CHAPTER - V

NUCLEAR ISSUE IN INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS :
THE APPROACH OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The nuclear weapons constitute a major issue in the study of international relations. "Nuclear power has been described as 'at most deadly, a most dangerous process that man has ever conceived.'" Nuclear weaponization has become one of the major factors in international relations, having a potency to determine the nature and content of relations among different States of the world. The presence of nuclear weapons poses serious ramifications not only for the bilateral and multi-lateral relations. The bilateral relations among nations will be vitiated largely if one or both the parties possess nuclear weapons. Hence, possession of nuclear weapons constitutes one of the several major factors that contribute to the heightening of tensions between two countries. According to Prakash Nanda there are significant similarities in the tensions between India-Pakistan, China-Taiwan and the two Koreas. He believes there are three common elements. "First is that, each case is a source of regional and global tensions, no wonder why so much of international media coverage is focused on them. Secondly, each one of these conflicts has a nuclear dimension. Thirdly, all these cases are conspicuous by the fact that the disputes relate to the unresolved dilemmas of their division."
In view of this, the emergence of India and Pakistan as declared nuclear weapon States in recent times, has brought in a structural change in the pattern of their bilateral relationship. Nuclearisation of these States has acted as a catalyst in accentuating the already existing animosity between them. This has also magnetized an added global attention towards the South Asian region as, the obstinate belligerence between India and Pakistan which has dragged their relations to a boiling point, engraves in a perennial and potential threat of an open conflict involving nuclear weapons. Thus there is an increasing international realization that south Asia is one of the major spots of disquiet in the world. This prevailing situation between India and Pakistan has not only disturbed peace and security of South Asian region, but it has also hampered global peace and security. “India and Pakistan are two nations that have experienced war with each other in 1947 over Kashmir, the Punjab area in 1965 and the Multan-Sindh-Kutch region in 1971 with an over increasing spread of weapons of mass destruction [WMD]. The South Asian region does not escape this trend. The increase of nuclear proliferation is evident in the nuclear programmes of both India and Pakistan.”

Apart from several international variables that influence the policy makers to adopt a strategy of nuclearisation, there are many domestic factors which improve them. National security constitutes a major part of national interest. Various groups in society debate over the issue of national security and discuss whether nuclear weapons are
essential for safeguarding the country's national interest. This debate influences the policy makers perception facilitating them to comprehend various requirements for effectively safeguarding national security and decide whether nuclear weapons must be inducted in the defence arsenal of a nation for ably accomplishing this task. In this context, political parties, as significant institutional variables, form one of major domestic factors that have a prominent impact on the formulation of the defence policy. The perception of political parties regarding national security plays a vital role in moulding the defence policy of a country. In this regard, parties express their opinion as to whether nuclear weapons are needed for the protection of national security on the basis of their perception and evaluation of international situation.

In India, political parties have expressed diverse opinions on the issue of nuclearisation of Indian defence mechanism and these views have significantly contributed to the shaping of India's nuclear policy. The issue of nuclear policy became a subject of debate among political parties. It has been viewed: “The technological sophistication manifested at Pokhran is a product of a long process of prioritization of national security since the Sino-Indian war of 1962, and all mainstream political parties are culpable in ushering this political process”. In the light of this, it is pertinent to understand the approach of major national political parties towards the issue of nuclear weaponisation and its implications for bilateral relations
between India and Pakistan. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse the attitude of political parties towards the nuclear issue in Indo-Pakistan relations. For understanding the position of Indian political parties on nuclear issue, it is necessary to understand the major events relating to the issue.

Evolution of India's Nuclear Programme

India's urge to acquire nuclear technology can be found immediately after the independence of the country. "India's nuclear quest is tied to an accident of history, a confluence of two of the most striking personalities of our age- one belonging to the world of science and the other placed at the helm of political decision making. The two were none other than India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and India's great nuclear scientist and science organizer Homi J. Bhabha. Dedicated primarily to atomic power generation and other peaceful applications, India's nuclear technology acquisition kept the weapon option open." Jwaharlal Nehru's vision and Homi Bhabha's scientific skills ultimately led to the signaling of an era of nuclear technology in India.

The process of India's nuclearisation went through a long period. "The full story of India's path to nuclear capability acquisition is bumpy but absolutely absorbing and spread over 50 years. Its special characteristic and the attached map will give glimpses intertwining atomic science and technology for peaceful
application and the weapon option with overwhelming priority for peaceful uses."  

Pokhran I Nuclear Test 1974

The first historic landmark in the chronicle of events in the history of India's nuclearisation is the peaceful nuclear explosion conducted by the Indira Gandhi government in 1974 at Pokhran. The official claims regarding the Pokhran I nuclear test declared that nuclear explosion was carried out purely for peaceful purposes but the probability of the use of nuclear option was not ruled out. The dominant motivations for the nuclear option are regional in nature and the fears of a nuclear armed Pakistan compelled India to pursue a more robust nuclear policy. India's nuclear policy was considerably influenced by the nuclearisation of two hostile neighbours. "India's policy of nuclear abstinence underwent a definitive change after the first Chinese nuclear test in 1964. This shift in India's nuclear policy to nuclear ambiguity began with its own nuclear test, which was a watershed in India's nuclear decision-making." On the other hand, in India, "The primary justification for going nuclear was the perceived threat from a nuclear capable Pakistan". Whatever may be the external factors that have played a vital role in shaping India's nuclear policy in its initial stages which led to the first nuclear explosions in 1974, the significance of domestic determinants influencing it cannot be undermined and it can be viewed here that not
only international forces but strong domestic compulsions at the time of Indira Gandhi’s regime led to the Pokhran I nuclear tests.

“India’s ability to explode a nuclear device was demonstrated at Pokhran in May 1974. No single causative factor was underlying the Pokhran test. These were diverse and evolved over a period of approximately three years. Probably security threats, bureaucratic and scientific pressures and prestige considerations entered the decision-making process, but in different measures and in various points of time”.10 “The decision to explode the device was probably dictated by technological and internal compulsions.”11 “The decisive factors that led to the detonation of a nuclear device in 1974 were the Atomic Energy Commission’s determination to prove its metal and Indira Gandhi’s sense that India would gain confidence in itself as a nation and in her as a leader. The final decision to conduct the test was the result of an ad hoc intuitive process that lacked a rigorous foreign policy analysis”.12

Pakistan’s Nuclear Programme

It is pertinent to know the roots of Pakistan’s nuclear programme. Pakistan has been rather slow and reluctant to start in the field of nuclear development. It was not until 1954 when the American exhibition on atoms for peace toured Pakistan that some interest was aroused in the potential of the new technology for national development. Consequently, a 12-member atomic energy committee
was appointed by the Government of Pakistan to prepare a blueprint for the promotion of atomic energy in Pakistan. Based on the recommendations of the committee, an Atomic Energy Council was set up in March 1956, with the task of planning and development of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.\textsuperscript{13} Hence, with the establishment of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), the nuclear programme of Pakistan was formally launched. \textquoteleft\textquoteleft The efforts to achieve nuclear fuel cycle autonomy which is essential for developing a nuclear weapons option started in earnest only in the 1970s and gained impetus after the Indian nuclear test in 1974.\textquoteright\textquoteright\textsuperscript{14}

At the dawn of the sixth decade of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, there emerged two schools of thought in Pakistan— one upholding the restriction of nuclear energy for only peaceful purposes and the other, preferring a more hawkish nuclear policy to discover its military uses. \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Pakistan's actual nuclear history begins with General Ayub Khan's takeover of the government in 1958.\textquoteright\textquoteright\textsuperscript{15} This event is a benchmark in the history of Pakistan's nuclear programme. It was at this time that positive response began to consider the question of utilities of nuclear power for national development and in this regard, it was Pakistan's president General Ayub who was the first to express some positive approach and a political will to evolve a structured nuclear policy. \textquoteleft\textquoteleft The Ayub regime was determined to promote the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. However, it was sharply divided on its role for military employment. The Chairman of Pakistan Atomic
Energy Commission (PAEC), Dr. I.H.U. Usmani, wanted to entail peaceful use ruling out any possibility of military use, whereas Z.A. Bhutto and his supporters were in favour of developing a nuclear capability that had potential for an eventual nuclear weapons option.¹⁶ That is the era of intense political debate in Pakistan over the nuclear question and the divide within the ruling establishment regarding the usage of nuclear power generated heat and created frictions among the top leaders of Pakistani ruling class. "Ayub seems to have finally accepted Usmani’s view by rejecting Bhutto’s suggestion."¹⁷

