Chapter Four
India’s Security Perception after the Cold War

From 1991 to 2004, state power in India successively passed to several governments: the Congress-led government under Narasimha Rao (June 1991-May 1996), the Janata Dal-led United Front governments under Deve Gowda (June 1996-April 1997) and I.K. Gujral (April 1997-March 1998), and the BJP-led NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government under Atal Bihari Vajpayee (March 1998-May 2004), and the Congress-led UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government under Manmohan Singh (May 2004 - till date). Led by different political parties, these governments might have found many divergences in their domestic agendas, but as far as national security and foreign policy are concerned, they have converged in many aspects. Facing a post-Cold War world with various new challenges, each government, though to different extents, chose to respond by introducing new ideas into its security consideration. This gradually led to a major change with regard to India’s security perception.

4.1 India’s Assessment of Its Security Environment

Compared to China’s greatly transformed sense of security after the Cold War, India seemed extremely pessimistic about its security environment in the early days of the post-Cold War era. In the assessment of strategic analysts, the end of the Cold War did not eliminate the traditional threats to its territorial security; “instead it accentuated the Indian security problems.” (Mohan 2003: 11)

Confronting a

© At the end of 1998, the BJP-led coalition NDA government collapsed due to the AIADMK, one of the coalition partners, pulling out. It proceeded to win the 1999 elections with a greater majority and new alliances. It formed a new government with Atal Bihari Vajpayee again as the Prime Minister.
radically transformed world order, India foresaw the possibility of being marginalised in the world affairs. Since the mid-1990s however, such apprehensions have been allayed by two events: the recovery of the Indian economy which began to experience a boom after the five-year efforts by the Narasimha Rao government (June 1991-May 1996); and then towards the end of the 1990s, India under the leadership of the NDA government went nuclear in May 1998. Since then, a more confident India has looked at its security environment through a much wider prism.

The Indian government considered the early 1990s as a period of "strategic uncertainties". *(Annual Report 1992-93: 1)* With the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the world has been assessed as having become unipolar in military terms, with the US becoming the power centre, but in terms of technology, natural resources and demography, the world has become multipolar where new equilibria among the US and the emerging power centres of Western Europe, Russia, Japan and China have not yet stabilised. Issues which dominated international relations during the Cold War period, such as colonialism and imperialism, the ideological struggle between the communist and non-communist states, the economic issues affecting interaction between the industrially advanced countries and the poorer developing countries, have been replaced by concerns about human rights, disarmament and arms control, good governance, management of the global environment and the structuring of the globalised economic order ruled by free market economy principles. The information and technological revolutions and the globalisation of the world economy have been eroding the territorial compartmentalization of societies as nation-states. Geopolitical and economic regionalism and regional groupings have replaced the old trans-regional and trans-continental multilateral fora such as the NAM, the UNCTAD and the G-77 which represented the interests of developing countries. *(Dixit 2003: 223-224)*
"While the Cold War confrontation has ended," as the Indian annual defence report of 1992-93 states, "the de-escalation of tensions at the global level has so far not had a positive impact in our region." (Annual Report 1992-93: 8) Though there were no overt threats to its territorial integrity and security, covert threats persisted. (Dixit 2003: 225) First of all, Pakistan "remained central to" India's strategic concerns. (Annual Report 1991-92: 3) To quote:

Despite these encouraging trends, however, we remained seriously concerned about the political, diplomatic, moral and material support that Pakistan continued to provide to armed militant groups in J&K and Punjab...Pakistan's pursuit of its militarisation programme also continued to outpace, by far, the country's legitimate defence requirements...Pakistan's clandestine nuclear weapons programme also continues to be pursued, despite the strains that have developed in its long standing relations with the US on this point. (Ibid: 3-4)

Secondly, as ethnic assertions increased and religious fundamentalism intensified after the Cold War, it led to heightened tension in many areas of the globe. (Annual Report 1994-95: 1) India's national unity as well continued to be threatened by "Pakistan sponsored insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, the often externally supported subversive activities of militant groups in the North-East, and the proclivities of such extremist groups as the Peoples War Group in Andhra Pradesh and the Naxalites in Bihar and West Bengal." (Annual Report 1996-97: 7) Thirdly, India's bilateral relations with its immediate neighbours continued to face various difficulties: for example, its water dispute with Bangladesh™, the impact of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka™, and Myanmar's attitude towards Indian insurgent groups in

™ India and Bangladesh had had a dispute on the sharing of the waters of the Gangetic basin for decades. Stress and strain arose in the Indo-Bangladesh relations when the Ganges water issue was internationalised and raised at the UN General Assembly by Bangladesh prior to its being amicably settled in 1996. See Murthy (2000). For details, also see MEA Annual Report (1993-94).

™ After the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) from the island-nation of Sri Lanka early in 1990, the ethnic conflict between Tamil and Sinhalese continued. The instability in Sri Lanka continued to put India in a dilemma since India had to take the sensitivities of its own Tamil population into consideration. Moreover, due to the prevailing Tamil insurgency, Sri Lanka "has developed some sort of reservation with respect to India". (Siwach in Prasad 2002: 315; Dixit 2001: 271-304)
the North-Eastern states. As for China, although the India-China relations continued to improve, "the territorial issue will continue to be the spectre that will haunt...India-China relations until it is finally resolved," (Bhattacharjea 2001: 390) and India maintained "a close watch on China's own military modernisation programmes as well as its military relations with [our] immediate neighbours who have, in the recent past, been beneficiaries of Chinese military supplies in the form of weapons and training." (Annual Report 1991-92: 5)

A number of Indian analysts believe that the end of the Cold War has weakened India's international position in many ways, and this relative political decline has made India "shakier than ever before". (Mohan 2003: 3) The collapse of the Soviet Union, India's de facto military and political ally since 1971, left India with few reliable friends in the new world order dominated by one superpower. (Lalit Mansingh in Sisodia and Bhaskar 2005: 43) Analysts further argue that India came out on the losing side of the Cold War, and was treated by the world as "a regional power locked into a conflict with a hostile smaller neighbour, Pakistan." (Mohan 2003: 12) The post-Cold War marginalisation of the Non-Aligned Movement could also be seen as a big blow for the relevance of India, which had for decades seen itself as the leader of the Third World. (Ibid: 30, 38) As developments in West Asia, Central Asia, East Europe and Russia drew increasing international political attention after the Cold War, India was accordingly marginalised as an area of interest. (Dixit 2003: 226) In the meanwhile, the US and other advanced countries continued "to be opposed to some essential aspects of India's policies" rather than befriend it. (Rajan 1999: 133) As the international non-proliferation regime was strengthened by a series of activities like the indefinite extension of the NPT and the negotiation of the

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According to Indian annual defence report of 1991-92, some reports indicated that there were "growing links between the Myanmar Army and some insurgent organisations in the North Eastern part" of India. (Annual Report 1991-92: 7) The annual defence report of 1994-95 stated, "Indian insurgent groups in the North-Eastern states continue to use the border areas of Myanmar for sanctuary, training and import of arms." (Annual Report 1994-95: 4)
CTBT, India felt growing “global pressures” on its nuclear option and missile programmes. *(Annual Report 1995-96: 2-3)* Another pressure came from the criticism of India’s human rights records by “certain quarters in the West.” *(Annual Report 1994-95: 2)* India pointed out that the purpose of the West was to use Human Rights as a means to “scrutinise India’s domestic affairs.” *(Ibid)*

