CHAPTER III
NUCLEARISATION OF SOUTH ASIA: INDIAN PERCEPTIONS OF PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

The nuclearisation of South Asia has become an integral part of the security discourse in the region. The Pokhran nuclear tests of India in May 1998, followed by Pakistan's Chagai tests, set the stage for a renewed nuclear debate in South Asia. Threat perceptions continued to be reinforced by these nuclear tests, with both Pakistan and India showing no restraint, which could help foster peace and harmony in the region. This chapter seeks to examine the Indian perceptions of Pakistan's nuclear programme focusing particularly on that of the government, political parties and the strategic community, and also incorporating their approach to nuclear weapons in general. Emphasis has been placed on the nuclear tests of 1998, the period May-July having been selected for content analyses of Indian newspapers to be taken up in the succeeding chapters. An introductory overview of the nuclear policies of both India and Pakistan has also been provided, focusing particularly on the latter, taking into consideration the thrust of the study.

India's Nuclear Policy

Until the mid-1990s, India was a strong critique of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence and rejected the notion that nuclear weapons could be legitimate, strategically rational, or essential to the security of any country. It consistently criticised the international nuclear regime dominated by the existing five nuclear powers and perceived its own nuclear capability to be a form of defiance of that order. In all international fora, India advocated the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons
and in culmination of these efforts, it pleaded before the International Court of Justice in 1995 that nuclear weapons are illegal and incompatible with international law, and sought to ban their use, threat of use, manufacture or possession.\(^1\)

During the Nehru years, the dominant security discourse in India primarily echoed what he postulated to be the country's national interests and observers tended to accept Nehru's word as India's.\(^2\) Nehru viewed atomic energy as a harbinger of progress for India, while condemning its military use on moral grounds, calling the possession of this 'evil thing' a crime against humanity.\(^3\) In 1957, Nehru stated in the Lok Sabha: "We have declared quite clearly that we are not interested in making atom bombs, even if we have the capacity to do so and that in no event will we use atomic energy for destructive purposes."\(^4\) He also admitted:

> It is true that in the ultimate analysis, a country which has atomic power fully developed can use it for good or evil purposes. And no declaration which I can make today will necessarily bind people in future, but I do hope that we shall

---


create an atmosphere in this country which will bind every
Government in future not to use this power for evil proposes.5

The numerous speeches and writings of Nehru reflect this
perspective.6 The post-Nehruvian Indian nuclear discourse
witnessed a subtle shift from the categorical opposition to
nuclear weapons to a 'No Bombs Now' orientation, culminating
in the 1974 nuclear explosion. This period was marked by
India's quiet preparations to acquire a nuclear weapons
capability, while retaining the opposition to deterrence and
weaponisation.7 The Chinese nuclear test of 1964, which came
after India's defeat at the hands of China in 1962, had generated
an increasing public debate on India's nuclear policy, with
arguments for keeping the weapons option open, beginning to
gain legitimacy. In his speech following China's test, Homi J.
Bhabha, the chief architect of India's atomic energy programme,

5 Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, n.3, p.436; also see India, Lok Sabha,

6 As far back as 1955, Nehru was instrumental in getting Indian scientists
to study the physical and biological effects of nuclear explosions. See Nuclear Explosions and
they Effects, n.3; also see Speech in the Lok Sabha, 10 May 1954, in Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, n.4, pp.254-262;
Speech in the Lok Sabha, 10 August 1960, in Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, n.3, pp.435-440; India, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Development of
Nuclear Energy for Peaceful Uses: Policy, Programmes and Achievements
(New Delhi, August 1974), pp.11-16. Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik point out that an overwhelming number of references can be cited to
support these views of Nehru. However, some analysts see his rejection of
nuclear weapons to be less than categorical. See The Kargil Review
Committee Report, From Surprise to Reckoning (New Delhi: Sage, 2000); Itty Abraham, The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and
the Postcolonial State (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1999). Bidwai and
Vanaik argue that it is illogical to put inordinately heavy interpretation on
certain statements to conclude that Nehru was ambivalent about nuclear
weapons, when the evidence to the contrary, especially from well-
considered and carefully enunciated policy formulations, is massive and
persuasive. Nehru's actions, as well as the central thrust of his
reflections and pronouncements on the issue, support this premise. Any
inference regarding ambivalence can only be the result of interpretation,
rather than explicit unambiguous statements. See Bidwai and Vanaik,
n.1, pp.74-75.

7 Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, p.25.
stated that India too could conduct a nuclear test in 18 months. Although no change was articulated at the policy level, Bhabha's statements appeared to have set the tone for change. Speaking in parliament a month later, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri stated that India was willing to consider the use of nuclear blasts for peaceful purposes. New uncertainties were reflected in India's role and attitude to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) negotiations, in which it had initially played a significant role. In 1968 India refused to sign the NPT stating that the final draft of the treaty did not reflect its demand for a better balance between the differential obligations of the nuclear weapons-states signatories and the non-nuclear weapons-states signatories.

In April 1968, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stated in Parliament that India's nuclear policy was framed after due consideration of the national interest, specifically with regard to national security and that the events of the last twenty years clearly showed that the possession of nuclear weapons had not given any military advantage in situations of bitter armed conflict. Indira Gandhi, in her replies to questions in Parliament in 1972 and 1973, denied that there was any schedule fixed for a nuclear explosion, but made it clear that the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was constantly reviewing progress in the technology of underground nuclear explosion from both the theoretical and experimental angles. On 18 May 1974, at the height of a nation-wide railway

---

8 Shyam Bhatia, India's Nuclear Bomb (New Delhi: Vikas, 1979), pp.113-114.
11 See, for instance, India, Lok Sabha, Debates, Vol.20, No.31, 15 November 1972, col.49.
strike (led by George Fernandes, who was then a trade union leader), India conducted its first nuclear test at Pokhran.\textsuperscript{12} Indira Gandhi stressed that "this experiment was part of the research and development work which the Atomic Energy Commission has been carrying on in pursuance of our national objective of harnessing atomic energy for peaceful purposes"\textsuperscript{13} and that "our neighbours need have no fear."\textsuperscript{14} However, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) pointed out that the "issue is really one of intention since there is no technical difference between the initial stages of a programme to develop 'peaceful' nuclear devices and one to develop nuclear weapons."\textsuperscript{15}

Indian governments, over the years, strongly advocated nuclear disarmament, while at the same time justifying the country's right to keep the nuclear option open. Even during the Janata rule (1977-79), the then Minister for External Affairs, A.B.Vajpayee stated in the United Nations that India was not only against the proliferation of nuclear weapons but "against


\textsuperscript{13} India, Lok Sabha, \textit{Debates}, Vol.41, No.1, 22 July 1974, p.264.

\textsuperscript{14} See SIPRI, \textit{Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmament 1975} (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wikell, 1975) p.16. On 22 May 1974, four days after Pokhran-I, Indira Gandhi wrote to Bhutto to assure him: "I am aware that in popular parlance a nuclear explosion evokes an awesome and horrifying picture. However, this is because our minds have been conditioned by the misuse of nuclear energy for the development of weapons and by the use of these weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We in India have condemned and will continue to condemn military uses of nuclear energy as a threat to humanity." She emphasised that "it is strictly in this context that our scientists have launched on this experiment... There are no political or foreign policy implications of this test." Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{15} SIPRI, n.14, p.16.
nuclear weapons themselves"\textsuperscript{16} and that the "concept of a security system of which nuclear weapons represent the most dangerous and totally unacceptable component must be abandoned."\textsuperscript{17}

During the period 1983-93, India rejected a total of seven proposals by Pakistan for nuclear restraint and regional disarmament, on the grounds that it would only discuss nuclear disarmament in "global," "multilateral" fora, and in a "non-discriminatory" framework.\textsuperscript{18} However, in 1986, India joined the Five-Continent Six-Nation Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament.\textsuperscript{19} Following the May 1995 NPT Extension Conference, India maintained that as the conference did not extract a time-bound commitment towards disarmament from the declared nuclear states, such a commitment should be made in the context of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The debates over the CTBT were a turning point in India's nuclear policy. India began to contend that the proposed CTBT contained loopholes, and would not help to achieve the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Until early 1996, the nuclear discourse in India had not been linked with its national security

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{16} India, Ministry of External Affairs, \textit{Speech of External Affairs Minister A.B. Vajpayee on 4 October 1977 at the 32nd Session, 18th Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, New York}, www.meadev.nic.in.
\item \textsuperscript{17} India, Ministry of External Affairs, \textit{Speech of External Affairs Minister A.B. Vajpayee on 10 October 1978 at the 33rd Session, 29th Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, New York}, www.meadev.nic.in.
\item \textsuperscript{18} See Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n. 1, p. 70.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Among the various documents of the 'Six Nation Initiative' is the Joint Message of 28 February 1986, to U.S President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Union President Gorbachev which states: "As long as nuclear weapons exist, there can be no security for the world... That is why we feel it is incumbent on us to do all that we can to avert this threat, and to build a new concept of global security without nuclear weapons." See India, \textit{Ministry of External Affairs, Disarmament: India's Initiatives} (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1988), p.95; also see the Mexico Declaration in ibid., p.104.
\end{enumerate}
considerations. For instance, in March 1996, India’s Foreign Secretary Salman Haidar had stated at the Conference on Disarmament:

We do not believe that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is essential for national security, and we have followed a conscious decision in this regard. We are also convinced that the existence of nuclear weapons diminishes international security. We, therefore, seek their complete elimination. These are fundamental precepts that have been an integral basis of India's foreign and national security policy.20

This reflected the traditional Indian approach of not relying on nuclear weapons for security. The dominant nuclear discourse in India relating to the CTBT saw a gradual change in the run up to India’s May 1996 elections, and was characterised by populism, with political parties, sections of the Indian bureaucracy, the Indian press, and security analysts all converging to oppose the CTBT. All Indian political parties joined the anti-CTBT bandwagon, making it difficult for any party to back down on the issue. On 20 June 1996, India’s Foreign Secretary stated at the Conference on Disarmament, that “our national security considerations (have) become a key factor in our decision-making” and that the proposed CTBT was not “in India’s national security interest.” He also stated that India would not sign it in its “existing form.”21 For the first time, the government officially cited ‘national security’ considerations for retaining the nuclear option and invoked the relevance of


'deterrence.' The mainstream nuclear discourse in the country witnessed a complete turnaround thereafter.

**India’s Nuclear Programme**

A brief overview of India’s nuclear programme as distinct from its policy would be required for a better understanding of the ease with which it crossed 'the nuclear Rubicon' in 1998. M.V. Ramana argues that there are several instances when material activities suggest a completely different narrative from the statements of political leaders at the domestic and international levels. According to George Perkovich, during the period from 1947 to 1974, Indian scientists developed the technical means to produce nuclear weapons within a polity that had moral doubts and competing priorities. The first Indian nuclear reactor, Apsara, went critical in 1956 and from the mid-1960s India undertook the construction of nuclear power stations and large research facilities, and the establishment of independent 'unsafeguarded' sources of weapons-grade plutonium. Homi J. Bhabha used both his political power base and his personal relationship with Nehru to advance the nuclear power programme.

---

22 Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, p. 209.


26 See Itty Abraham, n.6; Dhirendra Sharma, *India’s Nuclear Estate* (New Delhi: Lancers, 1983).
Although, during the years following the 1974 tests, India did not conduct follow-up nuclear tests or build a nuclear arsenal, Indian scientists and engineers continued, often secretly, to develop nuclear weapon and ballistic missile capabilities. However, moral and political doubts, domestic turmoil and competing national and international priorities are perceived to have influenced India's leadership to refrain from enunciating nuclear postures and policies like the existing nuclear powers.\(^{27}\)

The Kargil Review Committee Report maintains that the Indian nuclear programme was weapons-oriented at least since 1983.\(^{28}\)

Claims have also been made of evidence of attempts by various Indian governments to carry out tests in 1981, 1983, 1984 and in 1995. Each time the preparations were brought to a halt, suggesting that the costs were considered too high for the gains expected at the time. Although a major shift had occurred at the ground level in India's nuclear preparations, there was no corresponding change in official policy pronouncements. India sought to develop its nuclear programme across a broad technological front that also included progress in the field of delivery systems. Work on space-launchers and rockets had begun in the 1960s, and by the early 1980s the basic technology required for missile systems in solid and liquid propulsion, control and guidance and, precision fabrication had been established.\(^{29}\)

In 1983, India launched the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme, which aimed to produce five kinds of missiles. By 1998, analysts believed India possessed

---

\(^{27}\) For further details, see George Perkovich, n.24, pp.190-352.

\(^{28}\) The Kargil Review Committee Report, n.6, pp.199 and 205.

roughly twenty-five ready-to-assemble fission weapons with several means for delivering them.\(^{30}\)

**Pokhran-II Nuclear Tests 1998**

In January 1998, elections to the Lok Sabha were announced. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) manifesto for the elections stated inter alia that if voted to power, the party would "re-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons."\(^{31}\) The BJP-led government came to power in March 1998 and on 11 May 1998 India tested three nuclear weapons at Pokhran, followed by two additional tests two days later. On the eve of the first test, Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes had raised concerns about Chinese designs and recent weapons deployment within the region.\(^{32}\) The official Indian press release of the Prime Minister after the nuclear tests stated that these tests "provide reassurance to the people of India that their national security interests are paramount and will be promoted and protected."\(^{33}\) India thus witnessed a transition from a state that campaigned "for nuclear disarmament and practised nuclear abstinence, to one that suddenly embraced the doctrine of nuclear deterrence and self-avowedly tested these weapons of mass destruction."\(^{34}\)

---

\(^{30}\) George Perkovich, n.24, p.2.


\(^{32}\) "China a bigger threat than Pak, says George," *The Times of India*, 4 May 1998.


\(^{34}\) Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, p.209.
The three important texts of official policy explanation for Pokhran-II are the Prime Minister's letter of 11 May 1998 to the United States President Bill Clinton,35 his *suo motu* statement in Parliament of 27 May 1998, together with the paper entitled “Evolution of India’s Nuclear Policy”36 that goes with it, and his “Statement Re: Bilateral Talks With United States,” made in the Rajya Sabha on 15 December 1998.37 N. Ram points out:

Together they comprise the BJP-led regime’s authoritative case for Pokhran-II and nuclear weaponisation. There are common points and overlapping arguments in these texts, but also some inconsistencies and contradictions. The most notable contradiction is between the more or less exclusive identification of China and Pakistan as security threats to India in the May 11 letter and the high ground claim in the December 15 statement that India’s concerns relating to disarmament and non-proliferation ‘go beyond the South Asian region, and involve a wider perspective.’38

35 Prime Minister Vajpayee’s letter to President Clinton after the nuclear tests in May 1998, which was leaked to the press states: “I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, specially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state. At the hands of this bitter neighbour we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years. And for the last 10 years we have been the victim of unremitting terrorism and militancy sponsored by it in several parts of the country, specially Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.” See “Text of Vajpayee’s letter to Clinton,” *The Hindu*, 14 May 1998.