Thus this was the initial years of Pakistan’s nuclear programme and an analysis of these early significant events maps out for us the future shape and direction of Pakistan’s nuclear policy and contributes to the understanding of the probable influences on the nature and direction of nuclear programme of Pakistan. Thus we can attempt to know what were the binding compulsions that led the policy makers of Pakistan to change the course of the country’s nuclear policy from a peaceful one to the discovery of its military potential. Here, it is significant to make a comparative analysis of nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan and while doing so, it seems that there exists a glaring incompatibility in the nuclear policies and pattern of national security strategies of India and Pakistan. "According to a Pakistani analyst, the security models of India and Pakistan differ as their national aims and objectives are dissimilar. The nuclear postures of
both India and Pakistan are different. Since such a stance is factored into the security perceptions of both the countries, it has consequently resulted in different nuclear doctrines and security paradigm.18 Pakistan nuclear programme was moulded and influenced by one single factor that is its security threat perception from India. "Pakistan's nuclear programme is reactive in nature, reactive to the developments in India. India's nuclear programme is not just a reaction to the Chinese and Pakistan nuclear programme and military oriented right from the beginning, but it is also driven by the desire for prestige and international standing and India has a grand vision of its role in world affairs which visualizes that it cannot play effectively unless it acquires nuclear weapons."19 Hence, the Indian nuclear programme has a broad base in the light of global developments, as J. N. Dixit states: "India's nuclear policies have not developed in vacuum. They are essentially a graduated and measured response to international non-proliferation trends which India perceived as a threat to its long term security interests."20 Contradistinguished to this, the Pakistani nuclear endeavour can be termed as Indo-centric. This gets an endorsement by the statement made by Z.A. Bhutto in 1965 when he boisterously argued in favour of weaponising Pakistan's nuclear capabilities. This views emerged out of his concerns regarding the security threats to Pakistan due to its adverse relation with its militarily stronger neighbour India. Bhutto said, "If India developed an atomic bomb, we too will develop one, even if we have to eat grass or leaves or to remain hungry, because
there is no conventional alternative to the atomic bomb”.21 “This statement was fully endorsed by a cross-section of the Pakistani society, particularly the press”.22

“In their book, Islamic Bomb, Steve Wiessman and Herbert Krosney assert that right from the mid-1950s, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto when he became a minister in Ayub Khan’s cabinet was an advocate of Pakistan developing nuclear weapons. Pakistan’s defeat in 1971 strengthened Bhutto’s conviction. He took the decision that Pakistan should have nuclear capacity two years before India’s 1974 test in Pokhran.23 Hence, Pakistan’s nuclear policy can be viewed from the prism of its adversial bilateral relations with India. The argument of the Pakistani ruling elite to attain military parity with India, in order to deal with problems especially Kashmir in its own favour, drove it into a megalomaniacal fantasy of achieving superiority in non-conventional weapons. By this the Pakistani ruling establishment felt that India would never be able to defeat Pakistan. In turn, Pakistan would attain a leverage over India and hopefully at one point of time, it may inflict a military defeat upon India with the help of nuclear weapons.

India Pakistan Relations In the Post Pokhran I Period

It is pertinent to note that the Pokhran I nuclear test by India also brought a major change in the nature of bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. It heightened tensions and disturbed the
peace and tranquility in the region, allegedly by provoking Pakistan to
take the root of military nuclear policy which finally has turned into a
nuclear arms race between the two neighbours of the sub-continent.
Besides, it attracted increased international observation towards the
South Asian region.

With the nuclear testing by India in 1974, India and Pakistan
got embroiled in an intense diplomatic and political altercation.
Pakistan expressed a seemingly prejudiced view of the issue and made
vociferous claims that its security is in jeopardy on account of India’s
nuclear test. On its part, India demonstrated remarkable discreetness
and tightly held on to its position that its nuclear explosions were
carried out for peaceful purposes and it was not directed towards any
country. The nature, degree and intensity of the debate can be gauged
by looking through the letters exchanged by the prime ministers of
India and Pakistan. In her letter, the Indian prime minister Indira
Gandhi stated that, "PNE is the normal result of the research and
study of our scientists and we are firmly committed to the peaceful
uses of nuclear energy. India has no military or political intentions in
carrying out nuclear explosions."24 On the other hand, the reaction of
Pakistan’s prime minister Z.A.Bhutto was replete with a nuclear threat
perception from India. He remarked: "A more grave and serious event
has not taken place in the history of Pakistan. The explosion has
introduced a qualitative change in the situation between the two
countries".25 Over all, it can be regarded that India’s nuclear testing
brought a structural change not only in the security environment of South Asian region, but also it induced a fundamental change in the bilateral relations of India and Pakistan. Due to this, nuclear weaponisation became yet another major issue in the ambit of Indo-Pakistan relations. The result was an over complication of the course of their bilateral relations. The long-standing issues like Kashmir became more complicated because of the commencement of the process of covert nuclear weaponisation in the sub-continent after the Indian nuclear explosion in 1974. According to Zafar Iqbal Cheema: "Nuclear competition between India and Pakistan has proved intensely complex. The pattern of conflict in South Asia primarily between India and Pakistan has endured a cold war paradigm. The chances of denuclearisation of South Asia are slim because of the level of nuclear weapons capability".26

India and Pakistan : The Road to Overt Nuclear Weaponisation

The intervening period between 1974 and 1998 marks an important phase in the history of nuclearisation of India and Pakistan. It is in these crucial years that both the countries catalysed their efforts to acquire weapons grade nuclear technology. This period is characterized by an aura of uncertainty, secrecy and mutual distrust over each other's nuclear capabilities. It is very significant to understand the 1998 declaration of nuclear weapons capabilities by both the countries in the light of the developments in the last two decades. In this period, a remarkable divergence can be witnessed in
the nuclear policies of the two South Asian neighbours. India followed a self-restraint from further tests after 1974. But simultaneously, the Indian scientific establishment tacitly endured with its endeavours to achieve higher levels of nuclear technology without resorting to open tests. "In sharp contrast to India's reticence, Pakistan has been garrulous in proclaiming its nuclear capabilities in the hope no doubt of deriving a measure deterrence from its ambiguous nuclear posture."27 "The pattern of interactions between the two countries consists of India's repeated denials of either possessing or wishing to possess nuclear weapons. Pakistan on the other hand, intersperses jingoistic declarations that it possesses nuclear weapons with routing denials of any desire to weaponise its nuclear capabilities."28

The duration of 24 years in between the two nuclear tests of India has been marked by uncertainties, nuclear ambivalence and lack of coherent, clear and a well co-ordinated nuclear policy. The period witnessed several perilous security situations that called for countervailing action that is, the situation compelled the policy makers to opt for open declaration of nuclear weapons capabilities. But the Indian policy makers felt rational enough in continuing with an undeclared nuclear posture. Besides, India did not make an explicit demonstration of its nuclear capability, the scientific community did not desist from refining the existing technology so as to be ever ready for any urgency to conduct nuclear test. Hence,
commenting on India's nuclear status before its open declaration of nuclearisation, an assessment of the Russian intelligence concluded that, "India may be classified among the countries which unofficially possess nuclear weapons. There is an advanced program of military applied research in the country. With stocks of irradiated fuel not under safeguard, the country could reprocess it for the purpose of extraction of plutonium for the creation of a powerful arsenal of nuclear weapons". But it seems that the policy pronouncements of successive Indian governments before 1998 were broadly characterized by candid denials of having weaponised its nuclear technology. This policy stance of the government has been comprehensively explained in a categorical statement of a former top Indian official that, "India does not possess nuclear weapons, consequently the military authorities have been directed to prepare plans to meet any foreign threat on the basis of our not having any nuclear weapons". India's nuclear policy before its open declaration of nuclear status was characterized by ambiguity and government's self-imposed nuclear abstinence. This ambiguity ended only in 1998 after India crossed the nuclear rubicon and since then a serious endeavour has begun on the part of the government to evolve a comprehensive and coherent nuclear doctrine.