In the early 1990s, the importance of the domestic situation in determining India’s overall national security was especially salient. Apart from the above-mentioned “subversive activities” which had been threatening India’s unity for decades, the economic crisis and internal riots deepened India’s sense of insecurity. Along with the disappearance of the military and political support of the former Soviet Union, the economy which was considerably weakened by the external payments crisis of 1990-91, appeared to make India more vulnerable in the new world order. As India started its economic reform, the speed and direction of its liberalisation and modernisation plans became new areas for the West to intervene in India’s domestic affairs. *(Dixit 2003: 225, 237)* Destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by the Hindu extremists on 6 December 1992 also affected India’s international credibility. It created an impression that “the Government of India was weak” *(Ibid: 230)* and “the country’s principles of secularism, religious tolerance and rule of law” were under “an unprecedented threat”. *(Mohan 2003: 59)*

The economic revival and the nuclear tests changed the way the Indian elite thought about national security. *(Lalit Mansingh in Sisodia and Bhaskar 2005: 45)* The fact that an emerging India was becoming “an inexorable reality” *(Bhaskar in Sisodia and Bhaskar 2005: xx)* eradicated India’s earlier concern about being marginalised in world affairs and allowed India to look at its post-Cold War security environment with a sense of confidence which had not been much in evidence earlier. “Non-military challenges” and “energy security” were listed for the first time as
separate items in India's annual defence report of 1997-1998. Since then, India has adopted "a more comprehensive approach to security." (Annual Report 2000-2001: 7) During the 2004 national electoral campaign, the Congress party stated in its Security Agenda that national security "has political, economic, social and developmental dimensions" and should not be perceived "within the narrow prism of the purely military context." (Congress 2004: Security Agenda)

Drawing lessons from the collapse of the Soviet Union and its own economic setback, India started to pay attention to economic security in the mid-1990s. The collapse of the Russian economy was a warning to all nations including India of the risk of pursuing power through the barrel of a gun. Although the Soviets had armed themselves to the teeth to fight NATO on every possible battlefield, they lost the Cold War due to their poor performance on the economic front. Some analysts also saw some relevance in the notion of "Comprehensive National Power," which was formulated by the Chinese scholars. They believe that "power in the modern world was based as much on economic competitiveness and political resilience of a country as it was on military capability." (Baru 2006: 26) As India received "much greater respect" from the world due to its economic performance and liberalisation since 1991, it started to put economic interests, in place of high politics, at the centre of its foreign policy. (Sinha 2003: 480, 492-494) It was in this context that India began to attach importance to the relevance of the economic factor in national security and the economic dimension of its external environment. This has also motivated India to keep closer watch on situations in its extended neighbourhood in the Gulf and Central Asia, because these are the two energy rich areas on which India's economic development is heavily dependent as also arenas of intense international competition for access. (Annual Report 1999-2000: 10) When looking at its maritime environment, India lays more stress on the security of its economic interests, including its rights to the maritime resources and the safety of the sea-lanes. (Ibid: 6,
Apart from the economic security, India has also started to pay attention to other "new security challenges" since the mid-1990s. (Annual Report 1995-96: 6) As India's annual defence report of 1994-95 states, "new sources of tension and potential conflict are emerging in today's world involving availability of resources such as oil, gas, food and water. There are anxieties regarding population migration, new concerns over ecological degradation and its effect on health and quality of life, the peddling of drugs and its links with terrorism, and the proliferation of small arms and their linkages with both state and non-state actors." (Annual Report 1994-95: 1) The 1997-98 report explains further that "the linked problems of drugs trafficking, terrorism and organised crime" are the major non-traditional threats facing India in the post-Cold War era. Located between two of the world's leading narcotics producing and exporting regions—North West Pakistan and Afghanistan on one side and Myanmar on the other, India is particularly concerned about the "involvement of insurgent and criminal groups in the drug trade". (Annual Report 1997-98: 7) The September 11, 2001 terrorist attack against the United States was instrumental in forging an international convergence on the fact that terrorism had become the major non-traditional threat to nations in the post-Cold War era. India gave its own view regarding the threat of terrorism to its national security. Its 2003-2004 annual defence report states that "terrorism is India's primary and most immediate security threat," because India is located "at the centre of the arc of extremist activism and terrorism." (Annual Report 2003-2004: 7) Since the end of the Cold War, India has been a victim of terrorist attacks such as the Mumbai bomb blasts of 1993 and of 2003. By emphasising the "crossborder and state-sponsored" nature of terrorism faced by India, however, it is clear that India sees Pakistan using terrorism as an instrument to de-stabilise India. (Ibid: 6-8)
Since the late 1990s, India has also been keeping close watch on the implications of "new technologies" for its national security. "Adequate concern is being focused towards information and space technology, advanced materials and bio-technology," as these are shaping a country's national strength "in a far more significant manner than is commonly realised." (Annual Report 2001-2002: 13) The Indian national defence especially faces a new challenge of the worldwide RMA driven by the development of new technologies. (Annual Report 2004-2005: 8) The 1999-2000 annual defence report observed:

The future battlefield scenario would be vastly different from its traditional version. Technological superiority, weapon effectiveness and force mix, capabilities for rapid response and precision strike will be more important than conventional numerical superiority. There is already a transformation in warfare towards the utilisation of high technology weapons and systems, advanced command and control networks, electronic and information warfare, as well as enhanced administrative efficiency and logics support. (Annual Report 1999-2000: 11)

Till the end of 2004, India's traditional two-front security concerns persisted, in spite of the fact that its security environment had improved considerably due to "positive developments with its two largest neighbours". (Annual Report 2004-2005: 8) In January 2004, India and Pakistan started the peace process with President Musharraf assuring India that Pakistani territory would not be used to support terrorism in any manner and Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's commitment to a purposeful discussion of the Kashmir issue. Since then, a number of initiatives have been taken to ease tensions, normalise and improve relations between India and Pakistan. At the level of the government, the Composite Dialogue was initiated with the resumption of Foreign Secretary level talks in June 2004. At the level of the armed forces, a number of CBMs were exchanged. At the level of the people-to-people contacts,
major steps were taken to start bus services and restore rail links. Despite these positive elements in the India-Pakistan relations, India was not convinced that it meant "any discernible change of heart, or action, by the Pakistani authorities," because "there was no evidence of any significant Pakistani effort to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism." (Ibid: 10) In the meanwhile, India accused Pakistan of pursuing a policy of acquiring military superiority by taking advantage of the war against terrorism to procure sophisticated weapons and platforms like the F-16s, P3C Orion maritime surveillance aircraft etc. (Ibid) Although China-India relations were continually improving and entered into "a phase of comprehensive all-round development supported by high-level exchanges and dialogue," concerns about China's military modernisation and its "close defence relationship with and military assistance to Pakistan" were of a serious nature. (Ibid: 13) India's 2002-2003 annual defence report states, "the India Armed Forces have a two front obligation, which require them to safeguard the security of our borders with Pakistan as well as with China." (Annual Report 2002-2003: 10)