Vajpayee’s statement to parliament in December 1998 also maintained that the tests were “a continuation of a decision taken near 25 years earlier.”\textsuperscript{39} In various interviews to the media, the Prime Minister pointed out that the “one and only reason for undertaking the tests was to ensure our security and to let the people of India and the world know that we have a credible deterrent.”\textsuperscript{40} Immediately after the tests, India indicated its willingness to being an adherent to some of the undertakings in the CTBT and to participate in the negotiations for the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).\textsuperscript{41} It was also claimed that there was a “strong national consensus supporting the Government’s decision to authorise these tests to protect India’s security.”\textsuperscript{42} In the wake of the tests, the statements made by the Indian government describe a new nuclear posture, of two parts: “insisting that India will have a minimum deterrent, on the one hand, and proclaiming support for nuclear restraint and disarmament, on the other hand.”\textsuperscript{43}

The Draft Nuclear Doctrine (DND) formulated by the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and released in August 1999 marked a further hardening of India’s nuclear posture since Pokhran-II. Enumerating its objectives, the DND called for an “effective, credible nuclear deterrence and adequate retaliatory

\textsuperscript{39} India, n.37.

\textsuperscript{40} See \textit{Outlook}, 25 May 1998; also see \textit{India Today}, 25 May 1998.

\textsuperscript{41} See \textit{Foreign Affairs Record}, n.33, p.37; also see Ministry of External Affairs’ Press Statement, 13 May 1998, in ibid., p.38.

\textsuperscript{42} Ministry of External Affairs’ Press Release, 15 May 1998 in ibid., p.38.

capability should deterrence fail." In January 2003 the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) summarised India's nuclear doctrine as to include the building and maintaining of a credible nuclear deterrent; a posture of 'No First Use'; and massive nuclear retaliation to a first strike. 45

Pakistan's Nuclear Policy

Pakistan's initiative to develop nuclear energy came from the Atoms for Peace proposal of President Eisenhower, which was submitted to the United Nations in September 1954. In 1956, Pakistan established an Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), which was intended to be a part of a new body for scientific and industrial research in Pakistan. 46 Since its inception in 1947, efforts to evolve a separate Pakistani identity were intricately tied to the portrayal of the Indian threat in the dominant political discourse in the country. 47 Despite this, and the PAEC's references to the Indian model of nuclear development, and the regular coverage about Indian nuclear plans, including speculation about Indian nuclear intentions, that was provided in the Pakistani press, Pakistan's political, diplomatic and

---


45 For the Press Release, see India, Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews Progress in Operationalizing India's Nuclear Doctrine, 4 January 2003 www.rajyasabha.nic.in.

46 The mandate of the PAEC was to plan and develop 'peaceful uses of atomic energy with special reference to survey, procurement and disposal of radioactive materials; planning and establishment of Atomic Energy and Nuclear Research Institute, installation of Research and Power Reactors, negotiations with International Atomic Energy bodies, selection and training of personnel, application of radio-isotopes to agriculture, health, industry, etc.' See Nasir Ahmad, "The Atomic Energy Commission," Pakistan Quarterly, Vol.7, No.3, Autumn 1957, p.14; also see Ashok Kapur, Pakistan's Nuclear Development (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p.36.

military elites in the early years did not concern themselves with the Indian dimension of the nuclear issue. Even during the early 1960s, although the threat from India and the construction of a Pakistani identity to counter it continued to be the central theme of the mainstream political discourse, the nuclear option was conspicuously absent in Pakistan's strategic discourse. This is evident in the writings and speeches of Ayub Khan, who headed the military clique that ruled Pakistan during 1958 to 1969.48

According to Bidwai and Vanaik, the parliamentary and public debate in India, especially the clamour for an 'Indian bomb' by several members of Parliament following the 1964 Chinese nuclear test appeared to have provided a stimulus to Pakistani decision-makers to favour the pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability.49 When India started reprocessing in 1964, PAEC experts recognised it as a significant technical event in the subcontinent. Writing in 2000, George Perkovich revealed that a "recently declassified U.S. government cable indicates that in November 1964, Ayub Khan had expressed his deep concern at the prospect of rapidly developing Indian nuclear capability which could be readily converted from peaceful to war-like purposes.50 In 1965 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto stated in an interview that if India produced nuclear weapons "then we should have to eat grass and get one, or buy one, of our own."51 Bhutto was associated with atomic energy as Minister for Natural Resources

48 Ibid., pp.72-74; also see Ashok Kapur, n.46, p.82.


during 1958-63, and Minister for Foreign Affairs during 1963-66.52

The 1965 war appears to have been a turning point in the reorientation of Pakistan’s security policy.53 According to Kapur, the technical baseline of the Pakistan Foreign Office advocacy of a nuclear option was the start-up of Indian reprocessing, which was reinforced by the political baseline of the defeat in the 1965 war. However, Kapur adds that there is no evidence that these Foreign Office reactions led to any change in the orientation of Pakistan’s nuclear policy. The peaceful character of the nuclear factor remained unchanged at the policy level. The PAEC was instrumental in vetoing the Foreign Office advocacy to develop Pakistan’s nuclear option. However, extraneous factors could have favoured rethinking about the nuclear question.54

Addressing the UN General Assembly in September 1965, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto described Pakistan’s security dilemma by asserting that it was a small country, “facing a great monster, a great aggressor always given to aggression.”55 In December 1966, Bhutto argued that for Pakistan,

52 Bhutto formed Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) in 1967 and joined the government of President Yahya Khan in 1971. From 1972 to 1977, he was the President of Pakistan.

53 Farzana Shaikh points out that the roots of this reorientation lay in “Pakistan’s disappointment at losing the diplomatic support of its longtime ally the United States, which was now engaged with India in containing China’s regional ambitions, and its shock over the suspension of US military aid to Pakistan.” Farzana Shaikh, “Pakistan’s Nuclear Bomb: Beyond the Non-Proliferation Regime,” International Affairs, Vol.78, No.1, January 2002, p.42.

54 Ashok Kapur, n.46, pp.55-56.

...the nuclear threat is real and immediate.... Pakistan will always find it difficult to quantitatively keep pace with India; but qualitatively we have maintained a balance in the past and will have to continue to maintain it in the future for our survival. It is for this reason that as Foreign Minister and Minister in charge of Atomic Energy, I warned the nation some time back that if India acquires nuclear status, Pakistan will have to follow suit even if it entails eating grass.56

General Yahya Khan who was President from 1969 to 1971, did not effect any change in the country's nuclear policy.57 In the 1970s, the nuclear factor gradually emerged to become an integral part of Pakistan's strategic discourse. Bhutto, as Prime Minister from 1972 to 1977, played an important role in bringing the nuclear issue into the political arena of Pakistan through his speeches, writings, and patronage of the PAEC. Nizamani points out that the salience of the nuclear option to counter the Indian threat, and by implication strengthen the Pakistani identity, was one of the hallmarks of Bhutto's politics.58 The earliest detailed discussion of the utility of the nuclear option to thwart the Indian threat appeared in Bhutto's book The Myth of Independence, in 1969.59 Describing the nature of the threats faced by Pakistan, and the reasons behind them, the nuclear option was introduced as the solution to meet these threats. Bhutto writes:


58 See Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, pp. 72-4.

All wars of our age have become total wars; all European strategy is based on the concept of total war; and it will have to be assumed that a war waged against Pakistan is capable of becoming a total war. It would be dangerous to plan for less and our plans should, therefore, include the nuclear deterrent. Difficult though this is to employ, it is vital for Pakistan to give the greatest possible attention to nuclear technology, rather than allow herself to be deceived by an international treaty limiting this deterrent to the present nuclear Powers. India is unlikely to concede nuclear monopoly to others and, judging from her own nuclear programme and her diplomatic activities, especially at Geneva, it appears that she is determined to proceed with her plans to detonate a nuclear bomb. If Pakistan restricts or suspends her nuclear programme, it would not only enable India to blackmail Pakistan with her nuclear advantage, but would impose a crippling limitation on the development of Pakistan’s science and technology.

We are, however, not immediately concerned with the question of a nuclear stalemate. Our problem, in its essence, is how to obtain such a weapon in time before the crisis begins. India, whose progress in nuclear technology is sufficient to make her a nuclear Power in the near future, can provoke this at a time of her own choosing. She has already received foreign assistance for her nuclear programme and will continue to receive it. Pakistan must therefore embark on a similar programme, although a nuclear weapon will be neither a real deterrent nor can it be produced in a few years. We must therefore write it off as a practical deterrent in any conflict with India in the near future.60

According to Nizamani, although Bhutto’s book did not invoke an international outcry or initiate a debate over the nuclear option within the country, it contained elementary arguments...

---

60 Ibid., p.153.
that would eventually turn into dogmas of the dominant security discourse.\^61 The 1971 war was a decisive event in terms of both the identity issue of Pakistan and its inability to deter India, which reinforced its sense of insecurity and accelerated its nuclear programme. The issues of identity, security, and threat were fused during this period. The nuclear factor entered into the dominant political discourse of Pakistan and the rhetoric of militant nuclearism also gathered strength.\^62 It is generally held that Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme gained momentum thereafter when Bhutto ordered the development of nuclear weapons at a secret meeting at Multan in 1972.\^63 At the same time, however, inaugurating the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant on 28 November 1972, Bhutto said:

> For our people atomic energy should become a symbol of hope rather than of fear. For this reason we would welcome if the entire subcontinent, by the agreement of the countries concerned, could be declared a nuclear free zone and the introduction of nuclear weapons banned.\^64

According to Gowher Rizvi, an important compulsion pushing Pakistan towards nuclearisation was that ever since the mid-1960s, it had lost hope of acquiring parity with India in conventional weapons and could not hope to match India's defence capability.\^65 Pakistan's worst fears about India's superiority in nuclear technology were confirmed by India's

---

\(^{61}\) Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, pp.78-79.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., p.17.

\(^{63}\) Farzana Shaikh, n.53, pp.42-3.


'peaceful' nuclear explosion of 1974. Bhutto declared that it was a "threatening," "fateful development." However, he added that Pakistan was "determined not to be intimidated" and would never fall prey to "nuclear blackmail" by India. Bhutto again vowed that his people would "eat grass to ensure nuclear parity with India."

During the parliamentary debate in June 1974, on the implications of the Indian explosion for Pakistan's security, Bhutto used the nuclear issue to depict political opponents as being less patriotic for having boycotted the debate (which was for reasons not related to the issue). Nuclear technology became linked to power, status, and national security during the National Assembly debates. Reminding the members of India's past role, Bhutto emphasised its evil designs and plots over the years, which culminated in the dismemberment of Pakistan. Given this history, Bhutto expressed doubts about Indian intentions, accusing it of "hegemonistic designs" in the subcontinent, and of having introduced a qualitative change in the security system of the region. Bhutto criticised previous governments, especially Ayub Khan's, for not paying due

---

66 The Pakistan Foreign Office stated that it was a development that 'cannot but be viewed with the degree of concern matching its magnitude by the world and more especially by India's neighbours. It assured the public of the measures taken by the government to face such a challenge. They included Bhutto's pleas to Ayub Khan in securing Karachi Nuclear Power Project (KANUPP), and his direct supervision of the PAEC since assuming power in 1971. \textit{Dawn}, 19 May 1974; also see Haider K.Nizamani, n.2, p. 85.

67 \textit{New York Times}, 20 May 1974; also see George Perkovich, n.24, p.185.


69 Haider K.Nizamani, n.2, p. 87.

attention to the nuclear option. Responding to Indira Gandhi's letter of 22 May, Bhutto denied any distinction between a peaceful and a military nuclear detonation and declared India's new military capability a permanent factor to be reckoned with. Bhutto then cancelled scheduled talks with India on normalisation of relations, and began to seek a nuclear security guarantee against the Indian nuclear threat, but his efforts were unsuccessful. At the United Nations General Assembly session on 28 October 1974, Bhutto proposed that South Asia be declared a nuclear weapons free zone. However, India opposed the proposal on the plea that the initiative for the proposal should come from the countries of the region and not the United Nations.

Pakistan announced plans to add up to twenty-four reactors by the year 2000 and acquire proficiency in all facets of the nuclear fuel cycle. It also signed a previously negotiated agreement with a French firm to construct a plutonium-reprocessing plant at Chashma. The key figure in organising this venture was Abdul Qadir Khan, a metallurgist by profession who has often been referred to as the 'father of the Pakistan bomb.' However, the new determination by the United States and others to block transfers of nuclear technology to non-parties to the NPT had its impact on Pakistan. Its plans to use French nuclear cooperation to provide technological infrastructure and training that could

71 Nizamani points out that by accusing a former general who ruled Pakistan for more than a decade, of committing fatal errors in ensuring national survival, "Bhutto was also establishing a link between past and future attitudes on the issue. That would continue to guide proponents of the nuclear option in the nuclear discourse in Pakistan." Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, pp. 86-7.

72 Foreign Affairs Record, Vol.20, No. 6, June 1974, pp.194-96.

73 For details, see Zafar Iqbal Cheema, "Nuclear Diplomacy in South Asia During the 1980s," Strategic Digest, Vol.22, No.12, December 1992, p.1584.
then augment production and operation of unsafeguarded plutonium production and separation plants for weapons purposes were circumvented.\textsuperscript{74} In 1976, the United States adopted the first in a series of anti-proliferation laws aimed at “capping, freezing and rolling back” Pakistan’s nuclear programme.\textsuperscript{75} Under “the dictates of the non-proliferation regime, Pakistan’s nuclear programme went underground.”\textsuperscript{76} It focused for the near term on producing highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons instead of plutonium. Pakistan clandestinely acquired the necessary supplies and equipment to build a gas centrifuge uranium enrichment facility at Kahuta.\textsuperscript{77}

During the controversial 1977 National Assembly elections and its aftermath, the politics of the nuclear issue was evident in the allegations and counter allegations about opponents’ patriotic and religious credentials. Bhutto linked the movement against his regime to a U.S. ploy to remove him in the wake of the nuclear reprocessing plant deal his government had struck with France. Pakistan’s nuclear programme was portrayed as a symbol of resistance by an independent Islamic state against the U.S. and Indian hegemonic designs.\textsuperscript{78} It was at this time that

\textsuperscript{74} George Perkovich, n.24, p.186.

\textsuperscript{75} These included the 1976 Symington Amendment barring U.S. aid to any country that imported uranium enrichment technology without accepting safeguards determined by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); the 1977 Glenn Amendment, which required the suspension of US aid to Pakistan in the event of Pakistan receiving or exploding a nuclear device; the 1985 Solarz Amendment barring aid to any non-nuclear weapon countries which illegally exported nuclear commodities from the United States for use in a nuclear device and the 1985 Pressler Amendment, which required US assistance to Pakistan to be made dependent upon presidential certification that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device. See Farzana Shaikh, n.53, p.32.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p.43.

\textsuperscript{77} George Perkovich, n.24, p.186.

