

Genesis of Pokhran II Nuclear Tests: Alternative Explanations

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “Genesis of Pokhran II Nuclear Tests: Alternative Explanations” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

Kazutoshi TAMARI

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this ^{dissertation}~~thesis~~ be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Contents

List of Tables, Figures, Appendix and Abbreviations.....	4
Chapter 1 Introduction	6
Research Interest.....	6
Methodological Frameworks.....	7
Expected Contributions	11
Chapter 2 Content Analysis of Nuclear Debate	13
George Perkovich	14
Sumit Ganguly.....	17
Stephen P. Cohen.....	18
Karsten Frey	20
Kanti Bajpai.....	20
Karthika Sasikumar and Christopher Way.....	23
Chapter 3 Historical Backgrounds	29
Long Range: 1948-1995	29
Middle Range: 1995-1998.....	34
Short Range: March-May 1998	37
Chapter 4 International Regimes and Pokhran II.....	40
Long Range.....	40
Middle Range	45
Short Range	48
Chapter 5 Regional Security and Pokhran II.....	52
Long Range.....	52
Middle Range	55
Short Range	57
Chapter 6 Domestic Politics and Pokhran II.....	61
Long Range.....	61
Middle Range	64
Short Range	65
Chapter 7 Conclusion.....	69
Appendix	76
References	88

List of Tables, Figures, Appendix and Abbreviations

Tables

Table 1.1	Sagan's three models about the reason why states build nuclear weapons
Table 1.2	Three hypotheses of this study
Table 1.3	Framework of analyses of this study
Table 2.1	Development of India's nuclear policy seen in chapterization of Perkovich
Table 2.2	List of variables by Cohen (2000)
Table 2.3	List of variables by Bajpai (2009)
Table 2.4	List of variables by Sasikumar and Way (2009)
Table 3.1	Nuclear debates in India
Table 3.2	Prime Ministers of India, 1991-1998
Table 3.3	Sequence of events March-May 1998
Table 3.4	Indian nuclear tests, 1974 and 1998
Table 5.1	Logic of Perkovich denying the "Ghauri trigger" explanation
Table 5.2	Alternative logic supporting the "Ghauri trigger" explanation
Table 7.1	Variables explaining Pokhran II

Figures

Figure 1.1	Three time ranges for explanation of Pokhran II
Figure 2.1	Predicted likelihood of acquiring nuclear weapons
Figure 2.2	The effect of enduring rivalry on the predicted likelihood of acquiring nuclear weapons
Figure 2.3	The effect of alliances with nuclear-armed powers on the predicted likelihood of acquiring nuclear weapons
Figure 4.1	Nuclear status distribution in the perception of India's strategic elite
Figure 4.2	Open nuclear option
Figure 4.3	Closing nuclear option
Figure 4.4	Issue-wise nuclear reporting, mid-1991 to mid-1996
Figure 4.5	Issue-wise nuclear reporting, mid-1996 to mid-1998

Appendix

- Appendix 1 Suo Motu Statement by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the Indian Parliament on May 27, 1998
- Appendix 2 Paper laid on the table of the House on Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy, May 27, 1998

Abbreviations

AEC	Atomic Energy Commission
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CTBT	Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBEI	Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals
IDSA	Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
IPCS	Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies
MEA	Minister of External Affairs (India)
NPT	Non-proliferation Treaty
NSG	Nuclear Suppliers Group
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Chapter 1 Introduction

This study demonstrates that the Indian nuclear tests conducted on 11 and 13 May 1998, which are called “Pokhran II” after the name of the test site Pokhran in Rajasthan, were explained the best by regional security threat perspectives. To that end, the genesis of the tests is re-examined in the light of three theoretical frameworks and three ranges of time-scope. Based on secondary works and newly available materials, an alternative explanation about the Indian nuclear tests in 1998, one case of nuclear weapons proliferation, is provided in this study.

Research Interest

The purpose of this study is to offer a theoretical examination about the reason why India conducted nuclear tests in May 1998. Although much has been written about Pokhran II previously, there is, however, considerable disagreement about how Pokhran II can be explained, contrary to the Indian first nuclear test in 1974, Pokhran I. It is fairly agreed that India’s shift toward Pokhran I in November 1964 was influenced by Chinese nuclear test in October 1964 and the particular timing of the conduct of India’s first atomic test in May 1974 was explained by the domestic political conditions. Pressure from scientists is considered to be important, too.