4.2 India’s National Security Strategy

4.2(1) Objectives of India’s National Security Strategy

The objectives of India's national security strategy after the Cold War are not in essence different from that of the Nehru's era, though the backdrop on which they are based has transformed. As discussed in Chapter 2, the first two decades after Independence witnessed the two-fold strategic objectives set by Nehru for India: to preserve India's independence and maintain its national unity and territorial integrity, on the one hand; to play a leadership role in world affairs, on the other. The

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(1) As a result, bus services between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad and between Amritsar and Lahore commenced respectively on 7 April 2005 and 20 January 2006. The Khokrapar-Munabao rail link resumed on 18 February 2006.
post-Cold War security strategy of India also has a two-fold objective. To safeguard the territorial security and integrity remains the primary task. To emerge as a major power or an important pole—along with the United States, Europe, Russia, China and Japan—in the new international system is a continuing effort by India to recover “the lost space in the global arena”. (Baru 2006: 27) This is a goal that has been pursued by India for decades.

India, in the post-Cold War period, unlike in the Nehru era, was confident that its existence as an independent nation-state was under no threat. However, “covert” threats to its territorial integrity and security persisted after the Cold War, and India has listed “defending the country’s borders as defined by law and enshrined in the Constitution and protecting the lives and property of its citizens against terrorism and insurgencies” at the top of its national security objectives. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress party, the two biggest political parties in the contemporary Indian political arena, appear to share a consensus in this regard. The BJP claims that it “has always attached the highest importance to national security” (BJP 2004) and “dedicate(d)” itself “to preserving the honour and territorial integrity of [our] motherland”. (NDA 1999) In its manifesto for the general elections of 2004, the Congress party stated that “safeguarding India’s territorial integrity and unity against overt or covert external aggression is the supreme responsibility of the Government…keeping the nation armed forces fully prepared, backed up by necessary resources is important.” (Congress 2004: Security Agenda)

In the early 1990s when India felt the pressure of being marginalised in the world arena and bogged down in South Asia, it was clear that to recover India’s relevance and position in world affairs, at least to the level during the Cold War, was obviously another major strategic objective of the then Indian political leaders. In the view of

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0 See India’s annual defence reports since 1997-98.
strategic thinkers, "Regaining the psychological parity with Beijing, reasserting a role in the Asian balance of power and getting out of the subcontinental box" were the concrete targets. (Mohan 2003: 12) The vision of India did not just stop here, however. As it has turned out since late 1990s, the "Indian Renaissance" or "India's rise" is actually a more ambitious agenda. (BJP 2004) In 1998, the then Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee put it simply that "our aim is to be a strong nation." (Vajpayee 1998e) In 1999, the NDA government made a commitment to "build a resurgent, modern India" and to "obtain for India its rightful place in the comity of nations." (NDA 1999) In 2004, the NDA which was seeking a renewed mandate under the leadership of Vajpayee set a goal to make India a developed nation and a great power by 2020. This means to "secure for India a steadily broadening role in international affairs" (BJP 2004) and a status of "economic superpower" (NDA 2004) as well.

Compared with Nehru's aspirations, there is nothing new in the post-Cold War objective of India's national security strategy. Independent India always had the sense of a manifest destiny to be resurgent. Like Nehru, the current Indian leaders base this destiny on India's greatness. They are proud of India's 5,000 years-old civilisation and long for the pre-colonial era when India, along with China and Europe, was one of the three poles of equal power. (Baru 2006: 26) What makes a difference in the present context, is a distinct possibility of achieving this goal. Since Independence, "it was only in the 1990s that India seemed able to grasp that destiny." (Mohan 2003: 53) The new turn in India's economic performance due to the economic reforms since the early 1990s and the Pokhran-II blasts in 1998 have, for the first time, shaped the basis for India's re-emergence. (Baru 2006: 27) Today, even the world recognises India as an emerging power. (BJP 2004)
4.2(2) India’s National Security Interests

Like China, post-Cold War India has broadened the parameters of its definition of national security interests. While China’s consideration in this regard has experienced a shift from emphasising the antecedence of economic interests to equalising the significance of economic interests and military interests, India has taken a converse route by continuing its focus on military interests and then gradually getting economic interests incorporated. Generally speaking, stronger defence, rapid economic growth and multipolarity are the three major national security interests of India in the post-Cold War era, reflecting an even hand of India in dealing with its respective security in military, economic and political dimensions.

Guided by the above-mentioned security objectives of India after the Cold War, a consensus, that “stronger defence” (Congress 1991-1996) is a fundamental requirement of India’s national security, has been built among India’s political forces. Each government sees strengthening India’s defence capability and preparedness as a paramount duty. (NDA 1999; Congress 2004: Security Agenda) Believing its national unity and territorial integrity to be still under threat, India finds it imperative to “maintain a high level of defence vigilance and preparedness to face any challenge to its security.” (Annual Report 2002-2003: 2) It is also apparent that India would find it impossible to attain the status of a major power without credible strategic and military capabilities. As Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the then Indian Prime Minister, argued in September 2000, “our experience has taught us that peace (security) lies in strength.” (Vajpayee 2000) Since the aim of his argument was to justify India’s decision to go nuclear in 1998, the word “strength” should be comprehended here as military and strategic capabilities. This view appears to be shared by other mainstream political parties in India. In light of the changed world military scenario since the end of the Cold War, a stronger defence of India cannot just be interpreted
in the traditional sense as more troops and weapons. It means "a credible nuclear weapons programme," (Congress 2004: Manifesto) "a secure, effective and credible minimum deterrent against the use or the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction against India," the ability to defy the international sanctions by "indigenous research, development and production" of "material, equipment and technologies that have a bearing on India's security," and the ability to catch up with the worldwide RMA including technological innovation and management reform. (Annual Report 1999-2000: 3, 11-12)

While Vajpayee accentuated the significant consequences of the military and strategic capabilities for national security, he also admitted that "the strength of a nation flows primarily from the strength of its economy." (Vajpayee 1998e) Based on this kind of understanding, since the mid-1990s, India has started to see enduring and rapid economic growth as another security interest, as significant as stronger defence. Analysts have argued that to regain its pre-eminent place in the global arena, "India must ensure faster paced economic growth...Unless the Indian economy becomes more competitive and is more globally engaged, unless the economic well-being of all Indians is assured, unless the financial health of the Government improves, India will not be able to sustain itself as a major power." (Baru 2006: 26-27) Moreover, India's improved economic performance will have strategic consequences on its national security, both internal and external. A more equitable and efficient growth process will reduce domestic social and political tensions. The new relationships of economic inter-dependence, due to its better economic engagement with the world, will "have benign consequences for international relations." (Ibid: 27) Rich fiscal resources will empower the Indian government to invest more in strategic capabilities. (Ibid) Therefore, accelerating the growth rate of the economy has become a central task for each Indian government since 1990s. The NDA government (March 1998-May 2004) successfully reached the goal of an annual
growth rate of 7-8%. The UPA government (May 2004-till date) which succeeded it committed to the same growth rate. To quote:

