INTRODUCTION


An Overview

The atom bomb is not just a weapon; it is rather “a tool for reshaping the world” (DeGroot 2005: viii). If necessity is the mother of all inventions, was the nuclear bomb a historical necessity? J. Robert Oppenheimer has remarked that scientific discoveries and inventions merge not only on the criterion whether they are useful but also whether they are possible (Oppenheimer 1953). On the face of it, one may assume that the idea of the usefulness of atomic weapons for political ends coincided with the scientific inquisitiveness about the power of the atom. This coincidence streamlined the scientific community to explore the possibility of the atom project under the patronage of the political leadership. Therefore, atomic energy had a particular presence in and around representations of the state and nation reflecting its origin in the modern meeting of science and war” (Abraham 1998: 7). Many, including atomic physicists, hoped that the fear of the atom bomb would destroy war itself. But in course of time, it has been argued that the best protection against an atom bomb is another bomb of such type (Waltz 1981). This justification made policy-making on atomic weapons open-ended. So far, two bombs have been used; many more have been piled up, any are being replaced, and many have also been dismantled. The number of countries with bombs is gradually increasing and many others are trying to acquire them. But the fundamental question, how a nation-state makes its nuclear policy decisions, has been partially answered.

No country takes a policy decision in a vacuum but the processes of and reasons for specific policies are not always known. Normative understanding would suggest that both domestic and international variables influence a country’s policy-making process (Putnam 1993). This study, enquiring into India’s nuclear weapon policy, discusses only the domestic component, confined to the role of political parties. In other words, the study seeks to look
into the role Indian political parties played in the evolution of India’s nuclear weapons policy to its contemporary stage.

Contemporary discourse on nuclear weapons focuses primarily on their deployment, number, quality and who possesses them and how. The fact remains, however, that nuclear policy is merely the ultimate stage in a process in which the decision may have been taken long ago (McLean 1986: xiii-xiv). To investigate why a nation arrives at a specific policy decision, it is necessary to unravel the complex processes of policy-making and to understand the variables that condition these processes. This is possible by enquiring into the organisational and institutional structures, and the individuals and groups involved, which shape or control the process. This study takes three political parties — Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party and Communist Party of India (Marxist) — as unit of analysis in the domain of India’s nuclear weapon policy-making.

Policy decision as a process may not always be forthright, says Gerston, “it is a series of events that build towards confusion, crisis and change. The activities that lead up to specific policies are almost cacophonous in nature – some dramatic, others insignificant; some random, others patterned; some horrific, others humorous” (Gerston 2010: 73). In fact, policy decisions are part of the political system constituting those activities or interactions that relate more or less directly to, what David Easton called, “the authoritative allocation of values” for the whole society (Easton 1953; 1965). This political system, where popular values are authoritatively allocated, is open to influences from its environment; and the environment is affected in turn by actions of the political system to which Easton described as “input-output relationship”. Easton’s this formulation suggests that national policies are generally arrived at after public deliberation conditioned by popular demands and sentiments. In the context of national nuclear policy-making, political parties, as agents and channels of popular “interest aggregation” and “interest articulation” for collective goals in general

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1 David Easton’s model of “Political System” was driven by an organic view of politics, as if it were a living object. A political system is composed of regularly interacting or interrelating groups of activities which he described as input-output model. The political system itself is conceived as a conversion process, whose work is to convert inputs into outputs and thereby to insure the survival of the system. Easton compares the political system to a gigantic communications network into which one kind of information flows and out of which another kind of information emerges. His formulation was first conceived in 1953 where he said that a political system could be seen as a delimited (i.e. all political systems have precise boundaries) and fluid (changing) system of steps in decision making.
(Matlosa and Shale 2008: 6) can be viewed as the most vibrant domestic mechanism to condition the policy-making environment leading to a specific policy outcome.

In addition, political parties being part of the national legislative process also shape the contours of such policies. According to Mark P. Jones, the structures and organisations of political parties and party systems considerably influence the policy-making process in general (Jones 2005: 2). He attributes national policy outcomes to four distinct characteristics of political parties and party systems.

First is the level of political party institutionalisation. Institutionalised party systems provide greater levels of policy consistency and relative stability (Jones 2005: 2-3). In the first two decades after Independence, India experienced “one-party dominant system”, which Rajni Kothari calls the “Congress System” (Kothari 1964), with a highly “institutionalised” party at the helm of affairs.² During this period, India’s nuclear policy seems to have been consistent – no nuclear bomb, complete nuclear disarmament and peaceful use of nuclear technology. With the collapse of the Congress system in the decades after Nehru, India experienced unstable coalitions owing to fragmentation of the national political space. The nuclear policy also underwent change with the change in party and leadership orientations which is the subject matter of research in subsequent chapters.

Second, in a highly nationalised party system, national issues become central in the legislators’ careers and therefore national factors help in forging bonds between voters and parties. In the Indian political context, though the Congress party was nationally entrenched, nuclear weapons seem not to have been a career issue for Congressmen, especially to forge bonds with voters. On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made nuclear weapons a major plank of its “security-first” agenda; it even made acquisition of nuclear weapons a major electoral plank in its election campaign. The Left parties seem to have taken an “interventionist stance” in every debate, including on nuclear weapons.

Third, polarisation, ideological or otherwise, among parties in the legislature directly influences the legislative outcome. One gets the impression that India’s domestic political

² A dominant party system, which rests primarily upon the capacity of a single leader who enjoys wide public appeal, is without a dominant competition within the party or without.
scenario is dissected by three ideological underpinnings. Mainly, three streams of ideology seem to have been manifested in post-Independence Indian politics, though there is considerable inter-penetration as well as conflict among these three: (1) the Congress is seen to operate under the banner of a secular, anti-imperialist and class-neutral nationalism; (2) the BJP and its associate groups represent the trend of pan-Indian, ethno-cultural nationalism; and (3) a secular class-oriented politics is championed by the communists and socialists (Chaube 1999). How has this polarisation influenced policy outcomes, especially India’s nuclear weapon policy, is debatable.

Fourth, a normative political understanding suggests that the presence and stability of partisan cleavages strengthen the programmatic politics which in turn generate “higher level of policy salience” (Jones 2005: 34). Therefore, it is expected that changes of governments lead to far-reaching policy changes as “competing parties are programmatically far apart” (Zohlnhofer 2009: 104). If India’s political discourse is examined against this thesis, it seems that India’s nuclear policy has not changed radically because of change in government; rather, it has changed with formation of government by the same party again. In other words, the hypothesis to be examined is, if political leadership is more determining than political parties in nuclear policy-making.

