CHAPTER- V

NUCLEAR REGIMES AND NUCLEAR POLICY UNDER NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Political System remained largely one party dominated system for the first three decades since independence. During this period the Congress party dominated the political scene at the central level and in most of the states. The new phenomenon commenced in 1977 when the Janata Party defeated the Congress in Parliamentary elections and formed the government at the central level having secured majority. This phenomenon is known as Coalition Politics and the governments are known as Coalition Governments. The Janata Party led coalition could not sustain for full span of its tenure and it collapsed within three years paving way for another Lok Sabha election in the country. The next decade again remained the Congress dominated. However, the succeeding decade i.e., from 1989-1999 was the era of unstable coalition governments. All the governments during this period were short-termed governments except the Narasimha Rao led National Front government that completed its full tenure. The year 1999 came to be recognised as a watershed in Indian polity when for the first time the non-Congress parties formed coalition government successfully enjoyed a full term in office. Hence, the National Democratic Alliance Government (NDA) created history of sorts by putting an end to unstable coalition governments.

After the fall of the United Front Government, the NDA Government led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee created history as far as the nuclear policy and decision making was concerned. It was during his premiership that India conducted a series of nuclear tests known as Pokhran-II on 11th and 13th May 1998. The BJP had been advocating for it for long and that was one of the promises, they had made during election campaigns in 1998. The nuclear test was an Indian nationalist decision. On

---

May 11, 1998, the Indian nuclear establishment gave the world a huge shock. In an article K. Subrahmanyam, a noted scholar on strategic matters asserted, “By conducting three underground nuclear tests simultaneously, India has formally joined the club of nuclear weapon states. India has become an irreversible nuclear weapon state and the other nuclear powers have to reconcile themselves to it.”

The world was astonished by the Indian government’s decision to test, and Indian government managed to do all preparations of the test, in a completely clandestine manner. After the shocking explosion the world without any exception gave sharply negative responses. “One hundred and fifty-two individual states spoke out against the tests.”

The Indian government was ready to face all the repercussions of the nuclear explosion and it managed well to a great extent. The NDA coalition led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), leaving besides her predecessor governments, dealt with the security issues in a very provocative and strategic manner. It saw the nuclear test as a step towards fulfilling its promise to build a strong India. The ultra-nationalism also played an important role in the background of the decision to test. At the domestic level the whole country including the opposition parties welcomed the nuclear explosion. Only little wave of criticism arose from the Leftist parties, which resisted the Vajpayee Government’s justification of the nuclear explosion based on the Chinese threat.

The strategic decision in the form of the nuclear explosion placed India in a difficult situation at the international platform. In spite of this India with her diplomacy and growing economic position managed to ingest all the economic sanctions placed on her as its fallout. Though the NDA government of 1999 had to face number of hardships as it was a weak coalition but, irrespective of that it took premeditated decisions as far as the foreign and economic policy of the nation was concerned. Despite so much of criticism and sanctions, it was this government which sailed India through the hour of economic crisis at global level. India’s economy was still opening up and the interdependence was increasing but it withstood the enormous pressure of signing the

---

Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and joining of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) discussions. All such decisions taken by NDA government only showed exemplary courage and determination of not making any compromises with its nuclear policy. It entered into a historic strategic dialogue with the US government which resulted in lifting of international pressure from India and slowly sanctions were lifted against India after the visit of President Clinton to India. It also initiated affable relations with China and Pakistan in the later part of its term and hence, maintained continuity in the policy of its predecessor government of friendly relations with neighbouring nations. On the whole the NDA government’s challenging decision to go ahead with the nuclear explosion strengthened India’s image and role in the South Asian region as well as at the international level, making India one of the top most powerful countries of the world.

**FORMATION OF NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT**

The elections for the 12th Lok Sabha were overshadowed with the anti-incumbency factor and it turned out to put the BJP at the winning end. “India plunged into a morass of political instability and uncertainty, with record-breaking government turnover between 1989 and 1998.” The deteriorating position of the country at the international as well as national level and the unstable economy along with the weak coalition governments changed the game for the existing government. Although, the previous United Front government was successful in showcasing several accomplishments on the front of the foreign policy but it did not had any effect on the domestic factors in the country. During the elections the BJP came up with a strong nationalist election agenda. Discussing the external security issue the agenda clearly stated that the party is committed to:

---


Establish a National Security Council to constantly analyze security, political and economic threats and render continuous advice to the Government. This Council will undertake India's first-ever Strategic Defence Review to study and analyze the security environment and make appropriate recommendations to cover all aspects of defence requirements and organization.\(^6\)

In order to capitalise the nationalistic feelings of the nation the BJP manifesto asserted to, “re-evaluate the nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.”\(^7\)

It is to be noted that the Vajpayee Government which came to power in 1996 had pursued for the nuclear explosion but because it lost majority in just 13 days, so the final authorization to go ahead with the nuclear test could not be proceeded. Hence, to make India a nuclear power was always a key goal of the BJP. The elections were held and the Indian National Congress (INC) could win only 29.56 percent of the seats and the BJP with 46.91 percent seats managed to form government with the help of its coalition partners. The following table 5.1 shows the performance of various national parties in 1998 General Elections. The table reveals that none of the national parties could attain clear majority and therefore like previously a coalition government was the only solution left. Therefore on 19\(^{th}\) March 1998 the BJP along with her 18 coalition parties formed the NDA under the premiership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The country had already faced weak coalition governments in the past and this time again in the initial days of the NDA government same situation emerged. The NDA ran into difficulties when its allies from the south and west particularly AIDMK, Trinamool Congress and the Samata Party threatened to withdraw from the alliance.\(^8\) For the AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha it was said that, “...the second largest coalition partner in the BJP coalition has kept the government on the tenterhooks either for not dismissing the DMK government in Tamil Nadu on complaining by her.”\(^9\)

---


\(^8\) For details on this see: “Pressure from Regional Allies,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no.17 (April 25- May1, 1998), 936.

Table 5.1: Performance of the National Parties in 1998 Lok Sabha Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTY</th>
<th>CANDIDATES</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
<th>VALID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>CONTESTED</td>
<td>WON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr.No.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>INC</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>JD</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1493</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Similar undue demands and irresponsibilities came from Mamata Banerjee, the Samata Party and Shiv Sena. Under the leadership of A.B. Vajpayee the NDA managed to reconcile all the major issues of its allies, but the sword of withdrawing support always hung on government’s head until 1999.

**Reasons for Going Nuclear**

For a nation like India to go ahead for conducting its nuclear tests and an overt announcement of her nuclear policy was never an easy way out. As Varun Sahani mentions that “Development, deployment, and declaration are the three essential elements of the policy option called “going nuclear.”\(^{10}\) Since, the Rajiv Gandhi period

---

the nuclear establishments were actively working on India’s nuclear programme and the later governments also maintained continuity in the policy. In fact during the Narsimha Rao phase India was on the verge of conducting the nuclear tests but backed off at the last moment, and similarly, during the previous government headed by the Vajpayee had gone ahead with the decision to conduct nuclear tests but had to withdraw as they were faced with the No Confidence motion. George Perkovich clarifies the stance of the BJP by stating that, “If the BJP did not survive the pending vote of confidence in the Parliament, a successor government would be left to deal with the consequences of an act that it had not authorized.”

Hence, keeping this in mind the Vajpayee government backed out.

The strategic decision of conducting nuclear tests by the Vajpayee Government can be traced to various reasons domestic as well as international. Domestically, the NDA Government was faced with continued threat of withdrawing of support from the allies, so Vajpayee wanted to strengthen base of the party and turn the public opinion to his side. He calculated well that conducting a nuclear test could be utilised to overcome the threat of losing power, as was done by Mrs. Indira Gandhi during the 1974 Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE). Some of the scholars argued that:

…the tests had been timed to overshadow the domestic machinations of erstwhile BJP ally but supreme political opportunist Jayalalitha, leader of All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party…the BJP, mindful that their slim majority in the Lok Sabha would be vulnerable to any kind of disaffection or over-ambition from within their multi-party coalition, pushed for the nuclear test so as to have a strong campaign issue in any subsequent general election.

The Indian decision of nuclear explosion was also seen as the fulfilment of the promise made by the BJP in its election manifesto. In reality, the BJP was the successor of the Janata Party which always favoured the nuclear option as a nationalist agenda. Also the BJP was backed by the strong Hindu nationalism and the Jana Sangh (later called

---

Nuclear Regimes and Nuclear Policy Under NDA Government

Rastriya Swayam Sewak Sangh), and they always demanded of indigenous military and nuclear programme in order to create a chauvinistic, masculine and strong image of India vis-a-vis other nations of the world.

...in the aftermath of 1962, the Jana Sangh called for the development of an indigenous nuclear weapons arsenal. In fact, the party mouthpiece, Organiser condemned the “eunuch government...in its ahimsic idiocy” for the “criminal folly” of not pursuing nuclear weapons...the Jana Sangh identified China as the rationale for a hypothetical nuclear weapons programme arguing that “India would be able to give them a fighting reply and blast their aggressive designs.”

Hence, the pressure was exerted on the Vajpayee Government from within the structure of the party and its ideological base. With its nationalistic base the BJP always wanted to create a strong and powerful image of India with regard to its defence and foreign policy and nuclear bomb was seen as a foundation for fulfilment of such goal. “Thus, Hindu nationalism manifested through nuclear nationalism in the BJP framework.”

Gaurav Kampani, sums the ideological basis of the BJP’s goals as:

1. Making Hindu revivalism the basis of nationhood; and
2. Constructing a masculine national security state as symbol of national myth and achievement.

It marked a change in the existing ideology followed at the national level since the times of Jawaharlal Nehru. The BJP government was so passionate about the nationalism that Jaswant Singh, Foreign Minister in the NDA Government, “blamed the “ersatz pacifism” of Buddhist, Jain, Vaishnav-Bhakti and Gandhian views for “twisting India’s strategic culture into all kinds of absurdities” and enfeebling a once fierce nation. He tried to revive the courage, bravery and strength of the warrior tribes and castes, like Rajputana, the Vijayanagar Empire, the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs, etc.

---

16 As cited in Chaulia, 220. Also see: Jaswant Singh, Defending India (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 13.
By reviving such qualities of India’s strategic culture the BJP wanted to highlight India’s prestige at the international level and exploding the nuclear bomb was seen as a step towards enhancing India’s mannhish and combatant image.

Another important reason at the domestic front which led the Vajpayee Government to go ahead with the nuclear option was the demands from the Indian scientists and the ‘strategic enclave’. Since the days of the PNE the Indian scientists were working on the advancement of the nuclear technology and they were well prepared to take Indian nuclear potential to the next level of the ‘thermonuclear tests’ but due to several reasons they were denied this opportunity, but now they were ready and eagerly waiting to showcase to the World the advancement they had made in all those years. Samir Sen has rightly pointed out this point when he mentions that:

India's nuclear warhead research activities had proceeded for a long time on a low key in the absence of any test whatsoever, tests were long needed, and it was only to be expected that Indian scientists would conduct these tests at the earliest possible moment after receiving the clearance.\(^{17}\)

On the similar lines the BJP had always advocated the cause of self-reliance and Swadeshi at the economic as well as the military lines. As Baldev Raj Nayar puts, “To the BJP ‘Swadeshi’ simply means ‘India First’.\(^{18}\) This attitude was carried forward by the NDA government even in its foreign policy, continuing the Indian principle of self-reliance they pursued their nuclear policy. Indian nuclear tests were justified based on this concept of swadeshi and self-reliance, so that country should not be dependent on the US and U.S.S.R for any kind of nuclear technology, and it could be attained in India only after conducting the nuclear tests.

