi. Those

[361] Raghavan, V.R.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, July 3rd 2002.
[362] ibid.

> responsible for building up India as the bugbear in Pakistan are the very persons responsible for upholding Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity.[363]

Before the nuclear tests of 1998, there had been unanimity among India's mainstream strategists that China's no-first use declaration could not be trusted and India should therefore build up its own full-fledged arsenal. Once India had declared itself a nuclear weapon state, it proposed itself a no-first-use agreement to Pakistan. Pakistan's rejection of joining India's no-first-use declaration was condemned by the same strategists as the outcome of a 'manufactured paranoia' towards India, which 'says enough about Islamabad's intentions.'

After the tests, most of India's elite believed that the fundamentally different status of India and Pakistan within the international system, which was widely seen as an axiomatic fact, had been internationally acknowledged. American criticism of General Musharraf's threat of nuclear first use was commented on in India's media with great ease. This appears ironic considering the fact that the United States as the world's leading power insists on maintaining the nuclear first-use option. Most analysts expressed their satisfaction about the assumed increasing awareness of the international audience about Pakistan's malicious intentions and India's legitimate security concerns. This satisfaction was illustrated in an article in *The Hindu* in June 2002, in which the author claims the following:

> The scenario of a nuclear war between Pakistan and India has come to impinge on the conscience of the global community in the context of a stark contrast between the nuclear security doctrines of these two estranged neighbours. While India has consistently stated that it will not be the first to use nuclear weapons against any country, Pakistan does not subscribe to a similar principle. It is this notion of ambiguity about Pakistan's intentions which serves as grist to the doomsday mills on the international stage. Now, although Pakistan is not alone among the states possessing nuclear weapons in refusing to propound a 'no-first-use' policy, what seems to have set Islamabad apart is its tendency to justify such an attitude by citing its strategic vulnerability to a big neighbour like India.[364]

The continued application of double standards stemmed from the dual significance of nuclear weapons as strategic devices as well as symbols of international prestige and standing. While the considerable impact of Pakistan's nuclear weapons for both countries' strategic relationship is widely accepted by India's strategic thinkers, a nuclear Pakistan was still considered a major obstacle for India's efforts to elevate its international status to the rank of a major power.

---

[363] Baruah, Amit: "The invisible line between conventional and nuclear war." In: The Hindu, January 2nd 2003.
[364] N.N.: "Opinion: Towards a thaw." In: The Hindu, June 4th 2002.

9.3.5. Pre-Emptive Strike Imperatives

The British-American invasion of Iraq in spring 2003 caused some repercussions among India's political leaders and its foreign policy elite. The debate was triggered by India's External Affairs Minister Yaswant Sinha, who declared that India had "a much better case to go for pre-emptive action against Pakistan than the US has in Iraq."[365] His comment was followed by then Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, who declared India's right to attack Pakistan pre-emptively by quoting the Iraqi precedent. The U.S. government reacted promptly by rejecting India's claims and negated any existing parallels between the two cases.

The idea of considering America's action against Iraq as precedent for potential action against Pakistan was dismissed by a majority of India's strategic elite. As J.N. Dixit states:

> A US attack on Iraq cannot be a model for India primarily because of the asymmetry in the military equations between the Iraq and the US. … . Secondly, Saddam Hussein was generally considered a pernicious influence by countries of the region as well as by the important powers. Thirdly, though there was no consensus on the manner in which the military operations were launched by the US against Iraq, there was general agreement that Saddam's regime should be removed. Fourthly, no country or group of countries has the capacity to prevent the US from carrying out its decisions on the ground. … . Lastly, the Bush administration had the will and resources to implement its decision regardless of objections from domestic or world opinion. The Indian predicament is exactly the opposite of all that… .[366]

J.N. Dixit challenges several myths which guided how politicians raised this issue, including the overwhelming superiority in power capabilities necessary to conduct a pre-emptive strike, the consensus among the world community in regard to the Pakistani threat, and above all, India's autonomy from international objections.

Yet, India's strategic elite repudiated the immediate American objection in their traditional anti-imperialist response. In contrast to similar previous instances, particularly during the non-proliferation debates of the 1990s, anti-American or anti-imperialist emotions did not run high within this scenario. Hussain Haqqani criticises the US policy by saying the following:

> [A]s the State Department response to Sinha's first statement affirms, the U.S. considers the doctrine of pre-emption exclusively to its status as a global hyperpower. India can try to please its own people or embarrass Pakistan in that

[365] Yaswant Sinha, cited in Haqqani, Hussain: "Why India cannot afford a pre-emptive strike on Pak." In: The Indian Express, April 10th 2003.
[366] Dixit, J.N.: "Linkage politics." In: The Indian Express, April 18th 2003.

> segment of the global media that has time to pay attention to it. But it cannot realistically expect international support for a pre-emptive strike against Pakistan.[367]

Even those who favoured a strong hand against Pakistan and generally supported pre-emptive measures in this conflict still reject the politician's notion of quoting the Iraqi precedent. According to Dixit, "[i]f India deems it necessary to take pre-emptive action, it need not be linked to the US operations in Iraq. It should be an autonomous exercise based on the ground realities and governed by careful and measured calculations."[368]

Although the debate on the pre-emptive strike option was only indirectly related to the nuclear issue, it nevertheless illustrated a general change within India's strategic policy making with major implications for the country's nuclear course. The major strategic policy decisions throughout the 1990s were backed by a highly emotionalised and lurid debate by the strategic community within the media, which in turn, was instrumentalised by the political leadership for partisan purposes. These dynamics were, however, no longer in place in 2003. Even the hawkish section of the strategists favouring a tough line against Pakistan was not willing to jump on the bandwagon. Without the strategists' public backing, the issue soon lost its appeal to the political elite. Defence Minister George Fernandes, who had supported Sinha's idea at first, reconsidered his view shortly thereafter. His actions were subsequently followed by most other members of the government.

[367] Haqqani, Hussain: op.cit.. In: The Indian Express, April 10th 2003.
[368] Dixit, J.N.: op.cit.. In: The Indian Express, April 18th 2003

10. The China Factor in India's Strategic Thinking

10.1. The Emergence of Sino-Indian Strategic Relationship

Throughout the 1950s, India's foreign policy elite perceived Indo-Chinese relations as a natural partnership of two major Third World countries. Despite several unsolved frictions on the exact border demarcation and sympathetic feelings among Indian elites towards the Tibetian liberation movement, Jawaharlal Nehru followed a course of reconciliation with China, which came to be known as Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai.
This phase of Indo-Chinese friendship ended in 1959, when the dispute over the territory of Aksai Chin emerged. In the same year, the bilateral relationship further deteriorated after a Tibetian uprising and the resulting Chinese repression caused the Dalai Lama and many thousand of his followers to flee and take refuge in India. China accused the Indian government of conspiring with the Tibetian movement. Despite these disturbances in bilateral relations in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the outbreak of the Indo-Chinese war in 1962 caught Nehru as well as the greater part of India's foreign policy elite completely unprepared. The course and outcome of the war revealed several shortcomings: First, the Indian armed forces were insufficiently prepared to defend the borders. This was particularly true for high altitude warfare in the Himalayas. Second, the military command proved to be ill-prepared, overstrained, and lacked a comprehensive strategy. Third, the political leadership was blamed by many among India's strategic elite for pursuing a highly naive foreign and security policy while ignoring the realistic nature of international relations. Jawaharlal Nehru witnessed the ruin of his vision of a peaceful world order guided by factors other than military strength.

Immediately after the war, the government launched an intense programme to strengthen India's military capabilities. However, this effort did not include the nuclear programme, seen as a competitor of the conventional arms build-up, in the allocations for the limited defence budget. Nevertheless, the Sino-Indian war of 1962 had several indirect implications on India's nuclear build-up. First of all, the monopoly of Nehruvian thought in Indian foreign and security policy discourse was broken, though truly differing opinions were still limited to a few strategic analysts, certain parts of the media, and opposition politicians. Secondly, the overall debate on security issues intensified.
The close cooperation between China and Pakistan, which was confirmed in 1963, further increased India's threat perception towards China and its feeling of being surrounded by a hostile neighbourhood.

On October 16th, 1964, a nuclear dimension was added to Sino-Indian hostilities when China conducted its first nuclear test. The Chinese nuclear programme had been initiated in 1955, and made rapid progress due to large-scale Soviet technology transfer, including a blueprint of a nuclear explosion device. In strategic terms, China's newly developed

nuclear capabilities aimed at deterring its two major rivals: the USA, which had introduced nuclear weapons into its confrontation with China through an assistance pact with Taiwan, and the Soviet Union. India, on the other hand, played only a minor role in China's strategic calculus. Nonetheless, China's nuclear breakthrough alarmed India's strategic community, which was still in a state of dismay after the humiliating debacle of 1962. In the eyes of many Indian strategic analysts, the only way to deter China from future military aggression or blackmail was to acquire nuclear weapons as well. The perception of the country's strategic and technological inferiority vis-à-vis China further increased when China conducted its first test of an H-Bomb on May 9th, 1966.

While the strategic implications of the Chinese nuclear tests on India's security environment caused deep concern among strategic analysts, the broader public as well as most parts of the political class were occupied with its non-strategic implications. Prior to the Chinese tests, India's political leadership and public considered its nuclear programme well ahead of that of China. With Soviet assistance, China had surpassed India within a short range of time. Additionally, the tremendous funds allocated by the Chinese government as well as the sacrifices borne by its people were only possible because of its authoritarian regime. Indian disappointment was further aggravated by the mainly positive reactions to the Chinese tests by other developing countries. Subsequently, China effectively played the nuclear card in order to gain international prestige and improve its status.

In retrospect, the Chinese success in using its nuclear achievements for political ends made a much greater impression on the participants of the nuclear debate in India than its mere strategic implications. The use of nuclear devices in gaining international prestige and advantage was valued much more highly by India's elite then during Nehruvian times. However, in contrast to the expectations of most Western analysts, the effect of the newly emerged Chinese nuclear threat on India's security perception as well as on the Indian psyche was not strong enough for India to change its course and openly embark on a path towards nuclear weaponisation.

The successive events of 1959, 1962, 1963, 1964, and 1966 had reversed Indo-Chinese relations from Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai to a bitter strategic rivalry. This deep-rooted dislike was slightly alleviated by two events in the early 1970s. In 1971, both the South Asian strategic landscape and the Asian balance of power fundamentally changed. The Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 and the subsequent disintegration of Pakistan were perceived as a major victory for India as well as a great success for Indira Gandhi's foreign policy. India emerged as the undisputed regional power in South Asia. Simultaneously, the Sino-US rapprochement and the concurrent signing of the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty altered the Asian balance of power system. In its strategic relationship to China, India was able to significantly improve its position, firstly by breaking the Sino-Pakistani axis in the east, and secondly by encircling China through a strategic alliance with the USSR in the north. India did not win the power game completely, however, as the USS Enterprise was dispatched into the Bay of Bengal at the height of the war. This move was perceived by India's strategists, who had expected America to stand by the democratic India, as an open attempt

at blackmail. The fact that this event had such an impact on the psyche of India's elite illustrates its almost naive misperception of the dynamics in international affairs. As in the 1962 war, India's elite reacted to the Enterprise incident with indignation and a deep sense of humiliation.

Three years later, India tested its first nuclear device. The subsequent rhetorical exchange between India and China reveals the dilemma caused by the various symbolic meanings of the nuclear issue. India's elite adopted the official position and emphatically stressed the peaceful intentions behind the explosion. In its official response, the Chinese government explicitly followed suit: "China responded to the Indian PNE with conscious aloofness, reporting the event without comment. Subsequently, Chinese officials suggested that the PNE had no military significance"[369]. India's elite, in turn, perceived China's reaction as an insult of its achievement. Overall, the test did not have much strategic implication for China, as India lacked the delivery systems to threaten Chinese targets. Furthermore, it largely failed to boost India's international standing to the degree of China's 1964 test.

10.2. Elite Perception and the Chinese Threat

10.2.1. Rajiv's Policy of Rapprochement

In late 1988, Rajiv Gandhi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Beijing since the war of 1962. The chances to end 26 years of hostility appeared to be good for several reasons: First, the Brasstacks crisis had directed the attention of India's strategic thinkers almost exclusively to Pakistan; second, India's military build-up along its Himalayan border to China had reversed the local balance of power to India's favour, precluding a repetition of the 1962 defeat.
The lack of interest in Indo-Chinese strategic relations among most policy makers and the public left the issue to a very small circle in India's strategic community, as well as to the anti-Chinese section of the foreign policy elite. While the latter grossly overstated the Chinese nuclear threat (allegedly emerging from large scale Chinese missile deployments in Tibet), the former, most prominently K. Subrahmanyam, preferred to describe China as India's future competitor for supremacy on the Asian continent.

The strategists concerned with the Chinese threat considered the lack of conflicting national interests irrelevant. Following their Realist logic, a tangible motive to threaten India was unnecessary, the mere capability to do so was enough incentive for India to build-up a nuclear arsenal of its own. Interestingly enough, most of those analyses positing India's nuclear build-up as a counter to China were published as a reaction to assessments by Western (read: American) strategists[370] that negated any Indian strategic need for the bomb. Both sides, however, limited the scope of their assessment to their half of the truth. Any

[369] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p. 187.
[370] among these: Arnett, Eric: Military Capacity and the Risk of War: China, India, Pakistan, and Iran. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997.

balanced and realistic threat assessment would have had to acknowledge some basic realities: First, since the late 1980s, a repetition of the Sino-Indian war was no longer a realistic scenario. Due to its conventional build-up along the shared Himalayan border and major improvements in its high-altitude warfare capabilities, India was able to establish conventional superiority along the border. More notable than the Indian build-up was the fact that China continuously avoided balancing India's efforts through proportional reinforcements. China's restraint and its tacit acceptance of a modest imbalance was a clear signal to India's policy makers.

Secondly, neither the Chinese air force, nor the Chinese navy posed a severe threat to India's security or territorial integrity. Any penetration of India's air space by China's limited and obsolescent fleet of nuclear capable strike aircraft could easily be intercepted by India's air defence. Despite alarming reports on co-operation between the Chinese and Burmese navies in the Indian Ocean, China's limited power projection capabilities did not pose a credible threat to India's interests in the Indian Ocean. China had the capability, however, to target India with its nuclear missiles. This fact was the main argument for Subrahmanyam et. al. to call for India's nuclearisation.

The lack of a substantial conflict in national interests that would provide an incentive for China to target India is matched only by the weak strategic implications of the China-argument , rather cast doubts about the sincerity of those emphasising it. If one accepts the Chinese nuclear threat as being acute, it would have been imperative for India to build-up delivery systems capable of reaching Chinese strategic targets in order to create a credible nuclear deterrence against the Chinese threat. Most of India's strategic thinkers, however, were rather unconcerned with this strategic necessity in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The fact that most strategists suggested China by 'going nuclear' (where 'going nuclear' defined as assembling a nuclear device and declaring itself a nuclear weapons state) indicates the strategists' preoccupation with status considerations, not with the acquisition of a credible nuclear deterrent. The debate on the Chinese nuclear threat remained largely restricted to academia and expert circles outside the mainstream.

10.2.2. The Changing Image of China in the 1990s

Between 1991 and 1996, the focus of China's South Asia policy gradually shifted away from Pakistan towards India. The incentive for this change did not come from changes in the strategic balance of power, but rather from economic reforms India initiated in 1991 that made its domestic marked attractive for Chinese goods and services. Beginning in 1991, China adopted a much more restrictive stance on its missile exports to Pakistan. Further, China joined the NPT in 1992, thereby accepting its strict provisions on nuclear technology transfers. The same year, it principally agreed to (without signing) to the Missile Technology Control Regime. In 1993 and in 1996, it signed two treaties with India on the demarcation of its disputed border, ruling out military action. Finally, in 1996, on his trip to India and Pakistan, Chinese Prime Minister Jiang Zemin called on both sides to solve the Kashmir dispute on a bilateral basis. Though disguised beneath banal diplomatic rhetoric, both sides understood the message: While India had always insisted on a bilateral

solution of the conflict, Pakistan continuously attempted to internationalise it. Prior to Jiang's visit in 1996, China adopted Pakistan's position and demanded an international approach. In this context, the declaration of 1996 marked a fundamental paradigm shift in Chinese foreign policy.

The nuclear discourse in India remained largely unaffected by these positive developments. A broader debate on China's motives and moves was virtually nonexistent in the editorial and opinion sections of India's dailies. In most nuclear related articles of the early 1990s, the Chinese nuclear threat was taken as an axiomatic fact unworthy of further scrutiny. The first recorded attempt to correct this shortcoming was done only in 1994, by A.G. Noorani[371]. Consequently, Noorani starts by lamenting the ignorance of India's media and academia towards this issue:

> India's stress on reckoning with China as a powerful nuclear-weapon State in any discussion on a nuclear-safe Asia is perfectly justified. But what is inexplicable is that it is only its index finger, pointing east, that is engaged. India has not asked China for a discussion on the subject. It has not sought to engage China in a meaningful exchange of views. That attitude is reflected also in the media and academia's indifference to China's views on disarmament.[372]

The author subsequently outlines the Chinese policy in favourable words, emphasising the consistency of both countries' (then held) positions on major issues like the desirability of a global and comprehensive test ban agreement -- "a pledge by all nuclear-weapon States not to use nuclear weapons at all"[373] -- and the ultimate goal of creating a nuclear-weapon free world.
Noorani ends by stating that "India could well endorse China's stand, in so far as it accords with its own, and press for a dialogue on a nuclear-safe Asia without prejudice to its stand that this is essentially a global question and many other States are also involved, not least, Israel"[374].

Noorani's analysis does fall short of giving a comprehensive overview of China's strategic thinking. By focusing exclusively on China's stance towards the Western nuclear weapons states as well as the international non-proliferation debate, he actually confirms what he initially criticises: The ignorance of India's elite towards China as an independent actor in the nuclear arena. While the overall supremacy of the 'India-against-Western discrimination'-theme is inherent to Noorani's look at China, he nevertheless departs from the mainstream view with regard to China's position within this framework. In his perception, China is not a part of the exclusive, discriminatory 'nuclear club', but instead on India's side as a leading member of the Third World community. This revival of

[371] Noorani, A.G.: "Asian Security: Beijing's Stand On Nuclear Arms. In: The Statesman, May 13th 1994.
[372] ibid.
[373] ibid.
[374] ibid.

traditional Nehruvian thoughts had not gained much popularity among India's strategic elite since the 1962 war.

In April 1995, a Chinese notion forwarded to the Geneva Conference of Disarmament triggered an alarmist newspaper analysis one week later by Brahma Chellaney[375]. The content of the Chinese notion was a specification of its no-first-use declaration of 1982. Therein, China unambiguously declared that "at no time and under no circumstances will China be the first to use nuclear weapons, and that it undertakes unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon countries and nuclear-free zones"[376]. The Chinese declaration had two major aims: Firstly, it aimed at avoiding the emergence of a nuclear arms race with other nuclear weapons states by declaring a no-first-use policy; secondly, it aimed at avoiding nuclear proliferation among non-nuclear weapon states by giving them guarantees not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them. Furthermore, the 1995 specification closed a loophole in China's 1982 declaration by stating that those countries that acquired nuclear capabilities but were not officially recognised as nuclear-weapon states by NPT should not enjoy the security guarantees granted by China to non-nuclear weapon states. Brahma Chellaney quite rightly interpreted this statement as targeted against India. Many strategic policy makers and analysts in India, among them Brahma Chellaney himself, maintained that India had acquired nuclear capabilities at least by 1974, while at the same time expecting Chinese security guarantees as long as India was not officially recognised as nuclear weapon state.

China issued the amended declaration in 1995 after it had become apparent to Chinese policy makers that India had taken the irreversible path towards a full-fledged nuclear arsenal. In the new declaration, it stated that the 1982 declaration "naturally applies to non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or non-nuclear weapon states that have undertaken any comparable internationally binding commitments not to manufacture or acquire nuclear explosive devices"[377]. The 1995 declaration left no room to manoeuvre for Indian proponents of nuclear ambiguity, as it gave India the choice of either committing itself to a binding moratorium of its nuclear programme, or losing its non-nuclear weapon status. The second part of the declaration, which stated that "comparable internationally binding commitments" (i.e. any other bilateral or multilateral agreement on nuclear non-proliferation) would also satisfy China's terms, was an implicit acceptance of India's rejection of the NPT on principles of non-discrimination. This annex was ignored by Brahma Chellaney.

The Chinese move was considered by Chellaney as an implicit threat against India:

> Behind the nuclear powers' casual disregard of world opinion for legally binding assurances without caveats lies a subtle but important shift in China's position -- a

[375] Chellaney, Brahma: "Chinese N-policy shift may pose a threat to India". In: Indian Express, April 15th 1995.
[376] ibid.
[377] ibid.

> shift that is of direct consequence for India. The change can be construed as an implicit nuclear threat against India.[378]

He subsequently relativised his threat assessment by stating that "India could not be the target of a Chinese first strike but of a nuclear intimidation and blackmail"[379].
Additionally, he questions the importance of any Chinese declaration -- no matter how explicit, for India's security policy: "The shift in the Chinese nuclear posture need not unnecessarily be viewed as a serious development because even earlier, when Beijing's assurances were unconditional, India could not have relied on its unilateral, non-binding declaration"[380]. Although this downplaying of the relevance of Chinese declaratory diplomacy dampened the alarming tone of Chellaney's prior stance, it was nevertheless in line with the traditionally sceptical position of India's strategic elite on the reliability of international agreements or treaties.

In sum, the Indo-Chinese rapprochement in the years from 1991 to 1996 had the opposite effect one might have expected. The prospect of friendly relations and cooperation with China added an element of urgency to the nuclear apologists' demand for the bomb. Knowing that Chinese nuclear capabilities were the only strategic threat with which India could credibly justify its nuclear build-up, each Chinese step towards reconciliation implied the weakening their position.

10.2.3. Redefining Sino-Indian Relations after the Tests

In the aftermath of India's nuclear testing in 1998, several members of the cabinet agreed to earlier statements by Defence Minister George Fernandes that named China's as the main cause for India's nuclear programme. China reacted with outrage to these statements.
India's newspaper commentators generally agreed to the government's assessment of the Chinese threat, but considered such open declarations to be diplomatically clumsy.
An account illustrative of the general disposition of India's strategic analysts towards the issue was given by V.V. Paranjpe two weeks after the tests[381]. His account starts with the praise typical of the overwhelming majority of newspaper commentaries in the immediate aftermath of the tests:

> Pokhran '98 was undoubtedly a great achievement for India and every Indian is proud of the Indian scientists who made it possible and look so simple, natural and easy. … . While the credit for the nuclear tests goes to the scientists, the credit for a bold decision goes to the BJP government.[382]

[378] Chellaney, Brahma: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, April 15th 1995.
[379] ibid.
[380] ibid.
[381] Paranjpe, V.V.: "Fall-out of nuclear tests on Sino-Indian ties". In: The Hindu, May 25th 1998.
[382] ibid.

Like most commentators at the time, Paranjpe was overwhelmed by pride. These emotions reflected the total identification of the observer with his subject: Paranjpe generally refers to 'we' and 'us' when assessing the government's actions, calling the nuclear tests "our achievements".

Generally, commentary on the nuclear issue in the spring and summer of 1998 bore a resemblance to a football commentary, in which the national team scores against a seemingly unbeatable rival team. But while the goal scorer, i.e. the nuclear scientists, was heaped with praise (to continue with the football metaphor), some of the head coach' decisions were criticised. According to Paranjpe,

> [t]he BJP publicity suffered from two blemishes: giving explanations and mentioning names.
> Explanations imply a sense of guilt and we need have none. As the advice goes: 'Don't explain, don't complain'. We owe no one an explanation, least of all to the powers in the 'nuclear club' -- they have done much worse and got away with it. It is our legitimate right to strengthen our security in every possible way.[383]

As with nearly all supportive commentaries in the aftermath of India's nuclear tests, Paranjpe does not give any analysis of how the tests strengthened India's security, but prefers to leave the interrelation of nuclear testing and 'strengthening our security' as a given. According to Paranjpe, the most severe mistake of the Indian government, had been the naming of China as India's threat number one. Those members of government who named China were criticised as 'rabble-rousers':

> But once in the Government, Ministers will not only be rousing the 'rabble' but Republics. And that is exactly what has happened. China has been openly named as the source of our concern. If it is only a guess, better not mention it. If we have enough evidence, even then it is better not to let the enemy know what we know. By all means take firm action, but use mild language. That is the art of state-craft.
> Today we have only succeeded in rousing Chinese anger, when China was trying to be friendly. We have unnecessarily queered the pitch. On the one hand, the Government has been trying to improve relations with China and on the other we are engaged in a mud-slinging match, giving the impression that one hand of the Government does not know what the other is doing. This is a repetition of 1959. We then unleashed an anti-China campaign which spread misinformation and /based on that) many misconceptions about China. China has a much larger and richer diplomatic tradition. China did not say much but it acted to teach us a lesson! -- and again smiled. Barking has no value, unless you can bite. If we create that 'biting' power, that is all for the good. But we must refrain from a 'bark'.[384]

[383] Paranjpe, V.V.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, May 25th 1998.
[384] ibid.

While V.V. Paranjpe generally agreed that China was a major threat to India's security, his criticism focused less on the substance of this claim than on the form in which it was announced: the Indian government publicly treated China as punching bag.

While Paranjpe's criticism of India's poor diplomatic handling of the post-Pokhran situation might be explained by his background as former ambassador, those commentators with a military background were much less concerned with diplomatic conventions, and many of them expressed their support for Fernandes' blunt rhetoric. Brijesh D. Jayal, retired air marshal, started his analysis of Sino-Indian nuclear relations after the tests by stating that "[t]he Armed Forces ought to be delighted that in George Fernandes they have at long last a minister who is willing to provide the much needed leadership"[385]. Jayal then criticised the mainstream position of media commentary on Fernandes' forthright approach:

> Strangely, little media attention has focussed on this very positive aspect of the Defence Minister's business-like and dynamic approach. Instead, volumes have been devoted to statements made by the minister with regard to China being considered the primary threat and allied issues. A majority of media comments have been critical of the minister's outspoken comments.[386]

Jayal's view of China as a dangerous and hostile neighbour reflects the deep humiliation that was still very much present in large sections of India's military 36 years after the lost war. These sentiments are further outlined by Jayal:

> While the general refrain is to treat the Chinese with kid gloves, it is being forgotten that the Chinese believe in dealing with others from a position of strength and any weakness that they perceive in their adversary is converted into their advantage. That they also happen to be sitting on large areas of our sovereign territory only makes their resolve stronger. All this leaves the Armed Forces somewhat confused, not with their minister personally, but with the system of governance and the intelligentsia. China today occupies tens of thousands of square kilometers of Indian territory and lays claims to hundreds of thousands more.[387]

According to Jayal, the frictions within the government were caused by the opaque, secretive mode of strategic policy making, which made the need for a reform of the decision making structures apparent. Jayal calls for a shift of power away from the MOD into the hands of the military leadership: "Today, the service chiefs are accountable for the performance of their forces without having the necessary powers. Those in the MOD wielding the authority, however, are not accountable. Little wonder that India is the only democracy following this archaic model"[388].

---

[385] Jayal, Brijesh D.: "National Security: Kid Gloves Will Not Do". In: The Statesman, June 3rd 1998.
[386] ibid.
[387] ibid.
[388] ibid.

Many strategic thinkers called for an increased involvement of the military in strategic policy making in order to improve the expertise therein; Accordingly, the Security Advisory Board was established soon after the tests. But the increased role of the military was carefully limited to advisory functions, for the allocation of executive powers in the policy process was still considered taboo. The open call for a shift of political power into the hands of the military by Jayal, himself a retired military officer, was a rare infringement of the self-imposed code of India's military. Jayal subsequently recommended the immediate establishment of a Chief of Defence Staff as well as a radical reform of India's ineffective system of defence PSU's and Ordnance Factories[389].

The most sophisticated assessment of the strategic implications of the tests with regard to Indo- Chinese relations was made by C. Raja Mohan[390]. In his view, China's changing role after the end of the Cold War, according to Mohan, was the key cause for the revival of the nuclear debate in India:

> the collapse of the Soviet Union, the emergence of China -- once India's peer -- as the second most important power in the world, the consequent disorientation of India's foreign policy and the fear that India will forever be marginalised in the Asian and global geopolitics forced New Delhi to reconsider its nuclear policy in the 1990s.[391]

Mohan's position reflects the mainstream view of the academic section of India's strategic community, which was mainly trying to explain India's nuclear policy through an analytic assessment of geo-strategic dynamics. These approaches necessarily centred on the China factor as the most plausible incentive for India's nuclearisation. Even so, some of the factors given by Mohan to back up the plausibility of the China factor appear grossly overstated. Above all, his claim that China had become the 'second most important power in the world' by the 1990s is questionable at best.

Even more fragile is Mohan's reasoning that China's alleged domination was the main incentive for its neighbours to develop nuclear weapons. As evidence, Mohan notes the North Korean nuclear programme, as well as Taiwan's and Japan's flirtation with the nuclear option. This logic appears flawed, as North Korea's nuclear efforts were not triggered by China, but rather aimed at deterring the superior conventional weaponry of South Korea, Japan, and the USA. A stronger China would probably have decreased North Korea's incentives to proliferate. Taiwan, on the other hand, had rejected the nuclear option in the midst of the Cold War.

Japan appears as the strongest case for Mohan's argument. His claim that "the nuclear weapon option remains an important sub-text in Japan's long-term strategic thinking"[392]

---

[389] Jayal, Brijesh D.: op.cit.. In: The Statesman, June 3rd 1998.
[390] Mohan, C. Raja: "Nuclear balance in Asia". In: The Hindu, June 11th 1998.
[391] ibid.
[392] ibid.

and his indication that Japan was developing scenarios in which nuclear weapons contribute to its efforts to balance China's power, in the case of an American pull-out of the region, was a well documented fact. Yet it is important to stress the long-term character of this scenario. The Japanese did not sense the urgency that guided India's nuclear testing, its self-declaration as nuclear weapon state, and Mohan's premature classification of China as the world's second largest power.
Beyond the specific cases cited by Mohan, his model of nuclear balance in Asia faces one fundamental problem: according to his logic, the incentives to build-up nuclear weapon capabilities applied not only to the three cases mentioned (plus India) but also to several other states in South East, South, Central, and Western Asia. The essential question is thereby whether an Asian strategic set-up comprised of at least a dozen nuclear weapons states would really be in the best interests of India's security.

Essential to the changing Asian balance of power was the developing Sino-US relationship. According to Mohan, neither the emergence of a new Cold War between the US and China, nor a Sino-US axis would be in the interest of India and other Asian nations. In his view, an independent foreign policy allowed India to maintain well-balanced relations with both powers, despite their resentments after the revelation of India's nuclear capabilities. According to Mohan,

> [i]n the short-term, this [the tests] has tended to reinforce the convergence of interests between Washington and Beijing to limit the Indian nuclear potential and prevent it from emerging as an important factor in the Asian balance of power. Both have rejected, for different reasons, India's claim to be a nuclear weapon power and demanded an end to India's nuclear and missile programmes. Washington is driven by reasons of defending the global nuclear order and China is compelled to act on the grounds of realpolitik.
> China's position is understandable, although it is not acceptable to New Delhi. No great power likes to see the rise of a challenger in its neighbourhood. China's current approach to New Delhi is no different from that of Russia's attitude towards Beijing when it went nuclear in 1964.[393]

Far from depicting China as the evil empire, as with some of the more hawkish sections of India's strategic elite – particularly among retired military officers since 1962 – Mohan's arguments were basically systemic. This understanding of the structure of the Asian strategic environment was inherent to Mohan's concluding policy recommendations:

> India needs to proceed rapidly to complete the development of a medium range missile which is the missing link in its proposed minimum nuclear deterrent. The longer range Agni-II is essential for India to gain strategic parity with Beijing and reinforce its claim to become an indispensable element of Asian geopolitics. This does not mean, however, that India needs to pursue anti-China policies. The balance of power is not about defining enemies but about seeking stability through a rough

[393] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, June 11th 1998.

> equality of capabilities among major powers. Nuclear India's interest lies in reaching out to improve relations with both Washington and Beijing, once they get out of their current pique.[394]

Mohan's call for an extension of India's medium-range ballistic missile capabilities for strategic parity is only valid when one assumes that China's nuclear capabilities are designed as deterrent devices against India. Mohan thereby ignores the fact that China postponed its medium-range ballistic missile programme in favour of its long-range and inter-continental ballistic missile programme, clearly signalling its strategic orientation towards its American rival. Surely, one might argue that the Chinese long-range ballistic missiles also threaten medium-range targets like India (as well as most other Asian countries). Due to its complexity and extreme costs, however, a deployment of Chinese inter-continental missiles against medium-range targets is unrealistic.

Much more plausible is the second clause in Mohan's explanation, denoting the acquisition of medium and long range missiles as necessary for India in order to "reinforce its claim to become an indispensable element of Asian geopolitics"[395]. This clause insinuates a significance of the nuclear bomb not in terms of security in the narrow sense, but rather in terms of international standing and leverage. Mohan furthermore implies that "the fear that India will forever be marginalised in the Asian and global geopolitics forced New Delhi to reconsider its nuclear policy in the 1990"[396]. The idea that India's nuclear achievements had significantly bettered its international standing was reflected in Mohan's interpretation of China's negative reaction: "No great power likes to see the rise of a challenger in its neighbourhood"[397].

A similarly elaborate assessment of Indo-Chinese strategic relations after the tests was offered by K.N. Ramachandran[398], a member of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. While he considered the reactions by Chinese officials to be largely modest and adequate, one of the major achievements of the tests was that India finally displayed on China's strategic landscape: "To sum it up, the fact that India has declared itself a nuclear weapon state will indeed be included as a variable in China's overall nuclear doctrine, but China's position on no first use has perhaps not changed"[399]. The analytic style of his analysis was only abandoned when it came to China's position on the oft-protested NPT and CTBT regimes:

> One cannot accept with equanimity China's call to India to accept the NPT and CTBT regimes which are blatantly discriminatory. China became a party to the CTBT after 45 tests and for a quid pro quo from the US without jeopardising its strategic assets. It may be recalled that in the Sixties and early Seventies, China

[394] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, June 11th 1998.
[395] ibid.
[396] ibid.
[397] ibid.
[398] Ramachandran, K.N.: "Musing of the mandarins". In: The Indian Express, June 26th 1998.
[399] ibid.

> justified its nuclear weapons programme as a drive to smash the nuclear monopoly of 'imperialism and revisionism', that is, the US and the then USSR. Having become a member of the nuclear club, it seeks to blackmail other aspirants. It is like Casanova extolling the virtues of abstinence.[400]

The controversy over the international non-proliferation regimes was, according to Ramachandran, only temporary in nature, as China was expected to give up its blackmail attempt in the near future. Similar to Mohan, Ramachandran expected Indo-Chinese strategic relations to develop positively once India's nuclear capabilities were recognised by its China as an irreversible matter of fact.

> India's nuclear weapons are defence-oriented, as indeed China's weapons are. On the basis of this reality the two countries should proceed to abide by, and carry forward, the agreements reached in the last ten years, beginning with the China visit of Rajiv Gandhi in 1988. The two most populous nations of Asia who share a common border -- a geo-strategic reality -- have shared goals to pursue in meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century.[401]

An interesting contribution to the debate on deterrence and the Chinese threat was done by A. Gopalakrishnan in November 1998[402]. He bases his account on two premises: First, India's nuclear capabilities were directed against China as its major strategic rival. Second, the nuclear option was only expedient if it comprised a credible second strike capability. Anything less than such capabilities would damage India's security interests more than lacking nuclear capabilities at all.

Gopalakrishnan, himself a former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, starts his account by disproving two myths maintained by the nuclear scientific establishment: First, he rejects the scientists' notion of the effectiveness of India's multiple testing. Second, he substantiates that the yield of the tests was about 12.5 KT, and not the 58 KT claimed by the scientists. He concludes that "[a]ll this raises a fundamental question about Pokhran-II. What was the great hurry in conducting what surely appears to be a scientifically ill-planned series of tests over a 48-hour time span?"[403] The simultaneous multiple testing was criticised by Gopalakrishnan as a spectacle guided by self-portrayal and prestige thinking: it was largely useless in technical terms. In his view, it would have been necessary to "carry out a large number of single-explosion tests"[404] within a time span of one and a half years, assuming that establishing a suitable deterrent consisting of fission and fusion bombs against China was the sole purpose of the tests. He then expands this technical critique into an ideal political scenario:

---

[400] Ramachandran, K.N.: op.cit.. In: The Indian Express, June 26th 1998.
[401] ibid.
[402] Gopalakrishnan, A.: "How credible is our deterrence". In: The Hindu, November 18th 1998.
[403] ibid.
[404] ibid.

> [t]he associated political decision could have been to declare at the outset that India is embarking on a planned series of 10-15 tests, after which we shall seriously consider the signing of the CTBT unconditionally. This would have also made it clear that India is not going to be a stumbling block in the way of the CTBT coming into force in 1999. In that case, I do not believe that we would have faced much more international condemnation and economic sanctions compared to what we are, in any case, facing today. At least, we would then have gone through the hardship, knowing that we have achieved proven weapon designs which can be rated as adequate 'minimum deterrents' against a nuclear weapon power like China. Today, instead, we have data from just one thermo-nuclear device of very low and questionable yield, and out DAE and DRDO advisers are recommending that India can go ahead and sign the CTBT because they have collected 'all the data' they would ever want. The entire episode does not make scientific or political sense.
> Consider the position of strength from which a nation like China is amusingly watching the recent sabre-rattling of India"[405].

Gopalakrishnan's criticism is based on the following premises 1) nuclear weapons were exclusively military-strategic devices 2) that they were mainly directed against China 3) that the scientists' and politicians' sole objective should have been to establish a credible and adequate deterrent as effectively and quickly as possible, and that 4) India's reason for rejecting the CTBT was because it would have prevented the country from achieving these objectives. However, none of these premises conforms to reality. Gopalakrishnan is wrong in concluding that the testing episode 'does not make any scientific or political sense'; for neither the scientists' quest for public recognition nor the partisan motives of the political leaders depended on the effectiveness of the tests themselves.

With regard to China, the introduction of nuclear weapons, no matter how imperfect the deterrence value was in technical terms, did generate some attention and undoubtedly reinforced India's "claim to become an indispensable element of Asian geopolitics"[406].
In this light, the range of India's future policy options outlined by Gopalakrishnan appeared incomplete:

> In short, we are faced with broadly two options. One is to hold on to the position that nuclear weapons, delivery systems and all the associated paraphernalia, of a credible performance level, must be developed and productionised, so that India can have a 'minimum deterrence' capability against neighbours like China. Or else, we can consider all that happened since May 11, 1998 as a bad dream and try to steer our policies in a saner direction, without escalating any further conflict with the rest of the world and save the country from a steeper economic downslide in the name of 'strengthening' it.[407]

[405] Gopalakrishnan, A.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, November 18th 1998.
[406] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit. In: The Hindu, June 11th 1998.
[407] Gopalakrishnan, A.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, November 18th 1998.

10.2.4. Indo-Chinese Relations in the Post-September 11th World

While the nuclear tests, and particularly their subsequent justification by the government, attracted some attention to Indo-Chinese strategic relations, this attention was short-lived. Only in late 2002 did the China factor re-emerge in two very different analyses, one published by Jasjit Singh in *The Indian Express*[408], and the other on the 40th anniversary of the Indo-China war by Brahma Chellaney in the *Hindustan Times*[409].
Jasjit Singh's analysis of Post-September 11th changes in China's strategic position followed the mainstream view of India's strategic community; namely, now that India was a major, nuclearised Asian power, it could confidently deal with China at eye level. In Singh's view, China had finally accepted India's greater role, thereby opening the chance to establish strong and peaceful bilateral relations:

> China's approach to bilateral relations with India has undergone near dramatic changes after 1998, in spite of the hiccups in the weeks after the Indian nuclear tests. Since then the pace of change toward deeper and stronger relations has intensified. An increasing number of bilateral high level visits has helped to deepen mutual understanding although the resolution of some of the problems 'lest over by history' seems very remote. China's aim appears to be to keep progress on them in slow motion while building its own comprehensive power. This in no way should be seen to signal negative implications for India. In fact we would do well to adopt the same philosophy of building comprehensive national power while strengthening bilateral relations with China and maintaining peace and tranquillity on the borders.[410]

Singh's subsequent outlook on the development of Indo-Chinese strategic relations reflects the enormous gains in self-confidence among India's strategic elite after the nuclear testing. The enthusiasm over India's ostensible new role in the world was generally supplemented by a great deal of overstatement about the appreciation of India's nuclear achievements in foreign capitals. According to Jasjit Singh,

> [t]he increasing acknowledgement of a greater role for India in world affairs is implicit in the twin strands of multilateralism and the question of strengthening the UN. Many in China now emphasise the importance of India qua India, while concluding that it was not a good thing for the UN Security Council to have only one solitary developing Asian country as a permanent member. An increasing number of responsible people in Beijing seem to be arguing for the need to bring India into the UN Security Council as a permanent member so as to recognise geopolitical realities and strengthen the UN. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the government is ready to support this view. Meanwhile, a wider support

[408] Singh, Jasjit: "China in Uncle Sam's world". In: The Indian Express, September 25th 2002.
[409] Chellaney, Brahma: "Forty years after Indo-china war"; "The burden of memory"; "A question of timing". In: Hindustan Times, October 20th 2002.
[410] Singh, Jasjit: op.cit. In: The Indian Express, September 25th 2002.

> for the idea of a China-Japan-India co-operative triangle based on strengthening bilateral as well as trilateral co-operation seems to be growing.[411]

Singh's suggestion that India's nuclear tests would cause China to support India's demand for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, as well as his vision of a Japan-China-India strategic and economic triangle, is a gross overestimation of India's newly gained leverage.
It nonetheless reflects the sharply increased self-confidence of India's elite and its eagerness to play a respected and responsible role in world affairs.

While this gain in self-confidence caused a broadening of mainstream elite opinion towards a more balanced and comprehensive perspective on world affairs triggered mainly revanchist sentiments among the anti-Chinese section of the strategic community this perceived empowerment. The analysis of Brahma Chellaney falls into this category. Maintaining the old legacy about the true Chinese motives in the war of 1962, Chellaney states that "[t]he first political objective was to humiliate India, China's Asian rival. … . Such have been the long-lasting effects of the humiliation it imposed that China to this day is able to keep India in check, despite transferring weapons of mass destruction to Pakistan and opening a new strategic front through Myanmar"[412]. Within Chellaney's worldview, relations between states are first defined through transcendent factors like national pride and national honour, or, for that matter, national humiliation. The dynamics of this international system, are quite simple: Brave, noble India stands in the centre of Asia, surrounded by a sinister and evil-minded China in the north, and its satellites Pakistan and Myanmar in the West and East. Following this logic, the 1962 war can be viewed as the culmination of China's long-term strategy to suppress India's aspirations and establish itself as Asia's dominant power. Chellaney explains India's economic and military inferiority as a direct outcome of the war:

> India continues to pay for the 1962 debacle. The war not only ended India's aspirations to be a credible rival of China in Asia, it also shrunk India's strategic space, confining it to the subcontinent -- a box from which the nation has yet to come free. Such was the humiliation inflicted that decades later India still plays a diminished role on the global arena, a nation that few believes speaks with the weight of the one-sixth of the human race domiciled on its territory.[413]

Chellaney continues by comparing the recent Indo-Chinese border talks (fruitless as they "serve as a cover for China to pursue containment of India with engagement"[414]) with the border talks between Mao and Nehru before the 1962 war. Noteworthy in this context is Chellaney's interpretation of the motives for India's nuclear build-up:

---

[411] Singh, Jasjit: op.cit. In: The Indian Express, September 25th 2002.
[412] Chellaney, Brahma: "Forty years after Indo-china war" In: Hindustan Times, October 20th 2002.
[413] Chellaney, Brahma: "The burden of memory" In: Hindustan Times, October 20th 2002.
[414] Chellaney, Brahma: "Forty years after Indo-china war" In: Hindustan Times, October 20th 2002.

> Four decades later, India has not forgotten the central lesson it was taught by Mao. India's rise as a military power with independent nuclear and missile capabilities is the consequence of a lesson learned. However, with foreign policy still being shaped by personal predilections and idiosyncrasies rather than by institutional processes, India continues to repose faith in adversaries and then cries foul when they deceive it, as Kargil showed.[415]

Similar to the analyses of Singh et al., Chellaney's deliberations reflect the increased self-confidence among India's strategists after the nuclear breakthrough. Chellaney does not, however, appreciate India's increased political role in world affairs, but instead "India's rise as a military power" vis-à-vis its immediate, threatening neighbours. Ironically, his views mirror those attitudes among India's strategic elite that he criticises: the narrow outlook of India's regionally confined foreign policy, India's hostile relationship to its neighbours, its idiosyncratic policy formulation, and its habit of crying foul when the neighbours react to this idiosyncrasy negatively.

Chellaney's recommendations about how to deal with China in the future contain a hidden, but nonetheless blunt threat:

> India continues to display the symptoms of a 'battered victim.' syndrome. It probably may never recover from 1962 until it is able to stand up to China. Some may even contend that India would come of age as a nation-state only if avenges that humiliation.
> But that would be expecting too much from a nation that cherishes its heritage of benign and humane civilisation, with its wealth of philosophy and its spiritualised and romanticised worldview -- a nation that has never retaliated to its neighbours' proxy war.[416]

Chellaney concludes his account by giving an idiosyncratic interpretation of the forthcoming event that again brought Indo-Chinese relations back onto the agenda of India's public: Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to Beijing in the summer of 2003. In Chellaney's view, "India's innate strength lies in its enduring ability to accept 'evil for good' -- and let bygones be bygones. Knowing that, today's Chinese leadership had urged Atal Behari Vajpayee to pay an official visit to Beijing in November, coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of Mao's humbling of India"[417].

[415] Chellaney, Brahma: "Forty years after Indo-china war" In: Hindustan Times, October 20th 2002.
[416] Chellaney, Brahma: "The burden of memory" In: Hindustan Times, October 20th 2002.
[417] ibid.

PART THREE:

Beyond Security: Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige

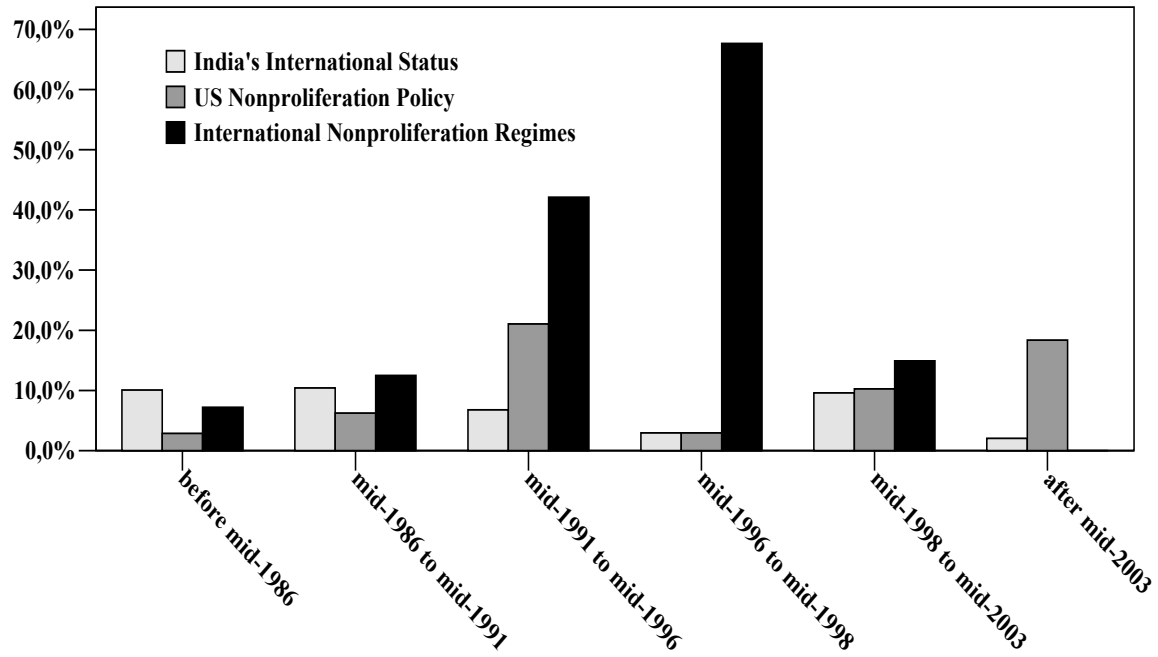
11. India's Self-Image as Emerging Power

11.1. Elite Perception, Nuclear Weapons and International Status

According to the main hypothesis of this study, India's nuclear course was strongly determined by motives of status-seeking. The policy of prestige, or the demonstration of power, was thereby the means by which India sought to gain international status.

Chart 11.1. delineates the relative frequency by which nuclear-related accounts addressed issues specifically linked to India's status seeking. These articles are structured into three main categories: first, accounts directly addressing India's international status; second, accounts addressing the nuclear nonproliferation policy of the USA, India's main adversary within the status competition; and finally, the category of articles dealing with the fora provided by the international nuclear nonproliferation regime.[418]

Chart 11.1.: Frequency of Articles on Issues Related to the International Nuclear Order (in % of total sample)



The empirical evidence presented in chart 11.1. suggests that within India's discourse during the crucial period of its nuclear programme from 1991 to 1998, the pros and cons of

[418] This category comprises the two variables 'NPT' (extension) and 'CTBT' (see table 4.2.).

such weapons for India's security were only marginally discussed. Instead, the debate largely focused on the role of nuclear weapons for the country's international status and prestige.

The share of status-oriented accounts among the overall reporting on the nuclear issue sharply increased from about 20 percent before 1986, to 70 percent in the 1991 – 1996 period, and to 73 percent in the 1996 - 1998 period. After the nuclear tests of 1998, its share dropped again to 35 percent in the period of consolidation from May 1998 to 2003, and finally to only 20 % after 2003.
The overwhelming attention the international nuclear nonproliferation regime received during the crucial years is also remarkable. The dominance of this issue in the mid-1990s, which was mainly caused by both the debates on the indefinite extension of the NPT, completed in 1995 and the conclusion of the CTBT in 1996, suggests a strong causality between the Geneva negotiation process of 1995 and 1996 and India's nuclear tests of 1998.

Within the following three chapters, an attempt is made to describe the dynamics that had been fundamental for the strong status-orientation of the nuclear debate among India's strategic elite until 1998. The main objective is hence to explore if the policy of (nuclear) prestige was viewed as a means to pursue higher national interests, such as security or economic progress, or if status enhancement had become an end which in itself justified the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

11.2. The Emerging Debate

The general debate on reforming India's foreign policy away from Nehruvian values towards a foreign policy led by power politics gained momentum after India's debacle in the war of 1962. But even after the first Chinese nuclear tests in 1964, few strategists suggested that the acquisition of nuclear weapons should be a part of India's efforts to strengthen its power capabilities. It was only after the Bangladesh war of 1971 that the nuclear question again came into the focus of India's foreign policy elite. Among academics in the field of strategic studies, these dynamics are considered one of the major puzzles of India's nuclear build-up. Deterrence Theory suggests that a country acquires nuclear capabilities as soon as its neighbouring adversary does so. This understanding suggests that India should have become a nuclear weapons power soon after 1964. After the split of Pakistan in 1971, India emerged as the uncontested regional power. In this context, the basic paradigms of Deterrence Theory suggest that the pressure to proliferate nuclear weapons decreases if a country is able to establish a conventional superiority within its region, as India did in 1971. This paradox of India's nuclear development is explained by most scholars with the technical advancement of the nuclear programme. India tested its nuclear device not in the mid 1960s, as the argument goes, because it was technically not in the position to do so until 1974. This argument, however, lacks empirical evidence. It was less technical immaturity that caused this delay but more the lack of political will to

proceed with the preparations for testing. As the following analysis of elite opinion will show, the Bangladesh war drove the debate towards a direction favourable to nuclear testing. This appears paradoxical to those trying to explain India's nuclear arming efforts with security considerations only. But to India's strategic elite in the 1970s, playing the nuclear card after 1971 was only consequential: having established itself as the uncontested regional power, India should now corroborate its increased status, which it felt still deprived from internationally, by adding the nuclear dimension to it.
The debate of the 1970s underwent three phases. During the first phase which lasted to the Bangladesh war, analyses on the nuclear issue were rare and largely dismissive to the nuclear option.[419]

The second phase commenced in the aftermath of the Bangladesh war in 1971 and ended in spring 1974 when India exploded its nuclear device in the Pokhran desert. In this period, the nuclear issue was largely dealt with in the larger context of India's newly emerged regional supremacy as one possible option among others to increase its status. The departure from the Nehruvian, post-colonial legacy towards a more self-confident definition of India's international role is best illustrated by D.K. Palit[420] in 1973. Referring to the post-colonial era prior to the Bangladesh war of 1971, Palit states:

> From the point of view of international relationship, therefore, South Asia grew into a community of dependent minor 'powers.' It was in the interest of the old colonial powers from whom the United States took over the colonial baton – which this state of affairs should continue. India, the only ex-colonial nation that possessed both the political and administrative background and the geographical and demographic potential to assume regional leadership, was effectively stifled. Pakistan was deliberately set up as a counter measure to offset India's power-potential. … . Consequently, between 1947 and 1970 India, in spite of her power potential, remained a minor power barely able to manage her own internal and external problems.[421]

Palit's deliberations show several elements that dominated the nuclear debate for the next three decades. First, he considers India's regional supremacy as natural due to its size and its political and administrative institutions. Further, his deliberations reflect a deeply engrained feeling of being humiliated by colonial forces, which deprived India of its major power status. Third, in his view, the United States replaced the European countries in acting as the symbolic place of the colonialists. Fourth, he does not consider Pakistan as a state in its own right but as minion of the colonialists who intended to repress India's emergence as major power. Fifth and most strikingly, in renunciation of the Nehru legacy, Palit explicitly considers increased defence production as the best strategy for India to achieve its merited status.