Policy-making aims at arriving at right policies at appropriate moments so that the national interest is best served (Kangas 1984). The right policy at the right moment necessitates excellent coordination between pragmatism of the agents involved and the efficiency of the mechanisms by which such policies are arrived at. The agents may be both informal and formal groups and individuals, providing inputs and feedback. They are varied and diverse (Wendt 1987: 335), ranging from government officials to the general public, from media to think-tanks with different capacities.

First among these agents is the executive branch, particularly the head of the government or the chief executive and the senior officials. The executive not only exercises the formal power of military command, but also in practical matters it oversees, directs, and looks into the budget of the programme (Lindsay 1992). The executive in democratic countries is accountable to the legislature or parliament, which is the second agent (Johari
The world over, legislatures, though they play a minimal operational and remote doctrinal role, have considerable control over the budgets. Third, the legislature in a democratic polity is composed of groups of representatives of the electorate: normally the political parties, the focus of this study – invariably shape the policy-making process. Fourth, the public and the media are the major pillars of a political system. In open political systems, extra-governmental democratic elements and specialised non-governmental communities express their voice on nuclear weapon policies (Fisher 1999). Fifth, behind the public domain, the scientific-bureaucratic community, by virtue of its expertise and involvement in the programme, plays a vital role in the evolution of national nuclear weapon policy (Anderson 2010). Lastly, strategic thinkers and think-tanks sometimes influence the policy process by their insight on various aspects of the discourse, thereby providing back-up to the policymakers on relevant aspects, and at the same time figuring out lacunae in the policies arrived at. While the media provide the medium for debate, these institutions supply the debaters (Alexander 2006). However, before undertaking such an investigation, a brief narration on what constitutes nuclear weapon policy-making is warranted to better understand the broad contours of the issue.

**Contours of Nuclear Weapon Policy-Making**

Nuclear weapon policy-making involves a spectrum of topics spanning every stage in the evolution of the debate to the actual acquisition of a nuclear weapon. An analysis of this aspect would bring forth the “why” and “how” aspects of the discourse. When one is puzzled by a happening, the source of that puzzlement is typically a particular government action or set of actions. Then one tends to ask why such a decision is taken and what its rationale is.

The Organisation Behaviour Model emphasises the distinctive logic, capacities, culture, and procedures of large organisations like government which take such decisions (Griffin 2007). According to this model, “acts” and “choices” are thought of instead as outputs of large organisations that function according to regular patterns of behaviour (Allison and Zelikov 2004: 18-19). It highlights the aspect: from what organisational context, pressure, and procedure did a particular policy emerge? In the context of national policy-making, it necessitates an investigation on the politics of government. In the process, one
finds such events on which decisions are made are neither unitary choices nor organisational outputs. Rather the outcome is understood as resultant bargaining among players in the national government. The key players in government are the political parties, interest groups and individual leaders who in essence influence the policy-making process immensely. Within this formulation, the nuclear weapon policy-making process seems nothing but solving of certain key questions based on national imperatives, debated or otherwise. They mainly constitute:

1. Should the nation possess nuclear weapons?
2. What is the plan for use of nuclear weapons?
3. What is the nation’s strategy for nuclear weapons?
4. How is the force to be maintained and modernised?
5. Who has authority to order the weapons to be launched and how to ensure that such an order would be carried out?
6. What is the nation’s nuclear posture at the international level, what stand should it take on non-proliferation issues at the international level?

The first five issue areas, identified by Walter B. Slocombe, signify the domestic aspects of nuclear policy-making process (Slocombe 2006). However, a country’s need, strategy, plan of use, upkeep and the decision to launch nuclear weapons are not only shaped by domestic issues, they are rather influenced more or less by external factors like regional security environment, strategies of neighbouring countries, global nuclear trend, the non-proliferation regime, etc. (Ford et al. 1977). However, the most fundamental but critical policy decision of a country’s nuclear discourse is whether it has to have nuclear weapons at all. Certainly, this decision is the outcome of the intricate interplay of group interests, leadership expositions and national ethos.

Perceptibly, no country has ever acquired nuclear weapons after a meaningful public debate. Real decisions to go for nuclear weapons have always been arrived at secretly by a close group or individuals. Even in countries like China and Pakistan where the military and political leadership are closely intertwined, the basic acquisition decision has been made by the political leadership, confined to a very restricted inner core of the leadership, albeit with
military inputs (Cirincione et al. 2005: Chapters 7 and 12). While countries like Germany and Japan have taken a negative decision through a much more public process and restrained themselves to civilian nuclear energy programmes (Ragheb 2007; Kelleher 1968), the nuclear programmes of Canada and Sweden have been decided by a very small circle of civilian executive leaders and their most senior military and scientific advisors with minimal parliamentary and public/media inputs (Robinson 2002; Arnett 1998).

Next to the policy on "whether to acquire nuclear weapons" is the plan of their use. A nation with nuclear weapons "has to make quasi-operational policies about the circumstances in which its nuclear arsenal would be employed" (Slocombe 2006: 9). While these plans are guided by the concerned nation’s basic strategy, it is the primary responsibility of the leaders to chalk out the strategy on the possession and possible use of nuclear weapons so that they contribute to the nation’s overall interests and objectives. Even where the basic objectives are defined, the operational plans need to be worked out on concrete terms, clarifying what units are to do what; how orders are to be transmitted; and how targets are to be identified and approved.

Once the operational plans are worked out, generally every nation takes a "declaratory position" on how it sees its nuclear weapons serve its national objectives (Paul 2009: 117). These declaratory positions vary widely among nations. For example, Israel is known to have nuclear weapons but does not accept their presence openly, hence categorised as opaque proliferation. The United States, in contrast, provides details on the structure of its nuclear force, doctrine, policy and even basic principles of targeting by various official statements (US Department of Defense; Congressional Research Service). Britain and France also provide broad outlines of their policy through various official pronouncements though they are less comprehensive than those of the US (Tertrais 2007). India, China and Pakistan, though they overtly speak of their possession, do not go beyond revealing the broad contours of their arsenals. Russia with a more open political system now entertains public

\footnote{The US Department of Defense brings out all important policy formulations like the Nuclear Posture Review, Nuclear Weapon Systems Sustainment Programs, etc. The Congressional Research Service, a think-tank, provides reports to members of Congress on a variety of topics relevant to current political events, including information on nuclear arsenals.}
discussions about its nuclear force, purpose and their place in its overall defence strategy (Woolf 2003).

