CHAPTER IV

THE ISSUES AND POLICIES OF THE BJP

Political parties in every country formulate public policies and try to implement them in order to solve the problems faced by a society and thereby they offer political and electoral choices to the citizens. As a right-wing conservative political party, the Bharatiya Janata party has a distinct agenda of its own which includes Ram Janma Bhumi movement, Babri Masjid demolition, Abolition of Article 370, Bangladeshi infiltration, Cow Protection, Uniform Civil Code, Nuclear policy, Foreign policy, Economic policy, etc. It should be mentioned that this agenda of the Bharatiya Janata Party is essentially linked to the Hindutva Ideology of the party.

In this Chapter, a critical study of the issues and policies of the BJP has been undertaken.

Ram Janmabhoomi Movement

During the nineties of the last century, the RSS, the VHP and the BJP set up a strong Hindu revivalist Ram platform that revolved around the issue of the birthplace of Lord Ram at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. The Sangh Parivar, as they are popularly known, has contended that the Babri Masjid was built on the ruins of a Hindu temple which was constructed to commemorate the birthplace of Lord Ram. The temple was destroyed by the Muslim invaders.

The controversy over Ram Janmabhoomi versus Babri Mosque became part of the Bharatiya Janata Party’s political agenda in 1989 when in its Palampur (Himachal Pradesh) meeting the party adopted a resolution endorsing the Vishwa Hindu Parishad’s claims to the site where the Babri mosque stood.
The resolution went thus:

The BJP holds that the nature of this controversy is such that it just cannot be sorted out by a court of law. ... The BJP calls upon the Rajiv Government to adopt the same positive approach in respect of Ayodhya that the Nehru Government did with respect to Somnath. The sentiments of the people must be respected, and Ram Janmasthan (Ram's birth place) handed over to the Hindus – if possible through a negotiated settlement or else, by legislation. Litigation certainly is no answer.¹

For Advani, the Palampur Session was a milestone because the BJP allied itself with Shiv Sena and the Party finalized its position on the Ayodhya affair in that session. Advani skilfully utilized the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue to bring the Congress's so-called policy of minority appeasement on the centre stage. The Ayodhya issue, to Advani, was not only a matter of dispute; it also became a symbol of pseudo-secularism and appeasement of the minorities.

The BJP succeeded in utilizing the issue both for electoral gain and to promote its brand of nationalism. The BJP wanted to take full advantage of the mobilization by the VHP. It became very evident when many activists of Ram Janmabhoomi belonging to VHP and Bajrang Dal contested the Lok Sabha election of 1989 on the tickets from the BJP.² The results of the 1989 elections heralded a decisive breakthrough for the BJP as it helped it to emerge as the third largest Party in the country.³ The Party was able to increase its vote share from 7.4 per cent in 1984 to 11.4 per cent in 1989. Towards the end of 1989, a Government headed by V P Singh was installed at the Centre. The Left Parties and the BJP supported this Government from outside. The BJP's support to the National Front Government was with its reservation on Article 370 and support for Uniform Civil Code, Human Rights Commission and Ram Janmabhoomi. But when the V P Singh Government decided to implement the Mandal Commission recommendation of 27% reservations for the OBCs in educational institutions and government services, the tensions between the Central Government and the BJP reached a point of no return. The BJP perceived it as a threat to its strategy to unify the Hindu Community on the basis of Hindutva. It was also against the ideological foundations of Hindu nationalism which emphasized on the political
unification of Hindus. The BJP leaders came to the conclusion that only a purely religious issue could unite the Hindus irrespective of caste and class divisions. They, therefore, decided to mobilize the Hindus on the basis of the highly emotive issue of regaining their hold over the sacred place in Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Ram. As a result, “In September, 1990, the Bharatiya Janata Party, responding to its own complex electoral calculations, decided to join in the procession, fundamentally altering the scope and complexion of the mobilization. Like the VHP, the BJP grew out of the RSS and most of its leaders shared an RSS background and ideology, but its charge was different. The BJP was to operate primarily in the sphere of electoral politics and so it needed to pursue a more broad-based and pragmatic rhetorical strategy.”

In August, 1990, Advani decided to launch his so-called ‘Ratha Yatra’, a march from Somnath (Gujarat) to Ayodhya which was to reach Ayodhya on 30 October, 1990, to have the construction work of the temple under way. The Ratha Yatra led to large scale violence and devastation. “Between September 1 and November 20, at least 116 communal riots had broken out in which 564 people lost their lives.”

In its 1991 election manifesto, BJP made Ram Janmabhoomi an issue. It was stated in the manifesto:

BJP firmly believes that construction of Sri Ram Mandir at Janmasthan is a symbol of the vindication of our cultural heritage and national self-respect. For BJP it is purely a national issue and it will not allow any vested interests to give it a sectarian and communal colour. Hence, the party is committed to build Shri Ram Mandir at Janmasthan by relocating super-imposed Babri structure with due respect.

L. K Advani said on 29 November 1992 in New Delhi, “The Ayodhya Movement is not just a plea for a temple for recapturing our national identity.” Advani went on to say further, “This Movement is not the culmination but the commencement of the nationalist assertion.” Commenting on the stand taken by the BJP on this movement, he said, “BJP is committed to the construction of the temple to make the very place adorned by Ram Lalla today as the Sanctum Sanctorium, Court wrangling can delay, and New Delhi can obstruct but no one
can deny this ultimately." In 1998 election manifesto also the issue of Ram Temple was given a very prominent place. The manifesto stated:

The BJP is convinced that Hindutva has immense potentiality to re-energize this nation and strengthen and discipline to undertake the arduous task of nation-building. ... It is with such integrative ideas in mind, that the BJP joined the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement for the construction of Shri Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. This greatest mass movement in post-independence history reoriented the disoriented polity in India and strengthened the foundation of cultural nationalism.

Again, it was stated in the Manifesto, “The BJP is committed to facilitate the construction of a magnificent Shri Ram Mandir at Ram Janmasthan in Ayodhya where a makeshift temple already exists. Shri Ram lies at the core of Indian consciousness. The BJP will explore all consensual, legal and constitutional means to facilitate the construction of Shri Ram Mandir at Ayodhya.” Here, we should turn our attention to what Vajpayee, the so-called liberal face of the BJP to many, had to say on the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement. He said,

We joined the movement because Shri Ram epitomizes the cultural heritage of all Indians; he symbolises our cultural nationalism. Through this movement, we were able to unleash the suppressed aspirations of millions of Indians and canalise their nationalist fervour towards nation-building. Indeed, the Ayodhya Movement has effectively driven home the point that if Ram represented the ideal of conduct, Ram Rajya to which the BJP is dedicated, represented the ideal of governance. The Ayodhya Movement seeks to restore the temple at the birth-place of Shri Ram since this would contribute to the restoration of our cultural heritage as well as set right a grave historical wrong.

In 1999 Lok Sabha Election, the BJP did not have its own election manifesto. Instead, it decided to go with the NDA’s Agenda where the contentious issues like Article 370, UCC and Ram Mandir were put on the backburner temporarily. Here it should be mentioned that “At the top level of the party the political exploitation of the Ayodhya issue was always done discreetly, essentially to avoid upsetting its new allies.”
In 2004 Lok Sabha Election, the BJP emerged on the election scene with its 'Vision Document'. In this 'Document', the party’s emphasis had shifted “from pushing a hard line confrontationist agenda to one of consensus and resolution.” The Ram Janmabhoomi issue was not raised by the BJP in this election with such enthusiasm as was found in earlier elections, still it was emphasised by the party in a much more persuasive way. But this issue could not succeed in deriving any benefit for the party.

