CHAPTER III
THE INDIAN NUCLEAR POLICY:
IT'S EVOLUTION AND GROWTH

GENERAL BACKGROUND

India’s nuclear programme dates back to 1948, when Homi J. Bhabha successfully convinced the Indian Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, to set up the Indian Atomic Energy Commission. Nehru, during his period, failed to give requisite importance to India’s defence because he concentrated too much on socio-economic development. He was an advocate of nuclear disarmament, who condemned nuclear weapons both in India as well as in international forums. Basically Indian leaders, right from India’s independence, were not clear in their opinion about nuclear weapons. Even Nehru’s ideas and his stand about the Indian nuclear programme was hard to understand. But one thing was certain that, India’s nuclear programme with dual objectives had begun. During Nehru’s era, there was no serious debate or spelled out security need of the nuclear weapon capability. It was only after the 1962 Chinese conflict, decision was taken to modernize Indian defence forces.¹

After Nehru’s death, there was no strong leadership to lead India. After the demise of Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri became the Prime Minister of India, who was virtually unknown in the international politics. Soon after he became the Prime Minister, he had to face two challenges. First, the Chinese exploded their first nuclear device, which set

in motion a nuclear debate in India. In reaction to this Chinese explosion, New Delhi started a wide range of programmes without a clear policy.

Secondly, the second Indo-Pak war of 1965, exposed India’s security weakness. India’s two hostile neighbours, China and Pakistan, identified India as their common enemy. This combined threat from its neighbours made India to analyse its defence policy.

After Lal Bahadur Shashtri, Mrs.Gandhi assumed office, as the third Prime Minister of India. India tested nuclear devices for the first time during Mrs.Gandhi’s period. But after this nuclear test, there was no follow-up development in India’s nuclear programme because of various problems that India faced like fragile economy, poverty, unemployment etc. But after a gap of 24 years, the BJP government under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee, took a bold decision of making India, a nuclear weapon state, by testing the nuclear devices at the same venue.

To get a more detailed knowledge of the evolution and development of Indian nuclear policy since independence, it is analysed under different phases.

NEHRU’S PERIOD (1947 - 1964)

India’s nuclear policy which began to take shape from 1945 onwards, has undergone many changes. These changes were influenced greatly by Mahatma Gandhi’s policy of Ahimsa and India’s stand on nuclear disarmament. India’s opinion was that, the nuclear energy should be used for peaceful and economic development, instead of using it as weapons of mass destruction. Nehru viewed atom bomb as a symbol of evil, as he was very much inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy of non-violence. He gave a call for all the nations which possessed nuclear weapons to come forward to stop the
production and proliferation of nuclear weapons. "He told a mamoth public meeting in Bombay, in 1946, that it was a very grave responsibility for any country to have used atom bombs and the greatest responsibility rests with the United States." He made such a statement because of the American belief that nuclear weapons prevented war.

In 1947, after attaining independence from the British rule, India emerged as a free nation. The Indian leaders under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, took an important decision to follow a policy of non-alignment, to deal with the bipolar world. During the cold war, there was arms race between USA and USSR, but Nehru believed that a nuclear weapon free world would enhance not only India’s security but also the security of all nations. The period in the late 1940s, India was actively engaged in the arms control and disarmament debates. This phase was probably the most decisive in the evolution of India’s nuclear policy. It was decisive because the country was not allowed to improve its nuclear weapon programme, at a time when the major powers were overwhelmed by the concept of "atom for peace".

Nehru said in the Constituent Assembly on April 4, 1948, that atomic energy should be developed for peaceful purposes and not for fighting wars. Thus passion for peace made Nehru to condemn the nuclear programme intended for weapon purposes. This showed anti-nuclear weapon perception which was reflected in the country’s foreign policy. But at the same year, an Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was created by the

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G.G. Mirchandani, *India’s Nuclear Dilemma*. Popular Book Services, New Delhi, 1968, p.3


Indian Government and Dr.Homi.J.Bhabha was appointed by Nehru to take charge of the Commission. Both Nehru and Bhabha believed that the British rule in India for such a long period has affected its industrial and economic development and that, only if science and technology are developed there would be an improvement in the Indian economy. And during that time it was felt that proper utilization of atomic energy would boost the Indian economy.

The ‘atom for peace programme’ which emerged in the 1950s, gave India a chance to harvest the benefits of nuclear energy. The nuclear issue became a part of foreign policy which clearly showed signs of development. Nehru supported and took control of the application of nuclear energy which he believed, would definitely raise the living standards of the Indian people. Nehru supported and welcomed the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes but at the same time he vehemently opposed using it for making weapons. So he raised his voice for nuclear disarmament and opposed the development of all types of nuclear weapons. Further, disarmament would help India to avoid spending huge sum of money on enlarging its arsenal and instead it would help her to make maximum utilization for developmental purposes.

He therefore advocated a mission for India together with other countries to awaken the conscience of the world to the evil effects of atomic explosion. Thus Nehru, advocated disarmament and he opposed Research and Development (R&D) of nuclear weapons both at international and national levels.