The next element of nuclear weapon policy-making is the maintenance and modernisation programme of the arsenals. The issue is, having acquire them, how to strengthen the nuclear force, their delivery systems and other support elements? Other than the technical acquisition decisions, the aspects of subordination, custody and organisational structure in the management of nuclear weapons are equally important (Brown 2000: 204). But the level of public participation in the process varies. While in the case of the US, and to a lesser degree the UK, the veils of their secrecy have parted considerably, the decisions of other states have been tightly held (Reiss 1995). In India, while specific decisions to conduct the tests and orders for scientific preparedness for the bomb are still shrouded in mystery, the shape and parameters of India’s nuclear weapon policy have been subjects of open deliberation. For example, the National Security Advisory Board, after an intensive deliberation, brought out a draft nuclear doctrine that was debated for almost three years until it was finally operationalised in 2003.

Even the debate over the basic framework of India’s nuclear weapon policy — “no-first use” but “credible minimum nuclear deterrence” — is still in vogue and various political parties and leaders continue to assert their current thoughts on this policy. For example, a prominent BJP member and former External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, has called for a second look and revision of India’s no-first-use doctrine (The Statesman, 15 March 2011). Initiating the discussion on demand on grants for the Ministry of External Affairs in the Lok Sabha on 15 March 2011, he said:

I am of the view that the policy-framework that the NDA devised in 1998 is very greatly in need of revision because the situation that warranted the enunciation of the policy of ‘no-first-use’ or ‘non-use against non-nuclear weapons’, ‘credible deterrence with minimum force’, etc. has long been overtaken by events.... You cannot continue to sit on yesterday’s policy. (Indian Express, 16 March 2011)

The Congress-led UPA Government rejected this suggestion. The Minister for External Affairs, S.M. Krishna said that “Our policy (no-first-use) remains as it exists.
Government is committed to safeguarding India’s security interests in consonance with our declared (nuclear) doctrine” (IBN Live 16 March 2011).

The role of leaders, especially the political leaders or the central authority (in the case of non-democratically ruled nations), who give the final order for possession and use of this arsenal, is a crucial aspect of nuclear decision-making (Hymans 2006). The ultimate authority to give orders for development and their use generally rests with the senior political leadership. However, the central question is, should the principle of political decision-making be reinforced by technical measures that make it difficult for the weapons to be launched without the receipt of some code to be transmitted to the military forces? As authority can also be delegated, the principle of succession also needs to be decided (Cimbala 2005: 20). This gives rise to another critical issue area: should the authority to launch the weapon be given only in the midst of a crisis (“real time”) or in perpetuity?

Political Parties as Agents and Institutions in Policy-Making

The political parties constitute the primary agents in determining the contours of nuclear weapon policy-making in a democracy. The party system normally refers to “complex social and political processes that go beyond individual leaders, societal associations, political groups and organisations to the intricate pattern of their interactions and interrelationships” (Mehra 2003: 23). Basic to the party system are political parties as institutions which are varied in organisation, functioning, leadership, and decision making, and do not fit into one model (Hasan 2010: 248). Therefore, one finds considerable divergence of views and opinions on any issue basically owing to “the way they evolved, their status as the ruling or opposition party, their support bases, leadership styles and traditions, and their geographical location and spread” (Suri 2005). Political parties as institutions also “provide the crucial connection between political process and policymakers, and bring to the forefront issues affecting the interests of social groups and the public at large” (Hasan 2010: 241). How much these “institutions affect policy outcomes” is one of the classical and most important issues concerning a democratic nation (Kawanaka 2010: 1).

Essentially, the issue is about identifying the causality between institutions and national policies: in particular, how differences among institutions cause “variations in policy
outcomes" and what role institutions play in formulating policies (Persson and Tabellini 2003). This study, therefore, attempts to provide a systematic assessment of the role of three different political parties in India’s nuclear weapon policy-making process.

Political parties affect policy outcomes roughly in three ways: (1) they decide, first, the players who participate in the policy-making process; (2) the preference of the players; and (3) the strategy sets of the players (Kawanaka 2010: 1). In the first instance, political parties link individuals to the democratic process by simplifying the choices for voters – they “help to make politics user friendly for citizens” (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002: 6). The party that forms the government takes required decisions partly based on its own ideological inclinations and its organisational ethos and partly in response to the need of the hour. The parties outside the government equally shape public opinion and pressurise the government for clarification on specific decisions arrived at. They manage and structure the affairs of government by identifying numerous key aspects of the democratic process, such as: creating a political majority, organising the government, implementing policy objectives, organising dissent and opposition, ensuring responsibility for government actions, controlling government administration, fostering stability in the government, etc. (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002: 8). “Their ultimate influence is on the policy outcomes of government” (Caul and Gray 2010: 208-37).

In India, the emergence and growth of political parties is related to the rise of nationalism in the country during the British rule (Mehra 2003: 51). During subsequent decades after Independence, India has seen a splintering of political parties of different ideologies and organisational ethos, sometimes basing on the societal underpinnings and fractions. According to Zoya Hasan, most political parties lack the political capacity to take the lead in formulating and debating policies which reflect people’s aspirations and needs. Although parties and party leaders profess to stand for ideology, in reality they are flexible enough to compromise on their professed ideological stance for political expediency (Hasan 2010: 251).

To verify the nuclear policy orientation of various political parties, one may study their pronouncements on the matter over time and also through an analytical approach, based
on the proposition that policy rests on multiple determinants, both internal and external (Patagundi 1987: 10). The perception of nuclear policy as an outcome of domestic politics or party politics may help us understand its origin but is not sufficient to explain its continuation. On the other hand, the analytical approach would provide the ground to understand the continuation of policy emphasising national interest as the permanent guiding factor. But different political parties articulate national interest in different ways and forms. One way to establish a parallel is to study extensively individual party functioning, ideology, pronouncements and leadership style and compare them.

Three parties have been selected for this study – the Congress, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) and the BJP – to evaluate how far they have influenced the country’s process of nuclear weapon policy. Here ‘influence’ connotes participation in the policy-making process and their views on India’s nuclear weapons posture. These and other intricate issues generally involve many nuances of the linkage between systemic factors and the procedural aspects in a given polity, which can be better understood within a theoretical framework of the interface between nuclear policy-making and domestic politics.