A lot of authors have explained Pokhran II from a lot of different perspectives. Some explain it in the context of international relations, while others offer explanation focusing on India’s domestic politics. Some attach importance to political leadership, while others think much of a role of the pressure from the scientists’ community. Even at this moment in time, the “why then question” of Pokhran II remains unsolved.

Now, it seems to be the good time to tackle with this question, because we have some newly available sources like memoirs and articles by key persons of that time, although classified materials remain unavailable. For example, Strobe Talbott (2006), then Deputy Secretary of State of United States of America (USA), writes a memoir which shows how Clinton Administration put pressure upon India not to conduct nuclear tests. On Indian side, K. Subrahmanyam (2004), a very important person of Indian nuclear policy of that time, refers to continuity of nuclear programme from Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to his successor, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He also admitted Prime Minister Rao's will to conduct nuclear tests in an interview (Chand 2008). A memoir by Jaswant Singh (2006), who was a Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission then and later appointed Minister of External Affairs (MEA), also includes suggestive information for this study. On the basis of these new materials and theoretical frameworks, alternative explanations about Pokhran II are presented in this study.

Methodological Frameworks

This study deductively tests three hypotheses which are based on three models by Sagan (1996).

Sagan (1996: 54-86) provides three models for explaining the reason why states build nuclear weapons: (1) the security model, which assumes that states build nuclear weapons to increase national security against foreign threats, especially nuclear threats (2) the domestic politics model, which assumes nuclear weapons are political tools used to advance parochial domestic and bureaucratic interests, and (3) the norms model, in which nuclear weapons decisions are made because weapons acquisition, or restraint in weapons development, provides an important normative symbol of a

state's modernity and identity (see Table 1.1). His objective is to argue that "the consensus view, focusing on national security considerations as the cause of proliferation, is dangerously inadequate because nuclear weapons programs also serve other, more parochial and less obvious objectives" (Sagan 1996: 55). In short, he tries to show the security model is not the only way to explain the reason of nuclear weaponization by states.

Table 1.1 Sagan's three models about the reason why states build nuclear weapons

(1) Security model	States build nuclear weapons to increase national security against foreign threats, especially nuclear threats
(2) Domestic politics model	Nuclear weapons are political tools used to advance parochial domestic and bureaucratic interests
(3) Norms model	Nuclear weapons decisions are made because weapons acquisition, or restraint in weapons development, provides an important normative symbol of a state's modernity and identity

Source: Sagan (1996: 55)

Based on Sagan's three models, this study introduces three hypotheses: (1) international regime hypothesis, (2) regional security threats hypothesis, and (3) domestic politics hypothesis (see Table 1.2, in the next page). The first hypothesis of international regime proposes that developments of international non-proliferation regimes, such as Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), urged India to conduct nuclear tests. This is one of dominant explanations about Pokhran II. For example, it is supported by Jasjit Singh (1998). The second hypothesis proposes an explanation that regional security threats, especially a threat from Pakistan, urged India to conduct nuclear tests. While this hypothesis is based on Sagan's security model, this study confines the scope into threats coming from India's neighbouring countries. China is included in the "region"