The UPA government supported by the Left Parties will have six basic principles for governance...to ensure that the economy grows at least 7-8% per year in a sustained manner over a decade and more and in a manner that generates employment so that each family is assured of a safe and viable livelihood. (UPA 2004: 2)

Thanks to India’s confidence in its potential to re-emerge as an important pole in the international system, it appeared that “the creation of a multipolar world was in the interest of India”. (Staff Correspondent of Hindu 2005) India’s annual defence report of 1997-98 states, “India’s long-term and immediate security interests lie in encouraging the evolution of the international community towards greater multi-polarity.” (Annual Report 1997-98: 2) The objective of preventing world domination by the sole superpower achieved national consensus after the end of the cold war. During the national elections of 2004, both the Congress party and the BJP, along with their respective partners, expressed strong support for the idea of a multipolar world and made multi-polarity a major theme of their respective external agendas. In its Common Minimum Programme, the Congress-led UPA undertook to “promote multi-polarity in world relations and oppose all attempts at unilateralism.” (UPA 2004: 22) The BJP-led NDA promised to “work for the creation of a cooperative multi-polar world order, with India as one of the poles;” to further raise India’s standing in the world; and to secure for India a meaningful and steadily growing role in international affairs. (BJP 2004; NDA 2004) The multipolar world should be fashioned according to the following principles: it will be composed of six poles including India, China, United States, Europe, Russia, and Japan; rising powers like China and India should secure their emergence “within their legally defined borders;” (Annual Report 1997-98: 2) major powers should interact with each other
out of "a position of mutual benefit, mutual respect and equality;" (Ibid) "the United
States will continue to be the pre-eminent power but will have to accommodate the
aspirations of many other nations;" (Baru 2006: 27) "the legitimate aspirations of
developing countries" should be taken into account. (Manmohan Singh 2004)

4.2(3) India’s National Security Policy

With a broadened definition of its national security interests since the end of the
Cold War, India has adopted a comprehensive multi-dimensional national security
policy, which features a combination of military and technological self-reliance, new
partnership, security dialogue and cooperation, and economic diplomacy.

Although self-reliance has been an important principle of India’s national security
policy since Independence, it was after the Cold War that it became more imperative
than ever before. The "idealist" Nehru paid too much attention to moral strength. The
"realist" Indira Gandhi felt a diminished urgency due to the de facto military and
political alliance between India and the Soviet Union, the then superpower. The
disintegration of the Soviet Union left India with few reliable friends, however. As
analysts put it, when alliance security became history, "the importance of self-help in
managing its national security was coming to the fore with greater clarity." (Mohan
2003: 11) Moreover, the decades-long international restriction on the transfer of such
items as material, equipment and technologies that have a bearing on India’s
strategic and military programmes, the intensifying global pressures on India’s
nuclear option and missile development, and the international backlash and sanctions
after Pokhran II, have reinforced India’s belief in self-reliance. Prime Minister
Vajpayee told the nation in 1999 that a resurgent India must stand on its own feet:
"In a rapidly changing security environment, India cannot depend on others to
defend her. We have to develop our own indigenous capabilities." (Vajpayee 1999)
Since the end of the Cold War, India has taken a series of concrete steps in this regard. First and foremost, India conducted five successful nuclear tests at Pokhran from May 11-13, 1998, achieving nuclear weapon capability. The preparation for Pokhran II was started by the Narasimha Rao government. It was stopped in December 1995 by the United States when the latter noticed that the former was getting ready to test. In the second week after he took office, Prime Minister Vajpayee chose to act. (Perkovich 2000: 353-354, 404) Secondly, India started to accelerate its missile programmes. India has expedited the development of the Agni series of ballistic missiles “with a view to increasing their range and accuracy”. (BJP 1998: Chapter 8) In April 11, 1999, India successfully test-fired Agni-II, India’s intermediate range ballistic missile. Thirdly, India has paid more attention to space technology. The successful launch of INSAT 2-E satellite “has taken Indian into a new orbit of world-class satellite communication.” (Vajpayee 1999) It is also promoting the Chandrayan programme, which aims to send India’s first space mission to the moon before 2008. Fourthly, more emphasis has been put on the indigenous development of defence related technology. “Abundant budgetary support” (BJP 1998: Chapter 8) or “special allocations” (Congress 2004: Security Agenda) were promised by the successive governments. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has launched a number of major programmes for the development of critical technologies and systems. As a result, “several major systems have been indigenously developed and led to production.” The Department of Defence Production has set self-reliance as a major goal in key areas of defence production. (Annual Report 2003-2004: 72)

Nevertheless, “Swadeshi does not mean an inward looking policy.” (Vajpayee 1998c)

As the world has become a global village, interdependence requires India to walk on

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two legs: ensuring military and technological self-reliance, on the one hand; engaging proactively with the world, on the other. As mentioned in Chapter 2, since independence, non-alignment had been India's fundamental approach to world affairs. Formulated as a third way to shun the two-bloc confrontation, non-alignment made India stress multilateralism more than bilateralism, stand with the Third World vis-à-vis the West, and become in essence a revisionist power in the then world system. After the Cold War, the altered world and especially the fact that India was becoming a major player of the post-Cold War "polycentric order" (Subrahmanyam 2005: 551), motivated India to pursue a national security policy beyond non-alignment. Through the 1990s, successive Indian governments gradually deviated from non-alignment by introducing "new partnership" (Manmohan Singh 2004) as a significant approach to safeguarding India's security interests.

In contrast to non-alignment, the "new partnership" has the three following features: First, it attaches equal importance to bilateralism and multilateralism. Since the end of the Cold War, India has shifted its focus from multilateral diplomacy in the NAM to what is seen as "the creation of strategic partnerships with pivotal states in the region and beyond." (Mohan 2003: 47) Meanwhile, India also began to "promote greater regional... relationship". (BJP 1998: Chapter 7) India showed growing interest in making effective the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and expected to establish a South Asian Parliament. (Congress 2004) India also made "purposeful efforts" to strengthen its relations with other regional groups like ASEAN and APEC. (Ibid)

Secondly, this implied a strategy of omnidirectional diplomacy. With no bias, India, like China, worked for strengthening and expanding good relations with countries all over the world, irrespective of whether they were major powers or neighbouring countries, or Western countries or the developing countries. Since the end of the
Cold War, India has improved its relations with all major powers including the United States, the European countries, the Russian Federation, China and Japan. With regard to its immediate and small neighbours, India tried to promote a positive neighbourhood policy by replacing the Indira Doctrine with the Gujral Doctrine. This doctrine essentially sought to transform India's approach towards its smaller neighbours by discarding the principle of reciprocity and being more accommodating and generous to Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. (Gujral 1998: 74-75) Keeping in mind the special relevance of its extended neighbours in Central Asia, West Asia and the Gulf, India made continuing efforts to enhance "cooperation in political, economic and technological spheres" with them. (Congress 2004) Through the "Look East" policy, India's relations with South East Asian countries and countries in the South Pacific region have made considerable progress in recent years. (Annual Report 2000-2001: 12) As for countries in Africa, South America and Latin America, India promised to continue its traditional friendship with them.