Theorising Nuclear Weapon Policy-Making

In general, nuclear weapon policy discourse is a critical blend of history, technology and strategy (Asaro 2000: 257). Therefore, a large number of variables can be identified in the pursuit of understanding the nuances of nuclear weapon policy processes. Construction of empirical models allows one to generalise from the historical cases, technological realities and constraints, enabling prescription for the current and prediction of future nuclear weapon policy prospects. But empiricism is not sufficient to define the causal relationships between national nuclear postures and nuclear policy-making expositions. The question, why do certain states adopt specific nuclear postures, signifies the existence of puzzles that the contemporary world is grappling with for predicting the future of international security (Sagan 1996/97: 54). “Since wars begin in the minds of men”, preparedness for war is also designed in the minds of men. The theoretical debate over how nuclear weapon policies are arrived at and whether the study on policy orientation can be separated from the phenomenon of “domestic coalition building” (Ogilvie-White 1996: 43) is a critical issue area. To
understand the causes of a certain strategy or the attitude of a nation towards a certain phenomenon, it is pertinent (1) to trace the circumstances in which an actor or group of actors arrive(s) at such policies; and (2) to study the brains or the traits and personalities behind such policies.

It is pertinent in this context to analyse the "theory of political decision-making", since nuclear weapon policies are essentially political decisions (Cohen and Lee 1986). The decision-making approach, which Richard C. Snyder brought to the awareness of political scientists, maintains that there are those who hold formal or informal positions of power and authority frame policies for certain events (Snyder 1962). These policymakers can be located within a bureaucratic or administrative network or within representative groups privileged with information supply and authority to implement the policies. They draw on a memory of past events and frame their behaviour upon expectations about the future. They are, however, subject to possible pressures arising from society. At a given moment, they will be made aware of a particular situation for which they will consider changing the policy or type of behaviour that has been practised. This process is continuous: the situation occurs; information about it is passed to the policymakers; possible behaviours relative to the situation are considered; a policy is made either to change behaviour or to stay with the previous behaviour; the policy is then implemented and in turn a new situation is created (Price 1975: 418-19). This explanation provides an understanding of how the policy-making process takes place. However, theories dealing with individuals in the policy-making domain are incomplete as they fail to take into account the circumstances in which this behaviour occurs (Farnham 1990: 83).

Robert J. Art identifies "two waves" in the evolution of policy-making theories. The "first wave" policy-making theorists (Roger Hilsman, Samuel Huntington, Richard Neustadt and Warner Schilling) have applied a bureaucratic but essentially political perspective. For them, policy-making was not simply a matter of determining the policy with the greatest expected utility; rather they held that the nature of the political context influenced what a policymaker could reasonably hope to accomplish and therefore, ought to take into account in his calculations. Their concern was with the impact of the entire political context on the policy-making process. The second wave theorists (Graham Allison, Morton Halperin and
Richard Snyder) went a good deal further in moving the focus of interest away from the individual policymaker and toward the political system itself (Art 1973). The Bureaucratic Politics Model, a part of the second wave, asserts that the policy positions of individuals derived primarily from their roles rather than from a process of “internal debate” (Snyder and Sapin 1962). Also, political decisions were seen as a result of a process driven by the interaction of bureaucratic interests, and not by the decisions of individuals (Allison 1971).

During the 1970s and '80s, there emerged various psychological approaches, which Barbara Farnham calls the “third wave” of theories on policy-making. These theorists (Guilford, John Steinbruner, Robert Jervis, Janice Stein and Philip Tetlock) were essentially concerned with the influence of “cognitive factors” or “motivational phenomenon” on policy-making; their main emphasis is on the policymakers’ mental operations (Guilford 1979: 8).

The general policy-making theory applied to nuclear weapon policy-making of nations explain the why and when of national policy parameters. Graham Allision’s three models (rational-actor, organisational-process and government-politics model), though specific to the decision-making process, clearly demonstrate the influence of “actors”, “factors” and “choices” in policy “outputs” (Allison 1971). Barbar Kellerman of Fairleigh Dickinson University has added another three models (Small Group Model, Dominant Leader Model and Cognitive Process) to further understand the policy-making process (Kellerman 1983). However, none of these models, when applied to nuclear weapon policy-making, can go beyond the actors-factors analysis. Though national security is the standard referring point to decipher a nation’s nuclear posture, many states are seen to have opted for atomic weapons merely for prestige. It is argued that the nuclear weapons posture serves an important symbolic function – both shaping and reflecting a state’s identity. According to this perspective, state behaviour is determined not by leaders’ calculations about the national security interests or their parochial bureaucratic interests, but rather by deeper “norms” and “beliefs” about what is legitimate and appropriate in international relations (Sagan 1996: 73).

To reiterate what has been said earlier, only empirical investigation of the circumstances or the setting may not suffice to understand the “why” aspect of specific nuclear postures. Dr. Conardo Varotto, the father of Argentina’s once-secret uranium enrichment programme, said, “the bomb is in the human heart or it isn’t … we could have
done it, but we didn’t, because the bomb was not in our hearts” (Quoted in Hymans 2006: ix). His basic point was that specific nuclear postures reflect the “psychology of the leaders”, which Hymans identified as a discrete “policy-making pathway” that leads from “different national identity conceptions, through emotions towards the ultimate nuclear choice” (Hymans 2006: ix). A similar trait can be observed in Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a former Pakistani President, who took the historical decision to fabricate the atom bomb for his country in a meeting with the top nuclear scientists in Multan in January 1972. In this meeting Bhutto told the scientists, “this is a very serious political decision, which Pakistan must make, and perhaps all Third World countries must make one day…” (Quoted in Weissman and Krosney 1983: 45; emphasis added).

Contemporary security studies debate is woven around the temporal interest of nations and are by nature power-centric and policy oriented, mainly defined by Western scholars (Nizamani 2001: 3). But are the theoretical bases explaining the security discourse of the Western world fit for analysing issues of the non-Western world? Are developing countries a unique category which merits a separate analytical framework? An empirical study of the policy-making process seems inadequate in answering these questions. An ideological-value laden study may on the other hand provide an appropriate framework to look into the nuances in the nuclear policy-making process of the post-colonial states.

Two competing theoretical camps have sought to uncover how states arrive at specific nuclear weapon policies. The first takes the “realist” view that states adopt specific nuclear weapon policies depending upon the specific security situation (Bracken 1999). Classical realism views the working of the international system as being anarchic, and therefore considers nuclear weapons as “absolute weapons” and beneficial for states (Hymans 2006a: 456): states need to deter potential enemies and in the age of the atom “the gold standard of

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4 The main expectations of realism or, more accurately, neo-realism are: (1) the recurrence of balance of power in the world political system; (2) the tendency of states to balance, that is, to strengthen, themselves in the face of foreign threats; and (3) the inclination of states to imitate one another and to become socialised to the international system. The realists say that states usually balance against the most serious military threats to their security; rarely do they bandwagon, that is, accommodate or appease those making the threats. States can try to balance “internally” by relying on their own military capabilities, or “externally”, by relying on the military capabilities of allies. Defence planners generally prefer internal balancing because it leaves less to chance and less to the will of others; however, this strategy requires levels of national determination and resources that are beyond the reach of many countries.
deterrence is nuclear”. Policymakers in countries that believe that their interest is threatened and nuclear weapons offer the best protection, tend to adopt such a myth. Neo-realism, the structural form of realism, traces the motive of specific nuclear policies to balance of power and security dilemmas (Waltz 1981; Mearsheimer 1990). According to this stream of thought, the domestic nature of states, regimes, groups or individuals is irrelevant to nuclear policy formulation and outcomes as the feeling of insecurity by the state and its policymakers is the major drive in the search for nuclear weapons.