\textsuperscript{78} Haider K.Nizamani, n.2, pp.90-91.
General Zia ul Haq came to power through a military coup in 1977. General Zia imprisoned Bhutto, who was later sentenced to death on charges of crimes committed during the previous election. From his death cell Bhutto wrote:

When I took charge of Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission, it was no more than a signboard of an office. It was only a name.... When I assumed charge of atomic energy, Pakistan was about twenty years behind India's programme. When I ceased to be Prime Minister, I believe, that at most, Pakistan was five to six years behind India... We were on the threshold of full nuclear capability when I left the Government to come to this cell. We know that Israel and South Africa have full nuclear capability. The Christian, Jewish and Hindu civilisations have this capability. The Communist powers also possess it. Only the Islamic civilization was without it, but that was about to change.... What difference does my life make now when I can imagine eighty million of my countrymen standing under the nuclear cloud of a defenceless sky? 

Nizamani asserts that Bhutto's writings from the death cell "shed light on the importance of the nuclear programme as a potent force in the game of proving one's patriotism and others' lack of it." In this context, Farzana Shaikh argues that although much of the evidence of a link between Pakistan and rich Arab states was tenuous and often based on conjecture, Pakistani leaders were also responsible for fuelling Western concern, as evidenced in the above statement by Bhutto. Concerns about an 'Islamic bomb' derived from a Western suspicion that Pakistan's nuclear capabilities could have been financed by radical and wealthy Muslim states in West Asia in

---


80 Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, p. 98.
exchange for technical information to enable them to embark upon their own nuclear weapons programmes.  

In its drive for legitimacy, the Zia regime was quick to capitalise on Bhutto’s nationalist stance on foreign policy matters, particularly the nuclear issue. The politics of the nuclear issue was utilised by the dominant discourse to legitimise the military regime and consolidate an Islamic identity for Pakistan to counter domestic and external enemies. In 1979 the effectiveness of the anti-proliferation laws was diluted by cold war imperatives that led the United States to abandon its non-proliferation goals for Pakistan’s cooperation as a ‘front-line’ state, during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Pakistan, however, did not abandon attempts to address its security problem with India through non-nuclear alternatives. During General Zia’s regime, Pakistan offered India a wide range of nuclear arms control proposals such as: the creation of a nuclear weapon-free zone (NWFZ) in South Asia; simultaneous signatures to the NPT by India and Pakistan; mutual acceptance of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards; bilateral inspection of each other’s nuclear facilities; joint declaration to renounce the development of nuclear weapons; and signing a regional test ban treaty. The NWFZ proposal was carried forward from the Bhutto era while the remaining five originated during Zia’s rule. Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo reiterated these proposals in 1986 and 1987, offering to accept binding obligations if India reciprocated. India’s rejection of Pakistani proposals for declaring a nuclear weapons

---


82 Haider K. Nizamani, n. 2, p. 17.

83 Zafar Iqbal Cheema, n. 73, pp. 1584-1585.
free zone in South Asia and international inspection of both countries' nuclear installations added fuel to the Pakistani security fears. Samina Ahmed points out:

Pakistan's support for the 'stabilisation' of the nuclear arms race in South Asia is clearly a bid to acquire de facto recognition of its nuclear weapons capability as well as international acceptance of an unverifiable freeze. At the same time, Pakistani proposals for other steps toward nuclear restraint, such as non-weaponisation and non-deployment of Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons and missile systems, would also work to Pakistan's advantage in view of India's more developed nuclear infrastructure.84

China played an important role in building up Pakistan's nuclear capabilities, particularly with regard to missile technology. It was in this context that the United States imposed military sanctions on Pakistan in August 1993, under the terms of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which sought to curb the transfer of Chinese technology for the development of Pakistan's medium-range missile programme. According to Farzana Shaikh, these sanctions, though partially lifted in 1995, did not alter relations between China and Pakistan or diminish China's support for Pakistan's nuclear capability.85

By the mid-1990s, the terms of Pakistan's engagement with India on nuclear issues had changed. The CTBT had emerged as a major issue. When it became clear in 1996 that India would not sign the treaty, Pakistan followed suit. Former Pakistan Ambassador Sajjad Hyder notes, "Pakistan's policy towards India is mainly reactive. This is as true of the nuclear issue as it is of


85 Farzana Shaikh, n.53, p.33.
our bilateral relations in general. Since India is not only our neighbour but is also far larger, it could not be otherwise."\textsuperscript{86}

On 6 April 1998, Pakistan tested the Ghauri missile, which it claimed had a possible range of 1500 kilometres with a payload of 700 kilograms.\textsuperscript{87} Pakistani leaders depicted the nuclear and missile programmes as "last-resort protection" against the BJP leaders' assertions of nuclear weaponisation. The Ghauri test was also supposedly used to signal that the BJP could not realise Vajpayee's campaign pledge to "take back that part of Kashmir that is under Pakistan's occupation."\textsuperscript{88}

After the Indian nuclear tests of 1998, Nawaz Sharif and other Pakistani officials maintained that they were not surprised by the tests, given their worst-case assumptions about the BJP. They declared they would take "necessary steps for addressing Pakistan's legitimate security concerns."\textsuperscript{89} Although Abdul Qadir Khan informed the top civilian and military leadership that Pakistan needed three days at the most to carry out its own tests, Pakistan waited for two weeks before responding accordingly. Sharif bought time to consider Pakistan's options and to evaluate the response of the international community and the political dynamics within his own country to determine how much leeway he had.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{86} Sajjad Hyder, \textit{Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Reflections of an Ambassador} (Lahore: Progressive, 1987), p.74.

\textsuperscript{87} George Perkovich, n.24, p. 409.


\textsuperscript{89} "Pak reserves right to take appropriate steps," \textit{The Hindu}, 12 May 1998; "Gohar speaks of 'matching response,'" \textit{The Hindu}, 13 May 1998.

\textsuperscript{90} George Perkovich, n.24, pp.418-19.
Initially the government sought strong political reassurances as well as significant material help from outside countries, particularly the United States. Bidwai and Vanaik point out that there were sound reasons for Islamabad being cautious. It was clear that Pakistan would be subject to economic sanctions given that its economy was far more externally dependent than India's. There was also something to be gained in terms of international prestige and political sympathy by not following India. Pakistan could hope more successfully than ever to mount a collective diplomatic campaign against India and thus broaden its own international support base on the Kashmir issue.\footnote{Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, p.112.} By the end of the week after India's tests, it appeared that Pakistan would refrain from testing its nuclear weapons. However, on 18 May, India's Home Minister, L. K Advani, called upon 'Islamabad to realise the change in the geo-strategic situation in the region and the world.' Whereas India subscribed to the principle of 'no first strike,' Mr. Advani invited Pakistan to 'join India in the common pursuit of peace and prosperity in the Indian subcontinent,' but also warned Islamabad that 'any other course will be futile and costly for Pakistan.'\footnote{"Roll back proxy war, Pak told," The Hindu, 19 May 1998.}

The response to this from Pakistan was one of strong nationalist outrage. More inflammatory statements by Indian leaders, in particular Defence Minister George Fernandes, including threatening "hot pursuit" of Pakistani troops and Pakistan-backed guerrillas into its territory, followed. The eventual Pakistani decision to respond with its own tests was therefore determined by a combination of external and internal factors. On the external front, Pakistan was disappointed that the...
opposition to the Indian action was not as sharp as it had hoped and that the United States did not declare its willingness to provide a nuclear umbrella to it. Neither did the financial-economic-military package offered to Pakistan by the United States measure up to its expectations. More significant in shaping the final decision, however, were domestic factors. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s political support had been steadily falling. His party, the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) was under pressure not only from the opposition Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) but also, more seriously, from an array of explicitly fundamentalist, right-wing Islamic forces that had been strengthened by the successes of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Sentiment among the officer corps was also strongly in favour of an equivalent Pakistani response to the Indian action. Thus, the Sharif government found it very difficult to confront such internal pressures, which secured public support for retaliatory tests.93

On 28 May 1998 Pakistan detonated five nuclear devices and on 30 May exploded a sixth one, which was apparently intended to establish parity with India by taking into account the latter’s Peaceful Nuclear Explosion of 1974. Nawaz Sharif contended:

Immediately after its nuclear tests, India has brazenly raised the demand that Islamabad should realise the change in the geo-strategic situation in the region’ and threatened that ‘India will deal firmly and strongly with Pakistan.’ Our security, and peace and stability of the entire region was thus gravely threatened. As a self-respecting nation we had no choice left to

93 Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n. 1, pp.112-114.
us. Our hand was forced by the present Indian leaderships' reckless actions.94

On 30 May, the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, in a press briefing announcing further tests, stated:

The fact of our existence as the neighbour of an expansionist and a hegemonistic power taught us the inevitable lesson that we must search for security. Contemporary history held only one lesson for us. The answer lay in credible deterrence. Today we have proved our credibility.... Our six nuclear tests are only for self-defence and only to deter aggression.... As a responsible country whose record of restraint and responsibility is impeccable, Pakistan today assures the international community and in particular India of our willingness to enter into immediate discussions to address all matters of peace and security including urgent measures to prevent the dangers of nuclear conflagration.95

On 2 June, Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Nations, Munir Akram, stated at the Special Session of the Conference on Disarmament:

Pakistan did not instigate or initiate the security crisis in South Asia. We were obliged by security considerations and national considerations to respond to India's provocative nuclear tests .... Our decision to test became virtually inevitable because of three factors:

-one, the steady escalation in the provocations and threats emanating from India - its declarations that it was a Nuclear

---


95 For text of the press briefing by the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan announcing further nuclear tests, 30 May 1998, see www.pak.gov.pk.
Weapon State, that it will use nuclear weapons, its threats against Pakistan, etc.

two, the weak and partial response of the world community to India's tests and threats. Obviously, no one was - no one is - willing to underwrite Pakistan's security. We have to do it ourselves. Therefore, criticism from some of our friends which enjoy the NATO security umbrella is not even-handed.

three, the realisation, that given the nature of the Indian regime, we could not leave them in any doubt about the credibility of our capability to deter and respond devastatingly to any aggression against our country or pre-emptive strikes against our facilities.... Pakistan is not interested in an arms race with India nor is Pakistan seeking the status of a nuclear weapon state. Our tests were defence oriented and meant to restore strategic balance in the region.96

The nuclear discourse in Pakistan following the Chagai tests is a continuation of the debate during the 1990s. Nizamani points out:

Street indignation that followed the Indian tests and jubilation that accompanied the Pakistani tests further consolidated the nuclear hawks' belief in the nuclear option as a symbol of national self-respect. The centrality of the Indian factor in determining the political as well as technical nature and direction of Pakistan's nuclear program became axiomatic.... Issues of national identity, strategic imperatives, and self-respect became dependent upon the immediate conduct of nuclear tests. Euphoria following the nuclear tests signified the

success of the dominant discourse in tying the above factors together.97

India’s test of its 2500 km range Agni-2 missile in April 1999 initiated a new round of the missile race in South Asia. Pakistan tested its Ghauri-2 missile, which it claimed had a range of 2300 km, arguing that the test was necessary to maintain the strategic balance. The following day Pakistan also tested its short-range Shaheen-1 missile.98

R. Rajaraman, M.V. Ramana and Zia Mian point out that in contrast to India’s nuclear doctrine, Pakistan does not have a comparable document detailing its envisaged nuclear policy, the closest to this being a newspaper article by three leading Pakistani statesmen, Agha Shahi, Zulfiqar Ali Khan and Abdul Sattar. They recommend: “In the absence of an agreement on mutual restraints, the size of Pakistan’s arsenal and its deployment pattern have to be adjusted to ward off dangers of pre-emption and interception.” They also suggest: “A high state of alert will become more necessary as India proceeds with deployment of nuclear weapons.” 99

Indian Perceptions of Pakistan’s Nuclear Programme

In the diverse socio-cultural and political context of India, there can be no monolithic Indian perception regarding Pakistan’s nuclear programme, or any issue for that matter. So also, the actual perceptions of policy makers would be difficult to identify.


This section however, identifies the broad contours of perception on Pakistan's nuclear programme by governments, political parties and the strategic community as enunciated in their speeches, statements and writings. Together with these sections of society, which have constituted the dominant discourse on the issue within the country, there is an overview of 'public opinion' and the counter-narrative on the issue.

Nizamani argues that "...Nehru's portrayal of Pakistan as an intimate yet puzzling Other on the one hand, and his depiction of China as a friendly country up until the 1950s have had a lasting impact on India's strategic discourse where Pakistan continues to be the ideal candidate to identify as an enemy in the Indian nukespeak." However, such identification in the government nuclear discourse began to emerge only in the 1970s. Responding to a Lok Sabha debate on the Non Proliferation Treaty in 1967, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, M.C. Chagla stated:

At present the threat is from China, - I do not know what the future holds for us, if you look at the world landscape - and Pakistan also, but Pakistan is not a nuclear country. These are the two countries from whom we might expect an attack and who are openly hostile to us.  