Thirdly, the new partnerships can be assessed as genuine non-alignment. As discussed in Chapter 2, India's policy of non-alignment was not in the literal sense of the term as such, especially when Nehru "sought and received American, British and Canadian military equipment on concessionary terms" in the early 1960s. (Surjit Mansingh 1984: 16) Moreover, it had lived with an India-Soviet alliance for decades. The post-Cold War new partnerships laid emphasis on independence, non-alignment and compatibility. Even though Vajpayee went so far to proclaim that India and the United States were "natural allies" (Vajpayee 1998d), and a strategic triangle seemed to emerge among India, Russia and China, neither of them appears to be based on a

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The "Look East" policy was launched by the then Narasimha Rao government in 1992. Initially, this policy was aimed at increasing India's economic and political interaction with the so-called economic "tigers" of South East Asia. Later on, it was extended to encompass the entire Asia-Pacific region and became a vital part of India's foreign policy. According to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2006), the "Look East" policy "was not merely an external economic policy; it was also a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's place in the evolving global economy."
zero-sum pattern of alliance. With its aspiration to be a pole in the new international system India is unlikely to become “a satellite or a junior partner” of any power of the world, including the United States. (Lalit Mansingh 2006: 5) Neither is it possible for an India-Russia-China triangular alliance, when all of them “value their relations with the United States”. (Baruah 2005: 10) In this context, India’s new partnership with the United States is only a part of its multidirectional engagement of the major powers. It does not exclude India developing new partnerships with other individual powers. As K. Subrahmanyam, India’s leading strategic analyst, put it:

In this balance of power system each power tries to develop strategic partnerships and relationships with other individual powers in order to optimize its own economic, political and strategic advantages. In pursuance of this strategy, India has developed partnerships with the US, the European Union and Russia and strategic relationships with China and Japan. (Subrahmanyam 2005: 551-552)

The annual defence report of 2003-2004 also put it clearly that “any military alliance or strategic grouping” was not consistent with India’s interests. (Annual Report 2003-2004: 14)

India sees security dialogue and cooperation as another important approach to security in the post-Cold War era. As challenges of international terrorism, concerns about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and threats to the security of transport, travel and the sea lanes, have brought countries closer to “cooperate for their mutual security”, India has developed and expanded its security dialogue and defence cooperation with major powers and key partners. (Ibid: 184) Since the 1990s, India and US have developed a number of mechanisms for security and strategic dialogue on global, regional and bilateral issues. These institutionalised dialogues include bilateral nuclear talks, Asian Security Dialogue (bilateral), Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism, the Defence Policy Group, and the Joint Technical
India's strategic ties and defence cooperation with Russia are manifest in various mechanisms including a tradition of annual summits, security dialogue at the level of heads of National Security Councils, mechanisms to deal with specific challenges such as terrorism and Afghanistan, and the only ministerial-level mechanism for defence-industrial cooperation, i.e., the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation. (Annual Report 2003-2004: 196)

With other countries, India has various institutionalised security dialogues and defence consultative mechanisms at the Defence Secretary's level, such as the India-UK Defence Consultative Group, the India-France High Committee on Defence Cooperation, the India-Italy Joint Defence Committee, the India-Vietnam Security Dialogue, and the India-South Africa Joint Defence Committee. (Ibid: 185-186) To enhance mutual understanding, India has also sought security cooperation with a large number of countries in the form of military training exchanges, joint and combined exercises and port calls.

With neighbouring countries, India observes confidence building and dialogue along with defence preparedness as effective ways to improve its periphery security environment and commits to solving all disputes and differences peacefully. (Ibid: 2)

In spite of the Kargil War of 1999 and constant tensions with Pakistan, India has continued the bilateral contacts at different levels. Apart from the Lahore Summit (1999) and the Agra Summit (2001), top leaders from the two sides regularly meet on the sidelines of the international fora. Based on the framework of “composite and integrated dialogue” unveiled in September 1998, India and Pakistan initiated the Peace Process in January 2004, as mentioned earlier. The eight issues listed on the agenda are as follows: peace and security including confidence-building measures; Jammu and Kashmir; Siachen; Tulbul navigation project; Sir Creek; terrorism and drug trafficking; economic and commercial cooperation; and promotion of friendly
exchanges. (Reddy 2004: 1) By the end of 2004, the two sides have produced a number of positive results in terms of agreements on nuclear confidence building measures and normalisation of diplomatic relations. With Myanmar, India has regular institutional dialogue on border management-related matters. (Annual Report 2000-2001: 11) With Sri Lanka, "cooperation in operational matters of mutual interest continued through institutionalised consultations such as the Operational Review Talks." (Annual Report 2003-2004: 191)

At the multilateral level, India has an increasing interest in regional security cooperation. It is engaging in cooperative security initiatives such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). (Annual Report 1997-98: 2) As a member of the ARF, "India sees the ARF as an experiment for fashioning a new pluralistic, cooperative security order in tune with the diversity of the Asia-Pacific region, and in consonance with the transition away from a world characterised by poles built around military alliances." (Annual Report 2000-2001: 16)

Despite the cautious pace and domestic "knee-jerk resistance", economic diplomacy has become a complementary element of India's national security policy in the post-Cold War era. (Baru 2006: 70) The aim of India's economic diplomacy is to ensure India's rapid economic growth and safeguard other economic security interests like energy security. There appears to be a national consensus on laying new stress on economics in the making of foreign policy. In its manifesto of 1998, the Congress party stated: in the new situation, "economics, commerce and trade are the new languages of diplomacy. Our foreign policy and foreign service...will be refashioned to suit the contemporary world." (Congress 1998) The BJP also committed "to re-orient Indian diplomacy to our economic and commercial goals and to ensure that our missions abroad play a more active and supportive role in

For details, see MEA Annual Report (2004-2005).
meeting these." (BJP 1998: Chapter 7) In practice, Indian diplomats are actively engaged in “promoting India as a business destination globally, especially to access foreign investment and key technologies”. (Sinha 2003: 274) India’s interest in regional economic cooperation is also growing. India has shown more enthusiasm for such initiatives as the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), the BIMST-EC,(Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation), IOR-ARC (Indian Ocean Rim Agreement for Regional Cooperation), the Ganga-Mekong Group (including India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) and the ASEAN-India dialogue. Bearing in mind the vital impact of energy security on its entire developmental process, India also observes energy diplomacy as a significant and integral part of its economic diplomacy. The Indian annual defence report of 1999-2000 set several principles for energy diplomacy as follows: 1) working for “mutually beneficial arrangements with India’s eastern neighbours as well as Nepal for long term energy exploitation and sharing;” 2) promoting cooperation “with other interested parties in protecting the sea-lanes of communication;” 3) seeking “greater involvement in exploration projects overseas pertaining to oil and gas resources.” (Annual Report 1999-2000: 10)

4.3 India’s China Perspective

In contrast to China’s explicit stance towards India, India’s post-Cold War perspective on China is ambivalent and complex, having more resemblance to the Rajiv Gandhi’s era. While positive and realistic view of China, and a sense that China is not hostile to India but desirous of good relations, have started to gain momentum, the “China threat” is still haunting India’s thinking about China. There are hot debates domestically on how to look at China, therefore, and most Indians seem to drift between two ends: representing China as an ancient sister civilisation or as a perennial threat to India. (Swamy 2001: 143; Ranganathan and Khanna 2004:}
Although such kind of debate has a bearing on India’s decision-making with regard to China policy, this thesis will focus on the official perspective, which reflects the mainstream Indian perceptual position on China in recent years.