But the realist framework seems too abstract to allow a precise understanding of the conditions under which policymakers adopt a specific nuclear posture (Lavoy 2006). It is insufficient to explain the timing and nature of policy shifts because it operates at a systemic level of analysis (Singer 1961). It does not take into account specific political, technical or psychological factors that condition national thinking, perception of the national leaders and their policy-making pattern. It also fails to explain why at a certain point of time a state adopts a certain posture. For example, why did India test nuclear devices in 1974 and 1998, and not in 1968? And why did India adopt the no-first use policy? Similarly, why did South Africa, not Sweden or Saudi Arabia, and why France but not Germany or Japan, chose the policy they currently follow? In order to have a nuanced understanding of why some countries seek a certain nuclear weapon posture in preference to other options, or why some countries adopt a yes-bomb policy while others follow a no-bomb policy, an alternative theoretical perspective – idealism – has been applied by many scholars.

This “idealist” camp emphasises “the causal power of ideas, including identities, perceptions, emotions, cultures, etc.”, and considers that states and their policymakers gradually stop worrying and “learn to love the bomb” (Potter 2003). Professor Jacques Hymans of Smith College (USA) contends that the idealist paradigm can better explain the nuclear weapon discourse of states. In his understanding, the idealist approach by focusing on ideas produced by national, cultural or individual attributes explains much about the worldviews, motives and policy orientations of national leaders or groups (Hymans 2006b). Policymakers are driven toward the bomb or foreclose that option by the idea that it is beneficial or unnecessary, respectively. This idea is not purely the result of international anarchy, as is argued by the realists. The idealists admit that policymakers’ perceptions of the
bomb's utility prompts them to adopt the policy favouring or discarding the nuclear bomb (Gompert 1998). The idealist approach focuses on the psychology of national leaders, emphasising the constraints of cognitive behaviour triggered by domestic or international factors. Also, they posit "strategic culture as a driving force behind nuclear bomb" policies of nations (Levoy 2006: 435).

The idealist camp has developed its analyses on three levels: the international level, the domestic level and the individual level. At the international level, idealists stress the importance of international "norms" or "normative predispositions" that guide the nuclear weapon policies of states. The realists explain nuclear norms as "taboo" and "myth"; the idealists use the explanation somewhat differently. In most countries, in their view, the development of nuclear weapons is considered morally prohibitive, incompatible with the country's identity and international outlook (Frey 2006: 4). These norms, or the "nuclear taboo", are major factors in preventing states from acquiring nuclear weapons (Tannenwald 2005). In some states, however, these "negative norms" are overridden by a positive set of norms — "the nuclear myth" — causing nuclear weapons to become a shield or symbol of invulnerability to perceived threats or "the regalia of major power status" (Frey 2006: 4). Specifically, a normative understanding of the role of norms in nuclear weapon policy-making explains that democracies do not act more peacefully than authoritarian regimes on nuclear matters per se but generally take a more determined position on the bomb (Frey 2006: 15). The idealists, however, concur with the realists that countries are more prone to "the nuclear myth" with regard to the acquisition of nuclear weapons; but they also point out that nations are more committed to the taboo with regard to their use.

While some idealists focus on broad global trends and ideas about the desirability of possession of nuclear weapons by states, others stress important societal constituencies (work at the domestic level) that are strong enough to adopt a policy supporting nuclear weapons (Sen 2000: 16-24). Other idealists who look into the domestic-level variables emphasise the relationship between domestic political coalitions and alternative nuclear postures. For example, Etel Solingen opines that the study of this linkage can provide additional insights into why certain nations veil their nuclear weapon programmes and defy widely accepted international norms (Solingen 1994). In his view, countries ruled by coalitions of social and
economic groups pursuing economic liberalisation are more likely to cooperate internationally on nuclear non-proliferation than are countries ruled by inward-looking coalitions with radical fundamentalist ideologies. Some other idealists emphasise the role of individuals or the “motivations of state leaders” (Hymans 2006) because nuclear weapon programmes are often secret and under the tight control of the top leaders. Jacques E.C. Hymans describes these political leaders as “oppositional nationalists” who see their nation as both naturally at odds with an external enemy and also naturally its equal if not its superior (Hymans 2006: 2). In his view, nuclear weapon policies are “revolutionary choices”. The resulting decisions will primarily reflect the policymaker’s “national identity conception” (NIC), which stands for his/her understanding of their nation’s identity – their sense of what the nation naturally stands for and of how high it naturally stands in comparison to others (Hymans 2006: 12-13).

Beyond the dyadic explanation (realist vs. idealist), two other theoretical frameworks draw attention. One is the neo-liberal institutionalism and the other is the constructivist approach. The neo-liberal framework calls greater attention to international factors in domestic politics that ultimately determine the national nuclear course of action (Costanzo 2002). On the other hand, the constructivist approach emphasises the role of domestic factors in international relations in that “international reality is socially constructed by cognitive structures” (Adler 1997: 209). The constructivists identify the impact of “norms” and how they contribute to states’ nuclear forbearance. They take a middle ground between rationalist approaches and interpretative approaches. Irrespective of which sector influences whom and to what extent, it is easy to recognise that there exists a constant interaction between the domestic and international spheres, and therefore “domestic politics and international relations are somehow entangled”, which Robert D. Putnam describes as “two level games” (Putnam 1993: 431). However, if norms or institutions are the chief factors behind national nuclear decisions, it needs to be assumed, why do some countries acquire nuclear weapons while some others do not prefer them? It is seen that national leaders sometimes advance “reasons of state” as justification for forming policies to acquire or renounce nuclear weapons (Abraham 1998).
Another methodological argument on *current proliferation trend* is that democratic and economically outward-looking countries generally are averse to nuclear weapons whereas inward-looking closed political economies are prone to the nuclear craze and temptation (Solingen 1994). But these assertions are not universally applicable. India is a classic example. The largest democracy in the world, India conducted its second series of nuclear tests in 1998 after it adopted the liberal economic model. Under Nehru’s leadership though India was an inward looking economy, it extended all support for global non-proliferation initiatives. In contrast, under Narasimha Rao’s coalition government, known for its LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation) programme in restructuring its economy making it outward-looking, India did not embrace the Pakistani overture for a nuclear-free zone. Rather, it was preparing for a test in 1995 that was pre-empted by US surveillance. The same coalition government categorically rejected India’s adherence to NPT in 1995. Therefore, theorising nuclear discourse is a “multi-factor heuristic task” since no single factor is solely accountable (Connor-Linton 1988). The reason to bring domestic politics more explicitly into the study of a country’s nuclear behaviour is the existence of a relationship between domestic political coalitions and alternative nuclear postures.