That the construction of the Ram Temple is very much on the agenda of the BJP, in spite of its defeat in the 2004 Lok Sabha election, is proved by what the Party President of the BJP said in 2006. Rajnath Singh, the Party President, “denied the party had suffered any erosion on the ideological front but said that the first thing the BJP would do if voted to power at the centre with a majority would be to enact a law paving the way for early construction of a Ram Temple in Ayodhya.” He further said, “the Ram Janmabhoomi issue was part of the party’s cultural agenda” and “we want the construction of a Ram Temple in Ayodhya.” Towards this end, he said, “If talks do not yield any result, then we would like the court to come out with a solution. If nothing comes out of these two steps, then the BJP, in the event of getting a clear majority, would not hesitate to enact a legislation.” In 2007, Kalyan Singh, the former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and during whose rule the Babri Masjid was demolished on 6 December, 1992, said in course of an election campaign in Uttar Pradesh, “Without its demolition it was not possible to construct a Ram Mandir at the right place.” He further said, “If the BJP returned to power in Uttar Pradesh, the construction of the Ram Temple would top his agenda.”

Demolition of the Babri Masjid

It was quite clear that the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation could not be carried on for ever, and that more concrete results were required to be produced at the site in Ayodhya to keep up the momentum and political importance of the issue. The VHP got thousands of Sadhus and Sants assembled in response to a Sammelan called by the Dharma Sansad. “As expected, the VHP announced unilaterally that it would start Kar Seva on December 6 in Ayodhya and would
not stop until the temple was completed.” 22 The Central Government was in two minds on the question of allowing Kar Seva but eventually the go-ahead was given to perform a symbolic Kar Seva. “Everything seemed to be going according to the plan announced by the organisers for doing a symbolic Kar Seva and observing other formalities of Kar Seva not involving violation of Court Orders.” 23 All over the country, activists from various outfits of the Sangh Parivar were mobilized in large numbers. “On 6 December 1992, all debates, all discussions, all mediations came to a grinding halt. The unpredictably predictable development took place in Ayodhya.” 24 “The Babri Masjid was reduced to rabble by a huge crowd of militant Hindus under the leadership of the VHP and the Sadhus and in the presence of BJP leaders that included Advani.” 25 Initially, the demolition forced the BJP to be on the defensive. “Advani claimed it was not the intention of his party to demolish the Masjid and that things went out of hand on that fateful day.” 26 The same Advani went to the extent of saying that, “The event was a historic one.” 27 “For Vajpayee, the event was ‘unfortunate’. But this poet and man of refined feelings was quick to dismiss it as of little consequence.” 28 He said, “It was a disputed structure, and it was being used as a temple.” 29 Kalyan Singh, the dismissed Chief Minister of UP, remarked, “I do not have any regrets and repentance for the happenings in Ayodhya and the disturbances that followed afterwards as the demolition of the disputed structure was a spontaneous outburst of pent-up Hindu ‘sentiments’.” 30

From the above, it becomes evident that “the entire Ayodhya Movement launched by the Sangh Parivar has been based on sheer fraud and force from the very beginning, something the devout Hindus have never failed to acknowledge.” 31 The fact that a conspiracy was hatched to destroy the Masjid was revealed by the Inquiry Commission and the Citizen’s Tribunal on Ayodhya and it was very difficult for the Sangh Parivar to swallow it for its moral, legal and political ramifications. “Hence the lies and prevarication.” 32 As recent as 2006, while filing its submission, though belatedly, before the Liberhan Commission, the UPA Government said, “It was an act of national shame. What was demolished was not merely an ancient structure but the faith of the
minorities in the sense of justice and fair play of the majority. It took their faith in
the rule of law and constitutional processes". 33

An *Indian Express* editorial dated 7 December 1992, exposed the *Sangh
Parivar* by stating, “The outrage Ayodhya witnessed on Sunday is an affront to
our national honour. India’s principal opposition party now stands exposed as
one only too willing to resort to deceit and dastardliness in its frantic pursuit of a
religious goal.” 34

The demolition of the Babri Masjid was strongly criticised and commented
upon by many. Professor Hiren Mukherjee said:

On December 6, 1992, when the 500 years old Babri mosque in Ayodhya was
brought down with devilish glee by contingents of frenzied religio-fascists
mobilized by the notorious Sangh Parivar, with its political flagship the BJP and
odious outfits like Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, etc., it was
not only our fleeting image as a ‘secular state’ but our historically involved
civilisational entity which nearly lay shattered. 35

According to Professor K N Panikkar, “The demolition of Babri Masjid represents
the beginning of a new phase in the history of communalism.” 36 Professor Zoya
Hasan, commenting on the demolition of the Babri Masjid, said,

The demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu militants, and its
aftermath, dramatically highlighted the growing influence of political Hinduism
and the rise to power of the BJP. Dedicated to a redefinition of nationalism, the
BJP began to fill the political vacuum created by the decline of the Congress,
providing a Hindu nationalist alternative. It’s climb to national power was
promoted by the campaign to build a Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya,
thought to be the birthplace of Ram. 37

In the words of Professor C P Bhambhri, “The Indian State collapsed on
December 6, 1992 because it failed to defend itself against the action of a mob
which was determined to destroy the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya.” 38

To conclude, “the politics of Mandir brought into sharp focus questions about the
plural character of Indian society and the resilience of the democratic political
process.” 39 “What began in the 1980s as an agitation by a small section of
fanatics, turned into a major framework for conducting politics during the
Problems and prospects of the BJP in West Bengal

1990s.” In other words, “The Mandir issue sought to shift the terms of political discourse from plural democracy to majoritarian politics.” There is no doubt that the BJP has gained much from this type of politics, but it is also a fact that “The demolition of the mosque deprives it of any comparable mobilizational focus to what it possessed prior to demolition. It is much more difficult to arouse mass passions for building a Ram temple than for destroying a hated symbol. The 1993 Assembly Elections in the north shocked the BJP and exposed the limits of Ayodhya-type politics.”

**Uniform Civil Code**

A major component associated with the communal politics in India is the controversy over the uniform civil code. The BJP is of the opinion that the continuance of the Muslim Personal Law is nothing but a kind of appeasement of the Muslim community which goes against the concept of secularism. “For the Sangh combine, national unity could best be achieved by curbing minority rights and introducing a UCC that would apply to all communities.”

After the Lok Sabha Elections of 1984, Vajpayee resigned and Advani took over the reins of the party to give it a new shape. Under the leadership of Advani, the party started questioning the Nehruvian concept of secularism and began to attack it describing it as ‘pseudo-secularism’. According to the party, the main objective of the Nehruvian concept of secularism was to create a Muslim vote-bank. For this, the Congress party indulged in ‘appeasement of the Muslims’. The BJP cites separate Muslim Personal Law as an instance of appeasement of the Muslims. The Party draws our attention to Article 44 of the Constitution which states, “The state shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.”

The Party leadership puts emphasis on the fact that separate personal laws for such communities as the Muslims, Hindus, Christians and others were formulated only as a temporary arrangement. The Hindu nationalists are particularly exasperated that the Civil law was all about the Hindus whereas the Constitution enjoined (in Article 44 of the Directive Principles) the State to give India a uniform civil code. Nehru, the Prime Minister was not willing to effect
reforms that would pave the way for a UCC because he thought that his Government in the aftermath of partition should avoid taking any step that would offend the religious sentiments of minorities, especially the Muslims; instead he put emphasis on mitigating their concerns regarding their status in independent India. He said, "If anybody brings forward a civil code bill, it will have my extreme sympathy. But I confess, I do not think the time is ripe in India for me to push through it." Although he thought that, a UCC for the whole country is an essential and vital element for national development, the Prime Minister was apprehensive of the fact that any unconsented imposition on minorities, would be injudicious. Unfortunately, things have not changed for the better in India. "Politics has increasingly become communalised and Hindu-Muslim relations have developed fissures which are reflected in riots the frequency and intensity of which is a matter of shame for all Indians." The real change came with the meteoric rise of the BJP towards the end of the 1980s which appropriated the UCC -- historically, a feminist demand -- as a rhetorical device to attack minorities. "The Sangh assailed the Muslim desire to conserve a separate identity, and demanded that Muslims should shed their special ways of life and culture and accept a UCC." The demand for a common civil code became intense with the agitation the orthodox Muslims organised on the Shah Bano Case. The Supreme Court gave its ruling on the case of maintenance for a divorced wife in Shah Bano's favour under Section 125 of the Cr.P.C. "This was construed by the Muslim leadership as interference in the Shariat law and the Shariat law being divine could not be changed or interfered with." The Muslim leadership, ignorant of the long-term consequences, organized an aggressive movement, compelling the Rajiv Gandhi Government to change the law for the Muslims. "An act was passed called the Muslim Women (Protection on Divorce) Act, which made Section 125 of the Cr. P. C. inapplicable to Muslims." To the Hindu communalists, it was nothing short of a stick to beat the government with. The BJP fully exploited the passage of the Bill by the Parliament dubbing it as an act of appeasement of the Muslims. "The Hindu middle classes were easily convinced and began to support the BJP demand for
a common civil code. Thus, the common civil code became an important item on the Hindutva agenda." 54 Thus, "Unfortunately, a secular measure acquired strong communal overtones." 55