In the early days of the post-Cold War era, India saw China as an “inward looking” power which did not pose an immediate threat to India and with which India should maintain “a good working relationship”. (Dixit 2001: 227, 223) According to J. N. Dixit, who served as the Foreign Secretary of India from 1991 to 1994, India tried to maintain its relations with China “on an even keel.” (Ibid: 239) On the one hand, “there is no Indian desire for the revival of any emotional closeness of the type with China which [we] presumed in the late 1940s and early 1950s,” nor are there “possibilities of any grand strategic equation between India and China to counter the West or other important centres of power.” (Ibid: 243, 223) On the other hand, “competition or confrontation are not elements of our policy towards China and they should not be.” (Ibid: 239)

As a country with a feeling of being marginalised in world affairs and suffering from both economic crisis and internal riots, India kept alert to China’s increasing national strength in all aspects. India was aware that “it is a powerful China in transition that [we] are dealing with.” (Ibid: 243) Already being seen as a great political power, “China is firm on nurturing its great power status in economic and military terms.” (Ibid) Against this backdrop, the post-Cold War India continued to have a number of

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Some within the Indian strategic community have argued that China did not have the intention to antagonise India but desired good relations and a strategic partnership with India. The Sino-Pakistan relations, including the security and nuclear arrangements in the past, should be seen more as strategic responses of China to the then Sino-Soviet rivalry and other challenges to its internal security than as India-directed moves. The most important lesson learnt from the past was that the two neighbours must make peace not war. Cooperation between India and China was indeed a historical necessity. For further details about the positive view of China, please refer to Bhattacharjea (2001); Ranganathan and Khanna (2004); Deshingkar (2005). However, some others within the same community argued that China was a country determined to seek hegemony in Asia and to therefore keep India confined to South Asia. China was definitely practising strategic encirclement of India and enabling Pakistan to threaten India. Clearly, China was a long-term strategic threat to India. India should develop adequately military strength and powerful levers to deter China from continuing its “mischief”. For details about the negative view of China, please refer to Chellaney (1999: 141-222, 313-336); Karnad (2002); Kanwal (2000: 1591-1628).
security concerns with regard to China, mainly related to China's military buildup and its military relations with Pakistan. As listed in the India's annual defence report of 1997-1998, these concerns include: 1) India is conscious of the fact that China is a nuclear weapon state and continues to maintain one of the largest standing armies in the world; 2) Its military modernisation programme is rapidly transforming the technological quality and force projection capabilities of its armed forces in all aspects; 3) China's assistance to Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme and the sale of missiles and missile technology to Pakistan also directly affect India's security; 4) India is aware of military collaboration between China and Myanmar, including the development of strategic lines of communication. (*Annual Report 1997-98: 2*)

Despite this negative impression, India also noticed that, in order to fully concentrate on "its programme of modernisation and economic restructuring", China was pursuing a good-neighbourly policy to ensure "a peaceful and stable environment in its neighbourhood and in the Asia Pacific region". (Dixit 2001: 226, 243) Therefore, "While China remains a great and nuclear weapon power, it is perhaps a more inward looking China that [we] are dealing with." (Ibid: 227) China would not be a threat to India at least in the short-term, because it desired a "normal stabilised relations" with India to ensure that "developments in the subcontinent or in Tibet do not affect China's stability and security." (Ibid: 239) On India's part, it was also in the interest of New Delhi to maintain good relations with Beijing. Since early 1990s, "India too has embarked upon a more liberalised economic programme...(and therefore) needs a peaceful environment in which faster economic growth can be achieved." (Dutt in Lalit Mansingh et al 1998: 235) The Indian annual defence report of 1994-1995 put it in the following way: "Both our nations are concentrating on economic development; hence, peace and tranquility on our common borders is important for both." (*Annual Report 1994-95: 3*) Furthermore, along with the

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2 Also see the annual defence reports from 1991 to 1997.
evolving international situation, certain parallel interests with regard to various
world issues emerged between China and India. According to the then Indian Prime
Minister Narasimha Rao, “there are international fora where India and China are
working together more or less on the same themes, on the same lines and, therefore,
the prospect on that score seems to be quite encouraging.” (Rao 1994: 402) These
shared attitudes provided the basis for cooperative and positive relations between
them. (Dixit 2001: 224)

In 1996, the Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma told the visiting Chinese
President Jiang Zemin, “India seeks a relationship of constructive co-operation
with...China.” He said “friendship between India and China was dictated by the
logic of history and the needs of the present.” It would not only serve the
fundamental interests of both sides but also contribute to the peace and stability both
at the regional level and the international level as well. While expressing his
satisfaction with the latest trend in India-China relations, he urged to “give a
renewed impetus to our bilateral trade, economic co-operation and technological
collaboration.” He also suggested India and China to strengthen cooperation in world
affairs and play an active role in the evolution of the international situation. As to the
boundary dispute and “other issues on which their positions differed,” he insisted on
peaceful resolutions through dialogue. (UNI 1996) The India’s annual defence report
of 1997-1998 stated, “India will continue to engage China through bilateral
discussions in a spirit of good neighbourly relations to address all outstanding
differences with a view to enhancing mutual understanding and building a
relationship of constructive cooperation based on a recognition of India’s legitimate
security concerns.” (Annual Report 1997-98: 2) Along with the speech of Indian
President Sharma, this statement reflected the then India’s perception on China.

What happened during the days of Pokhran II, however, seemed to reflect a dramatic
change of India's China perspective. In early May 1998, just a week before the Indian nuclear test, Defence Minister George Fernandes made a series of statements against China. In an interview broadcasted on May 3 by a private television channel, he declared that China was the number-one threat to Indian security, greater even than Pakistan. He accused China of implementing a defence strategy which intended to encircle India. To support his argument, he listed several "facts" as follows: "China has provided Pakistan with both missile as well as nuclear know-how;" "China has its nuclear weapons stockpiled in Tibet right along our borders;" China had expanded military airfields in Tibet; "on the eastern frontier, the Chinese have trained and equipped the Myanmarese Army;" China had also been building a naval base in Myanmar's Coco Islands near the Andamans. He concluded that China must be perceived as a bigger threat than Pakistan by "any person who is concerned with India's security." In the following days, he indicated the possibility of an antagonistic stance toward China by saying that "our past experience has shown that talks are not enough." His statement, that "we need to strengthen our borders with China...and there will be no cut in the strength of our armed forces in those areas," completely moved away from the spirit of 1993 and 1996 agreements with China. (Swami 1998)

The sign of a perception change appeared to be reinforced by the above-mentioned letter from Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee to the U.S. President Bill Clinton. The letter was leaked to The New York Times, which had it published on May 13, 1998. To quote again:

I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, especially 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.