Additionally, a number of international factors also forced the NDA Government to move a step forward in the nuclear world. The most significant of all was the continuous security threat from the neighbours. China and Pakistan had constantly posed a threat to India’s security and their growing friendship heated the

---


cause. Time and again, China was found to be helping Pakistan to build its nuclear project which caused a serious threat to the national defence of the country. The *Annual Report* of the Ministry of Defence for the year 1997 under the United Front Government had reported that China was actively supporting Pakistan’s nuclear and ballistic programme and at the same time it was also making larger advancements in its own programme.19 Another explanation for India’s nuclear tests was the growing strain from the international nuclear regimes. India had not signed the NPT and the CTBT, and had continued to criticise the discrimination done under the garb of these nuclear regimes, but with the passage of time when most of the nations of the world had compromised their interests to these nuclear regimes, India wanted to overcome this pressure. The nuclear weapon possessing nations in the name of nuclear regimes were forcing India to withdraw its nuclear programme. According to J. N. Dixit, India’s former Foreign Secretary:

...the deliberate ambiguity which India had practiced about its nuclear weapons capacities was being used as an argument to immediately cap, roll back and eliminate India’s nuclear defence capacities.20

The Indian Government was not ready to bow down in front of these nuclear regimes. Hence, exploding the nuclear bomb was seen as a lesson to the world showing that India will never compromise on its sovereignty and security issues. After the tests K. Subrahmaniyam justified this point by stating that, “Nuclear weapons are not military weapons. Their logic is that of international politics and it is a logic of global nuclear order.... India wants to be a player in, and not an object of this global nuclear order.”21

The pressure exerted by the international regimes highlighted the need to follow a defensively tough approach. Describing various reasons for India’s concretizing its nuclear weapon option Dixit states that:

The incremental and definitive prospects of restrictive and discriminatory international regimes being put in place which would have not just stifled but would have also have put a complete stop to

---

India realizing its potential in the fields of space and nuclear technologies spurred India to exercise the nuclear option…India took note of the fact that other nuclear weapons capable states, which were subjected to restrictive pressures, either overcame the pressures by becoming nuclear weapon powers themselves, such as France, and China, or they succumbed to international pressure and their nuclear technologies capacities (in terms of self-reliance) were capped, rolled back and eliminated as in the case of Argentina, South Africa and Brazil. India decided to adopt first option to overcome these pressures.\textsuperscript{22}

Similar opinion was put forward by Jasjit Singh, former Director of IDSA, he was of the view that, “If the stranglehold of the non-proliferation order continued to tighten around the open option, and India did not take steps to break out of it, very soon there would be no option left.”\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, India maintained its prior stand even in difficult circumstances; rather it took a decisive decision of conducting nuclear tests and proved its importance and esteem to the world.

The role of the Clinton Administration was also somehow responsible for India’s decision to go ahead with this overt weapon option. With the passage of time America had changed its policy towards Asia and particularly China. The US Government started having deep engagements with China and viewed it as the emerging power of Asia. Such a change delimited the Indian role vis-à-vis the Western powers, especially America and India felt that such US intervention in the region would vividly affect balance of power in South Asia. The softening behaviour towards China, silent attitude to Pakistan’s growing military power and China’s military and financial aid to Pakistan, all together frenzied India to react in such a manner.

Sumit Ganguly mentions three major reasons which led India to conduct nuclear tests of 1998; he argues that, “a mix of ideology..., statecraft, and domestic pressures reflecting security concerns”\textsuperscript{24} were responsible for India’s decision. Perkovich has summarised the reason for India’s nuclear tests in seven points.\textsuperscript{25}

1. To win recognition of India as a major power;

\textsuperscript{22} J. N. Dixit, \textit{Foreign Policy 1947-2003} (New Delhi: Picus, 2003).
\textsuperscript{25} Perkovich, 439.
2. To catch up with China in terms of status and strategic deterrence;
3. To reassert technological and strategic superiority over Pakistan;
4. To bolster the expertise, morale and recruitment of the BARC and the DRDO;
5. To strengthen national defence at low cost while maintaining civilian control over nuclear policy;
6. To maintain moral standing as an advocate of nuclear disarmament; and
7. To boost the BJP government’s internal position.

The most significant factor that acted as a catalyst in the whole scenario was Pakistan’s testing of the *Ghauri* missile in April 1998. Pakistani Premier in an interview openly agreed to the fact that they were working on the development of nuclear weapons and after testing of the *Ghauri* missile, they also announced the testing of their long range missiles namely *Ghaznavi* and *Babri*. Before that Pakistan had already acquired M-11 missiles from China and Ndong 11 missiles from North Korea, these missiles were noteworthy because they were capable of carrying nuclear warheads, hence the Indian side got furious with such activities of Pakistan. Also merely 50 km away from Islamabad, Pakistan had set up a missile factory at Fatehganj. Further, the Indian response became mandatory due to the “Military nuclear presence of the US and China, land based, airborne and sea-borne in the Northern reaches of the Indian Ocean stretching from Diego Garcia to the Straits of Hormuz to the Gulf and from the Gulf in a semi-circular arc right up to the South China sea.”

All these reasons were enough for a nation to take some affirmative stand as far as the security and nuclear development was concerned. Keeping all these factors in mind as an immediate reaction to Pakistan’s testing of the *Ghauri* intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM), which had the capacity to reach almost all the major cities of India, the Indian Prime Minister authorised the testing of nuclear weapons. Although the talks were already going on before the test of the Pakistani missile, but after the testing of the missile the Indian Prime Minister got an appropriate opportunity to react to the situation and prove India’s capability in the region.

---

26 Dixit, 11-12.
CULMINATION OF INDIA’S NUCLEAR TEST (1998): OPERATION SHAKTI

Within two months of coming into power the NDA government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee conducted the much awaited nuclear tests in the Pokhran on 11 May and 13 May, 1998. The nuclear explosions were not sudden but a result of the continuous efforts done by the Indian scientists in all the previous years. The world was under a great shock after the news was circulated in the international media that India had conducted her second nuclear explosion after 1974. This time it was an overt ‘culmination of nuclear weaponization,’ rather than a peaceful nuclear explosion, although India always emphasised not to use it for destructive purposes. Named as “Operation Shakti” (Pokhran-II), it marked as a watershed moment in the Indian history. Bharat Karnad clarifies that the decision to conduct nuclear explosion was taken on April 8 or 9, and it was decided to go ahead with test at the end of the month itself. But due to the absence of President K. R. Narayanan, the date of the culmination of the nuclear test was postponed, as the President was on to a state visit to Brazil on April 26-27, and the Vajpayee Government wanted the President to be present in the country during such a crucial day.27

On Monday, 11 May 1998, India conducted a series of nuclear explosion by testing three devices at the Pokhran site under the surface of the Thar Desert of Rajasthan near the Indo-Pak border. It was followed by two more tests on 13 May. India detonated the advanced stage of the 1974 nuclear explosion i.e., a thermonuclear weapon design. After the tests India declared itself a fully-fledged nuclear armed state. This de facto declaration was followed shortly thereafter by an official one. On 11 May 1998, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee held a Press Conference and declared that:

I have an announcement to make: today at 3:45 p.m., India conducted three underground nuclear tests in the Pokhran range (in Rajasthan state). These were contained explosions like the experiment conducted in May 1974… I warmly congratulate the scientists and engineers who have carried out these successful tests.28

27 Bharat Karnad, India’s Nuclear Policy (London: Pentagon Press, 2008), 64.
Accompanied by his political advisor, the Prime Minister did not entertain any questions from the media. There were around hundred national and international media persons in the Press Conference, which was held at his official residence. He clarified that the country had detonated three devices, “a fission device with a yield of about 12 kilotons (KT), a thermonuclear device with a yield of about 43 KT, and a sub-kiloton device,” later on 13 May similar tests were conducted and were reported to have a yield “in the range of 0.2 to 0.6 KT.” While speaking about the success of the tests the Premier said, “The measured yields are in line with expected values. Measurements have also confirmed that there was no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere.”

In an official Press Statement issued by the Government of India on 13 May 1998, the official stance mentioned:

In continuation of the planned programme of underground nuclear tests begun on the 11th of May, two more sub-kiloton nuclear tests were carried out at Pokhran range at 12:21 p.m on the 13 of May, 1998. The tests have been carried out to generate additional data for improved computer simulation of designs and for attaining the capability to carry out subcritical experiments, if considered necessary. The tests were fully contained with no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere. This completes the planned series of tests.

Press briefings were given by Prime Minister, his special envoy Mr. Jaswant Singh, PM’s political advisor Mr. Parmod Mahajan and Principal Secretary to PM, Brajesh Mishra. All the briefings held the same point of clarifying about the nuclear tests conducted by India and also India’s motive behind conducting such test. After the test various US and individual reports concluded that there was difference in the yield claimed by Indian scientist and the actual yield. According to the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, India attempted to detonate a thermonuclear device, but that the second stage of the two-stage bomb failed to ignite as planned. But Indian government and scientists declared it as a successful nuclear test. The following table 5.2 gives a

32 Ibid, 98.
brief description of the ‘Operation Shakti,’ its timing and yield. There have been certain discrepancies with regard to the yield of the Pokhran-II explosion.\textsuperscript{33}

Table 5.2 Details of Operation Shakti

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEST</th>
<th>DEVICE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>YIELD CLAIMED</th>
<th>YIELD REPORTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shakti 1</td>
<td>Thermonuclear Device</td>
<td>11 May 1998</td>
<td>43-60 KT</td>
<td>12-25 KT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakti 2</td>
<td>Fission Device</td>
<td>11 May 1998</td>
<td>12 KT</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakti 3</td>
<td>Low-Yield Device</td>
<td>11 May 1998</td>
<td>0.2 KT</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakti 4</td>
<td>Low-Yield Device</td>
<td>13 May 1998</td>
<td>0.5 KT</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakti 5</td>
<td>Low-Yield Device</td>
<td>13 May 1998</td>
<td>0.3 KT</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The whole Operation Shakti was headed by different team leaders and heads. The detailed description\textsuperscript{34} of the scientific intelligentsia involved in the ‘Operation Shakti’ of 1998 is as follows:

\textbf{Project Leaders:}

Dr. Avil (Abdul) Pakir Jainulabdeen Kalam

- Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister
- Head of the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO)

Dr. Rajagopala Chidambaram

- Chairman of India’s Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)
- Chairman of the Department of Atomic energy (DAE)


\textsuperscript{34} As cited in “India’s Nuclear Weapon Programme, Operation Shakti: 1998,” (accessed November 19, 2011); available from \url{http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/India/IndiaShakti.html}. 
Development and Test Teams

**Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) Leads**

- Anil Kakodkar, Director of BARC
- Satinder Kumar Sikka, Lead for Thermonuclear Weapon Development
- M.S. Ramakumar, Director of Nuclear Fuel and Automation Manufacturing Group;
  Lead for nuclear component manufacture
- D.D. Sood, Director of Radiochemistry and Isotope Group;
  Lead for nuclear material acquisition
- S.K. Gupta, Solid State Physics and Spectroscopy Group;
  Device design and assessment
- G. Govindraj, Associate Director of Electronic and Instrumentation Group;
  Lead for field instrumentation

**Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Leads**

- K. Santhanam; lead for test site preparations
- Chairman of the Department of Atomic energy (DAE)

The previous governments since the days of Rajiv Gandhi had laid the foundation of such an event, and the successive governments managed to continue the programme but the credit for taking such a crucial and strategic decision for India has to go to the BJP led NDA Government. On 27th May 1998, Prime Minister, before the Parliament (via a written statement), held, “the onus of India’s nuclear tests on the nuclear haves who had over the decades stubbornly refused to negotiate any treaty to dismantle the nuclear weapon stockpiles.”  