---

[419] See: N.N.: "India has no means to enter the nuclear club." In: Hindustan Times, November 3rd 1971.
[420] Palit, D.K.: "Can India Be A Major Power?" In: Hindustan Times, January 23rd 1973.
[421] ibid.

These ideas formed the cornerstones within which the future nuclear debate in India would take place. Yet, two crucial elements of the future debate still remained unmentioned: first, the international non-proliferation regime as the epitome of the above expressed colonialist and discriminatory order, and second, nuclear weapons as the embodiment of India's opposition to this order. Palit avoids explicitly mentioning nuclear weapons but vaguely refers to 'sophisticated weapons' instead:

> We shall first have to achieve the aim of integrating national development and defence production and successfully strike an 'optimal balance' between the two before we can hope to start aiming towards self-sufficiency, sophisticated weapons and then acquire major power status and the confidence for independent decision-making in global strategic matters.[422]

After the nuclear test on May 18th 1974, the analyses of the strategic community abruptly became much more explicit about the relationship between India's nuclear achievements and its quest for major power status. Between May and December 1974, several opinion articles and analyses aimed at redefining India's enhanced position in the world. These articles largely centred on one major theme: the perceived discriminatory and colonialist attitudes of Western countries, particularly the USA. The discriminatory outlook of the newly created NPT was perceived as the major instrument through which Western countries attempted to maintain the colonialist world order and therefore became the main target for the strategists' battle for justice. This perception was brought to the forefront in an article in *The Hindu* shortly after the nuclear test:

> The NPT is one of the most unequal international treaties ever signed, because while it prohibited the nuclear have-nots from acquiring nuclear capability, it left the haves free to add to their arsenals. The exclusiveness of the so called nuclear club which was sought to be preserved through the NPT has now been ended by India which, incidentally, is not a signatory to the treaty.[423]

The appreciation of the 1974 test followed the same *leitmotif* as the strategists' approach to the 1998 tests. This *leitmotif* – nuclear testing as a symbolic act of opposition against a colonialist world order that denied India its merited status and was manifested in the NPT – differed between 1974 and 1998 with only one detail: in 1974, most analysts adopted the official government line that the test was exclusively done for peaceful purposes. Scepticism on the peaceful nature of the explosion was largely repudiated as unfounded allegations by those Western critics who tried to preserve the existing order:

> Despite the Prime Minister and other official spokesmen repeatedly saying that India has no intention to go in for atomic weapons and its experiments are meant solely for putting the atom to peaceful use, the suspicion is bound to exist in the outside world that India will secretly make the bomb. This cannot be helped. The

[422] Palit, D.K.: op.cit.. In: Hindustan Times, January 23rd 1973.
[423] N.N.: "Nuclear Fall-out." In: The Hindu, May 22nd 1974.

> history of the last 25 years has shown that Indian intentions have often been suspect in certain foreign eyes.[424]

While doubts about the peacefulness of the test were, in the author's view, unfounded, the test nevertheless created an option for future military applications if the need for them would arise. The author asserts:

> At the same time, [the Indian government] cannot renounce nuclear weapons for all time to come, considering there are other armed with such weapons, not all of them well disposed toward our country. This makes it necessary for India to keep its options open, even while concentrating on using its new power for peaceful purposes only.[425]

These deliberations expressed what would become India's official declaratory policy until 1998 — the policy of 'keeping the nuclear option open.' At the same time, a major inconsistency within this concept became visible: while maintaining a moral distinction between India's peaceful nuclear intentions and the alleged Western aggressive use of this technology, it bases the Indian military's use of nuclear technology on the existence of a nuclear armed neighbour, which was 'not well disposed' toward India. This condition was, however, already met, as the existence of nuclear armed China was already well known at the time when this concept became commonly accepted among India's elite. The ambiguity between the repudiation of any doubts about the peacefulness of the test on one side, and the implicit acceptance of the military option on the other, was further aggravated by the fact that none of the authors on this issue (with V. Venkateswaran as the only exception) [426] actually mention the kind of peaceful applications nuclear explosion could potentially have.

In his account on civilian applications of nuclear explosives, V. Venkateswaran puts forth ostensible projects in Nevada, in which nuclear explosions were used to cut mountains, dig canals, highways and railroads, as well as in Tadzhikistan, in which this technology was ostensibly used to construct a rock fill dam. Venkateswaran concludes:

> [T]he explosion of underground bombs has vast scope for advancing the economic and industrial progress of India. The bombs can be used for constructing new highways through the country's long mountain ranges, for constructing new dams avoiding wastage and time lag and last but not least for exploring new mines and tapping oil and gas source. Production of a nuclear bomb does not mean that the country is going the whole hog for stockpiling atomic weapons. There is a gulf of difference between tapping nuclear energy for peaceful and destructive purposes. … . Having gained the know-how and the experience of it, the nuclear scientists should

[424] N.N.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, May 22nd 1974.
[425] ibid.
[426] Venkateswaran, V.: "India's Place on the Nuclear Map." In: The Hindu, May 22nd 1974.

> break new ground in this field for lifting the country from its present economic backwardness.[427]

By stressing the importance of the nuclear scientists as the lead for India's path towards industrialisation, welfare, and modernity, the author again revives the Nehruvian nuclear myth. He thus ignores the contemporary wisdom on the dangers of nuclear technology that had significantly changed the appreciation of nuclear technology among the international public in the 1970s, as compared to its uncritical view in the 'Atoms for Peace' era. In the international nuclear discourse of the 1970s, the suggestion to use nuclear explosions for the construction of highways appeared naive.

With the exception of Venkateswaran, all the articles published in the aftermath of India's first nuclear test that related the nuclear issue to India's international standing, considered the actual applicability of nuclear explosions, being either peaceful or military, as only of secondary relevance. In these accounts, the nuclear test appeared justified because it was a symbol of opposition against perceived Western dominance and discrimination. In the eyes of India's elite, this alone was reason enough for testing. As such, most of these accounts did not focus on India's action but instead on Western reaction. The ambiguity of this logic – doing something purely in order to oppose those who tell oneself not to do it – became most visible in a May 31st 1974 article in *The Times of India*.[428] Therein, the author drew an alarmist scenario of a nuclear proliferated Western world, in which "any determined and resourceful group of gangsters can get hold cities and governments to ransom. Worse, deranged individuals in possession of this deadly material can even destroy whole cities."[429] After having highlighted the great danger of nuclear technology, the author concluded that in view of India's nuclear test, "gone are the days when have nations [sic.] could perpetuate their monopoly. Either they should begin to disarm in all earnestness or face the risk of further dissemination. Neither voluntary abstention by India nor attempts to blackmail it can stop the drift in that direction."[430]

The question of whether the international audience acknowledged the symbolic meaning of India's test was answered differently among India's strategic writers. Some argued that other nuclear weapons states slowly accepted India's enhanced status, as "[e]arly disapproval, which was most pronounced in the US, after the Pokhran test two months ago, is changing to a readiness to admit India to the club."[431] Others still perceived an unchanged discriminatory and colonialist attitude among the members of the 'nuclear club.' V. M. Nair asserts:

> India's now familiar assertions of its determination to exploit the nuclear know-how for exclusively peaceful purposes apparently fell on deaf ears and only one country

[427] V. Venkateswaran: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, May 22nd 1974.
[428] N.N.: "Strange Logic." In: The Times of India, May 31st 1974.
[429] ibid.
[430] ibid.
[431] Das, Sitashu: "India and N-weapon dissemination." In: Indian Express, July 14th 1974.

> out of the host of its so called friends openly came to its support. Yugoslavia stood by India, but understandably Belgrade's espousal carried little weight.[432]

Commentary on international reaction to India's test generally showed two common features. First, the frequent use of the expression 'club' to label those countries that had acquired nuclear weapons were now trying to keep India out. The perceived exclusivity of this 'club' was considered likewise provocative and appealing. Becoming a member of this club had turned into an end in itself, regardless of the actual use of membership. Second, the analyses of international reactions further reflected a strong inward looking mindset, and accordingly, a deep lack of comprehension about the dynamics of international opinion shaping. In this context it is quite remarkable that throughout the 1970s, not a single article tried to explore the motivation of those countries that had a civilian nuclear programme but abstained from developing nuclear explosives. These countries actually outnumber the nuclear weapon states by a large degree. This lack of understanding became most visible in a *Statesman* article of December 1974:

> Hopes that misgivings in other countries about the nuclear explosion in the Rajasthan desert would soon be dispelled have not been fulfilled. … . It is unfortunate that even a country like Sweden whose views on world affairs have so often been similar to India's, should fail to see the logic behind India's nuclear policy or be unwilling to accept New Delhi's assurances regarding its aims.[433]

The fierce rejection of the nuclear weapons programme by the government of Morarji Desai (1977 – 1979) did not, as many scholars contend, disrupt the nuclear debate among India's strategic community, nor did it lead to any significant change in its general outlook. On the contrary, Desai was considered to have carried on Indira Gandhi's nuclear policy without disruption. The basis for this view was Desai's decision to leave the core issue of India's nuclear debate untouched—he continued to strongly object to any concessions to the nuclear nonproliferation regime. This firmness was appreciated by India's strategists, as commentary by G. K. Reddy illustrates:

> The firm stand that the Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai, has taken on the question of nuclear safeguards has enhanced his prestige in the Third World by demonstrating that he is capable of resisting pressures from both the United States and the Soviet Union. It has also served as a striking example of the country's determination to pursue a policy of genuine non-alignment in the sense that India has refused to sacrifice a principle for the sake of convenience by submitting itself to a highly discriminatory form of international controls on its nuclear programme.[434]

---

[432] Nair, V.M.: "India Isolated from Nuclear Club." In: The Statesman, September 4th 1974.
[433] N.N.: "Constraints on A-Power." In: The Statesman, December 27th 1974.
[434] Reddy, G.K.: "India's Stock up on Nuclear Issue." In: The Hindu, February 18th 1978.

Parallel to Morarji Desai's symbolic pacifism, the newly elected Carter administration followed a much sturdier approach to nuclear disarmament by passing strong non-proliferation legislation as a new guideline for American foreign policy. This created a new area of conflict with the effect that, in the perception of India's strategic elite, the USA emerged more than ever before as the sole ringleader of the colonialist countries. The sentiment towards American non-proliferation efforts among India's elite was best illustrated in the account of Nani A. Palkhivala in 1978, who stated:

> [W]e are impressed by the genuineness of President Carter's concerns and share his vision of a world free from the threat of possible abuses of nuclear energy. India has always willingly considered participation in any measure aimed at genuine non-proliferation and disarmament. But there are good reasons for India's difficulty in accepting some of the provisions of the recent U.S. legislation. … . Nothing would be so detrimental to the cause of non-proliferation as the evolution of a system which divides the world into nuclear weapons and second-class countries which penalises non-weapons countries by placing discriminatory restrictions on their peaceful developmental aspirations; which motivates countries to accelerate their efforts to achieve nuclear self-reliance at any cost; which underestimates the forces of nationalism, pride and self-respect in other countries merely because they are today poor or vulnerable; and which ignores the energy needs, philosophical traditions, international record, and geopolitical contexts of individual countries by seeking to clamp, one uniform regime of restrictions, on all non-weapon powers.[435]

Among all analyses on the nuclear issue, Palkhivala's article stands out as one of the very few that explicitly relates the nuclear question to nationalism, in disguise of national pride and self-respect (while these dynamics were only implicitly innate to most other articles). Also exceptional was the wide range of meanings assigned to the nuclear issue by Palkhivala, ranging from the country's development to its 'philosophical traditions.'

Finally, Palkhivala neglects the excessive attribution of various meanings to nuclear weapons in his prior deliberations and expresses his discontent about the exaggerated international reactions to the nuclear test that in his view, clearly overshot the mark. He says, "[f]our years ago this May, India exploded a nuclear device in the Pokhran desert in Rajasthan. That explosion created political and psychological reverberations around the world which were far out of proportion."[436]

11.3. From Prestige to Security and Back Again

During the 1970s, the insistence of the strategic elite on the peaceful nature of the nuclear programme prevented the emergence of a wider debate on its security aspects. The prestige oriented discourse changed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when rumours about the

[435] Nani A. Palkhivala: "India and the nuclear debate." In: Indian Express, May 20th 1978.
[436] ibid.

progress of Pakistan's nuclear programme made a deep impression on the way the nuclear issue was debated among India's elite. The security component, which had largely been ignored before, suddenly came into focus. Articles relating the nuclear issue to India's standing in the world, which had been published in India's major English speaking dailies before, largely stopped, suggesting the existence of a certain trade-off between security and prestige within the nuclear discourse among India's strategic elite.

In contrast to the 1970s when the peaceful character of the programme was a largely accepted pretence, the 1980s introduces it as a vehemently contentious issue. Opinion on this topic was largely split among India's opinion leaders into two different positions:
The defenders of India's traditional nuclear rhetoric still maintained the stance that India's nuclear programme continued to be peaceful in nature. As Sureshwar D. Sinha explains:

> India had rightly given up the nuclear option, and has till today resisted the temptation to produce nuclear weapons, despite provocation to do so from both China and Pakistan. Whilst the former regularly carries out nuclear tests and fires its test missiles over our country into the Indian Ocean the latter agreed to develop the 'Islamic bomb' at the instance of Libya and reportedly some other Arab countries. In this it has been assisted by China and through covert sales of critical items made to it, also by several developed European countries despite laws to prevent such sales.[437]

After all, this orthodox position of India's moral superiority had lost much of its credibility in the course of the Brasstacks Crisis and gradually lost much of its relevance thereafter.

The second group of opinion leaders claimed that India had proven its nuclear weapon capabilities already with the Pokhran test in 1974, thereby implicitly or explicitly stating that India's nuclear programme had a military component already since at least 1974. Among these authors, S. Mulgaokar states:

> India has proven nuclear weapons capability, a capability that was demonstrated to the world as early as in 1974 with the underground explosion at Pokhran, India then said that the underground test of a nuclear device was for peaceful purposes. This was widely doubted and we may as well accept that there has been no follow-up in the 13 years since Pokhran to investigate the peaceful potential of contained nuclear explosion. But it is good to remember that India at the same time foreswore the intention to build nuclear weapons. That promise to the world, which India was under no overwhelming compulsion to make, has been scrupulously kept until today while evidence mounts not only of Pakistan's capability to build nuclear weapons but also of Pakistan's preparations actually to translate that capability into weapons.[438]

[437] Sinha, Sureshwar D.: "Need for a credible nuclear policy." In: The Statesman, June 14th 1987.
[438] Mulgaokar, S.: "India's cruel nuclear dilemma." In: Indian Express, January 1st 1988.

This position was a refinement of the previously developed concept of 'keeping the nuclear option open.' The concept of nuclear option in the 1970s basically denoted India's willingness to convert a genuinely peaceful nuclear programme into a military programme if the need for it may arise. In the late 1980s, however, this option was no longer between 'peaceful' and 'military' applications but between 'military in principle' and 'weaponised.' The threshold of when to actually exercise the option was thereby gradually lowered. It then continued to be marginalised throughout the 1990s and was finally dropped altogether in 1998.

This lowering of the threshold produced two new problems. First of all, it had the smell of self-defeat, considering the fact that Pakistan's nuclear efforts were basically a reaction to India's 1974 test. As S. Mulgaokar remarked, "Pakistan may finally be deterred from going over the brink but the possibility that it may not has to be taken into account by India. It is the event of such a nuclear intervention by Pakistan that India is more or less committed to exercise the option of making a nuclear response."[439] According to this logic, India had created a nuclear option to which Pakistan reacted by equally developing nuclear capabilities. Now that Pakistan had progressed, India would have to actually exercise their nuclear means even if Pakistan was itself deterred. Mulgaokar subsequently identifies this paradox:

> There is another truth that we have refused to accept. It is that we could have stopped Pakistan from any thought of going nuclear. Pakistan has always proclaimed the willingness to sign NPT if India signed it. Our objection to such a course we made a matter of principle. In the result we have placed ourselves in a situation where at Pakistan's dictation we will cede the moral ground on which we stood in not joining the nuclear race though we had the capability to do so.[440]

The second problem caused by the rhetorical redefinition of the nuclear option was a loss of credibility with regard to India's morally principled stance on the nuclear issue, particularly in view of its rejection of the international non-proliferation regime. Considering the mounting international pressure to finally joint the NPT, Mulgaokar concludes that India had no choice but to accept these security related compulsions of *realpolitik* and should finally swallow its pride and sign the NPT:

> Such a consideration [to sign the NPT] would invalidate the argument used by India of discrimination between the nuclear and non-nuclear powers for not signing the NPT. Seen in this light the NPT is of course discriminatory. But the treaty can only avoid discrimination in conditions where the nuclear weapon has been totally abolished. Ergo, in that happy situation there will be no need for the NPT. We in India and the rest of the non-nuclear countries are condemned to live in a world as we find it. Certain unfortunate events have cast a doleful shadow on the world. We

[439] Mulgaokar, S.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, January 1st 1988.
[440] ibid.

> cannot therefore ask that history should go into reverse. Nuclear history has passed India by as it has passed all but five countries in the world.[441]

The above distinction between India's security driven nuclear policy towards Pakistan and its prestige oriented policy towards the international community, was widely made among India's mainstream strategists.

In contrast to this approach, prestige thinking remained the dominate motivation among the nuclear scientific community in its appreciation for Indo-Pakistan relations, causing a general downplaying of Pakistan's nuclear achievements by the scientists. As Amalendu Das Gupta notes, "[l]acking political direction, the atomic establishment rationalized its inaction by assuming a superior posture: what, after all, could the industrially and scientifically backward Pakistanis do that India had not already done?"[442]

The phase of ambiguity that was caused by the clash of the carefully maintained myth of India's peaceful nuclear endeavour was made with the reality of Pakistan's weapons programme, and India's elite was thus split over the question whether the country had a civilian or military nuclear programme. This division ended in the late 1980s as a wide consensus among India's mainstream strategic thinkers was reached on a commonly accepted approach to India's nuclear policy. This consensus among the opinion leaders was most explicitly expressed by K. Subrahmanyam.[443] In his view:

> The USSR, Britain, France, China, Israel and Pakistan all had to gatecrash into the nuclear club and once that happened the U.S. was prepared to live with it. The same is true of missile technology. There is a lesson for India in this. If India were to go ahead ignoring U.S. protests and posturing, they will accept 'Agni' and even Indian nuclear weapons.[444]

Subrahmanyam continued to maintain the traditional, seemingly paradox stance that the acquisition of nuclear weapons was the only way for India to achieve global nuclear disarmament: "India can play an effective role in multilateral nuclear disarmament at the global level only when the world comes to believe that India is a nuclear weapon power and therefore it is not an ignorable factor in respect of disarmament negotiations."[445] This recurring view, which became particularly popular in the course of the heated NPT and CTBT debates in the mid-1990s, was considered among outside observers as a paradox at best and highly hypocritical at worse. It was, however, a compelling logic within the framework of the basic parameters set by the various normative values attached to nuclear weapons by India's elite.

---

[441] Mulgaokar, S.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, January 1st 1988.
[442] Das Gupta, Amalendu: "Nuclear Options – II: No Need to Hedge Response." In: The Statesman, May 5th 1989.
[443] Subrahmanyam, K.: "N-arms & unilateralism." In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1989.
[444] ibid.
[445] ibid.

Subrahmanyam's analysis ended by ruling off once and forever the myth of India's peaceful nuclear programme:

> The unilateralism that India's nuclear programme is entirely peaceful should be given up. It is not suggested that there should be a public declaration that we have become nuclear weaponised. India's declaratory policy should become increasingly ambiguous. In future the answer to the question whether India intends to go nuclear or has gone nuclear should be that India's policy is adjusted to the international realities and takes into account multilateral interactions.[446]

11.4. Axiomatic Arguments

In the early 1990s, the parameters of the nuclear debate were set and remained basically unchanged until the May 1998 nuclear tests. India's opinion leaders believed the country to be on a mission to crush the discriminatory, neo-colonialist international system led by the USA, and, in turn, enhancing India's status and position among the community of states.

In the period from the take-over of the Narashima Rao government in mid-1991 to the nuclear tests in May 1998, 71 percent of all editorials, opinion articles and analyses on the nuclear issue published in India's major daily newspapers devoted themselves to India's stance to either the international non-proliferation regime, American non-proliferation efforts, or India's status and prestige seeking in general. The focus was on possession of nuclear weapons, not on its use. With few exceptions, these articles generally agreed on the perception that nuclear weapons were effective devices to enhance India's security but abstained from actually discussing security aspects in detail. This peculiarity of the expert and public discourse had the effect that, despite excessive reporting and the intense debate on the nuclear issue prior to the tests, India had neither a nuclear doctrine nor any deployment strategy at the time when the government decided to test and to declare India a nuclear weapons state.

In the perception of India's strategic elite, the country's nuclear course of the 1990s was a symbolic act of emancipation against the discriminatory world order dominated by Western countries, above all the USA. This *leitmotiv* was not common only among advocates of the bomb but also to most of its critics. In his call for abandoning the nuclear option, Bharat Wariavwalla outlines the structural imbalances of the international system:

> The United States, speaking on behalf of all the present nuclear haves, except perhaps China, wants us to surrender the nuclear option. … . It is not that the Soviet Union ever endorsed our stand on the NPT or approved in the slightest our 'peaceful nuclear explosion' of 1974, but it did not publicly come out against them for cold

[446] Subrahmanyam, K.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1989.

> war considerations. Now Russia is a junior ally of the United States, ever ready to help America construct a new world order.[447]

Ironically, Wariavwalla explicitly excludes China from the countries discriminating and thereby pushing India towards nuclearisation, despite the fact that China was, in the perception of many strategists, the only true security-related motive for India's nuclear weapons programme. Wariavwalla's account on the first Iraq war, which had taken place few months before, indicates the stereotypes that underpin the perception of Western behaviour by large sections of the strategic elite. He writes:

> Saddam Hussein was savagely punished by the West, not just because he had the concealed capability to make nuclear weapons but also because he was the symbol of the strategic defiance of the Third World of the West. The symbol had to be crushed to demonstrate to other third world countries that they can only have limited strategic autonomy.[448]

More noteworthy than the omission of key factors such as the Iraq's annexation of Kuwait and the participation of several Third World countries in the coalition against Iraq is the use of the 'Third World' as the stereotyped category of the subdued in contrast to the 'West' as the subjugator.

The self-image of India as the head of the Third World had been one cornerstone of Nehruvian foreign policy. However, for India's mainstream foreign policy thinkers of the 1990s, this self-image was rather ambiguous. On one side, it was perceived as a disturbing factor in India's quest for joining the major powers in their exclusive club. On the other side, it was inherently part of its campaign against the discriminating order. India's nuclear strategists tried to maintain the country's self-image as p*rimus inter pares* of the majority of have-nots. Nikhil Chakravartty assessed the discriminatory world order in *The Hindu* in September 1994 along these lines:

> In fact, the case of nuclear weapons and missiles, a monopoly club appears to have been set up which patently divides the world community into the nuclear haves which have the authority to dictate, and the vast number of the nuclear have nots, who are sought to be bound down to an inferior status of subservience to the nuclear bosses.
>
> It is the insidious game of nuclear hegemony that the entire world attention is sought to be focussed on the perceived danger of an Indo-Pak nuclear conflict, while the world community has to acquiesce in the more definite danger of entrusting history's largest stockpile of nuclear weapons – sufficient to destroy the entire human civilisation – to the very power which alone has the unenvied record of having used the atom bomb. It is for India to raise its voice against this grotesque

[447] Wariavwalla, Bharat: "The Nuclear Option: Circumstances demand that India abandon it." In: Indian Express, April 2nd 1992.
[448] ibid.

> discrimination in the field of nuclear threat. We have to declare, straight and clear that to make the world safe from the danger of nuclear war, it is for the U.S. along with the other members of the nuclear club, to disgorge their entire nuclear stockpiles, and only then should others, including Pakistan and India, follow suit.[449]

While being an extreme case of raged rhetoric, the article reflects the general mood among India's opinion leaders in the mid-1990s. The rage in which the writer held his (or, as he perceives it: India's) position, reveals the strong emotionalisation and polarisation of the nuclear debate in the mid-1990s. It further hampers the proper appreciation of the inconsistencies, among them the basic contradiction between Chakravartty's demonisation of nuclear weapons as abysmally insidious weapons in the hands of Western countries, and, at the same time, his emphatic insistence that India should have them by all means.
Also noteworthy is Chakravartty's implicit suggestion that Pakistan and India should join hands in crushing the discriminating order by developing nuclear weapons. This suggestion, similar to Wariavwalla's above cited remark on China,[450] highlights the contradiction between the symbolic value of nuclear weapons for India's struggle against global discrimination and the security aspects of India's nuclear weapons programme.

Within the broader debate on the nuclear issue, the nuclear scientific establishment followed its own variant of the general *leitmotiv* of status and prestige seeking. According to the scientists, the most discriminating aspect of the international order was its focus on the military applications of nuclear technology and its disregard of India's civilian nuclear achievements. This accomplishment, in their account, had a much longer and more successful record than the Chinese civilian nuclear programme. This view was exemplarily expressed in an *Indian Express* article by O.P. Sabherwal in August 1995.[451] After specifying India's past nuclear achievements, he concludes that "[a]ll this, and much more the Indian scientists achieved admirably during the last four decades, giving this country a robust indigenous nuclear capability that outstrips attainments anywhere except the top four nuclear powers."[452]

Different from the mainstream opinion leaders' trend during the mid-1990s to display the nuclear issue as a battle over principles between India and the US-dominated Western countries, Sabherwal aims at placing India in fifth position ahead of China in terms of international standing,:

> India on the other hand while developing nuclear capability on a sound base – ahead of China except in the limited domain of weaponisation – lagged behind in staking its claim as a nuclear weapon capability power on the world stage. The crime for which India's nuclear status is sought to be downgraded is (a) giving first priority to peaceful application of atomic energy and a lower priority to developing weapon

[449] Chakravartty, Nikhil: "The nuclear hegemony." In: The Hindu, September 22nd 1994.
[450] See fn 29.
[451] Sabherwal, O.P.: "India's right to a nuclear status." In: Indian Express, August 25th 1995.
[452] ibid.

> capability; (b) in not conducting a number of tests after Pokhran to demonstrate its proven and transparent weapon capability. And yet the NPT is supposed to work for reducing atomic weapons. … . But the question which the West should examine is whether discrimination against India in pushing it to the wilderness of nuclear have-nots can be fruitful? Whatever the present-day official postures, it would be puerile to expect the Indian nation and its scientific community to succumb to the unacceptable stand which places a premium on weaponisation and belittles Indian nuclear attainments so as to deny this country its rightful status as a nuclear power with weapon capability.[453]

Sabherwal's deliberations show all elements of the nuclear scientists' general understanding: the heroic achievements in India's civilian nuclear realm; the genuinely peaceful character of these achievements; and the international non-proliferation regime as a perceived instrument to 'downgrade' India's nuclear status. Sabherwal explicitly stated that the nuclear issue was about international status and that its practical application, either civilian or military, was without relevance for achieving this status.

In a follow-up article three months later, Sabherwal highlights his perception on the true meaning of India's nuclear achievements. Similar to his earlier article on "India's right to nuclear status," his understanding of India's nuclear motives became visible in the title of his November 1995 article on "India's nuclear achievements: A matter of pride."[454] He summarises the structure of the non-proliferation regime by applying key expressions like "nuclear colonialism," "American-dominated cartel of nuclear weapon powers," and the "wilderness of nuclear have-nots." Sabherwal's deliberations continue to reveal the dilemma between the dual contradictive objectives of displaying the nuclear programme as peaceful and gaining maximum status by stressing its military potential. The latter objective becomes apparent in Sabherwal's praise of the 1974 nuclear test:

> Let it also be said to the credit of Indian scientists that the first test at Pokhran was a resounding success yielding higher explosive power that the percentage reached in the first few atomic tests by the US or Russia. … . First and foremost, the underplaying of India's nuclear capability must end. The world must be given a full picture of the attainments of Indian nuclear institutions and the status of India's nuclear capability. Tell the world the facts, for India has nothing to hide. Having attained weapon capability as early as 1968-70, the fact that India has refrained from conducting a series of tests is no crime.[455]

Sabherwal finally concludes that "India's place in the NPT, if that treaty is to play its declared role of ending the spread of nuclear weapons, can only be as a weapon power, the status given to the five others, irrespective of its arsenal or stock of weapon-grade

[453] Sabherwal, O.P.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, August 25th 1995.
[454] Sabherwal, O.P. "India's nuclear achievements: A matter of pride." In: The Indian Express, November 25th 1995.
[455] ibid.

plutonium."[456] This conclusion, which was inherent in most accounts focusing on nuclear weapons and India's standing in the mid-1990s, weakened the morally-driven rhetoric against the NPT because it implied the recognition of the NPT as the framework of the global nuclear order if India would be accepted as nuclear weapons state. Once again, the pragmatic quest for international status and prestige clashed with the moralist principles attached to India's nuclear policy.

The ambiguity of accepting discrimination as soon as one's own position shifts from the discriminated to the discriminating was recognised by few among India's opinion leaders. As an example of this ideology is that of Amrita Abraham who writes: "Even though the nuclear powers cannot, in fairness, object to an Indian test on their own account, they are duty bound to do so on behalf of 165 other nations, among them close allies, who have foregone nuclear weapons by signing the NPT."[457]

After the conclusion of the CTBT in mid-1996, the escalating debate on the perceived unfairness of the international order focused on nuclear testing as the ultimate way to express India's objection to it. In an account published in September 1996, K. Sundarji considers nuclear testing necessary to increase India's standing against the pressures from nuclear 'haves' (although he refers to the term 'self-confidence' rather than 'standing').[458] Sundarji foresaw that India's nuclear tests would be followed by Pakistan's own nuclear testing. But he accepted these dynamics, saying "[t]his should not worry us, for Pakistan has the same right to cater to its self-defence as we have."[459] Beyond Pakistani tests, he also anticipates international repercussions:

> The U.S. will organise world wide protests and create a furore, but I am convinced that there would not be any effective or long lasting repercussions, political, economic or technological. Unfortunately, we have continued to nurse the inferiority complex of colonial subjects even after Independence as the protection offered by non-alignment in a bipolar world did not force us to develop a backbone. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union, and the greatly augmented bullying power of the U.S., we seem to have lost what little self-confidence we developed during the Cold War era. We are the only country in the world that has voluntarily abstained for 22 years after a first test even in the face of live nuclear threats, in the vain hope that the world would move towards universal nuclear disarmament. If we need to test now, to establish or re-establish the credibility of our nuclear deterrence capability, let us do so without any moral qualms or exaggerated fears of repercussions. Soon enough the doomsday scenarios of some economists and others would be shown up to the myths that they are. As a result, I hope that at long last, Indian self-confidence will come age.[460]

---

[456] Sabherwal, O.P. op.cit.. In: The Indian Express, November 25th 1995.
[457] Abraham, Amrita: "Why a second Pokhran blast will not work." In: Indian Express, December 27th 1995.
[458] Sundarji, K.: "Strategic scene till 2015: Impact on South Asia." In: Indian Express, October 20th 1995; and Sundarji, K.: "India's best option." In: The Hindu, September 16th 1996.
[459] Sundarji, K.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, September 16th 1996.
[460] ibid.

Sundarji's predictions proved to be largely consistent with the events of 1998.
This consistency is also an indication of the strong influence the analyses of Sundarji et. al. had on the government's nuclear policy.

The dynamics of the debate compelled the political decision-makers, who were rather uninformed on details of strategic and foreign policy making but quite sensitive in capturing public sentiments, to follow the strategists' rationale.
The strategists' success in shaping public opinion on the nuclear issue rested on their ability to describe India's interaction with other powers in the global nuclear order simplistically and as a great game between the righteous and the evil. The often overdrawn characterisation of the actors involved frequently referred to stereotypes rather than nuanced portrayals.

This section has so far revealed how great an influence the dynamics of the debate on nuclear weapons and India's international standing had in determining India's course towards nuclear breakthrough in 1998.
Also significant are those aspects that were widely ignored by analysts. During the final years before the nuclear tests of 1998, not a single account of the nuclear issue addressed possible motives of the large majority of nuclear 'have-nots' to forego nuclear armament and to join the international non-proliferation regime as official non-nuclear weapons states. While the non-proliferation regime was unanimously considered unacceptable to India's pride and dignity, the question whether a vast majority of the other countries in the world had lower standards in terms of national pride was not raised. Accordingly, K. Sundarji praised India's voluntary 22-year abstinence from nuclear testing as evidence of India's moral superiority but ignored the fact that all but six countries did not conduct any tests at all.[461] Most strategists considered the voluntary acceptance of the status of non-nuclear weapons state by most countries as a self-defeating policy.

11.5. Joining the 'Nuclear Club'

In the months before May 1998, most nuclear related articles called for India to 'join the nuclear club', which became a fixed expression and was used as a synonym for conducting nuclear tests. The strategic elite was aware of the fact that this 'joining' could only be done by force (i.e. by establishing nuclear facts), and that India would not be formally admitted by its members (the five nuclear weapons states recognised by the NPT provisions).
Immediately after the testing on May 12th 1998, the opinion leaders' attitudes towards the international nuclear order changed from its categorical rejection on moral grounds to a much more favourable position. This abrupt change in attitude becomes apparent in an analysis by C. Raja Mohan published one day after the testing:

> As it gate-crashes into the nuclear weapons club, New Delhi is signalling that it is ready for a nuclear bargain with the United States. The Indian objective is to limit

[461] Sundarji, K.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, September 16th 1996.

> the damage and ensure a *modus vivendi* between India and the international nuclear order that New Delhi has now shaken to the core. … . With this package India is communicating to the United States that as it becomes a formal nuclear weapon state, New Delhi is prepared to undertake the full responsibilities of a great power.[462]

This statement points out two pillars of India's redefined self-perception after the tests. First, India's major power status was deduced from its self-declaration as a nuclear weapons state.[463] Second, bargaining on India's new role within the international system was considered a matter between India and the USA. In a follow-up analysis one day later, Mohan rejects the negative repercussions particularly from Australia, Germany and Japan as hypocritical due to their status as mere satellites of the USA, who enjoy protection under the American nuclear umbrella.[464] Most of the status oriented accounts published in the immediate aftermath focus on the reactions by the USA, other members of the 'nuclear club,' and on their 'proxies,' who are countries allied with nuclear powers, most notably Japan and to a lesser extent Germany and Australia. Reactions from most countries that had neither nuclear ambitions nor enjoyed protection from a nuclear power were widely excluded.

Negative repercussions from nuclear weapons states or their 'proxies' were generally dismissed as hypocritical and often commented on with unacknowledged gratification. As K. P. S. Menon remarks, "[n]uclear weapon powers see their cosy little world of nuclear supremacy dissolving before their eyes. They react with the petulance of a spoilt child deprived of its toys."[465]
Japan's negative reaction to India's nuclear tests was more rhetorically explicit and drastic by means of imposing sanctions. The reason for this harsh reaction – with Japan as the only victim of a nuclear attack – was largely rejected by India's commentators. They pointed to United States' security guarantees, including nuclear deterrence protection, and to Japan's own nuclear achievements, which ostensibly included military applications. C. Raja Mohan concludes:

> Japan has resolved its short-term security problems by reinvigorating its alliance with the U.S. But caught between China, a large rising nuclear neighbour, and the U.S., a fickle and distant ally, Japan cannot but quietly contemplate the acquisition of nuclear weapons in the future. India can easily empathise with the Japanese nuclear dilemma. It cannot, however, accept the political hypocrisy of Japan that

[462] Mohan, C. Raja: "India crosses the nuclear rubicon." In: The Hindu, May 12th 1998.
[463] Mohan erroneously denotes India's new nuclear status as being formal.
[464] Mohan's assertion that Germany has been in consultations with France on the development of a 'Euro-bomb' that could eventually give Bonn a finger on the nuclear trigger was not only mistaken on the name of German's capital but also wrong in content, as Germany rejected the idea of a European nuclear bomb.
[465] Menon, K.P.S.: "Why are nuclear powers so upset? Petulance and opportunism." In: Indian Express, June 29th 1998.

> relies on nuclear weapons for its own security but preaches the virtues of non-proliferation to New Delhi.[466]

By comparing Japan's nuclear ambitions to its rising nuclear neighbour of China, Mohan implicitly draws a parallel to India's strategic situation.[467]

The most structured analysis of international reactions to India's tests was provided by J.N. Dixit.[468] Dixit begins his account by citing Winston Churchill: "'it is better to be alone in the deciding what is right and relevant than being part of a crowd going downhill in every sense of the term.'"[469] Subsequently, Dixit subdivides the international reactions into six categories:

> The first category could be described as macro-level strategic and political pressures. These consist of official statements by the nuclear powers individually criticising or condemning India. … . The second category is of sanctions by leading G-8 countries, specially the USA and Japan. … . The third category of pressures is even more pernicious and is an exercise in psychological warfare. These are propaganda exercises laced with pseudo-technical arguments. Pakistani scientists and some of their American friends put out information that India's nuclear devices were not indigenous, that vital technical components were supplied by the Israelis, and were in fact operated by them in the tests. Some Pakistanis have even descended to personal attacks on the credentials of scientists in charge of India's nuclear tests. The fourth type of pressure is the propaganda that Indian claims of nuclear, thermonuclear and sub-critical tests were not valid and that they were exaggerated. … . The fifth sort is to convey to India that it would not be legally acknowledged as a nuclear weapon… . The sixth category is the accusations levelled against India that its nuclear tests were the sole trigger for the latest proliferation phenomenon which may result in spread of nuclear weapons in South and West Asia.[470]

Dixit's structured account circumvents the critique of international strategists questioning the positive effect of nuclearisation to India's security, as well as the critique by economists, who point to the enormous costs of the nuclear programme. Additionally, Dixit's assessment of reactions to the sixth category appears questionable, as he ostensibly invalidates the negative effects on regional proliferation. While a vast majority of international comments acknowledged the negative effects on regional proliferation, only

---

[466] Mohan, C. Raja: "Japan's nuclear hypocrisy." In: The Hindu, August 6th 1998.
[467] Explanations of the harsh Japanese reaction diverged among India's commentators. P.V. Indiresan suggested that "[t]he Prime Minister of Japan is supposed to be allergic to India because some years ago someone in the Indian Embassy in Nepal did not treat him properly. That is suspected to be the reason why his reaction to our atomic tests has been particularly harsh." (Indiresan, P.V.: What next?" In: The Hindu, May 30th 1998).
[468] Dixit, J.N.: "Post-Pokhran pressures on India: Stoicism it'll have to be." In: Indian Express, July 23rd 1998.
[469] ibid.
[470] ibid.

very few of them purport this as being the 'sole trigger for the latest proliferation phenomenon,' as Dixit insinuates.

Ironically, after having ignored international scepticism about the security benefits of India's bomb in his analysis, Dixit concludes that "the world at large should also take note of Indian security and strategic concerns if it desires to overcome the present impasse."[471] The notable feature of Dixit's account was its illustration of how international reactions were perceived among India's mainstream analysts rather than its applied analytic framework. While international criticism focused upon security or economy was largely overlooked, those repercussions aimed at the symbolic value of the nuclear tests for India's prestige and standing were dealt with in detail.

Two days after the tests, Shekhar Gupta commented in the *Indian Express* on India's new international role.[472] Gupta put the nuclear tests into the context of the India's 50 years of experience in foreign policy matters. By quoting the precedent of Indira Gandhi's short lived boost in popularity after the victorious Bangladesh war of 1971, Gupta warned the government about conducting emotional politics without a solid strategic policy or doctrine:

> That is the problem with mixing emotion and partisan politics with strategy and national interest and that is precisely what this government needs to guard against. The masses would always cheer any tremor at Pokhran but unless you build on it and give evidence of a clear strategic thought that strengthens the foundations of the national interest beyond the issue of earning international prestige, the euphoria could be short-lived and the same voters could turn around and ask uncomfortable questions.[473]

According to Gupta, after having achieved the status of a nuclear weapons state, the responsibility of India's leadership had increased with regard to its foreign policy formulation:

> The signals that go out from India now, the posture of our leadership and diplomats, need to reflect the mind of a mature, self-assured and powerful nation and not the reactions of a defensive, jingoistic and shaky establishment. The world by and large is not pleased with us. Today, there isn't even the old Third World lobby of drum-beaters unless a Castro, Gaddafi or Saddam decides to embarrass us by rising in our support. … . The intention behind the tests can only be to see that India is embraced back on the world's centre-stage as a stronger power rather than be consigned to the sideline as some nuclear rogue.[474]

---

[471] Dixit, J.N.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, July 23rd 1998.
[472] Gupta, Shekhar: "Burdens of the nuclear state: The morning after." In: Indian Express, May 13th 1998.
[473] ibid.
[474] ibid.

While mainstream opinion leaders were trying to accommodate the traditional patterns in which the international order was perceived to the changing conditions, the fundamental paradigm shift in India's nuclear policy also created space for some analysts to question these patterns. Shekhar Gupta's assessment of India's redefined international standing avoided the emotional inclination inherent to conventional reporting on the issue and deliberately adopted a critical aloofness to the subject. His account was part of a growing number of elite explanations that reflected increased national self-assurance without adopting the nationalistic undertone of the general debate. These analyses were still exceptional in the emotionally heated aftermath of the tests, but they increased in number in the period of nuclear consolidation.

Gupta's critical appraisal of the public's adulation was unique in the post-testing period. Most commentators unconditionally welcomed the wave of public enthusiasm and national pride. In J.N. Dixit's view, this wave of national pride was less an outcome of short-lived partisan politics, but it rather showed that "the decision [was] being backed by informed public opinion," which constituted an "important requirement … especially in a democracy like ours."[475] He asserts:

> There are elements in political circles and the media who have genuine doubts on whether these tests, which have attracted worldwide negative reaction, are necessary. While respecting that diversity of opinions is imperative in a democracy, the point is that between 87 and 89 per cent of Indian citizens have endorsed the tests in public opinion polls. A general feeling of self-confidence and national pride has been generated by the tests. It is in this context that India should fashion its policies in dealing with the problems and pressures that have arisen.[476]

These contradicting estimations of the role of public opinion on the nuclear policy addressed by Dixit reflect two fundamentally different approaches to the dynamics of India's democratic processes: the first approach unconditionally affirms the positive effects of democratic structures to India's foreign policy outcomes, while the second approach critically assesses the effects of certain dynamics of India's mass politics on its foreign policy formulation.

The status-oriented comments in the immediate post-Pokhran period generally considered nuclear weapons as increasing, or at least not harming India's security. Possible discord between the goal of enhancing India's status and its quest for security remained unaccountable. The resulting ambiguity became visible in Manvendra Singh's appreciation of India's new role in the international system.[477] In Singh's view, China's negative reaction to the tests showed a growing concern among the Chinese government that India's nuclear build up posed an increasing threat to its security. Astonishingly, he welcomed

[475] Dixit, J.N.: "Pokhran-II: managing the fallout." In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1998.
[476] ibid.
[477] Singh, Manvendra: "Ignorant and sanctimonious: A coalition of wise guys." In: Indian Express, May 25th 1998.

Chinese apprehension as a major achievement of the tests, as this showed that China was finally taking India's activities seriously.
Describing the pre-testing situation, Singh claims:

> Anybody who thought Indian concerns were taken seriously internationally, or even regionally, suffers from self-delusion. While recognising India as its main adversary of the future, the People's Republic of China attached a rider – India would have to do something drastic to change its power equations in order to become the threat that it is capable of becoming. … . The reaction of the conservative communo-capitalist ruling in Beijing is, therefore, the most satisfying. If the People's Republic is forced to call for international action against India it means they have understood the magnitude of the technologies involved in Shakhti '98.[478]

Singh's satisfaction with the negative reactions from China ignored the nuances of Indo-Chinese interaction in the immediate aftermath of the tests: China's immediate reaction to India's tests was modest at best, signalling its intention to tacitly accept the new situation. Only after the leaking of Prime Minister Vajpayee's letter to President Clinton, calling the Chinese threat the true reason for the tests, China was coerced to react in a more resolved declaratory policy. Chinese criticism, however, was not primarily aimed at the nuclear tests as such, but at India's undiplomatic handling of the post-test situation.

A recurring aspect of the analyses of Indo-Chinese relations was the still omnipresent humiliation of 1962, particularly among those comments made by the military-strategic section of India's elite. Retired Major-General K.K. Ganguly started his summary of the changes of Sino-Indian relations after the nuclear tests by highlighting the paramount role of the USA in shaping Asian strategic competition. According to Ganguly:

> [A]s the sole global power, America's interest is in ensuring no powerful voice emerges to question its hegemony. China was a potential threat. But the US have bought Chinese support by conceding their every demand and by admitting her in the group of global 'haves'. India cannot be allowed to emerge, in this situation, as yet another potential challenging voice. So despite the American interest in the huge Indian market, the US Administration cannot accept India's assertion of its nuclear option. Further, India's defiance of the unjust global nuclear order has resulted in a severe loss of face for America as far as the world community is concerned. It is for this reason that the US is refusing to recognise India as a nuclear weapon state despite the fact that she has nuclear warheads as well as their means of delivery.[479]

[478] Singh, Manvendra: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, May 25th 1998.
[479] Ganguly, K.K.: "Self-interested Parties: India And Her Security Concerns." In: The Statesman, May 28th 1998.

Ganguly's view that American non-proliferation policy was guided not by its concerns about nuclear dangers but rather by its wish to maintain its global supremacy was commonly accepted among India's elite.[480]
His position reflects disappointment about the international refusal to formally accept India as a nuclear weapons state. This formal recognition was expected by most commentators in the immediate days following the nuclear tests. With regard to China, Ganguly assumes that Chinese official statements were guided by two motives: first by security concerns, particularly along its common border in the Himalayans and second, in a broader sense, by the fear to lose its supreme status in Asia. In Ganguly's view:

> Possessing both the status of a 'legitimate' nuclear weapon state as well as the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council, China would have definitely liked to see India remaining a non-nuclear weapon state. Chinese long term interest would have been best served had India been forced to sign the CTBT and NPT. China knows India is the only country with the potential to be not only a regional Asian rival but also a contender for global status in the 21st century. With a nuclear weapon monopoly in Asia, China would have always been able to blackmail India in case the latter sought to regain lost Indian territory including areas gifted away to China by Pakistan. Thus India's emergence as a nuclear weapon state has considerably jeopardised Chinese calculations.[481]

Inherent to Ganguly's suggestion is that India should attack China and seize 'lost Indian territory,' as China was no longer in the position to react to such an attack with 'blackmail.' This is an alarming product of the overflowing nationalistic hype among large sections of India's elite and public in the aftermath of the tests.
His analysis focused on China as India's direct competitor within the international status competition and on the USA as the dominator of the international nuclear system which had just been crushed by India. In Ganguly's view, Pakistan played only a minor role in the status competition. This view was guided by his disbelief about Pakistan's ability to test:

> The world is aware of the manner in which Pakistan has been trying to attain nuclear capability. The time has now come to call Pakistan's bluff about her nuclear weapon status. … . Pakistan's interests will be best served in maintaining the ambiguity to give the impression that it has refrained from nuclear testing only to honour the requests made by powerful friends like the US and China and obtain maximum mileage from the same in terms of international support, concessions, funds and weaponry. This will safeguard her status as an undeclared nuclear weapon country. Is it surprising that Pakistan could claim, and convince the world of, parity with India in all fields despite vast differences between the two countries in terms of size, population, resources and potential?[482]

[480] This view is shared by strategic elites in other countries as well.
[481] Ganguly, K.K.: op.cit. In: The Statesman, May 28th 1998.
[482] ibid.

Ironically, Ganguly's lack of confidence in Pakistan's capacity to test was published in *The Statesman* on May 28th 1998, the same day that Pakistan conducted its first nuclear test in response to India's testing two weeks earlier.

An interesting contribution to the debate on India's standing in the world, and its competition with China and Pakistan, was Saeed Naqvi's glossary "Maybe a bomb for the front pages."[483] In his sarcastic account complemented by several anecdotes, he complains about the great attention China was receiving in the American capital of Washington due to its military might. At the same time, India was pushed to the side lines together with Pakistan, on the margins of public and political attention. Naqvi concludes:

> Of course, this is all part of the global imbalances, but the scale on which these imbalances manifest themselves on the Indian mind says something of our general sense of uncertainty of where we stand in world affairs. For a country of our size and depth with an abiding though sometimes sullen self esteem, the uncertainty as to where we were going to be slotted in the family of nations was disconcerning. The consequent neurosis was in some measure at the bottom of caste, communal, regional tensions. It would be silly to imagine that a bomb is the ultimate answer. But it could be a beginning. At least it might be an insurance against our being relegated to the next lower slot.[484]

The main theme of the glossary mirrors the general mood of India's elite in the post-Pokhran phase. However, the degree of self-doubt and the soft language, exemplified by phrases including 'global imbalances' instead of 'discrimination' and 'family of nations' instead of 'international regime,' was quite exceptional in this period.

Once the dust on the Pokhran test site had settled, the previously emphatic repudiation on any criticism on the part of Western countries changed into a more careful assessment of the overall international reaction. This process of reappraisal was initiated by two articles in *The Hindu* in early July 1998.[485] K.K. Katyal identifies a window of opportunity in some of the more balanced reactions among the major powers: "[n]ot all of the terms set by the nuclear powers and their proxies (their beneficiaries of the nuclear umbrella) are acceptable to India, but most of the points, made by them, have served as the basis for a dialogue with a promise of positive results."[486] Beyond this, reactions by India's South Asian neighbours were perceived as even more promising for improved future relations: "New Delhi has reasons to be satisfied with the reactions in the neighbourhood (apart from Pakistan which is in a different category)."[487] Pran Chopra identifies a similar window of opportunity but stresses the need for improved efforts by India itself:

---

[483] Naqvi, Saeed: "Maybe a bomb for the front pages.: In: The Statesman, May 29th 1998.
[484] ibid.
[485] Katyal, K.K.: "A hint of positive results." In: The Hindu, July 6th 1998; and, Chopra, Pran: "Slowly back to sanity." In: The Hindu, July 7th 1998.
[486] ibid.
[487] ibid.

> Taken together, [the international reactions] suggest that some significant countries might pay more attention to India's future nuclear policy if it is set out firmly and clearly, with the stamp of a national consensus upon it, and behind it a will, all the more steady for being calm, free of the bellicosity which some of us mistook to be proof of our patriotism in the heady days immediately after the Pokhran tests and free of the bombast which made it appear more ambitious and more uncompromising than in fact it is.[488]

The views among India's strategic elite on which course the country should adopt in the nuclear field oscillated between those favouring a clear path towards the development of applicable nuclear weapons capabilities and those maintaining that the value of nuclear weapons for India was purely symbolic. These two diverging positions are illustrated within two exemplary accounts. In the first article, Jasjit Singh makes the case for recognition of security seeking as the sole motive for the build up of India's bomb, while emphatically neglecting any prestige value.[489] In the second article, Pushpa M. Bhargava calls for a shift in India's declaratory policy to make clear to the world that its intentions were purely aiming at the symbolic value of nuclear weapons. As such, they do not pose any security threat to other powers.[490]

Jasjit Singh laments that the exchange of bellicose rhetoric between Indian and Pakistani leaders after the tests had obscured the true intentions of India's nuclear programme:

> The verbal duels between the leaders of the two countries are likely to continue. But there is a need to pragmatically assess the direction in which we are heading. First, there is a need to rethink why India needs nuclear weapons. The only reason is to provide insurance against nuclear threat ('blackmail' or hegemony, as the Chinese describe it) and possible use. We do not need them for power or prestige. India's status in the final analysis will be governed by how successful we solve our problems. This, no doubt, has been the basis of the four-decades-old consensus that we will not commit to being non-nuclear, at least not until the nuclear weapons states give up these horrendous tools of coercion and destruction.[491]

Singh presents the classical view of India's security-oriented strategic thinkers on nuclear weapons: the prime role these weapons played for India was the fending off of any potential blackmail attempt by other nuclear weapons states. According to Singh, preventing nuclear blackmail would have been ideally achieved through global disarmament, but after India had accepted that this was not feasible, it had to acquire the bomb as its second best option.