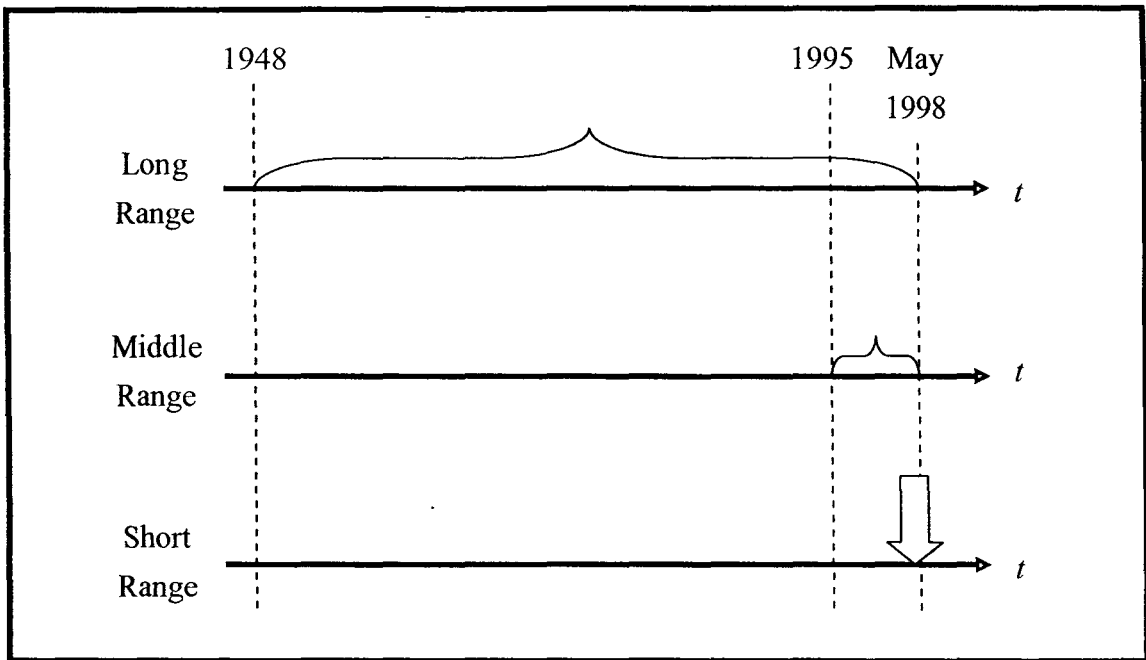
here in the sense that China is neighbouring India, although off course China is not in the South Asia region. For example, Subrahmanyam (1998) and Sumit Ganguly account for Pokhran II in this viewpoint. The domestic politics hypothesis tries to account for Pokhran II in terms of the political considerations. There are some variants in this approach. Some focus on the specialty of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s identity and policy, because BJP decided to conduct nuclear tests soon after it had come to power (Cherian 1998). Another approach which thinks much of the role of scientists can be categorized here. For example, Perkovich (2002: 46-47) pays attention to the role of scientists Rajagopala Chidambaram and Abdul Kalam in the decision making for Pokhran II, while his stance is not mono-causal one.

Table 1.2 Three hypotheses of this study

(1) International regime (examined in chap. 4)	Developments of international non-proliferation regimes, such as NPT and CTBT, urged India to conduct nuclear tests
(2) Regional security threats (examined in chap. 5)	Regional security threats urged India to conduct nuclear tests
(3) Domestic politics (examined in chap. 6)	Domestic political consideration led India to conduct nuclear tests

This study also introduces three time-scopes: (1) long range, from 1948 (establishment of Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)) to 1998, (2) middle range, from 1995 (alleged attempt of nuclear tests by Narasimha Rao government) to 1998, and (3) short range, from March (BJP's coming back to power) to May, 1998 (see Figure 1.1, in the next page). These are introduced to examine variables in the light of multiple perspectives. This setting of three scopes of time-range is influenced by Cohen (2000: 13-35, discussed later).

Figure 1.1 Three time ranges for explanation of Pokhran II



The key of this framing is the year 1995. This study assumes that an alleged attempt of nuclear tests by Narasimha Rao government in the late 1995 was serious (discussed in Chap. 3). Based on this assumption, the middle-range perspective pays attention to continuity from Rao government to Vajpayee government. The middle-range variables ensure that they are able to explain the continuity from 1995 to 1998. For example, an explanation focusing on the BJP specialty does not fit this requirement.

To sum up this section, the framework of analyses of this study can be represented by a following three by three matrix (see Table 1.3). Variables in each cell are examined one after another. This table below shows the structure of this study.

Table 1.3 Framework of analyses of this study

	International regime	Security threat	Domestic politics
Long term	Chap. 4 (1)	Chap. 5 (1)	Chap. 6 (1)
Middle term	Chap. 4 (2)	Chap. 5 (2)	Chap. 6 (2)
Short term	Chap. 4 (3)	Chap. 5 (3)	Chap. 6 (3)

The research interest and methodology of this study explained above, which tries to explain why India decided to have nuclear weapons at that time, could be criticized in the sense that such a narrow approach presumes that nuclear proliferation is problematic. Abraham (2009) provides critical examination about such a research approach. He criticizes the concept of “nuclear proliferation” and argues that “the effect of this framing of the “problem” of nuclear power has led to a conflation of the reasons why countries develop nuclear weapons and why they create nuclear programs” (Abraham 2009: 107) ¹. While his analyses seem to make sense and, this study dismisses the role of discourse and focuses on deductive examination of Indian governmental decision. The nature and the role of public nuclear debates in India² may be too big issue to include in this study.