The domestic and the international considerations played a very important role in the decision making by the Vajpayee Government, but the government showcased immense courage and urgency in taking such decision. As Amitabh Mattoo states, that Prime Minister Vajpayee, “demonstrated a chutzpah, rare in recent Indian history, by having the tests conducted.”  

---

important facts about India’s nuclear tests of 1998 was that it was comparatively of low cost as compared to the other nations, it exhibited the excellent work of our scientists and nuclear programme. According to one study, “building bombs consumed just seven percent of the total cost of the U.S. nuclear weapons program.”\textsuperscript{37} Atal Bihari Vajpayee gave a detailed statement on Pokhran-II test in Parliament.\textsuperscript{38}

**Reactions to the Pokhran-II in India**

India’s reaction to the situation was overwhelming and receptive. The Indian media and public took it as a moral boost and matter of prestige. It was the moment full of patriotism, proud, self-belief and confidence. The whole country’s attention got diverted from the issues of poverty, weak government, unemployment, weak economy etc., to something which enhanced and highlighted India’s status at the international level.

Much to the delight of the Vajpayee government, the BJP, and the RSS, the Indian people’s reaction to the tests was a euphoric outburst of the national pride. There were enthusiastic demonstrations throughout the country, celebrating the tests as a demonstration that India was well on its way to joining the exclusive “nuclear club.” The third day after the completion of the second round of the tests was observed nationally as a “Day of Pride,”....A public opinion poll conducted in Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad on the day following the first series of the tests showed that 91% of the respondents applauded the government’s action, and that 82% thought India should go forward and build nuclear weapons. But the finding that brought the greatest satisfaction to the Vajpayee regime was that 67% of those polled said they were now reassured that the government was strong and would safeguard their security.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{38} http://youtu.be/63jO8tu9Gt4
Photograph 5.1: Key scientists and engineers involved in India’s Nuclear Tests on May 10, 1998. Abdul Kalam is on left (silver hair), R. Chidambaram is holding file, Anil Kakodkar is behind Chidambaram wearing glasses, K. Santhanam is at extreme right.


Photograph 5.2: Dust columns from the Shakti test series on 11 May 1998

Source: “A Brief History of Beginning of the End,” (accessed August 21, 2011); available from [https://sites.google.com/site/amy99323/hist5b/proliferation](https://sites.google.com/site/amy99323/hist5b/proliferation)
Photograph 5.3: Test Site of Pokhran II. This photo released by the Government of India on May 17, 1998 showing the Pokhran-II test site after a nuclear device was detonated underground on May 11.

Source: [http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pokhranii-was-successful-says-mannmohan/article11093.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pokhranii-was-successful-says-mannmohan/article11093.ece)

Photograph 5.4: Various Sheds along the crater. These two photographs disclose that the small subsidence crater from the test was centered on a long shed [#1], and that a pair of parallel sheds [#2 & #3] ran at right angles to this shed. A fourth shed [#4] can be seen in the background.

Photograph 5.5: Prime Minister Vajpayee at the Nuclear Test Site in Pokhran.


Photograph 5.6: Press Conference on 16 May. From right Anil Kakodkar, Abdul Kalam, R. Chidambaram, and K. Santhanam.

Even the Indian media highlighted the Indian achievement by making it the headlines as ‘Explosion of Self-Esteem’ and ‘Megatonnes of Prestige.’

“A Moment of Pride” mentioned Hindustan Times, whereas The Indian Express praised the NDA regime for putting the nation on “Road to Resurgence,” Tushar Gandhi (grandson of Mahatma Gandhi) categorically mentioned, “As an Indian, I am proud it was done in India and by Indians.” The editor of India Today, labeled the nuclear tests as a “good dose for a nation fed on a diet of bad news.” Even the Indian army was highly enthusiastic and proud of the strength which the nuclear weapons gave to the nation. It was believed that the nuclear explosions would fortify the armed forces to acquire suitable launch systems, and with the help of knowledge and expertise generated an effective command-and-control mechanisms could be built for India. The nuclear weapon test was seen as an effective mechanism to counter nuclear threats and nuclear blackmail from the adjoining nations of Pakistan and China and even against the United States for that matter.

Along with that the Indian scholars were of the view that now India can easily fight for its esteemed place in the greater world order. The overt nuclear weapon capability also strengthened India’s demand to be part of the Permanent Security Council in the UN. A former Chief of Indian Air Force was quoted in the Boston Globe on 13 May, 1998, stating:

We’re not being recognized by world powers. A lot of advanced countries are not backing a seat for Indian in the Security Council, even though India deserves it in every way. We are a democracy, we have economic strength, and we contribute resources and peace keepers all over the world to help the U.N.

---

To the dislike of the nations of the world, India keeping its security and national interests at upper hand, went ahead and crossed the nuclear Rubicon. The situation at home was not all welcoming as there were voices criticising the Vajpayee Government’s decision to alter the pre-existing moral approach of India towards the nuclear weapons. Also the advocates of non-proliferation and disarmament described the test to be directed to gain votes in the elections and categorised it to be a ‘cheap and partisan political trick.’ The opposition party mainly the Congress party officially welcomed the NDA regimes decision, “In a meeting of the Congress Working Committee, Sonia Gandhi stated that she “would like to place on record…the pride we feel in the achievement of our nuclear scientists and engineers….The nuclear question is a national matter, not a partisan one. On this every Indian stands united.” But some of the political leaders like I.K. Gujral and some of the leaders of the Communist Party of India held a different perspective. They criticized the Indian Government that after such overt weaponization, India’s claim regarding disarmament and non-proliferation got affected and in turn it has spoiled India’s image at the international level. C. Raja Mohan has elaborated on this as:

Fifty years after Independence, India now wanted to become a normal nation-placing considerations of realpolitik and national security above its until recently dominant focus on liberal internationalism, morality and normative approaches to international politics. The shock waves from this decision would certainly haunt the domestic politics of India, the regional equation in the subcontinent, the balance of power in Asia and the global nuclear order for a long time to come. There was no turning back now from India’s decision to explore the uncharted waters of a nuclear future.

The Indian leaders were pessimistic about the reactions of the world, particularly countries like China, Pakistan and the US. The reason for the fear in the minds of the Indian leaders was mainly because officially India justified its nuclear test as a result of security threat from China and Pakistan. They were intimidated by the reactions from the opposite side. Also a few days before the test India’s the then Defence Minister, Mr.

---

45 Dixit, 432
46 Dettman, 42.
George Fernandes publically declared China as India’s “threat number one” in a television interview. Former Prime Minister Gujral was upset on such developments as according to his viewpoint, such proactive declarations could ruin the mutual understanding which was built by his government in the last five years. Natwar Singh a Congress party specialist on foreign policy was infuriated on the situation; he responded as, “the anti-China statements by the BJP-led coalition members had thrown into the dustbin ten years of hard diplomatic efforts that India has spent on improving ties with Beijing.” It was debated that the long followed duality of “public-disarmament-but-private-armament” or “international-disarmament-but-national-weaponisation” was shattered after the open declaration of India’s nuclear weaponisation.

The nuclear tests also marked a shift in India’s foreign and security policy. Since the days of independence India had emphasised her moralistic approach towards the disarmament and the non-proliferation issues. Even the first nuclear test by India was named as Peaceful Nuclear Explosion, and ever since India was following the policy of ‘restraint’ as far as the nuclear weapons programme was concerned. Even during the worst circumstances when India had to face war like situation, she never tried to capitalise her nuclear potential overtly. But in 1998 the continuity in the nuclear policy of the previous governments of India was changed and the Vajpayee Government took a major step to weaponise India’s nuclear option explicitly. Although it would be wrong to give the whole credit to the NDA regime as, if the previous governments would not have maintained an ‘open nuclear option’ and would not have continued the nuclear weaponisation programme in a clandestine manner along with the Civilian nuclear programme it would have never been possible for the Vajpayee government to take such a decision and make India proud. On the other hand the decision which the Prime Minister Vajpayee took shifted India from a moralistic to a realistic stance. India’s Defence Minister Jaswant Singh has elaborated on this shift. He states that:

---


The current disharmony, therefore, between India and the rest of the globe is that India has moved from being totally moralistic to being a little more realistic, while the rest of the nuclear world has arrived at all its nuclear conclusions entirely realistically. With a surplus of nuclear weapons and the technology for fourth-generation weapons, the other nuclear powers are now beginning to move towards a moralistic position. Here is the cradle of lack of understanding about the Indian stand.\textsuperscript{51}

In an interview to India Today after the conduct of nuclear tests, Prime Minister clarified all the doubts which arose in the minds of opponents of the nuclear explosion. He maintained that “the greatest meaning of the tests is that they have given Indian shakti [power], they have given India strength and they have given India self-confidence”…further he claimed the tests to be the result of, “the supreme consideration of national interests,” and “beginning of the rise of a strong and self-confident India.”\textsuperscript{52}

In May 1998 Prime Minister emphasizing his achievement gave the slogan: \textit{Jai Jwan, Jai Kisan aur Jai Vigyan}.\textsuperscript{53} Also Prime Minister Vajpayee declared 11\textsuperscript{th} May as the National Technology Day for India.

\textbf{International Reactions and Sanctions after Pokhran-II}

The international media was in a state of shock and dismay when they learned about India’s nuclear test of 11\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} May 1998. Unlikely at home, the world did not approve or welcome India’s sudden nuclear explosion that too without any warning. Almost all countries of the world condemned India’s action. The world was in shock particularly America as they could not detect any such preparations going on at the Pokhran site. It was another achievement on part of India, that in spite of advanced spy satellite system they managed to keep their entire activities secret. It is believed that after the leakage of the news of India’s nuclear test preparations in 1996, India had to put all its activities underground and was extra cautious of the steps taken.

In fact, National Security Advisor Sandy Berger told reporters the United States still had no confirmation of the test nearly 12 hours after the blast.

\textsuperscript{51} Jaswant Singh, “Against the Nuclear Apartheid,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 77, no. 5 (September/October 1998): 47.
occurred… CIA officials say the United States did not know anything about the tests until Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee announced the tests on television Monday morning, four hours after they had taken place… India calculated the orbits of spy satellites and then moved equipment at times when they believed nothing was overhead. India, several officials noted, has long had a space program and is capable of determining what satellites are in which orbit. “They were in our blind spot,” said a senior military official. Moreover, intelligence officials note that the Indian nuclear weapons program is the “most secretive” of all Third World programs. “We know more about the North Korean program than we do about the Indian program.”

Strobe Talbot mentions Indian scientists comment on this situation as, “It’s not a failure of the CIA. It’s matter of their intelligence being good, and our deception being better.” “One hundred and fifty-two individual states spoke out against the tests.” India was well aware of such criticism and it was likely that a harsh disapproval would come after India’s bold step. On 12 May 1998 Indian Prime Minister wrote letters to 177 heads of the state (except China and Pakistan) giving his clarification on the nuclear tests. In his letter to President Clinton, he wrote:

> I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, specially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust of the country [China] has materially helped another neighbour of ours [Pakistan] to become a covert nuclear weapon state.

But even after such justifications the US took a very strict stand on this matter. President Clinton reacting to India’s nuclear tests stated that he was “deeply disturbed by the nuclear tests”, he argued that such tests do not contribute to “building a safer 21st

---

56 Talbott, 1999.
century” and added that “this action by India not only threatens the stability of the region, it directly challenges the firm international consensus to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”\(^{58}\) Bill Clinton also reacted on the failure of the CIA to detect any such activity. Five days after the Indian nuclear tests India’s Home Minister L.K. Advani during his visit to Kashmir firmly stated that, “India’s nuclear weapons capability showed the country’s resolve to deal firmly and strongly with Pakistan’s hostile designs and activities in Kashmir,” on asking about Pakistan’s nuclear programme L.K. Advani mentioned that, “In fact it was Pakistan’s clandestine preparations that forced us to take nuclear path of nuclear deterrence.”\(^{59}\) Pakistan retaliated by conducting Nuclear Explosion on 28 May and 30 May 1998, hardly 15 days after India’s nuclear tests. The South-Asian region fell prey to mad race of weaponisation and nuclear establishments. The world got worried about the issue and the simultaneous overt nuclear weaponization by two countries of Asia changed the direction of focus towards them.