---

[488] Chopra, Pran: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, July 7th 1998.
[489] Singh, Jasjit: "Nukes have no prestige value: Press for total disarmament." In: Indian Express, June 4th 1998.
[490] Bhargava, Pushpa M.: "An opportunity lost." In: The Hindu, July 8th 1998.
[491] Singh, Jasjit: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, June 4th 1998.

One major inconsistency within the 'blackmail' theme was the question as to why only India was in need of protection against nuclear blackmail, while a vast majority of the world's countries did not feel such a need and therefore avoided the developing nuclear weapons. Singh carefully circumvents this pitfall by claiming that "instead of moving toward disarmament the international community, led by the five nuclear weapons states, has shifted the focus instead to 'non-proliferation.' Measures have been increasingly deployed to tighten the non-proliferation stranglehold, especially to India."[492] While India had been perceived by its strategic elite as the leader of either the Third World countries, or, for that matter, the 'community of nuclear have-nots,' Singh's statement reflects a changed self-image. India was no longer perceived as representing the nuclear have-nots, as these countries had now joined forces against India together with the 'nuclear haves.' According to the widely accepted view among India's strategists, India now played the role of the lonely moralist struggling against the unjust world order. This changed 'all-against-one' theme became dominant during the negotiations to the NPT extension in 1995, when India finally ceased being the only major country voting against it. They persisted up to the period of nuclear consolidation.

Jasjit Singh rejects the concerns of a looming nuclear arms race with Pakistan by raising the following question: "do the events of the past six weeks indicate that we are now well set on an 'arms race'? The answer is a categorical no. There is no requirement for an arms race. Deterrence is not dependent on matching weapon to weapon, but on the ability to retaliate with a residual capability."[493]

In sum, Singh's assessment of the post-Pokhran situation was a reminder to India's policy makers, opinion leaders, and public at large, to bring the nuclear issue back into the realm where it, belonged: in the field of national security and strategy.
The assessment of Pushpa M. Bhargava, on the other side, contrasted sharply to Singh's security-oriented approach. First of all, Bhargava tackles the question of why India had to acquire the bomb while other, more advance countries did not:

> We should not forget in this context that Japan and Germany have not wasted their resources on nuclear armament – in fact on any kind of armament. Indeed, they do not have to, as their capabilities are recognised the world over and their contribution to world economy is far too important for anyone to think of waging any war, leave aside a nuclear war, against them. Wouldn't that be a better example to emulate, rather than nuclear powers such as the U.S.?[494]

This approach differed remarkably from the conventional explanations that pointed to the USA's nuclear umbrella under which Japan and Germany were positioned. The rationale of economic prowess as a natural protection against any military attack appeared, however, somewhat naïve, and was surely not convincing to security-oriented analysts like Jasjit

[492] Singh, Jasjit: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, June 4th 1998.
[493] ibid.
[494] Bhargava, Pushpa M.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, July 8th 1998.

Singh. This rational was bound to a very peculiar understanding of nuclear weapons as symbols of modernity and technical sophistication, which, according to Bhargava, was the true currency (in contrast to military power) of the competition among states. This view, which was genuine to a large section of India's nuclear scientific community,[495] is illustrated in Bhargava's further deliberations:

> Our scientists and technologists are surely not less capable than their counterparts in the nuclear powers, Japan or Germany. We know that but it is important that this be demonstrated to the rest of the world…. . In no other country in the world, dishonesty and corruption increase exponentially with affluence as they do in ours. Therefore, unless we demonstrate that we can make nuclear weapons, test them with finesse, and do it all in a way that has never been done before, no one will believe that we can do so – and that we can do so totally by ourselves, without the help from outside.[496]

While this view on the symbolic meaning of the bomb was implicit in many other assessments on the nuclear issue in this period, Bhargava's deliberations were nevertheless remarkably explicit on this symbolism.

Similar to Jasjit Singh, Bhargava calls for a clear identification of the *raison d'être* of the nuclear programme. His suggestion as to how this should look greatly contrasted with Singh's ideas. According to Bhargava:

> [T]he nuclear explosions need to go along with a tenable raison d'être for it: that we have done it only to show that we can do it and act responsibly afterwards; that is, give a guarantee (that no traditional nuclear powers ever gave at the first weaponisation of their nuclear programme) that we would never, absolutely never, stockpile or use nuclear weapons even though we can. We should have made it absolutely clear that we have not carried out the nuclear explosions for security reasons as nuclear arms in today's world do not provide any security whatsoever, on the contrary they lay the foundation for an extended and avoidable world conflict. We should have stated, along with the news of the explosion, that the purpose of the explosion was not defence or offence or to build a nuclear arsenal, but to demonstrate the absurdity of the NPT and CTBT in their present form, and to show that a sense of responsibility is not the prerogative of the developed nations or the existing nuclear powers alone. By voluntarily giving up the right to further nuclear tests and to stockpile nuclear weapons, even while possessing the ability to do so, at the time of the first announcement of the explosion, we could have set an example and used the explosion for building solidarity among the developing and non-nuclear nations, and among thinking, responsible, and peace-loving individuals around the world, cutting across national boundaries of every hue and colour.[497]

---

[495] Bhargava himself was the founder-Director of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad.
[496] Bhargava, Pushpa M.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, July 8th 1998.
[497] ibid.

He assumes that if India would have negated any military relevance of its tests, it would have been admired by the world as a responsible and peace-loving nation. He believes that this would thereby generate a wave of solidarity among the developing and non-nuclear nations. Bhargava's approach reveals a rather incomplete understanding of the dynamics of world affairs and the way India's nuclear achievements were perceived by the international audience.

Bhargava nevertheless concludes his account by highlighting scientists' deep understanding of the field of politics. In his view, "responsible scientists may find it difficult to negotiate the corrupt and murky terrain of today's politics, at least in our country, but they understand politics a great deal more than politicians (including scientist politicians) understand science and technology."[498]

11.6. India as Emerging Power: Prepared Grounds

Once the patriotic hype in the immediate aftermath of the tests abated, accounts on India's new status in the global arena decreased in number. Other aspects of the nuclear issue, such as its relevance for Indo-Pakistan relations and aspects of doctrine formulation, came to the fore.

Between late 1999 and early 2002, prestige and standing in relation to nuclear weapons became almost an anathema. It was addressed in greater detail only in May 2002 on the fourth anniversary of the tests. In an account on India's success in consolidating its claims as an emerging great power, V. R. Raghavan draws a rather grim picture:

> Four years after the nuclear tests of 1998 is a good time to assess India's stock as a regional and global strategic player. Great power status and consolidation of India's claims to it were claimed to be the primary aim of the tests. The 'resurgence of India,' which the tests were supposed to herald, seems today some long distance away.[499]

According to Raghavan, the main reason India was unable to transform its nuclear ambitions into increased international standing was its failure to incorporate its newly created nuclear capabilities into a credible and responsive defence structure:

> The nuclear doctrine of the nation hangs in limbo, with neither its authors not the Government claiming it to be official, legitimate or authoritative. There is no known nuclear command authority; the chain of command is unclear to both friends and

[498] Bhargava, Pushpa M.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, July 8th 1998.
[499] Raghavan, V.R.: "India's nuclear balance sheet." In: The Hindu, May 7th 2002.

> adversaries. There is no nuclear risk reduction dialogue among the Indian, Chinese and Pakistani Governments.[500]

However, Raghavan claims that India's nuclear policy was nevertheless successful in generating attention by the international community of states: "It is not as if no successes were gained by the BJP-led Government which went in for the tests. The tests moved India from being a covert nuclear weapons possessor to an overt one. It certainly made the major powers take note of the new boy on the block."[501] Raghava's analysis reflects the aloofness that came to dominate the accounts on the nuclear issue in the period of nuclear consolidation. These sharply contrast the bellicose, agitating rhetoric of the immediate pre- and post-test period.

Since the year 2000, few aspects of the nuclear issue were able to trigger heated and passionate responses within India's media. Among these were the fears of a nuclear escalation that were expressed in the international media during the Indo-Pakistani standoff along the LoC in Kashmir during 2002. These fears were also fuelled by the war rhetoric of officials in both countries' governments. These internationally expressed fears were largely dismissed by offended Indian commentators. As Sevanti Nina asks, "[w]hat is the basis for the incredible nuclear war hysteria that the Western media built up through the latter half of May? … . Are white nuclear superpowers more responsible than brown nuclear states?"[502] Nina's remark reflected the deep seated sense of victimisation that had guided the elite's rhetoric prior to 1998 against the discriminatory international order, and, in 2002, was directed against Western concerns about the nuclear dangers that in the elite's view was largely motivated by racist attitudes.

Allegations of racism by the 'Western' world were frequently made in both directions. The 'West' was blamed for not paying enough attention to India, but then as in the 2002 crisis, was blamed for paying too much attention. As evidence in support of his allegations of 'Western' media, Ninan cites articles from *The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, The New York Times,* and *USA Today*, thereby indicating the general focus of India's elite on America as the epitome of the stereotyped concept of the 'West.'

Next to the escalating situation in Kashmir and international reactions to it, one might expect another event in 2002 to have revived the debate on nuclear weapons and international standing: the self-declaration of North Korea as a nuclear weapons state. However, reactions in India to the emergence of the ninth nuclear power were minimal. One of the very few analyses on this development was made by Jasjit Singh, who raises this question:

> What does a nuclear North Korea mean for the region and the world? … . In the absence of any move toward disarmament, North Korea acquiring nuclear weapons

[500] Raghavan, V.R.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, May 7th 2002.
[501] ibid.
[502] Ninan, Sevanti: "Western overdrive." In: The Hindu, June 9th 2002.

> in violation of treaty obligations is likely to increase the incentives for other countries to acquire such weapons increasing the prospects of further proliferation.[503]

Jasjit Singh's assessment on nuclearised North Korea and the significant lack of further commentary on this issue indicates the pitfall that the North Korean case posed for the apologists of India's nuclear course. India's acquisition of nuclear weapons was justified above all as an act of emancipation against a discriminatory nuclear order. This logic would have suggested that the apologists' justification would endorse North Korea's achievements, as well. However, it did not. In this context, Jasjit Singh's argument that North Korea's nuclear achievements cause instability in Asia and increase the prospects of proliferation because it was done illegally by violating international law appears rather weak. North Korea had joined the NPT but then left it (in accordance to the treaty's provisions), while India had never done so. Beyond this subtle distinction, Singh was unable to present any more substantive argument as to why nuclear proliferation was destabilising, dangerous, and illegal for North Korea, but conversely, an act of emancipation and a responsive quest for security for India.

[503] Singh, Jasjit: "The ninth nuclear horseman: How has the world changed now that North Korea has joined the club?". In: The Indian Express, October 21st 2002.

12. The "Colonialist" Stereotype: Indo-US Relations

12.1. US Non-Proliferation Pressures and Indian Sensitivities

Within the perception of India's elite, the USA epitomised the forefront of the discriminatory order well before it emerged as the sole superpower in the course of the 1990s. When referring to the 'West' as the oppressor of the poor, developing, or, for that matter 'nuclear have-nots,' India's elite were actually referring to the USA. Similarly, when blaming 'Western media' for an imbalanced coverage of India's action, India's opinion leaders quoted American newspapers. Reasons for this almost exclusive focus on America and the wide indifference to other Western countries, the Soviet Union / Russia, or even China, were manifold. First of all, American officials pushed forward their non-proliferation objectives more explicitly and directly than, for example, the EU. Secondly, the USA was perceived to be the direct successor of colonialist Europe, thereby allegedly adopting similarly colonialist and discriminatory attitudes.[504] Thirdly, thanks to English language, American media was directly accessible to India's elite. Fourthly, America's policy towards South Asia carried several inconsistencies, particularly with regard to alternating military assistance and military sanctions to Pakistan,[505] thus giving the impression that South Asia was little more than a playing field for global US power politics. Sixthly, the USA, as the perceived leader of the exclusive club to which India so passionately sought admission, proved to represent a compelling archetype for the hopes and visions of India's elite for their own country. This dimension of India's relationship with the USA explains the high degree of passion in the commentary that not only reflects disgust about the perceived discrimination, but also some degree of admiration. This was regularly transformed into reverse feelings of indignation each time the USA denied India's quest for admission to the club of the world's leading powers.

The strong cognitive bias in India's perception of America's non-proliferation policy was further aggravated by the often insensitive rhetoric applied by American policy makers. Their recurring call to 'cap, reduce and eliminate' India's and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities was frequently brought forward in a paternalist mode. According to Stephen P. Cohen:

[504] This perception was assured by the 'Enterprise' incident during the Bangladesh war.

[505] US American military assistance to Pakistan began in 1954. It was cancelled due to Pakistan's initiation of the war with India in 1965. In 1979, Pakistan re-emerged as American strategic partner after the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan, and the USA lost its main ally Iran due to the Iranian revolution. It fell out of America's favour again in 1989 after the Soviet Union left Afghanistan and the USA officially discovered Pakistan's nuclear activities. Finally, in 2001 US-Pakistani strategic partnership was again revived in the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Center.

> It is harder to imagine a formulation that was more threatening to the vast majority of Indian security experts, whose chief goal was to retain the option, not to exercise it or to abandon it. Incredibly, senior U.S. officials continue to use this formulation in public speeches, ensuring that the bomb lobby's interpretation of a malign U.S. policy will remain dominant for the foreseeable future.[506]

Commentary on the allegedly misguided American non-proliferation efforts was most frequent during the height of the non-proliferation debate in the mid-1990s. However, the recurring features of the debate were already present in the 1970s. In an *Indian Express* editorial of May 1979, the author comments on the American efforts to establish a nuclear weapons free zone in South Asia by giving India and Pakistan security guarantees against any form of nuclear threat or blackmail by the existing nuclear weapons powers. As the author observes:

> The U.S. Government continues to show a blind obstinacy and lack of understanding in its continuing attempts to force this country to accept full scope international inspection of its nuclear facilities. The latest attempt … is even more unintelligent than some previous moves. It envisages a nuclear free zone in South Asia, with a guarantee from the U.S., USSR and China that they would not threaten the countries of this region – principally India and Pakistan – with nuclear attack.[507]

In security terms, the suggested nuclear weapons free zone formally guaranteed by the nuclear powers would solve almost all of India's concerns: it would stop Pakistan's nuclear programme before it could pass the threshold; it would mitigate the Chinese nuclear threat; it would cement India's regional supremacy, established in 1971; and, most importantly, it would fix India's conventional superiority towards Pakistan. The American proposal was nevertheless widely rejected by India's elite, because it deprived India of the crucial interest attached to its nuclear programme: international standing. This shortcoming was subsequently expressed by the *Indian Express* article:

> Anyone who has followed India's nuclear policy would realise that such a proposal does not go an inch forward to meet its objections to international arrangements that seek to give a handful of countries the right to manufacture and deploy nuclear weapons while denying it to others. … . Just because India has shown restraint in its nuclear programme, and in fact has unilaterally vowed not to make nuclear weapons does not mean that it will accept an inferior status to countries that have no such scruples. That would be to turn international morality upside down.[508]

The *leitmotif* of a perceived morally superior India fighting against a discriminatory world order, in which its peaceful intentions were defied, was inherent to most commentary on Indo-American nuclear relations for the following two decades. Finally, the author referred

[506] Cohen, Stephen P.: op.cit.. 2002; p. 23.
[507] N.N.: "Nuclear Nonsense." In: Indian Express, May 30th 1979.
[508] ibid.

to yet another recurring feature of the debate, that is, the double standard applied by India's elite with regard to the status of India and Pakistan. The Indian battle against discrimination – even if it was done so in the name of all 'have-nots' – did not include Pakistan. According to the mainstream perception among India's elite, Pakistan could not legitimately claim the same status India was claiming for itself. The author writes:

> If the big powers are anxious to stop further proliferation of nuclear weapons technology, surely it is Pakistan that should be persuaded to abandon the path. If guarantees are required, India would be happy to join other nuclear powers in pledging that it will never threaten Pakistan with nuclear weapons; in fact, this promise should carry more weight because it has no such weapons. But this country is already a nuclear power in the sense of having demonstrated the indigenous capability to explode a nuclear device. If it is to be equated with another country that country should obviously be China rather than Pakistan.[509]

These remarks reveal three other features of the debate. First, the phrase "[i]f guarantees are required, India would be happy to join other nuclear powers in pledging that it will never threaten Pakistan"[510] illustrates the widely adopted attitude of the opinion leaders on foreign policy issues to speak for their government in an 'us-against-them' pattern. This style often foreclosed any critique of the government's action. It stemmed from the generally inward looking nature of the debate.

The remarks also illustrate the complex semantic distinctions from which both, India's perceived moral superiority and its nuclear status, were derived. The author calls India a 'nuclear power' in terms of status because it has proven its nuclear weapons potential in the 1974 test, but he negates this status when it comes to the immorality of nuclear weapons. This distinction was derived from official statements, declaring the 1974 test as a 'peaceful nuclear explosion.' This semantic quibbling was inherent in mainstream analyses on the nuclear issue. Finally, the author explicitly equates India's status with the one from China, not Pakistan. This was in line with the elite's general refusal to accept Pakistan at an equal level, and, in turn, their perception of China as India's true competitor.

Throughout the 1980s, the view of India's elite towards US American non-proliferation efforts was determined by the American administration's continued assurance that Pakistan did not embark on a nuclear weapons programme. This certification was the legal prerequisite for American military aid to Islamabad. In regards to Pakistan's obvious progress in developing nuclear weapons that became apparent in the late 1970s, this continued certification was viewed by India's foreign policy elite as an act of *Realpolitik*, motivated by America's interests in Afghanistan. Finally, President Bush (sen.) refused to certify that Pakistan did not possess nuclear capabilities in October 1990 after the Soviet Union had left Afghanistan, and in compliance with the Pressler Amendment, US military and economic assistance was immediately suspended. Officially, the Bush administration

[509] N.N.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, May 30th 1979.
[510] ibid.

based its decision on U.S. intelligence reports in which Pakistan was alleged to have manufactured rudimentary nuclear devices in the late 1980s.

Surprisingly, India's strategic elite did not unanimously welcome this shift in American non-proliferation policy towards Pakistan. Instead, the implications of America's policy shift were interpreted by India's opinion leaders in diverse ways. Following, two fundamentally different positions on this issue are analysed in detail, namely Pran Chopra's account published in November 1990,[511] as well as the response to Chopra by K. Sundarji two weeks later.[512]

Chopra begins by expressing worries about a possible nuclear arms race: "[o]n the face of it the U.S. is taking steps which should help to keep South Asia free of both Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons. The result, paradoxically, might turn out to be to hasten both countries down the nuclear path and into a nuclear arms race".[513] Reason for this pessimistic prediction was the fact that American refusal to certify the non-existence of Pakistani nuclear capability would be taken as proof of its existence, which would increase public pressures on the Indian government to go 'down the nuclear path.' According to Chopra:

> [O]f course if the U.S. converts suspension into cessation, it will be seen as clear confirmation that the U.S. now fully shares India's long standing conviction that Pakistan is not only at the nuclear threshold but has crossed it. In either case one can expect to see powerful pressures exerted by public opinion upon the government of India that it must respond to Pakistan in kind; that if India does not have a nuclear weapons programme yet, it must begin one now; and if India has a covert one it must be made public so that the right kind of message goes to Pakistan before that country launches some adventure in the expectation that it will catch India at a nuclear disadvantage. … . The government of India might also decide, as it seems to have done in 1974, that some suitable nuclear demonstration might give it some relief from current political pressures.[514]

Chopra expected that such arming efforts by India would cause Pakistani reactions and accelerate the spiral towards a nuclear arms race. The chances that an Indo-Pakistani accord such as the suggested mutual no-first-use agreement, would materialise, were considered by Chopra as rather slim. K. Sundarji dismissed Chopra's critical assessment on four points. The first incorrect assumption, according to Sundarji, is as follows:

> [O]nce countries like India and Pakistan go overtly nuclear, they are in for an unending nuclear arms race… . The question is not who has more and who has less, but whether in the event of nuclear deterrence failing, can a country do

[511] Chopra, Pran: "In the nuclear trap." In: The Hindu, November 29th 1990.
[512] Sundarji, K.: "In the nuclear trap: wrong assumptions." In: The Hindu, December 11th 1990.
[513] Chopra, Pran: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, November 29th 1990.
[514] ibid.

> 'unacceptable damage' to the other in retaliation, with 'unacceptable damage' sensibly defined. As has been said, more is not better, if less is enough… . Nuclear arms racing therefore, would not be axiomatic. Further, missiles do not become obsolescent as soon as a later and better type has been introduced by the adversary.[515]

Sundarji's second dismissive point is that Chopra's "implicit assumption that if India takes legitimate steps to defend itself against nuclear blackmail, and to deter China, it is committing a somewhat shameful if not immoral act,"[516] is not convincing. Thirdly, Sundarji rejects Chopra's belief that India was unable to catch up with China in the nuclear field. Fourthly, K. Sundarji concludes:

> Mr. Chopra feels that there is not much hope in the proposal that India and Pakistan make a 'no first use' declaration, because this would also be considered discriminatory like the NPT. I am afraid he has not understood the proposal. Any country which believes that nuclear weapons are only useful for deterrence, implicitly thinks only in terms of retaliatory use in the second strike mode, and is foreswearing a first strike option.[517]

The last remark illustrates the dilemma of Sundarji's course of argumentation, and, in retrospect, proves to be the reason why his predictions largely failed to materialise. The assumption that the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrence device would automatically lead to a no-first-use doctrine proved to be erroneous. On the contrary, Pakistan was forced to maintain its nuclear first strike option in order to establish a credible deterrence situation vis-à-vis India's overwhelming conventional superiority. Also problematic is Sundarji's implicit claim that India was self-evidently a "country which believes that nuclear weapons are only useful for deterrence." His prediction on the non-emergence of an arms race explicitly rests on this understanding of what nuclear weapons were about, and more importantly, of what they were not about. It shows the general difficulties that military-strategic thinkers including Sundarji have accepting the existence of non-security driven forces behind arming decisions. Sundarji correctly claims that orthodox deterrence theory suggests that a limited number of devices would suffice to maintain India's security, but he proves to be wrong in concluding that this insight would cause India's prestige-oriented strategic policy makers and mainstream strategic elite to accept any inferior nuclear arsenal vis-à-vis Pakistan.

In sum, the accounts of Chopra and Sundarji encompass the full spectrum of opinion on this issue illustrate the general attempt by India's elite to redefine Indo-American relations after America's fundamental shift in its non-proliferation policy in 1989 and 1990.

---

[515] Sundarji, K.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, December 11th 1990.
[516] ibid.
[517] ibid.

12.2. The USA and the International Non-proliferation Regime

Since 1991, the appraisal of Indo-US relations among India's strategic elite became increasingly determined by the emerging debate on the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. The portrayal of the international nonproliferation discourse in India's media frequently rested on a simplified worldview, in which the world was basically split into the rich industrial 'haves,' led by the USA, and the community of discriminated Third World 'have-nots,' led by India. This pattern became increasingly predetermined in India's mainstream public opinion, leaving no room for the appreciation of nuances.

While this general pattern remained intact until 1998, some of the explicit arguments changed in the course of the evolving international debate on the NPT and the CTBT. In 1991, India's still favourable position towards the CTBT was considered part of its moral strength, while the initial rejection of the test ban by the USA was perceived as one of its major contradictions. Brahma Chellaney explains:

> The central contradiction in US policy is getting more pronounced: The world's most powerful country insists on testing and producing more advanced nuclear weapons and maintaining the first-use doctrine in order to meet its security needs, but it wants other nations to forgo nuclear arms in the interest of world security. India can provide the intellectual leadership to the Third World on global disarmament issues. Having pursued a consistent and principled policy on disarmament since the Nehru years, India has the right credentials to spearhead the cause of global arms control.[518]

Chellaney's remarks show the great inclination elites have towards the idea that India is the leader of the poor and deprived. This theme is further reflected in Chellaney's subsequent prediction on the outcome of the NPT negotiations:

> Getting a majority vote of all the parties for its extension may not be a simple matter, as was underscored by the failure of the 1990 NPT Review Conference to produce a final document due to dissensions over a CTB. Nonaligned nations inside the NPT regime are expected to demand a ban on testing of nuclear weapons, production of nuclear materials, and modernisation of weapons as a price for supporting the treaty's extension.[519]

In retrospect, these predictions were obviously on the wrong track, as the exact opposite occurred: the extension of the NPT received an overwhelming majority, with India as its isolated opponent; the demand of a ban on testing was fulfilled, but again India emerged as the isolated opponent of the CTBT; and finally, India turned into one of the most outspoken opponents of any agreement on banning the production of nuclear materials, the

[518] Chellaney, Brahma: "Non-proliferation issue: No need for India to be on the defensive." In: Indian Express, December 17th 1991.
[519] ibid.

modernisation of weapons, or any other agreement which would curtail its nuclear development.

India's isolation in the negotiations on NPT and CTBT became explicit in the voting on both regimes in 1995 and 1996 and caused some degree of confusion among India's strategic elite with regard to the popular claim to represent the larger number of states, being the 'Third World,' the 'nuclear have-nots,' or the community of nonaligned states. The underlying misjudgement was caused by the above illustrated simplifies patterns in the elite's perception of the international system.
In 1992 the USA launched a new non-proliferation initiative for South Asia by suggesting a regional solution to this problem to be negotiated in a five-power conference. Prime Minister Narashima Rao first cautiously welcomed the initiative but later condemned it, as did India's opinion leaders. In February 1992, C. Raja Mohan commented optimistically on the American proposal:

> India's traditional emphasis on nuclear first principles and its refusal to engage in discussion on nuclear issues, except in a global context, had made New Delhi's nuclear posture rigid and out of tune with the current international realities. … . India's readiness to talk about proliferation and security issues even in a preliminary way should help bring the discussion down from the propaganda plane to the realistic one.[520]

A chief obstacle to the constructive position of the Rao government was, according to Mohan, a dismissive public opinion. In his view, the "success of the new direction of India's nuclear diplomacy rests on New Delhi's ability to create a political consensus within the country. Given the change of nuclear course, an intensive public debate is absolutely essential."[521] In a follow-up article one month later, Mohan stated that the negative shift in Rao's position on the American proposal was caused by the dismissive public opinion. Taking reference to his earlier article, Mohan states:

> [T]he Indian Government feels constrained in making any radical departures from its traditional nuclear policy, behind which there is a solid national consensus. Having effected fundamental economic reforms and risked the opprobrium of selling out to the IMF and World Bank, New Delhi can ill afford to be seen as compromising India's sovereignty on the nuclear policy.[522]

The negative effects of populist and partisan considerations on a constructive nuclear policy by the government were only implicitly indicated by Mohan, who abstained from giving any explanation on how this 'solid national consensus' had been reached and by whom it was shaped. Instead of addressing these negative effects in detail, he blames American

[520] Mohan, C. Raja: "New Delhi's nuclear diplomacy." In: The Hindu, February 6th 1992.
[521] ibid.
[522] Mohan, C. Raja: "Towards realistic nuclear dialogue." In: The Hindu, March 5th 1992.

ignorance of the peculiarities of India's domestic polity as the true reason why the negotiation initiative finally failed:

> The United States needs to show greater sensitivity to the imperatives of the domestic Indian consensus on the nuclear policy as well as the logic of its external security environment. It should be obvious to the Bush Administration that no Indian Government can give up its right to make nuclear weapons and expect to survive the domestic political onslaught.[523]

The shortcoming of Mohan's account, which follows the pattern among India's opinion leaders to simply shift the blame to outside - preferably Western - powers instead of addressing the dynamics behind the government's persistence on a purely destructive nuclear policy due to public pressures, was tackled by Achin Vanaik in May 1992.[524] In his assessment, in which he takes a generally dismissive position on India's nuclear weapons programme, Vanaik addresses some nuances of Indo-US relations by stating that "[a]fter all, the USA is not simply telling India to sign the NPT it is also saying that if this is unacceptable, India should propose something else to get the nuclear disarmament ball rolling."[525] Vanaik continues to declare that any kind of disarmament process was in India's interests, thereby negating any value of nuclear weapons for India: "India missed the nuclear bus long ago. It has lived comfortably with the Chinese bomb. China has never attempted nuclear blackmail (the US has unsuccessfully) [526]. … . The bomb as a currency of international power and prestige is a thoroughly devalued currency."[527] Vanaik refrains from further elaborating upon evidence in support of his claim of nuclear bombs being a 'devalued currency.' He therefore fails to persuade the majority of India's elite and public, who indeed consider the bomb as a valuable currency for the country's international power and prestige.

Vanaik subsequently drops the nuanced approach to US non-proliferation policy and instead refers to the stereotyped patterns of thought:

> If a South Asian NWFZ is the longer term goal there is much that the two countries can do in the short run to undercut US pressure and force it on to the defensive, diplomatically and politically. … . [I]t is the US that should be doing much more than it is to disarm itself if it is preaching disarmament to others. … . With the end of the cold war the US has less justification than ever for not acceding to a CTBT for fear of hurting its "Star Wars" ambitions. Washington should be put under pressure on this issue by linking India/Pakistan behaviour to US behaviour in this regard.[528]

---

[523] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, March 5th 1992.
[524] Vanaik, Achin: "Need for a positive nuclear policy." In: Indian Express, March 30th 1992.
[525] ibid.
[526] Vanaik hints to the 'Enterprise' incident of 1971, which is still omnipresent in the elite's discourse.
[527] Vanaik, Achin: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, March 30th 1992.
[528] ibid.

As the perception of US non-proliferation policy as an instrument of discrimination had been a major psychological motive for the proponents of a nuclear arsenal in India's discourse, Vanaik's attempt to make a case for nuclear disarmament by appealing to similar sentiments failed to have any significant impact on India's nuclear discourse.
More substantial than this emotional approach was Pran Chopra's critical stance on India's nuclear policy, particularly with regard to its relations with the USA within the NPT negotiations. In his view:

> India's position on the present NPT is also flawed by contradictions. The present treaty is indeed discriminatory. But how would it become less discriminatory if, as is urged by the best known among Indian enthusiasts of the bomb, India were allowed entry as well as the doors of the club were closed after that? Those then excluded would cry 'discrimination'. … . Nor does India's case make any more sense at its other extreme, that India will abandon its nuclear option only when everyone who has the bomb destroys it. That would end discrimination. But it would also end all hope of ending proliferation, because there is no earthly chance of universal nuclear disarmament by any date which has any relevance to any policy maker unless he is sitting on some other planet. Nor is it a realistic policy aim for India any longer (it might have been two decades ago) to become a nuclear weapon power on a par with China, or sufficiently close to par to reduce China's nuclear arsenal to irrelevance through deterrence alone.[529]

Chopra's critique on India's nuclear policy was supplemented by a plausible blueprint for a more effective policy. In Chopra's view, the discriminatory nature of the 'nuclear club' could not be overcome by "letting India in and then shutting the door,"[530] as most of India's international relations specialists suggested, instead he supports conducting a policy that aims at devaluating the nuclear club's privileges and responsibilities. To achieve this goal, Chopra suggests two major steps. The first is as follows:

> [B]asing the club, and the responsibilities, privileges and restrictions of membership, and a phased equalisation of the rights of all members, on rules which should be negotiated afresh, in the light of present-day realities, on more universal principles, through more universal processes. That means they must be devised more openly, more through the U.N., more clearly within the final jurisdiction of the most universal body which exists today, namely the General Assembly, than happened when the present NPT was made.[531]

The second step Chopra suggests is to conduct negotiations on disarmament on a bilateral level with those countries concerned, most prominently China.

---

[529] Chopra, Pran: "Nuclear aims for India." In: The Hindu, August 8th 1992.
[530] ibid.
[531] ibid.

Chopra's suggestions faced several obstacles, particularly with regard to a strengthened U.N. involvement. He refrains from tackling the structural problems of the U.N. in which the five recognised nuclear weapon states had veto power. Further, the IAEA as the main institution in charge with nuclear affairs was largely discredited in India due to its safeguard regime. Despite such obstacles, Chopra's approach was nevertheless one of the most constructive and convincing approaches towards a revised, more effective nuclear policy in the crucial years of India's nuclear course in the 1990s.

12.3. The Strobe Talbott Mission

In the early and mid-1990s, several additional non-proliferation initiatives were launched. Next to the negotiations on the indefinite extension of the NPT as well as the creation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, efforts were made to achieve an agreement to control the spread of fissile material. Similar to the CTBT negotiations, India initially signalled its consent towards a possible fissile material cut-off treaty but withdrew its approval as soon as the negotiations were underway. Within India's political party competition, those who advocated the benefits of such a regime for India's security were soon displayed by populist political rivals as unpatriotic agents of Western neo-colonialist interests. The most comfortable way for political leaders to avoid such allegations was to simply say 'no' to any international agreement that would restrict India's sovereignty. Under these circumstances, several initiatives launched by international non-proliferation bodies, as well as by the Clinton administration, failed.
The Clinton administration in late 1992, and particularly the launch of several initiatives by the energetic U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott, starting in April 1994, stimulated the search for a new base of Indo-US nuclear relations.

In 1994, the U.S. government also tightened its non-proliferation legislation by passing the Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act, known as the Glenn Amendment. In addition to the cancellation of military and economic assistance, it provided financial sanctions to those countries suspected of developing nuclear capabilities.
Talbott's innovative negotiating strategy had two components: he formally maintained the US American commitment to the idea of non-proliferation while at the same time signalling the willingness to tacitly accept India's nuclear capabilities as a given fact, and he no longer insisted on demanding strict non-proliferation, which would de facto mean unproliferation in the Indian case. The strategy behind this was to strike a deal that would allow India to keep its secret nuclear capabilities without fearing international pressures, and, in return, officially commit to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime rather than blocking it. Realising that nuclear unproliferation in South Asia was unrealistic, Talbott thought that this pragmatic deal would benefit all parties. It would allow India to use its capabilities effectively as existential deterrence devices, while at the same time would save the international regime from collapsing and continue to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in other parts of the world. The main flaw of this strategy was that it missed the crucial point, as it was diametrically opposed to India's non-security interests. India's main

international objective was to gain recognition and prestige and to enjoy equal status to other major powers, especially within the nuclear field. A deal that would provide India with security but would withhold the benefits in terms of status and prestige was not acceptable to India's strategic elite. The American bargaining leverage was significantly weakened by the fact that both the Bush (sen.) and Clinton administrations declared nuclear bombs as crucial component of the American arsenal to deter nuclear, biological and chemical attacks by 'rogue states.' Moreover, France and Britain continued to see their nuclear capabilities as prestigious devices, and important leverage to defend their privileged positions as permanent members of the UN Security Council. The unwillingness by the nuclear weapons states to reduce the political value of nuclear weapons proved to be a strong incentive to India's quest for the bomb.

Paradoxically, the more the Clinton Administration's pragmatic approach opened up new windows of opportunity for India to solve the nuclear question, the more the proponents of a nuclear India felt the urgency to push forward and create irreversible nuclear facts.
The discomfort of the nuclear bomb lobby with the Talbott initiative became visible in an analysis by Atul Aneja one week before Talbott's first visit to New Delhi.[532] The idea of allowing verifications of Pakistani and Indian nuclear sites by international inspectors as a first confidence building step was dismissed by Aneja on the ground that it would destroy the benefits of India's nuclear ambiguity: "Since, nuclear ambiguity (whether India has a bomb or not) arguably increases deterrence, any evidence of dispossession can prove counterproductive. It can encourage hostile neighbours, who may be in clandestine possession of a bomb, to launch the first strike."[533] This argument contradicted the fact that India already possessed rudimentary nuclear devices, which was well known among India's strategists in 1994.
Further, Aneja dismisses the proposal to curb production of fissile material. In his view:

> Ending fissile production will encourage NPT crusaders in the American establishment and academics to increase pressure on India to take the next step of eliminating the existing plutonium stockpile. Roll-back will mean accepting NPT through the backdoor for it will be another route to eliminate India's capability to produce weapons.[534]

The rationale behind this argument was clear: while ostensibly applied to restrictions of the production of fissile material only, Indian acceptance of these restrictions would decisively weaken its opposition against further restrictions, such as provided for in the NPT. As the only way to avoid this pitfall, Aneja considers any restrictions on 'India's capability to produce weapons' unacceptable *per se*, as they would mean accepting discrimination. In fact, the categorical nature of this position was the *ultima ratio* of India's negative policy towards any international non-proliferation effort.

---

[532] Aneja, Atul: "Balancing nuclear option." In: The Hindu, April 4th 1994.
[533] ibid.
[534] ibid.

Finally, Aneja dismisses the proposal to curb the development of ballistic missiles: "Media reports suggest that Mr. Strobe Talbott will ask India not to deploy ballistic missiles (the Prithvi and the Agni). But the Indian counterview that it would reduce its potential missile arsenal, if the rest of the world does so, may not necessarily be seen as utopia."[535] This all-out argument followed a similar logic as the aforementioned position on the fissile material cut-off. Along this logic, India would accept restrictions on ballistic missiles only if the rest of the world does so, too (which, after all, was truly utopian). In effect, it allowed India to fend-off any initiative and continue unrestricted development of ballistic missiles.
Aneja concludes his account by stating that the only way in which the USA could contribute to the security of South Asia was to accept the nuclearisation of India as a matter of fact:

> Based on the acceptance of India's capability to make nuclear weapons, New Delhi and Washington can explore ways of preventing a nuclear war from breaking out in the subcontinent. … . Recognising that insecurity may prompt India and Pakistan to go in for weapons, some 'nuclear managers' believe that the U.S. can play an activist role after India and Pakistan are declared nuclear-weapon States. The U.S. can assist the two countries in building safe and stably configured small arsenals. Know-how for efficient command and control systems, which reduce the risk of accidental nuclear war, can also be provided.[536]

In sum, Atul Aneja's assessment of India's nuclear options illustrates all facets of the bomb lobbyists' line of argument. It created a logic in which any reconciliation became *per se* subjugation under a discriminatory regime, and in which anything short of a full-fledged nuclear arsenal would be unacceptable for India on grounds of moral principles. Within this logic, the precondition of any constructive US American involvement was its acceptance of India as a member of the nuclear club.

Paradoxically, it was the reconciliatory policy of the Clinton Administration that asserted this position and made it commonly accepted by India's mainstream opinion leaders and, subsequently, by India's public at large.

The Strobe Talbott initiative became the main focus of further commentary on Indo-US nuclear relations. Commentators expressed more fear than hope that the persuasiveness of the initiative might cause India to give too much in, and would force it to accept any solution short of full-fledged nuclearisation.[537] India's mainstream opinion leaders thus faced the difficulty of having to accommodate two diverging, commonly held attitudes: any concession would be seen as an unacceptable limitation of India's sovereignty and second, the lip service to international non-proliferation and arms control had to be made in order to

[535] Aneja, Atul: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, April 4th 1994.
[536] ibid.
[537] Among of the more detailed assessments are: Jha, Prem Shankar: "A sane look at nuclear capping." In: The Hindu, April 9th 1994; Vanaik, Achin: "Nuclear Diplomacy." In: The Hindu April 19th 1994; Abraham, Amrita: "Nuclear manoeuvres: More skillful US diplomacy is putting India in a bind." In: Indian Express, April 22nd 1994; N.N.: "Nuclear Security." In: The Statesman, May 1st 1994.

maintain India's moral standing and avoid international isolation. The ambivalence of these two positions became visible in C. Raja Mohan's analysis on the matter:

> India must hold firm in the pursuit of advanced nuclear and missile capabilities, while demonstrating good faith in working for cooperative arms control worldwide. As the Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, prepares for his visit to the United States, New Delhi should make it clear that there is no question of the country compromising on its nuclear sovereignty. At the same time, it should reiterate that it is prepared to enter into any non-discriminatory arrangement on non-proliferation and arms control.[538]

As any such arrangement - discriminatory or not – was connected with some loss of sovereignty, both attitudes appeared to be incompatible. The more initiatives towards these arrangements were made, the more India's opinion leaders stressed the maintenance of 'nuclear sovereignty' as India's top priority.

Mohan criticised the inability of the U.S. Administration to acknowledge India's negative stance on any agreement as a matter of principle:

> Like the Carter administration which over-estimated the readiness of the Janata Government to compromise on the nuclear issue, the Clinton administration too may have misread signals from New Delhi on the room for compromise the Government of Mr. Rao has on the nuclear issue. The Governments in the U.S. appear determined to make the same mistake over and over again. But it is time Washington understood that given the solid national consensus on the nuclear issue, it cannot just hustle India into a nuclear deal that runs against New Delhi's national security interest.[539]

Mohan euphemistically refers to 'the solid national consensus on the nuclear issue,' when describing the negative dynamics of the process of opinion formation in India, which excluded any position by India's government other than 'no.'
Within this debate, the fiercest opposition against the US initiative was again brought forward by the nuclear scientific section of India's nuclear policy elite. Their objection was, however, not based on India's status seeking in terms of power and military strength but on the inter-state competition defined in terms of excellence in the field of high technology.

The most outspoken proponent of the scientists' approach was O.P. Sabherwal.[540] He states:

> India's nuclear policy – that related to its status on weapons capability and nuclear non-proliferation treaty – is getting entangled in a political and technological web

[538] Mohan, C. Raja: "Delhi must be firm on nuclear policy." In: The Hindu, May 11th 1994.
[539] ibid.
[540] Sabherwal, O.P.: "Nuclear Politics: Power game in new form." In: Indian Express, December 2nd 1994.

> laid out by the West. The Western attempt is to ward off a possible threat to its supremacy in the nuclear realm. … . Unfortunately, India's growing nuclear capability has gone well with the West, in particular with the United States, which views the Indian advance as a potential competitive challenge in an area of frontier science and technology. It is not low-investment weapons capability but recent Indian advances in sophisticated areas – reactor design and construction, fuels and plutonium technology – that are an eyesore to the US. If it were weapons production alone that called for the US concern, then China's with arsenal many times more than India's potential, would have created a far bigger reaction.[541]

By portraying the international non-proliferation initiative as an act of jealousy by an America envious about India's outstanding nuclear achievements, Sabherwal offers a rather naïve attempt to understand American motives behind its non-proliferation policy. The rationale behind this explanation nevertheless proved to be highly appealing to the nuclear-scientific section of India's debating elite.

Sabherwal further praises India's large bomb arsenal, demanding proper appreciation from the USA, who should finally recognise India's nuclear weapon status. Ironically, after having grossly exaggerated the size and efficiency of India's nuclear weapons arsenal, he identifies the peacefulness of its nuclear programme as the main reason why India was deprived of this merited nuclear status. Along this logic, he declares:

> [T]he stance adopted by the US towards India on NPT and nuclear non-proliferation issue is not only inequitable, discriminatory but even worse – it lacks consistency and keeps on shifting. A recent US intelligence study on behalf of Congress puts India's nuclear bomb arsenal at 50. So be it! But can a country having developed as many as 50 bombs on its own (without resort to the art of smuggling) be described a threshold power? Can a country which detonated a device as far back as 1974 (before the NPT came into effect), be bracked with non-weapons capability nations? … . By this logic, it is a crime not to push ahead with established and proven weapon capability, not to conduct a large number of detonations and tests, but rather give priority to developing peaceful applications of atomic energy, as India has done. The preposterous nature of this proposition is self-evident, and no power should be allowed to push India into a lower status under any acceptable non-proliferation regime that is equitable and that may be refashioned through the forthcoming round of NPT discussions.[542]

This rejection of any agreement which would push India 'into a lower status' was underpinned by Sabherwal with a strong warning to India's policy makers that any concessions in this respect would be considered as betrayal and could not be tolerated, as "[w]hat to be realised is that dithering and weak-kneed policies and postures encourage the

[541] Sabherwal, O.P.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, December 2nd 1994.
[542] ibid.

US to pursue and persist with the most illogical propositions in relation to India."[543] The most 'illogical' aspect of the American initiative was, according to Sabherwal, the missing distinction of India and Pakistan in terms of their respective nuclear status:

> It is this factor – the threat of the Pakistani bomb and the lurking devastation of an Indo-Pakistan nuclear war – that is being used by the US to push India into an inferior status in the non-proliferation regime that has to come. No one can contemplate to permit a situation to develop that leads to an Indo-Pakistan nuclear conflagration. But equally foolish would be not to see through the political games the US is playing by employing the Pakistani factor to beat down India vis-à-vis the NPT. In the first place, it is preposterous to allow a game of parity between India and Pakistan in relation to their status, either in terms of nuclear capability or the non-proliferation regime, even in the case of existing NPT inequitable as it is. Secondly, one has to take a balanced view, keeping off politically-motivated publicity, of Pakistan's real achievements in terms of nuclear capability and bomb making. There is little doubt that Pakistan's weapons capability has been blown out of all proportion – with a purpose – to scare India. A good bit of responsibility for this scare build-up lies with the West, and the rest with Indian credulous fears.[544]

In sum, Sabherwal's account reflects the position of the scientific-strategic elite within India's nuclear debate. The socially constructed norms underlying the perception of the international nuclear arena and India's role therein largely detached these accounts from real events in the international non-proliferation discourse.

The purpose of nuclear technology was greatly distorted by the ascription of several symbolic meanings to nuclear weapons and particularly by Sabherwal's absolute and unconditional acceptance of nuclear technology as the ultimate currency of the international competition for national prestige. As such, these were unique elements that influenced India's idiosyncratic nuclear discourse. It left no space for India's nuclear scientific community to appreciate other aspects related to this technology , such as the decades-long critical debate on the dangers of nuclear technology and the increasing doubts about nuclear weapons as a legitimate means for power in international politics since the end of the Cold War.

Sabherwal's policy recommendation for India's government on the nuclear issue consequentially followed this logic: "[t]he on-going preparatory round of talks for building afresh a nuclear non-proliferation regime through international negotiations in 1995 should be seized by Indian policy-makers to rectify the deplorable weakness in their policies and postures on Indian capability."[545]

---

[543] Sabherwal, O.P.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, December 2nd 1994.
[544] ibid.
[545] ibid.

12.4. From Non-proliferation to Test Ban

After the international community had reached agreement on the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, the debate inside and outside India shifted towards a possible agreement on a comprehensive test ban. India's mainstream opinion leaders reversed their attitude from supporting a tentative CTBT until 1993, towards its rejection since 1994 and 1995. In the following section, the opinion formation dynamics are illustrated through the analysis of two articles published in January 1996 in *The Indian Express*: "The Indian dilemma" by J.N. Dixit[546] and "Crucial test for India" by Brahma Chellaney.[547] In their respective accounts, both authors followed the rationale commonly accepted by India's elite, according to which the tentative CTBT was, similar to the just concluded NPT, basically an instrument of the USA to prevent India's nuclear breakthrough.

J.N. Dixit was aware of the credibility gap India's elite had manoeuvred themselves into by reversing their understanding of the tentative CTBT since 1993. In his view, "[o]ne point of recent criticism has been that India made a mistake in joining the US in sponsoring a resolution at the UN in 1993 to bring about comprehensive test ban arrangements. A further criticism is that we are now backing out of our commitment."[548] According to Dixit, this fundamental policy shift was justified after it became apparent that India was the prime addressee of US non-proliferation pressures. The perceived one-sided US policy was ostensibly caused by two factors:

> The first is based on concerns about the maintenance of regional stability in South Asia. The second emanates from the anxiety that India and Pakistan should not become nuclear weapons or missile weapons capability states. Especially, India should not acquire such capacities so that it does not fulfil the latent hegemonism in its foreign policy, a hegemonism which is an abiding perception about Indian intentions in US foreign policy and strategic think tanks. We have to contrast this political paranoia about our nuclear intentions with the predicament that we are in, though in comparative terms we can count ourselves among the advanced countries in the sphere of nuclear technology and its uses.[549]

After having rejected American incentives as discriminatory, Dixit points to the alleged consensus among India's public not to make any concessions to these and calls the government to take these public sentiments seriously:

> Our attitudes and policies at the political as well as their operational transmutation to our nuclear and missile development programmes have to be responsive to

[546] Dixit, J.N.: "The Indian dilemma." In: Indian Express, January 9th 1996.
[547] Chellaney, Brahma: "Crucial test for India." In: Indian Express, January 19th 1996.
[548] Dixit, J.N.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, January 9th 1996.
[549] ibid.

> parliamentary and public opinion in India which, as experience has shown, is acutely and accurately sensitive about the country's security interests.[550]

The escalating public debate in 1996 was highly emotional and occurred largely detached from any security considerations. Many strategists including Dixit continued to add fuel to this fire; his reference to the sensitivity of India's public opinion towards the country's security interests thus appears questionable.

Dixit concludes that America's unjust manoeuvres left no choice to India but to increase its efforts in the nuclear field:

> Should India abjure for ever, and that too prematurely, its established capacity to acquire deterrent strategic nuclear power on the basis of self-reliance because the existing nuclear weapons powers wish to perpetuate their technological and political superiority on the basis of the pretended moral objective of non-proliferation, an objective to which they are not themselves willing to make a time-bound commitment. It is my view that instead of just talking about 'keeping our option open', we must give some proof that our potentialities are not just conceptual claims, but are operationally concrete, which should be taken note of by other nuclear weapons powers. The possibility of India and the US reasoning together again on non-proliferation matters will be entirely dependent on the US being responsive to our sensitivities about our strategic interests and security concerns.[551]

These remarks illustrate two major features of the debate on the CTBT. The Talbott initiative and the NPT negotiations had created a feeling of urgency in the mainstream opinion, demanding that India should end its official policy of nuclear ambiguity and declare itself a nuclear weapons state. The emerging debate on the CTBT then served to finally add the urgency of conducting nuclear tests as the ultimate and necessary manifestation of India's nuclear outing. Dixit's reference to the expression of India having to 'give proof' of its capabilities was an implicit call for nuclear testing. The second feature was the USA acceptance of India as a full-fledged nuclear weapons state as the necessary precondition for any agreement between the two countries.

This demand was again only implicitly brought forward by Dixit, stating that "the possibility of India and the US reasoning together again on non-proliferation matters will be entirely dependent on the US being responsive to our sensitivities about our strategic interests and security concerns."[552] The implied view that the only way for India to cooperate on non-proliferation issues is based upon its admission to the official 'nuclear club' became inherent in most mainstream analyses on the issue in the mid-1990s.[553]

---

[550] Dixit, J.N.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, January 9th 1996.
[551] ibid.
[552] ibid.
[553] Again, see: Mohan, C. Raja: "Delhi must be firm on nuclear policy." In: The Hindu, May 11th 1994; as one of the few analyses in which this demand is explicitly spelled out.

According to Brahma Chellaney, India's policy on the CTBT in 1996 was conditioned by two prior developments; first, the conclusion of the indefinite extension of the NPT one year before, and second, the technological breakthrough of the nuclear weapons powers with regard to computer simulated nuclear tests, making actual nuclear explosions largely redundant. In his view:

> Political and military power in the world will continue to be determined by nuclear might. … . It is against this background that US-led efforts now confront major challenges in fashioning a CTB as a technical fix to prevent the rise of new nuclear powers and cap the capabilities of the existing threshold states, particularly India, the only threshold state not to receive tested warhead designs from external sources. … . The United States' abounding enthusiasm for a test ban derives from the fact that it has reached a stage technologically where it can underpin a permanent nuclear force through hydronuclear experiments and virtual-reality simulations without the need for fullscale underground testing.[554]

Chellaney's remarks again illustrate the common perception of the CTBT as one further device to prevent India from becoming a new rising nuclear power. By referring to India as 'the only threshold state not to receive tested warhead designs from external sources,' Chellaney hints to the popular belief among India's elite that Pakistan had received substantial technological know-how on warhead design from China. In this context, the technological ability to simulate nuclear tests by the advanced nuclear weapons powers turned the tentative CTBT, which only banned underground nuclear test, but allowed computer simulations, into a discriminatory device exclusively benefiting the nuclear haves. According to Chellaney:

> The central issue is whether the world will get a treaty that comprehensively outlaws all forms of testing or one with comprehensive loopholes for the select benefit of the nuclear powers. … . There can be no credible CTB without India's backing and participation. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao has clearly articulated India's stand on the issue, saying the NPT's permanent extension voided the goal of complete disarmament and his Government can now only back a loophole-free CTB linked to a binding disarmament timetable.[555]

Chellaney's speculation that the CTBT would allow the advanced nuclear powers to press home a technological advantage was supported by some evidence. Instead of leaving it as such, however, he then formulated two unrealisable conditions through which India could still join the treaty. Firstly, verification of computer-based simulations was technically impossible, turning his demand of a 'loophole-free CTB' obsolete. Secondly, his call for an agreement on total nuclear disarmament was equally unrealistic, despite its recurring dialectic instrumentalisation by the hawkish section of India's strategic elite.