Paradoxical to the Indian case, Pakistan's nuclear posture at this stage was entirely different from that of India. The country's nuclear policy was characterized by a non-hesitant declaration of possession
of nuclear weapons and a threat of use of nuclear power either preemptive or retaliatory, if there is a situation in which the country's national security was at stake. In this regard, the annual report of Indian Ministry of Defence viewed: "Pakistan continues to pursue a weapons-oriented nuclear programme. Pakistan government, its scientists, officials and political leaders have openly accepted that Pakistan has acquired the capability of making nuclear bomb. Pakistan has reportedly acquired M 11 missiles from China which has a range of more than 300 kms and are believed to carry nuclear warheads". \(^{31}\)

In the decade from 1980 to 1990, Pakistan's capacity to produce and deploy nuclear weapons began to become more visible and explicit. Several hyper-nationalistic elements in the Pakistani politico-administrative set up, its military establishment, scientific community, press and public made statements tinged with jingoism that their country possesses nuclear weapons and they have been rising the specter of a likely Pakistani nuclear attack on India. "At least twice, Pakistan threatened to use nuclear weapons against India following two significant crises in their bilateral relations. Firstly, during the Brasstacks operations and secondly, when there was a massive mobilization of troops by both countries along the Indo-Pakistan border due to the augmentation of tension in the wake of crisis in Kashmir in 1990." \(^{32}\)

Pakistan seems to have developed nuclear weapons capability prior to India. Since then Pakistan had a dubious distinction of having
an undeclared nuclear weapons status. Contrary to this, India exhibited itself as a strong case of a country having not so clearly defined its position on nuclear policy. As a result, the nuclear picture of South Asia was unclear. This uncertain situation had brought in fears among various quarters in India, as the threat of an impending nuclear attack by Pakistan increased.

Pokhran II and Chagai Nuclear Test 1998

"A critical question which assumes a silence in the light of developments [in 1998] relates to the implications of the overt nuclearisation of the sub-continent and more specifically what this entails in terms of regional stability."33 It may be viewed that there occurred a basic shift in the security model of the entire South Asian region after India and Pakistan conducted nuclear weapons tests in May 1998. It not only engendered a nuclear and missile arms race between India and Pakistan, but it brought a consequential impact upon the strategic calculus of the countries in the neighbourhood of India and Pakistan.

India's Pokhran II nuclear test symbolizes the culmination of a long process of scientific and technological endeavour to achieve a minimum credible nuclear deterrence. The event ended the state of strategic ambiguity which marked a national security policy since the first nuclear test of 1974. "On 11 and 13\textsuperscript{th} of May, India tested a total of five nuclear devices in the desert of Pokhran. The tests took
the Indian public and the world by surprise." "Simultaneous testing of a weaponised fission device, a low yield fission device and a thermonuclear device is an unprecedented event in the nuclear history."" 

"Primary reason for declaring India a nuclear weapons capability is the perceived threats to India from the two hostile neighbours China and Pakistan." Apart from this, "The detonation of nuclear devices by India at Pokhran is the result of its changing perception of threats to its national security. Sino-Pak nuclear nexus has provided valid reasons for India to break its nuclear restraint which it had observed since 1974".

Hence, the government was forced to exercise its nuclear option in order to protect its sovereign right for the purpose of safeguarding the country's national security. Recapitulating the reasons for India's refusal for not joining CTBT, Arundhati Ghose argued, "The Comprehensive Test Ban Treat is discriminatory, because it allowed the nuclear weapons States to carry out sub-critical and other forms of sophisticated testing not available to other States. forget the hypocrisy of such a position. forget the moral argument for a moment. Inequality inevitably leads to instability, instability leads to insecurity. This insecurity would certainly impinge upon India's interest as well".
The most fundamental challenge faced by the government after the nuclear tests was to evolve a coherent and comprehensive nuclear doctrine which would be acceptable in diverse sections of Indian society. But fruitful steps did not appear in this regard. In view of this, Muchkund Dubey viewed: "The government went to the extent of getting this draft made public even at the cost of antagonizing some of our friendly countries and frightening others. In my view it was tactically very undesirable to have made a public announcement of the intentions based on plans and projects, some of which are still on the drawing boards and some of them are only in the form of conceptions."\textsuperscript{39}

Nuclear Testing by Pakistan

The immediate fallout of Indian nuclear tests was that a state of anxiety perforated the entire Pakistan society and the Pakistani ruling establishment was exhorted from various quarters significantly, the army, the hawks in the scientific community and even the public, to match Indian action expeditiously by exhibiting Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability through conducting a nuclear test. "Indian nuclear test has questioned the credibility of Pakistan's deterrent, huge domestic pressure in Pakistan left Nawaz Sharif with no option but to follow suit."\textsuperscript{40} The international community was critical of the initiation taken by India. Both India and Pakistan became nuclear States after carrying out nuclear tests. This cleared the ambiguity with regard to the position of India and Pakistan on their nuclear
status. In this background on 28 and 30th of May, Pakistan carried out nuclear tests at Chagai in Baluchistan. Prime minister Nawaz Sharif announcing Pakistan's detonation of nuclear weapons device said that: "the decision was taken in the interest of national security and integrity and in this way now Pakistan had settled the score of strategic imbalance with India."\(^{42}\)

**Post-May 1998 India-Pakistan Relations and Implications for South Asian Politics**

Nuclear testing tended to serious implications for bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. "The nuclear testing became a debacle issue in India and Pakistan. The Indian articulation focused on the threats from Pakistan and China while Pakistan targeted India."\(^ {43}\) "Since India has directly named China as its potential number one threat which led the former not to further delay testing of its nuclear bomb, dark shadows of the widening of India-China rift and India-Pakistan rift with Pakistan getting covert support from China have started appearing on the horizon."\(^ {44}\) In view of this, it is significant to understand the actual impact of nuclear tests which has to be studied not only from the perspective of Indo-Pakistan relations, but from its implications on South Asia affairs. This needs to be analysed comprehensively.

It was expected that overt nuclearisation would deter India and Pakistan from engaging in armed conflict due to the risk of accidental
use of nuclear weapons. But in turn, the proxy war in Kashmir continues with several instances of open conflict, once in Kargil and secondly when the two countries were on the brink of a major armed conflict following the terrorist attack on India’s parliament and the subsequent mobilization of military on both sides of the border. In this context, it is generally considered: “Nuclear weapons do not contribute to stability in the region and further do not eliminate the possibility of a nuclear war in a nuclearised environment”. The Kargil crisis of 1999, demonstrated this: “The Pakistan army mobilized its nuclear weapons against India without the knowledge of the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif.” This indicates the existence of conflicting relations between India and Pakistan even after the nuclear weaponisation of the sub-continent and there is always a fear of a nuclear accident.

It appears that the prospects of arriving at an amicable solution to the protracted conflict have become more remote. Both the countries are considerably unclear in articulating their nuclear doctrines, the secrecy enveloping their nuclear posture. Apart from this, the leaders from both sides have adopted a posture of nuclear brinkmanship which reduces the possibility of building a trust between the two countries. If there occurs any nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan, the amount of human and material causalities will be unimaginable. Another crucial fallout of the Indo-Pakistan nuclear weaponisation is that “The nuclearisation has internationalized the
Kashmir problem”. Suddenly the nuclear tests in the sub-continent have brought the Kashmir issue to the core which is linked to any nuclear eventuality. Hence, the leaders on both sides have to act rationally and try to defuse the tension in a peaceful way.

Attitude of Political Parties Towards the Nuclearisation of India and Pakistan

Indian National Congress

The Indian National Congress came to power immediately after India’s independence. Since beginning, the party has expressed its aversion towards nuclear weapons. The party holds that its leaders have consistently laboured towards achieving a world free from nuclear weapons and the party’s vision was for creating a new world order free from nuclear weapons. The party believed: “It was Jawaharlal Nehru’s vision that informed India’s proposal to the United Nations General Assembly of a truly non-proliferation treaty. It was the same vision that inspired Indira Gandhi to launch the six nations initiative on nuclear disarmament. And it was the vision which found concrete and detailed expression in the action plan for a nuclear weapons-free and non-violent world which the prime minister Rajiv Gandhi submitted to the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in 1988.”

In the context of cold war, the Congress party expressed its alarm over the ghastly process of arms build up by the super powers
and felt that if it is not stopped by formidable means, then the entire mankind may be wiped out from the face of earth. A former president of INC, K. Kamraj Nadar said: “The great powers of the world have been arming themselves to the teeth with weapons of mass destruction. This mad race if not halted in time, must inevitably lead sooner or later to a conflagration, which unlike the previous world wars that left behind victors and vanquished, will exterminate all humanity.”

However, contrary to this position, it seems that the party had a very ambiguous stance on the issue of India's nuclear policy. The Indira Gandhi government which carried out the 1974 nuclear tests, made relentless attempts to pacify domestic and international criticism by stating that Pokhran I nuclear explosions were carried out purely for peaceful purposes, but the secrecy surrounding India's nuclear motives, put the domestic public and international community in suspicion regarding India's actual nuclear posture. It happened due to the policy of deliberate nuclear ambiguity maintained by the Congress both at the government and at the party level. Due to this, India was condemned in various quarters that it was trying to indulge in nuclear weapon programme under the pretext of peaceful uses of nuclear technology. "The United States argued that no distinction could be made between a peaceful nuclear explosive and a weapon. India responded by rejecting US interpretation and asserted its right to pursue any peaceful application of nuclear energy including peaceful nuclear explosives. While visiting the island of Mauritius she said that we have discussed this question deeply and rejected the idea of
The party is in favour of peaceful uses of nuclear technology. It stated in its 1991 election manifesto: “The Congress is wedded to and will continue to, the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. Congress favours a nuclear weapons-free world and will continue efforts for total and complete disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament.”