In the 1950s, nuclear weapons were tested above ground and during that time India gave a call to the international community, to put an end to nuclear weapon testing which would ultimately end the fast growing nuclear arms race. Addressing the Lok Sabha on
April 2, 1954, Pt.Jawaharlal Nehru stated that the nuclear, chemical and biological energy should not be used to produce weapons of mass destruction and he called for negotiations for the prohibition of nuclear weapons and to make an agreement to stop the testing of nuclear weapons.

During that period, India had to take some important decisions due to the changes taking place internationally. The Soviet Union and USA despite their differences, co-operated with each other to stop the spread of nuclear weapon technology to other countries. In 1957, both these countries worked together to create the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As the debate over proposed international agency proceeded in the United Nations, India’s representative to the United Nations, Mr.V.K.Krishna Menon stated that India should be given the right to take part in the setting up of rules for the International Atomic Energy Agency. After the institution of the IAEA, India agreed with its provisions and decided to sign the treaty. Bhabha was quiet confident that the proposed safeguard system could not prevent nations from developing nuclear weapons. Thus, India had the opportunity to get international assistance to develop its weapon and application for nuclear power without being accused of its misuse. "This awareness was evident in Bhabha’s speech on safeguards which was held on September 27, 1956: "There are many states, technically advanced which may undertake with agency aid, fulfilling all the present, safeguards, but in addition run their own parallel programmes independent of the Agency, in which they could use the experience and know-how obtained in agency-aided projects, without being subject in any way to the system of safeguards."

J.P.Jain, *Nuclear India, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1974, pp.4-12.*
In the late 1950s, and the beginning of 1960s, the nuclear issues dominated much of India's foreign policy and there was no direct relationship between the Indian security concerns and its nuclear policy. The main reason for this being so is that, during that time neither China nor Pakistan had gone nuclear and the chances for them to go nuclear during that time remained uncertain. Thus, in the period between 1940s, to early 1960s, the nuclear weapons option was not judged on specific security consideration. During that time at various international forums, Nehru advocated prohibition of use of nuclear weapons and exploitation of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The essence of Nehru’s nuclear policy was the following:

a. India should promote global disarmament and should continue playing an active role in the international disarmament negotiations.

b. India should concentrate on economic developments and seek accommodation with her neighbours on the principles of co-existence.

c. Nuclear research should be conducted in all its facets, and should be kept secret.

d. Vertical and horizontal proliferation should be stopped.

Nehru was very highly regarded within India because he hated war and was peace loving in nature. But India was rocked and Nehru’s ideas were shaken after the border war with China, in 1962. The 1962 defeat began to weaken Nehru’s political image and influence. After this war, Nehru realised that his policy was too far from reality. After the
Sino-Indian war of 1962, India significantly increased its military spending, and the defence budget for the year 1963-64 was doubled.

Meanwhile, China became very close to Pakistan after 1962 and a border agreement was signed between the two. Pakistan was not satisfied with the level of military assistance it received from United States and it was also irked by the US offer of military aid to India in the late 1962. All these things brought Pakistan very closer to China.

In India too, many changes took place after the war. India’s defeat at the hands of China, strengthened the case of those opposing Nehru’s policy. It was realised that moral diplomacy had not prevented India experiencing the defeat. After the war, India’s international prestige was also affected and all these things made India to revise its already existing security policy, including consideration of the atomic bomb option.

After the war India received military, economic and technological aid from all over the world and especially from the western capitalist countries. The Indian Airforce acquired Mig-21 Aircraft from the USSR. In November, 1963, India launched its first two stage rocket from Thumba, in Thiruvananthapuram, which bore remarkable similarities to an earlier American rocket.6

In December, 1963, India and US signed an agreement on the Tarapur atomic power plant. The intensity of Indo-US friendship began to grow, as a result of Kennedy’s efforts to reestablish the relationship with India.

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LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI'S PERIOD (1964 - 1966)

Shastri began his tenure, with the view that India does not need any nuclear weapon and he also shared Nehru’s view’s of non-alignment. Shastri very much believed that nuclear energy was directly linked with the socio-economic development and he was much committed to the non-military use of nuclear energy.

But on October, 1964, after China tested its nuclear device in Lop Nor, the Indian political leaders and strategic analysts set-off a debate in India to make an Indian Bomb. Until the Chinese nuclear tests, India did not have the idea of developing nuclear weapons but soon after the tests, the Indian policy makers seriously thought of developing nuclear weapons. Dr. Bhabha said that India also can develop nuclear weapons and that, a nuclear weapon would cost only 18 lakhs. But Krishna Menon, who opposed this idea was an anti-nuclear campaigner. But many Indian bureaucrats, took the Chinese explosion very seriously and they thought that India should take a quick action to consolidate its defence. K. Subramanyam, who was Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, asked the Defence Secretary to urge the government to set up a committee under Dr. Bhabha to analyse how far the Chinese explosion would affect the Indian security.