---

[554] Chellaney, Brahma: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, January 19th 1996.
[555] ibid.

While Dixit's and Chellaney's analyses attempt to explain India's shifting position on the CTBT, most of the many accounts on the CTBT did not make the distinction between NPT and CTBT. In the authors' view, the textual distinction between the treaties was marginal, as, in their perception, both served the same goal on the part of America to subdue India. This perception becomes visible in Amalendu Das Gupta's account on the issue:

> Seldom has India been under such severe pressure to accept the American plan to perpetuate the existing nuclear monopoly as in the past few months. That most nations have fallen into line should not obscure the U.S. role at every stage of the imposed consensus. Indian reluctance to sign a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) has thus turned into a test of this country's capacity to resist a combination of U.S. advice, admonition and threat.[556]

After the conclusion of the CTBT, which again largely isolated India from the international community, India's elite felt the urgency to finally conduct nuclear tests and then declare itself a nuclear weapons state. Their hope was that once India had exploded a nuclear device, its nuclear capabilities would be taken as an irreversible fact, thus ending the pressures from continued US nonproliferation diplomacy. In C. Raja Mohan's view:

> New Delhi has two choices. One is to step onto the slippery of slow denuclearisation. The other is to take the final and long-delayed steps to transform India into an open and unambiguous nuclear weapon power. Unless New Delhi can convince the U.S. that India's status as a nuclear weapon power is formal and irrevocable, it will remain one of the principal targets of the American strategy of counter-proliferation. If India does not move forward in its nuclear posture, there is a real danger that the American counter-proliferation policy will push it backward.[557]

The ostensible two choices conceded to India's government, the first clearly being identified by Mohan as the inferior one, did not exist in reality. India's foreign policy elite had come to the conclusion that nothing less than nuclear testing was acceptable for India to counter American pressures. In the period between the conclusion of the CTBT in mid 1996 and the testing in May 1998, the question was not *if* but only *when* India would conduct the tests.

12.5. India-US Relations after the Tests

When India tested its nuclear devices on May 11th 1998, the immediate American reaction was determined by two factors: the failure of American intelligence to detect the

[556] Das Gupta, Amalendu: "Nuclear Choice – I: Facing Up To New Pressure." In: The Statesman, March 4th 1996.
[557] Mohan, C. Raja: "Coping with counter-proliferation." In: The Hindu, April 18th 1996.

preparations, causing some confusion among American policy makers when news of the tests spread, and the surprise of American policy makers after noticing that many of their Indian counterparts were similarly caught unprepared. The amateurish handling of the immediate post-Pokhran situation by India's officials increased American concerns, which were frequently expressed with insensitive wording. Three days after the tests, the American Senate issued a statement demanding India's denuclearisation. This move, which inevitably caused an outcry from India's government, its elite and public at large,[558] exposed the extent to which American policy makers had failed to comprehend the sensitivities among India's elite and the dynamics behind its nuclearisation. Along with these declaratory statements, the US administration imposed economic sanctions and restricted India's access to the international loan market.

India's opinion leaders generally dismissed the economic sanctions as unjust, but considered their impact as minimal. Their stance on this issue was brought to the point by Saubhik Chakrabarti, who raises the question: "Will economic sanctions following Pokhran affect India? Yes. Will they seriously affect her? No."[559]
In a reflection on the legal aspects of the nuclear issue, V.S. Mani concludes that while it was legal according to international law for India to conduct nuclear tests and acquire nuclear weapons, the subsequent imposition of sanction was illegal.[560] Mani starts his account by addressing four questions: "(1) Has India violated the international law by conducting the Pokhran tests? (2) Is India a nuclear weapon state? (3) Can India legally use nuclear weapons in a conflict situation? (4) Do the U.S. and others have a right to impose 'sanctions' on India?"[561] The first question was tackled by claiming that "India is a party to the Partial Test Ban Treaty 1963 and the Outer Space Treaty 1967 and the tests have not violated these either."[562]

The second question was motivated by the general displeasure of India's elite and public regarding the international community's reluctance to automatically grant India the status of a nuclear weapons state. According to Mani:

> International law does not define a nuclear weapon state. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 1968 defines a nuclear weapon state as one which had tested nuclear weapon devices before 1968 but the treaty does not apply to India, a non-party. It is a basic rule of international law that a treaty does not, as a general rule, bind a country which is not a party to it. Nor can it create international law rules applicable against a persistent objector. It is well known that India has been consistently opposing the NPT. So only a commonsense definition would apply: a state which has nuclear weapons is a nuclear weapon state.[563]

[558] See for example: Singh, Jaswant: 'Against Nuclear Apartheid.' In: Foreign Affairs, September/October 1998.
[559] Chakrabarti, Saubhik: "Pokhran Sanctions: Much Ado About Little." In: The Statesman, May 17th 1998.
[560] Mani, V.S.: "India's tests: the legal issues." In: The Hindu, June 5th 1998.
[561] ibid.
[562] ibid.
[563] ibid.

The logic applied by Mani appears questionable. He quite rightly claims that except in the provisions of the NPT, no other document of international law defines the status of a nuclear weapons state. The NPT gives two necessary conditions for a country to fall under this category: first, the respective country tested before 1968 and second, it is a member state of the NPT. In this regard, Mani's suggestion that India should be given the status of a nuclear weapons state because these conditions do not apply due to its non-membership appeared flawed. In his final remark, Mani claims that, given the fact that the term 'nuclear weapon state' had no legal dimension at all, but only a political one, India had the right to call itself a nuclear weapons state, because "a state which has nuclear weapons is a nuclear weapon state."[564] This conclusion is self-evident.

The third question was, according to Mani, the trickiest one. First of all, he pointed to the general and universal right of any country to defend itself. As India declared to use the bomb exclusively in self-defence, this right would surely apply. However, Mani questions the legality of the concept of deterrence:

> A threat of use of force directed against the territorial integrity or the political independence of another state or in any manner inconsistent with the Purpose of the United Nations is forbidden under the modern international law – 50 years of India's foreign policy have contributed to this perspective of international law in no small measure. It is ironic that all the above legal postulates were sharply articulated by India in its Written Pleadings before the ICJ in 1995. India is now stopped from making a volte-face.[565]

Finally, Mani assesses the legality of the international sanctions imposed on India:

> The U.S. has invoked its domestic law, Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act 1994, to impose 'sanctions' on India. Germany and Japan have decided to cease their economic assistance programmes… . India's conduct in developing nuclear weapons was not a legally wrongful conduct; nor was it directed against the U.S., Germany or Japan. Therefore, these countries have no legal right to resort to countermeasures… . The U.S., Germany and Japan cannot legally impose on India their foreign or nuclear policies. Thus the so-called 'sanctions' violate a range of pre-emptory principles of international law – peaceful settlement of disputes, sovereign equality, non-intention and non-interference in the internal and external affairs of a state, good faith fulfilment of international obligations and freedom of international trade. They vidate agreements of economic cooperation and assistance, if any, concluded between these countries and India [sic.].[566]

[564] Mani, V.S.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, June 5th 1998.
[565] ibid.
[566] ibid.

Mani's attempt to approach the political question of India's nuclear status in purely legal terms has several inconsistencies. First of all, his claim that the cutback of many countries' economic assistance programmes was illegal according to international law lacks much substance. Secondly, economic sanctions were not illegal *per se*, as Mani suggests. His claim that the 'U.S., Germany and Japan cannot legally impose' their foreign policy on India was a bizarre argument, as it is in the nature of the 'foreign policy' of any country to be directed towards another country.

In sum, Mani's attempt to justify India's nuclear policy with legal provisions of international law and simultaneously revoke the legality of the sanctions towards India, faced the problem of placing genuinely political questions into the realm of international law. This attempt, despite being dubious in juristic terms, illustrates the strong pressures perceived by many of India's elite to develop appropriate apologetic arguments to the events.

In his account on the ambiguous legality of the sanctions in terms of free trade provisions, Eric Gonsalves concludes that "[t]he World Trade Organisation could be a useful ally against the sanctions not a hindrance."[567] Gonsalves thereby suggests a much more pragmatic approach to deal with the sanctions, as compared to Mani:

> The U.S.' efforts to impose sanctions and universalise them are unfair. But they provide a welcome opportunity to take unpleasant decisions at home to correct the populist policies which have brought the Indian economy to its knees. The budget unfortunately went too much in the opposite direction.[568]

Gonsalves' position reflects a growing understanding among India's opinion leaders that, now that India's nuclear capabilities were an irreversible fact, their prime objective should be to look forward. Generally, the willingness to engage other states, especially the United States, in a more reconciliatory dialogue increased remarkably after the dust of the Pokhran tests had settled. This was only providing that India's irreversible nuclear status was accepted as its basis. The Clinton administration contributed to this development by signalling an easing of its strict sanctions regime.

12.6. Paradigm Shift in Indo-US Relations

The nuclear tests proved to be a catalyst for India's emotionally overloaded nuclear debate between the years 1995 and 1998. Once the patriotic hype of the immediate post-Pokhran period calmed down, a process of fundamental rethinking began. The simplistic world view, according to which India had the moral obligation to fight against the discriminatory regime of the nuclear haves in the name of the have-nots, had to be revamped for obvious reasons. The pragmatists among India's foreign policy specialists soon put India's decade-

[567] Gonsalves, Eric: "The long haul after Pokhran." In: The Hindu, August 7th 1998.
[568] ibid.

long struggle against the discriminatory nuclear order to rest and instead suggested to preserve the nuclear order by joining the nuclear club and then closing the door behind themselves. Others continued to maintain India's moralistic stance and maintained that its self-declaration as a nuclear weapons state was an act of solidarity for all nuclear have-nots.

Between these two poles, several analysts used the new parameters of India's standing to develop innovative and nuanced approaches to the nuclear issue. Above all, the role of the USA in South Asia was re-evaluated, dropping several prior held taboos like US mediation in Kashmir or Indo-US cooperation in the military-technological realm.
One of the first articles that jettisoned the emotional compulsions of the earlier debate was an analysis of US mediation attempts by Gopalji Malviya and W. Lawrence S Prabhakar.[569] The authors initiated their re-evaluation of Indo-US relations by claiming:

> The rationale for an American mediation and a crisis management strategy in South Asia emerges from the Indian and Pakistani refusals to adhere and accede to the NPT; accept the indefinite extension of the NPT; refusal to sign the CTBT; and more importantly the overt nuclear weaponisation process resorted to by both the states. These have provided the U.S. grounds to 'pontificate' on the dangers of an accidental nuclear war given the 'Flashpoint in Kashmir'. The divergence between India and the U.S. over the CTBT is well known. The ongoing India-U.S. strategic dialogue (the Jaswant Singh-Talbott talks) seems to indicate some progress, with the U.S. realising India's security concerns.[570]

These deliberations sum up three major conditions determining Indo-US relations subsequent to the tests. First, the introduction of the nuclear dimension to the Kashmir question internationalised this conflict. As nuclear weapons were considered to be global weapons in the sense that their potential use would imply global consequences, India's long-held principle of handling Kashmir strictly bilaterally (as against Pakistan's policy of internationalising the issue) became contested. Second, the policy of the Clinton administration to continue its nuclear talks with India on the basis of a tacit recognition of India as a nuclear weapon state, was appreciated by India's elite. The third and most important feature was the awareness that the nuclear issue had brought South Asia onto the map of global strategic importance. South Asia, according to the authors, "was an 'area of strategic vacuum' until recently (the May 1998 nuclear test explosions)."[571] "Given all this," the authors conclude, "the issue of American mediation and peace-building in South Asia deserves a whole new rethink that should depart from the prevalent biases and stereotypes."[572] Considering that an appreciation of American mediation attempts had been a withheld until 1998 or even 1999, this conclusion marked a significant shift in Indo-US relations in early 2000.

---

[569] Malviya, Gopalji / W. Lawrence S. Prabhakar: "American mediation in South Asia." In: The Hindu, March 16th 2000.
[570] ibid.
[571] ibid.
[572] ibid.

President Clinton's visit to India in March 2000 was most successful in accelerating the process of rethinking among India's elite. However, the search for new approaches did not have much effect on the persistent world view among the nuclear scientific section of India's strategic elite. In a May 2000 analysis on the alleged insincerity of American mediation efforts, M.R. Srinivasan starts by pointing to the huge American nuclear arsenal:

> Yet India is hectored day in and day out how nuclear weapons are bad and how the country would be a more responsible state if it gives up its very limited quantity of weaponry… . No one has asked the U.S., which claims that it has tirelessly worked for global peace for the past 50 years or so, how much of global resources was wasted on building the enormous arsenals of nuclear weapons, missiles, submarines, aircraft etc... . We may reflect on the proposition what the impact on eradication of global poverty would have been had the wealthy countries utilised the funds wasted on armaments for poverty elimination and job creation in the poor countries.[573]

To back his perception of American immorality, Srinivasan claims that US wealth was based on the exploitation of India by the British: "Among all countries that were colonialised, none lost so much of its wealth as India. … . The surplus wealth from imperial Britain went into the building up of the U.S."[574] Whatever the historic substance of this allegation was, Srinivasan's attempt to use historic events of the 18th century to discredit American mediation attempts on Kashmir in the 21st century appears rather far-fetched. Srinivasan's further deliberations continue to follow the traditional pattern of the nuclear scientists' *Weltanschauung*. Srinivasan praises India's outstanding achievements in the civilian nuclear sector and its reluctance on the weapons front and concludes his account by displaying India as the leader of the developing world.

In sum, Srinivasan's article illustrates the deadlocked nature of the perceived worldview among the nuclear scientific section of India's nuclear policy elite. Their views were deeply embodied in a perception of the world which was widely detached from reality, and which had remained largely unchanged since Nehruvian times. Their ever recurring course of argumentation continued unchanged without being affected from outside events. The static nature of the normative value system underlying the scientific-strategists' approach to the nuclear issue was one of the reasons why their overall influence on India's nuclear discourse had gradually declined since their monopolist position in the late 1960s. In the period of nuclear consolidation, this section of India's strategic elite was more or less marginalised.

The counterparts of the group adhering to old patterns of thinking form the pragmatists among India's strategists, who were rather indifferent to the moral underpinning of the nuclear issue.

---

[573] Srinivasan, M.R.: "The n-proliferators." In: The Hindu, May 12th 2000.
[574] ibid.

In an evaluation of the new conservative nuclear policy by the Bush Jr. administration, P.S. Suryanarayana criticises Washington's transgression of the CTBT:

> Although India has over time expressed serious reservations about both the NPT and CTBT, New Delhi cannot afford to see with equanimity or unconcern any future American transgression of these agreements. The reason is not far to seek. Washington's growing disenchantment with the CTBT may catalyse India's own plans, if any, for transforming its notional nuclear deterrence into a reasonably realistic one over time. However, India cannot embrace a morally controversial idea which is implicit in the Pentagon's reported thinking that favours nuclear strikes against those without the proven means to retaliate in a like manner.[575]

While Suryanarayana's view was considered a cynical expression of *Realpolitik* by the defenders of India's moral exceptionalism, a growing number of strategists nevertheless saw it as the consequential next step for India to take. India had acted as driving force behind the CTBT in the early 1990s, when the treaty was thought to be an effective device to contain the exclusive nuclear club. When America unexpectedly adhered to the idea of the treaty, India's commentators had a hard time explaining why India had to reverse its policy and take a strict anti-CTBT position as a matter of moral principle. This radical shift became a major incentive for its nuclear tests and self-declaration as a nuclear weapon state. Now that India had become a member of the nuclear club, Suryanarayana et al. intuitively sought to close the club's entrance as well as exit doors. America's transgression of the CTBT was perceived as its attempt to leave the club behind and achieve a superior status. Suryanarayana expresses this fear by reintroducing the metaphor of the 'nuclear monopoly:' "[w]ith the old U.S.-Soviet bipolarity having disappeared, the U.S. is now in quest of a qualitative nuclear monopoly that can be consistent with the changing security paradigms of the space frontier and cyberspace."[576]

In June 2002, mounting tensions along the LoC triggered several alarmist reports in international media, causing the reduction of staff in foreign embassies in New Delhi and Islamabad. These international reactions were seen as insensitive by many of India's opinion leaders, who implied racist motives behind this perceived 'Western hysteria.' As Vandita Mishra comments:

> India may restate its no-first-use nuclear doctrine. The General may proclaim the insanity of even contemplating a nuclear war. But the US and British media aren't listening. Anxious dispatches from correspondents in New Delhi and Islamabad have painted the two nuclear rivals sweltering in full battle gear, itching to begin a war they do not understand, much less control… . The western media has a diagnosis – it's part Nuclear Illiteracy, part Nuclear Denial.[577]

---

[575] Suryanarayana, P.S.: "America's nuclear hit-list." In: The Hindu, April 30th 2002.
[576] ibid.
[577] Mishra, Vandita: "Us and Them: Dateline Ground Zero." In: Indian Express, June 9th 2002.

The speculations of commentators on the motives behind Western concerns marked a revival of the old anti-Western reflexes that had dominated the nuclear debate until 1998. Many commentators saw an orchestrated American strategy behind the international reactions. This view is illustrated in Jyoty Malhotra's questioning:

> Did the West use the threat of imminent nuclear war between India and Pakistan to pull most of their citizens – embassy staff, businessmen, tourists – out of India, so as to put economic pressure on New Delhi? Worse, did the big powers pass on their fears to allies, like Japan, so as to appear to speak in one voice against India's coercive diplomatic ways? The jury's still out on all these questions. In fact, we may never know the real truth.[578]

An emphatically critical but nevertheless nuanced assessment of American concerns about the developments in Kashmir was made by J.N. Dixit.[579] On the major objectives behind the US policy, Dixit suggests:

> The rationale of this policy appears unexceptionable: one, India-Pakistan tensions on the Kashmir issue should not escalate into a military conflict leading to a nuclear war; two, the India-Pakistan stand off should not disrupt the anti-terrorism campaign of the US; three, the resolution of the Kashmir issue through political dialogue is essential for long-term stability in South Asia which is an objective of US security and economic policies in this region; four, while the US accepts that the resolution of this problem is to be achieved primarily by bilateral interaction between India and Pakistan, it is increasingly of the view that this bilateral process must be facilitated by third parties led by the US.[580]

While Dixit generally considered American foreign policy as guided by selfish national interests, he nevertheless accepts American involvement in the Kashmir issue on these grounds. In his view, India would have to bite the bullet as a consequence of the emerging nuclear dimension of this conflict. Dixit infers that by accepting Pakistan as its major partner in its anti-terrorist struggle, the US policy endangered the good relationship with India that in his view began after India's reconciliatory policy since 1999. Dixit concludes his account by suggesting a much more aloof Indian policy towards the USA:

> Indian political circles and public opinion have been progressively disappointed by US policy stances on J&K and Pakistan's involvement in the state. This is partially due to excessive expectations following India's declaration of full support to the US after September 11. At a deeper level, it is time for the US to realise that an important ingredient in the rationale of India's pro-US policies since 1999, is now subject to question – that despite the decade-long effort of establishing closer Indo-US equations, US remains inhibited about giving full support to Indian interests and

[578] Malhotra, Jyoti: "Keeping the faith with India." In: The Indian Express, June 18th 2002.
[579] Dixit, J.N.: "Disappointed with America." In: The Indian Express, August 8th 2002.
[580] ibid.

> concerns. This is so because Indian policy-makers ignored the fundamental reality that foreign policies of countries, particularly of great powers, are primarily structured within the framework of their own perceived interests. Perhaps it is necessary to nuance our foreign policy taking this elemental reality into account.[581]

Dixit's deliberations remained vague about what other than a state's 'own perceived interests' should guide its foreign policy and why great powers are guided more by their respective interests than other powers.

Dixit's predictions relating to strained Indo-US relations were soon proven false. The tenor among India's foreign policy elite on US mediation in Kashmir remained pro-American, while tension concerning the American Kashmir policy and its alliance with Pakistan in its 'war against terror' were perceived as temporary phenomena. The long-term strategic relationship was generally considered to be on a reconciliatory path. As Mohan claimed, "President Bush's intent to elevate the relations with India to a strategic level was matched by India's own enthusiastic support to the controversial American initiative on missile defences. India and the U.S. appeared on the verge of an unprecedented convergence of worldviews."[582]

In contrast to Dixit, Mohan's assessment of U.S. policy towards South Asia during the 2002 crisis was generally positive, despite some persistent caveats: "[t]he Bush Administration's decision to lift the nuclear sanctions imposed on India after May 1998 without any conditions, the acceleration of cooperation on counter-terrorism and the resumption of arms sales to India seemed to expand the basis of Indo-U.S. engagement."[583] In Mohan's view, the US alliance with Pakistan did not pose a stumbling block for Indo-U.S. relations, as Dixit had suggested, but rather constituted a 'new complexity' that could be smoothened out. In his view:

> The events of September 11, however, have introduced new complexities into Indo-U.S. relations. India, which eagerly supported the American war on terrorism, found the U.S. moving towards a renewed partnership with Pakistan. The Bush Administration has, indeed, worked hard to limit the fallout from the rediscovery of Pakistan on the relationship with India… . The jury is out on the results from American nudging of Pakistan, but there is no question that the nature of the U.S. policy towards Indo-Pak. relations and the Kashmir question has begun to alter visibly.[584]

The Indira doctrine, which held that South Asian strategic affairs should be handled on the intra-regional level only, had been held to by a consensus among India's elite for three decades. Mohan departs from this and accepts American involvement in Sri Lankan and

[581] Dixit, J.N.: op.cit.. In: The Indian Express, August 8th 2002.
[582] Mohan, C. Raja: "Boosting Indo-U.S. ties". In: The Hindu, August 21st 2002.
[583] ibid.
[584] ibid.

Nepali security affairs but only on the condition of prior, recognized consultation with New Delhi. He writes:

> India and the U.S. need to build on the emerging convergence of interests in promoting South Asian stability. Both in Sri Lanka and Nepal, they have similar objectives in defeating the forces of extremism and promoting peace. But as the Bush Administration steps up its involvement in the internal conflicts of India's smaller neighbours, it is important that there is more intensive consultation and coordination between New Delhi and Washington in the management of South Asian security.[585]

The generally positive attitude among India's elite towards US American involvement in South Asian affairs, as illustrated by C. Raja Mohan's analysis, would have been unthinkable until 1998. In 2002, however, this position had already been accepted by India's mainstream opinion leaders. The change in attitude was based on one crucial precondition: The USA had to continue the strategic dialogue with India at eye level. This Indian sensitivity and its incidental negligence by the USA marked the major obstacle for long-term Indo-US convergence. Mohan averts the significance of this factor in an involved manner:

> Finally, the worm of non-proliferation is beginning to turn again and has the potential to poison Indo-U.S. relations. The U.S. restrictions on technology transfers remain and the habit of describing India as a non-proliferation concern has begun to resurface in Washington… . If New Delhi and Washington do not quickly settle the outstanding differences on the nuclear issue, it will return to haunt their bilateral relations.[586]

After some scepticism in the early days of the Bush Administration, a majority among India's strategists appreciated the Republican government's policy for its greater sensitivity towards India's status seeking than the previous Democratic government, which was traditionally more focused on non-proliferation issues. As Pramit Pal Chaudhuri explains, "[u]ltimately, India's main cheerleader will be US President George W. Bush. Bush and his foreign policy team ardently believe in a new strategic doctrine based on a small nuclear arsenal with an overarching missile defence shield."[587]

A test case for India's self-assured nuclear policy emerged in 2002 when America reacted sharply to North Korea's nuclear proliferation efforts. Until 1998, the *leitmotif* of India's quest for the bomb was its struggle against the discriminatory nuclear regime. This lingering claim proved to be problematic, as it was eventually asserted not only by India, but by other countries as well. After the tests, India's strategic elite confined the argument

[585] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, August 21st 2002.
[586] ibid.
[587] Chaudhuri, Pramit Pal: "Arrows and Exports: The new Indo-US nuclear agenda." In: Hindustan Times, September 30th 2002.

by referring to India's exceptionalism, to avoid this disturbing logic. According to the argument, the mere size, its strategic environment (particularly its proximity to nuclearised China) as well as its democratic tradition, gave India a certain natural legitimacy to acquire nuclear weapons. This refined perception of India's exceptionalism no longer defined as the spokesman of the Third World but as a *primus inter pares* among Third World countries, became obvious in the elite's largely negative comments on North Korea's acquisition of nuclear capabilities. The ambiguity of this argument arose from the underlying view of the international system as being divided between states that have the legitimacy to own nuclear weapons and those that do not have this legitimacy. This distinction appears most problematic considering India's traditional struggle against global discrimination.

India's strategic elite reacted with ease to the clear rhetorical distinction applied by US policy makers with regard to North Korea's illegitimate nuclear programme on one side and India's accepted arsenal on the other. In Pramit Pal Chaudhuri's view, this tacit acceptance of India's privileged status as legitimate nuclear weapons state was caused by the emergence of new threats by 'rogue' states like North Korea or non-state actors like Al Qaeda. Chaudhuri raises the following question:

> Why have things changed? India was a latecomer to the atomic club, detonating a nuke roughly a decade after the five established nuclear powers. By that time, the club was refusing new members and had set up numerous obstacles to keep out newcomers. Dubbing the entire nuclear nonproliferation regime 'discriminatory', India became an atomic dissident. Then along came missile defence. Faced with a new nuclear order where threats come not from great powers but little menaces like North Korea or al Qaeda, the US began shifting to a new nuclear doctrine of maximalist shields and minimalist arsenals. The membership rules of the atomic club were being rewritten. And this time India was going to be the first with an application form at the club door.[588]

These deliberations illustrate the fundamental turnaround of the nuclear discourse among India's elite. The mainstream perception in 2002, as expressed by Chaudhuri, reflected attitudes similar to those in the established nuclear weapon states' discourse: by stating that the nuclear threat was not coming from great powers but from small, renegade states like North Korea, Chaudhuri obviously considers India to be in the first category. He then comments with great satisfaction that the US non-proliferation policy should not target India but North Korea and others. This closes the door of the nuclear club but not in front of India. America's readiness to (tacitly) accept India as a member of this club was, according to Chaudhuri, greater among Republicans than Democrats. In his view:

> India also has to keep an eye on the Democratic party. There are still plenty of Democratic leaders, like Senator Joe Biden, who still hope to resuscitate the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the entire system of multilateral nonproliferation agreements. The Indian foreign ministry says it is not too bothered.

[588] Chaudhuri, Pramit Pal: op.cit.. In: Hindustan Times, September 30th 2002.

> A senior Indian government official said, 'Clinton was a Democrat. He came around to our viewpoint.'. New Delhi is adamant about only one thing. 'The US needs to accept India as a de facto nuclear power. We are prepared to keep waiting until they do, 'said an Indian official in August.[589]

J.N. Dixit describes in similar words this positive shift in US nuclear policy but points to one major catch: the USA would only continue to endorse India's enhanced status if India itself continued to accept the "regional order envisaged by the US policy planners."[590] He states:

> The Bush administration not only continued but expanded the positive orientation towards India initiated by Bill Clinton in the last year of his tenure… . The US seems to reluctantly acknowledge India's nuclear weapons status and, more importantly, India's capacities to function as a responsible nuclear weapons power… . This prospect is, of course, subject to the overall strategic stipulation that India's policies do not radically contradict or challenge the global and regional order envisaged by the US policy planners. The extent to which India can conform to the American world view in the context of Indian interests constitutes a challenge for India's foreign policy planners.[591]

American intervention in Iraq in 2003, which was officially done in the name of preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, had some mixed repercussions in India's newspapers. While some commentators revived old anti-American reactions, many others showed remarkable understanding. One of the most outspoken comments of the first category was Brahma Chellaney's *Hindustan Times* editorial.[592] Chellaney begins by raising a rhetorical question:

> Which country poses a serious threat because of its established links with international terrorism, proven weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme, and close ties with other dictatorship in WMD-related matters? To an Indian, the answer may be obvious: Pakistan, bristling with dangerous extremists inside and outside its armed forces and engaged in covert WMD cooperation with the communist regimes in Beijing and Pyongyang. But to President George W. Bush and several of his advisors, the answer is Iraq, a starving, humbled country reeling under oppressive international sanctions for 11 years whose WMD projects were dismantled methodically by UN inspectors over several years before they were expelled for refusing to acknowledge their mission was over.[593]

---

[589] Chaudhuri, Pramit Pal: op.cit.. In: Hindustan Times, September 30th 2002.
[590] Dixit, J.N.: "Plan for the great thaw." In: Indian Express, November 28th 2002.
[591] ibid.
[592] Chellaney, Brahma: "Differential Calculus." In: Hindustan Times, August 28th 2002.
[593] ibid.

Chellaney then continues to express his disgust regarding how America is not ready to join India in launching a pre-emptive attack against "the Pakistani dictatorship" that "openly deploys nuclear terror to shield its export of terror,"[594] and which, in his view, continues to employ nuclear blackmail against India.

The overall perception of America's policy on Iraq among India's elite was much more affirmative, with Chellaney's blatant repudiation as the clear exception. In a commentary on the fierce opposition against the Iraq war by some European states, C. Raja Mohan brings the fundamental change in India's elite perception towards the USA to the point:

> The current European criticism of the American approach to international relations today echoes many of the arguments that India used to employ in the past. That should have drawn India and Europe closer on global political issues. But it has not. At precisely the moment the Europeans are emboldened to criticise the U.S., India believes that it cannot jeopardise the budding strategic partnership with America. As a result, India has been far less critical than Europe of the U.S. policy on Iraq and less insistent on a multilateral route. At a moment when Europe proclaims that power politics is passé, India is beginning to de-emphasise the notion of collective security and stressing the importance of comprehensive national strength and balance of power.[595]

When the US government dismissed the objections of some European states and instead requested India, among several other countries, to deploy troops in support, a majority of India's strategic elite perceived this policy as an acceptance of India's increased standing in the world.

In accordance with most of India's foreign policy analysts, Mohan considered the Republican government more in line with India's new foreign policy than the previous Democratic government. In his view, "[i]t is not surprising that there is greater convergence today between India and the Republican-led U.S. on key international issues stretching from common support to missile defence and rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to the importance of limiting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court."[596]

Finally, Mohan moves one step further by expressing hopes that 'new India' could replace 'old Europe' in a new global order that was to be reworked by the USA:

> As a rising power, India is more sympathetic to the American effort to rework the rules of the global game from which it could benefit. Europe, on the other hand, is a staunch defender of the present order. No wonder then those segments of the American establishment are questioning the European over-representation in the global decision-making structures and demanding a greater say for nations such as

[594] Chellaney, Brahma: op.cit.. In: Hindustan Times, August 28th 2002.
[595] Mohan, C. Raja: "India and the U.S.-European divide." In: The Hindu, September 26th 2002.
[596] ibid.

> India, which is more in tune with the U.S. than Europe. If New Delhi gets its act together in the present global crisis, India might be better positioned than ever before to alter its standing on the global state.[597]

Mohan's account illustrates the extent to which the pragmatists among India's strategic elite had reversed the main paradigms of India's moralist, principle guided declaratory policy since 1998 into opposing ideology within a fairly short range of time.

[597] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, September 26th 2002.

13. The Symbol of "Injustice": The International Non-Proliferation Regime

13.1. The Emergence of the Non-proliferation Debate

13.1.1. Restrictions on Civilian Nuclear Technology Transfer

Soon after the nightmarish experience with nuclear technology in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, plans to globally restrict access to this dangerous expertise emerged under the umbrella of the newly established United Nations. In 1946, the Baruch Plan suggested the creation of an international authority to control nuclear proliferation. Further, in those countries in which the research on nuclear technology progressed, domestic debates on export controls gained momentum. The debate in Western countries was held on the basis of three fundamental considerations: First, the inhumane and devastating nature of nuclear technology, as well as its unforeseeable impact on the international power balance, were strong arguments in favour of its restriction. Second, the civilian use of nuclear power was seen as the best answer to the world's growing energy demand, and as such crucial to the world's economic development. The respective national nuclear industries, which engaged in a tough competition on shares of this potentially rosy market, set up strong lobby groups. The third dimension of the debate on restrictions of nuclear technology was set by geo-strategic considerations in the context of the emerging Cold War. The interplay of these three factors determined the respective national nuclear export policy, which often proved to be inconsistent and volatile. The bigger the potential import market was, and the closer the government of the importing state stood to the Western alliance, the lower were the moral standards of the exporting Western countries.

While all Western countries had developed their nuclear industry in close co-operation with each other, their determination to bulkhead their knowledge off and to instrumentalise it as leverage in their relationships to other countries alienated the debarred states. The forced isolation of the respective states' nuclear programmes combined with the value of this technology, symbolising modernity and technological supremacy, and predestined the development of nuclear capabilities as discipline for inter-state competition, as such greatly fuelling the ambitions of several countries.

India, at that time, was considered by the Western NATO countries as neutral state with rather low market potential. Pakistan enjoyed privileges due to its strategic alliance with the USA, while China, despite its attractive market potential, was cut off from Western technology until 1971 due to its proximity to the Warsaw Pact.
The adjustment of moral norms to pragmatic economic and strategic considerations, as well as the often rude play on the Third World countries' technological dependency by many of the technically advanced countries proved to be one of the main sources of the emerging

anti-colonialist feelings among India's and other Third World countries' elite. It further determined India's emphasis on self-reliance in the nuclear field. India's self-declared position was based on a clear distinction between civilian and military applications of nuclear technology. Within this framework, the restriction on Western transfer of nuclear technology and fissile material was perceived as unfair, because it prevented India's civilian nuclear programme from progressing, and thus spoiled the country's economic development.

Among India's policy-makers, Nehru's vision of India's moral exceptionalism and its heralding of peaceful co-existence were widely shared. This moral self-appreciation clashed with Western doubts about India's suitability as member of the nuclear club.
In the early stages of India's nuclear programme, however, Western export control policies were no more than intentions, and economic considerations prevailed. During the 1950s and early 1960s, India's nuclear programme quickly developed under the leadership of Homi Bhabha with the help of large scale technological assistance from Western countries, particularly from Canada, France, the USA and Great Britain, and later from Western Germany. Doubts about the distinctiveness of civilian and military applications of nuclear technology rose again during the debate on 'peaceful nuclear explosions' (PNEs). Efforts to extend a possible nuclear test ban on PNEs met with sharp protest from India's nuclear establishment and Western nuclear industry. Advocates of the PNE stressed the potential applications of nuclear explosions in large scale canal digging and mining projects. The moral self-appreciation of India's elite and the sacrosanct pro-PNE position of the nuclear scientists foreclose any serious debate on the effectiveness of PNEs in India. After authorising India's PNE in 1974, Indira Gandhi announced the event as breakthrough in the civilian use of nuclear technology, and the sharp international reactions took her by surprise. The fact that Indira Gandhi and India's policy-makers at large failed to anticipate the international reaction to the nuclear test of 1974 again highlighted the wide gap between India's position in the world and the self-perception of India's generally inward-looking elite.

During the 1970s, several factors made the Western nuclear exports to India increasingly problematic. First of all, awareness of the dangers of nuclear technology gradually increased among the public in the supplier states, causing increasing pressures on their governments to come to terms on restrictive agreements over nuclear technology export controls.

After the conclusion of the NPT in 1968, several exporting nations further engaged in negotiations to control more effectively the flow of nuclear expertise. In 1975, as a direct reaction to India's nuclear test, leading Western exporters agreed on the creation of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in order to establish binding export control mechanisms on sensitive technology and fissile material. The NSG prohibited the supply of those nuclear facilities, which were not under full safeguards of the IAEA. In addition, several Western countries significantly tightened their legislation on nuclear exports. In 1976, the U.S. legislative passed the so called Symington Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1951, which provided the cut off from military and economic assistance to those countries

with unsafeguarded facilities to enrich uranium or reprocess plutonium. Other countries followed with similar legislations.

13.1.2. Negotiations on the Non-Proliferation Treaty, 1968

Since negotiations on a global non-proliferation regime emerged in the mid-1960s, the treaty was debated in India largely along normative principles, and less with regard to its potential effect on India's security. In the view widely accepted among India's strategic elite, the nature of the NPT contradicted to the Nehruvian vision of an international order based on morality rather than on military power, as it gave certain privileges to those countries relying on the military might of nuclear weapons. Further, it collided with India's quest for major power status, as it restricted the official nuclear power status to those five states which conducted nuclear tests prior to the implementation of the NPT in 1968, six years before India conducted its first nuclear test.

The way in which these two norms determined India's position during the negotiations on NPT and CTBT, was summarised by Ashley J. Tellis as follows:

> Indian strategic policy for much of the Cold War period and thereafter focused on attaining two sets of objectives. The fist set of objectives – pursued mainly at the diplomatic level – consisted of espousing the global abolition of nuclear weaponry. These calls for abolition were often couched either in moralistic term drawn from indigenous traditions or in the secular language of liberal internationalism, both of which by imparting a strong 'idealistic' flavour to Indian rhetoric rendered such comments misplaced in the highly competitive arena of international politics. ... . Because this objective could not be attained, however – thanks both to the logic of technology and to political resistance on the part of the established nuclear powers – India gradually settled for a fallback option: preventing any external political or legal restraints from encumbering its right to formally develop a nuclear arsenal when that might be required.[598]

In the following, Tellis relativises the second objective as a 'fallback option' by stating that the "desire to maintain India's autonomy with respect to its nuclear choices existed since the beginning of its nuclear program"[599]. In other words, contrary to common interpretations, the nuclear weapons option had been an integral part of Nehru's vision for India within the community of states right from the beginning.

Among India's elite, both treaties, NPT and CTBT, became symbols of the discriminating nature of the international order, and the indifference of the community of states towards India's international aspirations and its quest for recognition and prestige. These dynamics largely foreclosed any pragmatic assessment of how India's security would benefit if it joined these regimes. The negotiations on the NPT in the mid-1960 thus had the paradox

[598] Tellis, Ashley J.: op.cit.. 2001; pp. 13, 14.
[599] ibid; p.14 fn14.

effect of further fuelling India's nuclear programme, rather than limiting nuclear proliferation.

When Ireland, in 1958, put forward the idea of creating a global treaty to prevent nuclear proliferation, India, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, felt morally committed to the idea and to actively pursuing the worldwide abolition of nuclear weapons. The more the negotiations on the treaty progressed, however, the more did the moral motive shift into the background, and other motives came to the fore. The course of India's policy subsequently changed from support towards fierce rejection of the treaty. This shift in policy resulted from the fact that the nuclear weapon states refused to contribute to the treaty by abolishing, or at least reducing their own arsenals, and used the treaty as a tool to create what Indian policy makers would then call 'a global regime of nuclear apartheid'. Apparently, the discriminating nature of the treaty was since then continuously used by India as the central moral justification for its quest for the bomb. The designated role of the officially recognised five nuclear weapons states enabled India to adopt its ambiguous policy of expressing its strong moral aversion against the bomb and, at the same time, developing its own nuclear capabilities without losing face. Instead of debating the strategic necessity of nuclear weapons for India's security, many among India's political elite after 1968 favoured the development of nuclear capabilities simply because they felt that India had the moral right to do so.

The negotiations on the NPT fell into a period of political change in India, in which three Prime Ministers successively shaped India's position along their personal beliefs and political circumstances. The personalised, ad hoc fashion in which the Prime Minister designed India's nuclear policy prevented a more effective and consistent pursuit of India's interests in the course of the negotiations.

The nightmarish experience with power politics in the Sino-Indian war of 1962 changed Nehru's foreign policy, and particularly his position on the non-proliferation treaty, in several terms. The event painfully showed the weakness of a foreign policy purely guided by abstract normative principles. The compulsions of *Realpolitik* subsequently forced the Nehru government to make a more pragmatic assessment of the pros and cons of the treaty to India's security. This policy benefited from Nehru's unchallenged position and the stable political set-up at large, which made the government less prone to pressures from the emotionally heated public debate and populist political rivals. When Lal Bahadur Shastri became Prime Minister in 1964, India's nuclear policy faced several obstacles. Shastri was a novice in international affairs. Nehru surrounded himself with a non-institutional network of loyal advisors. After the change in government, these informal threads of interpersonal relationships, which had shaped the process of foreign policy-making in India during the Nehru years, were disconnected. Without much deliberation on the nuclear issue, with strong opposition from within his own ruling party, and several looming domestic and regional crises diverting his attention, Shastri entered into the negotiations on the non-proliferation treaty. He launched an initiative by picking up on the idea of a comprehensive security guarantee by the two superpowers for the non-nuclear weapons states. If a general agreement on the immunity of non-nuclear weapons states to any form of nuclear threat

would be guaranteed by the two superpowers, as Shastri argued, the motivation of these states to acquire nuclear arsenals themselves would vanish. This agreement would then create a global nuclear umbrella, under which all states could enjoy the deterrent effects of nuclear weapons. The superpowers were not prepared to commit to such a comprehensive treaty and rejected the proposal. Shastri's initiative further met with strong opposition among India's strategic thinkers, as it contradicted the idea of a global regime based on equity among the states by causing new dependencies, and, as it was feared, would drag India into the Cold War competition.

When Lal Bahadur Shastri died in January 1966, his stay in power had been too short to have a lasting impact on India's position on the nuclear issue.
Due to the energetic ruling style of Shastri's successor, Indira Gandhi, India's interests were more vigorously pursued in the final stages of the NPT negotiations in Geneva. At the same time, the debate within the American polity between those who accepted India's claims as legitimate and those who wanted the treaty to prevent proliferation in the Third World without commitment of the nuclear weapon states, was finally decided in favour of the latter. In 1967, the USA and the Soviet Union advanced a draft of the treaty which restricted nuclear technology to the five nuclear weapons states. The draft neither provided any security guarantees, nor any obligation of these states to reduce the leverage and prestige they drew from their own arsenals. The treaty was not meant to reduce the nuclear dangers from the existing nuclear arms race of the Cold War, but to simply prevent new nuclear competitions from emerging in other, regional set ups. The fierce rhetoric of India's political elite on the nuclear issue heightened international fears of uncontrolled spread of nuclear weapons into unstable regions, and created a strong consensus on the urgency of the treaty among the community of non-nuclear weapons states, despite its discriminating character.

By condemning the one-sidedness of the draft treaty and demanding binding commitments by the nuclear weapon states, India's representative at the Geneva negotiations, V.C. Trivedi, adopted a comfortable position, which allowed him to abstain from any agreement while morally passing the buck to the superpowers. The only challenge to his position came from the efforts to establish a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing, including PNEs. According to George Perkovich,

> [t]he PNE issue was extremely delicate for India. As the leading demander of nuclear disarmament, India's decision would have been badly undermined by evidence that it was embarked on building its own nuclear weapon capability. At the same time, however, Indian diplomats sought to block efforts to proscribe national development of peaceful nuclear explosives.[600]

In the course of the negotiations, India acknowledged that there was no technical distinction between nuclear weapons and peaceful nuclear devices. Instead, it elevated the issue to a matter of principle. As Trivedi declared,

[600] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p. 120.

> [t]he civil nuclear Powers can tolerate nuclear weapon apartheid, but not an atomic apartheid in their economic and peaceful development. ... (T)echnology in itself is not evil. Dynamite was originally meant for military use. Aeronautics, electronics, even steel fabrication – these are technologies which can be use for weapons as well as for economic development. That does not mean, therefore, that only the poor and developing nations should be denied all technology for fear they may use it for military purposes ... the solution of the problem must not be sought in the renunciation of the sovereign right of unrestricted development of (atomic) energy by some countries only.[601]

This negotiation strategy aimed at allowing India to continue its preparations to conduct a PNE, which would demonstrate its – civilian and military - nuclear potential, while still being able to rhetorically declare it as a peaceful act. Finally, the Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed by a vast majority of states on June 12th 1968, with India as its sole outspoken opponent.

In the course of the negotiations to the NPT, the interaction between India's policy-makers and the leading powers, particularly the USA, left a deep impact on India's nuclear discourse that set its position on the issue for the next three decades. While many among India's elite maintained their moral aversion to the bomb, the anti-colonialist feelings and India's quest for a world order based on equity dominated their position of 'keeping the nuclear option open', and rejecting the global non-proliferation regime. Even the most bitter opponents of India's nuclear programme, like Morarji Desai, vehemently spoke against signing the treaty.

13.1.3. The Revival of the International Non-proliferation Debate

Until the late 1980s, India's policy on the nuclear issue featured two taboos: First, India would not build nuclear weapons; second, India would not accede to a non-proliferation regime without clear disarmament provisions for the nuclear weapons states. This two-track formula was most explicitly postulated by then Foreign Affairs Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in the late 1970s: "India will sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty only when nuclear-weapon Powers have given convincing evidence of their desire to ban and destroy nuclear weapons"[602]. Vajpayee categorically ruled out any Indian nuclear weapons ambitions for the future by stating that India "would never manufacture atomic weapons nor proliferate the technology of weapon development. It is our solemn resolve that whatever the rest of the world may do, we will never use the atomic energy for military purpose"[603].

---

[601] Trivedi, V.C., cited from: Abraham, itty: op.cit.; p. 140.
[602] Atal Behari Vajpayee quoted from: N.N.: "Treaty only if N-arms are banned: Vajpayee". In: Indian Express, October 2nd 1977.
[603] ibid.

Prior to the emergence of the Brasstacks crisis, in-depth analyses of India's stance towards the NPT were rare. As long as the official position adhered to the peaceful nuclear programme scheme, the debate was in a state of equilibrium, in which no decision about exercising the nuclear option had to be made. In the course of the intensified debate after Pakistan's nuclear threat during the 1980s, there was a unanimous understanding among India's foreign policy elite that the NPT would not pose any hindrance to India in exercising the nuclear option if Pakistan would acquire a nuclear arsenal or conduct a nuclear test. As H. K. Dua explained,

> [f]or several years, India has been sitting uneasily at the threshold, caught in the dilemma created by its achievements in the nuclear field and the vow it took many years ago that its nuclear programme is for only peaceful purposes. The policy of nuclear brahmacharya is, however, coming under severe pressure because of factors outside India's control. They include the attitude the superpowers and nuclear 'haves' towards India's nuclear programme as well as Pakistan's known drive to possess nuclear weapons.[604]

This assessment illustrated several ambiguities inherent in India's nuclear debate. First of all, Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons, which was accepted as a given fact among India's elite already in the 1980s, was eventually considered to be 'outside India's control'. The interrelation between progress in Pakistan's nuclear weapons and prior nuclear activities of India was ignored. Pakistan's assurance that it would give up its nuclear weapons programme and sign the NPT if India did so was condemned as untrustworthy. According to Dua, "Pakistan wants to have the bomb to gain nuclear advantage over India. It will test a device or make known that it has the bomb to prove its nuclear macho"[605]. Next, Dua's stance on the peacefulness of India's programme illustrated the elite's rationale which had caused some confusion among outside observers. According to this rationale, India's nuclear programme was peaceful because it was officially declared to be peaceful, irrespectively whether it developed nuclear devices or not. In fact, India was about to assemble its first nuclear device at the time the article was published in 1985.

13.2. The Period of Unambiguous Ambiguity

In June 1986, Rajiv Gandhi's expressed his concerns about the progress of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme. His declaration marked a major turn in the elite debate on the non-proliferation regime. According to G. S. Bhargava,

> [t]he Prime Minister's recent pronouncements on Pakistan's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and related issues imply a subtle, but significant, shift in India's stance on nuclear proliferation, especially in South Asia. Even if tactical, it is a healthy development signifying release of a policy from more than two decades of

[604] Dua, H.K.: Living in nuclear brahmacharya". In: Indian Express, March 27th 1985.
[605] ibid.

> corrosive rhetoric. India's opposition to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been as much due to its inequitable provisions as in account of what can be called the theology of proliferation, namely that any addition to the existing number of five nuclear weapons powers is destabilising.[606]

While most analysts did not consider India's repudiation of the non-proliferation regime in the name of all Third World countries (including Pakistan) on one hand, and the emergence of the Pakistani nuclear threat on the other, as being contradictive, Bhargava was much more assertive on this ambiguity. In his view, the Pakistani threat was used as a disguise for the nuclear ambitions of the Indian 'bomb lobby':

> The Bomb lobby in India thrives on the foregoing philosophy of 'the more the merrier', which however convincing in theory, is disastrous in practice. It uses Pakistan's clandestine nuclear activities as a lever to press India's case for going nuclear, regarding neither of the prospects as unmitigated evils. Its approach, therefore, is not to see that Pakistan is prevented or dissuaded from developing weapons capability but to use the security implications for India of such a development to make a case for the Bomb.[607]

The fact that India abstained from any serious attempt to come to terms with Pakistan on the nuclear issue before and after the Brasstacks crisis gave some evidence in support of Bhargava's claim. Bhargava then continued to examine the nuclear policies of several threshold states, which, at that time, had similar reservations about signing the NPT:

> The first crop of nuclear weapon powers – the US, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China – was the product of security concerns… . In contrast, the second generation of nuclear weapon powers – the NPT has not recognised them as such nor have they formally shown their hand – have been adopting the peaceful explosions route, even when they have legitimate security reasons for seeking to possess the weapon… . Why? If , as claimed by the protagonists of the Bomb, nuclear weapons endow the possessor with power and prestige, why should these governments be shy of owning it after having tried so hard to acquire the capability? Why do they all take recourse to the transparent deception of peaceful uses thus draining peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs) of whatever credibility they may have had? The reason perhaps is a realisation that the benefits of the Bomb have been overrated and that the cost of security brought with nuclear weapons is very, very high. This raises the fundamental question whether India's security will be better served by acquisition of nuclear weapons in competition with Pakistan than by trying, even now, to see that the South Asian region continues to be free of nuclear weapons.[608]

---

[606] Bhargava, G.S.: "India and NPT-I: Policy on proliferation" In: Indian Express, June 21st 1985.
[607] ibid.
[608] ibid.

The provisions of the NPT, and particularly the sanctions regime attached to it, caused the second generation of nuclear weapons states to engage in opaque, rather than overt proliferation. Theory suggests that an opaque nuclear arsenal like, for instance, that of Israel, could have a deterrent effect, and therefore enhance a state's security[609]. Nuclear weapons can endow the possessor with power even if their possession is officially denied. Opaque nuclear proliferation was nevertheless inappropriate to enhance the possessor's international status.

Bhargava's further suggestion that "they all take recourse to the transparent deception of peaceful uses thus draining peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs)"[610] was misleading, because India was the sole state explicitly conducting this kind of camouflaged policy.
In Bhargava's follow-up article one day later, he addressed the dilemma of India's nuclear policy, which attempted to deal with an increased nuclear threat from Pakistan and, at the same time, rejected those restrictions provided by the international non-proliferation regime, which would curtail this threat. In his view,

> [t]he Pakistani bomb in the basement is an opportunity more than a threat. India should reinforce its peaceful nuclear intentions with concrete measures like a bilateral arrangement on the lines of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in Latin America so that the Pakistani nuclear installations are exposed to IAEA safeguards and international inspections. India will have nothing to lose from a similar exposure because the Prime Minister has reiterated that our nuclear policy is geared to peaceful purposes.[611]

Bhargava's suggestion was unrealistic due to several factors. First, his claim that India had nothing to hide because the Prime Minister labelled the programme as peaceful appeared quite naïve. Second, already in the 1980s, a consensus among India's political leaders and its epistemic community agreed that IAEA safeguards or international inspections were unacceptable to India because they would curtail its sovereignty. Third, Bhargava disregarded the China factor. Fourth and most importantly, Bhargava neglected the prestige dimension of the nuclear arsenal, which would not allow India to give up its nuclear weapons programme unless all nuclear weapons states would do the same.

On December 13th 1985, Pakistan moved a resolution in the UN General Assembly suggesting that South Asia be declared a nuclear weapons free zone. The resolution was accepted with 103 countries in favour and 40 countries abstaining[612]. Only Bhutan, which did not conduct a foreign policy independent from India, and Mauritius, which had a majority population of Indian immigrants, joined India in voting against the resolution. This move showed, for the first time, India's international isolation on the nuclear issue.

---

[609] see: Aronson, Shlomo / Oded Brosh: The Politics and Strategy of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East: Opacity, Theory, and Reality, 1960-1991. Albany: State Univ. of New York Press 1992; and: Bundy, McGeorge: op.cit.. 1984.
[610] ibid.
[611] Bhargava, G.S.: "India and the NPT-II: Pakistan Problem". In: Indian Express, June 22nd 1985.
[612] Chopra, Pran: "Foreign policy v the Bomb". In: Indian Express, July 7th 1986.

Some analysts expressed concern about this isolation. According to Pran Chopra, "the risk of isolation in India's favourite fora is a price that must be taken into account in deciding the cost-benefit of a particular course"[613]. Other members of India's strategic community reacted defiantly to this isolation, thereby creating the myth of India as the world's sole moralist, which would eventually come to dominate the domestic debate on the international non-proliferation regime in the years to come. In a move to counter Pakistan's 1985 diplomatic success, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in May 1988 presented India's own, much more ambitious plan for nuclear disarmament to the UN General Assembly, suggesting a global elimination of all nuclear weapons in three steps until 2010. Despite its highly unrealistic outlook, this call for disarmament served India's foreign policy elite in maintaining its normative principle of moral exceptionalism. As Perkovich wrote, "(i)ndeed, Indian security pundits and the strategic enclave have called for disarmament knowing that the nuclear weapon states would not oblige, thereby giving normative cover for India to pursue nuclear weapons"[614].