The uncertain posture on nuclear policy has been persistently maintained by the senior leaders of Congress party and the functionaries of Congress governments. The position of the Congress that India will not forego its nuclear options creates several doubts regarding India's attitude towards nuclear weaponisation. In this context, it will be pertinent to observe the statement of P. V. Narasimha Rao, a former Congress president and Indian prime minister said: “In the context of the country's nuclear policy, a particular party had demanded that India should go nuclear. He pointed out that the country had been pursuing a consistent policy on the nuclear issue right from the days of Jawaharlal Nehru and V.K.Krishna Menon. He observed, today we have the choice of making or not making the bomb and I do not want to lose the option.” Further, the party has justified its nuclear position on the pretext that there is a global discrimination with regard to possession of nuclear weapons by nations. Whereas the five declared nuclear weapons powers are relentlessly carrying forward their nuclear weapons programme, the security of the non-nuclear weapons States is
always haunted due to the global presence of nuclear weapons. "The party condemns the tests conducted by the nuclear weapon powers to further refine and improve the weapons in their possession. India cannot and will not surrender its nuclear option as long as security is threatened by the possessors of nuclear weapons and until such time as an agreement is reached on a just, equal, comprehensive and time-bound programme for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction." Hence, it may be viewed that the articulation of the position of Congress is ostensible. Ostensible in the sense that by stating that we will not give up our nuclear option until there is global elimination of nuclear weapons. It seems that on this pretext the Congress attempts to justify that in a situation of national security crisis India can exercise its nuclear option by manufacturing nuclear weapons. The justification of the party is: "Our nuclear policy is geared for peaceful purposes".

The party has viewed that due to the presence of a nuclear environment in the region, there is a threat to the security of India. The Congress party viewed: "There are real and potential threats to our national security. Our armed forces must, therefore, be strong and well equipped". It means that the party favours our armed forces to acquire countering mechanisms or as it appears [nuclear weapons in a more specific terms] for defence against the threat. It seems, Congress's inclination towards nuclear weaponisation was visible after India's overt nuclear weaponisation, which was followed by
Pakistan's nuclear weapons testing at Chagai in May 1998 when it supported India's nuclear weapons posture and expressed its commitment towards maintaining a credible nuclear weapons programme. In this regard, the party stated: The Congress is committed to maintaining a credible nuclear weapons programme.57

Regarding nuclear disarmament, the Congress leader Margaret Alva maintains: "India should strive for a nuclear weapons free and non-violent world. But any agreement in this regard could not be on bilateral or regional basis."58

The party felt that the end of cold war marked the beginning of a new chapter in international relations. But it is deplorable that the new situation has not brought any change in the field of nuclear weapons, because the five nuclear powers persisted with their stand on nuclear weaponisation and subsequently they have perpetuated their domination because of their possession of nuclear weapons. The Congress opined: "The end of cold war has removed what little justification there was for persisting with policies of nuclear deterrence and Mutually Assured Destruction [MAD]. Instead of carrying to a logical conclusion the implications of a world without rival nuclear weapon blocs, the opportunity has been seized to attempt to impose an unequal nuclear hegemony of some over others as the determining parameter of international relations".59
Regarding the NPT and CTBT the Congress notes: “The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT] and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT] are not measures of disarmament but discriminatory regimes aimed at consecrating the domination of some over others. This is unacceptable to the Congress; it is unacceptable to India.”

Turning now to Pakistan, the Congress urged to attain nuclear weapons capability and the party feels that this action of Pakistan indicates threatening signs for India. The party pointed out that as India has kept its nuclear option open, it can be exercised in accordance with the requirement of national security. The argument of the Congress party is: In case Pakistan persists in the development of deployment of nuclear weapons, India will be constrained to review her policy to meet the threat.”

The statement of the Congress that India may review its policy symbolizes that it is inclined towards India attaining a nuclear capability when its national security gets threatened. It appears that the Congress did not make an explicit demand for India’s nuclear weaponisation. But the compulsions of national security in the light of dangerous developments around India’s neighbourhood, specially with reference to Pakistan, might have forced Congress to speak in favour of India exercising its nuclear option by developing nuclear weapons. Hence, an overview of Congress’s position on India’s nuclear policy reveals that it is Pakistan centric.
Pokhran II nuclear tests not only brought about a drastic change in the nuclear status of India, but it also tended to qualitative changes in the attitude of Congress party towards nuclear policy. Since the beginning, the Congress has been in favour of retaining India's nuclear option but not exercise it. P.V. Narasimha Rao, the former prime minister said: “People should not be misled on the sensitive question of the country’s nuclear policy. Weapons of mass destruction were not a child's play. Though India had the capability, yet such policies had to be formulated by taking into consideration the developing situation in the world.”\textsuperscript{62} Pokhran II nuclear tests seem to have resulted in a policy shift of the Congress, because the party hailed the tests and viewed that this technological accomplishment was materialized only due to the ground-work done by the Congress when it was in power. The party cited the technological achievement India gained after Pokhran I nuclear test of 1974, which laid the foundation for a formidable Indian nuclear programme. The perception of the Congress was: “The first Pokhran test of May 1974 was conducted during the prime ministership of Indira Gandhi that was an assertion of our independence of our nuclear capability.”\textsuperscript{63}

Correspondingly, the Congress supported Pokhran II nuclear weapons test and considered it as a great attainment of Indian scientists. With regard to the significance of consensus on nuclear policy, the Congress president noted: “I would like to place on record in this formal meeting of the Congress working committee the
pride we feel in the achievement of our nuclear scientists and engineers for putting India's nuclear capability in the front rank. We recall with equal pride that successive Congress governments have ensured that India's nuclear capability remains up-to-date, so that our security is not compromised. The nuclear question is a national matter; not a partisan one. On this, every Indian stands united.”

The Congress regarded that the nuclear tests had brought about drastic changes in the defence and foreign policy of India. The party felt that in such a situation, it was essential to restructure India's defence and foreign policy to make it adaptable to the changed circumstances. It observed: "The nuclear testing has brought a whole new dimension to our defence planning and strategy. The needs of the future will also be changing. With this in view, the Congress will appoint a High-Level Defence Reforms Committee to suggest a detailed operational plan for the reorganisation of the defence establishment in all its various aspects and for maximizing the effectiveness of defence expenditure". The Congress expressed its discontentment about the nature of post-Pokhran II India's defence and foreign policy and observed that it lacks clarity and objectivity. The party commented: "Our nuclear weaponisation programme remains a mystery. From all available evidence it seems more in the nature of enigmatic pronouncements than reality". After the Pokhran II nuclear tests, the government did not address several key issues. Firstly, on the question of weaponisation of Indian armed
forces, the government statement remained silent. The party remarked: "While Pokhran II has established our weapon capacity, and the question of weaponisation of our armed forces still remains. This has to be done keeping in view the national security and economic consideration. Unfortunately, the government has been vague, evasive and contradictory on the issue". The Congress has severely condemned the BJP led coalition government for not taking an objective and transparent stand on India's nuclear doctrine. As the draft nuclear doctrine was released at the time of elections and at that moment the BJP led coalition government lost the confidence vote, the Congress viewed that it was merely a device to achieve a political gain. Lashing at the BJP led government for formulating a nuclear policy, the present Union Minister for Defence, Pranab Mukherjee had stated: "a government which had lost people's mandate had no right to outline the policy. He described it as a poll gimmick and said that if the government wanted national debate then it should have brought up the matter after the nuclear blast in 1998." The party has warned that the nuclear testing by India will considerably complicate the management of nation's foreign policy and relations. It further criticized the BJP led coalition government that it carried out the nuclear tests without properly comprehending its likely implications. Natwar Singh commented: "A great deal of excitement has been caused with the five nuclear tests and for the foreign policy of the BJP government lays a great challenge."
a difference between foreign policy and diplomacy. Foreign policy is what you do and diplomacy is how you do it. On both accounts, I do not think, this government has taught through the consequences of its most recent action that is the dramatic explosions that have taken place".69