The following details are from Swami (1998).
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 that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state. At the hands of this bitter neighbour we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years. (Vajpayee 1998a: 4)

Fernandes’ statements and Vajpayee’s letter caused a hot debate both inside and outside India. Different people gave different interpretations. How to read them became a key to define whether there was a perception change or not on the Indian side. Although some still disagree, subsequent developments indicate that, against the backdrop of Pokhran II, they are meant for justifying the nuclear tests rather than amounting to a declaration of perspective change.

Evidence suggested that Fernandes spoke more for himself than for the BJP-led government. Given his sympathies for the movement for Tibetan independence and his long anti-China record, “some sources said that Fernandes was acting to further his own anti-China agenda.” (Swami 1998) Although maintaining a “stoic silence” on his remarks, Prime Minister Vajpayee did rebut Fernandes’ earlier claims that China had built helipads on Indian soil. According to officials in the Prime Minister’s Office, that initial refutation of Vajpayee “made clear that the Minister was not speaking for the Government.” (Ibid) By criticising Fernandes’ statements as “irresponsible and unfortunate”, the opposition parties in India also doubted that it was an official stance and demanded that the BJP-led government “put an end to the confusion the Defence Minister is creating.” (Ibid) It also indicated the lack of national consensus on the view that Fernandes had expressed.

It is widely believed that the BJP-led government deliberately kept silence, however, because Fernandes’ arguments would serve to justify the up-coming nuclear tests.
Although it is not clear if Fernandes was informed about the nuclear decision, \(^{0}\) "it is evident that his aggressive stand helped in shaping a climate in which the decision could be legitimised." (Ibid) As mentioned earlier, after the Cold War, India faced a tightening international non-proliferation regime. The successive Indian governments knew quite clearly what the cost was if India went nuclear. Narasimha Rao eventually withdrew his nuclear decision in 1995 mainly because he feared that the resurgent Indian economy could not afford the inevitable international sanctions. (Mohan 2003: 6-7) But it might be different if India has a significant and immediate nuclear threat from China. Seen in this context, the silence of the BJP-led government appeared to be "part of a well-thought-out strategy of using Fernandes as a signal flare." (Swami 1998)

Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee’s letter further displayed the tactical gamble he was playing. As discussed earlier, the major impetus of India’s nuclear tests was its dream of becoming a pole in the new world system. The preparations for the nuclear tests were almost through during the leadership of Narasimha Rao, under whom the India-China relations achieved major improvements. If Vajpayee’s argument had reason and logic, Narasimha Rao should have also taken some position regarding a "China threat". There could be two explanations of the contradiction here. One is related to the possibility that Narasimha Rao covertly observed China as an enemy but overtly disguised himself as a friend of China. The other more plausible interpretation is that he did not see any link between India’s nuclear weapon programme and the China threat. He regarded both the nuclear programme and good relations with China as effective approaches to India’s national security in the post-Cold War era. Therefore, the ostensible links built by Vajpayee between his nuclear decision and the "China threat" do not have a substantial base. As a Chinese

\(^{0}\) Some accounts claimed that he was informed of the decision just 10 minutes before the Prime Minister made the announcement. See Swami (1998); Mohan (2003: 292-293).
analyst said on May 18, 1998, India was just trying to “lessen the blow of sanctions” by demonising China. (Cited in Raman 1999) What happened in the following months and years have proved that Vajpayee’s letter and Fernandes’ arguments were only temporary expedients rather than a result of perception change.

Indirectly responding to the confusion caused by Fernandes’ anti-China statements and his letter to Clinton, Prime Minister Vajpayee elaborated his stance towards China during his testimony to Rajya Sabha, the upper House of the Indian Parliament, on the nuclear tests on May 29, 1998. It was the first time since Pokhran II that he made an effort to clarify his China perspective. In his speech, he avoided mentioning the China factor in India’s nuclear tests. He just repeated India’s traditional concerns regarding territorial security and China’s defence cooperation with Pakistan. He urged China to early address these concerns of India. To quote him:

But we have some concerns. We would like the Chinese side to appreciate that our concerns need to be addressed in a meaningful manner with a view to finding early resolution. There are issues relating to India’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and security that have been reflected at various levels, including highest levels...On the boundary question, we recognise that a resolution requires time and patience. But progress can, and should, be made...Given Pakistan’s approach to India, assistance in the defence field to Pakistan affects India’s security directly and adversely. The Chinese side should pay attention to the depth of feeling on the Indian side. (Vajpayee 1998b)

Though Vajpayee’s tone was not soft, he admitted the improvement of India-China relations achieved in recent years, especially the significant growth of bilateral trade and economic cooperation. He also said, in the same speech, “we do not seek a confrontation with China...We remain committed to the process of dialogue to resolve outstanding differences and to the development of friendly, cooperative,
good neighbourly and mutually beneficial relationship with China.” (Ibid)

Two months later, Vajpayee further softened his words on China. He gave a more definite clarification of his China perspective by saying that he did not regard China as an enemy of India. In a statement in the Lok Sabha, the lower House of the Indian Parliament, on August 4, 1998, Vajpayee said India was keen on improving its relations with China and asserted that his government had never dubbed China as an enemy or a threat. (Raman 1999) In the following months, this stance was reinforced by other official statements at different level. By the end of 1998, in his first press conference after taking office, Jaswant Singh stated that India was committed to improving its ties with China so that all outstanding issues were resolved in accordance with the five principles of peaceful co-existence. (Ibid) On February 22, 1999, President K. R. Narayanan told the Indian Parliament that India “seeks to strengthen and deepen its historic and friendly relations with China” and “is looking forward to continuing the dialogue with that country.” (Ibid) The annual defence report of 1998-99 released on April 16, 1999, in its section on Sino-Indian relations, observed:

China is India’s largest neighbour. India’s relations with China have improved in recent years. India has expressed its interest time and again in resolving the boundary dispute with China peacefully and through bilateral negotiations as quickly as possible. China’s assistance to Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme and the transfer of missiles and missile technology to Pakistan affect the security situation in South Asia. India does not regard China as an adversary but as a great neighbour with which it would like to develop mutually beneficial and friendly relations. (Annual Report 1998-99: 2)

In his speech at Peking University during his visit to China in June 2003, Prime Minister Vajpayee stressed that India and China were partners rather than enemies.®

® The following details are from “Speech by Prime Minister of India Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Peking
He said, "No objective analysis can deny the combined strength and complementarity of an India-China partnership." As the two most populous countries and the two fastest growing economies in the world, India and China had similar advantages and problems in terms of development. Their strengths in information technology complemented each other. They had overlapping positions on globalisation and multilateralism. The two countries had greatly expanded their bilateral trade and economic cooperation and "have made good progress" in "increasing mutual trust and understanding". Their dialogue "already transcends bilateral relations to encompass international issues such as terrorism, security, environment and sustainable development." Calling for a closer co-operation between the two countries, he said, "We should focus on the simple truth that there is no objective reason for discord between us, and neither of us is a threat to the other. These simple, but profound principles should form the bedrock of the future India-China partnership." (Vajpayee 2003: 583-586)

4.4 India's Security Perception in Transformation

Much like the development with regard to China since the end of the Cold War, India's security perception has also experienced a great change in the past decade. Though commencing somewhat later, advancing in a more gradual manner and bearing unique features, India's perception change has happened in areas similar to that of China's, viz., the definition of threat has been broadened, the security structure has been reorganised and the security approaches have been renewed.