Expected Contributions

The above is what this study is going to explore. Its primary goal is to show the best explanation for a question “why India conducted nuclear tests on 11 and 13 May 1998?” Additionally, offering an answer to this puzzle would contribute to some other broader research interests.

First, this study would be a case study for the Sagan (1996: 54-86)’s question, “why do states build nuclear weapons?” The conclusion of this study supports the traditional security model (see Table 1.1). Second, this study would constitute a part of studies of Indian foreign policy. How Indian foreign policy can be explained is a research area on which little has been done. The approach of this study focusing on the continuity of India’s nuclear policy would be a counter argument toward a

¹ For details of discussions about the role of discourse of nuclear nonproliferation in India’s acquisition of nuclear weapons, see Abraham (2009: 106-133).

² For the details of India’s nuclear debates, see Bajpai (2000) and Malik (2010).

conventional understanding of Indian foreign policy that thinks personality of prime ministers and domestic political situation are critical (Kapur 2009).

This chapter has shown research question, methodology, and purposes of this study. The next chapter reviews some important pieces of previous work on this research topic.

Chapter 2 Content Analysis of Nuclear Debate

This chapter reviews arguments of previous works about the reasons of India's conduct of nuclear tests Pokhran II. Because it is not possible that all existing pieces about this topic are examined here, this chapter reviews arguments of selected authors. Here, not perspective-wise exploration, but author-wise style of literature review is chosen, because the whole arguments by each author can be shown only by this approach, contrary to the following chapters that follow fragmented analyses approach.

It is not meant that the authors reviewed in this chapter, George Perkovich (vice president for studies and director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), Sumit Ganguly (professor of political science at Indiana University), Stephen P. Cohen (senior fellow of the Brookings Institution), Karsten Frey (research fellow at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI))³, Kanti Bajpai (professor in the Politics and International Relations of South Asia at Oxford University), Karthika Sasikumar (assistant professor in the Political Science Department at San Jose State University) and Christopher Way (associate professor of government at Cornell University), are more influential than other authors who do not appear here. They are selected in an attempt to show a full range of the variety of arguments and approaches of previous works on explaining the timing of Pokhran II.

Firstly, two works by Perkovich, who is regarded as a leading researcher on history of India's nuclear policy, shows the historical backgrounds of Pokhran II and

³ This title is according to Frey (2006).

predominant perspectives in the west. Perkovich (1999; 2002) emphasizes the importance of domestic political considerations in India's nuclear policy making. Secondly, Ganguly (1999) is useful to see a comprehensive critical review of major points debated about the reasons of Pokhran II. Thirdly, Cohen (2000) provides a multi-perspective analysis by employing three different time frames. It reminds us of the importance of setting of time-frame. Fourthly, Frey (2006), whose name is less famous than other three authors, is chosen here because he provides unique quantitative analyses on media coverage about Indian nuclear programme leading to Pokhran II. Fifthly, Bajpai (2009) is indispensable for literature review of this study. He offers a comprehensive examination about whether domestic political perspective is better than international security perspective as an explanation for Pokhran II. He makes much of characteristics of the BJP and its leaders, and argues that India would not have tested nuclear weapons in May 1998 if the BJP had not come to power. This study is obliged to challenge Bajpai (2009), which is presenting the opposite conclusion for the same puzzle. Lastly, Sasikumar and Way (2009) apply the general tendency of nuclear decisions in other cases into India and Pakistan cases by introducing quantitative method. This work is interesting in terms of that it quantitatively assesses the impact of some of variables on the likelihood for India and Pakistan to having nuclear weapons.

Previous works on Pokhran II by the authors above are reviewed one by one in chronological order in the remaining of this chapter.

George Perkovich

Perkovich (1999), vice president for studies and director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, provides a

comprehensive description of history of Indian nuclear development and policy from its independence to Pokhran II (see Table 2.1, in the next page), employing previous works, U.S. governmental materials, and a lot of interviews. Understanding of historical backgrounds of this study is basically based on his works. In the conclusion of the book, he presents six major factors to explain Indian nuclear policy:

- (1) the normative/national identity interest in achieving major power status,
- (2) the push by the strategic enclave,
- (3) the normative interest in positioning India as morally superior to the international system's major powers who possess and threaten to use nuclear weapons,
- (4) the absence of an institutional apparatus for defining and implementing national security strategy with significant military input,
- (5) economic constraints and the priority given to non-military and nonnuclear expenditures of national resources, and
- (6) international pressure imposing high political-economic costs if India were to build and deploy a nuclear arsenal (Perkovich 1999: 452).