The BJP did not hesitate to use this issue of uniform civil code as an important element of its electoral platform. In its Election Manifesto of 1989, it spoke about "the enactment of a uniform civil code and it was also stated that the Party wanted to build consensus before such a law is adopted by the Parliament." 56

The 1991 Election Manifesto of the BJP had this to say on the uniform civil code, "We will appoint a Law Commission to study various civil laws, ancient, medieval and modern to evolve a common civil law for the whole country to give all citizens a feeling of unity and brotherhood." 57 And in the 1996 Election Manifesto, the Party pledged itself in the Section on, 'Our Agenda on Women' to "Introduce a uniform civil code that will (1) give women property rights, (2) ensure women's rights to adopt, (3) guarantee women equal guardianship rights, (4) remove discriminatory clauses in divorce laws and 5) put an end to polygamy." 58 Then in 1998 Lok Sabha Election, the BJP secured the support of its allies by resorting to an unprecedented back-burner politics which meant that the party would put three contentious issues on hold temporarily. These were: (1) construction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya, (2) Abrogation of Article 370 and (3) adoption of a uniform civil code. 59 Here, we should remember that these issues armed the BJP with a distinct and solid identity right from the days of its earlier incarnation, the Jana Sangh. "But the Party sacrificed its Hindutva ideology temporarily for the sake of capturing political power." 60

Though the BJP cannot be blamed for its demand for a uniform civil code, the tone and context of the demand made all the difference. "Woven into the party's Hindutva ideology, the demand appeared to project Hindus as a progressive community and the Muslims as conservative and backward looking which is not necessarily true." 61 "Moreover, when Hindu chauvinists talk of a uniform civil code, at the back of the mind of most of them is the Hinduization of Indian personal laws as much as possible." 62
Subhashini Ali, former M P and the President of All India Democratic Women's Association, in an interview to T K Rajalakshmi of *Frontline* magazine, said:

The clamour for a uniform civil code is like many other simplistic solutions that are offered. It does not have much of a meaning. Unfortunately, the Sangh Parivar has used this issue as a stick to beat the Muslims with. ... All personal laws are discriminatory against women. There is a need for reform of all personal laws regarding inheritance, property rights, matrimonial rights, divorce and custody over children. There should be gender equal laws governing all communities. ... We have started a signature campaign among Muslim women and women that calls for the abolition of triple talaq, polygamy and equal custodial rights of children for women. We have got a good response from both men and women and that is much more important and effective than mouthing empty slogans like UCC. 63

To conclude, it may be said that the BJP and the *Sangh Parivar* have been able to communalise the UCC issue and the BJP has succeeded in highlighting the view that the absence of a UCC is sign of appeasement of Muslims who are against a united nation. It is unfortunate that the Indian Judiciary has also viewed the UCC issue through the prism of national unity. The most important issue of gender justice across all religious communities has been ignored. “Political Hindutva has no commitment to a genuinely gender-just UCC. The kind of common civil code acceptable to it would be based on Hindu codes interpreted in a loosely Brahminical fashion. In such a situation, not surprisingly, the very idea of a common civil code is seen by large sections of Muslims as motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment.” 64

**Article 370**

Before going into the stand taken by the BJP on Article 370, we should discuss the position of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the earlier incarnation of the BJP, on Article 370. According to Geeta Puri, an eminent scholar, “No other political party in India had campaigned against Article 370 in as determined a manner as the erstwhile BJS. Kashmir was the only theme which symbolised the
nationalist ideology of the party and greatly informed its intellectual sensibility and political strategy.\textsuperscript{65} The Jana Sangh founder, Dr Shyama Prasad Mukhopadhyay had opposed Nehru's Kashmir Policy during the 1952 hustings and he had even launched a movement for the complete integration of Jammu and Kashmir within the Indian Union. The Jana Sangh's calls for abolishing Article 370 (giving special status and privileges to Kashmiris) ceased to be an important issue in the post-Nehru period. It is interesting to note that during the Janata rule, the BJS, to a great extent, kept itself aloof from its previous position on many issues and its stand on Article 370 was much diluted, if not totally given up.

"The post-1989 Hindutva crescendo of the Bharatiya Janata Party, though largely linked with the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute had its historical and inspirational connection with the post-independence evaluation of the earlier BJS and then the BJP's perceptions and responses on the Kashmir problem." \textsuperscript{66} As a matter of fact, BJP's political perspective on Kashmir was as much an inseparable part of the ideology of cultural nationalism represented by the famous 1990 Advani \textit{Rath Yatra} as that of not so successful subsequent Joshi-led \textit{Ekta Yatra}.

Like other issues the BJP utilized this Article too to gain electoral mileage. As such, in its Manifesto for the 1991 mid-term Lok Sabha Election, the Party said, "We will delete the 'temporary' Article 370 from the Constitution, which more than anything else, psychologically separates J & K state from the rest of the country." \textsuperscript{67} In its 1998 Election Manifesto, it was stated by the Party that "The BJP will abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution". \textsuperscript{68} But it is amazing as well as amusing to note that "notwithstanding BJP's passionate campaign for the abrogation of Article 370 right from its inception in 1980 which has given it such a formidable identity, the Party dropped this demand in order to secure the support of its allies at the time of 1999 elections". \textsuperscript{69} In the \textit{Vision Document} of 2004, "there is no talk anywhere of abrogating the Article while recognising that the Constitution provides for 'transient and temporary' provisions for J & K – it does not even refer to Article 370 by name – it talks instead of the importance of eliminating terrorism and accelerating economic development." \textsuperscript{70}
BJP’s antipathy towards Article 370 giving autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir became quite evident when it was in power. The National Conference led by Farooq Abdullah and which was part of the BJP-led NDA Government at the Centre, formally took a resolution seeking restoration of the pre-1953 status of Jammu and Kashmir which meant that the Centre will have powers only with regard to external affairs, defence and communications and the state of Jammu and Kashmir will have powers on every other issue concerning the state’s governance. In other words, the resolution sought “to restore the instrument of accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh on October 25-26, 1947 with the Nehru administration.” The then central Cabinet rejected the demand outright.

The demand for autonomy put forward by the Farooq Adbullah Government of Jammu and Kashmir proves beyond doubt the fact that the autonomy given to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 has been much diluted. BJP itself is quite aware of the erosion that has made its inroads into the Article 370. The Party noted the following changes in relation to Article 370.

1. The permit system for the entry of the Indian people into the state and similar system for the state people going to other parts of the country have been abolished.

2. Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of India, jurisdiction of the Election Commission of India, and the jurisdiction of the Auditor General of India have also been extended to J & K.

3. There had been financial integration which resulted in flow of more Central assistance to the State.

4. Customs Duty which is imposed for import of foreign goods, was abolished as it was against the spirit of oneness of the country.

5. There has integration of the Services and many people of the state have found place in the IAS, IPS, IFS.

6. The system of nomination of members from the state to the Lok Sabha (the Lower House of Parliament) has been replaced by direct elections like other parts of the country.
(7) The nomenclature of the Sadar-e-Riyasat and that of the Prime Minister were changed to Governor and Chief Minister, respectively.

(8) Article 356 of the Indian Constitution has been extended to this state also.

(9) Over 50 Central labour laws have also been extended. 72 In conclusion, it can be said that BJP's politics has contributed to the increasing division among the people of Jammu and Kashmir on communal and regional lines. It has not been able to become a bridge -- emotional or political -- between the two main regions of the State, Jammu and Kashmir and undoubtedly, it has made the Kashmir problem more complicated.