Without exception the nations and the international organisations gave sharply negative response. On June 6, 1998 United Nation taking a strict note of the situation in this region of the world, condemned the nuclear tests of India as well as Pakistan. By passing the UN Security Council Resolution No. 1172 the members of the Security Council stressed that they are, “gravely concerned at the challenge that the nuclear tests...constitutes to international efforts aimed at strengthening the global regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.”\(^{60}\) The resolution was unanimously passed at the 3890\(^{th}\) meeting of the UN. It asserted both India and Pakistan to refrain from conducting nuclear tests in future and to become party to the NPT and the CTBT. It is noteworthy that in lieu of the nuclear tests again the international nuclear regimes started duping India to be part of the treaties which India have always condemned for being


\(^{59}\) Dettman, 40-41.

\(^{60}\) “Indian and Pakistani Nuclear Tests,” Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monetary Institute of International Studies, (accessed November 22, 2013); available from http://cnc.miis.edu/research/india/index.htm
Nuclear Regimes and Nuclear Policy Under NDA Government

discriminatory.\textsuperscript{61} Through Resolution No. 1172, the Security Council endorsed, ‘…its firm conviction that the international regime on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons should be maintained and consolidated. It recalled that, in accordance with the NPT, India and Pakistan cannot have the status of a nuclear-weapon state.’\textsuperscript{62} Hence, the international regimes did not approve India’s nuclear tests and denied a legitimate status to India as a nuclear weapon state. Various other international organisations followed the same suit, “The ASEAN Regional Forum expressed “grave concern” and “strongly deplored” the tests, while the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), where India had long been a leader, held a contentious discussions of the tests at its September Summit in Durban, South Africa.”\textsuperscript{63} Since India had directed the security threat from China and Pakistan for justifying her nuclear tests, so a strong criticism from the Chinese side was well expected. The Chinese Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement on 14 May:

In disregard of the strong opposition of the international community, the Indian government conducted two more nuclear tests on May 13 following the May 11 tests. The Chinese government is deeply shocked by this and hereby expresses its strong condemnation. This act of India’s is nothing but outrageous contempt for the common will of the international community for the comprehensive ban on nuclear tests and a hard blow on the international effort to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation. It will entail serious consequences to the peace and stability in South Asia and the world at large.\textsuperscript{64}

Treating India’s nuclear tests in a very serious and stringent manner America under the obligation of the \textit{Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act 1994}\textsuperscript{65} imposed economic

\begin{flushleft}

\hrule

\textbf{In Engaging India even Strobe Talbott talks about such preparations done by the US administration in order to somehow compel India to sign on the CTBT and the NPT.} \\
\textbf{The sanctions were imposed under the Arms Export Control Act or the Glenn Amendment, under the Section 102 (6) (2) of the Act which was incorporated in the Nuclear Proliferation Act in 1994. The act included the Symington Amendment of 1976, the Glenn Amendment of 1979, the Solarz Amendment of 1985 and the Pressler Amendment of 1985. The US laws cannot put sanctions on any nation for proliferation of weapons if the nuclear programme of the nation is indigenous. Under this condition India was free from any sanction, but since India was not an existing nuclear weapon state in terms of the NPT, hence the US imposed sanctions on India after the Pokhran-II tests.} \\
\end{flushleft}
sanctions on her. All the US economic aid except that for the humanitarian cause was halted. Similar course was followed by Japan, Australia, Canada and Germany. Later they were joined by the G-8 nations; around fourteen countries of the world imposed some kind of sanctions on India. Immediately after the tests of 11 May 1998 Japan condemned India’s action on a stringent note. Being the victim of the nuclear weapons such reactions were well expected from Japan. Later in 1999 in the aftermath of nuclear tests of India and Pakistan, Japan stated:

The nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in May 1998 awoke the world to the reality that the spread of nuclear weapons had reached a dangerous new phase. Two regional powers with unresolved antagonisms had made their nuclear ambitions overt. The tests reflected the failure of global non-proliferation norms to prevail over regional security imperatives, and increased fears that regional conflicts could turn into real nuclear wars.

India was well prepared for all this and keeping this in mind it tracked strong diplomacy in the G-8 summit and tried to ensure Britain about her motives to conduct the nuclear tests, it was done mainly to save India from severe sanctions. Indian Premier tried to justify his action to the G-8 nations regarding the nuclear tests because China along with some other nations was strongly pushing the G-8 and even the UN to ban India from the membership of the UN Security Council which was strictly against the interests of India, but in the end India was successful and no such action was taken against her. Bharat Karnad in his book, “India’s Nuclear Policy” has referred to a study conducted under the Narasimha Rao Government in 1995-1996, which states that “India would be able to withstand the force of economic sanctions” in the aftermath of nuclear tests. One cannot deny the fact that the nuclear tests conducted by India and as a result to that the sanctions imposed did have an effect on India’s economy. According to Baldev Raj Nayar, “The nuclear tests had a two-folded effect on the economy and economic policy. On the one hand, the government performance became completely

66 For a detail of the Sanctions imposed by the U.S. and Japan see: V. N. Khanna, 237 and 245.
68 Karnad, 65.
preoccupied with the diplomatic fallout of the nuclear tests, as the Western coalition under the leadership of the U.S. sought to isolate India politically and to punish it economically. On the other hand...the economic sanctions and the diplomatic isolation aggravated an already deteriorating economy and escalated economic uncertainty." In order to overcome the after effects of the sanctions the Indian Government immediately took two important steps. Firstly, it issued “Resurgent India Bonds” in the international market for reviving her economy from the sanctions. Secondly, it actively started strategic dialogue with the US. For this, Jaswant Singh was chosen and on the American side was Strobe Talbott. On the whole, the economic sanctions levied by the US and other nations did not affect India to a great extent. Indian economy managed to engulf these sanctions as was predicted by the study in the previous years. The economy grew at 6.2% rate in 1998-1999 which was better than 4.8% of the previous year. Indian economy did not go in a vulnerable position in the aftermath of the sanctions imposed and it was revealed even in a research which concluded that, “...the bottom line for the case of India is this: sanctions had a marginal – but not negligible – effect on the nation’s economy.” Commenting on increased efforts by India to involve America in the strategic dialogue, India’s Finance Minister of the time Yaswant Sinha, stated that, “...if we wanted the world to accept what we had done it was important to carry conviction with the US first. It had the desired effect.” During all these days France and Russia had, if not supportive then, also no confounding behaviour towards India. They endorsed India’s nuclear tests as the right of a country to have defensive nuclear power based on its security threat. Within few months the impact of the sanctions weakened and India continued to enjoy its status of strong nuclear weapon state, though officially major countries denied such status to India but India was a nuclear weapon state and no one could refute this fact.

---

69 Nayar, 803.
70 Later Strobe Talbott wrote a book called Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy and the Bomb, this book narrates the story of the Pokhran-II and its pre, as well as post-developments and the details of the interaction with Jaswant Singh during those times.
72 Cited in Karnad, 65.
Post-Pokhran Developments in Indian Politics

After facing criticism all over the world Indian Government without losing its morale engaged in having strategic bilateral dialogue with most of the powerful nations in the world and tried to regain its image of a peace loving and morally responsible country. On 27 May 1998 Indian Prime Minister speaking in Lok Sabha gave a speech on the nuclear tests of 11 and 13 May 1998, it was a speech not only to the nation but also a message to the world.

India is now a nuclear weapon state. This is a reality that cannot be denied. It is not a conferment that we seek; nor is it a status for others to grant. It is an endowment to the nation by our scientists and engineers. It is India's due, the right of one-sixth of humankind. Our strengthened capability adds to our sense of responsibility. We do not intend to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country, these are weapons of self-defence, to ensure that India is not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion. We do not intend to engage in an arms race.73

During this speech Atal Bihari Vajpayee laid a paper on the table entitled, “Evolution of India’s Nuclear Policy.”74 It had a description of the nuclear policy of India since the independence and it also highlighted the major features of India’s nuclear programme. Prime Minister Vajpayee on 28 May, 1998 announced two key features of India’s nuclear policy i.e., “minimum deterrence” and “No First Use” (NFU), he clearly asserted that India is a responsible nuclear weapon state and this was the reason that all these years India followed a peaceful nuclear policy, but due to the need of the hour India has made certain changes in her pursuit of nuclear policy, but India would always follow the path of disarmament and non-proliferation. He categorically mentioned that the Indian nuclear tests of 1998 were conducted as part of “self-defence.” Even the opposition party agreed with the changes and Natwar Singh, a carrier diplomat of foreign affairs in the Congress party consented by saying that,

74 For details see Appendix-I.
“Sticking to an anti-nuclear stand becomes counter-productive once the objective reality has changed.”\(^7^5\)

The nuclear tests of India as well as Pakistan accelerated the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda all over the world and all the nations of the world were pressing hard to make India and Pakistan signatories to the NPT and the CTBT. India had shown some concern stating that it could sign these treaties only after some alterations are made in them. In September 1998, at the platform of the United Nations, the Premiers of both countries India and Pakistan agreed to sign the CTBT within a year but under certain terms and conditions (one of the conditions was to uplift the sanctions imposed). At home, the Indian Prime Minister had to face severe criticism for making such a statement. The opposition condemned the Vajpayee regime for submitting to international pressures and compromising India’s national interests. It was against this background and domestic as well as international strains that on December 15, 1998, the Prime Minster declared that, “His government will maintain the deployment of nuclear weapons, continue development of ballistic missiles and reserve the right to produce more bomb-grade material.”\(^7^6\) It started a new debate in international as well as national media and other platforms that India might have deployed nuclear weapons. But the re-emphasis of the Indian Premier on India’s commitment to ‘no-first-use’ and ‘credible deterrent’ subsequently in Indian Parliament and the UNGA, gradually changed the world opinion towards India. The strategic dialogues, bilateral relations and diplomatic efforts worked as a catalyst in this change of opinion. India’s engagement at the multilateral disarmament and proliferation forums demonstrated the continuity in India’s traditional commitment to the larger goal of disarmament and non-proliferation. Indian officials time and again at various international platforms tried to recall India’s exemplary record vis-a-vis disarmament and non-proliferation.

India’s unilateral declaration of a moratorium on nuclear explosive testing was welcomed as were its subsequent statements relating to CTBT. India got actively engaged in multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva for the Conclusion of a Fissile

\(^7^5\) As cited in Karnad, 88.
Material Cut off Treaty... There was an appreciation by the international community of these clarification and steps by the Indian interlocutors. India also continued its effort to generate support in the international community for making use of the opportunity created by the end of the Cold War, for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons and moving towards a nuclear weapon free world. A new initiative taken by India in this regard in the UN General Assembly generated wide support.\textsuperscript{77}

This time was a turning point in the Indian nuclear policy. India focused its diplomatic efforts towards gaining conciliation and to placate and mollify the world. It was the time when India directed its nuclear policy from being a protestor of the existing nuclear order to the supporter of the same. In spite of tilting towards the existing nuclear world regime, India never compromised on the national interests, and it is due to this continuation of the existing nuclear policy that India has not signed any of the international treaties, which it has rejected for being discriminatory. During this phase India called for the incremental reforms in the existing international nuclear order and scholars and the strategic analysts of India realised that for making any change in the existing world nuclear world order, which India has criticised for years together, participation in the same is necessary. It was due to this reason that India enthusiastically participated in various conferences and meetings of the international regimes. The efforts of Indian side gradually played an important role and India was being recognised and accepted as an important nuclear player throughout the world.