All these events modified Shastri’s ideas and thinking, as he was given pressure from within his party and the administrators as well. Thus, Nehru’s policy, with regard to nuclear issues slowly changed during Shastri’s period and he adopted a new policy of nuclear flexibility. In a foreign policy statement to the Lok Sabha on November 27, 1964, the Prime Minister, Shastri remarked that, as changes take place in other countries, India should also change her policy accordingly.
While the Indian nuclear policy was undergoing changes, it caught the attention of Pakistan, which was very much worried because it found it very difficult to catch up with the pace of India’s development in nuclear industry. The desire to compete with India’s nuclear development was reflected in the way Pakistan began to expand its nuclear industry. Bhutto made a famous remark in 1965, when he said that “if India builds the bomb we will eat grass to get one of our own.” This statement shows that Pakistan could not tolerate the growth of India.

In the mid 1965, due to the increase in the number of China’s nuclear tests and China’s threat of military intervention on behalf of Pakistan, all made the Shastri government to make a shift in its ideas. It indicated its preference for an open and specific super power guarantee instead of an UN sponsored umbrella. Meanwhile, in India the opposition parties began criticising the ruling Shastri’s government. In the Parliament in September, 1965, members of many political parties asked the Shastri government to take efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

Eventhough, the government was severely criticised for not making any attempts to develop nuclear weapons, the Shastri government did not feel the requirement for a change in its policy. On the other hand, Shastri said that he could not bind the future governments not to change the policy. Although, Shastri did not like spending for nuclear weapons, he stated in the Upper House in November, 1965, that if China develops nuclear delivery systems then India too will act accordingly.

INDIRA GANDHI'S PERIOD (1967 - 1977)

After Lal Bahadur Shastri, Jawaharlal Nehru’s daughter Mrs. Indira Gandhi, became the Prime Minister of India. Initially, she too maintained the same policy that India should not develop nuclear weapons, despite the growth in Chinese nuclear capability. During Indira Gandhi’s period India’s nuclear policy was broadly determined and dictated by regional geo-politics, defence and development. She also declared that, the country’s security will always be given first place in framing government policies.

In 1965, India along with other nations had moved "Resolution 2028", in the UN General Assembly, which was done so in the intention to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. India’s intention was that the nuclear weapon states should stop further proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the non-nuclear weapon states should not start acquiring them. But India’s attempts were all in vain and the world did not pay any attention to India, and nuclear proliferation continued as it was before. The Chinese nuclear test really bothered India and it created restlessness among this politicians. The third nuclear test by China on May 9, 1966, led to debates and discussions in India. The members of the Indian Parliament started criticising the government and raised questions regarding the viability of Indian nuclear policy. While answering these questions, Mrs. Gandhi replied that the Indian nuclear policy is a positive one and it is constantly taking efforts to build up its atomic power and increase its know-how and other competence. She also said that mere production of one or two bombs will not in any way help India.

_B.M. Jain, Nuclear Politics in South Asia - In Search of an Alternative Paradigm, Rawatt Publications, Jaipur, 1994, p.58._
During this time, debates were going on in many parts of the country regarding India’s nuclear policy. Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the newly appointed Chairmen of AEC, while speaking on the bomb issue argued that, if India was looking for security, she needed, not just one atom bomb, but a total defence system, which would include atomic warheads, long range missiles for delivery and early warning systems. If India decided to become a nuclear power, implementation of the decision would require the total commitment of national resources.

Tension grew in India regarding the nuclear issue and the Indira Gandhi government was under pressure to take some important decisions. As a result of this immense pressure, the Indira Gandhi administration soon discarded the nuclear assurances through UN because of two reasons. The functioning of the UN and the veto power of the permanent members were cited as the reasons which made the guarantee ineffective. Meanwhile, the Indian policy makers got hope for the elimination of nuclear weapons through the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In the initial stages, India supported the Treaty wholeheartedly. But later on USA, Russia and U.K. made provisions in the treaty to suit their own wish. The United States rejected the demands raised by its North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) partners, especially Germany, for a multilateral nuclear force. Russia wanted to prevent Germany and Japan from acquiring nuclear weapons. They converted the NPT, into one licensing nuclear proliferation to the five nuclear weapon powers with a total ban on acquisition of nuclear weapons by all other nations. India strongly opposed this treaty on the grounds that it divided the countries into five privileged ones and the rest. No other nation in the world opposed this treaty, so daringly as India did. Even the nations which opposed the treaty in the beginning, finally fell to the pressure of United States.
When the final draft of the Treaty was ready, India refused to sign it, due to:

"1. Imbalance of obligations between nuclear and non-nuclear powers.
2. Inadequate security guaranteed the discrimination in the development of nuclear explosion.
3. Not allowing peaceful explosions to non-nuclear states."

When the Lok Sabha debated the NPT on April 5, 1968, Mrs. Indira Gandhi promised the House that India will be entirely guided by its national security. Mrs. Indira Gandhi decided to stay away from the NPT, mainly because she was interested in the development of the peaceful application of the nuclear energy. So she decided to follow the path of her predecessors, Nehru and Shastri in adopting their nuclear policy.