Economic Policy of the BJP

In order to grasp the economic policy orientations of the BJP, one must take note of the influence economic policies pursued by the Congress and its ideological mentor, the RSS had on it. The BJP strongly criticizes the Congress Government’s economic policies. It has alleged that, “the Congress Party’s plan for economic development was borrowed from abroad and so it has no cultural relevance to the country.” 73 The Party has blamed the Congress Government for its unabashed manner in which its licensing and regulatory powers were used to serve the financial interests of the ruling Congress Party that led to the growth of corruption and black money.

The BJP’s basic economic and development ideology has sought to ensure full employment and remove poverty by putting the agricultural base of the country on a strong footing by inculcating the spirit of swadeshi. According to one BJP ideologue, “Drawing sustenance from Indian tradition, our country can transform from the frenzy of international borrowings and unsustainable consumption patterns through the policy of 'Humanistic Approach to Swadeshi', which will release massive latent energy of the last, the least, the lowest and the lost.” 74

The swadeshi thrust has introduced a complex dimension into the BJP’s socio-economic thinking and it has important implications for the Party’s ideological development. The swadeshi component of BJP’s economic ideology
could not, however, inspire those sections of the industrial middle classes, the professionals and the managerial elites, who had identified themselves with the BJP because of its unflinching commitment to the values and concepts of economic realism, pragmatic efficiency and organisational discipline and rejection of the methodology of ‘class analysis’ and strategy of ‘class struggle’. 75

But the implementation of economic reforms by the Congress Government in 1991 in response to a serious economic crisis resulting from an adverse trade balance, the high cost of repayment of internal and external debts, a severe shortage of foreign exchange etc. led to the creation of identity crisis for the BJP. Although it is well known that initially the BJP had no problem in supporting the economic outlook in India, the fear of the Congress party making inroads into its constituency, the small traders and the industrialists, gripped the BJP. Jay Dubashi, economic adviser of the Party, commented, “The Congress took away our economic platform and is now taking away our political base. ....as the economy opens up it will be exceedingly difficult to keep the middle class away from Congress.” 76 Thus, the BJP confronted a major dilemma - how to satisfy its rank and file while keeping its recently won respectability among the India's English educated middle class in tact. 77 As was clear from its election manifesto and campaign in 1991, one of the Party’s principal concerns was to advocate economic liberalisation, a policy finding favour among its business and middle class bases of support. 78 After the new economic policy including liberalization, deregulation and privatisation was announced by the Congress Government at the Centre, “the RSS embarked on a campaign for a swadeshi Approach to Economic Development.” 79 This RSS offensive forced the BJP National Council to adopt a New Economic Policy Statement called, ‘Humanistic Approach To Economic Development : A Swadeshi Alternative’ in May, 1992. It was stated in this new document. “For the Bharatiya Janata Party, Swaraj and Swadeshi are indivisible. There can be no real Swaraj without Swadeshi. ... The economic programme of the Bharatiya Janata Party follows from the above paradigms namely Humanism and Swadeshi.” 80 The economic debate within the Hindu nationalist movement had its reflection in the shift of emphasis in the series of resolutions passed by the BJP on this issue. In August 1992 the Party's
National Executive declared that "the BJP stood for liberalisation with self-reliance or to stress the swadeshi angle, self-reliance with liberalisation." But in 1993, the Party supported the idea of separating internal liberalisation and the integration of the economy of the country with the world market and it "became the official policy of the BJP before the 1993 elections." It said that, "the BJP has long been an advocate of decentralisation and deregulation but it has always maintained that internal liberalisation should precede, not follow, the mad rush towards globalization."

In the 1996 elections, the BJP emerged as a party with the largest number of seats in the Lok Sabha and formed the government but failed to win the confidence vote. This short-lived government, however, gave us an opportunity to have an idea about the economic policy of the party in case it comes to power in future. In its 1996 election manifesto, it was stated that "the BJP welcomes foreign investment because we hold that it supplies knowledge, technology and know-how and sharpens the quality and competitive edge of our economy." The manifesto further said, "We will give preference to overseas investors who have domestic partners." It was also stated in the manifesto, "The Party regards the preservation of the nation's economic interests as a component of our external economic relations." Arun Ghosh, a noted economist and former member, Planning Commission, brought into the fore the inconsistencies found between pronouncement and practice in economic policies of the BJP. He wrote, "The BJP manifesto is quite vehement in its opposition to many aspects of the ongoing globalization (and economic reform) policies and yet the action taken by many BJP-run State Governments (and statements made by the 13-day old Atal Behari Vajpayee Government at the Centre in 1996) are at variance with the approach outlined in the Election Manifesto of the BJP."

It was in its 1998 election manifesto that the BJP tried to take a clearer view on economic issues. "It sent out signals to Indian industry that the Party shares their perception on development of national industry with gradual reform, first by opening the domestic market and then creating a competitive environment. Only in the second phase, were doors to foreign competition to be opened." It was further stated in the manifesto, "The BJP is fully aware that,
when it comes to power, it will be inheriting a badly managed economy and a badly directed reform process. The broad agenda of the BJP will be guided by Swadeshi or economic nationalism.” 89 According to the manifesto, “Every nation advocated free trade in all global force, but in practice, they compulsively resort to quotas, tariffs and anti-dumping measures to protect their national interests. ... while the declared agenda is free trade, the undeclared but actual agenda is economic nationalism. India, too, must follow its own national agenda.” 90

On the whole, the BJP’s commitment to economic reform was a mixture of appeasement and compulsion. It wanted to remain nationalistic on economic policy front without taking any risk of being isolated, a goal most likely unachievable in the contemporary world.

As a political party which is interested in widening its base among the people, the BJP knows the importance of taking recourse to rhetoric as well as pragmatic economic policy based on political reality. When in opposition, it depended on swadeshi rhetoric but when in power, it did just the opposite. After assuming power at the Centre the BJP practically sacrificed the concept of swadeshi at the altar of the World Bank and the IMF. The common people from their own experience have seen that there was not an iota of swadeshi in the economic policy of the BJP. As a matter of fact, BJP’s economic policies have served more the interests of the MNCs and WTO than any other previous government. It may be appropriate to state here that, “The SJM, under Sudarshan’s directive, took to the streets in 1998 criticising Vajpayee Government’s economic policies, particularly for allowing 100% FDI in tobacco and liquor industries, and for retaining and promoting certain bureaucrats who were hostile to Swadeshi.” 91 The ABVP Organizing Secretary even went to the extent of comparing Vajpayee with Bhisma Pitamah, who had joined the Kauravs and therefore had to be confronted to uphold the good high. 92 The student front of the Sangh Parivar dubbed Vajpayee as the Nikamma (most inept) Prime Minister. 93

During the thirteen months when the BJP-led coalition government was in power at the centre and its extended rule for several months as a caretaker government after it was defeated in the Lok Sabha in April, 1999, the country
Problems and prospects of the BJP in West Bengal