In the Lok Sabha in March 1972, the government was asked in writing whether the war with Pakistan "brought out the necessity for India to have more modern weapons" and, if so, "whether Government propose to embark upon the manufacture of nuclear bombs." The Minister of Defence, Jagjivan Ram, answered that army modernisation was an ongoing process and

100 Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, p.27.

that the government's policy with regard to production of nuclear weapons "is to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes only." He said, "the defence of our borders can be best ensured by adequate military preparedness based on conventional weapons. In their view the possession of nuclear weapons is no substitute for such military preparedness."\textsuperscript{102}

In explaining the nuclear tests in 1974, India did not cite any nuclear threat from Pakistan. Replying to the Lok Sabha debate on the 1974 explosion, K.C.Pant, Minister of Irrigation and Power emphasised that the test was a landmark for development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. He further stated:

... in 1972 we had talked of an experimental angle of the underground explosion. Against this background, it is difficult to appreciate Pakistan's somewhat hysterical reaction to this explosion. We know that Pakistan has its own internal difficulties, but if it wants to divert the attention of its people, we would be grateful if Mr. Bhutto would find something more credible. The way he has over-reacted to our explosion almost suggest that Mr. Bhutto feels that India made all the efforts of exploding a nuclear device underground, with the sole object of impressing him! He seems to be looking round for assurances against threat. But the basic question is, threat from whom? We have already declared categorically that our experiment was for peaceful purposes and our Prime Minister has conveyed this assurance to Mr. Bhutto. Therefore, there is in fact no danger or threat from India to Pakistan. The need to seek assurance or support against a non-existing threat is not there.\textsuperscript{103}

However, the Kargil Review Committee Report of 2000, in its section entitled "The 1971 War, the 'Enterprise' Incident and

\textsuperscript{102} India, Lok Sabha, \textit{Debates}, Vol.2, No. 5, 17 March 1972, cols. 130-31.\n
\textsuperscript{103} India, Lok Sabha, \textit{Debates}, Vol.42, No.14, 8 August 1974, col.287.
Pokhran-I," explicitly links these issues, stating that "The 1971 war and the US tilt towards Pakistan together constitute a milestone in the nuclear decision making process in India.... These developments would have been a deciding factor in India's security calculus that led to the peaceful nuclear explosion of 1974."104 Tracing the origin and development of Pakistan's nuclear policy, the Report locates its origins to the mid-1960s when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto negotiated the agreement to establish the Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology (PINSTECH) research reactor and sent Pakistani scientists abroad for training, while the weapons programme is said to have taken concrete shape at the 1972 Multan meeting. No correlation is seen to India's nuclear policy. However, while tracing India's policy, the report states that Pakistan's nuclear programme was initiated in 1972 with a view to deterring India and neutralising its conventional military superiority. It adds: "India's nuclear programme does not owe its origin to the threat emanating from Pakistan but developments there naturally impacted on the direction and pace of the Indian programme."105 Interestingly, the section on India's nuclear policy is placed immediately after that on Pakistan's and is entitled "Indian Response."106

The short-lived Charan Singh government of 1979 declared that India did not want to use nuclear energy for military purposes, "but we may have to reconsider our earlier decision if Pakistan goes ahead with the atom bomb."107 Achin Vanaik argues that

104 The Kargil Review Committee Report, n.6, p.203.
105 Ibid., pp. 184, 199, 206, 239.
106 Ibid., p.199.
this emphasis on the Pakistani threat was part of a more active
defence of keeping the option open.\textsuperscript{108} The Kargil Review
Committee Report states that by 1980, Pakistan’s strategy had
been “more explicitly directed at grabbing Kashmir at a time
when the Indian Government was weak and vacillating and, in
their view, liable to be paralysed by Pakistan’s nuclear
deterrent.”\textsuperscript{109} It further adds:

written accounts of foreign observers have highlighted that
since 1980, the Pakistani military establishment had
entertained ideas of deterring Indian nuclear and conventional
capabilities with its nuclear weapons and of carrying out a
brash, bold strike to liberate Kashmir which would go
unchallenged if the Indian leadership was weak or indecisive.\textsuperscript{110}

In 1980 Indira Gandhi had responded to parliamentary concerns
over Pakistan’s uranium enrichment programme by saying:
“While we do not have all we would like to have in the defence
sphere, we are trying to strengthen ourselves.” She then alluded
to the efforts by the Atomic Energy Commission to develop
uranium enrichment capacity.\textsuperscript{111} Indira Gandhi declared in the
Lok Sabha in 1981 that Pakistan’s development of nuclear
weapons would have “grave and irreversible consequences for
the subcontinent.” She added: “we are fully aware of our
responsibilities and the House can be confident that we shall
respond in an appropriate way to any development. Our own


\textsuperscript{109} The Kargil Review Committee Report, n.6, p.206.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111} George Perkovich, n.24, p. 224.
policy has been to use nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes and we crusade for the total banning of all nuclear weapons.”\textsuperscript{112}

In the context of the US economic and military aid to Pakistan in September 1981, the Kargil Review Committee Report quotes General K.M.Arif that Pakistan insisted that it would not compromise on either her nuclear programme or accept any external advice on internal matters. According to Gen. Arif, the US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, gave an assurance that Pakistan’s nuclear programme would not become the linchpin of the new relationship.\textsuperscript{113} The Report comments: “Thus, Pakistan not only obtained US economic and military assistance but also tacit acceptance of its nuclear weapons programme.”\textsuperscript{114} In March 1984, after Abdul Qadir Khan’s statement that Pakistan had the capacity to enrich uranium, the Minister of External Affairs, Narasimha Rao addressed a parliamentary request that the government respond to “the situation arising out of the reported nuclear collaboration between Pakistan and China.” Rao referred to reports from the United States that China had transferred sensitive nuclear weapons design information to Pakistan. Rao stated:

Keeping all aspects of the matter in view, we cannot but note with concern reports of contacts between Pakistan and China in the nuclear field. I would however like to assure the house that Government have been keeping a constant watch on all


\textsuperscript{114} The Kargil Review Committee Report, n.6, p.60.
developments having a bearing on India's security. Government would continue to do so with utmost vigil.¹¹⁵

In October 1984, Pakistan's *Nawa-e-Waqt* published an article from Washington alleging that President Reagan had written to President Zia urging, among other things, that Pakistan undo work it may have undertaken to produce nuclear weapons, upon which the United States was ready to provide the kind of atomic umbrella it provided to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) member countries. In the midst of rumours and reports, Indira Gandhi told a gathering of Indian Army commanders on 11 October that Pakistan’s nuclear programme had brought about a qualitative change in India’s security environment. She added that the United States continued to supply Pakistan with military equipment despite “evidence compiled by Americans themselves about Pakistan’s nuclear program.”¹¹⁶ Tacit American assistance to Pakistan’s nuclear programme was continually stressed.

According to Perkovich, Rajiv Gandhi’s emergence as Prime Minister, at a time when Pakistan was reportedly nearing the capacity to produce nuclear weapons, increased pressures from within the national security establishment to develop strategies and capabilities for maintaining political and military supremacy over Pakistan.¹¹⁷ In April 1985, Rajiv Gandhi stated in Parliament:

We do not like what we see about their nuclear programme. We have still no indication that they are not making a bomb. We know that they are getting aircraft; they have got aircraft, which


¹¹⁶ For further details, see George Perkovich, n.24, pp.257-259.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.261.
have the capability of carrying nuclear weapons.... We are very unhappy that certain major powers have made an exception in removing Pakistan from the list of countries to which Symington Amendment applies and we take this as a direct help in their nuclear programmes.\textsuperscript{118}

Rajiv Gandhi began to adopt a more rigid posture, as for example, at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) on 4 May, he stated: “We feel that they [Pakistan] are developing a nuclear weapons... [and] we are looking into various aspects of this question to see what action we should take.”\textsuperscript{119} In an interview in June 1985, when asked what India would do if Pakistan developed a nuclear weapon, Rajiv declared: “Then we would have to really re-think all our policies.”\textsuperscript{120} At the same time, in an April 1985 interview Rajiv Gandhi had stated: “I have never subscribed to the view that terror, balanced or otherwise, would stabilise anything.” He said: “A nuclear arms race in the sub continent would only subject both our peoples to the worst possible fate on earth.”\textsuperscript{121} In August 1985, the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, Khurshid Alam Khan stated:

\textbf{The non-peaceful dimension of Pakistan’s nuclear programme has been a matter of concern for India. Contrary to the claims}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{119} “India to review nuclear policy, Gandhi says,” The Washington Post, 5 May 1985. See George Perkovich, n.24, p.264.
\item \textsuperscript{120} US Embassy (New Delhi) to Secretary of State, cable no.051134Z June 1985, reporting on Gandhi’s predeparture interviews with American media. See George Perkovich, n.24, pp.267-68.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Interview with Mushahid Hussain. See Bhabani Sen Gupta, “Ambivalent Stand,” India Today, 31 May 1985, p.116.
\end{itemize}
by Pakistan's leaders, available evidence and public statements by Pakistani scientists suggest that Pakistan has been pursuing the objective of acquiring the wherewithal to manufacture nuclear weapons.... Reports which have appeared from time to time in the international media in this regard, particularly about the clandestine procurement of nuclear equipment and components by Pakistan, have reinforced our apprehensions. Of immediate relevance are the case of a Pakistani national who was caught in the process of smuggling Krytrons from the United States to Pakistan....

Government are concerned at the likelihood of Pakistan acquiring nuclear weapons which would result in a qualitative change in the security environment in our region. India remains committed to developing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. However, we cannot but take into account these developments in our neighborhood, which have grave implications for our security. I wish to assure the house that government have been keeping, and will continue to keep, a constant vigil on all developments having a bearing on the country's security...

Our apprehension is that their programme is not all that peaceful and they have been doing something and stating something else. There seems to be a wide gap between what they do and what they say.... On the one hand they say that all their programmes are for peaceful purposes and on the other they also say that they have got a right to make a bomb.\textsuperscript{122}

Although various members of parliament called for a nuclear weapons programme by India, Khurshid Alam Khan maintained that India remained committed to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. India's options were clear but could not be spelt out, as this would not be in the interest/safety of the

\textsuperscript{122} India, Lok Sabha, \textit{Debates}, Vol.8, No.13, 8 August 1985, col.283-290.
country. At a press conference in October 1985, Rajiv Gandhi added: "What is even more worrying about Pakistan's programme is that we are fairly sure that at least part of the finances of this programme have come from other countries. Now, what we worry about is that the nuclear weapon when developed will also have to go to these countries." In this context, the reports of India having made preparations for nuclear tests in 1983, 1984 and 1985 should be kept in mind.

The Annual Report 1987-88 of the Ministry of Defence stated that Pakistan's weapon-oriented nuclear programme and its quest for sophisticated weapons like an airborne early warning system, which go far beyond her genuine defence requirements are a matter of great concern to India. In the aftermath of A.Q.Khan's interview with Kuldip Nayar, in 1987, the government tried to calm reactions by declaring there was nothing new in Pakistan's claims or capabilities and that India had no intention of manufacturing nuclear weapons. The Times of India cited President Zail Singh that "India too could make a nuclear bomb if needed and that the neighboring countries trying to destabilise this nation should take note of it." A growing number of parliamentarians urged the government to reconsider its nuclear policy. On 27 April, Defence Minister K.C.Pant told the Lok Sabha, "the emerging nuclear threat to us from Pakistan is forcing us to review our

123 Ibid.
126 "Minister says no current plans for Indian nuclear bombs," Patriot, 14 March 1987.
127 "President warns India can make nuclear bomb," The Times of India, 30 March 1987.
options... I assure the house that our response will be adequate to our perception of the threat."128 Similarly, in April 1988, Pant stated that India had not allowed a window of vulnerability to develop and that Indian armed forces would not be at a disadvantage in the face of a nuclear attack by Pakistan.129

Three important bilateral agreements signed by Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto in December 1988 included the agreement on the prohibition of any attack against each other's nuclear installations and facilities. The Kargil Review Committee Report makes it a point to stress that the agreement "was first proposed by Rajiv Gandhi to Zia in December 1985 during the latter's brief stop-over in Delhi. This agreement was mooted as a confidence building measure to reassure Pakistan that India had no intention of undertaking a pre-emptive strike against its nuclear installations."130

The statement on nuclear non-proliferation of the Embassy of India, Washington D.C. posted on its website, while asserting that India's nuclear programme is indigenous and entirely peaceful, points out:

In 1994, Pakistan not only was involved in international plutonium smuggling but it also received from China, with which it has an ongoing military relationship, long-range missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. The US press has widely reported on hard evidence that Pakistan has

---

130 The Kargil Review Committee Report, n.6, p.63.
obtained ring magnets, an item used for producing weapons-grade uranium, from China.\textsuperscript{131}

This reflected the general trend in government articulation regarding Pakistan's nuclear programme over the years. Important government statements regarding the threat from Pakistan pronounced in the context of the Indian nuclear tests of 1998 have been mentioned in the previous section. Special emphasis needs to be placed on the Prime Minister's letter to President Clinton identifying China and Pakistan as threats posed to India. The Kargil Review Committee in a single sweeping statement on India’s tests posits: “Finally, in 1998, in the wake of Pakistan’s Ghauri missile test in April 1998, Prime Minister Vajpayee ordered the nuclear tests. Five devices were tested and conclusively proved India's capability across the yield spectrum from tactical to thermonuclear.”\textsuperscript{132}

In response to Pakistan’s nuclear tests of May 1998, the official statement of the spokesman for the Indian government read: “Pakistan’s nuclear tests have confirmed what has been known all along - that that country has been in possession of nuclear weapons. This event vindicates our assessment and our policy as well as the measures that have been taken. We expect that those who disagreed with us will reassess their stand.”\textsuperscript{133} The Ministry of External Affairs brief further clarified:

Another impression which needs to be promptly corrected is that because Pakistan’s tests followed ours, it was a reaction to

\textsuperscript{131} India, Ministry of External Affairs, \textit{Nuclear Non-Proliferation}, (Washington D.C: Embassy of India), www.indianembassy.org.

\textsuperscript{132} The Kargil Review Committee Report, n.6, p.205.

India's action. Again, as the evolution of events makes clear, it was India that was obliged to react to a progressive build up of nuclear weaponry and missiles in our neighbourhood. Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme predated ours and was built after years of clandestine acquisition. While we are mentioning the Pakistan factor, there is no obsession with Pakistan. Our security concerns go far beyond Pakistan and South Asia.... It is also a well-established fact that Pakistan is working systematically to create border tension and LOC/border firing as a proven method, for attracting attention and encouraging the 'flash point' theory.134

Another press release of the Minister of External Affairs states: "The misleading references in Security Council's Presidential Statement obfuscate the nature of Pakistan's nuclear and missile programmes, particularly the well documented fact that they are long established and are based on clandestine acquisitions and transfers."135 Vajpayee's securitisation of the issue was evident when he stated in the Lok Sabha: "a new situation has arisen.... The house should think about it deeply and seriously. We may have differences in our house, but if the challenge is from the outside, we should give the message that ... the country is together."136 Commenting on Pakistan's allegation that India was preparing to attack its nuclear facilities, a Ministry of External Affairs press release stated: "We see in these Pakistani efforts yet another example of their deep frustration. We are confident that all concerned will reject these crude


135 Press Release regarding reactions of the Security Council to the nuclear tests carried out by Pakistan, 31 May 1998, Foreign Affairs Record, n.33, p.44.

manifestations of the traditional Pakistani mindset of hostility against India.”137 The government also maintained that Pakistan’s tests were no match for India’s.138 Referring to Pakistan’s nuclear tests, the Kargil Review Committee Report makes no mention of the immediately preceding Indian tests, but pointedly notes:

The Gauribadnaur seismic array station of BARC recorded only one underground test explosion each on May 28 and May 30 respectively. The assessed yields from these signals were five to ten kt and two to four kt respectively.139 Some of the cables and connectors required for the tests by Pakistan were supplied by China.140 In the Indian Defence Minister’s morning meeting on May 13, 1998, the issue was raised as to how Pakistan could hope to conduct nuclear tests in the next couple of weeks unless preparations for them were already well under way.141

This all-encompassing paragraph questions the number and yield of the tests as claimed by Pakistan, while emphasising the China connection and insinuating that preparations for the Pakistan tests had already been well under way (before the Indian tests).

The passage of time witnessed more vociferous articulation of threats from Pakistan, as well as the government’s capability to protect the country. Two years after the nuclear tests, Vajpayee stated:

137 Statement on 28 May 1998. See Foreign Affairs Record, n.33, p.43.


141 The Kargil Review Committee Report, n.6, p.196.
Pakistan is threatening a nuclear war, but do they even know what it means? They think that they will drop one bomb and they'll win and we'll lose. This won't happen. We said we won't be the first to use nuclear weapons, but if anyone uses them against us, anyone threatens us, we will not wait for our annihilation.... We are prepared for any eventuality.142

Bidwai points out that this statement represents a dilution of India's much publicised 'No First Use' posture, as well as the manifestation of "nuclear recklessness by an Indian leader."143 It is also reflective of the nature of government articulation in recent years on Pakistan's nuclear programme.