Congress is of the opinion that nuclear weapons testing by India has brought to the fore the question of maintenance of stable bilateral relations with Pakistan. Since the nuclear tests challenged the conventional security paradigm of South Asia based on India's superiority in conventional weapons, it was very essential to put the issue of nuclear weapons at the top of the agenda of dialogue with Pakistan and a sustainable process of dialogue at all levels with Pakistan is necessary to diffuse any tension. The late Congress leader Madhav Rao Scindia had underlined: "Nuclear Risk Reduction measures must be put into place and they should be treated independently whether your talks on the other issues succeed or fail. There should be a different track for this. I would urge the government to put in place machinery which can meet from time to time, exchange views, talk about safety measures and create a greater comprehension, at least, on this particular issue because the whole sub-continent is interested, all our neighbours are interested."70

The party viewed that nuclear weaponisation of India and Pakistan adversely affected the maintenance of stability in the region. Contrary to this, the conventional conflict still persisted as Pakistan is
struggling to achieve parity with India in nuclear capability. Did the nuclear test by Pakistan have any role in the Kargil invasion? The Congress party answers: “The plan was based on the fact that Pakistan had finally achieved parity with India after the nuclear tests the BJP conducted on May 11 and 13. This was done when Pakistan reciprocated with its nuclear tests in Chagai hills on May 28 and 30. The tests removed whatever restraints the Pakistani army had faced with respect to India’s conventional military superiority”. Hence, it appears that according to the Congress, despite the nuclear testing by India and Pakistan, the security situation in the region did not change for the better. But instead, it has worsened. In view of this, rational measures have to be taken in order to avoid any inadvertent use of nuclear weapons in a crisis situation. The Congress suggests: “Concrete steps have to be taken to ensure that the nuclear weapons available with India and Pakistan are never used. At the same time, we must never allow a nuclear arms race to develop in the region.” Further, the party believes: “Management of India’s relations with other nuclear weapons powers is an important task, given India’s nuclear weapons and missiles capacities. Special attention should be paid to enhance India’s credibility as a responsible nuclear weapons power and forging equations with other such powers to stabilize the international security environment.”

On the one hand, the Congress hailed the nuclear tests and subsequently, in its 1999 election manifesto claimed to maintain a
credible nuclear weapon deterrent when it comes back to power. It has criticized the BJP led government that the nuclear weapons test conducted by the latter has been instrumental in destabilizing the security situation of South Asia. It further held that the security situation of South Asia has acquired a cold war paradigm. It commented: “Without planning to the country then or subsequently what its compulsions were for abandoning the tried and tested posture towards the acquisition of nuclear weapons, Pokhran II was presented to the nation and the world as a fait accompli which took us over the nuclear weapons threshold. Our response with Pokhran II and the ambiguous doctrine of ‘Minimum credible deterrence’ seem to have impressed neither the five traditional members of the nuclear club nor the Non-Aligned movement, nor indeed our neighbour.” If this was so, then what was the reason for the Congress to laud Pokhran II nuclear tests. It has been noted that the Congress has been an ardent champion of peaceful use of nuclear technology and on this ground, it justified its Pokhran I test. Even if it is assumed that the Congress hailed the tests as a technological attainment which would facilitate peaceful research, the justification may not gain much importance. The fundamental reason for this was that the BJP led coalition government clearly spelt out its intentions behind the nuclear tests that the tests were primarily directed to attain a credible minimum nuclear weapons deterrence.
Now, the primary question is what was the actual motivation behind Congress supporting the nuclear test and then taking a U turn and criticizing it. It appears that the Congress might have attempted to swim with the tide of domestic public opinion which depicted a hyper nationalistic mood in backing government’s move to test nuclear weapons. But subsequently, when the international opinion turned against Pokhran II and when Pakistan came up with its nuclear weapons tests disturbing the normal bilateral relations between India and Pakistan, leading to insecurity in the entire region, the situation might have compelled Congress to take a critical stand. Whatever it may be, it seems that, the party did not take a rational stand on the issue. Since the beginning it has been claiming that Congress is committed to India’s nuclear policy being directed entirely towards peaceful purposes and the 1974 tests were reflected as being done for entirely peaceful purposes. If this was the case, then how can the Congress government claim the credit of 1998 nuclear weapons test to itself that the primary groundwork had been done at the time of Congress government. Further, the Congress government maintains that after 1974 nuclear tests, their governments maintained strict restraint with regard to conducting nuclear tests. But it has come to light that: “twice under the Congress regime it was decided to carry out nuclear tests.” First around 1982-83 Indira Gandhi herself decided not to carry out test. Secondly, P. V. Narasimha Rao in 1995, held back the test because the preparations were detected by US satellites. Finally, the Congress’s views on disarmament appear to be
paradoxical after Pokhran II, because, it favoured the maintenance of a credible minimum nuclear deterrence. This idea runs through its 1999 and 2004 election manifesto. It may be questioned that how can nuclear weapons deterrence go hand in hand with nuclear disarmament? It may be viewed that Congress government in its nearly four decade rule did not clearly draw the outlines of India's nuclear policy. It has been sandwiched between two half baked notions of global nuclear disarmament and credible nuclear deterrence for India's national security.

**Bharatiya Janata Party**

The genesis of BJP's views on nuclear issue in Indo-Pakistan relations can be traced in the ideas of its predecessor the Jana Sangh. The party was of the opinion that keeping in mind the prevailing nuclear environment in India's neighbourhood, the declining security situation in the region and the cold war situation governing the affairs of South Asia after Pakistan's military alliance with the US, constrains India to attain a credible nuclear capability. In a meeting of eminent scientists, academics and politicians on India's nuclear policy, organised by the Indian parliamentary and scientific committee in May 1970 at New Delhi, several participants, urged the government to revise its policy and produce nuclear weapons. "They argued that India's prestige and national security depended on nuclear weapons. The Jana Sangh was the most vocal pro-bomb party." Its leaders vociferously argued in favour of India attaining a nuclear weapons
capability: “India exploded its first nuclear device in May 1974. Vajpayee was among the first to extol this decision.”77 Hence, since the days of Jana Sangh, the leaders who later became the members of the BJP were the strong advocates of nuclearisation.

Since its inception the BJP has always been in favour of India using its nuclear option by weaponising its nuclear capability. But at the same time, the party strongly counselled for nuclear disarmament. The party's position was that the ghastly arms race that existed between the two super powers indicated a dangerous prognosis for a mass destruction. The BJP believes: “It is incumbent on the super powers to move purposefully towards nuclear disarmament. What is at stake is not just their respective domains, it is the entire humanity.”78

On the global nuclear regimes the CTBT and NPT, the Bharatiya Janata Party has clearly stated its view that these global arrangements are not universal and they are based on discriminatory treatment. While the five declared nuclear powers can perpetuate their domination, the others lose their rights to attain any nuclear capability by conducting nuclear tests even for peaceful purposes. The party questions whether national security requirements differ from one country to another. The P-five have justified their possession of nuclear weapons on the pretext of their national security. Hence, India has the sovereign right to act according to the requirements of its national security. Articulating his views, L.K. Advani said: “We are unable to accept the thesis that the national security of some can
dictate even a continuation of nuclear tests that too despite the NPT, India's security requirements are such that they can always be relegated to a position of irrelevance. We regard the NPT and its recent extension and ratification as an iniquitous arrangement. India must reserve to itself all rights to take decisions as are in the interest of the nation".79

The BJP has opined that despite the end of cold war, the threat posed by nuclear weapons to humankind has not ceased because the declared nuclear weapons powers intend to perpetuate their domination by continuing the possession of nuclear weapons. The party feels what has worsened the situation is the attempt of some of the threshold nuclear weapons States, specially Pakistan to indulge in urging to attain nuclear weapons. In addition to this, citing China, the party viewed that it attempted to tilt the regional balance of power in its favour through the means of nuclear intimidation by virtue of its having a proven nuclear weapons capability. And hence, it is imperative to devise countervailing strategies like developing a credible nuclear weapons deterrent in order to face the challenge. L.K. Advani remarked: the end of cold war has not led to the end of nuclear threats to the world. He viewed: "Globally there has been some welcome movement forward. Regionally, however, the problem of proliferation has got aggravated. With Pakistan self-declaredly a nuclear weapons State, given the reality of a nuclear People's Republic of China and the aspirations of some nations in the Gulf, and
the turmoil and uncertainty within the Commonwealth Independent States, India has to address itself to this question principally as one of national security concerns. We cannot acquiesce in any effort to “contain India” our policy in this regard is dictated by continuity and more so, by a need for deterrence against aggression.”

The BJP leaders have consistently claimed that they share India’s commitment to global nuclear disarmament. The party has through the years expressed its resolve to work for the achievement of global nuclear disarmament and it has been viewed that nuclear disarmament will protect India’s vital security interests “For the last half century, India has consistently pursued the objectives of international peace along with equal and legitimate security for all through global disarmament. India has, over the years, sought to enhance its national security by promoting global nuclear disarmament, convinced that a world free of nuclear weapons enhances both global and India’s national security.”