Inevitably, neither a universal explanation of state behaviour in the realm of nuclear weapon policy-making has been devised yet, nor can effectively be constructed. None of the available theories by themselves are adequate to interpret and satisfactorily account for the policies of nations. The statecraft involving the international-, national-, domestic- and individual-level discourse is so dynamic, it is almost impossible to narrow down these policies to a precise cause or influence.

Many also find that individual traits are the determining factor and the national psyche, character, norms, and culture, in other words, the *indigenous factors*, govern the policy-making process. The nuclear discourse is more politics and psychology than physics and security. Scott D. Sagan, therefore, rightly asserts that “nuclear weapons like other weapons are more than tools of national security; they are political objects of considerable importance in domestic debates ...” (Sagan 1996-97: 55). Sagan has devised three models – the security models, the domestic politics model, and the norms model – to explain nations’ nuclear weapon policy-making behaviour.
The security model belongs to the realist paradigm as it explains that a country's specific nuclear policy has many important causes, but the forceful cause is the perceived deteriorating national security situation. Owing to the enormous destructive power of the nuclear weapon, any state desirous of strengthening its security would prefer to acquire a "minimum" nuclear weapon capability to balance against its rivals. Other than their deterrent utility, nuclear weapons also serve as diplomatic and coercive tools for a state (Sauer 2007). In pursuit of acquiring nuclear security, policymakers may adopt two postures: (1) develop their own nuclear arsenals; and/or (2) join a balancing alliance with a nuclear power for an extended deterrence guarantee. Therefore, policymakers' perception and response to national threats may lead them towards the nuclear weapons option. Moreover, the threat from a nuclear weapon state tempts a nation to acquire the weapon. George Shultz once noted that "proliferation begets proliferation", that "every time one state develops nuclear weapons to balance against its rival, it also generates a nuclear threat to another state in the region, which then has to initiate its own nuclear weapons programme to maintain its national security" (Sagan 1996-97: 84). In the process, national nuclear policy-making is nothing but "proliferation chain" reactions of states. (Dunn 1976: 20)

The security model also provides the same security justification for states which opt to roll back their nuclear weapon programme. South Africa rolled back its nuclear weapons programme in 1991 owing to the perceived radical reduction in the external threats (Horton III 1999). In fact, the risk of a Soviet-led attack on South Africa was virtually eliminated by 1989. The security model is also used to explain nuclear restraint policies of nations. Argentina and Brazil began their nuclear weapon programme in the 1970s but jointly declared in 1990 that they would abandon their programmes, other than economic reasons, explicitly recognised that they posed no security threat to each other (Perkovich and Choubey 2010: 14). States like Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus decided to give up their inherited nuclear arsenals because they did not perceive Russia as a major military threat to their security; also, the increased US security guarantees to them made their nuclear weapons unnecessary (Kiernan 2010). The realist explanation depends primarily on the statements of motivation by key policymakers "who have vested interests in explaining the choices they made would serve national interest best" (Sagan 1997: 63).
The domestic politics model, though it accepts the existence of threats to national security in the international system, is seen as more malleable and subject to interpretation. Security threats are not the central cause of nuclear weapon policies of nations, according to this model. They are considered “mere windows of opportunity through which parochial interests can jump” (Sagan 1997: 65). But the main point of reference for this model is the domestic actors consisting of the scientific community, professional military personnel and the politicians who encourage or discourage governments from pursuing the bomb. These actors, to satisfy their parochial interests and to “justify their existence” sometimes form “coalitions” that are strong enough to control the government’s policy-making process, either through their direct political power or indirectly through their control of information. From this perspective, one can expect that the nuclear arming decision or a reversal decision do not occur when external security threats are increased or diminished respectively; rather, these decisions are taken when the scientific-military-industrial complex initiates the move. Also, sometimes policies change with the occurrence of major internal political changes. Sagan ascribes this model to the Indian nuclear weapon discourse, which he terms as of an “unusual nature” (Sagan 1997: 68).

Sagan’s third model (norms model) suggests that nuclear policies are shaped neither purely by bureaucratic interests nor by the security rationale; rather, they are conditioned by the “deeper norms and shared beliefs” of a nation about what actions are legitimate and appropriate in international relations. This model emphasises the importance of roles, routines, rituals as individual and organisational interests are shaped by the social roles as much as through reasoned decisions. This highlights that nuclear weapon programmes serve symbolic functions reflecting leaders’ perceptions and policies reflecting a state’s identity. Sagan calls the phenomenon “nuclear symbolism”; Joseph Nye Jr. termed it as “Nuclear Ethics” (Nye Jr. 1986). It is perceived that possession of nuclear weapons enhances the international prestige and status of a state. States possessing these arms are given greater weight in international discourse; they are brought into a higher level of international discussions and their views are treated with greater respect. For example, UK and France, who have fallen behind Japan and Germany in economic strength, are still considered great powers because they possess nuclear weapons. Thus, according to this model, states may
seek nuclear weapons to maintain or achieve great-power status; to be assured of a seat at the "high table" in international forums; to enhance their prestige within a region or grouping of states; to address a perceived inferiority in the international hierarchy; and to demonstrate political independence and self-reliance to be able to resist political pressures from the nuclear superpowers (Epstein 1977: 21-22). Whether domestic political constituencies like political parties are influenced by these considerations in the Indian context is examined subsequently.

However, renouncing a nuclear weapon programme also equally elevates a country's political stature and prestige (Epstein 1977: 22). Why then, do some states choose to continue with nuclear weapons irrespective of all international pressure, when renouncing them promises equal pay-offs? This involves the perceptions of policymakers conditioned by the security situation, culture, personality traits, domestic political environment, etc. Therefore, theorising nuclear weapon policy-making in absolute terms is a somewhat futile task. Security requirements, priorities and objectives of nations differ widely; so also do their policies and strategies because at any certain point of time, state behaviour is conditioned by a plethora of variables. "Rational" policymakers only decide which alternative would minimise loss and maximise national gain. The policymaker makes a "rational choice" that consists of selecting such alternatives whose consequences rank highest in his/her "payoff function" (Simon 1955). However, differences in policy making groups or agents often result in policy shifts or alternations. This study enquires into the differential attitudes of the three political groups towards nuclear weapons and consequent policy outcomes in India's nuclear weapon discourse.