witnessed further speeding up of its so-called economic reforms, or in plain words, privatisation, retrenchment and opening up of the market to the foreign multinationals." 94 The Vajpayee Government's economic policies were called by many 'Videshi' in the garb of 'Swadeshi'. The economy was opened up in an unprecedented manner for foreign capital. A large number of items were dereserved for imports, which has drastically affected the domestic industry. Multinational Corporations were permitted to enter into the vital infrastructural areas such as power, steel, telecommunications, mining and ports. Utilising the excuse of the sanctions imposed by the USA following the Pokhran-II, the Vajpayee Government had embarked on a path of reckless opening up of the country's resources for multinational corporations' loot. This Government helped the foreign capital and MNCs to get hold of the domestic industries and surpassed all other previous governments in its drive for privatisation. This Government had also the distinction of being the first in creating a first ever ministry for disinvestment of profit-making public sector enterprises. The 'Swadeshi' plank of the BJP was totally exposed when it went to the extent of privatizing the insurance sector. Ironically it was the same BJP which opposed all these things when it was in opposition. Again, during the regime of the BJP-led government poverty got increased. According to a National Sample Survey, the number of people below poverty line was up to 27.6% during 2001-2002 from 24.4% during the period 2000-2001. The report pointed out that in the rural areas the number of people below poverty line increased most. While in 2000-2001, the number of people below poverty line was 24.4%, it went up to 28.6% in 2001-2002. 95 So far as employment is concerned while the rate of growth of employment was 2.7% in 1983-1994, it came down to 1.07 in 1993-2000. 96 During the BJP regime it was the working class who most lost their jobs. "Four lakhs twenty two thousand workers of public sector enterprises lost their jobs through voluntary retirement up to 31st March, 2002. 97 As a result of closure of registered factories from 1998 to 2002, 59,104 workers lost their jobs. 98 According to a government report, 14,406 workers were retrenched during the period from 1998 to 2002. 99 In the same period, lay-off took away jobs from 1,65,487 workers. 100 Even the EPF (Employees' Provident Fund) and pension of
the government employees were not spared. The BJP-led government brought down the EPF interest from 12 per cent to 8 per cent. The government also tried to free itself from its pensionary obligations to the employees and efforts were made to hand over the Pension Fund to the private hands. "In BJP-led government's agenda, working class issues always remained absent. The issue of protecting the rights and the privileges of the workers and the employees and their jobs remained real non-issues to the BJP-led government." It proved to be a government, which was totally unconcerned about the problems of mass poverty and human suffering.

The economic policy of the BJP was one of complete subordination to the neo-liberal policy of liberalization, privatization and globalization. It pursued this policy with all sincerity and enthusiasm in the garb of carrying through 'economic reforms'. Commenting on the complete reversal of swadeshi by BJP when in power, Zoya Hasan said,

The renunciation of Swadeshi or economic nationalism constitutes the biggest shift in BJP policy. Wedded to Swadeshi for the past five decades, the BJP-led NDA Government, after just two years in office has proved to be the most enthusiastic about liberalization and globalisation of the economy and in the process has sought to appease foreign investors, rather than the party's Swadeshi lobby.

In conclusion, it may be said that, "There was a time when the BJP was known as a 'baniya party'. Today, it has graduated into a full-fledged party of the domestic monopolists, a party of the big bourgeoisie."

The BJP and the Cow Protection

It is an established fact that "a long-standing demand of Hindu nationalism has been to create a nation that would draw its legitimacy from a set of sacred symbols of which the cow is a core element. Accordingly, efforts to ban cow slaughter have been at the forefront of the policies of Hindu nationalist parties and movements."

Cow protection is a theme, which has been articulated in the election manifestoes of the BJP. The party avers that, "from times immemorial, cow
protection has remained one of the bases of Indian culture and Indian agriculture." The BJP is regretful as, "about three million cows are slaughtered every year, most of them for export. The party would put a total ban on the slaughter of cows." In its 1991 election manifesto, it was further stated that the party will "amend Article 48 of the Constitution to cover bulls and bullocks, and prohibit all trading (state as well as private) in the slaughter of cows; implement a policy of Go-Samvardhan or development of cow and cattle-breeding, including the improvement of sheep and goat breeds, to bring about a White Revolution in the country; provide tax exemption to the income of Goshalas and Pinjrapoles." 

The BJP has throughout nurtured the belief that cow protection is the living symbol of Indian culture and is inseparably linked with the economy of the country since ages. In its 1998 election manifesto it was stated that "it is on the patient back of the cow and its progeny that entire structure of Indian agricultural rests. Over seven crore animals are employed in farming operations in Indian villages; more than 80 per cent of the rural transports needs are met by the bullock carts. Our live stock is also an effective protection against environmental degradation." 

Besides highlighting the issue of cow protection through its election manifestoes, the former NDA Government headed by Atal Behari Vajpayee gave a try to introduce a law banning cow-slaughter. The very first act of Uma Bharati, as the former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, was to ban the slaughter of cows. The reason behind the proposed legislation to ban cow-slaughter is not far to seek. It is nothing but "to show to the people of India that the BJP has not abandoned its Hindutva agenda." 

Foreign Policy of the BJP

In order to understand the foreign policy stance of the Bharatiya Janata Party, "one needs to keep in mind the broad characteristics of the period from 1980 to the present both in its international and domestic contexts." From international point of view, the period is of great importance starting with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (December 1979) culminating in the second
cold war in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. A long chapter in the history of international hostility came to an end." 112 Internally also, the period was one of immense importance. "The politics of the country was driven by both vertical and horizontal forces with contradictory implications for nation-building. While the movements in Assam, Punjab and Kashmir threatened to divide the country vertically, the backward classes movements and Hindu nationalistic politics threatened to divide the country horizontally. Simultaneously, there was a systematic erosion of value-based politics... primordial loyalties of caste and religion were evoked by political parties for electoral purposes with little consideration for their long-term implications on national integration." 113

The Bharatiya Janata Party did not support the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan and pro-Sovietism of Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister. Its National Executive declared:

It is highly regrettable that instead of raising a powerful protest against the Soviet interference in the affairs of Afghanistan, our traditional friend and non-aligned neighbour, the attitude adopted by Mrs Indira Gandhi's Government on this issue right from the beginning has resulted in lowering our prestige in the eyes of the world, reducing our credibility among non-aligned nations and isolating us from our neighbours. 114

It opposed the continued presence of Soviet armed forces in Afghanistan and wanted India to pursue an independent foreign policy. The BJP National Council in a meeting held in April 1981, passed a resolution accusing Indira Gandhi of imparting a 'unidimensional tilt' towards Russia and forsaking 'credible non-alignment'. 115 During this time, the party gave priority to two major planks, namely, 'genuine non-alignment' and 'improvement of relations with immediate neighbours'. The party said, "The BJP will adhere to the path of genuine non-alignment adopted during the Janata regime and shall pursue an independent foreign policy. ...The BJP considers improvement of relations with our immediate neighbours like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Ceylon and Bhutan as one of the major achievements of Janata's foreign policy. The BJP will continue to pay special attention to the development of these mutually beneficial ties with our
neighbours." But "BJP's faith in non-alignment completely evaporated after the end of the Cold War and the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union." The 1991 Election Manifesto of the party proved this point when it said, "In the post-Cold War period, neither the USA needs the third world countries to contain communism nor does the USSR has any use now for its 'Natural Allies' in the developing world. As a result, non-aligned movement which was created against the backdrop of a bipolar world has lost its relevance."  

The Manifesto further went on to say, "The new situation is a challenging one and at the same time pregnant with several fresh opportunities to enlarge India's role in global affairs. But only economically healthy, militarily strong and progressive India can carve out a niche for itself. As long as India goes around with a begging bowl around the world, her voice in the international affairs will not be heard with respect." The party decided to set up a Policy Planning Committee to chalk out the long-term foreign policy goals of the country. The party also proposed the setting up of a National Security Council with country's defence in mind. The 1998 Election Manifesto of the Party stressed the need for protecting India's national interest. The manifesto said:

We see a renewed tendency by some big powers to dominate and to impose conditionalities to advance their political and economic interest even if it is detrimental to others. There are also perceived notions of civilizational conflicts as also spurts in conflicts. This demands that India's national interest must be protected and pursued more vigorously. Our diplomacy must, therefore, be pro-active rather than being merely reactive without sacrificing the values of peace, equality and cooperation.  