Right from the days of Jana Sangh, the BJP vociferously articulated security threat perception from China and Pakistan. The party strongly held the position that due to India’s adversarial India’s relations with China and Pakistan, their nuclearisation naturally bears considerable implications for the security and territorial integrity of India. The party criticized India’s foreign and defence policy for lacking in vigour to address the challenges posed by the overt nuclearisation of China and the covert endeavour of Pakistan in their
path of nuclearisation. It believes: "For over four decades India's foreign and defence policies have lacked clarity and are devoid of objective understanding of the conditions of the world. India did not wake up when China after humiliating her in 1962 went on to become a nuclear power in 1964. Even now in the light of Pakistan emerging as a nuclear weapons State, the BJP has demanded that India must exercise its nuclear option so as to meet any threats to its security".82

The BJP condemns Pakistan for disturbing the security environment in South Asia by its ambition for obtaining nuclear weapons' capabilities. The party opines that due to such delirious motives pursued by Pakistan, India is compelled to restructure its defence policy in order to meet challenges. In the light of this, the BJP strongly argues in favour of India exercising its nuclear option for safeguarding India's national interest. The BJP states: "It is committed to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. At the same time, the BJP cannot unilaterally abjure the availability of options to the country. It retains the right to assess the requirements of the safety of Indian nation and its people in the light of its own perceptions".83

The BJP is of the view that the primordial challenge to India's national security and territorial integrity is from Pakistan. Emergence of Pakistan as a covert nuclear power bolstered BJP's notions and as an opposition, the BJP insisted that in the light of security situation, India should exercise its nuclear option. Expounding its views the party observed: "Pakistan is now a nuclear weapon State and this
The fact changes the military equation in Hindustan Peninsula. The Government of India must take any and all measures including the exercise of nuclear option to meet Pakistan's challenge to India's territorial integrity.⁸⁴

Hence, the BJP consistently counseled in favour of India exercising its nuclear option, on the grounds of perceived danger from adversaries in the neighbourhood. L.K. Advani argued: "So far as the BJP is concerned, it would like to reiterate its view that against the background of China and Pakistan having become nuclear power, national security warrants that India too must develop a nuclear deterrent of its own."⁸⁵ In this regard, the BJP's 1996 election manifesto promises: "The BJP will set up a national security council; re-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons."⁸⁶ This long standing threat perception to the security of India's territorial integrity, allured the party when it came to power as the leader of coalition government at the center in 1998 to exercise its nuclear option and conduct nuclear test at Pokhran.

The Bharatiya Janata Party celebrated the tests as a remarkable achievement of the scientific establishment and it viewed that it was a bold and rational decision. It claimed: "The BJP national executive hails the successful nuclear tests conducted by the BJP led government as a bold and decisive decision in the right direction. Pokhran II has not only demonstrated that India's indigenous scientific talent is second to none but also provided the nation with a
deterrence capability. For long India has had genuine security concerns. These concerns, neglected for more than two decades, have been addressed.\textsuperscript{87} When the economic sanctions were levied upon India, the BJP believed that the country has the courage and capacity to counter the challenge. The party said: "As expected economic measures have been taken against India for daring to challenge the discriminatory arrangements. But India’s spirit cannot be broken by sanctions or by initiating punitive steps. India has the strength and capacity to withstand and survive economic sanctions."\textsuperscript{88}

There were arguments that Pakistan conducted its nuclear tests plainly as a response to Pokhran II tests conducted by India. Cracking down these arguments in parliament A. B. Vajpayee then Prime Minister opined: "Some hon’ble members have said that, Pakistan conducted the tests in response to India’s tests. Is a nuclear test possible within a short period of 16 days?"\textsuperscript{89}

The critics of Pokhran II nuclear tests alleged the BJP led coalition government of destroying the democratic process of national consensus, by taking a unilateral decision to carry out nuclear tests. Repeating these allegations, A.B. Vajpayee defended his party’s decision in the parliament by reminding the house on Pokhran I nuclear test of 1974. He maintained: "The whole country had welcomed Indiraji’s decision of granting permission for conducting tests. Her decision was not a collective decision. She did not consult
the opposition for conducting the tests. But her decision was right and was in the interest of the country’s security."^90

Thus the emergence of Bharatiya Janata Party in the mainstream of Indian polity indicates qualitative changes in the debate over the country’s nuclear policy. The party was the forerunner among those who advocated nuclear policy directed towards weaponisation right from the days of its predecessor, Jana Sangh. The BJP’s advocacy on the nuclear issue considered India using its nuclear option owing to the security threats posed by the presence of nuclear neighbours. It can be opined that by articulating vociferously regarding the perceived security threats from China and Pakistan and championing the need for India going for nuclear weapons, the Bharatiya Janata Party defended its stand. The party seems to be instigating hyper nationalistic tendencies. It may be stated that such kind of a campaign may lead to extreme jingoism and it may foster feelings of animosity among people. Besides, the adherence of BJP to the idea of universal disarmament on the one hand and interspersing jingoistic arguments in favour of India developing nuclear weapons on the other, seems to be paradoxical. Hence, it may be viewed here that the party has not taken an objective stand on the issue pertaining to nuclear disarmament. Vajpayee expressed the concern that universal nuclear disarmament will enhance India’s national security.

There was a nationwide debate over whether or not the BJP led-coalition government should have taken the unprecedented step of
breaking the nuclear barricade and terminating the long standing ambiguity over India's nuclear policy. Unlike the 1974 tests, the Congress government claimed that they were done for peaceful purposes. It appears that the BJP led coalition government exaggerated upon its stance. No doubt, there is a long drawn security threat to India from its hostile neighbour Pakistan and it was amplified when the latter acquired nuclear capability but the prospects of Pakistan using nuclear weapons against India seemed to be bleak, simply because of the devastating effects of such an adventure, not only upon whom it is used but on the user too. In addition, there is a strong international opinion against nuclear weapons after the catastrophe of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The same could be said apropos China. "Notwithstanding the adversarial relationship that has existed between India and China, there has not been a single instance of nuclear threat or blackmail by China against India despite a long-standing border dispute. There has been no ideological confrontation between the two nations like the one that existed between the US and Soviet Union during the cold war years. India has been living with the Chinese bomb since 1964."\(^9\) Hence, the claims of the BJP led coalition government that threats to India's security made it to conduct the tests. "In the more than five years since India and Pakistan in that order declared themselves nuclear weapons States, there has been no evidence that the acquisition of nuclear arms has strengthened security in South Asia."\(^9\) Speaking in the Lok Sabha, I.K.Gujral, former prime minister believed: "There was no security
compulsion for doing the tests, I am saying this because I was the prime minister, I am saying this because I knew everything, I am saying this because in this country only the prime minister is the privy to certain secrets which nobody else is. And I say this with a sense of responsibility that there was no security compulsion for performing the test."93

Finally, after the BJP led coalition government conducted the nuclear tests, it did not make an attempt to address several basic questions that emerged in the aftermath of the tests. Prominent among them were the questions of formulation of India's nuclear policy, the problem of nuclearisation of the armed forces and setting up of nuclear command and control. The BJP led coalition government seems that it does not answer these questions satisfactorily.

Janata Party

The short period of the Janata Party government at the center constrained the party from widely articulating its views on nuclear policy. It does not maintain its party documents systematically. Whatever it made available have been used to make some observations on its attitude on nuclear issues.