**Perceptions and Responses of Political Parties**

None of the political parties in India explicitly opposed India's threshold status prior to 1998. There was a general consensus regarding the country's nuclear policy, the focus being on the call for global disarmament, while keeping the country's nuclear option open and endorsing New Delhi's determination to meet the threat from Pakistan. The BJP, however, had consistently called on governments over the years to exercise the nuclear option.

The Indian National Congress (INC), in keeping with the Nehruvian tradition, was officially opposed to the development of nuclear energy for anything other than peaceful purposes.144 Having been the party in power for the longest period since

---


143 Ibid., p.1134.

144 For example, see Balwant A.Desai (ed.), *Atoms for Peace: An Exposition of India's Nuclear Policy* (New Delhi: AICC, 1975).
independence, its perspective can be seen in consonance with that of the Congress governments, which have already been referred to. Notwithstanding official pronouncements, there were however, conflicting views within the party. Several members including K.C.Pant, Secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Party in 1966 and later to become a Union Minister, urged the government to give up its policy of “nuclear celibacy” and become technologically prepared for making the bomb. AICC sessions of 1964 and 1965 witnessed strong pleas from some delegates for the indigenous production of atom bombs.\textsuperscript{145} It may be recalled that it was the Congress governments under Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi, which initiated the policy of ambiguity leading to the 1974 nuclear tests. Reflecting the differences within the party, in August 1985 (when the Congress was in power), during the Lok Sabha debate on Pakistan’s attempt to develop a nuclear bomb and the supply of Krypton electronic triggers, P.J.Kurien questioned whether “we can afford not to go nuclear in the present context.” He also contended that any agreement with Pakistan on nuclear weapons would not serve the purpose as it could still conduct explosions and assemble and store nuclear weapons in secrecy. He argued:

A nuclear weapon is not a weapon of war alone. It has overriding importance. A country possessing a nuclear weapon is definitely at a psychologically superior position. We have to settle so many issues with Pakistan. And when we are going to face Pakistan armed with a nuclear weapon, what will be our position with respect to Pakistan. In that event I am sure not only because of change in balance of power, but psychologically also our position will be weaker. So, this aspect has to be taken into consideration.... The greatest deterrent against nuclear

\textsuperscript{145} Development of Nuclear Energy for Peaceful Uses: Policy, Programmes and Achievements, n.6, p.21.
weapons is the terror which it was generating. So, if we are also having nuclear weapons that will be the greatest deterrent.\textsuperscript{146}

Debates in parliament by Congress party members have also witnessed the stress on the clandestine nature of Pakistan's nuclear programme and the dubious antecedents of Abdul Qadir Khan.\textsuperscript{147} Soon after the 1998 tests, the Congress Working Committee, which met on 14 May, lauded the achievement and expressed the party's support for the tests. It reiterated that the party did not view national security in a partisan way.\textsuperscript{148} The party spokesman stated: "This is a national achievement of which the nation is proud. It is the outcome of 40 years of endeavour of our scientists and engineers under the Prime Ministership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and P.V.Narasimha Rao."\textsuperscript{149} However, during the debate in parliament, K.Natwar Singh contested:

There was no consensus on your exercising that option.... What I am trying to say is that you should have thought over this instead of inventing that the security environment has deteriorated, though in your statement you have not referred to it. It is because what you have said does not indicate that you are yourself convinced that a security threat exists.\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Lok Sabha Debates}, 8 August 1985, n.122, col.294-296.

\textsuperscript{147} For example, see India, Lok Sabha, \textit{Debates}, Vol.21, No.3, 6 November 1986, cols.374-375.


\textsuperscript{149} "Tests, a national achievement: Congress," \textit{The Hindu}, 14 May 1998.

Similarly P. Shiv Shanker asserted:

To me, it appears that so far as the threat perceptions are concerned which have been sought to be made out either in the letter of the Prime Minister to President Clinton or letter to the heads of Governments of G-8 countries, that threat perception either from Pakistan or from China does not seem to be either here or there. The situation that prevailed earlier to 19th of March prevailed even on the 11th of April. No new circumstances developed which should force this Government to take the decision and say that there is a threat perception from Pakistan and China. To me it appears that this is a clear case of bravado approach.... it appears to one that this decision had been taken to silence the various allies of the Government who had been raising different issues from time to time, and secondly, to divert the attention of the people of this country temporarily from the problems that beset them so that the entire nation is diverted towards a euphoria which this Government sought to create on the basis of the tests that have been carried out.151

During the same discussion P. Chidambaram also stated that “the Government has not discovered a new threat. It invented one.”152 However, official policy glossed over any such differences. Following Pakistan’s nuclear tests the party statement pointed out that the tests “are as expected as they are regrettable. This is a grave development.... At this critical juncture, the Congress stands with the nation united and determined to safeguard the country’s independence, security and sovereignty.”153 A later statement, while expressing it’s “deep sense of disappointment” that Pakistan could go back on

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid.

its earlier decision not to carry out further nuclear tests, called on the government to build on the initiatives taken by Rajiv Gandhi and P.V. Narasimha Rao for confidence building measures in the region.\textsuperscript{154}

The BJP (or its precursor, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh) is the only political party, which officially stated that it wanted India to be a nuclear weapon power, a position it has consistently reiterated since 1951, well before there was any issue of the Pakistani or Chinese bombs.\textsuperscript{155} As early as 1962, the BJS urged India’s acquisition of nuclear arms and criticised the government for raising the false issue of economic costs in weapons production.\textsuperscript{156} In later years, the nuclear threat from Pakistan and China came to be emphasised, while strongly advocating a posture of nuclear deterrence. It has been pointed out that “the ‘politics’ of Hindutva not only justifies the launching of India’s nuclear programme but also serves to mobilise it as a ‘Hindu’ defence strategy to protect India from Pakistan.”\textsuperscript{157}

The BJP National Council resolution of 1981 read: “Pakistan’s nuclear aspirations carry within them dangerous portents for a serious destabilisation of the strategic balance in the subcontinent. It is our view that in the nuclear arithmetic of death there are no objective criteria for assessing levels and

\textsuperscript{154} “Cong. concerned over Pak. decision on tests,” The Hindu, 20 June 1998.

\textsuperscript{155} Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, p. 94.


degrees of deterrence.”158 Similarly in 1985, responding to news of Pakistan’s successful testing of the non-nuclear triggering package for a nuclear weapon, the National Executive resolution stated:

The BJP view with concern the fact of Pakistan continuing to proceed with its nuclear programme of manufacturing a nuclear bomb. ... The BJP is firmly of the view that it is much too grave a matter to be taken in such a cavalier and casual manner in which the Prime Minister appears to be doing. ... Reports from Pakistan indicate that the threat of a Pakistani Nuclear Bomb is real and an immediate response to this is necessary. The BJP, therefore calls upon Government to take immediate steps to develop our own nuclear bomb.159

Similar responses were evident to most other reported developments in Pakistan’s nuclear programme, like for example, A.Q.Khan’s disclosures in 1991 and Shahryar Khan’s statements in 1992.160 The BJP manifesto for the 1998 elections stated that if voted to power, the party would “re-evaluate the country’s nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.”161 According to N.Ram, the 17 May 1998 issue of Organiser, “thinly disguised as a Pokhran-I anniversary special was actually released in advance to coincide with Pokhran-II. The collection of hawkish and virulently anti-China and anti-

---


160 For details, see George Perkovich, n.24, pp.324-26.

161 Bharatiya Janata Party, n.31.
Pakistan articles reiterated the well-worn RSS line that the bomb had to be made to ‘tame Pakistan’ and teach China a lesson for occupying Indian territory.” 162 The BJP government’s reactions to Pakistan’s nuclear tests of 1998 have been mentioned in the earlier section, the main thrust being that Pakistan’s tests vindicated its own nuclear stance. During the Lok Sabha debate on the issue, L.K. Advani pointed out that it was occasions like this that brought out “patriotism” among the people. In terms of nationalist fervour, India’s tests stood in the same class as the struggle for the accession of Hyderabad and the liberation of Goa. Those who did not agree with this perspective were dubbed by senior BJP leaders as “pseudo-liberals,” “friends of Pakistan” and out of sync with the “national sentiment,” and were told to “go and live in Pakistan.” 163

Incidentally, George Fernandes, the Defence Minister of the BJP-led government at the time of the 1998 tests, had earlier been a strong critic of nuclear weapons. His views on the issue in the specific context of South Asia merits consideration. In 1985, he had stated:

*When India exploded a nuclear device in the Pokhran desert in Rajasthan in May 1974, it should have been obvious even to the totally naive politician in the country that it would only be a matter of time before Pakistan would explode its own little 'nuclear toy'.... Whether Pakistan is actually on the threshold of exploding a nuclear device or not, India should take immediate steps to create the required atmosphere to prevent the subcontinent from getting involved in a nuclear arms race.*


No two countries will look more grotesque in the comity of nations if India and Pakistan should choose to squander the money denied to their hungry and dying millions into the making of nuclear bombs, their delivery systems and the anti-bomb systems.... Only the mentally deranged could lead India and Pakistan to a nuclear arms race.\(^{164}\)

Both the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) in their policy statements have been consistently opposed to an Indian nuclear deterrent and expressed concern at the negative implications this could have for relations with Pakistan. The CPI's Seventh Congress of 1964 declared that "the making of atomic weapons would not only place crippling burdens on our national economy but would also weaken India's role in the preservation and consolidation of world peace."\(^{165}\) They, however, rejected the international non-proliferation regime in the wider context of the struggle against imperialism. After the 1974 tests, while all other members of the Lok Sabha jubilantly competed in congratulating the scientists responsible, Indrajith Gupta of the CPI questioned the rationale for the timing of the test. He also added:

There are people in this world who do not view us in a kindly light, who are our enemies, who make no pretence of their hostility to us, no secret of it, people who are at all times trying to point out that India has got aggressive designs, expansionist designs, and who would seize upon an occasion like this to project their own ideas in the world and to try to spoil, if I may say so, the atmosphere which we have been trying to create since the Simla Agreement of 1972.... I hope we would also take into consideration the fact that people like Prime Minister


\(^{165}\) Shyam Bhatia, n.8, p.80.
Bhutto or some other people in Pakistan who may be perhaps more anti-Indian than Bhutto himself... They would seize upon an opportunity like this to say that India is now preparing to have some sort of aggressive or militaristic designs in this region, and therefore on that plea Pakistan and their allies should be given some protection in the form of a nuclear umbrella.... Nevertheless, I would just remind the Government that a nuclear arms race of any kind, even in the sphere of what Prof. Samar Guha called tactical nuclear weapons, would in my view be a disaster for us.\(^{166}\)

During the debate in Parliament following A.Q.Khan's statement in March 1984, Indrajit Gupta questioned the rationale of the government in creating an atmosphere of imminent threat, if India possessed a military advantage over Pakistan.\(^{167}\) Similarly, after the Indian nuclear tests of 1998, Indrajit Gupta questioned the timing of the test and the sudden change in policy, wanting to know what the provocation was. At the same time, he also stated: "Of course, some provocation may have been there, I do not know from the side of Pakistan, because they suddenly developed this Ghauri missile and said that it has a long range of so many thousands of kilometres. This Ghauri missile may be interpreted as a threat to us."\(^{168}\) He continued to ask what would happen if the Pakistan government chooses to also go in also for development of nuclear weapons. This could result in the grave risk of a nuclear arms race in the subcontinent. He further added "...we are not condemning the

---

\(^{166}\) *Lok Sabha Debates*, 8 August 1974, n.103, cols. 223-224.


\(^{168}\) *Lok Sabha Debates*, 27 May 1998, n.150.
fact that nuclear testing has been done. That by itself, technical or scientific, is a good achievement.\textsuperscript{169}

A joint press statement issued by the CPI and CPI (M) on 29 May 1998 stated that Pakistan’s tests were not a vindication of the policy adopted by the BJP-led government as the Prime Minister had claimed, but an inevitable confirmation of how wrong was the reversal of India’s long-standing nuclear policy. The statement said that it had undone the progress in establishing good neighbourly relations with India’s neighbours and security and peace in the region. It also added: “The short-sighted step taken by the Vajpayee government and the reaction of the Pakistani government is leading to the step by step escalation in the nuclear arms race in the subcontinent and its attendant tensions.”\textsuperscript{170}

Official pronouncements sometimes glossed over varying views within political parties, be they in the government or in opposition.\textsuperscript{171} Soon after the 1965 war, about 86 Members of Parliament cutting across party lines urged Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri to opt for nuclear weapons on grounds that “the security of the country can no longer be left to the mercy or whims of so-called friendly countries. India’s survival, both as a country and democracy, casts a duty on the Government to make an immediate decision to develop our own nuclear

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{170} Joint Press Statement issued by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India on 29th May on the Nuclear Tests conducted by Pakistan’, www.proxsas.org; also see “Left for dialogue,” \textit{The Hindu}, 30 May 1998; Pak tests reinforce fears: Left leaders,” \textit{The Hindu}, 30 May 1998.

\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Development of Nuclear Energy for Peaceful Uses: Policy, Programmes and Achievements}, n.6, p.21.
weapons." After the 1971 war, members from all parties in Parliament, excluding the two communist parties, had called for developing nuclear weapons, or at least greater preparation of relevant elements of nuclear explosives. Similar responses to developments in Pakistan’s nuclear programme were seen over the years.

Perceptions of the Strategic Community

Ashley Tellis uses the term nuclear strategists to refer to people "who devote most of their thinking not to the task of how best to de-legitimise and get rid of nuclear weapons but to justifying their possession, operationalising their threat, and, if considered necessary, organising their actual use." Similarly, Peter Lavoy alludes to myth makers as key individuals who expound threats to the state’s security in order to make the myth of nuclear security or nuclear influence more compelling. Haider K.

---


173 See, for example, the 1985 response to news of Pakistan’s successful testing of the non-nuclear triggering package for a nuclear weapon and the 1987 response to A.Q.Khan’s interview with Kuldip Nayar, in George Perkovich, n.24, pp. 169, 270-282.

174 The dominant characteristic of this mindset is its failure to think about its own problematic foundational assumptions and instead to preoccupy itself with thinking as comprehensively as possible within the framework of those accepted assumptions. Among those assumptions are a notion of security centred on territorial protection and a state-centric notion of ‘national’ security and other very conventional Realist assumptions, including the all-important belief in the efficacy of nuclear deterrence. See Achin Vanaik, "Mindset of the Nuclear Strategist," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.37, No.21, 25 May 2001, p.1994.