In the same Manifesto, the BJP declared that "We will pursue our national goals and principles steadfastly." These are:

(1) To give India a role and position in world affairs, commensurate with its size and capability;
(2) To promote sovereign equality among nations. The BJP rejects all forms of political and economic hegemonism and is committed to actively resisting such efforts;

(3) To re-orient Indian diplomacy to our economic and commercial goals and to ensure that our missions abroad play a more active and supportive role in meeting these;

(4) To promote greater regional and civilizational relationship and strive for Asian solidarity in general and the development of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in particular;

(5) To have greater interaction with more African nations;

(6) To place relations with the USA on a more even keel based on mutual respect, shared values and congruence of interests;

(7) To further develop the long and traditional relationship with Russia;

(8) To strengthen political and economic relations with the European unions, ASEAN Countries Japan, South Korea, South Africa, Iran, the Arab nations, Israel, Central Asian Republics and fellow Commonwealth nations;

(9) To improve relations with China by seeking speedy resolution of the outstanding border problem;

(10) To support a united Sri Lanka within which the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people should be fully accommodated;

(11) To maintain the unique, warm and friendly relations with Nepal with which India has the closest cultural, religious and historical ties;

(12) To further consolidate the close and friendly ties between India and Bhutan;

(13) To reinforce the improving relations with Bangladesh. We, however, continue to view with concern the unabated illegal infiltration into India from that country and will seek the active participation of the Bangladesh authorities in curbing this. 122

BJP's primary position was that of peace and friendship with each country as it is proved by its 1998 election manifesto. But after coming to power at the Centre, the BJP-led Government, in no time, threw to the winds, the policy of non-alignment; and started aligning itself with the imperialist global designs of
At the same time, its Hindu nationalist fanaticism contributed to the escalation of Indo-Pakistan tensions, and it was hell-bent on teaching a lesson or two to Pakistan with the help of the USA. It may be stated here that its predecessor, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh's foreign policy "was based on antagonism with Pakistan and China and distrust of the then USSR. Its foreign policy sprang from its strong ultra-nationalistic outlook." It had time and again condemned the Congress Governments for being soft towards Pakistan, for mishandling Kashmir question by not abrogating Article 370, for ignoring the interests of the Hindus in Bangladesh and for a tilt in favour of the erstwhile USSR.

**India-Pakistan Relations**

Bharatiya Janata Party has always advocated a very tough foreign policy against Pakistan and China on the basis of a premise that Pakistan as a Muslim country can never be friendly towards a Hindu majority India, and China as a communist country cannot be but a rival of India in the Asian Continent. Anti-Muslim and anti-Communist ideology of the Sangh brotherhood is the mainstay fundamental principle of their foreign policy.

One scholar commented that:

> The BJP is projected as an anti-Muslim Party. In its foreign policy, however, it recognises that India is surrounded by Muslim countries and has to maintain friendly relations with them. The party cites the Janata Party period, when Vajpayee, the BJP stalwart, was the foreign minister. Under Vajpayee's leadership India was able to build cordial relations with its neighbours, including Pakistan. Initially, BJP wanted peace and friendship with Pakistan. It sought that both the countries should forget the past and build a new era of durable peace. This attitude, however, was not to last long as situations in Punjab and Kashmir worsened and Pakistan's involvement in the secessionist movements became more and more evident. In the 1991 election manifesto of the BJP, it was stated that, "The BJP is wedded to national interest and world peace. To these end we will invite Pakistan to come forward to resolve our disputes, in terms of
the Simla Pact and meanwhile develop cooperative economic and media relations.” The Party wanted better ties with Pakistan but only within the ambit of the Simla Agreement. The National Executive of the BJP met at Bhubaneshwar (Orissa) from 6-8 November 1992 and took resolutions on some issues. Regarding Pakistan, the Party declared, “Some of India's neighbours interfere in our internal affairs with impunity. Pakistan aids and abets and directly takes part in promoting terrorism in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan instigates infiltration across the borders in Rajasthan and Gujarat.” An opportunity came to the BJP to pursue an anti-Pakistan foreign policy and an aggressive military based defence policy when it came to power at the Centre in 1998. The election manifesto of the BJP of 1998 committed the party, “to take active steps to persuade Pakistan to abandon its present policy of hostile interference in our internal affairs by supporting insurgent and terrorist groups. The BJP affirms unequivocally India's sovereignty over the whole of Jammu and Kashmir including the areas under foreign occupations.” In this connection, it would be appropriate to mention what Professor C P Bhambhri has said. According to him, “India-Pakistan relationship have never been smooth and the biggest dispute is over J & K.” He went on to say further that, “India and Pakistan have fought wars over Kashmir four times already.” and “If Pakistan is not involved in a direct military war with India it encourages military and insurgency in the Kashmir Valley.”

Relations with Pakistan occupied a dominant place in the regional foreign policy of the BJP-led NDA Government. These relations got very strained after 1998. “Moments of tense confrontation contrasted with interludes of apparently promising engagement. Vajpayee made several bold attempts to improve relations with Pakistan but these were not entirely successful and engagement was not a consistent theme in Indian Policy.” Towards the end of the first NDA regime Vajpayee undertook his bus journey to Lahore. “After several rounds of talks an agreement was signed in Lahore on 21 February, 1999. Among other things, it set out the bases on which Kashmir and the issue of nuclear security could be discussed.”
On 13 December 2001, Indian Parliament was attacked by a group of gunmen. The then Government of was of the opinion that Pakistan was responsible and demanded strong action against the militants nurtured by it. In order to achieve its objectives, India started mobilizing troops along its border with Pakistan. The possibility of a war between the two nuclear States raised an alarm in the international arena. After the attack on the Indian Parliament, L K Advani said, "It is now evident that the terrorist assault on the Parliament House was executed jointly by Pak-based and supported terrorist outfits, namely Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad." 135 Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said in his speech in Parliament, "Our fight is not against the people of Pakistan but against the phenomenon of terrorism and against those who support and encourage terrorism as a matter of state policy born out of hatred for India. We call upon the Government of Pakistan to take immediate and strict action against all the terrorists who have launched a campaign of terror and destruction across the borders of Pakistan." 136 Vajpayee further said, "We have made repeated efforts to resolve all our problems with Pakistan peacefully. Bus journey to Lahore and the invitation to Musharraf for Agra Summit despite Kargil is an evidence of this desire. In response, we have received nothing but hostility and terrorist attacks." 137 It was declared by the BJP that the party did not want a war with Pakistan. But if Pakistan chose to force a war on India, she should also be prepared to hand over an appropriate reply to Pakistan. 138

It may be pointed out here that it is in the interests of the two countries to resolve their problems through dialogue which should be voluntary and in keeping with the sovereign status of the two countries free from external interference. But the irony is that "the Vajpayee Government, pursuing the foreign policy parameters of the BJP failed to take any independent initiative to improve India-Pakistan relations ... and merely yielded to US pressure each time for the resumption of dialogue or refraining from military action." 139 While insisting on the bilaterism as enshrined in the Simla Treaty of 1972, the Vajpayee-Government, more often than not, submitted itself to undue US interference in its policy towards Pakistan. At the same time, it always adhered to the BJP's foreign policy approach towards Pakistan, and tried every trick to
frustrate the dialogue process on each occasion. Given the class character of both the Musharraf regime in Pakistan and the Vajpayee-Government in India, a solution to the Kashmir problem seemed to be a far cry. But the most disturbing feature of Indo-Pakistan relations during the Vajpayee was USA's growing interference in India's foreign policy and the wilful acceptance of the same by the Government of India.

**Indo-US Relations**

The BJP's Hindu nationalist ideology, its commitment to capitalism both at home and abroad, its strong antipathy towards socialism, its aversion for anti-imperialism and non-alignment, and its liking for an alliance with the USA have, in reality, have been the basic parameters of the foreign policy of the former Vajpayee Government. One of the notable features of the foreign policy during the regime under the premiership of Atal Behari Vajpayee was the USA's rampant interference in India's foreign policy and the cowardly acceptance of the same by India. This was most evident in the case of Indo-Pakistani relations. It may be mentioned here that during the Congress regime, Indo-USA Defence Collaboration Treaty was signed in the year 1995. No treaty like this was signed before between the two countries. As a result of this treaty, Indian military personnel were sent to the USA for further military training. Provisions for exchange of Army Personnel and joint exercises were also there in the treaty. But after the coming of the BJP-led coalition in power at Delhi, this military collaboration was raised to the level of a strategic alliance. This step was in keeping with an announcement made by the Vajpayee-Government to the effect that the USA is a natural ally of India. After the nuclear explosion in 1998, this friendship got soured to a great extent. Then, the BJP-led Government took the initiative to further strengthen the alliance. As a result, joint exercises of the two countries started on a regular basis and IMET (International Military Exchange and Training) for Indian Army was reintroduced.