\textbf{1999 Elections and Kargil Crisis}

As part of the active diplomacy directed to improve relations with the nations and particularly neighbours India and Pakistan signed Confidence-Building Memorandum (CBM) on 21 February 1999. It was due to the endeavour commenced by Indian Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee that he could cross the Line of Control between India and Pakistan via bus service from the Attari border. The CBM generally known as Lahore Declaration maintained that, “an environment of peace and security is in the supreme national interest of both sides and that the resolution of all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, is essential for this purpose.”\textsuperscript{78} The world seemed to be

\textsuperscript{77} Subhash Shukla, \textit{Foreign Policy of India} (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 2007), 249.

\textsuperscript{78} Mistry, 8.
assured that the two hostile nuclear weapon states had initiated peace at their respective levels. India continued to advance in its nuclear delivery system and satellites. On 11 April 1999 India conducted a successful test of the Agni-II missile.

On the political front just after completing its first anniversary in power the NDA government was faced with the vote of no-confidence. This situation arose when one of the biggest allies of the NDA Government, the AIDMK withdrew its support. With the narrowest margin of one vote the NDA government lost majority and the house was dissolved and the country was again forced to face elections.

Meanwhile the country also faced external aggression from Pakistan during May 1999. Two patrols of Indian soldiers encountered a group of men from the Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), while patrolling on the snowy mountains of Kargil. This infiltration by the Pakistanis later turned out to be Kargil War, when Indian soldiers found that around 500 Pakistani armed guerrillas had occupied 35 high peaks of the Indian territory of Drass, Kargil, Batalik and the Mushko Valley. Under the code name, “Operation Vijay” Indian army launched a full-fledged war against Pakistan. India announced that it would not cross LoC but it would not let the Pakistani infiltrators be successful in their aim. Due to the external aggression the Election Commission asked the NDA to continue in the Government as a caretaker till the crisis has fully resolved.

The Indian Prime Minister “was in position to make a decisive military response and to win international support, including that of the United States, for attacks, involving bombing, over eleven weeks in May-July 1999.” Pakistan denied its involvement in the whole crisis. Indian soldiers successfully managed to push the Pakistani infiltrators out of the region but all this came at the cost of death of 474 soldiers, besides 1109 got wounded. Though Michael Krepon clearly mentions the involvement of Pakistani military in the crisis, as he states that, “…1999 Kargil operation in which a small group of officers within the Pakistani Army planned and executed an initiative with high escalatory potential, without the knowledge of the Air

---

Force and Navy Chief of the State....”\textsuperscript{81} With regard to this situation mentioning in his article, Shayam Bhatia reported the warning of the Pakistan stating, “We have got the nukes.”\textsuperscript{82} According to Krepon India was in a favourable situation than Pakistan in case of a nuclear war, as he mentioned that, “Indian leaders and hawkish analysts in India were rest assure and confident about India’s Nuclear strike capability and openly challenged that in case of Nuclear war India was sure to survive whereas Pakistan will be completely destroyed.”\textsuperscript{83} Similarly Krepon quotes, Bharat Karnad’s statement that, “The problem here is not one of preventing nuclear war, but with believing that Pakistan can annihilate India, which is not possible, even as the reverse is eminently true.”\textsuperscript{84} So, it clearly shows that India although was committed to its No-First strike policy but on the other hand India would not give a second thought of destroying Pakistan in case of nuclear war and to defend her borders.

To counter the situation India invoked its ‘Operation Parakram’ and was a military standoff between India and Pakistan. The crisis ended when Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif, “pledged in Washington to request the withdrawal of armed men occupying the hills.”\textsuperscript{85} But the wounds which India got at her heart were equally deep, the Indians felt ditched by the Pakistani Government, after the Indian Premier’s initiation of friendly talks, in the early 1999. Public opinion rose in support of the Indian Government and the BJP got its benefit in the forthcoming elections.

Elections were held in the second half of the 1999. The BJP tried to highlight her achievements in the form of nuclear tests and the success of the ‘Operation Vijay.’ The National Election Study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (Lokniti) in 1999, in this survey tried to study the awareness and opinion of voters regarding the nuclear issues. The Figure 5.1 shows that out of all the respondents surveyed, almost half (47%) of them were aware of the Pokhran-I nuclear explosion. Therefore, the public was aware of Government’s conduct of nuclear explosion so, it

\begin{itemize}
\item[82] Shayam Bhatia, “India, Pak Came Close to Nuclear Confrontation Five Times,” The Tribune, February 1, 2013.
\item[84] Ibid.
\item[85] Nizamani, 65.
\end{itemize}
became easy for the Vajpayee Government to divert the public opinion in favour of their party.

On the other hand, the Congress Party tried to underscore the failures of the previous government. The Congress party fought this election under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, the wife of Late Rajiv Gandhi.

The Congress under Sonia Gandhi painted the dark side of the picture. Sonia depicted a government so inept that the prime minister had travelled by bus to Lahore in February 1999 to signal the beginning of a new era in peaceful resolution of conflicts between India and Pakistan, unaware of the Pakistan-supported intrusion underway because of a massive intelligence failure.\footnote{Francel.}

The BJP in turn attacked Sonia Gandhi on her being of foreign origin. But the Congress party could not attract the voters and hence comfortable majority was secured in 1999 Lok Sabha elections by the NDA and for the third time Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the Prime Minister. It laid the foundation of the stable coalitions in India. The most significant point regarding this coalition government was that for the first time the parties fought elections based on the pre-poll coalition strategy, i.e., all the regional parties had formed alliance even before the elections, unlikely the previous elections where coalition and alliances were formed after the elections. Another significant point during these elections was that the regional parties secured considerable seats and it showed a movement in the preferences of the voters. It was due to this reason that the BJP was successful in formation of the Government, as the NDA government formed in 1999 had the support of 23 alliance partners which accounted for 39 percent of the seats. The following Table no. 5.3 shows the seats secured by the BJP and its allies in the 1999 elections.
Figure 5.1: Awareness about Conduct of Nuclear Tests in 1998

Have you heard about the nuclear/atomic bomb test in Pokhran/Rajasthan conducted last year by Indian government?

- No: 53%
- Yes: 47%

Value of n=9436

Table 5.3: Seats of the BJP and the Congress and their Allies in Lok Sabha Elections 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>BJP and Allies</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Congress and Allies</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Shiv Sena</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>RJD</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>JD (U)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>AIADMK</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>SAD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>JMM</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>TDP</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>KC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Trinamool Congress</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>ML</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>BJD</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>RPI (P)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>UMFA</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>PMK</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>MDMK</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>HVP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Lok Dal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Loktantric Congress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Jantantric BSP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>AC (Apang)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>301</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The BJP also brought change in their election manifesto of 1999 and tried to change its image of Hindu hardliners with the manifestation of the “One Nation, One People and One Culture” ideology. Many factors altogether accounted for the win of the NDA and after more than a decade the country saw a stable regime although it was a coalition government, which earlier in India was considered to be weak. The year 1999 saw a major development in the form of the release of the Draft Nuclear Doctrine in India. The draft was criticised for its timing of release. Later in the year 2003 a complete Nuclear Doctrine was released which imparted the basic principles of the nuclear policy of India.  

---

87 The detailed note on the Nuclear Doctrine of India is discussed in the next section of the chapter.
The Post 1999 Phase

The most momentous event in the post 1999 and the early 2000 was the split in functions of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) and Bhaba Atomic Research Centre (BARC). Set up in 1983 the AERB was solely responsible for the regulatory and the safety functions of India’s atomic energy. “Subsequently, as per a decision of the Government of India, the regulatory and safety review functions related to Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) were transferred from AERB to an internal safety committee structure of BARC in June 2000.”\(^8\)

This transformation led to criticism among the scholars and analysts of the nation. It was also presumed that the BARC did not want to be regulated by the AERB and it was anticipated that the ‘weaponisation programme’ was complete at the BARC, and hence, it did not want any further interference. Later, in the year 2000 the nuclear institutions of India saw another change as after the completion of his term the chairman of the AEC, P.R. Chidambaram, was replaced by Dr. Anil Kakodkar, who was among the pioneer scientist involved in the 1998 tests in the capacity of the chief of the BARC. He was among the nuclear hawks of the nation and hence, this change foresaw a further acceleration of work at the AEC.

At the international front also the millennium year was very imperative to India. The Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee making history became the first person to speak in Hindi at the UN Millennium Summit.\(^9\) In his speech he justified the nuclear tests of India by saying that, “India was forced to acquire these weapons,” and underlining the basis of Indian ideology he outlined that it is an amalgamation of ‘Nehruvian idealism and realism,’ further he also emphasised India’s “responsibility and restraint.”\(^9\)

India also agreed to not only support but also implement the

---


\(^9\) To have an overview of the speech of the Prime Minister see: “The First Man to Speak in Hindi at UN Millennium Summit,” (accessed April 29, 2012); available from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dm9y-cU8Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dm9y-cU8Q)

Chaulia, 222.
Millennium Development Goals set up by the UN Millennium Summit. The world was amazed by the charismatic personality of the Indian Premier, and it was by his speech that he not only put forward India’s principles regarding the nuclear issue but also drew great applause for such idealistic realism. Along with this the visit of the American President to New Delhi was a result of the progress made by India in her bilateral relations with other nations. President Clinton’s visit was expected to be a great step in the normalisation of relations with the world’s superpower in the aftermath of the recent Indian nuclear tests. But the results were not as expected, as described:

President Clinton’s visit to India earlier this year, the first in 22 years by a US President, was generally hailed in the Indian media as an epoch-making event, the harbinger of dramatic new alignments in the region. Although of real significance, it was much less than that. The visit did not signify US abandonment of Pakistan nor a new strategic realignment with a newly acquired Indian ‘partner’ against China or anyone else. Washington continues to benefit from its triangular relationship with Islamabad and New Delhi in which both perpetually woo the White House. The US continues to see benefit for itself in having a near clientally in Islamabad both with regard to its wider considerations in Central Asia and the Middle East (the Saudi-Pakistan connection).

So, it is clear that though India could not capitalise President Clinton’s visit against the Pakistani aid and support but it was a clear declaration of India’s strategic partnership with the US and the results of this partnership were seen in the coming two years when all the sanctions levied on India after the 1998 tests were withdrawn and new focus was given on the Indo-US trade and relations.

---

91 The world leaders who gathered at the Summit committed their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty, and set out a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015 that have become known, since the Millennium Summit, as the Millennium Development Goals.

The Millennium Development Goals are to:
(1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
(2) achieve universal primary education;
(3) promote gender equality and empower women;
(4) reduce child mortality;
(5) improve maternal health;
(6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
(7) ensure environmental sustainability; and
(8) develop a global partnership for development.


At the domestic echelon another step in the establishment of a national security doctrine was taken in February 2001 after the submission of, ‘Reforming the National Security System: Recommendations of the Group of Ministers.’ This report was an attempt to review all aspects of the national security of India. “The establishment of an Intelligence Coordination Group (ICG) and Technology Coordination Group (TCG), working in close tandem with National Technical Facility Organisation (NTFO),” were the major elements recommended in the area of Intelligence.\(^93\) The report also recommended for the establishment of a National Defence University and intensive as well as extensive reforms in the areas of intelligence, internal security, border management and the management of defence. Highlighting the major security threats to India, the report stated that,

> China will continue to pose a threat to India’s security….Its traditional hostility and single-minded aim of destabilising India, is not focused just on Kashmir but on a search for parity….As a result of Pakistan’s political and economic instability, its military regime may act irrationally….Pakistan believes that nuclear weapons can compensate for conventional military inferiority; its leaders have not concealed their desire to use nuclear weapons against India.\(^94\)

Later on 17 April 2002, a Group of Ministers (GoM) consisting of Home Minister LK Advani, Defence Minister George Fernandes, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and Finance Minister Yashwant Singh along with “special invitee” National Security Advisor to Prime Minister, Brajesh Mishra were given the responsibility to review all aspects of Indian security. It was clear that the NDA government had put the national security issue in the high priority list and the deteriorating state of affairs in the region forced the government to have a deep analysis of the situation and act actively on that.