Once again, slogans were raised on the Indian soil in support of the bomb in the year 1970, as China made its entry into the space club. But the Indira Gandhi's government stood firm in its policy of using all the nuclear efforts for peaceful purposes. The events which took place in the following years, however, made the Indian government rethink its policy. The US. governments' support to Pakistan during the war of liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 and its increased Naval presence in the Indian Ocean indicated that United States did not accept India's dominance in the region. This was the same case with China. Until China demonstrated its nuclear capability, the United States did not recognize its interests. This convinced many in India that only an achievement of nuclear capability will put an end to the US. efforts to dominate India.

So, India which till then had no intention of achieving nuclear capability, began to think over of testing a nuclear device. This was evident, from what Mrs. Indira Gandhi spoke in the Parliament on August 2, 1972. She said that the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) reviewed the progress in the technology of underground nuclear explosions from all possible angle and also that it was studying on the impact of the tests on environmental and ecological conditions.

After all these studies were over, Indira Gandhi toured to several countries including USA and after her return, the decision to go ahead with the underground nuclear test was taken.

**POKHRAI-I NUCLEAR TEST**

After Mrs. Indira Gandhi won the 1971 general elections, she adopted the plan of Vikram Sarabhai. The main goal of this programme was to acquire India a nuclear status. India had at that stage, the Canada-India reactor and the plutonium reprocessing plant at Trombay, in operation. A stockpile of weapon grade plutonium was being built up. The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) had designed the Purnima reactor and operation of this reactor helped the scientists to get all the necessary information regarding a nuclear explosive device. At that stage, both the US and USSR were conducting large number of experiments in peaceful nuclear explosions, which were intended to be applied to civil engineering purposes. While the superpowers were conducting peaceful nuclear explosions, the Indian scientists presented papers in international conferences on applications of peaceful explosions and the scientists all over the world accepted that the technology for peaceful explosions and weapons was the same. Since there was an

agreement that the Canada - India reactor would not be used for purposes other than peaceful, India decided to conduct a peaceful explosion as did the two superpowers. One more thing is, peaceful nuclear explosions find a place in the NPT. 

Finally, Mrs. Indira Gandhi's decision to explode a nuclear device received a warm welcome from the public because they were annoyed that the nuclear weapon powers misused NPT. The scientists were getting ready to conduct the nuclear explosion. Eventhough, the material problems were solved, the test site was not yet finalised. At last, the army testing range in the Thar desert was chosen as the location to conduct the test as it was a closed area with very little population and very little or no underground water. A site without water was very important because it had been decided that the explosion would be an underground experiment.

After the test site was decided, work progressed well and some important decisions were taken. Mrs. Indira Gandhi decided to keep all the information regarding the test very secret and she shared it with only a selected few. Those who were present at the first round of meetings were: P.N. Haksar, the former Principal Secretary to the P.M.; Mr. P.N. Dhar, incumbent Principal Secretary; Dr. Nag Chaudhary, Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister; Mr. H.N. Setha, the then Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and Dr. Raja Ramanna. The various effects of the nuclear explosion were discussed in these meetings.

On 18th May, 1974, the AEC conducted a secret nuclear explosion at Pokhran, in Rajasthan desert, which had a 15-kiloton yield. The Indian Government described the explosion as "peaceful", conducted as a part of India's economic development programme.

Jaswant Singh, Defending India, Macmillan India Ltd., New Delhi, 1998. pp.315-316
Moments after the explosion of the nuclear device the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, received a message from the Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister that "Lord Buddha has smiled". This was the code for the message that the underground nuclear test had been carried out successfully.

After the explosions, Defence Minister, Jagjivan Ram, said that the test had no military implications and it was just an attempt to harness the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The two scientists closely associated with the nuclear test, Mr. R. Chidanandaram and Mr. Raja Ramanna also repeated the same statement given by the Defence Minister. They also said that the objective of the experiment was to develop new technology for exploring minerals and other underground resources. The scientists were also satisfied that they have achieved a significant breakthrough in the nuclear programme. This nuclear test did not violate any international agreements. This test demonstrated India’s capability to make nuclear weapons, if she is compelled.

IMPACT OF POKHRAN-I NUCLEAR TEST

Canadian Response

Soon after the test, India gave its statements, justifying the test, but many countries refused to accept the statement. Canada was one such country which condemned India for conducting the nuclear test because the plutonium used in the nuclear device was produced by the Canadian aided nuclear reactor CIRUS. Canada, whose nuclear assistance had ultimately contributed to the nuclear test, applied tough supply measures restrictions. Four days after the test, Canada informed the Indian government of its decision to suspend nuclear co-operation until two countries reached a new settlement. This immediate consequence of the Canadian restriction was the suspension of civil works on
the construction of the Rajasthan Atomic power plant. Subsequently, the Canadian government cutoff all nuclear co-operation with India.

US. Response

The US reaction was very severe. In 1976, Congress introduced the Symington Amendment to the foreign aid bill, thereby cutting off certain forms of economic and military assistance to the countries that received enrichment of reprocessing equipment materials or technology without full scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. Further, restrictions were also imposed under the Carter administration, which had non-proliferation as a key element in its foreign policy. These restrictions imposed by the US Congress, seriously affected the Indian nuclear weapons programme. As a consequence of these restrictions, the Indian nuclear programme became highly indigenous and self-reliant.