This moral exceptionalism on the nuclear non-proliferation front was outlined in an authoritative analysis by K. Subrahmanyam in 1989[615]. Therein, Subrahmanyam offered a terse answer to the question whether India should attend the NPT Review Conference of 1990 as an observer (as non-signatory state, India was bound to this status) or boycott the event. Subrahmanyam outspokenly opted for India's isolation by stating that,

> [i]n this writer's view not only India's attendance at the review conference will not promote the cause of the true non-proliferation it will be counter-productive. First, … India will not have the same rights as other nations and having protested against the NPT as an unequal and discriminatory treaty will it behove India's dignity to be a second class participant in that review conference? Our attendance in that conference will be deliberately twisted to proclaim to the world that India is finally coming round towards acceptance of the NPT in its present form. When such propaganda is made in the forum of the conference we will have no right to reply as an observer… . Will not our presence in the NPT Review Conference in the second grade status confirm to the world that on nuclear issues, India need not be considered a serious actor?[616]

Subrahmanyam obviously feared that by not having the same rights as NPT members, India would not have the appropriate forum to respond to any potential 'propaganda', and that, as a consequence, it might not be considered a serious actor. This argument, however, would also apply in case India was not present at the conference at all, a point overlooked by Subrahmanyam.
What made his argument so appealing within India's ongoing nuclear debate was less its content, but its explicit linking of the nuclear issue to the dignity of the Indian nation. As

[613] Chopra, Pran: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, July 7th 1986.
[614] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p.449.
[615] Subrahmanyam, K.: "Non-Proliferation & India". In: The Hindu, October 25th 1989.
[616] ibid.

the further analysis of the non-proliferation debate in India will show, it was this peculiarity of linking any problems on this issue on higher principles of national dignity, morality or prestige, which turned out to be the root cause of the reduction of India's international nuclear policy to categorical refusals of any initiative. For India's political leadership, saying 'no' proved to be the much more compelling option compared with engaging in a more constructive discourse and thereby risking blame from its domestic audience for being insensitive to India's dignity or prestige[617].

Subrahmanyam subsequently summarised the reasons for India's obligation to reject the discriminatory treaty on moral grounds:

> The nuclear weapon powers, which sponsored the NPT, have given no indication that they are willing to consider any modification to the Treaty as it stands at present. Their stand is that they would negotiate arms control measures among themselves according to their mutual convenience but the rest of the world should continue to accept the subordinate status and discriminatory treatment. They have not learnt any lessons from the flaws of the NPT but are attempting to bring in another version of the NPT in respect of missile technology proliferation which will again discriminate against the have-nots and perpetuate the dominance of the haves… . The NPT is a fatally flawed document. It does not condemn the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons and make the weapons illegitimate. No legitimate weapon can ever be eliminated or limited to the cartelised possession of a few countries only.[618]

Subrahmanyam's deliberations illustrate several key features of the emerging consensus of India's epistemic community on the international non-proliferation discourse. First, it departed from the traditional stance, which considered a non-proliferation regime only acceptable for India on the condition that the two superpowers simultaneously engaged in substantial nuclear disarmament. By the end of the 1980s, both superpowers were about to agree on substantial nuclear disarmament within the framework of INF and START. Subrahmanyam saw the pitfall, the superpowers' reduction of nuclear weapons could have for India's position. He circumvented this trap by claiming that such bilateral negotiations "according to their mutual convenience" would be equally unacceptable to India, as it

[617] In an article two years after the Geneva conference, G.S. Bhargava recalls a conversation with then-Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral: "I asked Mr. Inder Gujral, the then Foreign Minister who was perhaps the closest among his tribe to a positive perspective on nuclear deterrence, the reasons for India staying away from the Geneva conference. He said the 'experts' – meaning those who incessantly plug the hawkish theme on the subject and quote from each other's writings – had vetoed Indian presence at the Geneva meet… . In other words, whoever be the formal Minister of External Affairs and whatever be the political complexion of the Government, the entrenched South Block establishment persists with its policy of burying its head in the sand vis-à-vis the NPT" (Bhargava, G.S.: "India & the Bomb – II: Why India Should Sign NPT". In: The Statesman, November 21st 1991.).

[618] Subrahmanyam, K.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, October 25th 1989.

would mean that "the rest of the world should continue to accept the subordinate status and discriminatory treatment"[619].

Having expressed his disgust about the perpetuated dominance of the nuclear haves and their continued policy of discrimination against the have-nots, Subrahmanyam emphasised that India did not at all belong to the nuclear have-nots:

> Further India is about to enter an era when both its nuclear missile capabilities are likely to receive due respect and attention from the international community. Before 1995 when the NPT is due for reconfirmation and extension India would probably have tested missiles of range and accuracy not inferior to those of other powers. It is recognised that India, with its expanding civil nuclear power programme, would have accumulated more plutonium than China by the year 2000.[620]

At this point, Subrahmanyam's adherence to the rhetoric of the 'civilian nuclear programme' proved destructive to the concept itself: he declared that the plutonium cores that were to be mounted on India's advanced missiles were 'civilian'. This contradiction in terms illustrates the great importance Subrahmanyam et al. were attributing to the maintenance of the 'peaceful nuclear programme', which was still considered the crucial feature for demonstrating India's moral superiority.

Subrahmanyam ultimately offered a possible way out of the contradiction between India's self-depiction as the spearhead of the have-nots and its increasing nuclear capabilities:

> In spite of all these developments the sponsors of the NPT were to reconfirm the NPT in 1995 they will be confirming not only the status of the 140-odd nations which have subjugated themselves to the iniquitous treaty, they will in reality be confirming the status of undeclared nuclear weapon powers as well. Given the increasing awareness all over the world of the unwinnability of a nuclear war, one need not get to scared of a world of five declared nuclear weapon powers and another five or six undeclared nuclear weapon powers.[621]

These deliberations marked a turn in Subrahmanyam's line of argument. Having declared India's nuclear programme as 'civilian' in the earlier course of his deliberations, he then attributed the status of 'undeclared nuclear weapon power' to India, a contrast to the inferior status of the "140-odd nations which have subjugated themselves to the iniquitous treaty"[622].
He suggests that the world should not worry about a couple more nuclear weapons states, for most countries are aware of that fact that nuclear wars are 'unwinnable'. But if these

[619] Subrahmanyam, K.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, October 25th 1989.
[620] ibid.
[621] ibid.
[622] ibid.

weapons were of no practical value anyway, one might ask, why did Subrahmanyam take so much effort in promoting them?
This distinction, in terms of status, between undeclared nuclear weapons states and have-nots was a noteworthy anticipation of India's nuclear policy after its self-declaration as a nuclear weapons state. In fact, it already shows what would become more obvious in 1998: Despite heralding a nuclear regime based on the equal rights of all states, it was considered one of India's interests to keep the number of nuclear weapons states as small as possible. As long as India enjoyed member status, its aim was to keep the door of the nuclear club closed.

In sum, Subrahmanyam's analysis revealed the major dynamics of the nuclear debate in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in which the mainstream opinion on nuclear weapons was in the process of fundamental change. Reason for the emotional appeal of Subrahmanyam's logic, despite its several contradictions, was its all-embracing nature: India was displayed as the world's nuclear Robin Hood, fighting for the right of the deprived 'have-nots' against the discriminatory regime of the few 'haves'. At the same time, Subrahmanyam claimed for India the status of an 'undeclared nuclear weapon power', one notch above the 'have-nots'. Subrahmanyam claimed moral superiority due to the civilian and peaceful nuclear programme while simultaneously emphasising India's great prowess in terms of missile development and plutonium reprocessing. In Subrahmanyam's view, this prowess placed India ahead of not only the 140-odd 'have-nots', but most importantly, China.

The international audience perceived India's nuclear policy as increasingly equivocal. After having been almost completely isolated on the nuclear issue in several UN fora, India still maintained its claim to speak for all nuclear have-nots. India's strategic elite rejected the nuclear policy of the official nuclear weapon states on moral grounds, particularly that of the USA, while at the same time trying to exploit the prestige value of its own nuclear achievements. The increasing gap between India's self-depiction and the image of India abroad was amplified by the persistent view, particularly among Western states, of India as the country with the world's larges population of poor. This often orientalist perception of India added a moral dimension to Western views of India's nuclear course. The moral objections by the West, perceived as mere colonialism within the Indian discourse, clashed with the self-depiction of the domestic elite with regard to India's moral exceptionalism and exacerbated the bitterness of the debate.

Clearly, Subrahmanyam's emotionally appealing line of argument shut out a nuanced approach to the issue. Symptomatically, Subrahmanyam failed to mention a single reason why India would need nuclear weapons to improve its security.
The exploitation of India's nuclear capabilities for prestige purposes, like Subrahmanyam's claim that India would be ahead of China in 1995, had the ironical effect that, despite India's official claim of not having any weapons capabilities at all, the progress of its nuclear weapons programme was domestically and internationally overestimated. This effect was addressed by Amalendu Das Gupta:

> [q]uite conceivably, the Indian capability is still more a matter of potential than of something that can be put to immediate or early use. It would be ironic if it were significantly less advanced than generally believed, for India would then have paid a large price with little to show for it. Its refusal to sign the NPT or accept 'full-scope' safeguards has cost it valuable technical assistance for the nuclear power programme. There has also been political mistrust, and damage to its moral posture. Surely, the unsurrendered option ought to have yielded some compensation.
> The Government, of course, can do nothing to dispel any doubt on this score; ambiguity is the prescribed course in such situations. Nor can there be any question of reversing its decision to retain the bomb option. But New Delhi may have to redefine its formal response to international pressures. India's time bound plan for total nuclear disarmament is useful rhetoric; so is lack of a regional agreement covering not merely Pakistan but also the Chinese and other nuclear forces close to this subcontinent.[623]

Gupta identified three of the major costs of India's nuclear policy: First, less technical assistance for its nuclear power industry (which, after all, was officially the sole purpose of India's nuclear programme); second, the political mistrust; and third, the damage to its moral posture. In Gupta's view, this prize was worth being paid in order to keep the nuclear option open. The author suggests that the only way for the Indian government to deal with these international repercussions was to stick to its policy of nuclear ambiguity.

By suggesting nuclear ambiguity, Gupta ignored the source of international political mistrust. The instrumentalisation of India's nuclear weapons capabilities by domestic analysts for prestige purposes and the alarmist threat assessments of the nuclear dangers in South Asia, particularly from the USA, had the effect of resolving all doubts, internationally as well as domestically, about a clear path towards nuclearisation by the Indian government. The fact that despite this widespread conviction, the Indian government stuck to its principle of nuclear abstinence, was the root cause for international political mistrust. The Indian government followed Gupta's suggestion and continued to adhere to its rhetoric of nuclear ambiguity, though there were already few doubters of its impending nuclearisation.

13.3. Escalating Rhetoric on the International Non-proliferation Debate

13.3.1. The Bomb Lobby and its Challengers

In a move to adjust the official rhetoric of nuclear ambiguity to the progress of India's nuclear weapons programme, the chairman of the AEC, P.K. Iyengar, declared in an address to the general assembly of the IAEA in 1991 that "it is clear that signing an agreement or treaty by itself is not the recipe for preventing proliferation. What is more

[623] Gupta, Amalendu Das: "India and the Bomb: Issues Revived by NPT Review". In: The Statesman, August 17th 1990.

important is self-restraint and I am glad to say that India, despite having crossed the threshold in nuclear technology, continues to exercise self-restraint"[624]. This statement pushed India's nuclear discourse one step further: Before 1991, India's moral exceptionalism was derived from its stance of voluntarily abstaining from acquiring nuclear capabilities, despite its technical ability to do so. By 1991, according to Iyengar, India had acquired nuclear capabilities but continued to exercise self-restraint, in contrast to the unrestrained nuclear programmes of the official nuclear weapons powers. This step forward meant the end of the moral principle guiding India's 'peaceful nuclear programme' that pundits like Subrahmanyam had been adhering to into the early 1990s. But it did not mark the end of the principle of 'keeping the nuclear option open'. According to the modified logic, India's reputed self-restraint implied the existence of a nuclear option, despite the fact that no member of the political leadership or the epistemic community seriously considered rolling back India's nuclear programme in 1991.

In the same month that Iyengar gave his address to the IAEA, two new initiatives were launched to prevent the emergence of a nuclear arms race in South Asia. The first initiative was launched by US Secretary of State James Baker, who pressed India to finally sign the NPT. The second initiative was launched by Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who revived Zia-ul Haq's idea of a nuclear weapon free zone in South Asia. India's responses again reflected the ambiguity of its nuclear diplomacy. The Indian government rejected Baker's proposal by stating that, in addition to its discriminating character, the NPT would not provide enough security against India's regional nuclear threats from China and Pakistan. It then rejected Sharif's proposal by stating that nuclear weapons were not a regional but a global problem which could only be addressed in a global framework. While both statements were assessed independently by India's strategic pundits, the contradiction between them remained unnoticed. On the Baker initiative, C. Raja Mohan commented:

> India of course reiterated its traditional position that NPT is discriminatory and its security concerns about nuclear weapons in China and Pakistan. Clearly there are growing external and internal demands on New Delhi to recast its nuclear diplomacy. A restructuring of the Indian policy on nuclear weapons and arms control is necessary, but not because there are pressures from outside.[625]

In Mohan's view, the end of the Cold War opened up new windows of opportunity for creating a nuclear free world. He nevertheless misconceived India's international position by pointing to its successful mobilisation of international public opinion. Furthermore, Mohan suggested a comprehensive list of measures India should take to push the two superpowers towards total nuclear disarmament:

> [India] must demand that the nuclear weapon powers stop the deployment of nuclear weapons… . There are other proposals which India could make: One is to

[624] Iyengar, P.K., cited from: Bhushan, Bharat: "Nuclear policy pundits split over NPT". In: Indian Express, October 10th 1991.
[625] Mohan, C. Raja: "India's N-policy needs reworking". In: The Hindu, October 10th 1991.

> reiterate the call for a global freeze on the production of all nuclear fissionable material… . The other is to call for shifting nuclear weapons out of national control to the control of the United Nations.[626]

Mohan's catalogue of demands stemmed from a certain overestimation of India's international leverage and the international mortal authority arising from its self-perceived moral exceptionalism. It further reflected the inclination of some strategists, like C. Raja Mohan, to raise absolute demands – irrespective of their enforceability – as rhetorical elements of discourse strategies.

In a critical assessment of India's negative position on Sharif's initiative for a NWFZ, G.S. Bhargava again recalled Zia's old plans:

> Pakistan had made five suggestions to avoid the nuclearization of the region: that (1) India and Pakistan jointly sign the NPT, (2) prepare a bilateral version of the NPT as Brazil and Argentina have done, (3) create a nuclear weapon free zone in South Asia, (4) bilaterally accept the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards on all their nuclear installations, and (5) jointly renounce the acquisition and use of nuclear weapons.[627]

Bhargava continued to reject the objections against this proposal one by one:

> India would not let any of these proposals get off the ground. The alibis are well known. Nuclear proliferation is a global problem and not a regional one, although in ministerial rhetoric against weapons of mass destruction, it is highlighted that it is in the interest of India and the region that the superpowers should agree to do away with their nuclear arsenals. Secondly, South Asia is not a region but the whole of Asia including China. How this can be squared with India's active participation in SAARC is anybody's guess. Finally, Pakistan is not trustworthy and so there cannot be any bilateral agreement with it on the nuclear issue. What about the agreement entered into by Rajiv Gandhi with Mrs Benazir Bhutto in 1988 on mutual avoidance of attacks on each other's nuclear facilities?[628]

Bhargava tackles the general suspicion that India's elite had developed of any agreement with Pakistan *per se*. However, in his account of the benefits a NWFZ would have for India, Bhargava neglected the China factor. Indeed, a NWFZ in South Asia not involving China would be of little strategic value for India. India's enthusiasm for SAARC was lukewarm at best, and could not serve as a counter argument here.

---

[626] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, October 10th 1991.
[627] Bhargava, G.S.: "India & the Bomb – II: Why India Should Sign NPT". In: The Statesman, November 21st 1991.
[628] ibid.

In a move to acknowledge the relevance of the China factor for India's strategic calculus, Nawaz Sharif supplemented his proposal with the idea of a five-powers conference, including China, in addition to the five points originally suggested by Zia. This would have opened the chance for the Indian government to at least try to include China in any form of the NWFZ agreement. Whether China would have been ready to give security guarantees, or any other commitments, at a tentative conference is a matter of speculation, as India categorically rejected the idea of one.
Subsequently, Bhargava touched on international discontent about India's destructive nuclear policy, which was even criticised by friendly states:

> There were hints that Moscow would favour a five-power meeting, like the one suggested by Mr. Nawaz Sharif. If the Soviet Union did not formally welcome the Pakistani initiative, like the USA and China, it was out of diplomatic deference to New Delhi's weak case. More particularly, the Soviets were chagrined by India's failure to send an observer to the NPT review conference which was held in Geneva in August 1990… . The Soviets, for their part, have been supporting not only the principle of nuclear weapons free zones but have also been advocating the establishment of such a zone in South Asia. As long ago as in 1986, Moscow had got over its shyness to speak out on the subject lest the Indian Government should be embarrassed.[629]

Bhargava's comprehension of outside criticism of India's nuclear policy was exceptional in the early 1990s. In support of his call for a South Asian NWFZ, Bhargava presented the cases of five NWFZ that were all working under different circumstances.

In sum, the idea of a NWFZ, as suggested by Pakistan, would have improved India's security significantly should China have been involved in some form. The reason why India nevertheless rejected the idea was that, while enhancing its security, it would have deprived it of the enhanced status attached to nuclear weapons. Or, to apply the dialectics of India's strategic mainstream, it would have preserved the discriminatory international nuclear order of nuclear haves and have-nots.

In his assessment on the NWFZ issue, T.T. Poulose refined the conditions under which a South Asian NWFZ would be acceptable to India[630]. Similar to Bhargava, he considered the hawk's general distrust of Pakistan on this issue to be baseless. In his view, it was,

> pure blasphemy to suggest that the primitive nuclear devices of India and Pakistan would deter each other or India's first generation nuclear weapons would provide deterrence to the longstanding, large and sophisticated nuclear capability of China. It is equally erroneous argument that the handful of nuclear devices of India and Pakistan or their fissionable materials will be difficult to verify… . Hence, it is in the interest of India and Pakistan to come to terms with each other despite their

[629] Bhargava, G.S.: op.cit.. In: The Statesman, November 21st 1991.
[630] Poulose, T.T.: "Nuclear Debate: India Must Re-Examine Stand". In: The Statesman, January 7th 1992.

> deteriorating political relations, at least on the nuclear question. Nuclear egos should not come in the way of moving towards a mutually beneficial stand. It is not detrimental to our interest if India, in a spirit of accommodation and as a gesture of goodwill, agrees to the conference or consultation of five States (3+2 consultation) consisting of the USA, the former Soviet Union, China, India and Pakistan and examines the mechanism to create a nuclear-free South Asia… . Only those who are afflicted by narrow national chauvinism can argue that regional arms control arrangements can be suspended until global disarmament takes place[631].

Poulose, in contrast to Bhargava, did not neglect the Chinese nuclear threat in his calculus. He clearly formulated the Chinese commitment as the precondition of any NWFZ agreement. Referring to the Chinese medium-range ballistic missiles thought to be based in Tibet, he stated :

> it would have a sobering influence on India if China unilaterally announces its intention to dismantle its MRBM bases in Tibet as the Soviet nuclear threat to China has lessened. Simultaneously, both countries should agree to delink the nuclear issue from other complicated political disputes. The recent visit of the Chinese Prime Minister, Mr. Li Peng, provided India the opportunity to assess Chinese thinking about the nuclear sites in Tibet, as it was an essential prerequisite to allay India's fears about the Chinese nuclear threat and can facilitate the establishment of a nuclear-free South Asia. Much more than the USA and the former Soviet Union, China can play a crucial role in transforming South Asia into a nuclear-free area.[632]

Similarly to Bhargava, Poulose did not consider the policies of Pakistan, China, the USA or any other involved country as the main obstacle to establishing a nuclear weapons free zone in South Asia, but rather the hawkish domestic bomb lobby. Poulose was nevertheless much more explicit in condemning the negative role of this section of India's strategic elite:

> The noisy rhetoric of India's nuclear bomb lobby has been hijacking this clear-cut policy under the rubric of nuclear ambivalence. The nuclear hawks never bothered about India's former nuclear credibility as nuclearism was their material life blood and for some the very basis of successful careers. Their opportunistic or selfish propaganda for nuclearism is to be differentiated from the nuclear posture of the Bharatiya Janata Party which is a politically-motivated nationalistic policy.[633]

The impact of Poulose's sharp criticism on the nuclear debate proved to be quite limited. Obviously, the prestige-oriented arguments of the 'nuclear hawks' were more appealing to the interested public and the political decision-makers than Poulose's demure, security-oriented line of argumentation. As the further analysis will show, such nuanced assessments, like Poulose's distinction between the unconvincing NPT and the persuasive

[631] Poulose, T.T.: op.cit.. In: The Statesman, January 7th 1992.
[632] ibid.
[633] ibid.

NWFZ, became increasingly rare in India's ongoing debate over the international non-proliferation regime in the mid 1990s.

13.3.2. Hardliners' Emerging Dominance

By the year 1992, the issue of the emerging international consensus on the nuclear non-proliferation regime, which would eventually result in the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, threatened to isolate India even further. These circumstances triggered a high number of analyses, most of which vindicated India's position and called on the government to resist international pressures. In the following, the mainstream position on the issue will be assessed through the analysis of two exemplary articles published in late 1992: the first represents the military-strategic realm of analyses, the second the politico-strategic realm of analyses on the nuclear issue.

The military-strategists among India's epistemic community were generally rather diffident, security-oriented supporters of India's nuclear course. Their low-key, analytic commentary is best illustrated by an *Indian Express* article published by the former army chief general K. Sundarji. He starts his account by carefully noting that though India did have nuclear devices, it lacked a corresponding *stringent* nuclear policy: In his view, "(t)he fact that India is a threshold nuclear weapon power is no secret. As to which side of the threshold she is on is a secret, albeit a minor one. The really big secret is that India has no coherent nuclear weapon policy options in this regard"[634]. The lack of a clear nuclear course, euphemistically described as nuclear option by many politico-strategists, was unmasked by Sundarji as a non-policy resulting from political idleness, not a stringent political concept. According to Sundarji,

> [c]arrying on in this manner might not have damaged India's vital interests in the past, when ambiguity of nuclear policy used to bestow some benefits. The fact that such ambiguity was not planned or orchestrated, but occurred due to drift, was not material. I believe that the continuance of an ambiguous nuclear policy from now on will be downright dangerous for two cases. The first, due to the possibility of a war between India and Pakistan being triggered off through miscalculation of each other's nuclear status, as well as ignorance of the nuclear doctrines that the two countries are likely to go by, which would culminate in a tragic nuclear exchange. The second, due to the difficulties of ensuring the safety of nuclear warheads and the prevention of unauthorised use when in a clandestine state.[635]

Sundarji showed some scepticism about the benefits of nuclear weapons in the past, but as long as the minimum condition of not damaging India's interests was fulfilled, he approved its further development. Now that both India and Pakistan had crossed the threshold, or would cross the threshold in the next future, this minimum condition was no longer fulfilled due to two emerging dangers: first, the dangers of pre-emptive strike, and second, the

[634] Sundarji, K.: "Indian Govt must stop being defensive on NPT". In: Indian Express, December 20th 1992.
[635] ibid.

dangers of 'lose nukes'. Next to these two emerging dangers, Sundarji tabulated the political costs associated with India's nuclear ambiguity on the NPT negotiations: "When the pressures on us to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) are going to mount, we cannot even negotiate to advantage without knowing what our minimal acceptable position is, or should be"[636].
Subsequently, Sundarji developed a list of four nuclear policy options, ranked according to their 'toughness':

> India has the following nuclear options arranged in descending order of toughness, say from the North Pole to the South Pole:
> - Refuse to sign the NPT, declare a nuclear weapon status and indicate willingness to abide by the NPT and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) as a nuclear weapon power.
> - Refuse to sign the NPT as it is discriminatory and insist on the right to continue retaining a nuclear option till there is universal nuclear disarmament; continue development of missiles; indicate willingness to abide by the NPT and MTCR regarding the non-transfer of technology or materials to third countries.
> - Sign the NPT; but retain the right to hold the weapons already fabricated and fissile material already stockpiled (capping), and the right to reprocess the already held weapons or fissile material to keep them effective; continue to develop missiles and abide by the MTCR regarding transfer to third countries.
> - Sign the NPT; declare and destroy all fabricated weapons and fissile material; stop development of missiles for military purposes and accede to the MTCR.[637]

Sundarji dismissed the 'south pole' option as it would, in his view, create an unacceptable dependency on other countries in defence matters. On the other hand, he considered the hardline – in his words 'north pole' – option potentially as the best, but only if the impact of the expected sanctions would not be too costly. He criticised the government for not having done any sound assessment on the costs of sanctions so far.
Subsequently, Sundarji called for widespread involvement by all major political parties and sections of society in India's nuclear policy decisions:

> [a]t the domestic political level, the first need, I think, is for the Government to invite all major political parties for a non-partisan, incamera meeting on the nuclear issue… . Next, the Government must initiate a public debate on all aspects of this issue, and generate a national consensus. In the final analysis, this staunch public support will be the bulwark on which any ill-conceived US plans of pressuring or bullying India will founder.[638]

[636] Sundarji, K.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, December 20th 1992.
[637] ibid.
[638] ibid.

In a questionable bid to fend off US pressure, Sundarji attempted to combine a more informed governmental nuclear policy (based on experts' analyses) with an increased involvement of public opinion.

Sundarji concluded his assessment by again criticising the policy of the nuclear option, which had caused frustration abroad: "The world is increasingly viewing our tirade against the NPT for being discriminatory as mere sloganeering to keep our nuclear option open… . It is being increasingly felt that we are just being obstructionist without being constructive"[639].

In her account on the international non-proliferation issue, Aabha Dixit started by dismissing the Pakistani initiative on the grounds of 'atmospheric mistrust':

> New Delhi has never fought shy of participating in regional security talks if they deter any single nation from deriving propaganda advantages. It has always opposed Pakistan's suggestion for holding a Two (India and Pakistan) Plus Three (USA, Russia and China as external guarantors) exercise because of the greater stress on atmospherics than realism… . When such an atmosphere of mistrust of intentions exists, which political leader would have the courage to take the first step without fearing his falling into a quagmire?[640]

Dixit's attestation of 'India's impeccable record' in the international non-proliferation debate again illustrated the growing discrepancy between the self-perception of India's mainstream strategic elite, who considered India to be the precursor of global non-proliferation, and the way India was increasingly perceived by the international audience as the main obstructionist to a global accord. Dixit's rejection – on the grounds that India could not trust Pakistan – of the idea of the 2+3 conference appears inadequate when one considers that it was initially suggested to overcome mutual distrust between the two countries. She also rejected the claim by the two superpowers' that their progress on disarmament would pose an incentive for India to compromise on the non-proliferation issue:

> It needs to be accepted that regional nuclear issues work in a more or less autarkic fashion and there is need to delink them from bilateral issues at the superpower level. What is required is a holistic approach to the problem of nuclear proliferation, one that links all the regions of the world in a bond of common security. This has been the keystone of New Delhi's nuclear disarmament policies.[641]

Dixit's understanding of how this 'bond of common security' should look like remained vague in the face of the imminent creation of just such an institution within the framework of NPT (with India an isolated opponent).

---

[639] Sundarji, K.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, December 20th 1992.
[640] Dixit, Aabha: "Nuclear Change: India's Impeccable Record". In: The Statesman, September 22nd 1992.
[641] ibid.

In sum, Dixit's account was a categorical 'No' to any possible agreement. She unconditionally rejected a regional solution (mistrust against Pakistan), followed this with a rejection of the 'superpower' solution (unacceptable in terms of security) and finally took issue with a global solution within the NPT framework (as a matter of principle).

Subsequently, Dixit addressed the recent agreement between Argentina and Brazil to stop and roll back their respective nuclear arms programmes:

> The non-proliferationists have been delighted with the Brazil-Argentina agreement, which curiously is outside the NPT and indicates the kind of political pressures that have been generated in these countries when weighing the pros and cons of joining a patently discriminatory treaty. Non-proliferationists would argue that though the agreement is out of the NPT, it is better than having none at all. But to apply such analogies to South Asia is to remain ignorant of the complex issues at work in the region. The historical levels of distrust between India and Pakistan, India and China, Russia and China (…) are far deeper and more complicated than in Latin America. Brazil and Argentina may perceive threats from each other, but are relatively insular to extraterritorial threats.[642]

In her assessment of the Brazil-Argentina rivalry, Dixit deliberately ignored two facts: First, part of their agreement was to sign the NPT in the near future, which both countries eventually did two years later; second, the Southern Cone was not at all 'insular to extraterritorial threats' considering the fact that an outside nuclear weapons power was occupying several islands off the South American coast that were claimed by Argentina[643]. Including these two facts would have very much invalidated Dixit's line of argument.

With regard to the Pakistani nuclear threat, Dixit claimed that,

> [i]t is a known fact that Islamabad's nuclear weapons programme has been smeared with a coat of lies, illegal activities, broken promises and shoddy clandestine deals. The recent Pakistani statement on the 'freeze' of its nuclear weapons programme need to be viewed against this background. On the other hand, taken New Delhi's record. In spite of the demonstrable nuclear capability, there has been a deliberate decision not to go overtly nuclear.[644]

Dixit's definition of India's moral exceptionalism illustrated the increasingly narrow margin in the strategic elite's distinction between Indian moral position and Western immoral positions. While prior to 1992, this distinction was based on technical differences, Dixit reduced it to mere declaratory differences, defining India as a country which had nuclear weapons but was morally superior because it had not declared them as such.

---

[642] Dixit, Aabha: op.cit.. In: The Statesman, September 22nd 1992.
[643] Great Britain is occupying the Malvinas (Brit.: Falkland Islands).
[644] Dixit, Aabha: op.cit.. In: The Statesman, September 22nd 1992.

In sum, both military-strategists and politico-strategists had more or less agreed on several key aspects of India's nuclear programme by the early 1990s: First and most importantly, both considered India's nuclear capabilities as an irreversible matter of fact. Second, both sections categorically excluded any conciliatoriness from the present NPT debate, but signalled that India might adhere to the treaty after it was accepted as nuclear weapons state. Third, both sections of India's epistemic community considered the current policy of nuclear ambiguity as suboptimal to India's interests. However, this criticism evolved from two distinct approaches. While the military-strategists, represented by K. Sundarji, based their assessments on a clear payoff-matrix, including several security and economic interests, the mainstream politico-strategic thinkers like Aabha Dixit defined India's nuclear interests more in terms of international status and prestige. Their policy recommendations differed correspondingly. While Sundarji evaluated India's nuclear options according to their perceived costs and benefits for India's compound of national interests, Dixit categorically opposed any policy that would not award India with a fully recognised nuclear status by the international community.

However, suggesting that prestige thinking did not play any role in K. Sundarji's assessment at all would be likewise misleading. In his view, self-reliance in military affairs was a necessary condition for any acceptable policy – any dependency on other states was to be rejected..
In a response to K. Sundarji's article , Ashok Kapur criticised the call for a public Indian nuclear debate:

> General Krishnaswamy Sundarji's plea for a substantive and a public Indian nuclear debate that reveals a coherent nuclear policy is timely as is his list of four broad options. To be realistic such a debate ought to rest on the practical circumstances and the issues that dominate Western and particularly American non-proliferation thinking today.[645]

Kapur did not challenge any of the above mentioned key aspects. Rather, he criticised Sundarji for not being explicit enough in postulating them. He dismissed the politico-strategists' position by stating than neither India's struggle against discrimination nor its unrealistic call for global nuclear disarmament was internationally credible:

> First, with over a hundred countries in favour of a discriminatory NPT, India is no longer able to carry the discrimination argument to the world community. It can only convince others about Indian interests, not what is good for the world… . India has lost the use of the issue of universal nuclear disarmament, because the US and Soviet Union / Russia and some of the other republics in the former USSR have moved to significantly cut their nuclear arsenals. Of course these are not zero-level arms but then the Indian Government is not really concerned about American and

[645] Kapur, Ashok: "Nuclear Disarmament: India must have a new theme song for the 90s". In: The Hindu, January 14th 1993.

> Russian arms levels. India's concerns are regional, not global and these concern primarily China and Pakistan.[646]

In Ashok Kapur's view, the global nuclear order, dominated by the two major powers, was largely irrelevant for India's narrow security concerns; thus, the domestic debate's emphasis of the on issues related to this global nuclear order, like the 'discrimination argument' or the 'universal nuclear disarmament argument' were misguided. Rather, India's nuclear policy should be concerned with the regional nuclear threats from China and Pakistan. Kapur continued to evaluate these threats:

> [T]he India-China normalisation is going well and India sees no need to rake up controversies with China when Indian intelligence inputs do not indicate a China nuclear threat at present… . In the nuclear sphere the dialogue is only between the US and India and it is presently inconclusive… . There is no dialogue between India and Pakistan on the nuclear issue although the issue is on the table. Between India and China the issue is not even on the table because neither country, for different reasons, sees the need to raise this issue.[647]

Kapur brought the major paradox of India's nuclear policy debate to a point: While the nuclear threats to India's security were regional, it refused to deal with the issue on this level, instead addressing almost exclusively the global dimension of nuclear weapons. The dialogue on the nuclear issue was, to the exclusion of those two states which actually threatened India, almost exclusively with the USA. The failure to address the nuclear issue on a regional level was, in Kapur's view, caused by distrust in Pakistan's case, and disinterest in China's case.

In his subsequent assessment of Indo-Chinese relations, Kapur dropped his previous security-only approach and instead referred to India's ambitions in terms of status by claiming that "China's ambitions are global. India's are regional"[648]. While Kapur had quite rightly alluded to the discrepancy between India's regional security concerns and its global nuclear policy, he nevertheless failed to draw the obvious conclusion: India's global nuclear policy emerged out of the fact that, in contrast to its security concerns, its aspirations for status in the nuclear realm were global, not regional.

Similarly to Sundarji, Kapur concluded by suggesting an end to India's nuclear ambiguity, an attempt to draw the issue into the limelight and deal with China and Pakistan openly and directly:

> Is it not time to give China-Pakistan-India relations a nuclear insurance policy for all? With this the three countries could get on with the business of developing their mutually advantageous relations rather than engaging in sly behaviour. In all this the

[646] Kapur, Ashok: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, January 14th 1993.
[647] ibid.
[648] ibid.

> United States has a role to play by recognising the value of the nuclear insurance policy provided it leads to better relations in the subcontinents.[649]

13.3.3. Mounting Pressures from the Nuclear Scientific Community

Next to the military-strategic and the politico-strategic sections of India's epistemic community, India's nuclear scientific community proved to be the most intransigent and determined lobbyists for the bomb. In the following, their mainstream position is illustrated by articles from two former chairmen of India's Atomic Energy Commission, M.R. Srinivasan and P.K. Iyengar, that were published in July and September 1993, respectively[650]. Both authors strongly opposed any agreement which would impose restrictions on India's nuclear programme. Nuclear technology was seen as the currency of the global competition for status. Despite India's security threats being basically intra-regional, any agreement would have to be negotiated on the global level. According to this logic, the NPT was not acceptable because it did not provide all countries with equal conditions. As M. R. Srinivasan wrote, "India has refused to sign the NPT as it is discriminatory. Pakistan has maintained it is prepared to sign the NPT provided India did so. India's position is that elimination of nuclear weapons is a global problem and not a bilateral one or regional one"[651]. He outlined the terms under which India would consider an agreement as acceptable as follows:

> While the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons should be our ultimate aim, we have to be prepared for a much longer time-table than the one visualised in the Rajiv Gandhi initiative… . There are still certain elements which can find agreement among most if not all countries even now. The first is a comprehensive and universal test ban. The second element is an agreement on 'non-use' of nuclear weapons.[652]

While Srinivasan's call for total global nuclear disarmament was part of the discourse strategy common to many apologetic analyses of the nuclear issue, the possible content of an 'agreement on non-use of nuclear weapons' remained unclear. Srinivasan's call for a comprehensive nuclear test ban agreement was surprising, as it contradicted his opposition of all restrictions on India's nuclear programme to preserve India's sovereignty and self-determination. In fact, every nuclear scientists who has authored articles on this issue since 1994, including Srinivasan himself, took a negative stance on the CTBT.

In his conclusion, Srinivasan called on the Indian government to resist international pressures and not compromise on its nuclear capabilities. In his view,

---

[649] Kapur, Ashok: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, January 14th 1993.
[650] Srinivasan, M.R.: "NPT and India's case". In: The Hindu, July 10th 1993; and, Iyengar, P.K.: "The nuclear issue: Caution against bartering away our capabilities". In: Indian Express, September 16th 1993.
[651] ibid.
[652] ibid.

> India cannot dismantle the nuclear capability it has built up over the last 40 years simply because the U.S. is urging it to do so. This capability is the result of the dedicated and selfless work of a large number of scientists, engineers and technicians of the country. Our politicians and diplomats must not barter away this strength in exchange for useless bits of paper. The country must sustain our nuclear capability, including that in the field of nuclear power, and also similarly nurture other high technologies such as space and rockets, electronics, special materials, etc. The lesson we can learn from our nuclear energy and space programmes is the vital importance of developing self-reliance in these sensitive technologies. In the present euphoria about liberalisation and globalisation, we may overlook the importance of self-reliance. If this were to happen, the country will pay a heavy price later… . We cannot accept an abridgement of our sovereign right to pursue these new scientific and technological developments[653]

This conclusion showed several key elements of the nuclear scientists' rationale. First, Srinivasan's mentioning of the 'dedicated and selfless work' of the scientific community denoted the scientists' strategy to create facts, that the reluctant political decision-makers would then be pressured to accept. Second, Srinivasan's urge not to rely on 'useless bits of paper' reflected the opposition of the scientists to any agreement which would restrict their work. This urge exposed his previous suggestions about accepting the CTBT or a 'no-use' agreement as mere lip service. Third, Srinivasan explicitly called for sustaining 'our nuclear capability', devaluating the persuasiveness of his previous call for the 'elimination of all nuclear weapons'. Fourth, Srinivasan's 'lesson,' that developing nuclear technology in self-reliance was of 'vital importance,' reflected the traditional myth of modernity attributed to nuclear technology. Fifth, Srinivasan's critique of the policy of liberalisation and globalisation reflected a general fear among the nuclear scientific community of opening up the nuclear field to outside competitors.

The importance of self-reliance and the challenge posed to it by the process liberalisation was also addressed by P. K. Iyengar, who stated that "[e]conomists are confused even about fundamental concepts such as self-reliance, indigenous technology and independence of action in science, technology, defence, communications, etc."[654].
Iyengar started his account by highlighting the apologists' understanding of nuclear weapons as an invention tool of the West:

> Since then it has been a nightmarish tool of politics for the West. On one hand they have sought power through their exclusive possession of such a device, while on the other they have sought a world order that could ensure that such a device was never used again. This unresolved dilemma has led to the present situation where there are designated nuclear 'haves' and 'have-nots', who are sought to be treated differently. This distinction is hypocritical because the driving force behind the development of such devices, be they nuclear weapons, nuclear reactors or cryogenic engines, lies in

[653] Srinivasan, M.R.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, July 10th 1993.
[654] Iyengar, P.K.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, September 16th 1993.

> the brains of the scientists and engineers who develop them. However poor the economic or industrial resources of a country, it may not lack intellectual resources, and in the long run, in spite of disincentives that may be place in its path, any nation that wants such a device badly enough will get it.[655]

In a less emotionally heated discourse, Iyengar's sole focus on the genius of the scientists, might have raised questions as to why such large amount of the country's financial resources was allocated to the programme. In India's discourse in the mid-1990s, however, the very nature of the nuclear debate prevented more critical assessments of Iyengar's rationale.

Further, Iyengar indicated that restrictions by Western countries on nuclear technology transfers – even for civilian nuclear power programmes – was guided not only by power politics, but also by economic interests:

> [A]s the United States, under a new administration, enters a new era of activism on the nuclear issue, it is critical for us to be able to respond effectively to these growing pressures. In the case of the major Western countries, capitalist, free-market concerns, as well as global power politics, drive them towards restricting the spread and use of high technologies in the developing world and the means that they employ to achieve their goals may not always be consistent with their otherwise high-sounding principles.[656]

At this point, Iyengar reversed the causal relations. In fact, the countries of the Nuclear Suppliers Group had put restrictions on nuclear technology transfers to India despite pressures from their own nuclear industries because India had refused to guarantee its civilian use. These self-imposed regulations only applied to those countries with unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, irrespective of their state of development. In this light, Iyengar's presumption of economic interests behind Western constraints on civilian nuclear power programmes in the developing world does not hold up. Iyengar also stressed the importance of nuclear technology for India's development and security: "India needs nuclear power for development and has genuine cause to worry about the security of its realm. It therefore needs to develop and maintain nuclear technology for various applications"[657].

Iyengar concluded his account by urgently calling on the government to declare India a nuclear weapons state:

> I can only conclude by hoping that those who have the power will act with a sense of urgency in formulating a nuclear policy, and that they will not lead this country

[655] Iyengar, P.K.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, September 16th 1993.
[656] ibid.
[657] ibid.

> to make a mockery of the concepts of self-reliance which Jawaharlal Nehru formulated from his careful study of world civilisation.[658]

In sum, the scientific-strategic section's strong and unconditional advocacy of the nuclear breakthrough was, in contrast to the other two major sections of India's epistemic community, guided by motives of self-preservation . These motives stood behind their uncompromising assertiveness. More than the two other groups, the scientists resorted to rhetorical means of oversimplification, demonisation, and the use of stereotypes in their portrayal of the international system, particularly the role of Western countries.

13.3.4. Indefinite Extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, 1995

In the period from late 1993 until the NPT review conference in April/May 1995, the Indian debate on the international non-proliferation regime continued to generate a large number of comments and analyses in India's dailies. The content of the debate remained largely unchanged throughout this period, with the major arguments recurring in almost every analysis. While some analysts still adhered to the concepts of 'keeping the nuclear option open', including its myth of the civilian nature of India's nuclear programme[659], most others moved towards accepting India's nuclear weapons capability as an irreversible fact. The question was less if India should declare itself a nuclear weapon state, but when it should do so.
When negotiations on the NPT ended in May 1995 with a vast majority of states favouring its indefinite extension[660], India emerged as one of its few outspoken opponents[661].

Officially, India's opposition was based on the same arguments as in 1968 – the division of the community of states into haves and have-nots, and the unwillingness of the existing nuclear weapons states to commit to the ultimate goal of a global ban on nuclear weapons. Neither the two superpowers, nor the three minor nuclear weapons states seriously considered total disarmament as acceptable option. The smaller nuclear powers even considered a nuclear arsenal as an essential prerequisite for maintaining great-power status, including a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

Several unfavourable factors for India's negotiation strategy – the advanced state of its nuclear programme, the divergence between explicit and implicit negotiation strategies, governmental instability, and the unwillingness of the policy-makers to constructively participate in the negotiations – prevented any rapprochement on the issue. On the contrary, India was increasingly determined to "keep its nuclear option open" and therefore not only

---

[658] Iyengar, P.K.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, September 16th 1993.
[659] among these most prominently J.N. Dixit. (see: Dixit, J.N.: "Nuclear non-proliferation: India won't give in". In: Indian Express, March 21st 1995; Dixit, J.N.: "NPT extension: Keep India's option open". In: Indian Express, May 9th 1995; and Dixit, J.N.: "India and NPT: The challenges ahead". In: Indian Express, May 30th 1995.
[660] 179 countries agreed to the indefinite extension of the NPT in May 1995, and until 2000, 187 had signed it.
[661] next to India, only Pakistan, Israel and Cuba rejected the treaty. Pakistan explicitly declared to sign the NPT as soon as India would sign. Cuba does not have nuclear ambitions.

rejected any consensus on the NPT, but abstained from raising alternatives. The predetermined refusal of all international initiatives to accommodate India through concessions, or even to involve India in any form of constructive dialogue, caused significant frustration among several other governments. Similar to the conclusion of the NPT in 1968, the consensus on its indefinite extension in May 1995 appeared to have caused an acceleration of India's nuclearisation efforts.

After the Geneva conference, India's policy makers and its elite at large felt a deep humiliation about both the perceived ignorance of the nuclear weapons states and the disinterest of the non-nuclear weapons states in India's expressed concerns. Paradoxically, it was the determined rhetoric within India's nuclear discourse which had increased the international understanding about the necessity of the treaty.

The renewed determination of many Indian strategists, even those who had taken a rather aloof position before, to favour the country's nuclearisation was best illustrated by the extensive analysis of K. Sundarji in the aftermath of the NPT conference[662]. While Sundarji's had previously delivered nuanced accounts of the pros and cons of the nuclear issue, in which he cautiously suggested India's nuclearisation, the undertone of his writing changed radically in mid-1995. In Sundarji' view, "Indian reaction to the farcical permanent extension of the NPT has been thoroughly subdued. The NPT regime would continue to be discriminatory and cynical"[663]. After having been isolated in the course of the NPT negotiations, according to Sundarji, India faced potentially severe punitive measures if it continued to resist Western coercion:

> [p]unitive measures could fall into at least four categories: political, economic, technological and military. The political measures might include condemnation by the UN, the big and some of the lesser powers, accompanied by threats of dire consequences if India does not strip itself of nuclear weapon and delivery capabilities. Economic measures could include denial of funds from the IMF, World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral aid sources; trade embargoes and even the blockade of all exports and imports in the worst case scenario. Technological measures could go to the extent of termination of all technology transfers including those relating to the spheres of agriculture, health and disease control. In the military sphere, there could be threats or the actual use of force, naval blockade, selective air strikes on the lines of the NATO air action against the Bosnian Serbs; demonstration use of special weapons including nukes; massive conventional air strikes and naval bombardement of coastal areas; triphibious operations securing air heads and beach heads after massive conventional and selective nuclear preparatory bombardement, or of course opting to avoid ground operations altogether and going in for conventional-cum-nuclear stand-off attacks, to 'bomb India into the stone

[662] Sundarji, K.: "Western threats on NPT: National consensus needed". In: Indian Express, November 11th 1995.
[663] ibid.

age' as was attempted somewhat unsuccessfully in North Vietnam, using only conventional means.[664]

K. Sundarji's doomsday scenario was quite remarkable, especially when one considers that he was known as one of India's most prosaic analysts, and reflected the degree to which the dynamics of the nuclear debate had driven India's strategic elite into the state of psychological affect. This escalation widened the gap between Indian reactions to the conclusion of the NPT and the reactions of other (formal) non-nuclear weapons states. The discriminatory character of the treaty was largely accepted by almost all other states with equanimity. The understanding was that the treaty, however imperfect it was, had to be accepted as a tool to prevent the global spread of nuclear weapons. As this goal was largely considered to be in the interest of all states, the conclusion of the treaty hardly set off emotional controversies around the globe. Why was the Indian perception so much different? Why did India's elite react with a panic bordering on paranoia? Why did even the most prosaic Indian analysts predict immoderate doomsday scenarios in which India would be economically ruined and nuked back into the stone ages as a consequence of this treaty? Although not fully conclusive, one answer to these questions was surely to be found in the generally insulated, inward looking strategic debate in India.

13.4. Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty

The heavy psychological impact of the events in mid-1995 on the strategic community's nuclear debate became visible in its approach to two other issues in the nuclear field: the tentative Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), which had been suggested in a UN resolution co-sponsored by India in December 1993; and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which had been suggested in a UN resolution co-sponsored by India in September 1993.

The factors which had caused India to support the UN resolution calling for the creation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty were threefold: First, the chances of an agreement on the treaty were considered marginal. Thus, India would have increased its profile on the non-proliferation issue without having lost anything. Second, in the unlikely scenario of the treaty succeeding, India would still gain from it in terms of security and status. In security terms, the treaty would be beneficial for India because it was non-discriminatory, i.e. it would cut-off the plutonium stockpiles of the countries threatening India, Pakistan and China. In contrast to the NPT, the tentative FMCT would not give advantage to China vis-à-vis India. Furthermore, the treaty would leave India's current plutonium stockpile unsafeguarded, thought to be enough for a minimum nuclear deterrent capability.

By *de facto* legalising India's existing plutonium stockpiles, the treaty would have implicitly recognised India's nuclear status and therefore have tactfully achieved one of the most important goals attached to the nuclear programme: The admission of India into the

[664] Sundarji, K.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, November 11th 1995.

nuclear club. Additionally, the legalised status of its programme would increase India's accessibility to sensitive technology.

In this study it has been argued that India categorically rejected any agreement on the nuclear issue because none of the proposed agreements would have given India the status and prestige it was hoping to gain from its nuclear capabilities. The tentative FMCT, suggested in 1993, was the exception to this trend. Still, the epistemic community, while initially showing some sympathy for the treaty, finally insisted on its ever recurring 'NO'. As on previous occasions, the pressures built up by the opinion leaders through their extensive commentary and analyses proved to be too compelling for the government, which subsequently withdrew its support of the treaty and reverted to its destructive position.

The main argument not to adhere to the FMCT, or to any treaty of its kind, was the potential restriction of India's sovereignty, which was considered unacceptable *per se*. This motive was expressed by C. Raja Mohan:

> The so-called 'cutoff treaty', the negotiations on which are expected to begin soon in Geneva, will in effect put a cap on India's nuclear programme for the first time since it was initiated about five decades ago. It will be the most onerous agreement on arms control that India has ever entered into ending the production of unsafeguarded plutonium that is at the heart of India's nuclear weapon option and will impose international control on its civilian nuclear programme. For the first time since India launched itself on the course of nuclear autonomy – a policy lay down by Jawaharlal Nehru and the father of Indian nuclear programme, Homi Bhabha – New Delhi has been willing to negotiate active constraints on its nuclear programme. Two generations of atomic scientists have overcome great odds to sustain and nurture India's nuclear autonomy and every single Indian Government since Independence has preserved it despite unremitting international pressures. Given the gravity of the negotiations India is entering into, it is only proper for Parliament and the people at large to debate the implications of the cutoff treaty, and lay down clear markers.[665]

Mohan's attempt to portray the government's readiness to negotiate on the FMCT as a betrayal of Indian history and tradition was misleading and in several aspects factually wrong. First of all, neither highly enriched uranium (HEU) nor weapons grade plutonium were for civilian use, making Mohan's claim that its cut-off would impose constraints implausible. Second, the fact that Nehru had always objected to any military use of nuclear technology invalidated Mohan's claim that unrestricted production of weapon grade plutonium was in line with Nehruvian tradition.

As with the CTBT debate, the strategic elite made an about-face on the FMCT as soon as the USA signalled its support. According to Mohan,

[665] Mohan, C. Raja: "India & the nuclear question". In: The Hindu, February 21st 1995.

> [c]learly, the nuclear weapon States, the U.S. and Russia in particularly, are awash in weapons grade nuclear material. They lose nothing by signing a cuttoff treaty… . Why then are the nuclear weapon States so keen now on promoting a cutoff treaty?... . The very fact that India is prepared to back a treaty so patently directed against itself appears to suggest it is responding well to the American psychological treatment of packaging the agreement as 'nondiscriminatory'. New Delhi's claim that the cutoff treaty 'will meet India's global nonproliferation objectives' needs to be questioned.[666]

This logic showed the extent to which the oversimplified image of the USA as the malignant hegemon dominated the strategic discourse among India's elite in the mid-1990s. As soon as the USA signalled its support to any initiative in the nuclear field, even if this initiative had been co-sponsored by India itself before, India's elite became suspicious enough to withdraw their support. At this stage, the question of whether the FMCT would have been accepted by India if the USA would have shown more scepticism instead of support remains a matter of speculation.

The effect of a tentative FMCT on capping China's nuclear capabilities was also overlooked in Mohan's analysis. Considering that, in the security-oriented strategists' view, China posed the main nuclear threat to India, its omission in Mohan's account was problematic and illustrating the extent to which security considerations had lost their significance in the debate of the mid-1990s.
The role of China in India's position on the FMCT was outlined by Brahma Chellaney in two articles in April 1995[667]:

> India's position is that it will support a proposal for a fissile cut-off that is based on the three principal elements of the UN resolution of being universal, non-discriminatory and effectively verifiable. The Indian co-sponsorship of the 1993 UN resolution, however, may have sent a wrong signal to the world that the resultant capping would serve India's security interests by allowing it to retain a fissile-material stockpile sufficient for a threshold deterrence capability. With India seen by the proposal's main advocates as target No. 1, any such ban cannot be non-discriminatory from an Indian perspective, especially since it would formalise the Sino-Indian asymmetry.[668]

Chellaney's claim that the FMCT was discriminatory because it would 'formalise' Sino-Indian asymmetry ran aground because it ignored the fact that this asymmetry was already a given fact and would remain so in the foreseeable future whether the FMCT was agreed upon or not. In fact, the FMCT would probably have reduced this asymmetry significantly as it would have established formal parity in terms of both countries' nuclear status.