Nizamani uses the concept of *epistemic communities*\(^{176}\) in the South Asian context to identify segments of the societies in Pakistan and India that constitute the dominant nuclear discourse, while Ashis Nandy identifies these groups as *the strategic elite*.\(^{177}\) Bidwai and Vanaik refer to *strategic experts*, most of who are drawn from the bureaucratic, military and diplomatic services, journalism, think-tanks concerned with security matters, and academic disciplines like International Relations and Area Studies.\(^{178}\) Similarly, Kanti Bajpai refers to the *strategic community* of those outside the formal corridors of power, including former diplomats and officers from the armed forces, prominent media commentators and columnists, research scholars and academics. It is argued that members of this community shape government thinking as well as represent or communicate that thinking to the larger public and to the international community.\(^{179}\)

It is in this context that the perceptions of the strategic community, which in this study is taken to largely represent all the above sections reflecting the mainstream nuclear discourse in India, need to be particularly emphasised. In both India and Pakistan, individuals may assume multiple roles that "blur the

---

\(^{176}\) The term was originally used by Peter M. Haas to describe "a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain or issue area. This community may consist of 'professionals from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds,' who share a set of common characteristics." See Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Cooperation," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Winter 1992, pp. 1-36; also see Haider K. Nizamani, n. 2, p. 15.


\(^{178}\) Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n. 1, p. 107.

\(^{179}\) Kanti Bajpai, n. 43, p. 277.
lines between various groups specified as the dominant elite.\textsuperscript{180} Hence, no specific distinction is made between the groups identified, although the perceptions within the media will be examined in the following chapter. However, Itty Abraham defines a sub category of the Indian military-security complex, particularly the research establishments and production facilities that are responsible for the development of the missile and nuclear programmes in India as the ‘strategic enclave’.\textsuperscript{181} Perkovich uses the term in similar context referring to the “scientists and engineers in India’s defence research and atomic energy institutions who for five decades had been pushing India to join the exclusive club of nuclear weapon states.”\textsuperscript{182} These writers, as well as M.V. Ramana and Dhirendra Sharma have documented in detail the role of this scientific establishment in driving India’s quest for nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{183}

Shyam Bhatia argues that the AEC may turn out to have been the most important bomb lobby, for it was the carefully timed and worded statements of the AEC’s chairmen between 1964 and 1970 which, although not everyone may construe as encouraging the growth of a nuclear weapons industry, did in fact give life and body to the arguments for an Indian bomb.\textsuperscript{184} In 1964 Bhabha had argued: “...atomic weapons give a State

\textsuperscript{180} Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, p.16.


\textsuperscript{182} George Perkovich, n.24, p.1.

\textsuperscript{183} See ibid.; Itty Abraham, n.6; M.V. Ramana, n.12; Dhirendra Sharma, n.26.

\textsuperscript{184} Bhabha’s two statements in 1964 that India could explode an atom bomb in 18 months and that a ten kiloton bomb would cost only Rs.17.5 lakhs; and Vikram Sarabhai’s proposal for a ten-year nuclear development and space research programme costing Rs.398.1 crores, were utilized by some politicians and journalists as justifications for weaponisation. See Shyam Bhatia, n.8, pp.83-84.
possessing them in adequate numbers a deterrent power against attack from a much stronger state. Indeed the importance of nuclear weapons is that they enable a country possessing them in adequate measure to deter another country also possessing them from using them against it.”

Interestingly, a publication by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) in 1970 entitled *Nuclear Weapons: A Compilation Prepared by the DAE*, while incorporating policy statements by the government also included a number of articles stridently calling for exercising the nuclear option or outright weaponisation. A number of eminent scientists of the DAE for years argued:

*Pakistan* with its ‘considerably inferior’ science and technology base, manpower, and its generally backward infrastructure, could not possibly match India in mastering a ‘difficult’ and advanced’ technology such as nuclear energy.... They are on record as saying that Pakistan could not have mastered a technology that was ‘borrowed’ or ‘stolen,’ as opposed to one developed ‘indigenously,’ as in the mis-stated case of India. This assessment had less to do with a serious, considered, informed analyses of Pakistan’s capabilities than with the reluctance to concede that Pakistan could have mastered a technology – uranium enrichment by the centrifuge method – which India had failed to stabilise, leave alone industrialise.

---


187 Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, pp.233-244.
These scientists included Raja Ramanna who headed the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) at the time of the 1974 test and P.K. Iyengar who headed its Physics division (both of whom later became Chairmen of AEC). Nuclear establishment leaders consistently doubted Pakistan's nuclear capabilities and its claims in this regard. H.N. Sethna, Chairman, AEC, stated in October 1982 that "Pakistan had neither the industrial infrastructure necessary for producing an atomic bomb nor the resources and capable brains" for the purpose. Perkovich notes that in the context of the 1985 news reports of Pakistan's growing capabilities, a former AEC chairman volunteered:

"We did not take A.Q. Khan seriously. He was a metallurgist. They would not be capable of doing these things." Other top nuclear officials of the 1970s and 1980s echoed this low regard for Pakistan's scientific and engineering prowess, which partially explains India's nonurgency in militarising its nuclear option. The Brahminical contempt for the abilities of Pakistan's scientists and engineers also was intensified by the difficulties India's well-educated scientists had in trying to master large-scale uranium enrichment. (In November 1986, India announced that, it too, could enrich uranium to any required level, providing a political and psychological boost by matching Pakistan's technology and potentially, providing highly enriched uranium for thermonuclear weapons.) Cognitive dissonance may explain the Indian scientists' perspectives toward their Pakistani counterparts. The Indians recognised that Pakistan's enrichment program benefited enormously from designs stolen from Europe and assistance provided by China, but many still could not overcome their prejudices about Pakistani abilities. 

---

188 Ibid., p. 244.


190 George Perkovich, n.24, p. 276.
Raja Ramanna writes that during the General Conferences of the IAEA in the 1960s, the Indian delegation had to constantly protest against "Pakistani intervention with a view to embarrassing us." Referring to the western attempts to restrict India under full scope safeguards, Ramanna points out "one of the ways to intimidate us during the General Conferences was through Pakistan. I suspect that more often than not Pakistan was instigated by the others to make mischief..." Ramanna also refers to Pakistan's reactions to the 1974 test as "most amusing" and that the "reality of the situation was evident to those who cared to assess it impartially, but scientific truth can also succumb to political manoeuvring." 

After the May 1998 tests, A.P.J Abdul Kalam, who later became President, wrote: "...all of us have to be clear that nobody is going to hold our hands to lead us into the 'developed countries club.' Nuclear tests are the culmination of efforts to apply nuclear technology for national security." The aftermath of the 1998 tests saw an outpouring of statements by the scientific community, which will be elaborated on in Chapter V. Stressing the importance of nuclear weapons for national security, there was undisguised pride at India's 'indigenous' scientific achievement, while casting aspersions on the capabilities of Pakistan and its 'clandestine' nuclear programme.

---


192 Ibid., p.93.


Nizamani argues that during the period 1947 to 1964 there was no identifiable group of strategic experts or an epistemic community that made its living by writing as experts on the importance of the nuclear option as a means to enhance India’s image or decry nuclear threats posed by China or Pakistan. The establishment of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), the oldest strategic and security studies think-tank in India in November 1965, is of particular significance in this context, with members of the institute having published a large amount of literature on security strategic issues over the years.

K. Subrahmanyam’s contribution is one such example (being a former Director and regular contributor to the monthly journal of IDSA, *Strategic Analysis*), and is representative of the mainstream discourse on the nuclear issue in India. Subrahmanyam symbolises the multiple roles assumed by some of the individuals of the strategic community. Besides having been a former Director of IDSA, he had served as Secretary of Defence Production, Government of India, and contributes regularly to various publications, including newspapers and academic journals. He was a member of the group formed by Rajiv Gandhi in 1985 to consider India’s defence planning needs and that formed in 1990 to develop plans for ensuring that in the event of a nuclear attack on India, the government would continue to function and be able to retaliate. Subrahmanyam

---

195 Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, pp.30-32.

196 IDSA is a registered society governed by an Executive Council, the President of which is the Defence Minister. The Institute is funded by the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs. According to the official website of IDSA, the Indian Parliamentary Committee on Defence frequently utilises the literature, information and expertise of the Institute. The Defence Minister, George Fernandes is also quoted as having stated that Government and the informed public of the country have benefited from the work done at IDSA which has contributed to the national security policy formulation. See www.idsa-india.org.
was also Convener of the National Security Advisory Board that presented the draft of India's nuclear doctrine in August 1999 and the Chairman of the four member Kargil Review Committee. It is in this context, and the fact that he has consistently been the most prolific writer on nuclear security issues since the 1960s, that particular emphasis has been placed on Subrahmanyam's work in this section. The important themes which appear in Subrahmanyam's writings in the context of the present study include the arguments that Pakistan's security problems were largely self-inflicted, and the product more of its leaders' mistaken choice of post-independence path of development than of any external threat. Subrahmanyam has written extensively on the role of nuclear weapons as the "currency of power" in the contemporary world.

While western commentators consider South Asia as a possible venue for a future nuclear war, writings by security analysts in India largely favour nuclear deterrence and view nuclear weapons in the region as guarantors of stability.197 Kanti Bajpai, who has categorised the strategic community into three wide groups based on their desired nature of India's deterrent capability and approach to the non-proliferation regime, points out that the community is, however, largely in agreement that nuclear weapons are essential for India's security.198 Subrahmanyam contends:

---


198 See Kanti Bajpai, n.43, pp.267-301.
Deterrence is not a satisfactory doctrine and has always a risk of failing. But deterrence in Indo-Pakistan context is not as unsatisfactory as it is between the two superpowers. Here, even the failure of deterrence will cause vast but still a finite damage considering the kind of arsenals the two sides are likely to have for a long time to come with the advantage in arsenal being in favour of India if India were to exercise its option. It will not mean nuclear winter, rapid escalation involving use of hundreds of warheads and loss of control over the war. It will be analogous to the situation between the superpowers in the early fifties. That situation will still be preferable to one of India remaining non-nuclear facing the threat of humiliation, defeat and disintegration.... This is a case where deterrence with all its imperfections and risks is likely to work.199.

Even in 1969, Subrahmanyam was a strong advocate of the nuclear weapons option for India,200 as building a nuclear arsenal would force the United States to revise its "contemptuous" view of India and "enable us to deal with China on an equal basis."201 According to Subrahmanyam, "a non nuclear India would send signals of weakness of the Indian elite having no will power."202 Even the Soviet Union in spite of its friendliness, could not but have reservations about a country which "lacks the will to power."203 Furthermore, Subrahmanyam argues that a nuclear Pakistan in the subcontinent, besides a non-nuclear India, would "project an image of power far in excess of India," the country would assume leadership in the

199 K. Subrahmanyam, n. 197, p.12.


201 The Times of India, 26 April 1981.


Islamic world and "at least some segments of Muslim populations in other countries of the subcontinent, including recalcitrant sections of our population." A nuclear Pakistan would be "a convenient safe haven for our extremists." A non-nuclear India, beside a nuclear Pakistan would send signals of weakness of the country and its leaders, thereby influencing other neighbours and extra-regional powers who "will pay no attention to Indian sensitivities in their dealings with our neighbours."\(^204\)

To Commander Ravi Kaul, editor of the *Chanakya Defence Annual*, "only the nuclear weapon... will remove all doubts about the cataclysmic consequences of any aggressive acts by our adversaries." He strongly advocated a "minimal programme of nuclear weapons development" for power, prestige, deterrence and stability.\(^205\) Prior to the May 1998 explosions, the Indian nuclear programme was portrayed as patently 'civilian' in nature, guided by the vision of Nehru and Bhabha, whereas the Pakistani programme was 'militaristic' from the start.\(^206\)

\[\text{ Whereas the Indian nuclear programme is conceived in terms of a nationalist project representing the political will and scientific zeal of the Indian establishment, the Pakistani programme has more to do with the conspiracy of India's adversaries, an undermining of the so-called Third world interests, and the ganging up of the Muslim world to acquire nuclear capability.}\]

---

\(^{204}\) K. Subrahmanyan, n.197, pp.8-9.


\(^{206}\) See P.K.S Namboodiri, "Perceptions and Policies in India and Pakistan," in K. Subrahmanyan (ed.), *India and The Nuclear Challenge* (New Delhi: Lancer, 1986), p.198. However, in 1981 K.Subrahmanyan wrote that no doubt Gandhiji "expressed himself against the bomb, but that was long before nuclear weapons became the legitimate international currency of power." *The Times of India*, 26 April 1981.
The Pakistani nuclear programme is deemed a danger to India not only in terms of its wider scope but also because of Islamabad's malicious intentions.207

The ill intentions of Pakistan are seen to be manifest in the clandestine operations of its foreign missions and scientists. Sreedhar of IDSA refers to A.Q.Khan as "the Pak scientist-spy."208 This (sinister) nature of the Pakistani programme has been sought to be validated by negating its claims of being a reactive policy as well as emphasising the peculiar security traits of the Pakistani leadership and their domestic constraints.209 It is often said that the Pakistani nuclear programme predated the Indian one. K. Subrahmanyam argues that since Pakistan introduced F-104 aircraft, sophisticated tanks, and staged aggressions against India, it would be perfectly reasonable to assume that Pakistan introduced the nuclear factor in India-Pakistan relations. He also emphasises that Islamabad's nuclear ambition predated the 1974 Pokhran test.210 According to Raja Menon, "India never needed a nuclear arsenal against Pakistan, if Pakistan hadn't jumped the gun and made the bomb first."211 Such accusations of Pakistan, having introduced the nuclear factor often emphasised the role of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Bhutto was seen as a man obsessed with acquiring nuclear weapons well before India exploded its nuclear device.212 To some, Bhutto

---


212 P.B.Sinha and R.R. Subramanian, n.210, p.68.
introduced the nuclear factor because of domestic compulsions. According to Ashok Kapur, "Bhutto's ambitions, assessments, policies and motivations were the single most dominant influence which shaped Pakistan's nuclear activities since 1972..." Discussing Bhutto's role in Pakistan's nuclear policy, P.L.Bhola writes that "all of Bhutto's motives were geared to his drive for personal power and influence.... His ambitions were not confined to becoming Pakistan's national hero, but extended beyond the borders of the country."

Subrahmanyam maintains that once in power, Bhutto started on his relentless drive to achieve a nuclear weapons capability. D.K.Palit and P.K.S.Namboodiri (who according to the introduction to their book were intimately associated with the IDSA and K. Subrahmanyam in particular) also argue that Bhutto was thinking of nuclear weapons long before India's peaceful nuclear experiment. India was the immediate excuse, whereas his thinking was conditioned by his overall perception of war and strategy in the nuclear age. By these accounts, it was Bhutto's personality traits or political expediency that was responsible for introducing the nuclear factor into India-Pakistan relations.