STRATEGIC CONSEQUENCES

The nuclear test conducted by India on May 18, 1974, yielded some benefits according to the Indian expectations. After this test, India was found challenging China in the South Asian region and also it created anxiety to USA. Moreover, to some extent, this nuclear test helped India to let the world know that, it had nuclear capability. At that time, the Indian government was approached by many developing countries for nuclear co-operation.

Eventhough, India successfully tested the nuclear device, she was not fully recognized as a nuclear weapon state by the nuclear weapon powers. Within India also the Pokhran success did not bring the expected result to the ruling Congress party. The
political and economic crisis after the test, led to the imposition of emergency. This in turn led to the first Congress defeat in 1977. Further, this test also created fear in the neighbouring countries of India, of the Indian ambition. Pakistan took efforts to develop its own nuclear programme. This even created fear of a nuclear weapons competition in the Indian sub-continent.

THE MORARJI DESAI AND CHARAN SINGH PERIOD (1977 - 1979)

In March 1977, the Janata party came to power under the leadership of Morarji Desai. Mr. Desai was known to be a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, and his policy of non-violence. Desai also reiterated the policy of peaceful application of atomic energy. His policy had the following features.

a. India will not conduct any more nuclear explosion.

b. India will not acquire nuclear weapons.

c. Peaceful Nuclear Explosions (PNE) were also wrong.

d. India will never sign the NPT, whatever may be the consequences.

e. India would not throw open its nuclear facilities to international inspection except on a reciprocal basis.

Eventhough, the Janata government had no intentions to conduct nuclear explosions, it did not close that option completely. On October, 21, 1977, Desai stated that "Atomic energy invention, both for constructive and destructive potential, it is my conviction that the people of India and the world must totally avoid the use of atom for
military purposes. This can only come if we can bring total disarmament of existing nuclear weaponry. It is with this faith that, I publicly declare that India shall not use nuclear energy for other than peaceful purposes."

Eventhough, the Morarji Desai government did not give any boost to the Indian nuclear programme, it still had to face certain problems. It had problems with the US because US Congress passed the NPT Act in 1978, which restricted the supply of nuclear materials to any country that had not signed NPT. But the US President, Carter was willing to give waiver to India because of the importance of India in South Asia. Carter also believed in the Desai government that it would not conduct any nuclear test. The chances of the Janata government to conduct nuclear tests were very remote because of problems within the party. So, there was no improvement and progress in the Indian nuclear programme.

The Desai government fell in mid 1979 and an interim government was formed under the leadership of Charan Singh. Charan Singh was quiet different in his ideas from Morarji Desai. Charan Singh declared in his independence day speech on 15th August, 1979 that if Pakistan went nuclear, then India will have no other choice other than to review its nuclear policy. His stand was also supported by C.Subramaniam, the interim Defence Minister, who hinted that India might face a decision to go nuclear before long, and identified Pakistan as the most likely stimulus. The Charan Singh administration, thus brought a change in the nuclear policy by linking the Pakistani factor with the Indian nuclear programme of the future.

\[\text{Alam B. Mohammed, Essays on Nuclear Proliferation, Vikas Publishers, New Delhi, 1995, pp.31-34.}\]

\[\text{ibid., pp.45-46.}\]
INDIRA GANDHI’S PERIOD (1980-1984)

Mrs. Gandhi again returned to power in January, 1980. She tried to continue India’s nuclear policy which she herself initiated after the 1974, Pokhran explosion, with slight changes. In Trivandrum on February 17, 1980, she said that although India had no intentions to make nuclear bombs, it would carry out experiments. Later on while answering a question in Rajya Sabha, she said that nuclear tests can be conducted to enhance national security.

During this time, Pakistan was developing its nuclear weapons programme in a very rapid pace with the support of China. Indira Gandhi’s government was carefully watching the development of the Pakistani nuclear programme and it wanted to continue India’s nuclear policy actively by playing Pakistani card. She wanted the world to realise that India needs increased alertness because of Pakistan’s preparation for making the bomb.

Due to these developments, the Indira Gandhi government adopted the Dual track policy of remaining with peaceful nuclear energy and also keeping the nuclear weapons option open. On August 18, 1984, while speaking in the Lok Sabha, just 75 days before she was assassinated, Mrs. Gandhi said that India will not deviate from its peaceful nuclear policy but on the other hand she was also aware of the fact that India had two powerful rivals China and Pakistan developing their own nuclear weapon programme. So, until Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister, India followed the same policy.
RAJIV GANDHI'S PERIOD (1984-1989)

Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India in 1984, following the assassination of his mother Mrs. Indira Gandhi. He was the youngest Prime Minister, and was very eager for scientific and economic modernisation of India. He was committed to the peaceful applications of nuclear technology. He encouraged the setting up of new nuclear power reactors in the country and allotted liberal funds for the nuclear energy development programmes. His perceptions of peaceful co-existence and his vision of a nuclear free non-violent world laid down the yard stick of his policy approach. Through the Delhi Declaration of November 1986, during Soviet President, Gorbachev's visit to Delhi, both the leaders stressed that nuclear arms race was a real threat to mankind and non-violence is the only solution for peaceful life. Rajiv Gandhi also said that every nation should stop acquiring nuclear weapons, which is the only way to terminate nuclear arms race.