---

[666] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit... In: The Hindu, February 21st 1995.
[667] Chellaney, Brahma: "Fissile cut-off: India's crucial role". In: Indian Express, April 21st 1995; and, Chellaney, Brahma: "India's wrong signal on fissile cut-off". In: Indian Express, April 22nd 1995.
[668] ibid.

He subsequently invalidated his charges himself:

> [d]eterrence, however, is not based on quantitative equality, and a smaller fissile-material stockpile should not undermine any nation's deterrence objectives. Nuclear activities unconnected with the production, handling or use of new fissile materials will remain outside the scope of the cut-off regime. The cut-off will bring India into political alignment with the NPT without affecting its option to weaponise.[669]

It remained unclear whether Chellaney's last point was aimed at condemning the cut-off as an unacceptable accession to the NPT through the back door, or at approving it because it would not prevent India's nuclear breakthrough. It was only in his article on a similar issue, published one day previously in the same newspaper, in which his position was unambiguously revealed. Chellaney claimed that "a cut-off treaty will impose comprehensive safeguards on Indian commercial and research reactors, reprocessing and enrichment installations, and fuel-fabrication facilities. The impact will be similar to India acceding to the NPT"[670]. Here, Chellaney was much more explicit in rejecting the FMCT on a charge similar as that levelled at the NPT, namely its unacceptable restriction on India's sovereignty.

Chellaney then formulated the conditions under which India would be ready to sign the tentative FMCT:

> The core concern for India is that a fissile cut-off is not being seen as a measure towards nuclear disarmament but as one more technical 'fix' to control horizontal proliferation. A cut-off ought to be linked to substantial reductions in nuclear arsenals, the abandonment of offensive, first-use doctrines, and binding commitments to eliminate nuclear weapons within a specific time-frame.[671]

This statement again illustrated the continuously applied discourse strategy of attaching the unrealistic, all-out demand of total global nuclear disarmament as a precondition for India's more constructive participation in the global non-proliferation discourse.

After the finalisation of the NPT negotiations in May 1995, the looming agreement on a comprehensive test ban shifted into the focus of the epistemic community, and pushed the FMCT into the background until the finalisation of the CTBT in mid-1996.
The main reason for the scant attention given the FMCT during the nuclear debate in 1995/96 was the complexity of the issue, which made it difficult even for the fiercest apologists of India's nuclear course to formulate a clear -cut position.

After the conclusion of the CTBT, the possibility of a FMCT was debated in a less emotionalised mode than the NPT and CTBT. While the potential benefits of a cut-off

[669] Chellaney, Brahma: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, April 22nd 1995.
[670] Chellaney, Brahma: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, April 21st 1995
[671] Chellaney, Brahma: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, April 22nd 1995.

treaty were largely accepted, there was a unanimous understanding within the strategic elite not to accept any treaty which could potentially buttress the two pillars of the international non-proliferation regime, the NPT and CTBT. The frustration over the negotiation processes in 1995 and 1996 was too deep-seated to allow India's elite to develop any more constructive approaches for the FMCT. This predetermined position was best illustrated in D. Shridhar's account:

> After the conclusion of the CTBT, there has been a growing concern in India, that the CTBT, fissban and other measures proposed to be worked through the IAEA in Vienna, are part of a larger Western scheme of things to get the NPT through the back door. It is axiomatic, therefore, that the political and technical issues raised during the CTBT debate would be India's guiding principles when drawing up a coherent strategy with respect to the FMCT. For the moment, it believes that none of the so-called disarmament treaties will go beyond the pale of non-proliferation. Therefore, it is clearly conceivable that it would insist on seeking a clear time-bound linkage between the disarmament process and conclusion of the FMCT, to offset any moves that might be made to expand the scope of negotiations beyond what the UN resolution mandated.[672]

These remarks illustrated the extent to which India's isolation from the international non-proliferation regime foreclosed any constructive participation in the international disarmament fora. Ample evidence suggests that India would have continued to support the FMCT if its interaction with the key actors in these fora would not have stirred up such frustration and humiliation in the epistemic community.

13.5. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, 1996

Similarly to the NPT negotiations in the mid-1960s, India's position on the CTBT was quite positive in the initial phase of the negotiations, but gradually shifted towards unconditional opposition. While India acted as the co-sponsor of a UN resolution calling for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as late as September 1993, it remained isolated when it acted as an outspoken opponent of the CTBT in July 1996.

In the period from the conclusion of the CTBT in mid-1996 to the nuclear tests in May 1998, two thirds of all nuclear-related articles dealt with the CTBT's consequences for India's nuclear course (see Chart 11.1.). These articles showed a remarkably high attitude scale of 0.73. In other words, most accounts of the nuclear issue in this period involved calls for India to test nuclear weapons.
In the following, the dynamics of India's domestic nuclear policy debate, which had caused a radical policy shift in less than three years is analysed in detail.

[672] Shridhar, D.: "Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty: Don't Repeat the CTBT follies". In: Indian Express, March 7th 1997.

13.5.1. The Domestic CTBT Debate: Dialogue of the Deaf

In 1993, the CTBT was strongly supported by the gradually shrinking group of nuclear critics who saw it as an alternative to the discriminatory and discredited NPT. Their discourse strategy, which adopted stereotyped concepts similar to those of their pro-bomb counterparts, tried to display the treaty as an effective tool to fend off American non-proliferation pressures and create a non-discriminatory nuclear order. This strategy proved to be a complete failure, causing the anti-nuclear section of India's epistemic community to either join the ranks of the CTBT opposition or simply hold their tongues and resume their pro-CTBT campaign after the nuclear tests.

To illustrate the credibility gap that the nuclear critics had manoeuvred themselves into by trying to adopt the nuclear apologists' logic, three articles by Achin Vanaik, one of India's most prominent nuclear critics, that were published in February 1993, August 1994 and November 1995, are comparatively analysed[673].
In the 1993 article, Vanaik started his account by expressing his disgust over the new emphasis of the US Government under Bill Clinton on non-proliferation issues, which allegedly foresaw economic sanctions for India in the case of non-cooperation on the nuclear issue. This restrictive US policy was masterminded, according to Vanaik, by the 'liberal' pressure group within America's polity. In Vanaik's view,

> [t]his pressure group is composed of 'liberals' who have never before gone as far as to demand such aggressive steps. Of course, these 'liberals' … have never been known for aggressive hostility towards the generally duplicitous nuclear weapons policy and behaviour of the US government. They operate very much in the mainstream framework of accepting and endorsing American 'responsibilities' to exercise its nuclear/military power 'judiciously' for the 'larger global interest'. Any criticisms that they have made in the past about the slow pace or extent of American and superpower disarmament was always within this framework. The collapse of the Soviet counterweight which partially protected third world countries is seen by these 'liberals' as a window of opportunity that must be taken up.[674]

After having identified the non-proliferation policies of American 'liberals' as the root cause of the unjust international discriminatory order, Vanaik continued to promote the non-discriminatory CTBT as the best tool to counter the liberals' initiatives. The fact that, in the meantime, the CTBT had been absorbed by these American 'liberals' as one cornerstone of their own non-proliferation discourse was not elaborated on. Instead Vanaik described the US government as the biggest obstacle to the conclusion of the CTBT:

---

[673] Vanaik, Achin: "The nuclear stakes: Press for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty". In: Indian Express, February 27th 1993; Vanaik, Achin: "Jitters about CTBT". In: The Hindu, August 29th 1994.; Vanaik, Achin: "The Indian response". In: Indian Express, November 6th 1995.
[674] Vanaik, Achin: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, February 27th 1993.

> Both the Indian Government and the opinion shaping elite have virtually abandoned even propaganda criticism of the US on the question of accelerating the pace and scope of its nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, India can and should link nuclear restraint on its part to American nuclear restraint. One important way of doing this is to regularly and incessantly press for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to which India (Pakistan is also willing) would be a willing signatory. There is no justification for not having a CTBT but it is the U.S. government that is the biggest obstacle.[675]

Considering that a majority of articles on the nuclear issue during the mid-1990s carried anti-American undertones, Vanaik's expressed regret that India's opinion-shaping elite had abandoned criticism of the US appeared far-fetched. In positioning American nuclear restraint as the condition of any Indian concession, Vanaik applied the same all-out argument used by the pro-bomb strategists in avoiding Indian restraint. This strategy was incompatible with his objective of promoting the CTBT. Finally, considering India's almost complete isolation in the international CTBT debate and that the USA emerged as its main advocate only two years later, Vanaik's characterisation of the US government as the 'biggest obstacle' towards an agreement appeared short-sighted.

In an August 1994 article in *The Hindu*, he criticised the pro-bomb section of India's strategists for their turnaround on the CTBT front. In his view,

> [i]t had to happen and it happened. The fundamental intellectual and political contradictions within the bomb lobby have now led to the expression of serious reservations about the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) for reasons that are both good and not so good. This lobby has long been crying hoarse about the need to counter the 'China threat' and therefore the need to keep open the nuclear option or exercise it. At the same time, the bomb lobby has also been keen on emphasising its commitment to universal measures of disarmament as opposed to regionally limited measures. The notion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is, of course, just such a universal disarmament measure. So it is difficult to think of anyone within the Indian bomb lobby who has not endorsed such a measure. But now that some form of CTBT has become a real and imminent possibility, there are jitters.[676]

The main flaw of the pro-bomb strategists' course was, according to Vanaik, their rejection of the CTBT because the treaty aimed at 'capping' nuclear arsenals instead of 'rolling back' existing arsenals. This was not compatible with their call for total global nuclear disarmament.

Vanaik addressed this inconsistency in his August 1994 account by referring to an analysis published by C. Raja Mohan nine days earlier. Therein, Mohan had called for a change in India's CTBT policy for two major reasons:

---

[675] Vanaik, Achin: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, February 27th 1993
[676] Vanaik, Achin: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, August 29th 1994.

> New Delhi needs to put aside its sentimentalism in favour of the CTBT and take a close, hard look at the relevance of the treaty in the changed international context. India's support for a CTBT can no longer be reflexive and automatic. A number of key questions must be answered before New Delhi continues with its uncritical support for a comprehensive test ban in Geneva. Does the treaty serve the objective of achieving global abolition of nuclear weapons? The answer is a resounding 'no'. A currently envisaged, the CTBT is a stand alone agreement that does not address the question of time-bound global nuclear disarmament. There is another, perhaps more important, question that India must address. If nuclear weapons are going to be around for a long time, how does a comprehensive test ban affect India's ability to maintain its nuclear option? There are many reasons to believe that a test ban could significantly constrain India's capability, if and when it chooses, to develop and deploy nuclear weapons.[677]

Mohan's article illustrates the reflexes of India's bomb advocates, who repeatedly threw out their demand for all-out nuclear disarmament as a precondition for any restrictions on India's nuclear programme.

Given that it was quite clear that total nuclear disarmament was an unrealistic demand (even at the time of Nehru's initial proposition) and that it was in the nature of a tentative nuclear test ban to restrict India's nuclear programme, Mohan failed to explain which new factor necessitated a change in India's policy in 1994. Vanaik identified this inconsistency in Mohan's argument by countering that a tentative CTBT,

> even at its best, is a 'stand alone agreement' which does not address in a time-bound way the question of what further steps to take for nuclear disarmament. That is to say, it is a 'capping' measure rather than a 'roll-back' disarmament measure. Since this is not an argument that will convince many to oppose a CTBT, other arguments have to be found"[678].

A further major argument by the 'bomb lobby' was tackled by Vanaik in November of 1995, when he addressed the extent to which the CTBT had become an 'American' non-proliferation effort in the perception of India's elite:

> [...] obviously Washington's stance also aims to prevent horizontal proliferation on nuclear weapons generally. This has been the central focus of criticism of the CTBT by the Indian bomb lobby, its fear that it will trap India, for one, from further developing its nuclear potential.[679]

---

[677] Mohan, C. Raja: "Rethink the nuclear test ban". In: The Hindu, August 17th 1994.
[678] ibid.
[679] Vanaik, Achin: "op.cit.. In: Indian Express, November 6th 1995.

The reason why India's 'bomb lobby' supported the CTBT until 1993 was simply, according to Vanaik, their misperception about the chances of its success:

> Why has the Indian bomb lobby woken up to the 'danger of the CTBT' only in the last two or three years at the outside? It is not as if there has been any qualitative change in the last decade between the status of NWSs and of NNWSs that somehow makes the non-proliferation aspect of a CTBT far more pernicious now than it would have been had it been in place a decade ago! This 'puzzling' behaviour is easily explainable. Indeed, the game is given away by the fact that the opposition to the CTBT or, what is the same thing, to make Indian accession to it conditional, is of such recent vintage. These advocates, despite all their claims to being deeply concerned about nuclear disarmament, have always firmly subordinated such aims to their more fundamental determination not to allow the nuclear option to be foreclosed for India, if it cannot for the time being actually be exercised. As long as the CTBT was a distant prospect, the Indian bomb lobby could occupy the moral high ground and wax eloquent about its commitment to such 'universal and non-discriminatory' disarmament steps. The moment the CTBT has become a real and imminent possibility, it has got a worsening case of the jitters because if India accedes to such a CTBT, it will make its own efforts to lobby for establishing a 'stable minimum deterrent' in the future significantly more ineffectual.[680]

Vanaik garners support by exposing the credibility gap created when many of India's strategists reversed their pro-CTBT stance into unconditional rejection. The impending ability of advanced nuclear weapons states to conduct computer simulations of nuclear tests was already a well known, if ignored fact in 1993. The positive to negative shift in the mainstream opinion of the CTBT that occurred in 1994/95 seemed to be less guided by growing awareness of this 'loophole' in the treaty, but rather by a mutual consent materialising among the community of states that seemed to take India's strategic thinkers by surprise. Throughout the 1990s, a large majority of analysts placed the continued development of the nuclear arsenal, euphemistically referred to as 'keeping the nuclear option open', at the top of India's priority list. Recurring references to India's commitment to total nuclear disarmament was maintained only as long as it did not endanger its 'nuclear option'. If the moral high ground of total nuclear disarmament was unsustainable, as it was in the 1994 CTBT debate, the bomb advocates turned to other all-out arguments like India's endangered sovereignty, or more frequently, charges of discrimination. Vanaik pointed out these inconsistencies in the strategists' line of argument in a most explicit and polemic way. Still, his arguments have not proved to be very effective in convincing a larger audience. This is partly due to his instrumentalisation of anti-American sentiments, which, after all, had already been monopolised by the bomb advocates as a strategy to promote their cause. Vanaik's suggestion that "India can and should link nuclear restraint on its part to American nuclear restraint"[681], actually intended to promote the cause of the CTBT, had the opposite effect, for it was identical to the pro-bomb strategists' call to oppose the CTBT.

[680] Vanaik, Achin: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, November 6th 1995.
[681] Vanaik, Achin: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, February 27th 1993.

In sum, the analysis of Achin Vanaik's attempts to give India's public a critical awareness of the nuclear issue reveals the extent to which the domestic nuclear debate ceased to be a debate, at least in the real sense of the word, in the mid 1990s. Overall, those among India's strategic elite who had adopted a critical stance towards the bomb decreased in number. Their arguments remained weak and largely unappreciated until 1998. Instead of being 'debated' among India's strategists, opinion on the nuclear issue was increasingly reduced to the vociferous call for India's self-declaration as a nuclear weapons state. These calls for the bomb were not addressed to domestic rivals, but to international participants of the non-proliferation discourse, particularly (or better: exclusively) the Anglo-Saxon countries. The more India's domestic debate escalated, the less it correlated reality – the 'imagined' enemy was defined by stereotypes rather than by actual states. Within this world view, the alleged anti-Indian nuclear conspiracy was not necessarily shaped by the factual policies of the conspirators, but by the kind of policy decisions expected of them.

The polarising mode in which Achin Vanaik attacked the position of the 'bomb lobbyists' was criticised by K. Sundarji as counter-productive[682]. In his critical response to Vanaik, published in September 1994, Sundarji gives a rather prosaic assessment of the ongoing debate by claiming that there "is so much muddled thinking about nuclear strategy in India that very often the result is a lot of sniping at each other by the so-called bomb and anti-bomb lobbies"[683]. He then illustrates the flaws in both positions by referencing to the articles of C. Raja Mohan[684] and Achin Vanaik[685] quoted above.

Sundarji rejected Mohan's claim that the imposition of a nuclear test ban would prevent India from developing the capabilities needed for its minimum deterrent doctrine.
Regarding Vanaik's support of the CTBT, despite the computer simulation loopholes, Sundarji generally agreed with his position but challenged the offensive, trivialised criticism of those referred to as the 'bomb lobby'. In Sundarji's view,

> [c]ategorising every one who believes that we ought to deter Chinese (or Pakistani) nuclear threats as a hawk, without effectively debating the proposition, is wrong. Grouping all such people in an undifferentiated mass called the 'bomb lobby' is not only intellectually sloppy, but tends to prevent cogent and objective discussion of issues; it degenerates into a diatribe against supposed attitudes. The next step, that of attributing motives to the so-called lobbyists is but a short one. Would it be fair to all those who are anti-bomb if one were to question their pursuit of idealism or an ethical world view and dub it intellectually posturing? Should we call them anti-national because the so-called hawks feel that they are ignoring national security? It

[682] Sundarji, K.: "The bomb lobby and CTBT". In: The Hindu, September 16th 1994.
[683] ibid.
[684] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, August 17th 1994.
[685] Vanaik, Achin: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, August 29th 1994.

> is high time that the Indian nuclear and strategic debate desists from attributing motives to caricatured stereotypes.[686]

This assessment offers an exceptionally rare appraisal of one of the main flaws of India's strategic debate. Sundarji convincingly branded the opposition's over-simplifying and insulting rhetoric as counter-productive. His appraisal was nonetheless half-hearted, as it missed out on one of its most striking aspects. Sundarji assessed the way the two positions within India's strategic elite viewed each other but overlooked how stereotyped perceptions of outside powers negatively effected India's nuclear and strategic policy formulation. Moreover, he dismissed Vanaik's suggestion that the bomb might be considered an end in itself and blamed Vanaik for "questioning the intellectual honesty of the bomb lobby"[687].

With regard to the core issue of the debate, whether India could adhere to a test ban without compromising its security needs, Sundarji clearly considered nuclear testing unnecessary:

> I strongly believe that we can deter China without the need to test. There is no need to keep producing newer, better and more weapons, which would require testing. There is no need to match any adversary in the number of weapons, nor yields not types of weapons; nor in achieving superiority; as long as there is an assured capability of a second strike that can inflict unacceptable damage.[688]

He concluded his account by formulating the truly relevant questions, which, in his view, had been increasingly ignored by the participants of the domestic nuclear debate:

> Let us constructively address the issues concerned which are inter-alia:
> Can nuclear threats be credibly deterred by means other than nuclear weapons?
> If nuclear weapons are required, would deterrence alone not do; do we need to foolishly espouse nuclear war-fighting?
> If deterrence alone would suffice, would not finite minimum deterrence do without going in for an arms race?
> If minimum deterrence would do, what are the outlines of a credible and workable doctrine; what would be the force structure that such a doctrine would demand; what would be the political, societal and financial costs of such a force; can we afford it?[689]

As the following section shows, these core questions hardly played any role in the escalating CTBT debate that emerged after the NPT negotiation in mid-1995.

---

[686] Sundarji, K.: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, September 16th 1994.
[687] ibid.
[688] ibid.
[689] ibid.

13.5.2. Creating the CTBT Stalemate

After the agreement on the indefinite NPT extension in mid-1995, the CTBT became the single dominating issue within media reporting on nuclear policy in India. While the absolute number of commentaries on this issue increased significantly thereafter, these articles hardly ever raised new arguments. On the contrary: The more the CTBT debate heated up, the more commentators referred to well-known arguments, thereby ruling out any balanced assessment of the issue. The distinction between CTBT and NPT, which had been the basis of India's pro-CTBT policy in 1993, was now largely disavowed. Rather, the CTBT was increasingly regarded as one further device of the USA to establish its global predominance. As O. P. Sabherwal commented,

> [t]he NPT, CTBT and FMCT form an integral link in the American design. First came the NPT review and extension conference, where the United States steamrolled its way to indefinite weapon power monopoly for the five privileged members of NPT. Now follows the CTBT which will tighten the screws on countries like India which have kept out of the NPT and whose weapon status is ambiguous. There is also a tertiary American objective in CTBT of perpetuating its pre-eminence among the nuclear weapon states themselves… . With these tools, the US intends to entrench its dominant superpower status, and with the CTBT in place, extend its massive nuclear clout as a reinforcement of economic and political power well into the 21st century.[690]

Comments in favour of India supporting the CTBT almost disappeared. One exception was Amrita Abraham's article favouring a cautious and conditional pro-CTBT policy[691]. Amrita Abraham started by critically assessing the anti-CTBT mainstream opinion:

> If people were asked today whether India should sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the chances are most would say no. Their reason would be similar to those of a majority of nuclear analysts in New Delhi who interpret the treaty as a non-proliferation measure aimed at restricting India's freedom of action. Domestic opposition arises out of outrage over the double-standards of the Western powers and their bullying tactics on India's nuclear and missile programmes. It is also the outcome of the belief that universal nuclear disarmament is a mirage and in the certain world ahead India has no other choice but to keep its own powder dry. All this ties the present Government's hands and strengthens its negotiating position at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva where it has been made clear that India will not support a treaty falling short of its basic objectives.[692]

---

[690] Sabherwal, O.P.: "Playing an active role". In: Indian Express, January 29th 1996.
[691] Abraham, Amrita: "Test ban negotiations: Rethinking India's strategy". In: Indian Express, March 13th 1996.
[692] ibid.

Abraham pointed to one of the main flaws in India's nuclear debate: The prevalence of the perceived Western, or American, behaviour as a determining factor in the definition of its own, national interest. This trend was particularly identifiable in the CTBT debate of 1996. Instead of raising the question 'which policy best serves India's national interest?', opinion leaders raised the question 'which policy did America want India to follow?', and subsequently suggested that India follow the reverse policy. This logic might be considered a psychological phenomenon behind India's recurring opposition in international fora[693]. This rationale caused a paradox policy that, though rhetorically justified in the name of India's independence and sovereignty, was fully dependent on the policies of outside powers. This dependency remained largely unnoticed.
Abraham suggested an Indian policy towards the CTBT similar to K. Sundarji's recommendations:

> In principle, a comprehensive test ban, which by definition must exclude all forms of testing is a disarmament measure since it will cap the arsenals of the weapons powers. Therefore, it improves India's security environment. Secondly, if retaining the nuclear option means being able to develop a 'minimum deterrent capability', that is, a second strike capability based on a limited number of warheads and an effective delivery system, it is surely logical to try to reduce uncertainties by limiting the arsenals of potential neighbours.[694]

The closer the date of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament came, the more categorical was the mainstream rejection of the CTBT. Within the commonly accepted discourse strategy, India's approval of the CTBT was linked to the all-out condition of global, time-bound nuclear disarmament. In formulating this condition, the opinion leaders maintained India's moral exceptionalism by claiming that India continued to champion a 'true' comprehensive test ban. This strategy became apparent in Jasjit Singh's claim that

> [i]n the final analysis, the world needs a good CTBT and India, that has sought one for more than four decades, must remain in the forefront to ensure we have a treaty without loopholes and with effective international verification system. But above all, the treaty must have an unambiguous linkage with commitment to disarmament.[695]

13.5.3. The Lonely Moralist: The Geneva Negotiation Process, Summer 1996

When India's almost complete international isolation became apparent in the course of the Geneva Conference, India's elite reacted with defiance. A morally superior policy, as the

[693] These dynamics are most strikingly illustrated by Muchkund Dubey. Throughout his assessment, Dubey focuses exclusively on the allegedly infamous strategies of the NWS behind the CTBT, and derives his policy recommendation from these strategies by suggesting India to resist the pressures and stay firm on its negative stance (Dubey, Muchkund: "CTBT & India's n-option". In: The Hindu, April 8th 1996.).
[694] Abraham, Amrita: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, March 13th 1996.
[695] Singh, Jasjit: "CTBT and security needs: Persistence will pay". In: Indian Express, June 11th 1996.

mainstream explanation went, had to be defended firmly even if a majority of others failed to appreciate it.

The negotiation process for the CTBT followed similar dynamics as earlier negotiations. Western countries, above all the USA, tried to accommodate India by offering rather superficial concessions. India declined such moves on principle. The Indian delegation in Geneva officially stated that it neither considered nuclear weapons essential to its security interests, nor that it had any desire to acquire nuclear weapons. While this position would seem to suggest India's eventual acceptance of the treaty, it nevertheless retained its dogged opposition. India's refusal of any accommodating offers caused negative repercussions in the US administration as well as the American strategic elite, which often carried a presumptuous undertone. These repercussions then stirred up severe feelings of anti-colonialism and inferiority among India's elite, again stalemating India's intransigent position. In the final stages of the negotiations, the consensus on the incompatibility of the CTBT with India's pride and dignity was greater than ever before. Simultaneously, India's reputation among the international community of states was severely damaged.

The accounts on the Geneva Conference in India's dailies stressed four broad aspects: First, the theme of India as the lonely moralist; second, the broad domestic consensus reached on the CTBT; third, the emphasis on 'loopholes' and flaws in the CTBT's wording; fourth, the theme of 'discrimination'.
The first dimension, India's moral exceptionalism, was expressed in Nikhil Chakravartty's account of the conference:

> It is but natural for the Government of a self-respecting country like ours to desist from signing the CTBT. It may of course be argued that India should not consider itself as the only power with a conscience, and since most of the non-nuclear powers seem to have agreed to sign the CTBT why should we choose to be isolated? Such a stand goes against the historical role that independent India has generally played in international affairs. Immediately after Independence, India took up the cause of worldwide decolonisation – a stand which demonstrated that the democratic government of this country not only fought for national interest but also took the initiative – sometimes singlehanded – in defence of all the other countries fighting for independence. India's isolation at the CTBT conference at Geneva need not worry us, because that becomes the symbol of the urges and aspirations for other countries as well.[696]

The idea of India's moral exceptionalism, manifested in India's calls for total global nuclear disarmament, was most prominently advocated among India's opinion leaders of the first generation (i.e. those who started their careers before or shortly after independence) whose *Weltanschauung* was strongly rooted in India's struggle for independence. Of these, Nikhil Chakravartty (1913 – 1998) was one of the most well-known journalists. He linked India's moral exceptionalism to the country's genuine identity

[696] Chakravartty, Nikhil: "CTBT: a weapon of domination". In: The Hindu, June 29th 1996.

as post-colonial nation that was morally committed to the struggle against any forms of neo-colonialism. In his view,

> [t]he crux of the matter is that CTBT is much more than the Non-Proliferation Treaty, binds down a country to giving up the option of going in for the nuclear weapons. In other words, it seeks to enforce the age-old rule that only those who possess the weapon are entitled to use it and nobody else. Historically, this has throughout been upheld by the handful of powers that have ruled the world, leaving the vast majority dispossessed and hence subject to the tutelage of the mighty. Colonial powers conquering a country in the past would make it a point to disarm its people and impose their variety of demilitarisation so that the people in the subject country were kept under the military might of the conquering authority. Ours is the first country which stood up, unarmed, against such an iniquitous legitimacy of colonial rule. India has contributed in no small measure to the breakdown of that colonial raj and ultimately to its dissolution… . Alongside, the big powers with their huge arsenals of weapons, but conventional and nuclear, are seeking new devices for the physical domination of the world. CTBT is one such device by which the nuclear powers seek to lord it over the rest… . It is thus part of a sinister design to dominate the world by depriving the others the access to the weapons which the big powers have mobilised and have made no commitment to destroy.[697]

Chakravartty's focus on the symbolic and metaphoric dimensions of the nuclear issue was a general theme of the commentary on the nuclear issue in 1996. The exclusiveness of these intangible aspects in his report was nevertheless exceptional.

The second broad aspect of the commentary on the Geneva conference was an appreciation of the domestic consensus on the issue. This appreciation was often linked to an explicit call for 'going public', i.e. the creation of a public consensus, which was considered necessary to strengthen India's position in the negotiation process. The problems of the 'going public'-argument were outlined by Pran Chopra:

> Once CTBT comes into being in one form or another, India will stand out in the eyes of the world, whether in good light or bad, just as it has stood out at Geneva for stoutly defending its long-held position. Either it will be seen as a country which gave in at the end, or as one which must be really seriously intending to exercise its nuclear option, which otherwise it would not have defended so stubbornly against such heavy odds… . Either policy will call for a broad consensus, backed by manifest public opinion, and at the right time by a parliamentary resolution, so that no one may mistake it for a knee-jerk of a government which has yet to find its feet. But public opinion can crystalise only if the public can see the main elements of the competing policies. All that the people can see at present are gaps in their information, and these will inhibit any educative public debate.[698]

[697] Chakravartty, Nikhil: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, June 29th 1996.
[698] Chopra, Pran: "Gaps in India's n-policy". In: The Hindu, June 28th 1996.

The doubts expressed by Chopra about the efficacy of India's public opinion on nuclear decision-making appeared inconsistent with his call for going public.

The third dimension of reporting on the CTBT negotiations was its focus on technical 'loopholes', such as missing provisions on subcritical testing, computer simulated tests, and gaps in the verification system. These technical aspects were rarely discussed in detail, but again seen in a rather symbolic way. As J. N. Dixit wrote,

> [t]he criticism that India's reservations about loopholes, enabling nuclear weapons and other advanced countries to conduct laboratory tests is not valid… . What one would call the democratisation of high technology and easy access to it makes our reservations on this count pertinent.[699]

The generally accepted view among India's elite was that the USA and other nuclear weapons states only decided to support a nuclear test ban after it became technically possible to advance the development of their respective nuclear arsenals without testing. This position had some evidence in support, as the treaty did not clarify whether the test moratorium included subcritical testing, nor did it impose any restrictions on computer simulations on the basis of data acquired in earlier nuclear tests. These shortcomings, according to the interpretation widely accepted by India's strategic elite, would again create a discriminatory divide between the haves and the have-nots, as it would allow the further development of nuclear technology only by those states that had conducted sufficient tests prior to the conclusion of the CTBT. This criticism was widespread among other non-nuclear weapons states as well. However, its impact on the other countries' stance on the CTBT differed significantly from that of India. While a large majority of states analysed the pros and cons of the CTBT to their national security irrespectively of the NWS' motives, India's epistemic community saw the allegedly disingenuous motives behind America's support of the CTBT as a compelling reason to reject the treaty.

These dynamics were closely interlinked with the fourth dimension, that the CTBT was discriminatory. The theme was pointed out by Madhu Dandavate:

> Despite all professions about the 'equality among nations' made from various international fora, the attitude of the developed countries, particularly the nuclear powers, in regard to disarmament, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and comprehensive ban on nuclear tests is highly discriminatory… . The nuclear powers are allowed to go ahead without restraining their nuclear potential while others are expected not to resort to nuclear proliferation.[700]

This general perception of being discriminated against in the international fora was a theme common to a majority of nuclear related articles since the beginning of the 1990s. The

[699] Dixit, J.N.: "CTBT draft: Large gaps and loopholes". In: Indian Express, July 2nd 1996.
[700] Dandavate, Madhu: "Discriminatory CTBT: India's concerns ignored". In: Indian Express, July 18th 1996.

prominence given to these charges of discrimination in the reporting on the CTBT negotiation was nonetheless puzzling, especially when one considers the fact that the CTBT had been supported by India's elite until 1993 for its non-discriminatory character. As the above remarks illustrate, within the 1996 debate little distinction was made between disarmament, non-proliferation and a nuclear test ban.
Dandavate subsequently welcomed the Indian delegation's refusal to join the CTBT:

> Learning from the past experience, India had to take note of the stark reality that the main nuclear powers had built up an extremely iniquitous system, which gave a privileged position to them and meted out discriminatory treatment to the developing countries. The perspective which India has adopted regarding the CTBT is in tune with its consistently correct approach. This approach, conveyed to the Geneva Conference through the speech of India's Ambassador Arundhati Ghose, is loud and clear. Against the background of India's unfortunate experience, the ambassador giving the quintessence of India's attitude to the CTBT, unequivocally stated: 'India had demonstrated its resolve in the past. We have refused to accede to the discriminatory order of today's international nuclear regime. This policy has been maintained, despite pressures of one sort or another. The same conviction is reflected in our stand on the CTBT.[701]

The semantic distinction between India's categorical negation of its nuclear weapons ambitions, as expressed in the opening speech to the Geneva Conference, and the rhetoric endemic of India's representatives in Geneva, in which India signalled its determination to 'keep its nuclear option open' (justified by charges of discrimination), was little understood by the international audience. This credibility gap further increased when knowledge of India's possession of an arsenal of rudimentary nuclear devices spread. India's blocking and delaying strategy in the course of the CTBT negotiations was widely interpreted as being motivated by the technically advanced state of its preparations for nuclear testing.

Within India's domestic debate, the prevailing sentiments of defiance and moral conviction overshadowed any nuanced appreciation of India's declining international reputation. Among India's epistemic community, a consensus endorsed India's rejection of the treaty as well as the blocking manoeuvres of the Indian delegation. As Raja C. Mohan wrote,

> [i]n blocking the passage of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty at Geneva this week, India has shown a rare diplomatic self-assurance… . Despite some strong external advice in the recent weeks not to block the CTBT, India has demonstrated the political will to stand up and take its principled protest against the treaty to its logical end.[702]

While the analysts focused on moral principles to explain India's blocking strategy, another more technical aspect remained largely unnoticed: By late 1995, India's scientists had

[701] Dandavate, Madhu: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, July 18th 1996.
[702] Mohan, C. Raja: "CTBT: An India that can say no!". In: The Hindu, August 17th 1996.

already concluded preparations for nuclear testing at the Pokhran site. In mid-1996, when the Geneva Conference took place, there was nothing else to do for the Prime Minister but to push the button. Stepping back from the threshold would have nullified these efforts, severely frustrated the involved weaponeers and dashed the hopes of the ever growing pro-bomb strategists. These givens caused an obvious divergence between normative based rhetoric and the rather tangible implicit motives at stake. Publicly addressing these motives, however, would have been perceived by the opinion leaders as subversion of India's moral principles, and was therefore largely abstained from.

In sum, the dynamics of the domestic debate had again driven India into isolation. Its persistence on certain normative principles did not allow India's policy-makers to apprehend the various benefits of the treaty. These negative dynamics of the elite discourse in India were summarised by George Perkovich:

> Finally, while the treaty did not commit the nuclear weapon states to further steps toward nuclear disarmament, it clearly contributed to the goal, as India had acknowledged earlier in the negotiations. Banning nuclear tests is a necessary if not sufficient measure to end nuclear arms racing, to devalue nuclear weapons, and to facilitate disarmament. This was precisely why nuclear weapon establishments had fought against the treaty for decades. India faced enormous international pressure to sign the treaty but even greater domestic pressure not to.[703]

The peculiar dynamics of India's domestic debate were fuelled by the inept negotiation strategies of the nuclear weapons states, particularly by the USA. The US government followed a dual strategy. It was increasingly determined to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons beyond the five official nuclear weapons states, and increased pressures on those states which maintained nuclear programmes. On the other hand, it continued to reconstruct its own nuclear arsenal and to modify its nuclear doctrines in order to maintain the leverage and prestige endowed by its nuclear weapons. Insensitive Western negotiation strategies were frequently described in detail by India's media. Even the nuclear test conducted by China in the wake of the final agreement over the CTBT in July 1996, which might have been a cogent strategic argument against signing the CTBT in a less emotionalised debate, played a rather insignificant role in the heated rally against India's perceived subjugation to Western interests.

When a consensus on the final draft of the CTBT had finally been reached among the remaining participants, India prevented a decision by the Geneva Conference on Disarmament (CD), which, according to its rules, had to be made unanimously. The community of states then decided to bypass the CD and bring the CTBT directly to the UN General Assembly. India's efforts to circumvent this new procedure eventually failed. These tricks and dodges deepened India's almost complete international isolation on the nuclear issue.

[703] Perkovich, George: op.cit.. 1999; p. 380.

13.5.4. After the CTBT: Cutting the Losses

After the disappointing outcome of the Geneva Conference, the CTBT remained an issue for India's strategic elite, who increasingly demanded, as a retort to perceived injustices, that the government to finally conduct nuclear tests.
In his wrap-up of the Geneva negotiations, Manoj Joshi states that

> [o]fficial statements and pronouncements notwithstanding, the brunt of international opinion is that no matter what it says, India can no longer, at least in the near term retain its claim to a unique status as a leader in the arena of disarmament. So even while applause at home and censure abroad has not quite died down, the time may have come for India to think through the consequences of standing four-square against the CTBT. Analysts at home are already speaking of the enormous pressure that the current structure of the treaty will put on India, compulsions which could well force it to actually test, reiterate its nuclear weapons capacity and then sign up.[704]

By predicting that India's tattered international reputation as the 'leader in the arena of disarmament' and the mounting pressures from the international community might contribute to India's decision for nuclear testing, Joshi correctly foresaw the dynamics which would eventually lead to the events of May 1998. Joshi again outlined the legacies of India's self-image:

> Indian nuclear strategy, if indeed it can be called that, has been an idiosyncratic mix influenced much by Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru's non-violence and pacifism and battered by contrary ground realities. Simply put, this 'strategy' was: lead efforts to world disarmament, even while building up technical and industrial 'abilities' of making nuclear weapons and missiles. By demonstrating them at appropriate intervals, rather than actually developing and deploying weapon systems, India would warn off potential adversaries, save a lot of money, and retain its moral high ground.[705]

These legacies, whatever their true substance might have been, still dominated India's strategic thinking. They caused a large section of India's strategic community to abide by the concept of nuclear ambiguity, euphemistically described as 'keeping the nuclear option open', even after its flaws were clearly exposed by the events of mid-1996. According to Joshi,

> [t]he best option for India is to evolve a policy that will periodically, carefully and systematically, enhance its ambiguous nuclear and missile posture. In the past, this was based on the Pokhran blast, unsafeguarded nuclear reactors, plutonium

[704] Joshi, Manoj: "India's nuclear 'outing': Creating a post-CTBT mindset". In: Indian Express, September 9th 1996.
[705] ibid.

> reprocessing plant and the Agni tests, but their values is now much diminished. A policy which seeks to convince potential adversaries that India has a strategic capacity it can quickly translate into 'ability' without actually doing so, now requires a little more investment in the form of physical infrastructure that goes with nuclear weapons.[706]

While Joshi started his assessment by quite rightly detecting a credibility gap caused by India's nuclear course, he misconceived the dominant role the concept of 'keeping the nuclear option open' had played therein. His suggestion that a continued advancement of India's nuclear weapons infrastructure would 'enhance its ambiguous nuclear and missile posture' was not convincing, considering the fact that a majority among the international audience did not perceive India's nuclear course to be any ambiguous at all. Rather, outside observers realised after the events of 1996 that India had embarked on an unambiguous and irreversible nuclear path.

In the second half of 1996, a consensus emerged among India's elite that now it was time for India to finally conduct nuclear tests. This consensus was addressed in Abha Shankar's analysis of the post-CTBT situation:

> If the nuclear option is not to corrode and disintegrate, India will have to develop a national vision and policy beyond its firm posture on the 'Comprehensive' Test Ban Treaty. The CTBT posture resulted from a solid national consensus. Never before had India witnessed a national debate as intense and focused as the one on the CTBT. Now, the nation needs to embark on a strategic plan to secure its long-term interests. India spurned the CTBT because not only was it a bogus disarmament step, it would have imposed a legal and technical constraint on its nuclear option.[707]

This introduction illustrated all major features of mainstream opinion on the issue. Shankar's remarks about the unprecedented intensity of the CTBT debate, as well as the broad consensus against signing it, were empirically valid. The refusal to join the CTBT was, according to Shankar, justified by two major flaws of the treaty: First, its commitment to disarmament did not go far enough; and second, it would have put unacceptable restrictions on India's nuclear programme. These two aspects, despite an apparent contradiction, were in line with India's mainstream opinion.

The most noteworthy feature of Shankar's account was his implicit use of the concept 'nuclear option'. As this study has shown, the definition of 'nuclear option' had been constantly stretched towards the actual development of nuclear capabilities, thereby shortening the semantic distinction between 'keeping the nuclear option open' and exercising the nuclear option. By referring to the expression of India's 'nuclear option' when actually meaning India's nuclear breakthrough, Shankar brought this process to its consequential end.

---

[706] Joshi, Manoj: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, September 9th 1996.
[707] Shankar, Abha: "After CTBT, it's testing time for India". In: Indian Express, October 11th 1996.

Subsequently, Shankar made his case for an Indian nuclear test:

> The CTBT aroused deep national concern because it would have deprived us of our testing option. The logical follow-up to the CTBT posture should be the long awaited nuclear weaponisation… . India can no longer squander time in deciding the necessary follow-up. It has the following choices: stay out of the CTBT and yet not test; carry out a limited series of tests and then accept the CTBT; test but not sign, ensuring the CTBT collapses. The first choice – Uncle Tommed by 'multinational leftists' and 'buy-me pseudo-nationalists who earlier sought to undermine the CTBT consensus – carries only costs and no benefits. It is designed to bleed the country's vital interests. It suggests that a foolhardy India would wage a determined battle with the major powers and open itself to their blackmail and coercion so that it can have the right to test without the desire or intent to test. The CTBT posture leads India in only one direction: an operational nuclear deterrent upheld by testing… . As a double-edged tool of deterrence, testing will demonstrate the country's technical competence and prowess and also confirm its political resolve and will.[708]

These deliberations illustrate the difficulties India's strategic elite had in convincingly explaining why the CTBT, which had been supported until late 1993, had emerged as the main driving force for its call for India's nuclear breakthrough.

What caused this 180 degree turn in mainstream opinion? In the perception of India's elite, it was caused by three major factors: a) the CTBT did not include any time-bound commitment to total nuclear disarmament; b) the CTBT had a loophole, as it would allow computer simulated tests; c) the CTBT would put restrictions on India's nuclear programme. This explanation was dissatisfying because all three factors were already well-known in 1993. Despite their flaws, these factors nevertheless proved to be highly appealing to public opinion, which largely accepted the strategists' rationale.

13.5.5. The CTBT Debate in the post-Pokhran Period

As the previous section has shown, the nuclear testing of May 1998 was the inevitable culmination of the dynamics of India's strategic debate as catalysed by the CTBT negotiations. Once the Pokhran tests were completed, India's strategic elite started to redefine its position on the CTBT according to the new conditions. The *leitmotiv* of this position was that India should now merit the status of a nuclear weapons state. As soon as this status was granted by the official nuclear weapons states, India should engage in negotiations on acceding to the CTBT. According to Pranab Mukherjee, "[i]f India is not recognised as a nuclear weapon state and does not enjoy an equal status with the five nuclear weapon states, then signing the CTBT will only impose obligations and it will not have any benefit"[709]. Considering that the CTBT did not define the nuclear status of

[708] Shankar, Abha: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, October 11th 1996.
[709] Mukherjee, Pranab: "Should India sign the CTBT?. In: The Hindu, May 26th 1998.

countries, and, in contrast to the NPT, its provisions did not make any distinction between nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states – in other words, it was not discriminatory – Mukherjee's call for India's recognition as nuclear weapon state as precondition for signing the CTBT appeared questionable[710]. Once again, it reflected the lack of distinction made between the contents of the CTBT and NPT among the strategic community.

Many analysts suggested that India, having tested and declared itself a nuclear weapons state, should now engage in negotiations with the USA about the conditions for India's accession to the CTBT. This course was most clearly outlined by C. Raja Mohan[711]. In his account, Mohan started by giving a remarkable explanation of the clash between Indian and US-American negotiating strategies:

> For the Americans, deal-making comes naturally; they have no problem in splitting the difference between two divergent positions. Making deals and accommodation of divergent principles is part of American political life… Political deal-making is seen as immoral in India, where the Brahmanical approach has long put 'principle' and 'purity' above pragmatism. Political differences, even minor ones, in India are often elevated to the level of irreconcilable antagonism. Political parties cannot stop splitting in the name of principle. For many of India's leaders, 'purity' is more important than maintaining unity.[712]

Following this rather primitive explanation for India's confrontational stance, Mohan subsequently dropped this explanation in favour of its opposite:

> The U.S. commitment to preserve the non-proliferation regime that it has erected over the last three decades is understandable. But no international treaty system that is unwilling to adapt to changing political conditions has survived the test of time. There is no divine sanction to the decree of the NPT that the world can have only five nuclear weapon powers and no more. India, Pakistan and Israel have long been in an anomalous situation in relation to the NPT.[713]

Throughout the 1990s until the nuclear tests, Mohan and most other strategic thinkers in India applied fierce rhetoric to express their disgust about the discriminatory nature of the NPT, thereby suggesting that India develop nuclear weapons in order to crush the iniquitous regime in the name of all nuclear have-nots. Now, two months after India had declared itself a nuclear weapons state, Mohan dropped his principle guided position and called on the NWS to accept India as a member of their exclusive club while closing the

[710] This inconsistency in Mukherjee's article is addressed by Achin Vanaik in an article published in the same daily one month later (Vanaik, Achin: "Sign the CTBT". In: The Hindu, June 29th 1998.).
[711] Mohan, C. Raja: "The art of the nuclear deal". In: The Hindu, July 9th 1998.
[712] ibid.
[713] ibid.

door behind it. He justified his change of heart with the compulsions of *Realpolitik*, as India was forced to deal with Western power politics.
According to Mohan, India, now part of the nuclear club, should support American efforts to prevent new membership:

> While [the tests] create a short term problem for the U.S. they have also opened the opportunity to complete the architecture of the global non-proliferation regime by accommodating India into it in some form… . The Indo-U.S. dialogue will remain a meaningless exercise if the Clinton Administration believes that it can roll back India's nuclear and missile programmes and force New Delhi into joining the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state… . India, too, needs to acknowledge the core interest of the U.S. in maintaining a viable non-proliferation order in the world.[714]

These remarks already included the three major features of the newly emerging mainstream stance on the international non-proliferation regime that began to emerge during the consolidation. First, in Mohan's perception, India's nuclear tests and its subsequent self-declaration as a nuclear weapons state did not, contrary to many international observers, deal a major blow to the non-proliferation regime, but offer a chance "to complete the architecture of the global non-proliferation regime"[715] with addition of India a natural member of the 'haves'. Second, the acceptance of India's nuclear status by the USA was considered the necessary precondition for any negotiations. Third, the nuclear club should be kept closed by any means necessary, for India, in Mohan's sanctimonious rhetoric, "needs to acknowledge the core interest of the U.S. in maintaining a viable non-proliferation order in the world"[716].

After outlining the conditions under which India would resume negotiations on the CTBT, Mohan continued to estimate the chances of success quite positively. However,

> [g]iven the basic asymmetry in the negotiation, and the fundamental change in nuclear arms control policy that the Indian Government is trying to engineer, it is imperative that the U.S. offers tangible and substantive benefits for India in return for signing the CTBT. India will have to show that the global non-proliferation regime is buttressed by the deal.[717]

It is important to note that the CTBT was an international treaty, which, at the time of India's nuclear testing, had been signed by 144 nations[718]. In this light, the suggestion that one country that did not sign it (India) could renegotiate the treaty with another country that

[714] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, July 9th 1998.
[715] ibid.
[716] ibid.
[717] ibid.
[718] It was ratified by 32 countries. Among the 44 states required to ratify the treaty in order to come into force, 17 had done so. Among the 5 NWS, France and Great Britain had ratified the treaty at the time of India's nuclear tests.

did, yet abstained from ratifying it (the USA), appeared rather impractical[719]. Despite such impediments, this idea was widely expressed in the commentary on the issue in the immediate aftermath of the tests. It illustrated two tendencies within the immediate post-Pokhran debate: Firstly, a gross overestimation of the leverage obtained by India's self-declaration as a nuclear weapons power, and secondly, a gross overestimation of America's global hegemony.

In his evaluation of the pros and cons of signing the CTBT, Muchkund Dubey recapitulated the four major reasons why India had refused to sign the CTBT before May 1998 before throwing them all out:

> India decided not to be a party to the CTBT in 1996 because it thought that it might have to carry out a few nuclear weapon tests in the interest of its security. This principal purpose seems to have been served with the recent tests… . Our second objection was that the CTBT's entry into force clause was an infringement on our sovereignty, in that it obliged us to sign a treaty which we had publicly declared repugnant to our security interests. But once we decide to sign the treaty, this objection will no longer remain valid. Our third objection was that the CTBT was discriminatory because it permitted certain tests … which only a few nuclear weapon states were capable of carrying out. But now that our ability to conduct laboratory tests has been convincingly demonstrated… the treaty is no longer discriminatory against us. The only remaining objection is the question of the linkage of the treaty with nuclear disarmament. Lack of linkage cannot be a serious ground for objection because in practical terms a test ban treaty cannot at the same time be a treaty for eliminating nuclear weapons.[720]

Similarly to C. Raja Mohan, former Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey showed a remarkable pragmatism in adjusting his principle-guided judgments to the new conditions. It was only two years earlier in the wake of the Geneva Conference that had Dubey expressed his view that the CTBT was discriminatory to Third World countries and more importantly, did not carry any reference to nuclear disarmament:

> It is a great pity that India became an accomplice in the U.S. *volte face* on the CTBT purely for its own selfish purposes. In co-sponsoring with the U.S. the resolution on the CTBT adopted by the General Assembly at its 1993 session, India agreed to drop any reference to nuclear disarmament which had figured in all the resolutions on this subject sponsored by India in the past and which was the central theme of the Rajiv Gandhi Plan of Action.[721]

It is against this backdrop that Dubey's conclusion that the CTBT did not discriminate against India, now that it was able to conduct subcritical tests, appeared highly

[719] Further, Article 15 of the CTBT rules out any conditional ratification of the treaty.
[720] Dubey, Muchkund: "A possible Indian stance". In: The Hindu, July 20th 1998.
[721] Dubey, Muchkund: "CTBT & India's n-option – I". In: The Hindu, April 8th 1996.

questionable. Similarly, Dubey no longer viewed the lack of disarmament provisions in the CTBT as a serious problem, because, as he explained, the CTBT was never intended to have any. This stance again appeared quite remarkable in light of his 1996 remarks.

Mohan's and Dubey's accounts illustrate the pragmatic shift in the general process of opinion making among India's strategic elite's on the CTBT. This pragmatism was addressed by Amrita Abraham:

> Post hoc construction of nuclear policy is rich in irony but little else as yet. After three years of fighting off the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the strategic community has wheeled around in support of it. This development parallels the Vajpayee government's manoeuvres to get aboard the CTBT and is the most significant outcome of Pokhran-II so far.[722]

Abraham subsequently evaluated some realistic conditions under which the Indian government might be willing to sign the CTBT, the most substantial being India's access to dual-use technology. The lifting of sanctions, frequently named as a precondition for India's accession, would be the least problematic as it would be an automatic by-product of the CTBT signature. The two other demands could be agreed upon within some kind of declaratory face-saving device.

Abraham subsequently doubted the belief among the mainstream strategists that the CTBT could be renegotiated according to India's terms:

> The CTBT cannot be redrafted without the risk of losing it altogether. Some 140 non-weapons states believe it secures their interests and cannot be expected to go along with that or an unverifiable Indian commitment to abide by the treaty without signing it. So it is the 1996 document or nothing.[723]

According to Abraham, the decision on whether India should sign the CTBT based entirely on security considerations. On this premise, India could chose between the non-weaponised option, the development of nuclear capabilities without actual weapons deployment, and the weaponised option, which would have severe financial and security implications. Abraham clearly favoured the first option:

> The low-cost option of a declared but non-weaponised nuclear capability is not seriously undermined by the CTBT… . Weaponisation and deployment is the high cost and self-destructive option. Far from securing India, a heightened military stance works like a self-fulfilling prophecy by worsening the external environment… . A verifiable ban on explosive testing slows down weapons development in countries India regards as potential threats to peace and security, and it creates the momentum for the next steps in disarmament. That is the best

[722] Abraham, Amrita: "CTBT manoeuvres: Way out of Pokhran mess". In: Indian Express, August 1st 1998.
[723] ibid.

> bargain India can realistically expect. The clinching argument for the CTBT is that the country will be spared more reckless adventures.[724]

Abraham's recommendation that India should take the first option and abstain from full-fledged weaponisation remained underappreciated by most strategists.