But the year of 2001 also brought disgrace for the NDA as well as the nation when the National President of the BJP along with many other army officials were exposed by the Tehelka news channel. Under a sting operation named ‘Operation West End’ conducted by the Tehelka, Former President of the BJP was convicted for taking

---


\(^94\) As cited in Kundu, 17.
bribe of Rs. 1 Lakh for influencing the defence contracts.\textsuperscript{95} A number of other political leaders like, Jaya Jaitely, President of the Samata Party, along with four high officials from the Defence Ministry and high ranked army officials were accused similarly. The then Defence Minister had to resign from his office due to this scandal but was reinstated later, the opposition parties also demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister, but he managed to remain out of all this. The whole issue not only disgraced the NDA but also the country. The Tehelka chief Tarun Tejpal was also accused for offering prostitutes to the officials during this sting operation. Later he wrote an article detailing the sting operation.\textsuperscript{96}

After continuous enmity between India and Pakistan a modest hope in the process of peace and tolerance was seen in July 14-16 2001, (Agra Summit). The summit was a bilateral talk between President Musharraf and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee but the summit resulted inconclusively. Within two months the security calculations of the world got imbalanced after the 9/11 attacks on the US. After these attacks the American dependence on the Pakistan increased once again. Pakistan became a key player in the “War against Terrorism” launched by the US. India also offered its air base to the US as a response to the terrorist attack on the US, as a result of these favours the American attitude changed towards India and they completely lifted the sanction imposed on India as well as Pakistan.\textsuperscript{97} But India could never match the popularity which Pakistan gained in the Bush Administration for fighting against the Talibani forces. This popularity of Pakistan worked as a counter-measure in India’s domestic politics and sidetracked the NDA’s efforts against the combating of terrorism. In the rest few months of the 2001 the suicide attack on the Srinagar Assembly building in October and the December 13 attack on the Indian Parliament, worsened the situation between India and Pakistan. India openly indicted Pakistan for being involved in these attacks.

\textsuperscript{95} “Operation West End: The Bangaru Laxman Tape,” (accessed May 28, 2013); available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsuUIRjVlsU


The year 2002 heightened tension between the two nations and the world faced a threat of first nuclear war in the South-Asian region. In the background of the test-firing of the ballistic missiles capable of carrying the nuclear warheads, by India and Pakistan, the US and Britain asked their citizens to move out of India and Pakistan, this further gave wrong signals to the world about India.\(^9\) The gravity of the situation can be understood from the fact that the Natural Resource Defence Council\(^9\) in a report estimated the consequences of a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan, although both the nations never openly disclosed their nuclear arsenal.

It is noteworthy that due to India’s explicit “No-First-Use” policy the world was rest assure about India, but larger interference of the military in the administration of the Pakistan was well known to the global community. Hence, due to this the tension in this part of the region was high on notes of the international regimes. In order to cool down the situation and assure India’s intentions regarding the usage of nuclear weapons a Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) of India was established in 2003 January. It was created in order to manage India’s tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, and command and control system. As of now the highest body in the NCA is the Political Council which is under the headship of the Prime Minister of India along with the Cabinet Committee on Security with the Defence, Home and External Affairs ministers as it members. The Political Council is followed by the Executive Council with the National Security Advisor as its Chief and Chief of the three armed forces of India as its members, along with the Commander-in-Chief of India’s Strategic Force Command. As a backup mechanism in case of any emergency the NCA also has the provision of an alternative NCA. The establishment of the NCA was also seen as the first stage in the development of, “an effective and robust command-and-control (C\(^2\)) and indications and warning (I&W) systems and infrastructure for its strategic nuclear force commensurate with India’s strategic requirements.”\(^1\)


\(^9\) Natural Resource Defense Council, \textit{The Consequences of Nuclear Conflict between India and Pakistan}, (accessed May 28, 2013); available from \url{http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/southasia.asp}

of such a body was to strengthen India’s command and control system and to manage viably the situation of external emergency.

All these years under the NDA regime, the defence budget saw a steep rise. “Since coming to power in 1998, BJP-led governments have increased the defence budget by an average 6.28 percent per annum between 1998 and 2002.”101 More or less this money was used in the import of military arsenal like Gorshkov aircrafts, Mig-29 fighter jets, Kamov-31 anti-submarine helicopters from Russia, Hawk training jets from Britain etc. At the same time India tried to improve its relations with the major nations like the US, and Gulf nations particularly Israel. The visit of Israeli Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to New Delhi in 2004 was a result of strategic dialogue and enhancing partnership, which concluded in setting up of a ‘Joint Defence Committee’ and ‘Joint Working Group on Defence Cooperation.’102

In 2004, Indo-US ties also saw a bright improvement as the US viewed India as not only a big arms-market but also a strategic partner. It was due to this reason that the bilateral relations between the two largest democracies of the world saw a great progress. Both nations involved in naval exercises as well as technology cooperation agreements. The Strobe-Jaswant diplomatic relations also played a very significant role in augmenting relations of the two nations.

During 2003, the United States and India engaged in numerous and unprecedented joint military exercises. These continue in 2004, along with discussion on possible sales to India of weapons systems.103

On the same lines since the 1998 nuclear tests by India and holding China’s threat in its unequivocal justification by India paved strains in the Indo-Chinese relations built by the Gujral Government (initiated Rajiv Gandhi). But after the tests the Vajpayee Government also changed its approach and tried to build affable relations with the emerging powers of Asia. The Kargil Committee Report as well as the ‘Reforming the National Security System’ made reference to securing good relations with the powerful

101 Kundu, 22.
neighbours. It was also realised that by having harmonious relations with China, India could also overcome the threat of war amongst the nations. Hence, in this line:

External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh visited China in June 1999 and both sides reiterated that neither country is a threat to the other. President K.R. Narayanan’s visit to China in May - June 2000 marked a return to high level exchanges. Premier Zhu Rongji visited India in January 2002. Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee visited China in June 2003 during which a Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation was signed. This was the first comprehensive document on development of bilateral relations signed at the highest level between India and China. India and China concluded a border trade protocol to add a border crossing between Sikkim and Tibet Autonomous Region. Therefore, the NDA government by the end of its regime began the process of settling their relations with most of the countries which were annoyed after the nuclear tests. India by this time was seen as a strategic player not only in the South-Asian region but also at the international front. After the increasing American interests in the Indian market other European nations also started showing their attention towards India and France was foremost amongst them. India also rejuvenated its partnership with Russia which by this time had started emerging from the after effects of the cold-war. India also strengthened its relations with the Gulf countries and Israel after Russia became the largest supplier of the defence equipments. India’s initiation of friendly ties with Pakistan was welcomed all over the world and India’s anti-terrorist attitude also became an image booster for India during these years. It was due to these reasons that India’s continuous advancement in the nuclear arena was tolerated rather accepted world-wide.

**INDIA’S NUCLEAR DOCTRINE**

In the 1998 elections the Bharatiya Janata Party in its election manifesto promised to establish a National Security Council (NSC) in order to make a deep analysis of the security threats and the policy option for India. Within two months after coming into power the BJP led NDA government conducted nuclear tests. The critics of India’s nuclear bomb targeted the BJP, by refereeing to their promise of creating the NSC and argued that the tests should have been conducted after the creation and advice

---

of the NSC. Keeping this in mind Vajpayee instituted a National Security Council in April 1999. This body was created to, “analyse the military, economic and political threats to the nation and render continuous advice to the government.”\(^{105}\) Along with this the new bodies were created like Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA). After the Kargil conflict the Indian analysts viewed the creation of such agencies as a crucial step. These offices were created in order to, “integrate weapons acquisition, logistics and strategy, hitherto performed compartmentally by the Chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force.”\(^{106}\) Since the carrying out of the Indian nuclear tests the ‘strategic enclave’ became highly active and the pioneers of India’s nuclear programme namely, Kalam, Chidambram and Subrahmanyam enthusiastically participated to frame the policy options present in front of India. In 1998 after the culmination of Pokhran-II nuclear tests Indian Prime Minister openly referred to the two key features of the Indian nuclear programme and policy, i.e., “No-First Use” and “Credible Deterrence.” Mr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, also known as ‘Missile Man of India’ time and again repeated his mantra, ‘strength respects strength.’ All these features were kept in note by the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), a body related to the NSC, which was given the task to frame a ‘Nuclear Doctrine’ for India. Before this the nuclear doctrine was never seen separately from that of the conventional doctrines, but as an inherent part of the same. But, with the passage of time and particularly in the backdrop of the 1998 nuclear tests the demand arose for a separate nuclear doctrine.

The Bomb has shaped our nation’s thinking on a range of fronts, whether economic, security, social, political, psychological or moral. It has impacted our relations with other countries and our standing in the world.\(^{107}\)

Therefore, it became necessary for India to formulate formal principles regarding its nuclear programme. While framing the nuclear doctrine the NSAB considered the paper laid on the table of the Lok Sabha, entitled “Evolution of the Nuclear Policy,” various speeches of the Indian officials, strategic culture of the country and the various policy options available, but it is difficult to categorise any particular guiding principles behind

---


\(^{106}\) Chaulia, 223.

the draft nuclear doctrine. During the election time on 17 August 1999 the 27 member NSAB headed by K. Subrahmanyam released a ‘draft outline for a nuclear strategic doctrine’\textsuperscript{108} of India. On the release of the draft nuclear doctrine Brajesh Mishra drew his attention to some of the basic structure of the doctrine mainly the ‘no-first use’ and the concept of ‘deterrence,’ but one change from the previous stance of the deterrence was clearly visible, this change was that India’s National Security Advisor used the term, “Minimum but credible deterrence” rather than just ‘credible deterrence.’ In his opening speech he mentioned:

We have adopted a policy of minimum deterrence as the basic building block of our nuclear thinking. Minimum but credible deterrence is the watchword of our nuclear doctrine. From this, flows the decision to adopt a no-first-use posture. We have therefore given unconditional guarantees to States that do not have nuclear weapons, or are not aligned with nuclear weapon powers. A cardinal principle regarding the use of nuclear weapons is that of civilian control. Only the elected civilian leader of the country is empowered to authorise the use of nuclear weapons. As the recent operations in Kargil have demonstrated, our system and the political leadership, believe with great responsibility and restraint, as you would expect from the largest democracy in the world. This sense of responsibility will also guide our actions with regard to nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{109}

Basically, the draft nuclear doctrine set up the framework for India’s future nuclear forces. According to the doctrine it would involve, “triad of aircraft, mobile land-based missiles, and sea-based assets.” It further unequivocally mentioned that, “any nuclear attack on India and its forces shall result in punitive retaliation with nuclear weapons to inflict damage unacceptable to the aggressor.”\textsuperscript{110} It also mentioned the nuclear policy and its basic characters which India would follow in the course of pursuance of the decision-making in the nuclear sphere. The draft nuclear doctrine did not mention anything regarding the CTBT but following the conventional stand of India on the NPT it criticised it on the same lines like India used to do in the past. Based on the draft

\textsuperscript{108} For details see Appendix-II
\textsuperscript{110} For details see: Appendix-II.
report of the nuclear doctrine, Waheguru Pal Singh an expert on India’s Nuclear Doctrine, has enumerated nine basic elements\footnote{Sidhu, 22.} of India’s Nuclear Posture, which are

1. A declared unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests;
2. The need to build a ‘minimum credible deterrent’ based on a nuclear ‘triad’;
3. No First Use and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states;
4. An implied second-strike, deterrence by punishment posture;
5. A tacit arrangement that the nuclear force will be ‘strategic’ and will not include any ‘tactical’ weapons;
6. The need to maintain a de-altered or non-deployed posture;
7. A civilian or ‘divided control’ of nuclear forces;
8. A strict export control regime and, as a corollary, an informal adherence to the non-proliferation norms of the treaty; and
9. Doctrinal pronouncements in the wake of the establishment of the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) conveyed India’s threat to use of nuclear weapons to counter even a biological or chemical attack.