However, in 1985, during All India Congress Committee meeting in New Delhi, it was decided that Pakistan's nuclear programme may necessitate appropriate response from India. This stand was confirmed during an interview of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to a Kuwaiti daily, "Arab Times", when he declared that, India does not have nuclear weapons but if Pakistan were to acquire nuclear weapons, then India's security imperatives will compel her to review the nuclear options.

During his official visit to the United States, in October, 1987, Rajiv Gandhi explained to President, Reagon, that India will remain committed to the total nuclear

disarmament and it had no intention of producing nuclear weapons unless circumstances
comple it. Rajiv Gandhi also put forward an action plan for a nuclear weapon free and
non-violent world at the third special session of the General Assembly on Disarmament
in June, 1988, in the aim of achieving the goals of nuclear weapon-free world by the year
2010. The main features of the action plan were.

a. Establishment of a verification system within the UN.
b. Disarmament by all nations.
c. Opposition to selective nuclear weapon-free zones.
d. Support to peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Rajiv Gandhi set an example by taking the first step towards the creation of a
non-violent world order. A commitment was made by Pakistan and India not to attack
each others nuclear installations. This was made during the Pakistani President, Zia’s, visit
to New Delhi. However, till date this mutual declaration has failed to formalise itself into
an agreement, though a protocol to this effect was signed in February, 1989, during Rajiv
Gandhi’s visit to Islamabad.

V.P.SINGH AND CHANDRASEKAR PERIOD (1989-90, 1990-91)

After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi , V.P.Singh became the Prime Minister of
India. During his period, the National Security Council (NSC) was formed on the
executive side to formulate and co-ordinate National security policy.15 But this
government did not last long and there was no noteworthy development in the Indian
nuclear programme, during this period.
After V.P. Singh, Chandrasekar became the Prime Minister of India because of political turmoil. During Chandrasekar's period also, there was no significant progress in the Indian nuclear programme because of political problems within the country and the nuclear policy was the same as it was in the previous government.

**NARASIMHA RAO'S PERIOD (1991-1996)**

Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister of India on June, 1991. During this time, India was facing several problems including the pressure given by the United States to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The Narasimha Rao government was continuously subjected to the American pressures demanding India to cap its nuclear and space programmes. Rao explained to United States that India would not discuss its defence and security issues, if US continued to give pressure to India, to sign the NPT. Prime Minister Rao also made it clear that, international denuclearization as the only choice to eliminate all kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

Rao's government had the opinion that India does not need nuclear weapons and only socio-economic development was the need of the country. On August 23, 1994, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, declared that Pakistan had atomic bombs which will be used in defence against India. Responding to Pakistan, the Indian government said that necessary steps would be taken to safeguard the security of India. The Indian Prime Minister stated that India need not fear because Pakistan was having a bomb. When opposition parties demanded that India should also have nuclear weapons to counter the threat from Pakistan, the Minister of State for external affairs, Mr. Sulmankhursheed, said that India need not respond at the same level.
In fine, the nuclear policy of the Rao government had the following features:

1. Disarmament of the nations which had nuclear weapons of mass destruction.
2. Advocating a "nuclear no-first use" and launching negotiations for nuclear disarmament.
3. Initiating efforts towards global denuclearization.
4. Preventing the production of fissile materials for weapon purposes.
5. To oppose the discriminatory character of NPT.
6. To oppose the regional nuclear disarmament.

Eventhough his policy was to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, he took initiative to develop it for military purposes. Prime Minister Rao, permitted the preparations for carrying out a nuclear test in December, 1995. This test was stopped when US reconnaissance satellites picked up signs of activity at the test site. In response, the US ambassador to India, Frank Winner, negotiated with the Indian Prime Minister to call off the tests.16

Subsequently, the Rao government gave up its efforts to test nuclear devices because of US.pressure. It was during that time, economic reforms were taking place in India towards a market-driven system. The Rao government was under pressure from economic reform advocated within his government, not to risk sanctions. Ultimately, the Rao government decided not to conduct any nuclear test.

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GUJRAL’S PERIOD (1997-1998)

I.K. Gujral, became the Prime Minister of India in the year 1997. He proposed the famous "Gujral Doctrine" which reflected his vision. Gujral also said that India would not sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) because these treaties were in favour of the nuclear weapon states and unfair to the developing countries. His government also committed to the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes but on the other hand it also made it clear that it was not willing to close its nuclear option, as the security of the country was given top priority.


The results of the May 1996 elections were against the Congress Government. This election also created political instability, because no political party gained a working majority. The formation of a coalition government was the only solution. There was a short lived BJP government for 13 days after the May, 1996, elections. This short lived BJP government was warned by the US, not to go nuclear as the BJP’s stand on nuclear weapons was well known.

Then, after a period of less than two years the BJP party again returned to power with the help of 17 allied parties in March, 1998. The alliance after the elections issued a national agenda for governance and in the area of national security, it said that, all necessary steps will be taken to ensure the security, territorial integrity and unity of India.