It may be noted that the Janata Party was totally aversed towards nuclear technology, be it even for peaceful purposes. Immediately after it assumed office at the center in 1977, the then prime minister Morarji Desai stated in his first press conference on
March 24, 1977: "If it was not necessary to have nuclear explosion for peaceful purposes, then it should be never done." However, its policy position on nuclear issue demonstrated lack of objectivity and consistencies. Desai stated: on May 15 in another press conference: "If a peaceful nuclear explosion was necessary, India will do it. But we will not do in hide and seek manner. We will tell the people that we are doing and let them come and witness and the use will also be open equally to others."95 "There was also an effort to demonstrate India's genuine intention about the future explosions, if any, being for purely peaceful purposes."96 There was a further shift in this position when the then prime minister told the Lok Sabha on 13 July: "No further explosions are necessary to be carried out now by India for purposes of harnessing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes."97 On 22 December, Desai reaffirmed in the Rajya Sabha: "India was committed not to explode any nuclear device for peaceful purposes or make any nuclear weapons."98 "The shift in India's stand was there for any one to see."99

However, the Janata Party's position on the NPT seemed to be firm and consistent. In this regard, Margaret Alva viewed: "As far as the NPT is concerned, we congratulate the government on the bold stand taken that we will not sign the NPT because it is discriminatory."100

Thus it may be viewed that the nuclear policy of Janata government did not bear much impact on India's nuclear programme in
terms of content and direction. It lacked a vision and clarity which was needed at that moment when India had conducted peaceful nuclear explosion and there was a widespread national and international debate pertaining to India's nuclear policy after 1974 tests. Hence, it may be viewed that the study of Janata Party's nuclear policy does not assume much significance. Ultimately, commenting about the party's nuclear policy, P.R. Chari viewed: "The nuclear policy of the Janata Party, which came to power in 1977, as forestands: "India would utilise atomic energy for peaceful purposes only, and would not manufacture nuclear weapons under any circumstances; India would not sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty unless the nuclear weapons powers renounce these weapons; inspection of autonomously controlled or domestically established nuclear facilities would not be permitted; and peaceful nuclear explosions would not be conducted and their utility is questioned. The first three stance of the Janata government's nuclear policy correspond to previous government's position, but a sharp difference is evident in its attitude towards peaceful nuclear explosions. This aspect of the Janata Party's policy has been criticized as a surrender of national autonomy by opposition groups."101

Janata Dal

The problem of analysing the Janata Dal's nuclear policy is the same as that of the Janata party. Due to its short existence in the national scene, and its subsequent degeneration the party experienced,
it was not able to play any vital role in the formulation of nuclear policy. The party was not able to comprehensively articulate its views regarding nuclear matters in the wake of the instability and crisis of identity, it has been facing. Hence, the Janata Dal’s nuclear policy was not clear. However, with the help of the statements of some JD leaders and a few party documents, an attempt has been made to understand Janata Dal’s stand on nuclear policy.

The Janata Dal opposes the CTBT and NPT and term them as discriminatory arrangements. Defining its position the party stated: “The Janata Dal will not accept any discriminatory approach on matters pertaining to international armament and disarmament questions. Therefore, the Janata Dal will continue to oppose the NPT and its adjunct the CTBT as they are discriminatory and aimed at the preservation of the hegemony of a few countries. At the same time, we will continue to work for a comprehensive and complete nuclear disarmament through the elimination of all weapons in the world.”

It may be noted that the position of Janata Dal on nuclear policy plagued with internal contradictions. For instance, the attitude of the party towards CTBT is not consistent. The party stated in its manifesto that it is totally opposed to the arrangement since it is discriminatory. But the opinion and comments of various leaders of the party do not reflect unanimity of opinion. For example, if the former Janata Dal president Lalu Prasad Yadav, opposed signing CTBT and said: “India should not sign the Comprehensive Test Bank
Treaty [CTBT] under any pressure."¹⁰³ I.K. Gujral the former prime minister called upon the government to sign the CTBT.¹⁰⁴ Gujral, a senior Janata Dal leader had differences with the party’s other leaders. When Gujral was the minister of external affairs in the Janata Dal led United Front government, he had indicated: “We will maintain our position and not to sign CTBT.”¹⁰⁵ Here, Gujral’s views on CTBT is self-contradictory.

Further, the views of various leaders of the JD on Pokhran II nuclear tests are also contradictory in nature. Senior Janata Dal leader and former prime minister Deve Gowda supported the tests. “He Congratulated the scientists for successfully carrying out the nuclear tests at Pokhran.”¹⁰⁶ But at the same, Deve Gowda viewed that the decision to carry out the tests was politically motivated. In a latter written to the then prime minister A. B. Vajpayee, Gowda termed: “The decision to conduct the nuclear test is a political decision.”¹⁰⁷ Speaking in the same tone and criticizing the Pokhran II nuclear tests as a political gimmick guided by partisan considerations, I.K. Gujral commented: “There may be another consideration, there may be political considerations, there may be partisan consideration. But security consideration was definitely not there.”¹⁰⁸ In the ultimate analysis, it may be viewed that due to paucity of adequate literature party documents regarding the attitude of Janata Dal towards India’s nuclear policy, we have been constrained to make a comprehensive analysis of Janata Dal’s position on nuclear issue. An assessment of
the statements made for various leaders indicates that consensus does not exist in the party.

**Communist Party of India**

The essence of the CPI’s views on nuclear policy is its anti-American attitude. The policy pronouncements of the party focus more on condemnation of American imperialism. The party views that the world has reached the brink of destruction due to the threat of a nuclear war, only because of the US’s imperialist machinations. The party exhibits solidarity with the communist fraternity, like China and Russia. In this context, the party commented: “Bush’s nuclear posture review calls production and use of a new generation of nuclear weapons directed against China, Russia and five other nations. To wage this never-ending war, Bush administration has asked for a 48 billion dollar increase in the military budget including funds for the development of his so-called missile defence programme of nuclear weapons in space. The 18th Congress of the CPI condemns the imperialism’s nuclear war policy.”

The CPI opposes the global nuclear regimes, the CTBT and NPT and stated those who are pleading for the CTBT and NPT are against nuclear disarmament. The party has dubbed them as an attempt on the part of US to perpetuate its domination. Defining its position, the party said: “The recent New York Conference on NPT has unanimously decided on indefinite extension of the NPT. It means
that the signatories to the NPT have consciously opted out of any nuclear disarmament policy and the concept of the CTBT has been buried fathoms deep."\textsuperscript{110}

The CPI criticized the BJP led coalition government's decision to carry out the nuclear tests at Pokhran as a politically motivated decision and reflects the party's myopic vision of security. The party holds the view that in doing this, the government not only has ignored the actual problems of the country, but the tests instigated Pakistan to reciprocate with its own tests, resulting in an arms race in the region, having adverse ramifications upon the bilateral relations of India and Pakistan. The party was critical. According to it: "obsessed from its very birth by the thought that the possession of nuclear weapons would symbolize a strong and powerful India, the BJP government hastened to carry out the Pokhran tests soon after it came to power forgetting the fact that it was to eliminate poverty and economic distress and strengthen economic might and social stability. The theory of credible nuclear deterrence only gave false sense of security and was even responsible for neglect in other aspects of strengthening security, both military and economic."\textsuperscript{111}

Ultimately, in conclusion it may be said that the CPI viewed the entire nuclear question from the prism of its anti-imperialist policy. The party holds that Indo-Pakistan relations have been vitiated by the imperialist forces and it is one of the reasons for the nuclearisation of the region. But paradoxical to its calls for universal nuclear
disarmament, the party supports the creation of a nuclear free zone in South Asia. It is contradictory to the official Indian position of a global approach to nuclear disarmament. From a long time, the Indian government, be it any party, has favoured a universal nuclear disarmament and opposed a regional, that too a South Asian perspective of nuclear disarmament. This is because, Chinese nuclear weapons capability has been haunting the Indian power elite since the 1962 debacle of subsequent Chinese nuclear test of 1964. The Party believed: "India should pursue a policy of universal nuclear disarmament and a nuclear free zone in South Asia."\(^{112}\)

**Communist Party of India [Marxist]**

The CPI [M]'s views on the nuclear issue is based on its anti-imperialist attitudes. The party criticized that America is attempting to impose its imperialist domination upon India by forcing India to sign the CTBT and NPT. The party noted: "The USA has mounted sustained pressure to force India to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty or a regional multilateral treaty on proliferation."\(^{113}\) The party criticized the BJP government as pro-American in its nuclear policy. It observed: "The Vajpayee government is not moved by any anti-imperialist principles. It is willing to sign the CTBT to appease the US."\(^{114}\) Further, the party commented that the BJP led government is pursuing a pro-imperialist policy abandoning the fundamental principle of India's foreign policy that is Non-Alignment. The criticism of Communist Party of India [M] was: "Within a short
period, the BJP-led government has reversed the course of India's foreign policy, whose foundations were based on Non-Alignment and independence in decision making. After the Pokhran tests, faced with international isolation, the Vajpayee government began succumbing to US pressures. In its anxiety to get acceptance as a nuclear weapon power, it conducted an eight-month long secret diplomacy through Jaswant Singh-Strobe Talbott talks, unprecedented in India's diplomatic history. The Vajpayee government refused to condemn the US missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan.115

The CPI[M] severely condemned the nuclear tests carried out by the BJP-led government and commented that the government was unable to give a rational justification for the need to conduct the same. Further, the party believes that the BJP was driven by communal intentions while carrying out the tests. Senior CPI [M] leader Harkishan Sing Surjeet noted: "The BJP led government is yet to come out with a statement clarifying the need and the threat perception that forced it to go in for a major policy reversal and conduct the five underground tests of nuclear devices at Pokhran. In fact, the RSS and BJP's predecessor, the Jana Sangh, have been demanding that India should make the nuclear bomb. This fits in with the RSS-Hindutva ideology and scheme of things."116