It may further be mentioned that the Indian Government led by Atal Behari Vajpayee gave permission to the US Army to utilize the sea-ports and airports of the country when the USA started their military offensive against Afghanistan.
Again, during this time, Vajpayee Government allowed the American Secret Intelligence Agency, FBI, to set up their office at New Delhi.\textsuperscript{145} Not only this, this Government did not also hesitate to welcome, going out of its way, the declaration made by J W Bush, the then American President, relating to National Missile Defence Programme. Again, Vajpayee Government agreed to employ the Indian Naval Ships to escort the American Ships to Malacca traits.\textsuperscript{146} BJP is known to be in the habit of opposing the stand taken by the Leftist parties in issues related to Defence, Security and Foreign Affairs. It may be stated here that when the Leftists opposed the decision of the Assam Chief Minister to welcome FBI for investigation of the Assam Bomb Blast, L K Advani sided with the Assam Chief Minister. Advani is the man who welcomed the Indo-US joint Naval surveillance in 1999. Again, he was the first Home Minister of the country to see Langal, the Director of CIA, when he was on an official visit to USA.\textsuperscript{147}

The uncritically pro-American foreign policy of the Vajpayee-Government also raised its head when the US Government declared the ‘first war of the twenty first century’ against ‘international terrorism’ following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 9 September 2001. As soon as the Bush administration declared its international war against unidentified terrorists and countries alleged to be harbouring them, the Vajpayee Government agreed to allow the USA to use India’s air space, air force bases, and to give intelligence and logistic support to the USA for this war.\textsuperscript{148} It should be pointed out here that India was not requested by the US Government for such support, nor did they have any need for it. But India’s unsolicited and unqualified support for the new imperialist doctrine of the USA and also support for the subsequent US attack on Afghanistan, showed the distance Indian foreign policy had speedily traversed after BJP’s coming to power in 1998.\textsuperscript{149}

The emergence of the Bush Administration led to a considerable improvement in Indo-US relations. This was possible by the new administration’s abandonment of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, an issue that had soured the Indo-US relations since the mid-1990s. The surprising receptiveness shown by the NDA Government for ballistic missile defence programme unveiled by President Bush in May 2001 contributed a lot towards the betterment of
relations. India under Vajpayee thought that if the concerns about Pakistan and China were kept in mind then "it had nothing to lose and may be something to gain by welcoming the shift from deterrence to credible defence." As a positive gesture "the National Security Strategy released by President Bush identified India, along with Russia and China, as a potential great power, and one with which US interests required a strong relationship." As a result of the growing relationship between India and the USA, US officials like Secretary of State, Defence Secretary et.al started visiting the country. Even "President Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney made a point of cultivating personal relationship with Vajpayee and his Deputy, L K Advani." Not only this, a revived India-US Defence policy group met several times. What is very surprising as well as interesting is the fact that "For the first time in over three decades India started to buy significant amounts of US weapons." What is more, the US administration, in May 2003, "cleared Israel's transfer of phalcon AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control Systems) to India under a $2 billion defence deal reached in 2001." In this connection, mention must be made that it was during the reign of Atal Behari Vajpayee that the initiative was taken to form a new India-USA-Israel axis. According to Professor Jayantanuj Bandyopadhyay, "While this new Indian initiative is in conformity with anti-Islam, anti-Pakistan, and pro-American parameters of the BJP's foreign policy, it represents a complete reversal of India's West Asia policy since independence." Prior to the emergence of the Vajpayee era, Indian foreign policy had consistently championed the Arab cause against Israel and it was to oppose the Israeli occupation of Arab's territory disregarding numerous UNSC resolutions. "India's growing diplomatic and military collaboration with the USA during Vajpayee era, culminating in the emergence of an India-USA-Israel axis, represents the climax of a new Indian foreign policy that is simultaneously imperialist and anti-Islamic and a product of the class character and ideology of the Sangh Parivar." Vajpayee-Government's turning into an undisputable and trusted ally of the USA, the world's only superpower, is again proved by its response to the invasion of Iraq resorted to by the USA and UK in March, 2003 in complete disregard for the UN Charter and international law and which was
nothing but an imperialist aggression in the international context of the disintegration of the former Soviet Union.

From the above, it can be said that during the Vajpayee era, Indo-US relationship entered a so-called new chapter. But, in the process, it was forgotten that neighbours like Pakistan and China were also a determining factor so far as India's foreign and security policies are concerned. Another loophole in India's foreign policy during the reign of Vajpayee was the fact that while Vajpayee was tired of talking about 'multipolar world', he worked overtime work to evolve a strategic relationship with the Americans. Professor C P Bhambhri talked about the futility of such relationship. According to him, "such a relationship between Uncle Sam is not in our advantage as we are essentially an Asian nation and our strategic relationships depend mostly on our geographical location."  

We may conclude in the words of Professor Bhambhri, "While letting the Indo-US ties grow further, it will be advisable for New Delhi not to put all eggs in the American basket without resolving our issues with Islamabad and Beijing. Hence, Clinton's observation that 'India and the US are not only natural allies but have 'common enemies' should alert New Delhi that the US as sole superpower has global friends and global enemies, and India cannot be tied and linked with the list of such friends and enemies.'  

BJP and Indo-China Relations

BJP has always advocated a very tough foreign policy against China on the basis of the logic that China being a communist country is a natural rival of India. The Sangh Parivar has been found to be consistently anti-China and pro-Tibet as it is ideologically opposed to communism. India and China fought a border war with each other in 1962 which resulted in critical border issues remaining unresolved. Further uneasiness in relations was caused by China's softness towards Pakistan's perception of the Kashmir dispute. Finally, China's help to Pakistan in the area of nuclear and missile technology has become a cause for concern to New Delhi. BJP's antipathy towards China was proved by the fact that "In a confidential letter
written by the Vajpayee-Government to President Clinton of the United States it was mentioned that India exploded nuclear device because its security was threatened by Pakistan and China." \(^{159}\) In early May 1998, the then Defence Minister George Fernandes started preparing the ground for the Pokhran nuclear tests by identifying China as India's number one enemy.\(^{160}\) Since then the relations with China started taking a downslide thereby making futile all the efforts made in the past to improve relations.

However, in its election manifesto of 1996, the BJP went to state:

Our relations with the People's Republic of China offer an opportunity to put them now on a footing of friendship and cooperation. For this we need to solve the border question in a fair and equitable manner. It cannot, however, be ignored that the People's Republic of China continues to support Pakistan militarily and otherwise.\(^{161}\)

In the 1998 election manifesto it was said that, "We will pursue our national goals and principles steadfastly." \(^{162}\) These are, "to improve relations with China by seeking speedy resolution of the outstanding border problem. Even while doing so we will seek greater cross-border trade and cooperation in other areas. We are also concerned about China continuing transfer of advanced weapons and technologies to Pakistan as this has a vital bearing on our ties with our China." \(^{163}\)

From Pokhran to Kargil war when the BJP-led Government was in power, the relationship between India and China was characterized by cold attitude with each other. But it should be remembered that as a result of a dialogue which took place between the two Prime Ministers of the two countries during the ASEAN conference in Manila in August, 1998, the joint working group, set up during the Prime Ministership of Narsimha Rao, started meeting. Again, India was apprehensive of the fact that China would side with Pakistan in the Kargil war but to the satisfaction of India, China was seen to be sitting on the fence and appealed to the two countries to start a peace dialogue as soon as possible. The then Foreign Minister of India, Yashwant Singh, visited Beijing in June 1999 and he was assured by the Chinese Foreign Minister that, "China considered India to be an important neighbour with whom it wanted ... good neighbourly relations." \(^{164}\)
The BJP's long-standing commitment to have a national security doctrine in place took a step ahead in February, 2001 with the submission of 'Reforming the National Security System; Recommendations of the Group of Ministers, a report which reviewed all aspects of National Security. This reforming the National Security System identified China "as a potential threat because of its wide-ranging defence modernisation with a special focus on force multipliers and high technology weapons systems." 165 It is worth mentioning here that before Vajpayee visited China, a meeting took place between him and the Chinese President Hu Jintao in Petersburg in 2003. The Chinese President gave the highest priority to friendship and cooperation with India. Vajpayee, on his part, told the Chinese President that "cooperation between the two countries could result in the 21st century becoming an Asian century." 166 "Both India and China expressed their desire to deepen and diversify their ties and accelerate their respective economic potential and growth." 167 It is noteworthy here that "there were no discussions relating to the sensitive border question." 168 "Indian officials, however, claimed that the meeting between the two leaders would help speed up the process of solving the long-standing dispute over the Line of Actual Control (LAC)." 169 Two leaders of both the countries pledged to make concerted efforts aimed at carrying forwarded bilateral relations. 170