The newly formed BJP government was very determined to conduct the nuclear tests as it had mentioned in the election manifesto. But the opposition parties criticised the BJP’s electoral promise as something made for political gains. Eventually, the BJP
government kept their promise, and gave the green signal to conduct the nuclear test. The nuclear tests were successfully conducted on May 11, 1998 and Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, informed the nation and the world of India’s nuclear tests at Pokhran. He also said that the nuclear test was a tremendous achievement which was made possible by the co-operation between the scientific and defence community.

Eventhough the tests were conducted successfully the BJP government was severely criticised by the opposition parties. After the tests, the Congress was in the forefront in criticising the BJP for conducting nuclear tests. In the Lok Sabha, former Minister, P.Chidambaram said that "the government has not discovered new threat but invented them. Salman Khursheed, another former Minister of State for External Affairs, in the Congress government, saw nuclear tests as a potential gimmick for garnering votes.

Despite these criticism, the BJP government was quite sure that the nuclear tests were necessary for a big nation like India and at the same time it also maintained that India’s intentions will always be peaceful and it was not directed as a threat against any country. Prime Minister also stated that India with a population of 100 crores cannot be left to the mercy of others. Moreover, he said that, nuclear weapons are for self-defence and India’s enemies should know that India has nuclear weapons.

The Vajpayee government, however, failed to handle the diplomatic fallouts of the tests. Heavy economic sanctions were imposed on India by US and some of its allies. The Prime Minister, when asked about sanctions, said that "Sanctions cannot and will not hurt us and India will not be cowed down by any such threats and punitive steps."\(^{17}\) He agreed that India might have to pay a price for conducting the nuclear tests, but assured

that it can in no way stop India's nuclear programme. He also said that the countries threatening sanctions, were actually being hypocritical and pointed out that some of them had built up huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons. In fact, these sanctions has to an extent affected India's progress, but they could not halt the Indian nuclear programme altogether.

The primary data collected from the intellectuals through questionnaires is interpreted below.

**The Indian Nuclear Programme - Growth Periods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>No. Responded</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Nehru's period</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Indira Gandhi's period</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rajiv Gandhi's period</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vajpayee's period</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table - 3.1*

When asked about the time period in which the Indian nuclear programme attained drastic growth, about 70% of the respondents have said Vajpayee's period, 20% have said it was during Indira Gandhi's period, 8% have said it was during Nehru's period and the remaining 2% have said it was during Rajiv Gandhi's period. This reveals that it was during Vajpayee's period that the Indian nuclear programme attained drastic growth and development which culminated in the 1998 nuclear tests.

Soon after the Indian independence, the Congress party came to power under the leadership of Jawharlal Nehru who was a staunch believer of non-violence. He was very keen in the nations socio-economic development and firmly believed that war can be
avoided by maintaining diplomatic relations with the neighbouring countries. When his policy was proved wrong by China and Pakistan, he agreed with Dr. Homi Bhabha’s idea to start a nuclear programme. Then during Indira Gandhi’s period, India conducted nuclear tests in 1974, which caught the attention of the world. But for the next 24 years India was forced to remain inactive, when once again it tested its nuclear devices at the same test site by the Vajpayee led BJP government. The Vajpayee government stood firm in conducting the tests as it had mentioned in the election manifesto, although it knew very well that testing the devices would earn the wrath of the western nations.

The review of Indian nuclear policy and the rationale behind it would be incomplete if Pakistan’s nuclear policy and its race with India is not taken into account.

PAKISTAN’S NUCLEAR ARMS RACE WITH INDIA

Pakistan’s nuclear policy, right from the beginning is centered towards India. Pakistan has stated that, as long as India retains its own capabilities and develops it, Pakistan has no option but to keep developing its own nuclear programme. Pakistan claim’s that, their nuclear programme are a direct consequence of similar Indian development.

Before 1954, Pakistan did not make any attempt to develop their nuclear programme. It was only after 1954, that an initiative was taken to formulate a nuclear policy. In the 1950s, there was no nuclear threat to Pakistan, as there was only one nuclear power in the region, the Soviet Union. However, Pakistan realised that it had to strengthen its security arrangements after the 1965 Indo-Pak war. Like India, Pakistan also refused to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), calling it discriminatory. Pakistan
began to seriously think of developing its nuclear programme, only after India’s decision to conduct peaceful nuclear explosions. However, to develop its own nuclear programme Pakistan needed the help of foreign countries as it could not completely rely on its indigenous efforts. As a result of this, Z.A. Bhutto, decided to have collaboration with foreign countries. Subsequently, negotiations for the purchase of power reactor and commercial scale reprocessing plant began with France, for extracting plutonium from spent power reactor fuel. However, under US influence this deal was stopped.