Nizamani points out that the response of the Indian strategic community to Pakistan's reaction to the 1974 nuclear tests had a lasting impact on the nature and direction of the nuclear

---


214 Ashok Kapur, n.46, p.146.


216 K.Subrahmanyam, n.197, p.xxiii.

217 D.K.Palit and P.K.S.Namboodiri, n.81, p.16.
discourse in years to follow. Pakistan’s objective in international forums dealing with nuclear issues was portrayed as one that sought to embarrass India. Pakistan’s reaction was seen as a “hue and cry” that was “part of the game her military allies may be playing,” a “ruse to follow her foreign policy goals.”\textsuperscript{218} This careful construction of the Other relegates it to an entity incapable of independent decision-making. As such, its criticism of India merits no serious consideration. Pakistan’s contention that the Indian test aggravated regional security and posed a threat to its national security is dismissed as a figment of Islamabad’s imagination.\textsuperscript{219}

The military coup in Pakistan in 1977 and the subsequent Islamisation programme adopted by General Zia ul-Haq provided a new angle to the nuclear discourse in India. The “Islamic bomb,” became the theme of the Indian strategic community to highlight the threat from Pakistan. Pakistan’s alleged Islamic nuclear bomb became a security concern of “secular and democratic” India.\textsuperscript{220} Palit and Namboodiri stated, that with Bhutto’s “flamboyant personality and obvious intelligence it would not have been difficult to persuade the Arab nations to support Pakistan in the development of an Islamic bomb.”\textsuperscript{221} They also highlighted a close collaboration between Arab states and Pakistan and argued that “the bomb will be Islamic but the finger on the trigger will be Pakistani.”\textsuperscript{222} Describing the Israeli nuclear programme in detail, the authors mention the futile Arab

\textsuperscript{218} Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, pp.42-3; see, for example, K.K.Pathak, n.213, pp.178-180.

\textsuperscript{219} Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, pp.42-3.

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., pp.48-49.

\textsuperscript{221} D.K.Palit and P.K.S.Namboodiri, n.81, p.16.

\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., p.44.
efforts to obtain nuclear weapons capabilities. It was in this context of "repeated Arab frustrations that Bhutto was able to pick up the broken threads of Arab ambition and...persuaded both King Khalid and Col. Gaddafi that the only solution would be for Pakistan to make an Islamic bomb." Palit and Namboodiri throughout their book speak of an "Islamic nuclear threat."

Discussions of the Pakistani nuclear programme began to invoke the dangers of an "artificial, theocratic, unstable Pakistan" against a more natural secular and democratic India. The nuclear ambitions of the Zia regime were seen in terms of Pakistan becoming "the defender of the Gulf area" assuming that "money will pour in from Muslim countries" to fund Pakistan's nuclear programme. Writing in 1983, Bhabani Sen Gupta argued that the ongoing Indian nuclear debate was based on the expected acquisition of nuclear weapons by Pakistan: "...the perception of a nuclearising Pakistan is the strongest and most immediate pressure upon India to go nuclear.... Pakistan's persistent efforts at acquiring a nuclear weapons capability are perceived as a major threat to India's security." Referring to the heightened tensions between India and Pakistan in 1990, Subrahmanyam states:

Nuclear weapons tend to stabilise a situation instead of escalating tensions. Because of the presence of nuclear weapons on both sides the Indian Army did not cross the line of control in spite of the intensity of covert war and its conventional superiority. The Pakistan army halted the Jammu

223 Ibid., p.63.

224 K.Subrahmanyam, n.210, pp. 182-83; also see P.L.Bhola, n.57, p.67.

Kashmir Liberation Front from crossing the line of control with the use of force. Both sides are self-deterred.226

According to Nizamani,

the Indian nukespeak based upon holding Pakistan responsible for the nuclear imbroglio in the subcontinent comes under stress when Pakistani officials unequivocally propose to sign the NPT if India does the same, or when they recommend declaring South Asia as a nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ).... All Pakistani proposals are considered nothing but a pack of unfeasible, impractical, anti-India, pro-West moves to undermine India's principled stand on the issue of proliferation.227

To some analysts like Savita Pande and Subrahmanyam of IDSA, the Pakistani proposals were seen as "a diplomatic move intended to make its own bomb plan for 1972"228 or to further the West's interests,229 while to others, these proposals were aimed at benefiting China at the cost of India.230 Subrahmanyam maintained that the Indian policy was principled and practical implying the contrary of Pakistan's policy.231 At the same time, he decried the "loss of nerve on the Indian leadership that emboldened Pakistan to challenge India in the nuclear field, treat India condescendingly and propose to

---


230 See K.K.Pathak, n.213.

India calculatedly demeaning proposals."\textsuperscript{232} According to P.B. Sinha and R.R. Subramanian (then of IDSA), the Pakistani proposal to make South Asia a nuclear weapons free zone, though \textit{prima facie} very laudable, is insincere.... The sinister part of the Pakistanis proposal is that it knows that a nuclear free zone in this region is inconceivable unless China is also included."\textsuperscript{233}

In the aftermath of the 1998 nuclear tests there emerged a justification of India's nuclear weapons programme by the strategic community. Threats from China and Pakistan, the need to make the country's deterrent credible, and the failure of the five declared nuclear states to disarm\textsuperscript{234} were cited as the primary reasons for conducting the tests. Soon after the tests, IDSA convened a meeting of India's prominent serving and retired defence officials, academics, Foreign Ministry officials, and journalists. According to a \textit{Times of India} account, they underlined the "urgent need for India to both develop a nuclear doctrine and ensure that the success of the tests is not frittered away as did happen after the 1974 nuclear implosion."\textsuperscript{235}

Perkovich observes:

The gathered experts all had participated for years in debating the adequacy of the 'nuclear option,' or 'nonweaponised deterrence,' or 'recessed deterrence,' or 'minimum deterrence.' These doctrinal approaches ranged in their economic and technical demands and their conceptions of India's deterrence

\textsuperscript{232} K.Subrahmanyan, n.206, p.258.

\textsuperscript{233} P.B.Sinha and R.R.Subramanian, n.210, p.67.

\textsuperscript{234} For example, see Jasjit Singh, "India, Europe and Non-Proliferation: Pokhran-II and After," \textit{Strategic Analysis}, Vol.22, No.8, November 1988, pp.1111-1112.

\textsuperscript{235} "India now needs a nuclear doctrine," \textit{The Times of India}, 24 May 1998.
requirements. They were still the main courses on the menu from which Indian officials would now choose. None of the heretofore-debated doctrines envisioned or required thermonuclear weapons, yet these weapons now had to be reckoned with post facto. It was likely that the most radically pronuclear analysts would adapt by finding strategic imperatives for these superweapons.236

Bidwai and Vanaik maintain that the 'strategic experts' sought to justify the Indian decision and to explain why the tests were inevitable. Several books, published soon after May 1998, including those by Amitabh Mattoo, Jasjit Singh and Jaswant Singh carried virtually the whole range of views and arguments of pro-nuclearists together with the odd anti-nuclear contribution:

All the pro-nuclear advocates... seek to justify the decision to go nuclear as some kind of inevitable and 'logical' culmination of an evolving Indian nuclear policy refusing to recognise or accept that the decision to test and go openly nuclear represented a decisive rupture with India's past policy of ambiguity.... All of them claim the hypocrisy of existing NWSs in part 'drove' India to act as it did. This is more of a common thread than the claim which not all are prepared to make – that a deteriorating external security environment, namely a supposedly growing 'China threat' and/or a China-Pakistan nexus 'forced' India to go nuclear. Amitabh Mattoo and Jaswant Singh, however, are among those who do put more weight on the China factor. All the pro-nuclearists claim Indian security has improved or will soon enough do so as a result of this decision. All claim that

236 George Perkovich, n.24, pp.341-42.
Indo-Pakistan relations will improve and some that Sino-Indian relations will also become better.237

Ashok Kapur argues that the Indian tests of 1998 reflect a considered response to a pattern of Pakistani, Chinese and American provocations in a strategic sphere. While China supplied nuclear and missile aid to Pakistan in violation of its non-proliferation commitments, the Clinton administration repeatedly refused to accept the evidence of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on these issues. Kapur further states:

After the Ghauri tests of April 6, people like Mushahid Hussain, Minister for Information... made statements in Dacca and elsewhere that the Indians were weak, that they could not really stand up for their interests, and that they could be manipulated. The Indian tests were thus meant to signal that the Indian government was not really weak and that it was quite capable of dealing with external provocations. The Pakistani element, in my mind is not so important in terms of the sub continental military balance or distribution of military power but it is the psychological aspect that is important in Indian calculations.238

According to Nizamani, "contrary to the portrayal of China as the main impetus to India's nuclear ambitions, the substance of the Indian nuclear discourse is primarily Pakistan-centric."239


239 Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, p.66.
K. Subrahmanyam welcomed Pakistan's test series in the hope that it would give Pakistan confidence: “Pakistan is now in a position to liberate itself from the obsessive feeling of threat vis-à-vis India.”

According to Nizamani:

K. Subrahmanyam unwittingly puts Pakistan at the centre of the Indian nuclear programme by arguing that the Indian nuclear doctrine 'is the appropriate language to communicate to the nuclear warriors who believe in the first use of nuclear weapons.' This doctrine would create uncertainty 'in the minds of would-be nuclear intimidators, aggressors and interventionists that those actions against this country would not be rational options.'

Various analysts also contended that the Kargil conflict proved the efficacy of nuclear deterrence. Manpreeth Sethi of the IDSA, argued that the fact that the Kargil conflict ended as it did “reveals an inherent nuclear stability that is in place.” P.M. Kamath also maintained that the strength of the Indian nuclear policy brought international support led by the United States during the Kargil crisis, which asked Pakistan to withdraw forces from Kargil. In a similar vein, Commander C.Uday Bhaskar, Deputy Director of IDSA argued:

(The) relative severity of nuclear weapons related dangers between India and Pakistan is over-stated. Both states are in the early stages of the learning curve and are trying to evolve a

---


243 P.M. Kamath, n.197, p.1260.
management philosophy that would be in keeping with their
distinctive strategic and politico-military cultures. The Kargil
war of 1999 had an inadvertent silver lining in that it may be
seen as an inoculation for both states.\textsuperscript{244}

He also elaborated on the imperative need to stabilise the India-
Pakistan nuclear equation. Thus the Indian strategic
community’s perceptions and analyses reveal the inherent biases
with respect to Pakistan and the nuclear weaponisation in the
subcontinent.

**Public Opinion**

Ascertaining public opinion is a difficult and problematic issue,
particularly when it concerns issues such as nuclear and
security policies. Over the years, various public opinion polls
regarding nuclear policy have been conducted within the
country. One such poll conducted among adult literates of
metropolitan cities, in the context of the 1974 nuclear test found
that the perception that “the nuclear explosion will act as a
deterrent against possible aggression by Pakistan, found takers
among three in four persons.”\textsuperscript{245} In July 1981, the Indian
Institute of Public Opinion reported that nearly 70 per cent of
survey respondents wanted India to manufacture a nuclear
bomb, while only 19 per cent opposed the proposition. The
Institute concluded: “The U.S. decision to rearm Pakistan with
sophisticated weaponry seems to have convinced a large segment
of the Indian people that exercising India’s nuclear option alone

\textsuperscript{244} C.Uday Bhaskar, “Reducing Nuclear Dangers in South Asia,” *The Monitor*,

\textsuperscript{245} Indian Institute of Public Opinion, “Public Opinion on India’s Nuclear
Device,” *Blue Supplement to the Monthly Public Opinion Surveys*, Vol.19,
No.9, June 1974, p.ii.
would enable it to meet the challenge posed by the perceived change in the strategic balance.\textsuperscript{246}

The most detailed public opinion survey conducted on nuclear issues, commissioned by the Fourth Freedom Forum and the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies surveyed elite public opinion during the period September – November 1995. The survey found that 57 per cent of those polled supported India’s policy of keeping the nuclear option open. Thirty-three per cent supported acquisition of nuclear weapon capability, and only 8 per cent favoured renunciation of the nuclear option.\textsuperscript{247} The study stated that the survey,

\textit{shows unmistakably that the perceived nuclear threat from Pakistan was the single most important factor motivating Indian elites to consider the nuclear option. The evidence suggests that Indian elites would strongly favour the acquisition of nuclear weapons if Pakistan were to test a nuclear device. A majority of nuclear advocates identified the threat from Pakistan as the reason India should develop nuclear weapons. A near majority of official policy supporters and even 10 percent of nuclear opponents also believed that India would be justified in developing nuclear weapons in the event of a Pakistani nuclear test. By comparison, threats from China or even a serious deterioration of relations with Beijing were not seen as justifying the development of nuclear weapons.}\textsuperscript{248}


\textsuperscript{248} Ibid., p.17.
Of significance in the present context is the finding of the survey that only “13 percent of the respondents felt that information on nuclear issues is easily available. A majority of respondents (61 percent) believed that obtaining information on nuclear issues is either not easy or difficult.”249 The study concludes that “few Indians have strong opinions on the nuclear issue, and that the majority could be persuaded by new information or changing circumstances. A wider, more informed, and more critical public debate in India could lead to significant shifts in opinion.”250

Similarly, a Times of India poll in April 1995 showed that 79 percent of urbanites surveyed believed that Pakistan’s possession of nuclear weapons posed a “serious security threat to India.” (Only 47 percent believed that China’s nuclear status posed a threat, with 42 percent disagreeing.)251 Immediately after the 1998 tests, the widely publicised public opinion poll conducted by the Indian Market Research Bureau, in six metropolitan cities found that, 91 percent of those polled approved of the tests and 55 percent considered the Ghauri tests by Pakistan to have been the major reason for testing.252 However, Bidwai and Vanaik point out that most opinion polls, particularly the early ones,

were limited to the urban areas, and thus tended to exaggerate the popular support for the tests. The more systematic broad-sample polls done later suggest that large numbers of rural Indians were not even aware of the tests. According to an India Today-MARG poll, published in that magazine on 25 December

249 Ibid., p.13.

250 Ibid., p.17.


1998, 47 per cent of people had not even heard of the May tests.\textsuperscript{253}

V.Krishna Ananth adds that the fact that jingoism was not indicative of the popular mood, especially in rural India, was reflected in the results of the elections held later in the year.\textsuperscript{254} According to Nizamani, the popular support for the country's nuclear option is sustained by a select group of vocal opinion-shapers that holds sway over the nature and direction of the debate on the nuclear issue in the subcontinent. Hence the internal debate resembles more of a monologue of nuclear hawks where dissent risks being categorised as treasonous.\textsuperscript{255} T.Krishna Kumar also points out that people may have different perceptions on the threat and costs associated with the nuclear option. These however, are largely based on insufficient and manipulated information available. As such, with better and more information people may modify their perceptions, which may or may not be in favour of the nuclear option. However, a nationwide "debate on the issue may enable us to make informed and better social decisions through the majority of our democratic system."\textsuperscript{256}

**Dissenting Narratives**

The counter-narrative of the nuclear discourse in India has been sustained by advocates for nuclear disarmament who reject the

\textsuperscript{253} Achin Vanaik and Praful Bidwai, n. 1, p.273.