The doctrine was seen as a response to the international criticism especially from the western countries, which raised questions after the conduct of the 1998 nuclear tests, that India had exploded the nuclear bombs without any target or direction focused on any achievable goal. The doctrine was meant to be a reply to the critics which saw the nuclear tests as a surprise attack.

The timing of the release of the draft doctrine raised three issues which could possibly be seen as the reasons for the release of the draft of the nuclear doctrine in August 1999. “Some might argue that the draft doctrine was released to the media to bolster Bharatiya Janata Party’s electoral advantage. It might also be suggested that the nuclear doctrine was formulated only to formalize BJP’s nuclear policy declared after the nuclear tests conducted in May 1998. Yet, another view might be that it was to legitimise India’s nuclear weapons through the formulation of Draft Nuclear Doctrine arising out of “the reciprocal fear of surprise attack” on the part of political leaders,
military planners and strategic analysts in India.”\textsuperscript{112} After the release of the doctrine again the criticism arose from the foreign countries as well as from the domestic opposition parties. The major criticism came from the US, whereas the European nations made a cautious reaction to the same. Like before, France explicitly supported the Indian attempt.

The official U.S. State Department reaction given by Spokesman James P. Rubin was that India was “moving in the wrong direction” by trying to create a credible nuclear deterrence. Rubin said “We think it would be unwise to move in the direction of developing a nuclear deterrent and encouraging the other country to develop a nuclear deterrent and thereby creating an action-reaction cycle that will increase the risks to both countries.”\textsuperscript{113}

Commenting on the western criticism, the Chief of the NSAB of India, K. Subrahmanyam observed:

The core of deterrence, especially for a country which commits itself to no-first-use is its ability to carry out punitive unacceptable retaliation...those who believe in wielding nuclear weapons have to be deterred by spelling out the consequences of their actions...the Indian nuclear doctrine totally rejects the western approach to nuclear theology as is evident from the preamble and the last section, which reiterates Indian commitment disarment. India was compelled to go nuclear because of the obduracy of nuclear weapon powers, the legitimisation of nuclear weapons by the international community and the rising trend of interventionism by the industrialised nations in the affairs of the developing world. It became necessary to protect the autonomy of decision-making in the developmental process and in strategic matters, which are inalienable democratic rights of one sixth of mankind living in India. The Indian nuclear doctrine aims at providing India a credible minimum deterrent at an affordable pace of expenditure to create uncertainty in the minds of would-be nuclear intimidators, aggressors

\textsuperscript{112} Mohammed B. Alam, “India’s Nuclear Doctrine: Contexts and Constrains,” Working Paper No. 11, \textit{Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics} (Heidelberg: South Asian Institute, Department of Political Science, October 2002), 2.

\textsuperscript{113} As cited in, “India As A Nuclear Weapon Power: 1998-2001,” (accessed June 26, 2013); available from \url{http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/India/IndiaNPower.html}. 

229
and interventionists that those actions against this country would not be a rationale option.\textsuperscript{114}

Subharamanyam clearly gave a message to the world that India had maintained continuity in pursuance of her disarmament policy. With the changing times it became mandatory for India to make certain changes in its nuclear policy and the nuclear doctrine was an attempt to inculcate the moral values derived from India’s strategic culture (like the Non-first use policy can be traced to India’s value of ahimsa or non-violence). Subrahmanyam’s clarification also held India’s strict posture towards the discriminatory regimes and the powerful nation’s behind them, which have always tried to restrict India’s developing nuclear potential. The major criticism which arose regarding the draft nuclear doctrine of India, was that it did not clarify the size of India’s ‘minimal deterrent.’\textsuperscript{115} Speaking on India’s conception of the ‘credible deterrence’ National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra clarified Indian Government’s position, when he stated,

\begin{quote}
The credible minimum deterrence concept is a very flexible concept....It has been misunderstood with more emphasis on the word ‘minimum’ than on ‘credible.’ We had a certain threat scenario then and decided what we needed generally- Pakistan, China, and we don’t want the USS Enterprise coming again. But we could not have decided then what it is going to be like 10 years, 15 years, 20 years from now. And so the governments will keep on either increasing or decreasing [the force size and quality] depending upon what is happening around us and in the world generally. We gave instructions about a certain number of weapons, a certain mix [of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons], as we saw it then....Tomorrow, if certain events take place, the force size, quality and mix can change.\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{115} This issue was raised during the Talbott-Singh talks as well. The US Deputy Secretary of State, during the eight rounds of talks with India’s External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, raised the issue that India should define about their ‘minimum deterrent’ particularly in terms of size and number. In a reply to this Jaswant Singh replied that, “There’s no fixity to minimum, there cannot be, because it is a variable, in technological terms, in terms of physical numbers, it is a variable in terms of the launch capacity.”

\textsuperscript{116} As cited in Karnad, 89.
At the domestic front the opposition parties and the media criticised the draft doctrine on certain fronts. As P.R. Chari elucidates that, “The document was criticised in the media until the NDA government, then in power, virtually disowned the doctrine as being just a draft that was only meant to stimulate public debate and elicit opinion. Nothing further was heard in this matter until the Cabinet Committee on Security adjudicated the issues rose in the ‘draft’ doctrine and announced its decisions in January 2003.”

The regional reactions to the Indian draft doctrine were equally strict; especially Pakistan condemned the Indian draft doctrine for misguiding the world with its fake and imaginary intentions regarding the non-proliferation and disarmament. So much so that Pakistan tried to build international opinion against the Indian draft nuclear doctrine and tried to justify their nuclear deterrent against this background by launching a campaign against it at the UN Conference on Disarmament. Even Chinese reaction was equally severe against India.

It was in 2003 that the NDA under the leadership of Vajpayee launched its formal or official Nuclear Doctrine. On 4 January 2003, the NDA released its formal nuclear doctrine which stated its intentions of:

- Building and maintaining a credible minimum deterrent;
- A posture of “No First Use”: nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere;
- Nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage.
- Nuclear retaliatory attacks can only be authorized by the civilian political leadership through the Nuclear Command Authority.
- Non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states;

---

However, in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons; but the doctrine accepted that the “nuclear retaliation will inflict unacceptable damage.”

A continuance of strict controls on export of nuclear and missile related materials and technologies, participation in the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty negotiations, and continued observance of the moratorium on nuclear tests.

Continued commitment to the goal of a nuclear weapon free world, through global, verifiable and non discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

This doctrine was almost the replica of the draft doctrine, with minor changes. But the basic composition and the basic tenets of the draft nuclear doctrine were present in it as well. With the ‘outline for the development, deployment and employment of the nuclear forces’ the Indian Nuclear Doctrine held ‘the No-First Use’ and the ‘credible-minimum deterrence’ as its core policies.

India’s nuclear doctrine based on the cardinal principles of no-first-use and minimum nuclear deterrence adheres to a minimalist approach towards its weapons capability that is to be qualified in terms of being credible. Hence, it becomes important for the nuclear establishment to develop a deterrent capability that can produce an effective nuclear arsenal to deter an adversary.

The size of the Indian nuclear deterrent always remained an issue between the Indo-US relations, as the American government always stressed upon India to declare the ‘minimal’ deterrent, but Indian officials and particularly the ‘strategic enclave’ was in favour of keeping the size flexible, according to the need or requirement of the security. Strobe Talbot, during his interactions with his Indian counterpart time and again mentioned about this issue but India giving the plea of her security requirement easily moved out of this interaction. The need for development of Indian nuclear deterrent was not only necessary but unavoidable. In an article, Lt.Gen. Harbhajan Singh (Retd.)

---

122 Kazi, 30.
Nuclear Regimes and Nuclear Policy Under NDA Government

mentioned its importance while stating that, for coexisting with China India has to, “Develop conventional military and nuclear deterrence so China does not violate Indian borders and keeps away from neighbours and sea lanes. In addition, deter Pakistan against any military adventurism.”

Over the years due to circumstantial changes at the international level, in the region, as well as in the country, there has been a shift in the reasons or drivers which have shaped India’s nuclear policy since independence. Although, Pakistan and China continue to pose a threat to India and India’s nuclear weaponisation has been a result of such threats posed by her neighbours. Along with these Indian politicians, media and the people have made this nuclear potential as a symbol of national prestige and valour and similar pressures have come from the nuclear scientists and the so called ‘strategic enclave’ of the country. The table 5.4 discusses the different factors which were responsible for India’s nuclear posture over the years.

Table 5.4: Heuristic Drivers of Nuclear Proliferation and 21st Century Modernization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers for India</th>
<th>1946-1974</th>
<th>1975-1998</th>
<th>1999-Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Head of State Pressure</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nuclear and missile scientists pressure</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. International Prestige</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. China Threat &amp; its Nuclear Posture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Anti Americanism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Pakistan Terrorist Threat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Nuclear Balance with Pakistan and its nuclear Posture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Bureaucratic Politics within the military</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


NDA Government’s Interactions with the International Nuclear Regimes

A number of international nuclear regimes had come up at the international level by this time in history. Most of these regimes had been formulated in the export control area. One of the prominent nuclear regimes which was established in July 1996 was the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Control for Conventional Arms and Dual Use Goods and Technologies. The Wassenaar Arrangement was seen as a successor of the Coordination Committee for Multilateral Export Control (COCOM), which along with the NSG and the Zangger Committee controlled the export of sensitive nuclear material since 1950s. However, the guidelines issued by these regimes were categorised under the informal system, still they had immense weightage at the global level.

The newly formed Wassenaar Arrangement was agreed upon by 33 countries of the world from different regions. The arrangement was divided into two lists, namely, Munitions List and Dual Use Goods and Technology List. The Dual Use List had two annexes for sensitive and very sensitive items, which were further categorised in 09 categories, as: advanced materials; materials processing; electronics; computers; telecommunications and information security; sensors and lasers; navigation and avionics; marine technology; and, propulsion technology. “The Wassennar Arrangement is described as an agreement open to all countries, subject to its being a producer/exporter of relevant nuclear industrial equipment but stipulations on conformity with non-proliferation policies (NPT)…” This Arrangement is considered to be a double check on the states as it has provisions almost similar to that of the NSG, but the only difference is that of the degree. The list provided by this Arrangement is by far a more exhaustive and detailed list for the export control especially in case of dual use goods and technology. As far its implication on India is concerned, it has not accepted India as a party because of India’s disinclination and insolence towards the NPT. On the other hand India has also not taken any formative steps towards these regimes. This is due to the reason that India considers the guidelines of such regimes as an obstacle in the path of her nuclear developments. India has been known for her

---

sovereign and self-governing stand in case of her nuclear policy therefore, the impact of such regimes had been very low on her. It is to be noted that the technology embargo set up by the Wassennar Arrangement and other international nuclear regimes have hindered the path of the threshold nuclear powers. In case of India, she has utilised it as a motivation for self-reliance in this field. But it would be wrong not to mention that such export control regimes particularly the NSG and the Wassennar Arrangements have slowed down the pace of nuclear development in case of India. Shortage of nuclear fuel and ban on the export of nuclear technologies have definitely put impact on the progress of India’s nuclear programme.