The CPI [M] criticized the BJP government that it is following a policy of nuclear brinkmanship against Pakistan. Further, the party condemned the BJP government that it is not talking in one voice on
nuclear issue. In this context, the party viewed: "The politbureau of
the CPI [M] strongly criticizes the statement made by the then home
minister L.K. Advani, linking the finding of a lasting solution to the
Kashmir problem to India becoming a nuclear weapons State. It is
perfectly legitimate to take firm measures to deal with such activities
in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, but to indulge in nuclear saber-
rattling to deal with Indo-Pakistan relations is totally unwarranted,
which can lead to dangerous consequences. India is prepared to use
the nuclear issue as a factor in settling disputes with neighbours."\(^{117}\)

The CPI [M] condemned the coalition government for
disturbing the security situation of the sub-continent by its decision to
weaponise India's nuclear capability, because of which Indo-Pakistan
relations have been strained. Due to this, a nuclear arms race has
been instigated in the sub-continent. The party remarked: "The
decision of the BJP-led government to go in for nuclear weaponisation
after the tests in Pokhran in May, 1998, marked a dangerous new phase
in India's external and nuclear policies. It has created the situation
for a nuclear arms race in the sub-continent with Pakistan responding
to India's nuclear tests."\(^{118}\) The CPI [M] condemned the BJP-led
government that it had entirely changed the long-held India's nuclear
policy by its endeavour to weaponise the country's nuclear capability.
The party described: "The Vajpayee government has surreptitiously
and illegitimately reversed long-standing nuclear policy of the
country."\(^{119}\) The party believes that the nuclear tests internationalized
India's bilateral issues and India has become more vulnerable to imperialist pressures. Defining its position, the party indicated: "The Vajpayee government's policy of nuclear weaponisation after the Pokhran tests, in May 1998 has made India more vulnerable to imperialist pressures. The US is playing the role of arbiter in the Indo-Pakistan nuclear equations."\(^\text{120}\)

The party is of the opinion that due to the nuclear tests by India and the subsequent response of Pakistan, the strategic equations of the region has shifted from a favourable position to India to a situation of parity with Pakistan. The party viewed: "All that the BJP achieved was to have brought Pakistan on an equal footing with India in the international arena. Pakistan was inferior to India on various counts, particularly in the sphere of conventional weapons, but once Pakistan responded to Pokhran II with nuclear tests in Chagai, it achieved nuclear parity erasing India's superiority in conventional weapons. Pokhran II, therefore, only enhanced the status of Pakistan at India's detriment."\(^\text{121}\) "To deal with the situation the party has urged the government to "Open talks with Pakistan for de-nuclearised environment in South Asia."\(^\text{122}\) The party claims that the BJP's justification that nuclear tests will strengthen India's national security is based on faulty evaluation of security situation in the region which has not been modified due to nuclear tests. The party notes: "The one year since the Pokhran tests have amply shown the fallacy of this decision. India has not emerged stronger, but weakened by this
adventurist policy. India found itself isolated internationally from its friends and the Non-Aligned community of nations. With the retaliatory tests conducted by Pakistan in Chagai, the two countries were set to enter into a nuclear arms race.”

Thus the CPI[M]’s views on nuclear issue in Indo-Pakistan relations are based on the twin notions of anti-imperialism and anti-communalism. The party believes that the nuclearisation of the sub-continent is engendered in the communal factor and the implications of the process of nuclearisation symbolized that there is a return to imperialist intervention at the cost of India’s sovereignty. The party is much concerned with the economic repercussions of nuclear tests. The party argued that to achieve a nuclear weapons status, the BJP led government has accepted to surrender India’s national interest in the hands of imperialist USA, by expressing its inclination to sign CTBT. Not only that the party believes that the post-Pokhran II India’s foreign policy demonstrated a marked deviation from the fundamental principles of India’s foreign policy that is Non-Alignment. Finally, the party appears to have a pro-Chinese tilt. This was demonstrated by the party’s criticism of the BJP government for naming China as the principal reason for carrying out nuclear tests. The party viewed: “The letter Vajpayee wrote in defence of Pokhran II, to US president Clinton naming China as a country that possesses nuclear weapons and threatens India was an exaggerated threat perception at a time when for over a decade, the process of
normalization of relations with China was proceeding. Such a normalization was in the interest of India for that reason successive governments had pursued it. With this single unprovoked action, the Vajpayee government had soured these relations."

An analysis of the approach of various political parties on the nuclear issue indicates that a substantial degree of consensus exists among the parties on nuclear issues. For instance, all the parties adhere to the long-held Indian principle of universal nuclear disarmament. The parties have, in one voice, criticized the discriminatory global regimes, the NPT and CTBT. The parties agree that Pakistan's paranoiac urge to acquire nuclear weapons is dangerous to India since Pakistan's national security paradigm is primarily governed by Indian factor. Naturally, the nuclear weapons of Pakistan seems to be directed towards India. Hence, almost all the parties appear to have a belief that the nuclear issue is an important component in the ambit of bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. But regarding China, it is only the BJP that has expressed security threat perceptions to India. In this regard, the Congress, the Janata Party and the Janata Dal appear to have maintained silence. Anyway, the communist parties have severely criticized the BJP-led government that it has exaggerated the China factor. Pokhran II nuclear tests were a significant event in the broad history of India. They provoked an unanimous opinion from almost all political parties and the latter came out in support of the test and hailed it as a great
technological breakthrough by Indian scientists. But contrary to this, all the political parties criticized the BJP government’s timing of the test. They questioned the rational behind the tests and severely criticized the post-Pokhran II nuclear and foreign policy pursued by the BJP-led coalition government. The left parties opposed the nuclear tests from all perspectives.

However, it is observed: “The attitudes of political parties are governed by their party interests and it cannot be termed as entirely unbiased.” Further, “The opinions of political parties are oscillating in nature. Oscillating in the sense that they are subjected to changes by the situational variables.” For example, the political parties’ position on nuclear disarmament is paradoxical. On the one hand, the parties call for a global approach for attaining the goal of universal nuclear disarmament, and they are totally opposed to a South Asian model of nuclear disarmament. But, on the other hand, when it comes to the matter of security, the parties have taken a regional outlook and viewed that India has a perceived security threat within the South Asian region, specially from Pakistan. The Chinese factor has also been highlighted. Hence, the logic of the stand may be questioned. “When there is a perception of a grave security threat within the region, will it not be judicious to evolve a regional model of nuclear disarmament or de-nuclearisation? No party has spelt out any threat perception from either the US or UK. Then will it not rational to initiate disarmament measures first within the region and
then speak of universal disarmament because charity begins at home."\textsuperscript{127} It seems that the political parties have not been able to evolve a consensus on a comprehensive nuclear policy for India though the draft nuclear doctrine has been proposed but it has been left languishing without making any attempt to initiate a national level debate on the nature and implications of the doctrine. Political parties have only criticized the proposed nuclear doctrine but do not seem to have come up with an alternative. Political parties may take up the task of initiating a national debate on this matter in order to evolve a national consensus."\textsuperscript{128} Thus it is felt that Indian political parties criticize for the sake of criticizing and they do not come up with alternatives.

After a long time, Indian political parties have again, engaged themselves in a debate over India’s nuclear policy. The debate is expected to gain a momentum in the coming days. On 16\textsuperscript{th} December 2004, this debate was revitalized in the Rajya Sabha. It was in the wake of the present foreign minister in the UPA government, Natwar Singh’s remarks in an interview to a South Korean newspaper. Jaswant Singh a senior BJP leader and the present leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha, expressed strong reservations over the statement made by Natwar Singh. Jaswant Singh viewed: “Natwar Singh’s statement had broken a tradition followed by successive governments and taken our domestic policies to foreign shores. According to him, to say that the national domestic alliance government had entered into
a nuclear stand-off with Pakistan belittled the totality of the country’s nuclear programme.”

In Rajya Sabha, replying to Jaswant Singh, the prime minister of the UPA government Manmohan Singh said:

“There is no uncertainty on the country’s nuclear policy. India is a nuclear power and a responsible nuclear power.”

In his assessment, the minister’s remarks must have been in the context of replies to questions from the journalists and it was not a policy statement. Responding to Mr. Jaswant Singh’s query on the continuity of foreign policy, Manmohan Singh emphasised: “India’s defence and foreign policy were decided on continuity and consent and need to be kept out of national politics.”

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