The Indian nuclear test carried out at Pokhran, in May, 1974, shook the security environment in South Asia. After this test, Pakistan considered India as a bitter rival trying to threaten it. Following this, Pakistan speeded up its activity inspite of technological constraints. In 1976, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, a German trained metallurgist who had been working at a classified centrifuge enrichment plant at Almelo, in Netherlands, quit his post in Holland and returned to Pakistan to direct Pakistan’s nuclear programme.18

Then in July 1977, Pakistan’s army chief, General Zia-ul-Haq, seized power from Z.A. Bhutto, in a military coup. He brought many changes during his period. His policy was very similar to that of Bhutto in developing the nuclear weapons programme at any cost. In the 1980s, Zia-ul-Haq, slightly modified Pakistan’s nuclear policy by speeding up the overt and covert efforts taken by Bhutto, to acquire nuclear technology. As a result of this effort, within four years after Zia took over, Pakistan had succeeded in setting up a fuel fabrication plant at Chashma, a heavy water plant at Multan and an experimental scale ultra-centrifuge enrichment facility at Sinhala. While continuing efforts were taken

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to built an effective nuclear weapon programme, Zia and his officials gave statements which caused confusion about Pakistan's nuclear intentions. On one hand, statements were made which emphasized that Pakistan's nuclear programme was meant for peaceful purposes and on the other hand, they hinted that in case Pakistan was attacked, it could be converted into a facility for Pakistan's military use.19

During this time, a satellite photograph of Pakistan's Uranium enrichment plant at Kahuta, was published by a London weekly, on March 15, 1987, which gave conclusive evidence that the plant was used for manufacturing nuclear weapons. In an interview, the head of the Pakistani Uranium enrichment programme, A.Q.Khan, openly declared that Pakistan had built nuclear weapons. And in March 1988, Pakistan had accumulated Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU), enough for about five nuclear weapons. A report also said that, Pakistan can deploy nuclear weapons in the future, if a conflict arises, although it had not yet possessed a fully assembled nuclear device. In August 1988, General Zia was killed in a plane crash and he was succeeded by Benazir Bhutto. By this time Pakistan had become a nuclear weapon power having acquired enough nuclear material for roughly 5 to 10 nuclear weapons. Benazir Bhutto, during her period, took steps to improve Indo-Pak relations. Benazir Bhutto held talks with the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in Islamabad which resulted in an agreement not to attack each others nuclear installations. Although the agreement was signed, it was not ratified because both the governments faced many problems.

The objective of Pakistani nuclear programme right from the beginning was to manufacture nuclear weapons, unlike India which stressed for peaceful uses of nuclear

energy. The next Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, was ready to stop the production of fissionable material in exchange of American aid. However, later his government realised that this policy would damage its long term strategy.

Benazir Bhutto, during her second tenure since 1993, refused to abandon Pakistan's nuclear weapon programme. The Clinton administration tried to make Pakistan sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty but it refused to sign saying that, no such things can be accepted unless it was accepted by India.

Once again Mr. Nawaz Sharif, became Pakistan's Prime Minister after Benazir Bhutto, and he developed Pakistan's nuclear programme with full determination. Once, Nawaz Sharif mentioned that development of nuclear programme was important because it was directly related to economic development of the country. So, Pakistan decided to test its own nuclear devices, soon after the Indian nuclear tests in Pokhran.

On May 28, 1998, Pakistan tested five nuclear devices at Chhagai Hills in Baluchistan, to equal the Indian tests. Nawaz Sharif, in his speech said that Pakistan has repaid India. The Pakistani officials also said that by testing the nuclear devices Pakistan has restored the balance of power which was disturbed by the Indian explosions.

Pakistan has been able to achieve this stage with the help of China, and without its help this dream would not have come true to Pakistan. It is also said that no other nuclear relationship between any two countries has been for such a long duration.

The US imposed sanctions on Pakistan after it tested its nuclear devices, as it was imposed on India after it conducted its nuclear tests. The sanctions directly affected the economy of Pakistan. The Nawaz Sharif government tried to use its newly acquired
nuclear weapon status to gain some help from the US, but all in vain. Soon the Nawaz Shariff government was thrown away and Gen. Pervez Musharraf took the power. With the Pakistani government in the hands of coup leaders, many changes have come in the Pakistani nuclear policy.

CHINA'S INFLUENCE ON INDIAN NUCLEAR POLICY

China's role in South Asia is unique from the Indian point of view because of its secret assistance to the Pakistani nuclear programme. From the beginning the Indian nuclear policy had to bear the Chinese factor in mind because China posed the biggest challenge to India. The Indian defence analysts had always claimed that China, not Pakistan, poses the major threat to India. India also claimed that the nuclear tests were conducted mainly to deter China because India considers China as a threat to its future security. Further China's intimate relationship with Pakistan has always created tension in India. China has transferred nuclear and missile technology to Pakistan which continued even after China acceded to the NPT, in 1992. In April, 1996, US Secretary of Defence, William Perry, said that China has supplied many missile related technologies to Pakistan than any other country. US also stated that Chinese organizations continued to provide assistance to Pakistani ballistic missile development programme during the first-half of 1998 and that some assistance still continues. It is also reported that China has supplied ring magnets for use in Pakistan's Uranium enrichment programme.

Taking all these things into consideration it can be said that China is India's main rival in the South Asian region and that is the reason why the Indian nuclear programme has been developed aiming Pakistan but which is only second to China.