Next to those pragmatic strategic thinkers like Mohan and Dubey, who had quickly dropped their moral pathos and updated their opinions and those strategists who had been marginalised before the tests for maintaining a sceptical position on India's nuclear course during the escalating debate of the mid-1990s, like Amrita Abraham, a third group existed that was comprised of those authors who had stuck to the traditional principles of the pre-test nuclear discourse. This group, which had dominated the strategic discourse in the months before the tests, still constituted the majority of strategic thinkers in their immediate aftermath, but significantly decreased in numbers thereafter. Their rather dismissive position on the CTBT was illustrated by J.N. Dixit's assessment of India's changed negotiating stance:

> There are many questions related to our participation in the non-proliferation agenda of the nuclear weapons powers led by the United States, needing indepth [sic.] consideration by our government. Have we, for example, achieved levels of technological development where we really do not need to conduct any more tests?... . The second question is whether we have carefully assessed the implications of the international inspection system, stipulated in the CTBT and of the operational stipulations of the 'national technical means'. The third question: have we carefully considered the implications of the concept of 'permissive activities'? Fourth, is there really a compulsion to sign the CTBT before September 1999[725], especially in the context of the likelihood of US itself and China and Russia not ratifying it?[726]

Dixit left no doubt that these questions were to be answered negatively; thus India should continue to refuse joining the CTBT. Implicit in these questions were the underlying features which had guided India's CTBT policy since 1994: The general rejection of any major technological restrictions on India's nuclear programme on grounds of sovereignty and national dignity; the denial of inspections on similar grounds; and, the 'loophole'-argument on grounds of discrimination.

Finally, Dixit gave a fundamental, overarching reason why India should not sign the CTBT: Neither the nuclear weapons states nor India's neighbours would give up their nuclear arsenals in the foreseeable future. In Dixit's view,

---

[724] Abraham, Amrita: op.cit.". In: Indian Express, August 1st 1998.
[725] September 1999 was the date of entry into force of the treaty.
[726] Dixit, J.N.: "Non-proliferation negotiations: Weaponisation by default". In: Indian Express, April 29th 1999.

> [i]t is clear that the international community will remain subject to a nuclear and missile-weaponised world. One does not have to go into a detailed analysis of our regional security environment… . Basic non-proliferation objectives of the nuclear weapons powers, led by the US, have not undergone any meaningful change, responding to Indian concerns… . The solution does not lie in confrontational or withdrawal symptoms. We should continue the process of engagement. Our aim should be to change the negotiating framework, modify the benchmarks to meet our strategic concerns. We must also convince the nuclear weapons powers and others that, while we have weaponised ourselves due to unavoidable circumstances, we remain keen on bringing about a non-discriminatory non-proliferation order in the world.[727]

Unlike Abraham, J.N. Dixit was indifferent towards the impact of the CTBT on India's security. Similarly to many strategic commentators, he accepted *a priori* that nuclear weapons increased India's security. By considering India's increased security as a necessary effect of its nuclearisation, Dixit perceived any agreement which would restrict India's nuclear programme, such as the CTBT, unacceptable.

While the complexity of the causal relationship between nuclear weapons and India's security was not only outlined by India's nuclear critics, but also by leading military strategists like K. Sundarji, the majority of India's politico-strategists, represented by J.N. Dixit, traditionally abstained from addressing security aspects in detail. In their view, it was enough to state that "[o]ne does not have to go into a detailed analysis of our regional security environment"[728], and that India, while still being morally superior to Western countries, was forced to acquire nuclear weapons "due to unavoidable circumstances"[729]. In order to accommodate these two seemingly contradictory views – India's moral exceptionalism and its rejection of any restrictive agreement – Dixit applied the well-documented discourse strategy of demanding "a non-discriminatory non-proliferation order in the world"[730].

In mid-1999, the US Senate decided not to ratify the CTBT. This refusal proved to be the decisive argument for India's anti-CTBT analysts. The Indian government, which had signalled some willingness to sign the treaty[731], though it had actually avoided a final decision, now adopted these analysts' line of argument and abandoned plans to sign it. The unalloyed gratification among policy makers about this unexpected solution was evaluated by Arvind N. Das:

---

[727] Dixit, J.N.: op.cit.. In: Indian Express, April 29th 1999.
[728] ibid.
[729] ibid.
[730] ibid.
[731] The official policy on the CTBT was defined by Jaswant Singh, then Minister of Foreign Affairs: „Since India already subscribes to the substance of the test ban treaty, all that remains is its actual signature" (Singh, Jaswant: "Against Nuclear Apartheid". In: Foreign Affairs, September/October 1998.).

> [T]he US Senate itself decided not to ratify the CTBT, thereby making it possible for Indian diplomats to paste temporary smirks on their faces and to gloat that their stand has been vindicated. Which stand? Surely not the one taken a few years ago by the Indian representative, who declared unequivocally, 'We will not sign the CTBT. Not now. Not ever'. Much water flowed down the Potomac since that brave statement and only a few weeks ago there was much mumbling by those who determine security policy about 'building a national consensus' so that India could put its mark on the CTBT without too much discord in the political class.[732]

13.6. Joining the Club and Closing the Door

During the period of consolidation, the erstwhile heated debate on the international non-proliferation regime among India's strategic elite gradually abated. Only the NPT Review Conference in mid-2000 drew some attention. The mainstream stance on the issue shifted significantly compared to the immediate aftermath of the tests. While most of the analysts in 1998 and 1999 stuck to the pre-test arguments, by 2000 a consensus had emerged to drop India's long-held rejection of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and engage in some form of negotiation on India's possible adherence to the NPT and CTBT. The acceptance of India as a nuclear weapons state was thereby considered the crucial precondition to any constructive approach. The was again most clearly stressed by C. Raja Mohan:

> The non-proliferation champions of the NPT insist that New Delhi, if not now, at least over the long-term, could be persuaded to join the NPT. If they have their way… the conference could urge India to join the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. Nothing could be more preposterous… . Instead of the empty prattle about making the NPT universal, the time has come for the managers of the treaty to accept the reality of three nuclear weapons states outside the NPT system and the impossibility of getting them into the treaty without modifying it. No multilateral treaty or a legal system can survive the test of time if it does not have the ability to adjust to changing circumstances… . Once the treaty managers accept the ground reality, it should be easier for the NPT system to seriously explore ways of finding a *modus vivendi* with the nuclear weapon states outside the treaty. A genuine accommodation between the NPT and the nuclear hold-outs would in fact complete the architecture of the global non-proliferation regime and enhance international peace and stability.[733]

While Mohan had been one of the first opinion leaders to propagate a 180 degree shift in India's NPT policy in mid-1998, his rhetoric became much more explicit two years later. In his view, demand for a universal NPT was nothing more than 'empty prattle'. This again

[732] Das, Arvind N.: "India and the CTBT debacle: Did the dog learn French?". In: Indian Express, October 21st 1999.
[733] Mohan, C. Raja: "Nuclear India & the NPT ". In: The Hindu, April 27th 2000.

contrasted sharply to the consensus of India's strategists (including Mohan himself) until 1998, which involved rejecting the NPT for its dearth of universality and global equity.

While the member states of the non-proliferation regime were reluctant to give India official status as a nuclear weapons state for fear that it might set a precedent for other countries with nuclear ambitions, these concerns went unacknowledged by Mohan and his peers. Behind the strategists' inattentiveness was their implicit perception of India's natural right to this status (in contrast to other states). This commonly held view derived from what this study refers to as India's moral exceptionalism.

After vigorously demanding India's acceptance into the nuclear club, Mohan argued that this right should only be granted to India, that the door of the club should be closed thereafter:

> India alone among the nuclear hold-outs is in a position to initiate a political reconciliation between the NPT and those outside it. On matters nuclear, Israel's strategy is low-key and Tel Aviv has no desire to fall into the trap of a diplomatic confrontation with the Arab states in multilateral for a that address nuclear issues. In any case, the U.S. is there to take care of Israel's nuclear interests. Pakistan has never had an independent line on global nuclear issues.[734]

Once again, this view strongly contrasted to the dominating rhetoric of the pre-1998 period, which divided the world into 'nuclear haves' and 'nuclear have-nots'.

In fact, both Israel and Pakistan kept a low-profile within the international debate on the non-proliferation regime. Both countries were preoccupied with vital security concerns – Israel surrounded by hostile Arab states and Pakistan facing a conventionally superior adversary on its eastern border – and therefore proved to be rather disinterested in the status aspects of the treaty[735]. Thus, India was truly the only state to vehemently claim the superior status ostensibly attached to the possession of nuclear weapons.
Mohan continued to trivialise India's 'discrimination'- argument:

> To be able to explore reconciliation with the NPT system, India will have to discard much of the nuclear mythology that it has created over the last three decades. Take for example the Indian litany that the NPT is an 'unfair' and 'discriminatory' treaty and therefore it will have nothing to do with it. The Indian argument against the NPT in the framework of the North-South divide insults the intelligence of those nations from the South who have joined the treaty in such large numbers.[736]

When the NPT review conference started in May 2000, India again decided not to send an observer to Geneva. Then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaswant Singh sent an address to the

[734] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, April 27th 2000.
[735] in the case of Israel even officially denying the possession of nuclear weapons.
[736] Mohan, C. Raja: op.cit.. In: The Hindu, April 27th 2000.

participants categorically declaring that India would not adhere to the NPT as a 'non-nuclear weapon state'. Some of the major participatory states responded by forwarding a statement rejecting India's recognition as a nuclear weapon state. This stalemate had few repercussions on India's domestic debate, and the strategic elite soon withdrew its attention from the non-proliferation issue and turned to other fields, such as Indo-US bilateral relations.

The North Korean nuclear crisis wrung very little attention from India's strategic community. The few commentaries mainly focused on the question of how the nuclear dangers emerging from North Korea could be contained. The fact that North Korea assumed a similar rhetoric about the discriminatory NPT and the unacceptable restrictions on its sovereignty by IAEA safeguards remained largely unappreciated. North Korea's nuclear course was mainly interpreted as yet another proof of the flaws in the NPT. As summarised in an *Indian Express* article in January 2003,

> [o]bviously the issue goes far beyond North Korea. The provision of withdrawal in the NPT always represented the Achille's heel of the non-proliferation regime so assiduously built up over the decades. Withdrawal from the NPT by North Korea and the acquisition of nuclear weapons may well lead to the unwinding of the nuclear order with unpredictable consequences. India, which has had serious reservations about the NPT, has always cautioned the international community of the goal of pursuing non-proliferation without corresponding progress on global nuclear disarmament. India itself was unlikely to have gone nuclear if nuclear disarmament had been accorded even some priority after the Cold War ended.[737]

As the author quite rightly stated, India had always refused to sign the NPT because it lacked disarmament provisions. His assumption that India would have foregone nuclear weapons if disarmament would have been taken more serious after the Cold War was nevertheless a bold speculation. Evidence presented in this study suggests that India short of an expedited and unrealistic total nuclear disarmament, would have gone the nuclear path even if an agreement on disarmament could have reached. Further, this study has presented substantial evidence that it was the unrealistic nature of the claim itself that made it so attractive for the elite's discourse strategy. It allowed India's elite to categorically refuse any non-proliferation agreement and still maintain its moral high-ground.

The commentary on North Korea's nuclear programme further illustrated the extent to which India's status as a nuclear weapons state was already taken for granted as part of India's self-depiction in 2003. As Manpreet Sethi commented,

> [w]hile the US perceives greater national interest in devoting its resources and energies to taming Iraq, India must forcefully highlight the nuisance value of North Korean nuclear brinkmanship and press upon the international community to

[737] N.N.: "Nuclear Pandora's box". In: The Indian Express, January 11th 2003.

> resolve this crisis so that others do not reappear. Let not other countries conclude from this episode that nuclear brinkmanship works.[738]

Sethi's remarks illustrate the degree to which India's strategic community had already accepted India's membership in the nuclear club as a given fact after more than three decades of nuclear brinkmanship. A paltry five years after its self-declaration as a nuclear weapon state, one of the main tasks of India's nuclear policy was, according to its strategic community, to 'press the international community' not to allow aspiring countries to engage in nuclear brinkmanship, and to keep the door of the nuclear club closed.

In sum, the international nuclear nonproliferation regime was the crucial issue determining the course of India's nuclear debate. During the decisive years in the mid-1990s, two thirds of all nuclear related accounts addressed this issue. The extensive content analysis of these accounts has clearly shown the close causal relationship between the commentary on the Geneva negotiation processes on the NPT and CTBT in the years 1995 and 1996, and the Indian decision to openly go nuclear in 1998. Next, the fact that the strategic elite almost exclusively focused on the implications of the nuclear non-proliferation regimes for India's international standing, while the regimes were a priori considered detrimental to India's security without any evidence validates the core assumption of the model defining status seeking as a national interest in its own right, which does exist independently from other national interests such as security.
These findings lead to the following syllogism:

- A causality exists between the focus of the nuclear discourse on the international non-proliferation regime, and India's nuclear breakthrough.
- A causality exists between the dominance of status seeking over security within the national interest composition, and the focus of the nuclear discourse on the international non-proliferation regime.
- Therefore, India's nuclear breakthrough was caused mainly by status considerations, and less by security considerations.

[738] Sethi, Manpreet: "Running with the bomb". In: The Indian Express, March 4th 2003.

Conclusion:

Regional Ties and Global Aspirations

Explaining India's Decision to 'Go Nuclear'

By dropping the conventionally made assumption that security considerations alone matter in strategic policy making, and instead include a variety of further national interests, this study is able to present a comprehensive explanation to the rationale behind India's nuclear policy making. The study has shown that certain socially constructed normative values attributed to nuclear weapons made them particularly attractive for India's struggle for international recognition. The quest for international status is the decisive factor in the national interest composition that determines India's nuclear course.

Elite Perception and the Peculiarities of India's Strategic Policy Making

Elite opinion and status thinking

The value attached to nuclear weapons in the country's quest for status was defined by a relatively small section of India's elite, referred to as the 'strategic elite'. This group of strategists, which was able to monopolise the strategic discourse on nuclear weapons, exercised administrative power through their direct advising of organisational position-holders as well as through communicative power – shaping public opinion and generating public pressures on the government.

Their overriding influence benefited from three major structural features of the framework in which the nuclear discourse was embedded. First, throughout most of India's nuclear course, clear institutional policy-making structures were missing, allowing the strategists to influence the country's nuclear course through personal relationships and informal networking. Several reforms between 1998 and 2003 gradually lifted the institutional shortcomings in the realm of strategic policy making, but were not yet fully able to change the predilection of India's policy elite for impulsive, ad hoc strategic decision-making.

A second, strongly interrelated feature of India's nuclear policy making structures was the lack of clear political directives. which became particularly apparent during the crucial years of India's nuclear programme in the 1990s, in which formal nuclear decisions were continuously made post hoc only after the nuclear scientists and the strategic elite had created facts that limited the decision-makers' room to manoeuvre.

The third feature setting the framework of India's nuclear policy making was the role of public opinion. India's public generally proved to be rather preoccupied with domestic affairs and was largely disinterested in the nuclear issue. According to a post-poll survey conducted by the Delhi based Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in 1999, one year after the nuclear tests, 53.5 percent of India's electorate had never heard of the nuclear

tests. Moreover, 35.6 percent of the respondents had never heard of China, India's main nuclear rival and only 13.1 percent viewed Indo-Chinese relations negatively.[739] Despite its disinterest in international affairs, India's public proved to be highly sensitive to issues that stimulated sentiments of national pride or national status. The role these public sentiments played in India's nuclear discourse largely accounts for the strong emotionalisation of the debate in the mid-1990s, particularly with regard to issues related to the international non-proliferation regime.
However, this emotionalised public opinion was highly volatile, as became apparent in the aftermath of the nuclear tests in both 1974 and 1998, in that it set off short-lived waves of patriotic enthusiasm. These subsided as the public became preoccupied with the more tangible problems of everyday life.

The central means by which the strategic elite exercised its communicative power was their extensive publishing in India's print media, primarily in English-language dailies. The analysis of a random sample of 705 articles (expressing views on the nuclear issue by the strategic elite) in India's five major newspapers proved to be effective in tracking down the trends and dynamics of India's nuclear discourse. The articles also served to highlight the causal relationship between the strategists' discourse and both public opinion formation and formal nuclear decision-making.

Who are the strategic elite?
Within India's strategic elite, three broad sections can be distinguished: a) strategists reflecting the views of the armed forces, mainly comprised of retired officers b) strategists reflecting the views of the nuclear scientific community and c) those strategists referred to as the 'politico-strategists' with political, administrative, academic, or journalist backgrounds.

Until the late 1980s, the military-strategists' position on nuclear weapons was diffident at best, reflecting the military's comparably low appreciation of status thinking. As long as the nuclear programme was more concerned with showmanship than with the development of deployable weapons systems, India's armed forces were rather disinterested in the matter.

The implications of the Brasstacks Crisis of 1986 and 1987 on India's strategic thought as well as the progress of India's missile programme in the late 1980s gradually shifted the military's attitude, and the need to acquire nuclear weapons for the country's security became increasingly accepted. The leading figure of the military-strategists during the most decisive period for India's nuclear course was K. Sundarji. The significance of Sundarji's extensive publishing was twofold. First, it greatly enhanced the nuclear debate's sophistication in terms of strategic expertise – a clear weakness in most previous nuclear accounts. Second, Sundarji's involvement in political affairs during active duty broke the military's self-imposed taboo of non-involvement and had a significant impact on the country's civil-military relations in general.

[739] National Election Survey 1999, conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi.

While comprising the most heterogeneous section of India's strategic elite, the politico-strategists' views were nevertheless based on one major common paradigm: The understanding that India's position in the world was underrated and that its elevation had to be one of the prime objectives of India's foreign policy. Disagreement existed only with regard to the means India should apply to achieve status gains, including what role nuclear weapons should play.

India's most important strategic think-tank, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), took an intermediate position between the military-strategic and the politico-strategic sections. The IDSA, and particularly K. Subrahmanyam, created the strategic debate in the late 1960s and early 1970s that has continued since to occupy the central position in the strategic elite's nuclear discourse.
For three decades, Subrahmanyam, who was arguably the single most influential expert on the issue, defined the mainstream position of India's strategic elite on nuclear weapons, including the symbolic, often contradictory values for India's status and prestige.

In three decades after the civilian nuclear programme began in the 1940s, nuclear scientists were able to exercise a significant amount of administrative power that allowed them to shape India's nuclear course with little political interference. Right from the beginning, the scientists saw themselves in a competition with their Western counterparts for 'mastering the Atoms'. These motives account for their predilection for depicting their achievements as intrinsic parts of the nuclear programme.

Until the late 1960s, scientists held a monopoly in public opinion leadership on the nuclear issue, enabling them to bind the nuclear competition with the normative values that determined India's image of itself as a proud and powerful nation. Whereas the politico-strategic section followed a heterogeneous, normative approach that implied values of equity and justice, the nuclear scientists' position was intrinsically nationalistic in its vision of a morally and culturally superior India. In their understanding, India's nuclear achievements should be aimed at displaying their country's supremacy.

The nuclear scientific section generally took the most uncompromising and determined position on India's nuclear course. The scientists' dominant role in shaping public opinion has gradually weakened since the 1970s. During the 1990s, scientists were clearly sidelined by the two other sections of India's strategic elite and were eventually marginalised after 1998. Their normative ideas regarding the role of nuclear technology nevertheless proved to be persistent and remained a common theme throughout the 1990s. The appeal of these ideas only abated in the period of nuclear consolidation.

Detaching Strategic Thought from Security

Inadequacy of security oriented approaches
Of the total sample of 705 published accounts on the nuclear issue[740], less than one third of the authors identify security-seeking as the main motive behind India's nuclear course, while the majority of the publications focus on either domestic factors or aspects relating to India's international standing.

In the central phases of India's nuclear programme, the weight given to security further declined to about one sixth in the 1991 to 1996 period, and to only one tenth in the 1996 to 1998 period. After India's nuclear tests in 1998, the relative number of security-related articles gradually increased, accounting for more than half of the accounts on the nuclear issue addressed by 2003. In other words, while the causes of India's nuclear build-up were not primarily driven by security considerations, its consequences were.

This evidence suggests that security was not the dominating motive behind India's nuclear armament behaviour. Consequently, neither security-oriented explanatory models, nor threat-oriented explanatory models appear adequate. Instead of balancing power, or even threats, states pursue their national interests in the international system with broadly defined 'national interests'.

As the structural condition of the international system, the relative power distribution is permissive but is not imperative to India's nuclear arming behaviour. That is to say that India did not acquire nuclear weapons because it considered them necessary to improve its security, but acquired them to satisfy other interests under the premise that they would not harm its security.

By considering security as a permissive, rather than imperative motive of state behaviour, this model departs from conventional explanatory concepts. Ever since Baruch de Spinoza introduced self-preservation as the determining motive of (individual and collective) human behaviour in his general social model[741], its pre-eminence over further motives became accepted by most theorists in the fields of sociology and political science. The idea of self-preservation (or security, for that matter) as the overriding motive was most radically maintained in the field of International Relations. However, Spinoza himself was already aware of its inadequacy to exclusively explain individual behaviour within society or state behaviour in the international arena. Next to self-preservation, he added the strive for perfection as a motive inherent to individual and collective human behaviour. Furthermore, impulsive decision making caused by 'affective imbalance' might prevent men from pursuing these two objectives effectively. Analogous to Spinoza's concept of 'striving for perfection', this study introduced the quest for status as the second dominating motive of

[740] on the probability of the population parameter according to the law of large numbers, see Appendix A.
[741] Baruch de Spinoza: *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata* (1677).

state behaviour, next to security. Instead of referring to 'affective imbalances', it added psychological biases as intervening variables to the model.

The impact of nuclear weapons on India's relative power equation with its main strategic rivals, Pakistan and China, was ambiguous. With regard to China, the strategic conditions for India's nuclear rationale were set in the 1960s. China emerged as a major threat to India after the 1962 war. In 1964, China's first nuclear weapons test provided the strategic compulsion for India to build-up its own nuclear arsenal.

While the strategic incentives for India's nuclear build-up in the 1960s were unmistakable, India's actual course circumvented them in several ways. First of all, when India declared itself a nuclear weapons state in 1998, it had no delivery systems that could threaten China's power centres. The existence of such delivery vehicles, however, was necessary to establish a credible deterrent against China. India's nuclear declaration was thus counterproductive, as it increased deterrence instability between the countries. Furthermore, China's cautious conventional arming behaviour along its border with India, as well as the political process of reconciliation initiated in 1988, had significantly reduced the immediacy of the Chinese threat in India's strategic calculus.

In its strategic relationship with Pakistan, the equalising effects of both countries' nuclearisation reduced India's superiority in terms of its conventional power capabilities. The introduction of nuclear weapons enabled Pakistan to threaten India's heartland for the first time. The prospect of a nuclear-armed Pakistan, frequently named as one major incentive for India's nuclear proliferation during the 1980s, neglects the fact that it was India that initiated and continuously pushed for the nuclearisation of South Asia. This rationale would have recommended India's acceptance of Pakistan's offer to establish a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in South Asia, which it did not.

In sum, the introduction of nuclear weapons reduced but did not reverse India's superiority vis-à-vis Pakistan. With regard to China, nuclear weapons harmed India's strategic position in the short-term but could improve if it develops long-range ballistic missiles and second-strike capabilities.

If security considerations alone had determined India's nuclear course, it would have followed one of three possible approaches (ranked according to their benefits for India's security):
a) India would have foregone nuclear weapons, fostered its conventional capabilities along its northern and western borders, engaged in alliance building, and negotiated security guarantee agreements with the nuclear weapons states.
b) India would have conducted a nuclear test as soon as possible after the Chinese test of 1964 and subsequently developed appropriate delivery vehicles.
c) India would have developed long-range ballistic missiles and second strike capabilities first, only afterwards declaring itself a nuclear weapons state.
The strong deviation of India's nuclear course from these suggested patterns can be explained by the existence of other national interests and the limited relevance of security

considerations as permissive, rather than imperative determinants of India's strategic policy.

Theory and ideology
Despite the deviation of the nuclear course from security-centred approaches, the simplistic mainstream explanatory approaches, equating power-seeking with security-seeking, were nevertheless popular among the defenders of India's nuclear policy among the elite.

The popularity of these approaches can be explained by their dual function in explaining and legitimising a state's foreign policy. In other words, more than in explanatory power, security-centric approaches themselves become instruments of political power to those who, in Pierre Bourdieu's words, have the power to impose the principles of the construction of reality. India's nuclear build-up epitomised this ambiguity. The epistemic community's use of systemic approaches to legitimise India's arming behaviour is best seen in its estimation of Chinese missile capabilities. That China can target India with nuclear-capable long range and intercontinental ballistic missiles is beyond doubt – the strategists considered this alone compelling enough to call for India's nuclearisation. Their security-centric argument, demanding India's preparedness for any imaginable threat scenario, was very much in line with the systemic approaches based on the Balance-of-Power theory. For the same reasons, China's declaration that it would not threaten non-nuclear weapons states with its arsenal was rejected as a paper tiger.

This approach prevented any more nuanced assessments of the Chinese nuclear threat, as it neglected several contradicting factors. First of all, deploying intercontinental ballistic missiles to medium rage targets in India, despite being technically possible, would be strategic folly for two reasons: the excessive costs and weakening of its deterrence credibility towards the USA (considering its limited arsenal of ICBMs in the 1990s). China had abstained from developing nuclear capable medium-range ballistic missiles in Tibet in order to circumvent proliferation pressures on India. Furthermore, the systemic approaches were not able to appreciate the political dimension of China's no-first-use declaration. Any violation of this principle would entail far more damage within the international community than whatever was gained through a nuclear threat or 'nuclear blackmail' (an expression frequently applied by India's strategic elite), especially considering the states' few conflicting interests. By declaring itself a nuclear weapons state in 1998, India lost the relative protection provided by its non-nuclear status while inadequately replacing this loss with a credible nuclear deterrent.

Nuclear Weapons and India's International Status

Status-seeking as national interest
In the 1990s, nuclear weapons' ambiguous contribution to India's regional security environment took a back seat to the global aspects of India's nuclear course, namely the role of nuclear weapons for India's international standing, Indo-US nuclear relations, and

India's position on the international non-proliferation regime. The USA was not perceived as a nuclear threat to India's security, but as a threat, via its non-proliferation policy, to India's aspirations. Similarly, India's strategic elite largely abstained from assessing the international non-proliferation regime in the context of Indian security (which surely would have caused India to sign both the NPT and the CTBT), instead favouring to stress how the regime provided superior status to five powers.
The share of status-related accounts in all nuclear reporting increased from about 20% before 1986 to more than 70% in the period from 1991 to 1998, declining thereafter to 35% during the nuclear consolidation and to about 20% after 2003.

In India's nuclear policy formulation, status-seeking became a basic national interest in its own right. In contrast to security-seeking, which generally aims at increasing the state's (relative) substance of power, status-seeking aims above all at increasing the state's reputation of power by means of displaying it (referred to as 'policy of prestige' by Hans Morgenthau).

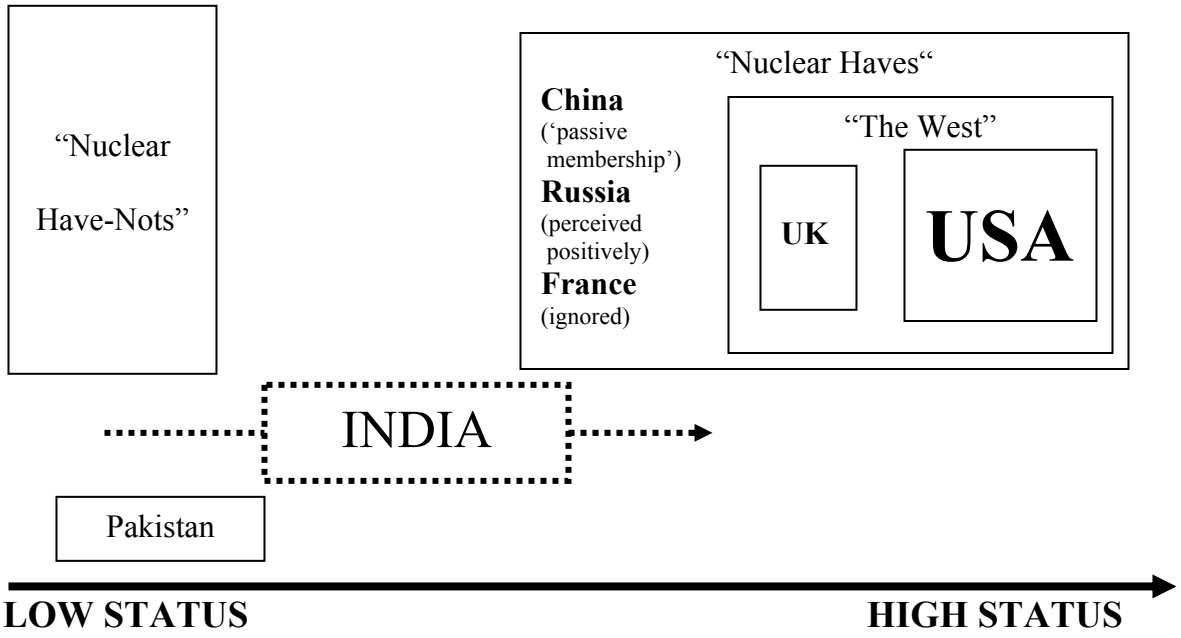
The nature of the international status competition raises questions about which normative values actually constitute 'status' and who defines them. Conversely, the more tangible conceptualisation offered by the conventional balance-of-power system differs significantly with its measurable, substantive military power capabilities. The perception of the status competition was also prone to the psychological biases underlying its normative construction.

Though they often contradicted each other, numerous socially constructed values were allocated to the policy of prestige and status-seeking. For example, the 'equity' norm, according to which the distinction between 'nuclear haves' and 'nuclear have-nots' has to be lifted, contradicted the 'nationalist' norm, by which India has to join the upper ranks of the major powers in the 'nuclear club' and close the door behind it to enjoy its exclusive status. Despite these contradictions, all normative values had one thing in common: their inherent acceptance of nuclear weapons as the currency in which the international status of states was measured.

Status competition and the nuclear order
In their quest for improved status, India's strategic elite identified those countries as India's main competitors that held the status India was aspiring to – the members of the 'nuclear club'.
The status competition, as perceived by India's strategic elite, is illustrated in Chart 13.1.. It shows the degree of status attributed to the various states from left (low status) to right (high status). By acquiring nuclear weapons and refusing to sign the NPT as non-nuclear weapons state, India was thought to have outstripped all those countries which accepted their inferior position as 'nuclear have-nots' in status terms. However, as long as it is not formally accepted as a nuclear weapons state, it is perceived to be confined to an inferior status as compared to the five officially recognised nuclear weapons states.
While being formally defined as those five states officially recognised by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, the term 'nuclear club' was often used somewhat metaphorically by

India's strategists. While Russia was usually seen positively and exempted from all the alleged negative attributes of the 'nuclear club' – its discrimination, colonialism and, more generally, its immorality – France did not play any role at all. As Great Britain was largely perceived as satellite of the USA, it was America that epitomised the supreme status holder and main suppressor of Indian aspirations. This role helps explain the tremendous attention US American nuclear policy received among India's strategic elite during the 1990s. While being a formal member of the 'nuclear club', China's position was carefully distinguished from the others. In the nuanced rhetoric of India's strategic elite, China was thought to have adopted a somewhat passive membership: Though admitted by the creators of the club, it was unable to make decisions over new memberships or changes in the rules. The strategists' frequent use of the term 'the West' – more of a metaphoric than a geographic specification – aimed at denoting the states that heralded the discriminatory order.

Chart 13.1.: Nuclear Status Distribution in the Perception of India's Strategic Elite



Within India's nuclear calculus, Pakistan and China were perceived as threats to its security as well as being factors in the international status competition. In India's efforts to improve its status through the acquisition of nuclear weapons, Pakistan played a rather ambiguous role. After that of China, the Pakistani threat was considered the major security factor behind India's nuclear build-up. Particularly after the Brasstacks Crisis in the late 1980s, the fears of a nuclearised Western neighbour gave a major impetus to India's nuclearisation efforts. However, during the mid-1990s, when the nuclear issue was most intensely debated regarding its role in Indian status, Pakistan largely disappeared from the radar of India's strategic elite. Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear capabilities was largely written off, as would (probably) fail to elevate Pakistan to a higher rank in the international status

competition, as it would in India's case. Pakistan was instead considered the major obstacle for India's rise beyond the South Asian region.

Pakistan emerged as the test case for India's strategic elite to incorporate national interests, security-seeking as well as status-seeking, into a single explanatory concept for India's nuclear course. The pitfall of the Pakistan argument was its contradictory assumption that though Pakistan's nuclear capabilities were advanced enough to pose a severe threat to India's nuclear security, they were not enough to qualify for nuclear status. The inferior status of Pakistan's nuclear programme was, according to this rationale, due to its imported nature (in contrast to India's indigenously built nuclear arsenal). Throughout its accounts of Pakistan's nuclear programme, the country's massive foreign aid, both financial and technological, has always held a key position. While charges of Chinese assistance and the illegal acquisition of nuclear expertise from Western countries, both of which had factual evidence in their support, were commonly raised after the Brasstacks crisis, speculations of a 'Western' master plan to subdue India through secret nuclear technology transfers to Pakistan gained some followers during the escalating nuclear debate in the mid-1990s. Furthermore, the idea of an 'Islamic bomb', developed with the financial assistance of Arab countries, also recurred throughout the 1980s and 1990s.
While some strategists, like K. Subrahmanyam, devoted a substantial number of articles to the Pakistan rationale, most members of India's strategic elite in the 1990s were rather indifferent to Pakistan's nuclear status.

The trade-off between status-seeking and security-seeking in India's nuclear policy making became even more obvious when one considers China's role. On the one side, the Chinese nuclear threat was perceived by many strategists as the only strategic incentive that could credibly legitimise India's nuclearisation. While the China issue was only rarely addressed by India's strategic elite, these accounts nevertheless came out in favour of the bomb for all nuclear-related issues. In other words, among those few strategists who concerned themselves with the Chinese threat, a large scale consensus existed that India should counter with its own nuclear arsenal.

One general inconsistency in these accounts was the authors' suggestion that India should respond to the Chinese threat by 'going nuclear', i.e. declaring itself a nuclear weapons state. The mere symbolism of this act, without the prior development of the delivery systems necessary to create a credible nuclear deterrence, would have been disadvantageous for India's security vis-à-vis China. Implicit in these suggestions was the perception of China as India's main competitor for status, which as member of the 'nuclear club' and as veto power in the UN Security Council, had already achieved the international standing to which India aspired. The success with which China had used its nuclear capabilities since the mid-1960s proved to be a compelling incentive for India's nuclear programme. Furthermore, Chinese foreign policy, while being increasingly accommodative towards India's security needs since the late 1980s, carefully distinguished between the two countries' international status, leaving little doubt about Chinese superiority. This attitude helps to account for the persistently negative image of China among India's strategic elite despite substantial improvements in the countries' security and economic ties.

Two events are illustrative of how the elite perceived China. After the nuclear test of 1974, India's strategists emphatically supported the government's official claim that the test had been a 'peaceful nuclear explosion'. While many international observers doubted this claim, the Chinese government officially accepted the peaceful nature of the test, and responded to it modestly. Other than might have been expected, India's strategists did not appreciate China's sensitivity towards India's moral distinction between peaceful and military applications, but reacted largely negative by decrying Chinese arrogance. Different dynamics were in place after the nuclear tests of 1998. As in 1974, the immediate Chinese reaction was rather aloof. Only after the Indian government had named the Chinese threat as the main incentive for its nuclear testing did the Chinese government react sharply. Its main criticism, however, was not the nuclear tests as such, but the declaratory policy of the Indian government in its aftermath. Although the undiplomatic rhetoric of the Indian government might have damaged its security interests, a majority of Indian commentators expressed satisfaction about China's reactions: China finally took India seriously.

The events of 1974 and 1998 indicate that security considerations may have been seen as the permissive frame in which Indo-Chinese interaction took place. The interaction as such, however, appeared to have been largely guided by the elite perception of China as a competitor in India's quest for international status.

Nuclear Weapons and India's Image of itself

The dual norms of India's image of itself: Between moral exceptionalism and military prowess

Within India's nuclear discourse, the normative values that posit nuclear weapons as the underlying currency of the (socially constructed) definition of international status are complex, and often discourage a clear and direct course towards nuclearisation. Due to this complexity, the relationship between nuclear weapons and international status is not monocausal (the more nuclear weapons, the higher the international status). For example, the value placed in indigenous development frequently delayed India's nuclear course, yet was nevertheless considered essential in status terms.

The most decisive factor in India's nuclear course was the friction between the two main normative values inherent in the status thinking of India's elite. The first norm, deeply rooted in India's independence struggle and closely connected to Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, was India's quest for social recognition as a morally superior international actor, an example of 'moral exceptionalism'. Nehru's definition of this concept involved the negation of power as a means of foreign policy despite the fact that it thus contradicted the second major normative value attributed to nuclear weapons: the quest for social recognition as a military power. Since the initiation of India's nuclear programme, these two norms set the parameters of the corresponding debate by the strategic elite. In an attempt to accommodate the contradictions, the strategic elite

developed the concept of the 'nuclear option'. This term was, however, technically meaningless, as 'to develop the nuclear option' implied the development of nuclear capabilities. But with regard to the two underlying norms, it was essential. Even after the emergence, in the mid-1990s, of a broad consensus among India's strategic elite for the unveiling of the nuclear programme, many strategists still preferred 'the nuclear option' to claiming the status of a nuclear weapons power openly.

The definition the 'nuclear option' became popular among the strategists in the 1970s; it denoted the technical ability to convert the civilian nuclear programme into a military programme should India's hand be forced by external pressures. Until the late 1980s, the programme's peaceful nature was emphatically defended despite the fact that it had already produced rudimentary nuclear devices. About the late 1980s and early 1990s, the nuclear option theme was modified to the new international conditions. The degree of confusion among the strategists during this period of transition can be seen in the confusion of K. Subrahmanyam's accounts – he simultaneously emphasised India's moral exceptionalism with regard to its nuclear self-restraint and, at the same time, praised the sophistication of India's nuclear weapons capabilities. Ostensibly for status reasons, he even claims that the plutonium cores, which India could mount on its advanced missiles, were part of India's 'civilian nuclear programme'.

Subsequently, the 'option' concept no longer denoted the question of whether India should be 'keeping the nuclear option open', but whether India should exercise it. The choice was no longer between 'peaceful' and 'military', but between 'military in principle' and 'weaponised'. Throughout the 1990s, the semantic distinction was further marginalised. In the period from 1996 to May 1998, many among the strategic elite derived India's moral superiority from the mere fact that, while having acquired nuclear weapons capabilities, India had so far restrained itself from openly declaring them.

Strong evidence suggests that, at least since the early 1990s, the nuclear option concept had already been reduced to a rhetorical device, as from that time on it had not presented political decision makers with a real choice (if it ever had). Since then, most strategists ceased to discuss the pros and cons of nuclear weapons. Instead, their analyses applied the scholastic method: While the need for India to acquire nuclear weapons was determined a priori as a fixed outcome of the analysis, the task was to develop rigorous lines of reasoning. The general outlook of the nuclear discourse was no longer characterised by the clashing of advocates and critics, but by the competition between bomb advocates for the most conclusive line of argument in favour of India's nuclearisation. The dynamics arising from these changing patterns significantly contributed to the increasingly emotionalised and biased nuclear discourse in the mid-1990s.
In the semantics of its strategic elite, India 'exercised its nuclear option' in May of 1998.

India's perceived victimisation
One further effect of India's moral exceptionalism was the strong tendency by India's elite to perceive themselves as victims. This sensitivity explains the charges of discrimination that dominated India's discourse on the international non-proliferation regime and its

relations to Western countries. Until the present day, this strong sense of victimisation has prevented India's strategic elite, with very few exceptions, from discerning any pro-active role India might have played in the development of its nuclear arsenal. This perception was closely interrelated with the concept of the 'nuclear option', according to which India would -- in J. N. Dixit's words -- 'acquire nuclear weapons if unavoidable circumstances' forced it to, being Western discrimination, Chinese blackmail, or Pakistani aggression.

The equity norm as a socialist variant of status-seeking

One further normative value, which determined elite perception of the international nuclear competition, was the idea of equity. Similar to the idea of moral exceptionalism, the importance of this idea in the Indian context originated from the struggle for independence and was deeply rooted in India's post-colonial, multi-ethnic society. The equity norm was the cornerstone of Nehru's foreign policy and its main source of legitimisation.

The reason why the idea of equity played a particularly prominent role in the nuclear realm was the explicitness of the nuclear order's inequality as laid down in the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty of 1968. Furthermore, the vigour with which the United States of America – until then perceived by India's elite as the main promoter of global democratic and equity values – pushed the treaty through caused severe consternation. Since then, virtually every account on the international nuclear order published by India's strategic elite took note of the discriminatory character of this order, which divided the world into 5 'nuclear haves' and 140 odd 'nuclear have-nots'. In this context, the term 'nuclear club' was most frequently used to denote the exclusivity of those states that owned nuclear weapons. To use the resemblance to British social clubs, the more exclusive the admission was, the more appealing it became for outsiders to seek membership as well as to express their indignation should admission be turned down. The metaphorical reference to an 'exclusive club' was particularly appealing in the Indian context, as the existence of British clubs in pre-independence India, in which admission was restricted to white people, had become symbols of the Indian nation's humiliation under colonial rule. The parallel between India's struggle, beginning in 1968, against the nuclear order and India's struggle for freedom prior to 1947 was a recurring theme in commentary during the Geneva negotiations in the mid-1990s.

The only way to overcome this 'global regime of nuclear apartheid' was to force the nuclear weapons states to abolish, or at least significantly reduce their arsenals. The call for total nuclear disarmament became a recurring demand of India in the international fora.

Since the 1970s, India's struggle for an equity-based international nuclear order has come under increased scrutiny. In 1971, Indira Gandhi explicitly defined the South Asian strategic set-up in unequal terms by claiming a superior position for India. Perhaps as a result, most Third World countries did not, as expected, welcome India's nuclear test in 1974 as they had with the Chinese tests in 1964, but reacted with indifference or even criticism. This weakened India's image of itself as the spearhead of the Third World. Despite this setback, many strategists maintained the idea that India developed its nuclear capabilities in the name of all 'nuclear have-nots'.

In the early 1980s, due to both sharp increases in the arsenals of the five nuclear weapons states and their continued use of nuclear weapons as leverage in the international arena, many among India's strategic elite came to the conclusion that India had to acquire nuclear capabilities in order to force them to take global nuclear disarmament seriously. This logic was little understood internationally.
Instead, it showed how fuzzy the idea of equity was in the context of India's nuclear build-up: Does a nuclear system with 5 'nuclear haves' and 140 odd 'nuclear have-nots' become any less discriminatory if the number of 'nuclear haves' is increased to 6? In the 1990s, this question was increasingly raised by strategists like Pran Chopra and Ashok Kapur.

Though still frequently raised by the proponents of India's nuclear weapons build-up, the call for total nuclear disarmament largely degenerated to an empty phrase that was only applied as a strategy to legitimise India's quest for the bomb. After the nuclear tests in May 1998, the idea of equity gradually reversed, with more and more strategists suggesting that India's main objective should be to keep the door of the nuclear club closed.

The "Lonely Moralist"
In late 1985, Pakistan launched an initiative in the UN General Assembly to create a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in South Asia. This initiative was mostly welcomed, with a majority of UN member states voting in its favour and the rest abstaining. India and Bhutan emerged as its lone opponents. This isolation on the international scene, particularly among Third World countries, had a deep impact on India's nuclear discourse. The idea of equity had triggered a momentum within the domestic debate, in which India was perceived as the spearhead of the Third World, and had developed its 'nuclear option' in the name of all 'nuclear have-nots'. The voting behaviour of the international community in late 1985 confronted the strategic elite with a different reality. While India's isolation concerned some strategists, a majority defiantly maintained this view and created the myth of India as the 'lonely moralist' that stood firm against the pressure from the 'nuclear haves'.

In a move to regain its reputation as an advocate for global nuclear disarmament, India supported joint initiatives to establish global treaties on a comprehensive test ban and on the fissile material cut-off in 1993.
The test ban initiative was surprisingly successful, with a large majority on states, including the USA, supporting it. India's strategic elite, however, withdrew its support in 1994/95 and forced the Indian government to oppose its implementation. While the reversal of their position was also justified by changing technical prerequisites, nuclear critics like Achin Vanaik suggested that it had more to do with the bomb advocates' underestimation of the treaty's chances of success. While both explanations have evidence in their support, they fail to explain the subsequent dynamics of India's nuclear debate comprehensively. The materialising agreement was fiercely condemned in a substantive number of exceedingly emotional accounts that firmed India's resolve to declare itself a nuclear weapons state. The debate that escalated from 1995 to 1996 detached itself from the real events at Geneva and resists explanation through either technical aspects or the clash of divergent normative values attached to the nuclear issue. Essential to the debate are the psychological momenta within India's idiosyncratic, inward looking discourse.

Several unfavourable factors contributed to the escalation of the debate. The first was the very short interval between the two negotiation processes in Geneva: One on the indefinite extension of the NPT, concluded in mid-1995, and the other on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, concluded in mid-1996. While India's strategic elite rejected the NPT outright as discriminatory, many of the commentators were unable to make a distinction between the two treaties and rejected the CTBT on similar grounds. This was ironic considering the fact that India had originally supported the CTBT initiative in 1993 by virtue of its non-discriminatory character. Another factor was related to the governmental instability in India during the mid-1990s that lent the nuclear debate renewed attractiveness as a political tool. For the fragile government, the (rather destructive) 'No' to any tentative agreement in the international arena was the best option to avoid the exploitation of the nuclear issue by domestic political rivals.

Yet another unfavourable factor was the emergence of a negative feedback process between India's strategic elite and the international audience. The increasingly acrimonious debate in India heightened international fears about nuclearisation in South Asia, which in turn, increased the bitterness of the Indian debate.

Finally, the debate on the international non-proliferation regime coincided with the US American non-proliferation initiative, further heightening elite perception of international pressures against India and adding a sense of urgency to go nuclear.
While India's moral exceptionalism was the central thread in the heated debate over the international non-proliferation regime, the other major normative value of the nuclear issue – India's quest for status through military might – was equally pervasive. In the interpretation most prominently advocated by K. Subrahmanyam, the official acceptance of the non-nuclear status by most states automatically elevated India to a status superior to them. India's negotiation strategy of categorical opposition was, in Subrahmanyam's view, quite successful in serving both normative values and the non-nuclear weapons states' accession to the NPT was perceived as self-defeating policy. In the period between 1996 and 1998, Subrahmanyam developed a 3-rank model of international status distribution, with the non-nuclear weapons states in the lowest rank, the official nuclear weapons states in the highest rank, and India, as an 'undeclared nuclear weapons power', somewhere in between. Pakistan failed to make an appearance. After the nuclear tests, this concept had to be modified only marginally, with India as 'unofficial' nuclear weapons power.

The Nationalist – Joining the Nuclear Club and closing the door
Right from the beginning of India's nuclear programme, the scientists involved perceived their work as part of a competition with Western countries for scientific excellence. The main quality of the work was thereby thought to be its indigenous nature, which explained the strong emphasis of the scientists on self-reliance. The idea of equity played no role in this perceived competition. Correspondingly, the scientists' rejection of the international non-proliferation regime was not guided by normative principles of equity. Instead, they considered the unequal NPT provisions as acceptable in principle on the condition that India would be member of the 'nuclear club'.

Immediately after the nuclear tests of May 1998, the pragmatists among India's strategic elite, like C. Raja Mohan, adopted the scientists approach to the international nuclear order, and started to appreciate the benefits of the existing international nuclear regime for India's status. In the pragmatists' view, India's (self-) declaration as nuclear weapons state 'completed the architecture of the nuclear order', which therefore became acceptable to India.

Subsequently, an increasing part of the strategists considered the preservation of this order as one of the most important objectives of India's nuclear policy. This created the paradox situation that India supported the international non-proliferation treaties without being their member. A tentative accession to both treaties, NPT and CTBT, was based on the precondition of India's official acceptance as nuclear weapons state.

Implicit to this pragmatic appreciation of the nuclear order after the tests was the general understanding of India's elite that India had a natural right to the superior status associated with the possession of nuclear weapons due to its mere size, its cultural heritage and its democratic achievements (the latter being of particular relevance as distinguishing feature to China and Pakistan). This intrinsically nationalistic approach was inherent to India's nuclear debate since the beginning, but remained largely hidden behind the morally defined normative values attributed to the nuclear issue prior to 1998.

The reorientation of India's debate on the security aspects of the nuclear issue in the period of consolidation increased the strategists' understanding that it should be India's prime objective to prevent non-nuclear weapons states from acquiring the bomb.

Psychological Bias in India's Strategic Discourse

The study has pointed out the complexity of the interrelated, socially constructed normative values that define the compound of national interests that determined India's nuclear policy and its quest for international status. However, the policies often lead to a suboptimal pursuit of India's national interests through the violation of its underlying norms. This performance goes back to a persistent misperception of the nature and motives of relevant actors in the international arena.

Inward looking debate

Seeking international status through the acquisition of nuclear weapons is by no means a strategy confined to India. However, several of the normative values attached to this strategy, particularly within the realm of morality, were deeply rooted in India's post-colonial, multi-ethnic society. As such, the social construction of these norms was genuinely Indian. The unique significance of these values for the nuclear discourse caused a deviation from the dynamics of the international debate. It is therefore important to

supplement the analysis of the Indian strategic elite with those aspects of the international debate absent from the Indian context.

When the 'Atoms for Peace' programme was launched by Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1950s, a global consensus existed that nuclear technology had the potential for solving many global problems, above all growing energy demand. In the 1960s, the enthusiasm for nuclear technology gradually abated and its supposed benefits became increasingly controversial. In India, the nuclear scientists successfully prevented the public debate from becoming more critical, despite the fact that the performance of its civilian nuclear energy production was poorer than in other countries. The impact India's growing environmentalist movement had on the nuclear debate was marginal until 1998, when a more committed discussion emerged over the hazards of the nuclear industry.

While the 'Atoms for Peace' programme at first promoted peaceful applications of nuclear explosions, the PNE issue was soon dropped from the international agenda, as the idea of using nuclear explosions for mining or canal digging proved to be impractical. Furthermore, it became increasing obvious that peaceful nuclear explosions were technically indistinguishable from those produced by warheads. As a result, India became the only nation to launch a PNE programme exclusively. Despite these developments, most of India's strategic elite remained unaware of why the peacefulness of the 1974 test was questioned internationally.

The case was similar in the nuclear weapons realm. Virtually all values attached to the nuclear weapons issue, with the exception of the nationalistic motive – that India had a natural right to possess nuclear weapons and the superior status thus afforded – should have motivated India's strategic elite to ask themselves why other countries in similar strategic positions forewent the development of nuclear weapons. This debate, however, did not materialise. India's strategist brushed aside the willingness of almost all official non-nuclear weapons states to accept the unequal provisions of the NPT as a self-defeating policy. The resolution with which most countries backed the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 was backed by elite discourses in their respective domestic policy arenas. The positive dynamics of these debates remained unnoticed by the Indian elite.

The nuclear debate in the other major states that abstained from signing the NPT extension, Israel and Pakistan, fundamentally differed from the Indian discourse. Israel's strategists viewed the country's nuclear arsenal as essential for its self-preservation in a genuinely hostile strategic environment. The status dimension of nuclear weapons was a non-issue in Israel's low-profile public debate. While the main focus of Pakistan's nuclear discourse remained tied to security aspects, the participating elite valued its contribution to the country's status and prestige as well. In contrast to India, however, the status competition was not defined globally, but almost exclusively by its relationship to India. Overall, India emerged as the only country to reject the Geneva negotiations for status reasons. India's strategic elite largely abstained from thoroughly assessing why international debate on the non-proliferation issue almost invariably turned out contrary to the Indian position.

The official statements by the Indian government to the Geneva negotiations reflected the strategists' position by maintaining that India had no intentions to develop nuclear weapons, but was willing to pay any political and economic price to 'keep its nuclear option open'. The underlying logic remained largely inscrutable to the international audience, illustrating the discrepancy between the international non-proliferation discourse and India's isolated nuclear debate until 1998.

The "Occidentalist" view and the "West" stereotype

In the years from 1995 to 1998, the escalating nuclear debate became dominated by the elite's desire to 'teach the West a lesson'. This was perceived as an end in itself, and as such enough to justify India's nuclear breakthrough. The often insensitive rhetoric used by the international non-proliferation movement, particularly US policy makers, to convey their demands to India aggravated Indian sensitivity to alleged colonialist attitudes. Anti-colonialist reflexes alone, however, cannot comprehensively explain the escalation of the debate fifty years after India's independence.

Next to the aversion to alleged colonialist attitudes, the nuclear programme was also guided by a strong strive to emulate the West, expressed in the desire to 'join the nuclear club'.