Survey of Literature

In the vast literature on India's nuclear arming behaviour, a comparative study on the domestic sources of nuclear policy-making, especially on the comparative role of the major political parties, is unavailable. There exist only stray attempts on the policies of individual parties. At the conceptual level, only a handful of writers have examined the role of domestic constituencies or institutions in national policy-making. The realist thinkers in India take up many internal impetuses (e.g. domestic politics, leaders' perceptions, state's intention based
on its civilisation, etc.) along with Kenneth Waltz's structural formulations, to explain India's foreign policy and national decision-making than to explain the systemic process in international politics (Zakaria 1999; Gideon 1998).

Since nuclear weaponisation is a sensitive issue, the role of domestic variables in shaping nuclear policy becomes more visible. A normative understanding of the role of norms in nuclear policy-making explains that democracies do not act more peacefully than authoritarian regimes on nuclear matters *per se* but generally take a more determined position on the bomb (Frey 2006). While they might be more prone to the "nuclear myth" with regard to the acquisition of nuclear weapons, they are more committed to the "nuclear taboo" with regard to their use. But nuclear arming decision-making does not stand alone. There exists a causal relationship between the role of national agents and the international system. James Rosenau was one among the first to call attention to this area by his taxonomy of "linkage politics" (Rosenau 1969). In his view, domestic politics and international relations are often entangled; there always exists a correlation between "domestic and international conflict behaviour" and national policies are mere manifestations of this complex entanglement. But his explanation does not sort out the puzzling tangle as questions like "when", "how" and "why" states behave the way they do have not been clarified.

The *domestic-international linkage* is conceptually looked into by Robert D. Putnam in his article "Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games" (*International Organisation*, 42(3) 1988). Putnam's generic observation is that international discourse is somehow linked to national affairs and national affairs in turn shape the nuclear behaviour of the nation. Very often this linkage politics turns into "conflict behaviour" and the final shape of a state's nuclear policy evolves and is guarded by the "state strength" or structural factors. At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressurising the government to adopt favourable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among

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5 A common belief is that nuclear weapons protect a country by deterring potential aggressors from attacking. By threatening massive retaliation, the argument goes, nuclear weapons prevent an attacker from starting a war.

6 A key calculation of the non-nuclear state springs from the taboo, which is an unwritten international prohibition since the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks, that nuclear weapons should not be used, especially against non-nuclear states. A nuclear state is self-deterred through the operation of the taboo in addition to other possible restraints. Nuclear states have refrained from making use of their advantage in armed confrontations with non-nuclear states, even when an attack of this nature would have made military sense.
those groups (Putnam 1988). At the international level, national governments seek to
maximise their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures while minimising the adverse
consequences of foreign developments. Thus, national political leaders have to make a
double-edged calculation. On the other hand, a state is not a unitary actor; it is a “poliarchy”
composed of actors with varying preferences who share power over policy-making and
domestic politics is more influential than international factors. Thus *domestic political
explanations of state behaviour* are more appealing (Milner 1997).

In the context of domestic-international interface, interests, institutions and
information, all explain the *rational choice* in policy-making. But statesmen find themselves
in a double-edged calculation of constraints and opportunities involved both at the domestic
and international level (Evans et al. 1993). This line of argument presumes that there exists
an intrinsic relationship between regime type and policy-making, and a bargaining takes
place between them.

Raj Chengappa in *Weapons of Peace* (2000) asserts that for long India’s nuclear issue
has remained confined to a small, incestuous circle of strategic experts. Also, much of India’s
ture nuclear history remains oral but the nuclear question straddles almost everything
fundamental to India as a nation. There is no coherent authoritative official document on
India’s nuclear history and therefore there exists considerable dissension and misperception
(Subrahmanyam 1998). Apart from the scientific aspect of building the bomb, there was its
military dimension and more importantly the political, ideological and even economic
rationale that had to be fathomed.

The evolution of India’s nuclear weapon programme has a chequered history. It has
travelled from a point of nuclear aversion to the “option open” policy, otherwise known as
“recessed deterrence” (Singh 1998), which is also termed as nuclear ambiguity. This policy
finally culminated in a “credible minimum deterrence” posture with a triad force structure
consisting of aircraft, mobile land-based missiles and sea-based assets (NSAB, “India’s
Nuclear Doctrine 1999”).

23
There has been an enormous growth in the organisational and functional aspects of political parties in post-Independence India and they have emerged as stable entities in the national security discourse. In an article "Parties under Pressure" (2005), K.C. Suri narrates how the gradual increase in the importance of nuclear weapons in the national security discourse is cotenemos with the gradual consolidation of party politics in the country. William Walker in "Viewpoint: India's Nuclear Labyrinth" in The Nonproliferation Review (1996) also asserts that India's body politic remains deeply attached to the nuclear discourse and its domestic political and psychological dependence on nuclear weapons has tended to increase. The reason, as advanced by Todd S. Sechser, being the domestic political incentives that played critical roles each time in their evolution. To that extent, A.N. Ram in Riding the Nuclear Tiger (1999) points out that India's 1998 tests were a direct consequence of a series of domestic factors, including the ruling BJP's desire to ward off hardliners, heighten its future re-election prospects, bolster its position among coalition government allies, and be seen as a "promise-keeping" party. He asserts that the 1998 nuclear tests were a "reactionary departure" from a well-conceived and tested policy which balanced commitment to independence and peace. The longstanding chauvinist goal of the Hindu Right hijacked India's nuclear policy.

By applying the domestic politics model of proliferation, Weixing Hu in "New Delhi's Nuclear Bomb: A Systemic Analysis" in World Affairs (2000) identifies the parochial interests of political forces in a domestic power struggle, where he explains that when the international-level bargaining on India's nuclear status failed, the domestic discussion was doomed to produce strong resistance against the international non-proliferation regime. This defiant national sentiment probably paved the way for the BJP's nuclear decision in 1998.