But this rapprochement did not last long. In fact, as both countries tried to spread their naval reach into each other's 'home' waters, India conducting anti-piracy exercises in the South China Sea with South Korea and Japan while China seeking to increase its influence in the Bay of Bengal with the help of a growing defence relationship with Myanmar, the potential for future tensions remained. 171

**Nuclear Policy of the BJP**

India's nuclear policy has gone through certain phases. During the Nehru era, it was one of opposition to nuclear weapons both on moral and practical grounds and his own commitment to nuclear disarmament. After Nehru, efforts were made to ensure nuclear protection against possible nuclear attack.
Mrs Indira Gandhi ordered a peaceful nuclear explosion in May 1974 (Pokhran-I) and announced that India had the ability to make the bomb, but committed the nation to a strategy of keeping the nuclear option open. The strategy ideally served well India’s moral and security concerns, had to acquire a national consensus over a period of time and continued to be the nucleus of India’s nuclear policy till May 1998.  

The BJP which came to power at the centre with the help of a 17-party coalition following the twelfth Lok Sabha election, brought about a qualitative change in India’s time-honoured policy of keeping the nuclear option open. Within two months of coming to power, Prime Minister Vajpayee took the plunge by taking the decision of executing the nuclear option.

The Hindu nationalist movement has always put great emphasis on the need to aggressively defend the Hindus and India. “Hindu nationalism itself stems from the idea that Hindus may be stabbed in the back by others – Muslims, Christians – and that Hindus must equip themselves to cope with these threatening others, at home and abroad.”

The Jana Sangh, the predecessor of the Bharatiya Janata Party, always favoured a strong Defence Policy. It considered both Pakistan and China as threats to India’s security. It attributed India’s failure on the battleground basically to its being unprepared as regards its strength in number and quality and quantity of equipment. Arguing that “no price can be considered too high where the country’s defence is involved, it found India’s policy of nuclear abnegation, as ‘suicidal’ and considered it imperative that an all-out effort be made to build up an independent nuclear deterrent of its own.” In a marked departure from previous national governments, those led by the BJP sought to address the national security issues both practically and strategically in keeping with the party’s philosophy of making India strong. National security remained a focal point of the BJP’s discourse in the 1980s and 1990s.

The BJP’s position on nuclear deterrence is similar to that of the Bharatiya Jana Sangha (BJS). Like the BJS, the BJP leadership also perceived that India’s security was threatened mainly by India’s two neighbours, Pakistan and
the People’s Republic of China. In July 1985, a National Executive Resolution of the Party made a declaration to the effect that “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.” The 1989 election manifesto of the Party talked about “Optimum Defence preparedness including production of nuclear bombs and delivery systems.” and in the 1991 election manifesto it was declared that “The BJP will give our Defence Forces nuclear teeth.” In the 1998 election manifesto, the BJP committed itself to “…establish a National Security Council to constantly analyse security political and economic threats and render continuous advice to the Government. This Council will undertake India’s first ever strategic ‘Defence Review’ to study and analyse the security environment and make appropriate recommendations to cover all aspects of defence requirements and organisation and…re-evaluate the country’s nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.”

The BJP got an opportunity to follow an anti-Pakistan and anti-China foreign policy and an aggressive defence policy when it came to occupy power at the Centre in 1998. A B Vajpayee became the Prime Minister and nuclear testing was the first significant decision he took a few weeks after assuming office. By ordering the nuclear tests, Vajpayee succeeded in fulfilling his commitment to the BJP ideology of Hindu nationalism and Hindu national power.

The BJP also found nuclear weapons as a source of pride. Following the tests, Vajpayee said, “The greatest meaning of the tests is that they have given India Shakti (power), they have given India strength and they have given India self-confidence.” It can be said in conclusion that, “Pokhran II or for that matter, the nuclear policy of the BJP far from strengthening India’s security has created new security concerns; has created new tensions with our neighbours; has made India more vulnerable to US imperialist pressures; and lowered India’s status among the non-aligned developing countries in the world.”
BJP and the Kargil War

After the fall of the BJP-led coalition Government in 1998, the caretaker government under BJP-led coalition got itself involved in an armed conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir. The worst fallout of nuclear explosion during the Prime Ministership of Vajpayee was the announcement made by India that Pakistan and China are threats to its security and with Pakistan exploding its nuclear bomb, India’s diplomatic relations with China became a bone of contention between the two neighbouring countries. With the United States declaring nuclear South Asia as the ‘most dangerous region of the world’, the Government of India was put under great international pressure to come to terms with Pakistan. Besides, the economic sanctions hanged like a sword of Democles over the head of the Indian government headed by Vajpayee. Under the circumstances, Vajpayee paid a visit to Pakistan to sort out things with Nawaz Sharif, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan (which was popularly known as ‘Bus Diplomacy’ culminating in ‘Lahore Declaration’). The ‘Lahore Declaration’ reiterated the two countries’ commitment to ‘universal nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation’ and their willingness to resolve all issues including Jammu and Kashmir within the ambit of the Simla Agreement.  

India and Pakistan were also to pursue other confidence building measures to reduce the chance of armed conflict between the two nuclear adversaries. It was expected that India and Pakistan would start striving for peaceful co-existence after the meeting at Lahore between Atal Behari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif. On the contrary, India’s status as a South Asian superpower was challenged when Pakistan supported heavily armed intruders crossed the Line of Control and put themselves at a height of 14000-16000 feet in the Baltik, Drass and Mushkoh sectors of the Kargil region. The Pakistani intruders took the army, intelligence and the leadership in New Delhi by surprise. They carried on with their mission much before New Delhi could understand the seriousness of the situation.

The Kargil crisis of 1999 revealed the rising collaboration between India and the US. This was proved by the fact that “when the Indian Army started its attack on the Pakistani forces that had infiltrated and built defensive positions across the LoC, the Clinton-Administration immediately directed the Vajpayee
Government not to allow the Indian troops to cross the LoC under any circumstances. The Vajpayee Government accepted the directive, and requested the US Administration to compel Pakistan to vacate its aggressive occupation of Indian Territory."  184

President Clinton summoned the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Washington and a joint declaration was issued by India and Pakistan for withdrawal of Pakistani troops to the Pakistani side of the LoC. 185 But with an election to the Lok Sabha, just round the corner, the BJP found it profitable to sustain the myth that Kargil War was an unequivocal triumph. Some of its leaders even went to the extent of claiming the victory to be greater than the one in 1971. The election manifesto of the NDA for the 1999 Lok Sabha election had referred to the Kargil War and it committed itself to preserve “the honour and territorial integrity of (the) motherland.” 186 In an election campaign in Uttar Pradesh Vajpayee spoke much in the same way. He said, "History has been written by Jawans, which will continue to inspire the coming generation. The nation demonstrated its unity in the hour of national crises. This unity has to be maintained." 187 The slogan the BJP coined post-Kargil was: “The leader you can trust -- In war, In peace.” An advertisement of the Party went thus: “As a friend, he can travel far to shake a hand (that of Nawaz Sharif in Lahore in February 1999); when betrayed; he can crush it with a Kargil." 188

Subsequent events had clearly shown that instead of taking moral responsibility for the Kargil failure, the Vajpayee-led Central Government did not hesitate to utilize the issue for electoral gains. Conclusion may be drawn in the words of Professor C P Bhambhri, “Hindutva survives and thrives on anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan sentiment and Pakistan’s misadventure in Kargil gave a great handle to the BJP campaigners during the elections who successfully projected India’s victory in Kargil as an accomplishment of the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee." 189
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