\textsuperscript{255} Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, p.146.

concept of deterrence on moral, political, legal and strategic
grounds, perceiving nuclear weapons to be inherently evil and
unable to provide security. Analysing the range of dissenting
viewpoints to the dominant nuclear discourse in India, Nizamani
points out that, on the one hand, are scholars who propose the
policy of nuclear abstinence as against the long-held official
policy of ambiguity (which has qualitatively changed with the
May 1998 explosions), and, on the other, are those who would
like India to accept the Pakistani proposal of declaring South
Asia as a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) or officially signing
the non-proliferation treaty (NPT). While nuclear abstinence calls
for a change in the present strategy, the call to sign the NPT
reflects an alternative perception of Indian security and
identity.257

Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, columnists and fellows of the
Centre for Contemporay Studies at the Nehru Memorial
Museum Library (NMML), have been the most vociferous
dissenting voices on the nuclear issue in India. Consequently,
their perceptions and writings deserve attention here. According
to Achin Vanaik,

to believe in the permanent efficacy of nuclear deterrence is
itself an irrational act of faith. ... As long as there are nuclear
weapons there is always the danger of their actual use. In
deterrence war avoidance is tied to war preparation... Nuclear
weapons deployment and nuclear deterrence neither create nor
promote security, they reflect and promote insecurity – that is
the central lesson of the Cold War period. Greater security,
including nuclear security comes above all from a prior
reduction of political hostility.258

257 Haider K. Nizamani, n.2, p.121.

To Rohini Hensman, deterrence will be credible only if those who possess it are prepared to use. The arguments of those like K.Subrahmanyam, who believe that “nuclear bombs will bring peace between India and Pakistan: peace and security presuppose mutual confidence that the weapons will never be used” are seen to be inherently contradictory.  

T.Krishnakumar also points out that the deterrence theory is based on a fallacious premise, which assumes that the threat perception is based on the present situation and that while we follow a strategic decision our adversary does not have a counter strategy. Gautam Navlakha observes that “nuclear arms are not ordinary weapons but pose a threat to all living creatures and therefore have no capacity to enhance security. In fact, it is just the opposite.”

Others argue that even if India faced a tangible nuclear threat, nuclear weapons are no means of meeting it. Bidwai and Vanaik describe how neither India nor Pakistan possesses the infrastructure, such as an acceptable early warning system for deterrence to work, nor can they afford to build one. They also contend that in comparison to external threat perceptions, India’s self-perceptions about its potential political ‘destiny’ and future regional, Asian and global positions played a more important role in nuclear policy making. Vanaik notes that threat perceptions justifying India’s refusal to sign the NPT have varied over time:

---


260 T.Krishna Kumar, n.256, p.328.


262 Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, p.221.
Throughout most of the 1960s and 1970s it was the Chinese threat, potential and actual; since the late 1970s it has been the Pakistani threat. But there has also emerged another factor besides the internal pressures generated by the bomb and defence lobbies. India’s status as the dominant regional power has progressively become more pronounced. This means that issues of prestige and self-perceptions have become more important in determining India’s nuclear weapons policies.

By contrast, threat perceptions have not experienced any comparable ‘intensification,’ though Pakistan’s efforts to reach the nuclear threshold have been watched closely.  

Dissenters see Pakistan’s route to the nuclear threshold as ‘straightforward’ and ‘reactive’ to Indian developments, guided largely by the notion of safeguarding its national interests. Vanaik points out:

By the mid nineteen sixties India had built a research reactor and a reprocessing plant, and the nuclear weapons issue had become part of the public debate at home. It is at this relatively late juncture that Pakistan entered the nuclear field. Arguments that Pakistan’s nuclear orientation is not fundamentally conditioned by Indian actions or by perceptions of Indian ambitions, but is independently motivated, are unconvincing. These arguments from the Indian side are also self-serving in that they tend to obscure India’s responsibility as the key referent in the South Asian nuclear dilemma. This is not to say there are no independent factors such as Pakistan’s search for prestige in the Islamic world. But the decisive factor remains India and its actions. The ‘Islamic Bomb’ notion is a red herring, since Pakistan has proposed non-nuclear parity with India. This kind of parity is, reasonably enough, more

important to Pakistan than the grandiose idea of producing a bomb for, and leading, an "Islamic world" which is not and cannot be united in any meaningful sense of the term.\textsuperscript{264}

Bidwai and Vanaik further add that Pakistan's deliberations have never been encumbered by moral doubt. On the contrary, they have been based on a realpolitik approach to threat perceptions, in the narrowest possible sense of the term. Thus, there is no available evidence to suggest that Pakistan ever seriously considered not moving towards a threshold status once India had achieved it. They argue that the Sino-Pak nuclear relation has been exaggerated as so as to justify Indian behaviour. According to them, the fact that there has been such a connection is undeniable. Yet, in the context of its contribution to Pakistan's development of a nuclear capability, "it has been very much a secondary factor in comparison to Islamabad's own clandestine efforts at equipping itself with the necessary hardware and software."\textsuperscript{265} Vanaik argues that much of what passes for strategic evaluation of Chinese nuclear behaviour with India's relations is neither objective nor balanced but speculation motivated by the need to paint a picture of "strategic threats" so as to justify a more hawkish stand on India's part with regard to the nuclear issue.\textsuperscript{266} In 1995, an official Indian delegation to China was politely informed that China was in the business of undertaking commercial transactions and would be willing to supply on Indian request each and every item they believed China had supplied to Pakistan!\textsuperscript{267} Vanaik says that the effort to cite an immediate danger of the Pakistan threat

\textsuperscript{264} Achin Vanaik, n.108, pp.80-81.

\textsuperscript{265} Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, pp.89, 216-217.


\textsuperscript{267} Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, p.91.
founders on Islamabad’s willingness to explore avenues of regional denuclearisation, in contrast to India’s unwillingness to entertain any such proposals.

Thus there is a marked inconsistency and contradiction in the general posture of India. It cites Pakistan as a major reason for maintaining its own nuclear option, but then justifies its refusal to discuss proposals for regional disarmament by citing factors, which have little or nothing to do with Pakistan. In short India demands ‘good behaviour’ from Pakistan in nuclear matters, but even ‘best behaviour’ (unilateral disarmament) is insufficient for it to close the option.268

However, there is a schism among the dissenters on whether India should sign the international non-proliferation treaties -- NPT, CTBT and FMCT. N.Ram argues that capitulating to the discriminatory global nuclear order through joining the CTBT and committing India to the accession to an FMCT, as envisaged by the United States and other nuclear powers while inducting and deploying nuclear weapons themselves, would be the worst possible option.269 This perception has been endorsed by the traditional left movements and political parties. By acknowledging the merits of the Pakistani proposal for a NWFZ or international measures like the NPT, CTBT, or FMCT, the dissenters stand in marked contrast to the dominant discourse. Achin Vanaik considers the establishment of a NWFZ in South Asia as “the most important and desirable” policy alternative for India. If India had the political will, the technicalities involved in realising the goal of a NWFZ could be overcome. It is also considered self-contradictory of Indians to doubt the sincerity of

268 Achin Vanaik, n.263, p.392.

Pakistan because the latter has proposed ideas like a NWFZ. Giri Deshingkar suggests that despite the NPT being a discriminatory treaty, India should still relinquish the nuclear weapon option. Since India has learned to live in an unequal world in various realms, there is no point in opposing the NPT.

Most dissenters share the perception that the BJP decision to conduct the 1998 tests was guided more by internal dynamics than external security concerns. Nuclear politics are seen in the context of the emergence of Hindu nationalism as a social and political force in the 1990s. The tests were seen to be a result of the construction of a nationalist identity, which is particularly antithetical to Pakistan. Bidwai argues that the nuclear tests were an expression of “the raw power of aggressive nationalism” and that the tests were an expression of Hindu nationalism rather than guided by any strategic logic.

…it was not changes in the ‘external security environment’ or even changes in threat perceptions that was the principal cause of India’s decision to go nuclear. It was changes in elite self-perceptions and the fact that the Sangh was in power, albeit in a coalition government. Self-perceptions, unlike threat perceptions, are far more susceptible to alteration as a result of significant changes in domestic politics and dominant ideologies. Elite frustrations have risen in tandem with external ambitions and also been fed by the lack of adequate fulfilment of these aspirations. Things have not turned out the way this elite expected or hoped. If at the time of independence there

---


was an easier self-confidence that India would in time 'naturally' take its place at the high table of the great nations or obviously enough become a great Asian power, this has clearly not happened. India's own search for regional eminence has been so uneven and the outcome so uncertain that this too has left its mark on the frustrated ambitions of this more callous and self-serving elite.²⁷³

Similarly, Aijaz Ahmad, Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum Library (NMML), contended that the tests helped the BJP,

cut across the Hindu/secular divide and reach out to claim the mantle of Indian nationalism as such.... The connection must be made with the communal agenda, with the fact that a step of this magnitude has been taken purely for the greater glory of the RSS, and that the consensus behind Vajpayee's nuclear policy amounts to a consensus behind Hindutva.²⁷⁴

Bidwai and Vanaik point out that the external threats most commonly cited by India's pro-nuclearists to justify the tests have been Pakistan and China, both separately and in unison with the citation of the Pakistan threat having the advantage of being highly saleable.²⁷⁵ Aijaz Ahmad also argues that China had not taken any steps in recent years or even decades that posed any threat to Indian security. Neither had Pakistan carried out any nuclear tests. Its 'conventional' intervention in the domestic affairs of India should be dealt with through 'conventional' and political means. The test could also not be seen as a response to 'Ghauri,' as India already had the

²⁷³ Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, p.97.


²⁷⁵ Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, n.1, p.86.
technology to match it. Similarly, Bidwai points out that it is irrelevant to cite Sino-Pakistani nuclear cooperation, which apart from being old hat, is of a limited, non-strategic nature. No state has recently threatened India with nuclear weapons or acted more belligerently than before. The global prospect for nuclear weapons elimination has not remained static or deteriorated. On the contrary, since the end of the cold war, the world has witnessed a weak, uncertain, halting, reversible but nevertheless authentic, new momentum favouring nuclear disarmament.

According to Amartya Sen the "nuclear adventures of India and Pakistan cannot be justified on the ground of the unjustness of the world order, since the people whose lives are made insecure as a result of these adventures are primarily the residents of the subcontinent." Admiral L. Ramdas (retd.) points out that:

The prime factor which motivated the tests in India were the domestic political ambitions of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government and pressure from the scientific community engaged in the nuclear weapons programme. The continued neglect by the nuclear weapon states of Article VI of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) provides added justification.

---

276 Aijaz Ahmad, n.274.


However, voices of dissent among the scientific community were also evident, particularly after the 1998 tests. In an Open Letter, a number of Indian scientists stressed that the magnitude of the achievement of science and technology should not be blown out of proportion.

These tests are bound to vitiate the atmosphere in the South Asian region, triggering a nuclear weapon race in the region, exacerbating the tensions that already exist and making even more difficult the achievement of peaceful co-existence and cooperation amongst the peoples and the nations of this region.

T. Jayaraman, a theoretical physicist, working at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai, pointed out:

... in hailing the 'achievements' of Indian scientists in these tests and claiming that they have delivered 'security' to the people, as scientists like Raja Ramanna are doing, is to take a somewhat short-sighted view. This point has been brought home sharply in the aftermath of the Pakistani tests that followed close on the heels of Pokhran-II. There is little doubt that Indian science and technology go deeper and are more sophisticated and broader in scope than anything that Pakistan can boast of. Nevertheless, Pakistan has clearly demonstrated a nuclear weapons capability. Irrespective of the fact that the level of technical sophistication may not match the Indian tests, irrespective of the fact that Chagai-I does not demonstrate an indigenous scientific capability to the same extent as Pokhran-II, we now have an incipient open nuclear arms race in the sub-continent. The over-blown estimation of the superiority of Indian science and technology appears to have blinded important sections of the ruling establishment to the extent that

280 The formation of the Indian Scientists Against Nuclear Weapons may be seen in this context. For details, see www.isanw.org

post-Pokhran II little thought was given to the possibility and consequences of tests by Pakistan.\textsuperscript{282}

Jayaraman maintains that the celebration of scientific achievements had more to do with jingoism than any objective evaluation of scientific advancement.\textsuperscript{283} In a strong critique of the theory of deterrence, M.V.Ramana, a physicist by training, who works on nuclear disarmament and peace issues at Princeton University, writes that nuclear weapons, in fact, "lead to different kinds of insecurity."\textsuperscript{284} Ramana points out that Hindutva's answer to the new 'elite insecurity,' which emerged as a result of the increasing social and political assertion of marginalised groups and the uncertainties of economic liberalisation,

is a quest for 'international status,' through the deployment of symbolic gestures of 'great power status' such as the ability to acquire and test nuclear weapons. The May 1998 tests, or for that matter the destruction of the Babri Masjid, a sixteenth century mosque, in 1992 are acts that demonstrate how it envisions making India 'strong.'\textsuperscript{285}

Quoting the United Nations Development Programme, \textit{Human Development Report 2002}, Amulya K.N.Reddy, Chemist and Energy Systems Analyst, stresses the fact that "India belongs well and truly to the club of poorest nations. It can move out of this club only through sustainable development – not through


\textsuperscript{284} M.V.Ramana, "Do Nuclear Weapons Provide Security?," in ibid. pp.50-54.

\textsuperscript{285} M.V.Ramana, n.12, p.215.
nuclear explosions. However, the thrust of Indian science does not correspond with the problems of the Indian people.”

The announcement of the 1998 tests saw a number of rallies and demonstrations held in several parts of the country. Others who registered their protests included the Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament, Pakistan India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy, Parmanu Bomb Virodhi Andolan, Medha Patkar and the National Alliance of Peoples Movements, Booker prize novelist Arundhati Roy, and numerous others. The extent to which these dissenting voices received public attention is open to question.

Notwithstanding the counter-narratives, the nuclear issue is placed largely within the framework of the dominant security discourse in India and is used to perpetuate a particular nature of discourse within the country. The discourse seems to have been practically appropriated by a few analysts and former military/government officials who unhesitatingly present a justification of official policy. The manner in which nuclear security/insecurity perceptions are defined within the country seemed to have changed according to pragmatic and ideological concerns. However, since the 1970s threats are defined in traditional realist terms, seeking to convince the people of existing external nuclear threats, particularly from Pakistan and the ability of the government to meet the situation and ensure collective protection, while at the policy level, the peaceful

---


orientation of its nuclear programme and its aversion to deterrence continued to be emphasised. Nuclear discourses of the government, political parties and strategic community have been mutually reinforcing, notwithstanding the differences noted. Negative images of Pakistan's nuclear policy are projected in contrast to India's own sanitised one, inculcating the need for providing security. In the process, nuclear issues are sought to be securitised, raising them above politics and making them unquestionable. Hence, there is a growing demand for unity and consensus on nuclear issues. Public opinion polls, notwithstanding their inherent limitations, reveal that these nuclear security perceptions seem to be reflected in civil society also, despite the existence of a small but vociferous community of dissenting voices. The precise dimensions of these contradicting perceptions within the wider society can be better ascertained through an analysis of the mainstream mass media.