The patterns which determined elite perception of 'the West' emerged from a cognitive bias that had produced a stereotyped world view in which Western interactions with India were not assessed as they were, but as India's elite expected them to be.

Oversimplification, intrinsic to any stereotype, moulded the perception of 'the West' as a monolithic bloc with the USA at the top. The diverging policies among Western states as well as the controversies within their polities remained largely unacknowledged. Within the boundaries of 'moral exceptionalism', 'the West' figured as abstract, demonic antagonist to India. This study has suggested the word 'occidentalism' to refer to the cognitive bias that effectively reverses the 'orientalist' charges frequently levelled against perceived Western discrimination.

One pattern of the escalating nuclear debate in the mid-1990s was that its arguments were not addressed to other participants within India's strategic community, but directed against an imagined Western antagonist. A majority of the accounts addressing the nuclear issue at the time took the form of a defence against alleged Western malice. The major reason for the marginalisation of criticism on India's nuclear course between summer 1995 and May 1998 was the explicit acceptance of the western stereotype by nuclear critics, who themselves based their arguments on the moral divide between India and 'the West'.

'The West' was largely equated with the USA. This emphasis was due to the country's status as the most powerful Western nation and the explicitness of American non-proliferation rhetoric; thus, a credibility gap arose from the juxtaposition of the rhetoric and America's reliance on the world's biggest nuclear arsenal (not to mention the frequent inconsistency of American South Asian policy in the past). Next to these tangible factors, a strong emotional affinity existed in the relationship of India's elite to America. In many ways, America's image of itself as the leader of the free world resembled what India's elite envisaged for their own country, the world's largest democracy and leader of the

underprivileged world. The normative value of moral exceptionality and the corresponding sense of mission plays a prominent role in both countries' political discourses. These underlying similarities explain the undercurrent of admiration in many commentaries on America's nuclear policy. They further explain the high emotional value of these accounts, particularly when they address America's perceived betrayal of moral values through ruthless power politics.

The strictly anti-Western patterns of India's nuclear debate in the mid-1990s had the paradoxical effect of causing the negative dependency of India's nuclear course on Western non-proliferation policy, despite its official justification in the name of India's sovereignty.

The changing US foreign policy towards South Asia in the early years of the Clinton Administration, particularly the Strobe Talbott initiative, posed a major challenge to the elite's perception of the international non-proliferation discourse. In many ways, the innovative approach of the initiative contradicted the traditional image of America's self-serving, neo-imperialist power politics. The short-term effect of this initiative, however, was the opposite of what the US government had hoped for, as it added a strong sense of urgency to go nuclear to the Indian nuclear debate. Its medium-term effect, on the other hand, was a general appreciation of America's nuanced approach during India's nuclear consolidation and opened up new windows of opportunity for American mediation on the Kashmir issue. In the unanimous view of India's strategists, the fundamental precondition for American involvement was its (at least unofficial) recognition of India as a nuclear weapons power.

This general trend to overcome the cognitive bias in India's nuclear discourse was occasionally disrupted by anti-colonialist, or 'occidentalist' reflexes triggered by (perceived) insensitive Western behaviour. One such case was the US Senate's call to 'cap, reduce and eliminate' India's and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities. Another was the decision by many Western (and non-Western) governments to reduce their missions' personnel in the course of growing tensions between India and Pakistan in 2002.

Despite these sporadic resentments, the overall trend towards overcoming the strategic elite's traditional us-against-them understanding of the international structure remained intact. This trend could be observed during the quarrel between the governments of the US and several European nations over the Iraq intervention in the spring of 2003. When the US government decided to ignore the objections of 'old Europe' and turned to new allies, America's request to the Indian government for troop deployment was appreciated by India's elite with great ease. Although the American request was eventually turned down, many commentators saw the US-European divide and the formation of new international alliances as an indication of the emergence of a new global order – one in which it was hoped that India would play a major role. Nuclear weapons were thus seen as India's leverage to consolidate its enhanced status.

Outlook

Once the hype that followed India's self-declaration as nuclear weapons state eased up, the patterns of the nuclear debate among its strategic elite gradually began to change. Status-seeking, the main national interest guiding India's nuclear build-up prior to the tests, changed into efforts to consolidate the increased status. Several of the normative values attached to nuclear weapons that had previously defined India's quest for status either ceased to exist, like the equity norm, or fundamentally changed in outlook, such as the idea of moral exceptionalism and the nationalist norm. The cognitive bias that had distorted elite perception of the international non-proliferation discourse and its major actors lost much of its intensity. In a further development security seeking, though marginalised from 1995 - 1998, began to re-emerge along the changed strategic conditions of India's regional environment.

This overall trend in the Indian elite's discourse on nuclear weapons, referred to as 'nuclear consolidation' in the present study, is likely to continue in the years to come barring an unforeseeable event, such as a major nuclear accident, that could abruptly change the socially constructed normative values attached to the nuclear issue in India's elite and society at large.

The nuclear rivalry between Brazil and Argentina in the 1980s, the only comparable case of an emerging regional nuclear build-up, might suggest that the system of values attached to the nuclear issue can change from within the society. In fact, the early termination of the South American nuclear competition was caused by the weapon's shift in meaning from symbols of national pride to symbols of authoritarian abuse of power that occurred after the democratisation of both countries in the early to mid-1980s. This kind of fundamental shift is unlikely to occur in the Indian case. In contrast to Brazil and Argentina, the meaning of nuclear weapons as symbols of national pride and greatness was not imposed from above, but grew from within – a complex feedback process of opinion shaping that originated from the country's political elite.

The complexity of the underlying value system and its firm establishment in the strategic mind of India's elite speaks against attempts to label India's nuclear weapons programme as a 'Hindu bomb' (i.e. suggesting that the nuclear breakthrough was caused by the rise of the Hindu-nationalist BJP to power). The BJP's playing of the nuclear card in its election campaigning in 1996 and 1998 did not create the nationalistic rationale behind India's nuclear build-up, but rather instrumentalised such pre-existing normative values for partisan political ends. This instrumentalisation becomes particularly visible in the political motivations of the BJP's leading figure, Atal Behari Vajpayee. In 1979, then-Foreign Minister Vajpayee categorically ruled out India's future acquisition of nuclear weapons. Little more than a decade later, Vajpayee, now in the opposition, emerged as one of the most outspoken advocates of nuclearisation in Indian politics. His about-face was not caused by a reassessment of India's strategic environment (the strategic incentives for India

to build-up nuclear weapons had actually decreased over time), but by a fundamental change of heart towards the bomb among India's strategic elite and, consequentially, among India's public at large, which made pro-bomb advocacy politically attractive.

The prediction about the continued relevance of nuclear weapons for India's image of itself and the relative stability of its underlying value system rests on the general insight in the peculiarities in which nuclear policy is made by the group of strategic elite in India's democratic set-up. Basic institutional reforms within the realm of strategic policy making between 1998 and 2003 generally stabilised the process of nuclear policy making, and significantly increased its predictability as well as its underlying strategic expertise, but it did not curtail the overall dominant position of the strategic elite. Reason for this is the still existing monopoly over public opinion by the elite, which continues to be maintained through extensive publishing in India's dailies.

While the proneness of the nuclear issue to partisan considerations within India's political party competition was reduced by the government's relative stability in the period of consolidation, in which the BJP-led coalition government was able to complete a full term in office from 1999 to 2004, the high sensitivity of India's political leadership to public opinion, and as a result, the great deal of power wielded by those that control public opinion, remains a decisive structural feature of India's strategic policy making.

This proneness to public opinion will cause India's policy makers to continue favouring the policy of prestige, i.e. to base strategic policy making on demonstrations of power, such as the development, and testing of advanced missiles. The policy of prestige's demand for regular flashy demonstrations of power is likely to keep some momentum in the South Asian nuclear arms competition, making a complete stop of the regional arms race, which many of India's strategic thinkers predict, unlikely to materialise.

While neither stagnation, nor a reversal of the nuclear build-up appears to be a realistic scenario in the short to medium term future, an escalation of the nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan, or India and China, is also unlikely. The reason for this is the dichotomous character of the status attached to nuclear weapons: mere possession of nuclear weapons determines one's place in the status competition – the number and quality of the nuclear arsenal is thereby only secondary. This perception significantly reduces the pressures on the Indian government to embark on a nuclear arms race defined in numbers of devices similar to the Cold War nuclear competition.

Further, it limits the effectiveness of nuclear weapons as devices to increase India's international status beyond the level it had reached by its self-declaration as a nuclear weapons state in May 1998. Apart from some public attention by sporadic missile testing, the nuclear issue appears to have been exhausted, and is unlikely to generate future waves of enthusiasm and patriotism similar to the hype of 1998.

This raises the question about other areas in which India's strategic elite could satisfy their ambitions in terms of international status and prestige. While the debate on the acquisition

of a Russian aircraft carrier in 2003 had some elements of the nuclear debate in the 1990s, it failed to generate a similarly passionate discussion among the elite, as it lacked much of the symbolic meaning of nuclear weapons.

Much more promising with regard to status-seeking as an element of India's national interest composition is its space programme. Similar to the nuclear programme, the scientists had launched India's space programme without much attention by the political leadership and the public. And similarly to the first Chinese nuclear test in 1964, it was the launch of the first Chinese manned space flight in October 2003 that brought the issue into the focus of India's elite.
Chinese comments and media analyses on the launch of the Chinese space craft showed several remarkable parallels to the Indian media coverage of the nuclear tests in 1998.
Similar to India 'having joined the nuclear club' in 1998, Chinese editorials in 2003 enthusiastically claimed that China had "joined the international space club"[742].
While many other governments congratulated China for its achievements, the Indian government abstained from any official reaction. Instead, the scientists presented an ambitious space programme with the aim of bringing the first Indian citizen into the orbit by an indigenously built Indian space craft. Commentary by India's opinion leaders on this programme indicated already the emergence of dynamics similar to the decade long nuclear discourse.

[742] e.g. Zhang Qingwei: "Comments on China's manned space-engineering achievements and prospects of the industry". In: People's Daily, October 15th 2003.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Note on Methodology

Sample Units

Nuclear-related opinion articles published in India's major daily newspapers by individual members of India's strategic elite were the sample units for the quantitative, as well as interpretive analysis.
The random sample of 705 articles was drawn from the following 5 English written newspapers:
The Hindu: print edition (until 1999, published in Chennai); online edition (since 1999).
The Hindustan Times: print edition (until 1999, published in Delhi); online edition (since 1999).
The Indian Express: print edition (until 1999; published in Mumbay); online edition (since 1999).
The Statesman: print edition (published in Kolkata)
The Times of India: print edition (until 1999, published in Delhi); online edition (since 1999).
The large size of the probability sample is representative for the universe, allowing for basic methods of quantitative analysis (the interpretive analysis is based on purposive, cross-sectional selection).

Construction of Variables

The 705 collected articles are classified according to the main issues addressed within the larger field of India's nuclear path. Eleven major issues are thereby identified which comprise the eleven explanatory variables for the combination of motives behind India's nuclear course.
These variables are:
1. Institutional Framework (Nuclear Authorities)
2. Science and Engineering / Nuclear R+D / Self-Reliance (Nuclear Science)
3. Domestic Policy Arena (Nuclear Politics)
4. General and Regional Security Threats
5. India's Nuclear Doctrine
6. Threats from Pakistan
7. Threats from China
8. India's Status
9. US American Non-Proliferation Initiatives
10. NPT (Extension)
11. CTBT

The set of 11 variables is divided into three main groups

GROUP	VARIABLES
1. Domestic Factors	
	1. Institutional Framework (Nuclear Authorities)
	2. Science and Engineering / Nuclear R+D / Self-Reliance (Nuclear Science)
	3. Domestic Policy Arena (Nuclear Politics)
2. Regional Security	
	4. General and Regional Security Threats
	5. India's Nuclear Doctrine
	6. Threats from Pakistan
	7. Threats from China
3. The International Nuclear Order	
	8. India's Status
	9. American Non-Proliferation Initiatives
	10 NPT (Extension)
	11 CTBT

Construction of Scales and Indices

Within the quantitative analysis of the randomly collected sample of 705 nuclear-related articles, three different measures are introduced that are aimed at:
a) measuring the general attitude of the author towards the bomb (attitude scale),
b) measuring the variance of the general outlook of the nuclear debate over time (time series analysis), and
c) measuring the degree to which the debate within India's elite was polarised, or, reversely expressed, the degree to which a consensus existed among India's elite on the nuclear issue (polarisation index).

a) The Attitude Scale
A property, defined as a qualitative characteristic of the object, is attributed to each of the 705 entries. The property, designated as the attitude score, has three different possible values. Value 1 is attributed to the property of those articles in which the author expresses his or her unambiguous opinion in favour of the bomb. Value 0 is attributed to the property of those articles in which the author takes either a neutral opinion on India's nuclearisation or the expressed opinion is not applicable to the dichotomous anti-/pro-bomb scheme. Value -1 is attributed to the property of those articles in which the author expresses his or her unambiguous objection to India's nuclear build-up.
The attitude scale is defined as the mean of the values attributed to the property of a sample of articles. The samples of articles are defined as variable-wise, group-wise, or sequence-wise, or, as a combination of all three, as figure for the total sample of articles collected.

The attitude scale (AS) is defined as:

$$AS = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{Xi}{n}$$

where
n = number of unit in the sample
X_i = attitude score from each sample unit

The range of possible values for the attitude scale is between the minimum of -1 (a consensus among the authors against India acquiring / maintaining the bomb) and the maximum of +1 (a consensus among the authors in favour of India acquiring / maintaining the bomb). The value of 0 marks the equilibrium of indetermination among the authors' aggregated attitude.

b) The Time Series Analysis
The time series analysis aims at measuring the arrangement of a series of observations (for example, the number of articles observed) of a variable (or group of variables) in the sequence of their occurrence at successive points of time (as defined in section 4.2). Measurements are made at irregular time intervals t_i (with $1 \leq i \leq 4$).
The main objective of the time series analysis is to illustrate the change of the outlook of India's nuclear debate over time.

c) The Polarisation Index
The polarisation index is defined as the standard deviation of the attitude score ($-1 \leq X \leq +1$) of the sample. It aims at providing an indication of the average amount by which the scores deviate from the mean (termed as the attitude scale) of the distribution.

The polarisation index (PI) is defined as:

$$PI_x = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (Xi - \overline{X})^2}{n-1}}$$

where
n = number of units in the sample
X_i = attitude score from each sample unit
$\overline{X}$ = sample attitude scale

The range of possible values for the polarisation index is between the minimum of 0 (a consensus among the authors exists) and the maximum of +1 (the number of authors is equally divided between bomb advocates and bomb opponents, the discourse is entirely polarised).

Appendix B: List of Cited Newspaper Articles

Abraham, Amrita: "Nuclear manoeuvres: More skillful US diplomacy is putting India in a bind." In: Indian Express, April 22nd 1994.

Abraham, Amrita: "Why a second Pokhran blast will not work." In: Indian Express, December 27th 1995.

Abraham, Amrita: "Test ban negotiations: Rethinking India's strategy." In: Indian Express, March 13th 1996.

Abraham, Amrita: "One month after Pokharan-II: A fine imbalance." In: Indian Express, 12th June 1998.

Abraham, Amrita: "CTBT manoeuvres: Way out of Pokhran mess." In: Indian Express, August 1st 1998.

Ananth, V. Krishna: "Jingoism, not nationalism." In: The Hindu, June 4th 1998.

Aneja, Atul: "Balancing nuclear option." In: The Hindu, April 4th 1994.

Aneja, Atul: "Limited war between India, Pakistan can lead to nuclear conflict." In: The Hindu, March 26th 2002.

Antia, S.N.: "India's Nuclear Policy: Reactions to Pakistani Advance." In: The Statesman, April 20th 1984.

Banerji, Arun Kumar: "Pokhran & Kargil: Peace Wanted, Not An Arms Race." in: The Statesman, June 5th 1999.

Baruah, Amit: "The invisible line between conventional and nuclear war." In: The Hindu, January 2nd 2003.

Bhargava, G.S.: "India and NPT-I: Policy on proliferation." In: Indian Express, June 21st 1985.

Bhargava, G.S.: "India and the NPT-II: Pakistan Problem." In: Indian Express, June 22nd 1985.

Bhargava, G.S.: "India & the Bomb – II: Why India Should Sign NPT". In: The Statesman, November 21st 1991.

Bhargava, Pushpa M.: "An opportunity lost." In: The Hindu, July 8th 1998.

Bhushan, Bharat: "Nuclear policy pundits split over NPT". In: Indian Express, October 10th 1991.

Biswas, Sanat: "Nuclear Peril – II: The Threat From Pakistan." In: The Statesman, October 19th 1989.

Chakrabarti, Saubhik: "Pokhran Sanctions: Much Ado About Little." In: The Statesman, May 17th 1998.

Chakravartty, Nikhil: "The nuclear hegemony." In: The Hindu, September 22nd 1994.

Chakravartty, Nikhil: "CTBT: a weapon of domination." In: The Hindu, June 29th 1996.

Chari, P.R.: "Pakistan's bomb: A strategy of deterrence crafted on make-believe." In: Indian Express, August 29th 1994.

Chari, P.R.: "Costing an Indo-Pak. War" In: The Hindu, February 9th 2002.

Chaudhuri, Pramit Pal: "Arrows and Exports: The new Indo-US nuclear agenda." In:

Hindustan Times, September 30th 2002.
Chellaney, Brahma: "Chinese N-policy shift may pose a threat to India." In: Indian Express, April 15th 1995.
Chellaney, Brahma: "Fissile cut-off: India's crucial role". In: Indian Express, April 21st 1995.
Chellaney, Brahma: "India's wrong signal on fissile cut-off". In: Indian Express, April 22nd 1995.
Chellaney, Brahma: "Differential Calculus." In: Hindustan Times, August 28th 2002.
Chellaney, Brahma: "Crucial test for India." In: Indian Express, January 19th 1996.
Chellaney, Brahma: "Forty years after Indo-china war". In: Hindustan Times, October 20th 2002.
Chellaney, Brahma: "The burden of memory". In: Hindustan Times, October 20th 2002.
Chellaney, Brahma: "A question of timing". In: Hindustan Times, October 20th 2002.
Chellaney, Brahma: "Non-proliferation issue: No need for India to be on the defensive." Indian Express, December 17th 1991.
Chopra, Pran: "Foreign policy v the Bomb". In: Indian Express, July 7th 1986.
Chopra, Pran: "In the nuclear trap." In: The Hindu, November 29th 1990.
Chopra, Pran: "Escaping the trap." In: The Hindu, December 8th 1990.
Chopra, Pran: "Nuclear aims for India." In: The Hindu, August 8th 1992.
Chopra, Pran: "Gaps in India's n-policy". In: The Hindu, June 28th 1996.
Chopra, Pran: "Slowly back to sanity." In: The Hindu, July 7th 1998.
Chowdhuri, S.R.: "Nuclear Option: Why India Must Go Nuclear." In: The Statesman, February 5th 1996.
Dandavate, Madhu: "Discriminatory CTBT: India's concerns ignored". In: Indian Express, July 18th 1996.
Das, Arvind N.: "India and the CTBT debacle: Did the dog learn French?" In: Indian Express, October 21st 1999.
Das, Premvir: "The war that never was." In: The Indian Express, November 18th 2002.
Das, Sitashu: "India and N-weapon dissemination." In: Indian Express, July 14th 1974.
Das Gupta, Amalendu: "India and the Bomb – II: Myth And Reality About An Option." In: The Statesman, April 21st 1981.
Das Gupta, Amalendu: "Nuclear Options – II: No Need to Hedge Response." In: The Statesman, May 5th 1989.
Das Gupta, Amalendu: "India and the Bomb: Issues Revived by NPT Review". In: The Statesman, August 17th 1990.
Das Gupta, Amalendu: "Nuclear Choice – I: Facing Up To New Pressure." In: The Statesman, March 4th 1996.
Dasgupta, Manas: "Our nuclear policy stems from confidence: Kalam". In: The Hindu, April 12th 2002.
Dixit, Aabha: "Nuclear Change: India's Impeccable Record". In: The Statesman, September 22nd 1992.
Dixit, J.N.: "India's nuclear options: Pakistani smuggling underlines non-proliferation shortcomings" In: Indian Express, August 30th 1994.

Dixit, J.N.: "Nuclear non-proliferation: India won't give in". in: Indian Express, March 21st 1995.

Dixit, J.N.: "NPT extension: Keep India's option open". In: Indian Express, May 9th 1995.

Dixit, J.N.: "India and NPT: The challenges ahead". In: Indian Express, May 30th 1995.

Dixit, J.N.: "The Indian dilemma." In: Indian Express, January 9th 1996.

Dixit, J.N.: "CTBT draft: Large gaps and loopholes". In: Indian Express, July 2nd 1996.

Dixit, J.N.: "Pokhran-II: managing the fallout." In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1998.

Dixit, J.N.: "Post-Pokhran pressures on India: Stoicism it'll have to be." In: Indian Express, July 23rd 1998.

Dixit, J.N.: "Non-proliferation negotiations: Weaponisation by default". In: Indian Express, April 29th 1999.

Dixit, J.N.: "Disappointed with America." In: The Indian Express, August 8th 2002.

Dixit, J.N.: "Plan for the great thaw." In: Indian Express, November 28th 2002.

Dixit, J.N.: "Linkage politics." In: The Indian Express, April 18th 2003.

Dreaze, Jean: "The warped logic of nuclear gambles." In: The Hindu, May 27th 2002.

Dua, H.K.: "Living in nuclear brahmacharya". In: Indian Express, March 27th 1985.

Dubey, Muchkund: "A possible Indian stance". In: The Hindu, July 20th 1998.

Dubey, Muchkund: "CTBT & India's n-option – I". In: The Hindu, April 8th 1996.

Dutt, J.K.: "Chanakya would understand." In: The Hindu, November 22nd 1997.

Ganguly, K.K.: "Self-interested Parties: India And Her Security Concerns." In: The Statesman, May 28th 1998.

Ganguly, Sumit: "Nuclear cloud' is full of hot air." In: The Indian Express, June 12th 2002.

Gonsalves, Eric: "The long haul after Pokhran." In: August 7th 1998.

Gopalakrishnan, A.: "How credible is our deterrence". In: The Hindu, November 18th 1998.

Guha, Ramachandra: "An incomplete iconography". In: Indian Express, June 1st 1998.

Gupta, Shekhar: "Burdens of the nuclear state: The morning after." In: Indian Express, May 13th 1998.

Gupta, Shekhar: "Turning nukes on their head." In: The Indian Express, June 8th 2002.

Haqqani, Hussain: "Why India cannot afford a pre-emptive strike on Pak." In: The Indian Express, April 10th 2003.

Indiresan, P.V.: "What next?" In: The Hindu, May 30th 1998.

Iyengar, P.K.: "The nuclear issue: Caution against bartering away our capabilities". In: Indian Express, September 16th 1993.

Iyengar, P.K.: "Twenty years after Pokhran". In: Indian Express, May 18th 1994.

Iyer, V.R. Krishna: "Adversarial Adventurism – II." In: The Hindu, July 21st 1998.

Jaisingh, Hari: "Indian options to Pak bomb." In: Indian Express, October 16th 1985.

Jayal, Brijesh D.: "National Security: Kid Gloves Will Not Do". In: The Statesman, June 3rd 1998.

Jha, Prem Shankar: "A sane look at nuclear capping." In: The Hindu, April 9th 1994.

Joshi, Manoj: "Framework for Security Planning". In: The Hindu, January 29th 1990.
Joshi, Manoj: "NSC: Form, not Substance". In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1990.
Joshi, Manoj: "India's nuclear dilemma." In: The Hindu, October 29th 1990.
Joshi, Manoj: "India's nuclear 'outing': Creating a post-CTBT mindset". In: Indian Express, September 9th 1996.
Kant, Krishan: "Why the bomb." In: Indian Express, May 2nd 1981.
Kapur, Ashok: "Nuclear Disarmament: India must have a new theme song for the 90s". In: The Hindu, January 14th 1993.
Katoch, G.C.: "Defence And The Bomb: Imperative Need For Economizing." In: The Statesman, August 18th 1985.
Katyal, K.K.: "Need for restraint". In: The Hindu, May 19th 1998.
Katyal, K.K.: "A hint of positive results." In: The Hindu, July 6th 1998.
Khare, Harish: "A repudiation of nuclear apartheid policy". In: The Hindu, May 12th 1998.
Krepon, Michael: "Nuclear Risk Reduction." In: The Hindu, June 30th 2001.
Krishnaswami, Sridhar: "Nuclear war will claim 12 million lives." In: The Hindu, May 28th 2002.
Malhotra, Jyoti: "Keeping the faith with India." In: The Indian Express, June 18th 2002.
Malviya, Gopalji et.al: "American mediation in South Asia." In: The Hindu, March 16th 2000.
Mani, V.S.: "India's tests: the legal issues." In: The Hindu, June 5th 1998.
Mehta, Ashok K.: "Securing national interests, BJP style". In: The Indian Express, April 4th 1998.
Menon, K.P.S.: "Why are nuclear powers so upset? Petulance and opportunism." In: Indian Express, June 29th 1998.
Mian, Zia et.al.: "What they can agree on." In: The Hindu, July 10th 2001.
Mishra, Vandita: "Us and Them: Dateline Ground Zero." In: Indian Express, June 9th 2002.
Mohan, C. Raja: "India's N-policy needs reworking". In: The Hindu, October 10th 1991.
Mohan, C. Raja: "New Delhi's nuclear diplomacy." In: The Hindu, February 6th 1992.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Towards realistic nuclear dialogue." In: The Hindu, March 5th 1992.
Mohan, C. Raja: "An Indo-Pak bomb count". In: The Hindu, September 19th 1992.
Mohan, C. Raja: " South Asia's nuclear spring." In: The Hindu, April 1st 1993.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Delhi must be firm on nuclear policy." In: The Hindu, May 11th 1994.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Rethink the nuclear test ban". In: The Hindu, August 17th 1994.
Mohan, C. Raja: "India & the nuclear question". In: The Hindu, February 21st 1995.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Coping with counter-proliferation." In: The Hindu, April 18th 1996.
Mohan, C. Raja: "CTBT: An India that can say no!". In: The Hindu, August 17th 1996.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Working with nuclear reality." In: The Hindu, October 10th 1997.
Mohan, C. Raja: "India crosses the nuclear rubicon." In: The Hindu, May 12th 1998.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Playing football with nuclear weapons". In: The Hindu, May 25th 1998.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Nuclear balance in Asia". In: The Hindu, June 11th 1998.
Mohan, C. Raja: "The art of the nuclear deal". In: The Hindu, July 9th 1998.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Japan's nuclear hypocrisy." In: The Hindu, August 6th 1998.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Denuclearising Pakistan." In: The Hindu, September 3rd 1998.

Mohan, C. Raja: "Nuclear India & the NPT". In: The Hindu, April 27th 2000.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Boosting Indo-U.S. ties". In: The Hindu, August 21st 2002.
Mohan, C. Raja: "India and the U.S.-European divide." In: The Hindu, September 26th 2002.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Countering Pak.'s nuclear blackmail." In: The Hindu, January 1st 2003.
Mohan, C. Raja: "Nuclear Command Authority comes into being". In: The Hindu, January 5th 2003.
Mukherjee, Pranab: "Should India sign the CTBT?" In: The Hindu, May 26th 1998.
Mulgaokar, S.: "India's cruel nuclear dilemma." In: Indian Express, January 1st 1988.
N.N.: "India has no means to enter the nuclear club." In: Hindustan Times, November 3rd 1971.
N.N.: "Nuclear Fall-out." In: The Hindu, May 22nd 1974.
N.N.: "Strange Logic." In: The Times of India, May 31st 1974.
N.N.: "Constraints on A-Power." In: The Statesman, December 27th 1974.
N.N.: "Treaty only if N-arms are banned: Vajpayee". In: Indian Express, October 2nd 1977.
N.N.: "Nuclear Nonsense." In: Indian Express, May 30th 1979.
N.N.: "Decision On Bomb Depends on Pak Moves." In: The Statesman, October 30th 1979.
N.N.: "India must maintain military superiority." In: Indian Express, April 26th 1984.
N.N.: "BJP, Janata, Lok Dal favour N-option." In: The Statesman, October 16th 1985.
N.N: "Stronger Sinews". In: Indian Express, April 11th 1986.
N.N.: "The bomb: to have or not to have". In: The Hindu, June 10th 1986.
N.N.: "Nuclear Security." In: The Statesman, May 1st 1994.
N.N.: "Opinion: Towards a thaw." In: The Hindu, June 4th 2002.
N.N.: "Unguided missile man". In: The Indian Express, June 21st 2002.
N.N.: "Nuke button rests in the PM's hands". In: Indian Express, January 5th 2003.
N.N.: "Nuclear Pandora's box". In: The Indian Express, January 11th 2003.
Nair, V.M.: "India Isolated from Nuclear Club." In: The Statesman, September 4th 1974.
Nani A. Palkhivala: "India and the nuclear debate." In: Indian Express, May 20th 1978.
Naqvi, Saeed: "Maybe a bomb for the front pages.": In: The Statesman, May 29th 1998.
Nayar, Kuldip: "A critical nuclear divide". In: The Indian Express, May 26th 1998.
Ninan, Sevanti: "Western overdrive." In: The Hindu, June 9th 2002.
Noorani, A.G.: "Asian Security: Beijing's Stand On Nuclear Arms". In: The Statesman, May 13th 1994.
Palit, D.K.: "Can India Be A Major Power?" In: Hindustan Times, January 23rd 1973.
Palit, D.K.: "Institute For Defence Studies: A Decade Of Progress". In: The Hindustan Times, November 24th 1975.

Pandit, Rajit: "India all set to set up nuclear forces command". In: The Times of India, December 30th 2002.
Paranjpe, V.V.: "Fall-out of nuclear tests on Sino-Indian ties". In: The Hindu, May 25th 1998.
Patney, Vinod: "Cutting through the nuclear fog". In: The Indian Express, January 15th 2003.
Poulose, T.T.: "Nuclear Debate: India Must Re-Examine Stand". In: The Statesman, January 7th 1992.
Raghavan, B.S.: "Security Policy Planning – filling in the gaps". In: The Hindu, August 11th 1989.
Raghavan, B.S.: "National Security Council – format and charter to suit Indian conditions". In: The Hindu, August 12th 1989.
Raghavan, V.R.: "South Asian nuclear dialogue." In: The Hindu; September 1st 2000.
Raghavan, V.R.: "Manipulating Nuclear Deterrence." In: The Hindu, July 3rd 2002.
Raghavan, V.R.: "India's nuclear balance sheet." In: The Hindu, May 7th 2002.
Raghavan, V.R.: "Nuclear building blocks". In: The Hindu, January 7th 2003.
Rajagopal, B.: "War talk and law talk." In: The Hindu, June 2nd 2002.
Ramachandran, K.N.: "Musing of the mandarins". In: The Indian Express, June 26th 1998.
Reddy, G.K.: "Renewed pressures to build nuclear capability." In: The Hindu, April 7th 1981.
Reddy, G.K.: "India's Stock up on Nuclear Issue." In: The Hindu, February 18th 1978.
Sabherwal, O.P.: "Nuclear Politics: Power game in new form." In: Indian Express, December 2nd 1994.
Sabherwal, O.P.: "India's right to a nuclear status." In: Indian Express, August 25th 1995.
Sabherwal, O.P. "India's nuclear achievements: A matter of pride." In: The Indian Express, November 25th 1995.
Sabherwal, O.P.: "Playing an active role". In: Indian Express, January 29th 1996.
Sethi, Manpreet: "Nailing the moving finger on the N-button." In: The Indian Express, June 13th 2002.
Sethi, Manpreet: "Nuclear power can bridge the gap". In: The Indian Express, August 20th 2002.
Sethi, Manpreet: "Running with the bomb". In: The Indian Express, March 4th 2003.
Shankar, Abha: "After CTBT, it's testing time for India". In: Indian Express, October 11th 1996.
Sharma, Dhirendra: "It is neither unscientific nor unpatriotic to oppose the bomb". In: Indian Express, January 1st 1986.
Shridhar, D.: "Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty: Don't Repeat the CTBT follies". In: Indian Express, March 7th 1997.
Shukla, Rajiv: "One name for President to silence them all". In: Indian Express, June 15th 2002.
Sidhu, W.P.S.: "A strategic mis-step?" In: The Hindu, January 13th 2003.
Singh, Jasjit: "CTBT and security needs: Persistence will pay". In: Indian Express, June 11th 1996.

Singh, Jasjit: "China in Uncle Sam's world". In: The Indian Express, September 25th 2002.
Singh, Jasjit: "Nukes have no prestige value: Press for total disarmament." In: Indian Express, June 4th 1998.
Singh, Jasjit: "The ninth nuclear horseman: How has the world changed now that North Korea has joined the club?". In: The Indian Express, October 21st 2002.
Singh, Jasjit: "A no-first-use doctrine for better security: Controlling the nuclear genie". In: The Indian Express, January 8th 2003.
Singh, Jasjit: "Get clear about nuclear". In: The Indian Express, December 10th 2003.
Singh, Manvendra: "Ignorant and sanctimonious: A coalition of wise guys." In: Indian Express, May 25th 1998.
Singh, Manvendra: "Who should control nuclear button? Armed forces have a proposal." In: Indian Express, September 1st 1998.
Sinha, S.K.: "Threats Facing Us – II: Pakistan And Those Nearer Home." In: The Statesman, May 30th 1984.
Sinha, Sureshwar D.: "Need for a credible nuclear policy." In: The Statesman, June 14th 1987.
Srinivasan, M.R.: "India's nuclear diplomacy I." In: The Hindu, June 25th 1993.
Srinivasan, M.R.: "NPT and India's case". In: The Hindu, July 10th 1993.
Srinivasan, M.R.: "Sundarji's wargames." In: The Hindu, October 23rd 1993.
Srinivasan, M.R.: "Self-reliance is the key." In: The Hindu, December 7th 1995.
Srinivasan, M.R.: "Our nuclear industry." In: The Hindu, April 14th 2000.
Srinivasan, M.R.: "The n-proliferators." In: The Hindu, May 12th 2000.
Srinivasan, M.R.: "Indo-Pak nuclear asymmetry." In: The Hindu, August 1st 2001.
Subrahmanyam, K.: "Mature View of Defence: Preparedness Is Not Militarism." In: The Statesman, August 12th 1981.
Subrahmanyam, K: "Threat perceptions and defence preparedness: International and national security." In: Indian Express, February 17th 1984.
Subrahmanyam, K.: "N-arms & unilateralism." In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1989.
Subrahmanyam, K.: "Why no National Security Council." The Hindu, August 22nd 1989.
Subrahmanyam, K.: "Non-Proliferation & India". In: The Hindu, October 25th 1989.
Subrahmanyam, K.: "Arms race myth." In: The Times of India, May 30th 1998.
Subrahmanyam, K.: "Chain of Command – Insulate armed forces from politics." In: The Times of India, December 21st 1998.
Subrahmanyam, K.: "Essence of Deterrence." In: The Times of India, January 7th 2003.
Sudarshan, V.: "The strategic review that never was: Freelance policy makers." In: Indian Express, April 14th 1999.
Sundarji, K.: " 'In the nuclear trap': wrong assumptions." In: The Hindu, December 11th 1990.
Sundarji, K.: "Where third world differs from the West." In: The Hindu, January 11th 1991.
Sundarji, K.: "Indian Govt must stop being defensive on NPT". In: Indian Express, December 20th 1992.

Sundarji, K.: "A non-nuclear India: Can Pakistan with its nukes be taken on in a conventional war?" In: Indian Express, June 8th 1993.
Sundarji, K.: "The bomb lobby and CTBT". In: The Hindu, September 16th 1994.
Sundarji, K.: "Strategic scene till 2015: Impact on South Asia." In: Indian Express, October 20th 1995.
Sundarji, K.: "Western threats on NPT: National consensus needed". In: Indian Express, November 11th 1995.
Sundarji, K.: "India's best option." In: The Hindu, September 16th 1996.
Suryanarayana, P.S.: "America's nuclear hit-list." In: The Hindu, April 30th 2002.
Swamy, Subramanian: "National security or Govt. security?" In: The Hindu, May 22nd 1998.
Thapan, M.L.: "Debate on the Bomb: What A Nuclear Attack Can Do." In: The Statesman, September 30th 1981.
Vanaik, Achin: "Need for a positive nuclear policy." In: Indian Express, March 30th 1992.
Vanaik, Achin: "Sign the CTBT". In: The Hindu, June 29th 1998.
Vanaik, Achin: "The nuclear stakes: Press for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty". In: Indian Express, February 27th 1993.
Vanaik, Achin: "Nuclear Diplomacy." In: The Hindu April 19th 1994.
Vanaik, Achin: "Jitters about CTBT". In: The Hindu, August 29th 1994.
Vanaik, Achin: "The Indian response". In: Indian Express, November 6th 1995.
Vanaik, Achin: "Drawing new lines". In: The Hindu, May 23rd 1998.
Vas, E.A.: "Nuclear India v nuclear Pakistan: South Asia's Day After." In: Indian Express, August 20th 1985.
Venkateswaran, A.L.: "Why a defence ministry?" Indian Express, May 25th 1984.
Venkateswaran, V.: "India's Place on the Nuclear Map." In: The Hindu, May 22nd 1974.
Wariavwalla, Bharat: "The Nuclear Option: Circumstances demand that India abandon it." In: Indian Express, April 2nd 1992.
Zutshi, Amar: "Pakistani Nuclear Aims: Need For Pre-emptive Indian Response." In: The Statesman, May 13th 1987.

Bibliography

Monographs:

- Abraham, Itty: The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State. London: Zed Books 1999.
- Ahmed, Samina: / David Cortright (eds.): Pakistan and the Bomb. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1998.
- Alemann, Ulrich von / Erhard Forndran: Methodik der Politikwissenschaft: Eine Einführung in Arbeitstechniken und Forschungspraxis, 4.ed.. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1990.
- Arnett, Eric (ed): Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control in South Asia after the Test Ban. SIPRI Research Report No 14, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Aronson, Shlomo / Oded Brosh: The Politics and Strategy of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East: Opacity, Theory, and Reality, 1960-1991. Albany: State Univ. of New York Press 1992.
- Bajpai, Kanti P. / P.R. Chari / P.I. Cheema / Stephen P. Cohen / Sumit Ganguly: Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia. New Delhi: Manohar 1995.
- Bajpai, Kanti / Amitabh Mattoo (eds.): Securing India: Strategic Thought and Practice. New Delhi: Manohar 1996.
- Basrur, Rajesh M.: India's External Relations: A Theoretical Analysis. New Delhi: Commonweath Publishers 2000.
- Bidwai, Praful / Achin Vanaik: New Nukes: India, Pakistan and Global Nuclear Disarmament. New York: Olive Branch Press 2000.
- Buzan, Barry: People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era; 2.ed. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991.
- Buzan, Barry: The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism. New York: Columbia University Press 1993.
- Carr, Edward Hallet: Grundlagen eines dauernden Friedens. Zürich: Steinberg 1943.
- Chari, P.R. (ed.): Perspective on National Security in South Asia: In Search of a New Paradigm. New Delhi: Manohar 1999.
- Chatterjee, Partha: The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Chellaney, Brahma: Nuclear Proliferation: US-Indian Conflict. London: Sangam Books 1993.
- Chengappa, Raj: Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to be a Nuclear Power. New Delhi: HarperCollins 2000.
- Cirincione, Joseph: Repairing the Regime: Preventing the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction. London: Routledge 2000.

- Cohen, Stephen P.: India: Emerging Power. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press 2001.
- Dougherty, James E. / Robert L. Pfaltzgraff: Contending Theories of International Relations, 3rd ed.. New York: HarperCollins 1990.
- Frankel, Benjamin (ed.): Opaque Nuclear Proliferation: Methodological and Policy Implications. London: Frank Class 1991.
- Frankel, Benjamin (ed.): Realism: Restatements and Renewal. London: Frank Cass 1996.
- Frankel, Benjamin (ed.): Roots of Realism. London: Frank Cass 1996.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg: Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik . Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr 1960.
- Ganguly, Sumit / Ted Greenwood (eds.): Mending Fences: Confidence and Security Building in South Asia. Boulder: Westview Press 1996.
- Ganguly, Sumit: The Crisis in Kashmir: Potents of War, Hopes of Peace. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997.
- Ganguly, Sumit: The Origins of War in South Asia. Boulder: Westview Press 1986.
- Glaser, Charles L.: Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990.
- Goldstein, Joshua S.: International Relations. New York: HarperCollins 1994.
- Government of India: Draft Report of National Security Advisory Board on Indian Nuclear Doctrine. New Delhi: Government of India 1999.
- Government of India: Reforming the National Security System: Recommendations of the Group of Ministers, February 2001. Government of India 2001.
- Gujral, I. K.: Continuity and Change: India's Foreign Policy. Delhi: MacMillan 2003.
- Habermas, Jürgen: Between Facts and Norms: Contribution to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996.
- Hagerty, Devin T.: The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia. Cambridge, Ma.: The MIT Press 1998.
- Jervis, Robert: Perception and Misperception in International Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1976.
- Jones, Rodney W. / Mark G. McDonough et.al. (eds.): Tracking Nuclear Proliferation: A Guide in Maps and Charts. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1998.
- Kahn, Herman: Thinking About the Unthinkable. New York: Horizon Press 1962.
- Katzenstein, Peter J. (ed.): The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics. New York: Columbia University Press 1996.
- Kayathwal, Mukesh Kumar: Security and Foreign Policy in South Asia. Jaipur: Pointer Publishers 1999.
- Keohane, Robert O.: After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1984.
- Keohane, Robert O.: Neorealism and Its Critics. New York: Columbia University Press 1986.

- Khanna, V.N.: India's Nuclear Doctrine. New Delhi: Samskriti 2000.
- Kothari, Smitu / Zia Mian (eds.): Out of the Nuclear Shadow. London: Zed Books 2001.
- Krepon, Michael / Chris Gagné (eds.): The Stability-Instability Paradox: Nuclear Weapons and Brinkmanship in South Asia. Report No.38. Washington D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, June 2001.
- Mattoo, Amitabh (ed.): India's Nuclear Deterrent: Pokhran II and Beyond. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications 1999.
- Menon, Raja: A Nuclear Strategy for India. New Delhi: Sage Publications 2000.
- Mishra, H.B.: Defence Programmes of India. Delhi: Authorspress 2000.
- Mohan, Sulaskhan: India's Nuclear Leap. Delhi: Indian Publishers Distributors 2000.
- Morgenthau, Hans J.: Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, revised ed.. Boston: McGraw-Hill 1993.
- Müller, Harald / David Fischer / Wolfgang Kötter: Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Global Order. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994.
- Nizamani, Haider K.: The Roots of Rhetoric: Politics of Nuclear Weapons in India and Pakistan. Westport: Praeger Publications 2000.
- Nolan, Janne E. (ed.): Global Engagement: Co-Operation and Security in the 21st Century. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution 1994.
- Paul, T.V.: Power Versus Prudence: Why Nations Forgo Nuclear Weapons. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 2000.
- Perkovich, George: India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation. Delhi: Oxford University Press 2000.
- Ramana, M.V. / C. Rammanohar Reddy (eds.): Prisoners of the Nuclear Dream. New Delhi: Orient Longman 2003.
- Rauf, Tariq et.al.: Inventory of International Nonproliferation Organizations and Regimes, 2000 Edition. Monterey Institute of International Studies Publication 2000.
- Rosen, Stephen Peter: Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies. Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996.
- Sagan, Scott D. / Kenneth Waltz: The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate. New York: W.W. Norton 1995.
- Schweller, Randall L: Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest. New York: Columbia University Press 1998.
- Singh, Dinesh Kumar: Power Politics in South Asia. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers 1995.
- Singh, Jasjit (ed.): Nuclear India. New Delhi: Knowledge World 1998.
- Singh, Jaswant: Defending India. Houndmills: Macmillan 1999.
- Subrahmanyam, K.: India and the Nuclear Challenge. Delhi: Lancer 1986.
- Sundarji, K.: Blind Men of Hindoostan: Indo-Pak Nuclear War.
- Sundarji, K.: Vision 2100 – A Strategy for the Twenty-First Century.

- Tellis, Ashley J.: India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal. RAND Publications 2001.
- Tellis, Ashley J. / C. Christine Fair, Jamison Jo Medby: Limited Conflict Under the Nuclear Umbrella: Indian and Pakistani Lessons from the Kargil Crisis. RAND Publication 2001.
- Thakur, Ramesh: The Government and Politics of India. Houndsmills: Macmillan 1995
- Thomas, Raju G.C. / Amit Gupta (eds.): India's Nuclear Security. Boulder: Lynne Rienner 2000.
- Van Evera, Stephen: Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict. Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1999.
- Waltz, Kenneth: Theory of International Politics. Reading: Addison-Westley 1979.
- Weber, Max: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre. Edited by Johannes Winckelmann. Tübingen: UTB 1967
- Wirsing, Robert G.: Kashmir in the Shadow of War: Regional Rivalries in a Nuclear Age. Amok: Sharpe 2003.
- Zhang, Ming: China's Changing Nuclear Posture: Reactions to the South Asian Nuclear Tests. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1999.

Articles and Book Chapters:

- Abraham, Itty: India's Strategic Enclave: Civilian Scientists and Military Technology. In: Armed Forces and Society 18, no.2, winter 1992.
- Andersen, Walter: Recent Trends in Indian Foreign Policy. Asian Survey, Vol.41, No.5, 2001; pp. 765 – 776.
- Bain, William: Deconfusing Morgenthau: moral inquiry and classical realism reconsidered. In: Review of International Studies, Vol. 26, No.2, April 2000; pp.445-464.
- Basrur, Rajesh M.: Nuclear Weapons and Indian Strategic Culture. In: Journal of Peace Research, Vol.38, No.2, March 2001; pp. 181-198.
- Bowen, Clayton P. / Daniel Wolvén: Command and Control Challenges in South Asia. In: The Nonproliferation Review, Spring-Summer 1999; pp.25-35.
- Bundy, McGeorge: Existential Deterrence and its Consequences. In: MacLean, Douglas (ed.): The Security Gamble: Deterrence Dilemmas in the Nuclear Age. Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld 1984.
- Bundy, McGeorge: Deterrence in the 1990s: What Can The Past Tell Us. Paper presented at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory workshop: The Role of Nuclear Weapons in the Year 2000; Oct.1990.
- Carranza, Mario E.: Dangerous Optimism: Non-weaponized deterrence and regional peace in South Asia. In: International Politics Vol.35, June 1998; pp.107-134.

- Carranza, Mario E.: An Impossible Game: Stable Nuclear Deterrence After the Indian and Pakistani Tests. In: The Nonproliferation Review, Spring-Summer 1999; pp.11-24.
- Chari, P. R.: India's Nuclear Doctrine: Confused Ambitions. The Nonproliferation Review, Fall-Winter 2000; pp. 123-135.
- Chaulia, Sreeram S.: BJP, India's Foreign Policy and the 'Realist Alternative' to the Nehruvian Tradition. In: International Politics, Vol. 39, June 2002.
- Chellaney, Brahma: New Delhi's Dilemma. The Washington Quaterly, Vol.23, No.3, Summer 2000; pp.145-153.
- Cohen, Stephen Philip: A New Beginning in South Asia. The Brookings Institution Policy Brief No.55, January 2000.
- Cohen, Stephen Philip: Moving Forward in South Asia. The Brookings Institution Policy Brief No.81, May 2001.
- Fearon, James D.: Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations. Annual Review of Political Science, 1998; pp.289-313.
- Feaver, Peter D. : Civil-Military Relations. Annual Review of Political Science, 1999; pp. 211 – 241.
- Feaver, Peter D.: The Theory-Policy Debate in Political Science and Nuclear Proliferation. National Security Studies Quaterly, Summer 1999.
- Feaver, Peter D.: Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm? International Security, Vol. 25, No.1, Summer 2000.
- Ganguly, Sumit: India's Pathway to Pokhran II: The Prospects and Sources of New Delhi's Nuclear Weapons Program. In: International Security, Vol.23, No.4, Spring 1999; pp. 148-177.
- Gerring, John: A Normative Turn in Political Science?. online publication, June 14th 2004, to appear in: Lebow, Richard Ned / Mark Lichbach (eds.): "Theory and Evidence"; forthcoming.
- Gizewski, Peter: Indian Nuclear Doctrine: A Critical Assessment of the Proposal for a Minimum Nuclear Deterrent. The International Security Research and Outreach Programme, Government of Canada 1999.
- Glaser, Charles L.: The Causes and Consequences of Arms Races. Annual Review of Political Science, 2000; pp.251-276.
- Guzzini, Stefano: A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations. In: European Journal of International Relations, Vol. 6 (2), 2000
- Hilali, A.Z.: India's Strategic Thinking and Its National Security Policy. Asian Survey, Vol.41, No.5, 2001; pp. 737 – 764.
- Joeck, Neil: Nuclear Developments in India and Pakistan. In: Access Asia Review, Vol.2, No.2, July 1999; pp.5-45.
- Jones, Gregory S.: From Testing to Deploying Nuclear Forces: The Hard Choices Facing India and Pakistan. RAND Issue Paper 192, 2000.
- Jones, Rodney W. / Sumit Ganguly: Debating New Delhi's Nuclear Decision. International Security, Vol.24, No.4, Spring 2000; pp.181-189.

- Joshi, Manoj: From Technology Demonstration to Assured Retaliatiomn: The Making of an Indian Nuclear Doctrine. Strategic Analysis, Vol.22, No.10, Jan.1999.
- Kampani, Gaurav: From Existential to Minimum Deterrence: Explaining India's Decision to Test. In: The Nonproliferation Review, Fall 1998.
- Krepon, Michael / Henry S. Drezin / Michael Newbill (eds.): Declaratory Diplomacy: Rhetorical Initiatives and Confidence Building. Report No. 27. Washington D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, April 1999.
- Krepon, Michael: A Ray of Hope. The Washington Quaterly, Spring 2002; pp. 175-179.
- Marcel, Valerie: The Constructivist Debate: Bringing Hermeneutics (Properly) In. Paper presented at the 2001 ISA conference, 21. February 2001
- Mitra, Subrata K.: Emerging Major Powers and the International System: Significance of the Indian View. In: Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics, #9, October 2002.
- Paul, T.V.: The Systemic Bases of India's Challenge to the Global Nuclear Order. The Nonproliferation Review, Fall 1998; pp. 1-11.
- Perkovich, George: A Nuclear Third Way in South Asia. In: Foreign Policy No.91, summer 1993.
- Perkovich, George: Think Again: Nonproliferation. In: Foreign Policy, Fall 1998.
- Poulose, T.T.: India's Deterrence Doctrine: A Nehruvian Critique. In: The Nonproliferation Review, Fall 1998; pp.77-84.
- Rajagopalan, Rajesh: Neorealist Theory and the India-Pakistan Conflict. In: Strategic Analysis, Vol.22, 9, December 1998.
- Rauf, Tariq: Learning to Live with the Bomb in South Asia: Accommodation not Confrontation. Online Publication. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Jan./Feb. 1999; pp. 14-16.
- Rose, Gideon: Review Article: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. World Politics, Vol.51, October 1998; pp. 144-172.
- Sagan, Scott: Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? In: International Security,Winter1996-97.
- Schaffer, Teresita C.: Building a New Partnership with India. The Washington Quaterly, Spring 2002; pp. 31-44.
- Sethi, Manpreet: India's Pursuit of Nuclear Disarmament: Efforts Must Continue. Strategic Analysis, Vol.23, No.3, June 1999.
- Sethi, Manpreet: Dangers From Weapons of Mass Destruction: Any Different in South Asia?. Strategic Analysis, Vol.24, No.11, February 2001.
- Shapcott, Richard: Solidarism and After: Global Governance, International Society and the Normative 'Turn' in International Relations. Pacifica Review, Vol12, No.2, June 2000; pp. 147-165.
- Sidhu, W.P.S. / Brian Cloughley / John H. Hawes / Teresita Schaffer: Nuclear Risk-Reduction Measures in South Asia. Stimson Center Report No.26. Washington D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, November 1998.

- Sidhu, Waheguru Pal Singh / Jing-Dong Yuan: Resolving the Sino-Indian Border Dispute: Building Confidence through Cooperative Monitoring. Asian Survey, Vol.41, No.2, 2001; pp. 351 – 376.
- Talbott, Strobe: Dealing with the Bomb in South Asia. Foreign Affairs March/April 1999.
- Tanham, George: India's Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay. Santa Monica: RAND Publication 1991
- Walker, William: Nuclear Order and Disorder. In International Affairs, Vol.76, No.4, 2000; pp. 703-724.
- Waltz, Kenneth: Structural Realism after the Cold War. In: International Security, Vol.25, No.1, Summer 2000; pp.5-41.
- Waltz, Kenneth: The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better. Adelphi Paper No. 171, 1981.
- Wendt, Alexander: Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics. International Organization, Vol.46, No.2, 1992; pp. 391-425.