Beyond these conceptual and theoretical arguments, analysis of the general national sentiment toward the bomb and the attitude and motivation of individual political parties, their ideology, personality of political leaders and their motivation towards the nuclear issue would be more revealing. Timothy D. Hoyt in "Shades of Realism: The impact of personality, ideology, and systemic pressures on Indian foreign policy" (2003) examines the role of ideas, individuals, organisations and institutions within the state and consequent structural pressures to explain state behaviour. But an objective evaluation entails that there
is an element of “circularity” and “ad hoc-ism”, which Ashok Kapur in *India’s Nuclear Option: Atomic Diplomacy and Decision Making* (1976) says is premised on the “scientific and political czarism” prevalent in India, referring to the attitudinal factors of the politico-bureaucratic community. His study directs attention to a need to investigate the interaction between politicians and scientists and other advisors in and outside the government. Perhaps keeping this aspect in mind, Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik in *South Asia on a Shot Fuse* (1999) say that the crucial explanations for India going nuclear must be sought on the domestic terrain of Indian politics. But the real difference between different political parties on nuclear policy is not expressed in all these studies. Only in the *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre* (1999), Partha S. Ghosh distinguishes the BJP’s nuclear track record from that of the Congress, where he says it is “more over form than substance”. Ghosh’s study, however, does not apply this comparison to the Left parties.

How domestic politics influenced the BJP’s decision is discussed by Kanti Bajpai in “The BJP, Domestic Politics in India, and the Bomb” (2006). In judging the contours of domestic politics vis-à-vis nuclear policy-making, he asks the question: if the BJP had not come to power in March 1998, would the test have happened anyway? In his analysis, the answer is, “probably not”. Sumit Sarkar in “The BJP Bomb and Aspects of Nationalism” (1998) refutes the BJP’s official explanation of the test as a response to the growing threat to national security, saying that relations with both China and Pakistan at that time were improving. He also refutes the electoral imperatives that prompted BJP to go for the test; rather he locates the cause of the test in the BJP’s organisational and ideological spectrum.

The Left fraction of India’s political discourse represents no single monolithic party (Suri 2005). Equally, its pronouncements have been inconsistent and contradictory. K.D. Mathur and P.M. Kamath in *Conduct of India’s Foreign Policy* (1996) bring out this aspect, highlighting how these parties are against military pacts, but not with communist countries; they favour disarmament, but advocate Communist military strength; they demand banning of nuclear weapons, but approve building of China’s nuclear arsenal; they oppose manufacture of nuclear weapons in India, sometimes on shady grounds. The volume, however, fails to answer to what extent the Left influences the Government’s nuclear and foreign policy. In fact, the foreign policy stances of the Marxist Party CPI(M) are similar to
the CPI except that they want complete recasting of foreign policy to suit China’s objectives. They think that India’s security is threatened not so much by China or Pakistan as by the United States (CPI(M), *Political-Organisational Report of the Central Committee 1968*; Banerjee 1966). The CPI(M) publication, *Against Nuclear Jingoism* (1998), a collection of views from leaders like Harkishan Singh Surjeet, N. Ram, Prakash Karat, Sitaram Yechury, links the nuclear tests of 1998 with Hindutva agenda, warns that the nuclear weaponisation pursuit is a disastrous course and brands it as manifestation of the jingoism that the BJP-led government followed.

In these studies, though they touch and highlight different aspects of the nuclear-political interface, many issues are left unanswered. The fundamental question, to what extent political parties have comparatively contributed in the evolution of India’s nuclear weapons discourse, remains unanswered. Did the party or the leadership of the party have a major role in the process?

As this study is focused on India’s nuclear weapon policy and the role of the political parties in its formulation, subsequent chapters broadly elaborate the domestic aspects of the Indian nuclear discourse. The research primarily tries to explain the normative nuclear arming choice of India and the role of political institutions, especially Indian political parties, in the process. Several questions this study attempts to address in fact are the issues around which Indian nuclear weapon debate revolves. First, if norms of “nuclear taboo” prevail over the norms of “nuclear myth” then why does India represent the reverse trend? Out of the 30 states that have military nuclear potential and are capable of launching a nuclear weapon programme on short notice, 28 are democracies. If democracies tend to display more determination on nuclear choice, why did India follow an ambiguous nuclear policy for half a century? If a country’s normative disposition towards nuclear weapons is rooted in the identity of its society, the societal debate in turn is fostered by political parties having their root in the ideological and political inclination of the general mass. With this assumption this study enquires into the role of political parties in formulating India’s nuclear weapon policy.

It is seen that the three political parties have taken different stands at different times on the issue of nuclear weapons. Did their respective ideological inclinations prompt them to
do so? As viable institutions, their party ideology remains constant but why is it that in different situations these parties take different positions on the same issue? Or is it only their electoral strategy that changes from election to election, and in turn their stand on different national issues? The party leadership determines the behaviour of a party in many ways. But domestic political circumstances (electoral politics) and the presence of weak governments do not often allow national political leaders to make concessions on sensitive issues like nuclear weapons. Even strong party leaders do not always take hard decisions.

At times, the domestic environment gets linked with the global environment and domestic political discourse accordingly gets shaped. Political parties, as stakeholders in the domestic environment, effectively respond to external stimuli. But do they compromise their ideological inclinations while responding to the external stimuli? Is India's nuclear doctrine, in any way, an outcome of the BJP's response to the external stimuli? Are the responses of the Left parties, who urge India to give up nuclear weapons, also linked to developments in the external environment? Was India's ambiguous nuclear posture in any way deliberate? Why did the BJP, and not Congress and Left parties, take the nuclear test decision 24 years after the first underground test in 1974?

These and many other research questions are discussed in the study with the broad assumption that the national political leadership is more a determining factor than the political parties in India's nuclear weapon decision-making. India's nuclear policy does not change with change in government and sometimes changes even when the same party forms the government again. The fundamental questions on which the study rests are: Do political parties and domestic politics account for India's nuclear weapon decision-making? If yes, in what way, and to what extent?

A cursory look on the domestic debate over nuclear weapons brings the impression that only three political parties in India have sustained an opinion on the nuclear discourse. The study therefore looks into the policies and deliberations of the Congress, the CPI(M) and the BJP. Therefore, the scope of the study is confined to the systemic national nuclear debate, nature of the party organisation and ideology, nature of its leadership, and electoral strategy of the three political parties in the context of India's nuclear weapon policy. It identifies the
linkage of all these with the matrix of *national identity conception*, leaders' identity types, emotional patterns and opposing effects of normative nuclear predisposition. The study also inquires if these three parties have followed different policies in different situations. A comparative study is undertaken taking into account the three parties' nuclear weapon policy vis-à-vis their position on domestic politics; broadly, it examines to what extent they have influenced India's nuclear weapon policy during its evolution to the stage where it stands today. The subsequent chapter specifically provides a base to the entire study by looking into India's political system, nature of domestic politics, relative position of various political parties, and their interest in nuclear weapon discourse: in other words, the *domestic linkage of India's nuclear weapon discourse*. 