Another, important implication of the Wassenaar cartel for India, as highlighted by Brahma Chellaney is the impact of this nuclear export control regime on Indo-Russia relations. As Russia is a member of this group and as per the “no-undercut” rule of the Arrangement, “...if a request for an export licence is rejected by one member, it is likely to be spurned by the other 32 members as well.” So in that case the import of nuclear technology becomes very difficult for India. Due to the unreliable behaviour shown by Russia in case of blocking reverse engineering and termination of the cryogenic engine technology contract, many expectations are not enshrined in.

In the case of India’s attitude towards these regimes it’s noteworthy that irrespective of a strong single party government in India or weak coalition governments’ Indian policy towards these export control regimes has not changed over a period of time. Despite strong international pressures all the governments that held reins of the country showed an exemplary continuity in the policy towards such regimes.

As far as, the other international disarmament treaties like the CTBT and the NPT are concerned, two important aspects have been discussed by Ashok Kapur. In his work he mentions that, “The Indian CTBT debate (1995-6) ran parallel to the Indian debate about nuclear ambiguity….On one hand, it meant a commitment to pursue an independent and principled opposition to the discriminatory NPT and ‘NPT equivalent’

---

in international arms control arrangements such as the CTBT. Secondly, it meant the continuous exercise of conditional self-restraint—India held the line against nuclear testing.”\textsuperscript{126} After the 1995 period, India’s perspective on these regimes was voiced out loudly at various international platforms. This change was also because of the overt and clear policy of the NDA government towards such treaties. Participating in the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament to discuss the text of the CTBT, Arundhati Ghose, the permanent representative to the UN clarified India’s stance in her speech on August 20, 1996. She stated that:

We have always believed that the objective of a CTBT was to bring about an end to nuclear weapons development....It is a fact that weapons related to R and D in these technologies is being promoted. Our objective therefore was a truly Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty rather than merely a nuclear test explosion ban treaty….A truly comprehensive treaty should have fossilised the technology of nuclear weapons. Despite our efforts, these concerns were not addressed and nor did India’s proposals receive adequate consideration….As a result we were obliged to reiterate that India could not subscribe to the Chairman’s draft Treaty text….\textsuperscript{127}

In this session the Indian diplomat also clarified that irrespective of the fact that India does not support this treaty in its present form still, India will continue to remain committed to the task of nuclear disarmament. A few days later, the Indian Minister of External Affairs Mr. I.K. Gujral also clarified to the Indian Parliament their position on the CTBT. He confirmed that India would not sign the CTBT in its present form; he clearly mentioned that, “There have been no pressures on India and if there are any in future, I am confident that this country has the national will to withstand such pressures.”\textsuperscript{128} India stuck to its strict position on the CTBT till 1998. Even the new government of the NDA, was hell-bent on not signing the treaty.

\textsuperscript{126} Ashok Kapur, *Pokhran and Beyond: India’s Nuclear Behaviour* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 235.
However, after the conduct of 1998 Pokhran explosion, the official stance of the Indian government underwent a sea change. The table 5.4 depicts various criticisms and alignments that emerged in the country regarding the signing of the CTBT and its relation to the NPT. In the table given above a detailed context of the various arguments and criticism that were prevalent in the post-Pokhran phase. He has outlined the Government’s stand on the CTBT and has also laid down the areas which criticised this stand and diversion of the NDA regime from the traditional and historical stance of India since independence against the discriminatory treaties and international nuclear regimes. The NDA regime relaxed its stern position and started showing its willingness to agree to the terms of the CTBT, if a complete status of a nuclear power is granted to India. To a great surprise even the staunch critics of the treaty started voicing in favour of it. This change came because of India’s conduct of nuclear explosion, and in order to join the nuclear club the government was ready to withdraw from its principled stand. A very important justification which the government of India gave for its slackened position was that after the conduct of nuclear tests in 1998, and announcement of the moratorium on further nuclear test India was now able to develop its nuclear arsenal without any nuclear tests. It was argued that by the declaration of the moratorium on further tests India fulfilled the major obligation of the CTBT.

This change in Government of India’s position was criticised by media as well as members of the strategic enclave. They argued that the Indian government under the pressures of the American administration and other international nuclear regimes, has diverted from India’s traditional stance and this step would also distort India’s image of a nation committed to the cause of nuclear disarmament, and not the discriminatory disarmament.

129 It included Jaswant Singh and Muchkund Dubey, who reverted their staunch and highly critical arguments against the CTBT to the one favoring India’s acceptance of the same in the wake of 1998 nuclear explosion.
Table 5.4: Various Positions on the CTBT after Pokhran-II Nuclear Explosion

The Post-Pokhran II Indian Debate

**POLITICAL CRITICISMS**

- RSS & Indian Left attacked softness of BJP stance on CTBT
- Former Indian Prime Ministers (e.g., L.K. Gujral and Deve Gowda) were against signing CTBT, Parliamentary consensus was problematic.
- Indian intelligentsia and press were divided on the CTBT issue and on the future of India’s nuclear weapons capability.

**THE POST-POKHRAN II INDIAN DEBATE**

- Talbot's conditions in Jaswant Singh-S. Talbott talks
  - Sign the CTBT now (e.g., Raja Mohan, K. Subrahmanyan) to ease pressure on India
  - Sign the CTBT if USA recognizes India as a nuclear power
  - Stop deployment and weaponization in India
  - Alignment
  - Conflict

- Do not sign CTBT because it creates a cover for Indian weaponization
- Do not sign CTBT because it is NPT equivalent (Ambassador A. Ghose and others)
- India does not have the budgetary allocations for a credible nuclear infrastructure
- India does not have a credible nuclear doctrine and infrastructure

**TECHNICAL CRITICISM**

Source: Adapted from Ashok Kapur, *Pokhran and Beyond: India’s Nuclear Behaviour* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 238
It was also believed that under the effect of the sanctions imposed by the international community the NDA government was taking this stand. Commenting on this situation Bahart Karnad opined that, “Nothing is better appreciated and better guaranteed to create respect—the vital aim always missing in Indian foreign and military policies—in the world than a country that stands up for itself and its national interests whatever anybody else may think or do….India is badgered and asked to behave because Washington is convinced that the threat of punitive actions is enough to turn Indian resolve to jelly…it is believed that India can be bought off or won over with blandishments.”

However, after the government realised that this criticism can fade off their image in the public and raise serious concern against their regime, they returned to the previous stand which India had been following since the days of the independence. Therefore, it is evident that somehow the NDA regime for various reasons of getting a status of nuclear power or under the fear of punitive action taken against India, tried to bring some alterations in India’s stand against the discriminatory nuclear regimes, and agreed to sign on the CTBT under some terms and conditions. Nevertheless under the influence of criticism all over the country and its internal compulsions (of RSS in particular) the Vajpayee government had to retreat to nation’s previous stance. It depicts that although pressures from the external determinants marked a change in government’s decision but the internal compulsions and domestic factors did not let the government to implement this change.

CONCLUSION

With the formation of the National Democratic Alliance, for the first time a stable coalition government had come to power. By this time, the nuclear weapons were seen as a currency of power, and Indian leadership of the period was aware that if India has to make a credible difference at the international level, and if it has to overcome the pressures exerted by the powerful nations and the international nuclear regimes, it has to capitalise this currency. Nuclear weaponisation was part of the BJP’s manifesto in the

previous elections so far. It was among some of the most prominent promises which the party did to fulfil once it came to power and Pokhran-II was a result of it. “The Political purpose of Pokhran-II” as forwarded by Talbott was, “simpler and the results more immediate and conclusive: India had put the world on notice that it was now-unambiguously, unapologetically, and irrevocably-a nuclear-armed power, to be regarded as such by its historically and potentially antagonistic neighbours, Pakistan and China, and by its estranged fellow democracy half a world away.”

The BJP led NDA Government marked a departure from the pre-existing way foreign policy was followed. In line with the philosophy of the party and its nationalist base, the NDA dealt the security issues and that of the national interest in comparatively firm and strict manner to the previous governments. Although, the slim majority in the Lok Sabha pushed the Vajpayee regime to divert the attention of the country towards the nuclear tests, it would be wrong to make it the only reason for the Prime Minister to take such an audacious step. A number of other factors, particularly the ideology of the party, the manifesto promises and the changing environment of the region along with the pressures from the international regimes to be party to the international disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, played their respective role in the culmination of the nuclear tests by India. The Vajpayee regime well calculated that the nuclear tests would not only bring pride and national strength to the country but also raise the confidence of the Indian public towards them. As expected the nuclear tests turned out to be vote-winner for the NDA in the 1999 election, though they lost elections in three states (Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi) few months after the tests but at the national level they returned with strong majority and gave the first successful coalition government which completed its full term in India. The Vajpayee regime also fulfilled its manifesto promise of giving top priority to the national security by creating National Security Council and by standing firmly in front of the economic sanctions levied by fourteen nations of the world and by bearing strong criticism and international pressure for conducting nuclear tests. Under the Premiershhip of Vajpayee India emerged out to be a strong player in international politics and diplomacy. In just six months India managed

---

to free itself from all kind of sanctions and by the end of the term of the NDA regime, India had cordial relations with her neighbours, both Pakistan and China.

However, the Vajpayee government is also remembered for changing India’s strict stance after the culmination of the Pokhran-II explosion. A huge round of criticism arose in the country after the NDA regime started giving signals to the international community that India could sign the CTBT provided she was given a status of nuclear power. Later, due to the fear of domestic fallouts, the Vajpayee government changed its position. But it was for the first time that any Indian government had tried to alter the traditional position of defiance of the international nuclear regimes. At the same time it also showed that any change in the sovereign status of India regarding her nuclear policy and commitment to deny the discriminatory nuclear regimes was not acceptable at the national front. Irrespective of the fact that which government alters the stance, the nationalist groups, strategic enclave, media etc., always acted to impinge and change any such decision made by any government.

The Agra Summit, Islamabad-Delhi Bus service and strategic dialogue with China were the result of the efforts of the NDA government. But on the other hand the Kargil Crisis, 2002 Godhra Riots in Gujarat, rekindling of the Ayodhya issue, collapse of the Bus-Diplomacy were some fronts where the NDA Government failed. Also, the growing strategic proximity towards the US was criticized by many in the country, as it was expected, that in order to have warm relations with America Vajpayee might surrender India’s sovereignty or might compromise on the national interests of the nation. However, India followed ‘coercive diplomacy’ and created a healthy environment of trade and relations with the countries of the world. Whereas, in the nuclear arena after the conduct of the nuclear tests, the release of the nuclear doctrine, appointment of the Nuclear Command Authority and furthering preparations for advancement in the civilian and military nuclear programme is commendable as far as the security and defence of the nation is concerned though the critics see it as a step to enhance the arms race in the region, but the BJP led government justified it as a requirement for the strengthening of India. While, comparing the Nehruvian traditions with that of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Ashok Kapur mentions that, “Vajpayee had pragmatic approach to the economic and social development of India, he used a
judicious combination of coercion and negotiation to promote Indian interests and to re-
engage other powers in the strategic and economic spheres….Vajpayee’s political and
diplomatic manoeuvring in regional and world affairs revealed an affinity with
Kautilayan stratagems…he demonstrated the capacity to build and to maintain domestic
as well as external coalitions with traditional and non-traditional allies.”132 But the
parochial approach of the BJP to take the complete credit of the Pokhran-II nuclear
explosion was highly criticized not only by the opposition party mainly (the Congress)
but also by the scholars of the nation. The Kargil Crisis gave the Indian pro-bomb lobby
to justify the weaponisation done by the Indian government. Brahma Chellaney, one of
the creators of India’s new draft nuclear doctrines, asserts that economic concerns are
secondary to the strategic and normative advantages afforded to India by the acquisition
of nuclear arms.