During the Cold War, the successive Indian leaders observed the threats facing India within a narrow prism of purely military and political contexts. Though Nehru did not see any prospect of direct military invasion by the superpowers, he was still
convinced that the two-bloc confrontation as well as colonialism and imperialism posed a strategic threat to the newly independent India. This kind of threat carried on both political and military elements. While the remnant political influence of the colonial forces and the political pressure of the superpowers challenged India's independence and sovereignty in a “soft” way, the military alliances like the SEATO and CENTO pacts constituted an indirect “hard” threat to India due to the possibility of its responsibility-related interference in the Indo-Pak disputes. With Pakistan being the major military threat to India since the Partition, after 1962, China was added to India’s top lists of direct threats. During Indira Gandhi’s era, India was haunted by a sense of being encircled when it found new threats emerged while old ones increased. It believed that the two-front threat was enhanced by the Sino-Pak collaboration since mid-1960s; the Sino-US alliance in the 1970s and 1980s had a strategic bearing on the India-China disputes; the smaller regional states tried to counterbalance India by developing military cooperation with the major powers. All these threats, no matter old or new, were also affiliated to military and political categories. Trapped in the subcontinent, Rajiv Gandhi still focused on the military and political consequences of the unrest in its neighbourhood, although he noticed the decreasing strategic pressures on India by China in particular and by the Cold War structure in general.

As discussed above, in the early years of the post-Cold War era, India’s threat perception was still confined to the political and military dimensions. As the traditional threats implicitly persisted, what concerned India most after the Cold War was the danger of being marginalised on the world stage. This was a political threat in essence. It was in the mid-1990s that India started to introduce other new-type threats into its security consideration. Recovering from the economic crisis, India realised the implications of economic strength for its national security. In the post-Cold War era, an economically weak country does not have a say in world
affairs. At the same time, India also started to pay attention to other non-traditional problems like drug-trafficking, terrorism and organised crime. In recent years, the threats posed by them to India's national security has become more salient, especially when they were combined with those traditional threats facing India.

With a broader definition of threat, the security structure perceived by India has changed considerably. During the Cold War, India, like China and many other countries in the world, proceeded on the assumption that national security had only military and political dimensions. While Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi seemed to view military security and political security with equal importance, Indira Gandhi obviously believed that military security should come ahead of political security. This came as a result of the fact that, during most of her tenures, Indira Gandhi thought India was under intensified two-front military threats from both China and Pakistan. In the early 1990s, India laid more stress on political threat than military threat, because the latter turned into "covert" from "overt" while the political marginalisation became the primary threat to India. Since the mid-1990s when India started to define "threat" in a broader sense, new components have been brought into India's security structure. Like China, nowadays, India views national security as a comprehensive issue which includes military, political, economic and other non-traditional elements. What differentiated India from China was the understanding of the sequence of these security categories. As mentioned in Chapter 3, after according priority to economic security in the first decade of the post-Cold War era, China has upgraded military security to the same level as economic security in recent years. In contrast to China, India has never downgraded the significance of military and political security, but since the mid-1990s it has gradually realised that economic security is just as important as military and political security in the contemporary world.
As the definition of threat broadened and the security structure was reorganised, the approaches adopted by India to deal with its national security issues have also been expanded since the end of the Cold War. As discussed in Chapter 2, during the most part of the Cold War, India, just like Mao's China, was heavily dependent on alliance security and self-help security to safeguard its national security. After the Cold War, however, India started to adopt comprehensive approaches to security. By emphasising military and technological self-reliance, India still regards self-help security as a significant approach to security for India in the post-Cold War era. This has been especially manifested in India's decision to go nuclear in defiance of the strong international opposition. New partnership, which has been gradually replacing non-alignment as another important security approach of India, should be attributed to common security, because it aims at cooperation and dialogue with countries all over the world, including major powers and neighbouring countries, Western countries and the Third World. India's security dialogue and cooperation with major powers, neighbouring countries and regional organisations is a typical instance of cooperative security, which is characterised by various confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) including joint training exercises, demilitarisation of common borders, exchange programmes of military personnel and weapon acquisition programmes. Representing a dimension beyond the strictly military, economic diplomacy is a comprehensive security approach adopted by India as a new way to deal with its security problems since the end of the Cold War. As India's quasi-military alliance with the Soviet Union became history due to the latter's disintegration and these new approaches started to gain momentum, alliance security has basically been deleted from the list of India's approaches to security.

As its security perception has transformed in general, India's China perspective has changed in particular since the end of the Cold War. Except the brief India-China "honeymoon" when Nehru regarded China as a friend, the lengthy Cold War
witnessed the fact that China was dubbed as a major enemy of India. Haunted by the humiliation of its defeat in the 1962 war with China, India thought that China's proximity to Pakistan, its later alliance with the United States, and its pursuit of nuclear weapons and missile capacities, were all India-directed. India even believed that there was a Chinese "conspiracy" to seek China's dominance in Asia by reducing India's position to a state of subordination. It was Rajiv Gandhi who started to reconsider India's China policy during his tenure from 1984 to 1989. Against the backdrop of Sino-Soviet rapprochement and China's dedication to economic reform, Rajiv Gandhi narrowed down the prediction of an India-China confrontation but saw a prospect of both cooperation and competition between them. In the early 1990s, India viewed China as an "inward looking" power which did not pose an immediate threat to India. A good working relationship with China was thought to serve the interests of the similarly "inward looking" India at that time. As it started to take a more comprehensive security perception in the mid-1990s, India saw more opportunities than challenges in its relations with China. It expected a constructive cooperation with China, both at the bilateral level and on the multilateral fora. Although some Indian top leaders such as the then Defence Minister and the Prime Minister warned against the "China threat" in 1998, it was not a manifestation of a return of India to its negative China perspective in the Cold War period but a tactical attempt to justify India's nuclear tests. As history has witnessed, shortly after the Pokhran II, the Vajpayee government reiterated India's commitment to the development of friendly, cooperative, good neighbourly and mutually beneficial relationship with China. Entering the 21st century, India regards China as a partner rather than an adversary. Although there are still some old security concerns regarding China, like China's military buildup and its military relations with Pakistan, India is adopting approaches beyond military confrontation towards solving these outstanding differences with China.