After examining the history, Perkovich (1999: 446-455) concludes that an "illusion" that assumes "security concerns decisively determine proliferation" should be refused. In Indian case, he argues, domestic factors can answer why India has developed nuclear weapon capability better than international security factors do, because "India is the only one that has debated publicly its decision to 'go nuclear.'"

**Table 2.1 Development of India's nuclear policy seen
in chapterization of Perkovich**

- 1948-63: Developing the technological base for the nuclear option
- 1964: The first compromise shift toward a “peaceful nuclear explosive”
- December 1964-August 1965: The search for help abroad and the emergence of non-proliferation
- August 1965-May 1966: War and leadership transitions at home
- 1966-68: The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and secretly renewed work on a nuclear explosive
- 1969-1971: Political tumult and inattention to the nuclear program
- 1971-1974: India explodes a “peaceful” nuclear device
- 1975-1980: The nuclear program stalls
- 1980-1984: More robust nuclear policy is considered,
- November 1984-December 1987: Nuclear capabilities grow and policy ambivalence remains
- 1988-1990: The nuclear Threat grows amid political uncertainty,
- 1991-1994: American non-proliferation initiatives flounder
- 1995-May 1996: India verges on nuclear tests
- June 1996-December 1997: India rejects the CTBT
- 1998: The bombs that roared

Source: Perkovich (1999)

Regarding the “why then” question about Pokhran II, his stance becomes clear in his later work published in 2002 as a chapter of a book (Perkovich 2002: 25-60). He argues “[m]ore than a Chinese national security threat to India, the most telling motivation for the Pokhran tests was broader and more political-psychological,” citing words of Jaswant Singh: “All that we have done is give ourselves a degree of strategic autonomy by acquiring those symbols of power which have universal currency” (Perkovich 2002: 47). The secondary importance was given to considerations of the nuclear establishment (Perkovich 2002: 47-48). He also wrote “the United States in several ways helped motivate India’s decision to test in 1998” (Perkovich 2002: 48).

His description of the history of Indian nuclear policy is very informative. However, his reasoning of Pokhran II is far from satisfying, because it is arbitrary while he uses a technique of counterfactual thinking only a little (Perkovich 1999: 433).

Sumit Ganguly

Ganguly (1999), a professor of Indiana University in USA, presents a compact and suggestive examination about Pokhran II. He specifies three factors which drove India to Pokhran II: (1) “the incremental and fitful acquisition of the capability to manufacture nuclear weapons”, (2) “the shifting calculations of Indian leaders, who responded to a mix of ideology (initially a force for restraint), statecraft, and domestic pressures reflecting security concerns”, and (3) “the perception of external security threats and the absence of security guarantees from friendly nuclear states” (Ganguly 1999: 171-172).

Ganguly (1999: 172-175) also refers to four major explanations and tests them. The first argument is that “the decision to carry out the tests can be directly attributed to the rise of the BJP.” He figures out two problems of this explanation: (1) BJP could not conduct the tests then without “the huge scientific-military nuclear infrastructure that previous regimes of vastly divergent political persuasions had forged”, and (2) “this argument ignores India's perceived security threats from growing Chinese military capabilities and arms transfers to Pakistan.” The second explanation is that Pokhran I and II were conducted “to divert attention from the nation's crippling social and economic problems and to bolster the sagging fortunes of the ruling party.” He argues such accounts for Pokhran II “demonstrate remarkable insensitivity to the nuances of the contemporary Indian political landscape” because “[t]he BJP-led government could hardly use this dramatic demonstration of India's nuclear

capabilities to cement its ties with its fractious parliamentary allies.” The third argument is that “the tests reflect India's attempt to meet its unrequited goals for prestige and status in the international system.” He easily points out the failure of this argument by saying “this argument fails to explain why previous regimes had not taken the same decision.” The fourth explanation is that “members of the scientific-bureaucratic establishment infused nuclear weapons with an almost mythical status.” He also refuses this explanation by arguing “the fundamental political decisions and strategic choices remained in the hands of political leaders in New Delhi, not in those of "mythmakers" in the AEC.”

Ganguly is right in the sense that his multi-variable explanation is more persuading and comes nearer to the actuality of the situation than mono-causal explanation. But this study is not satisfied with his reasoning, because he lacks parsimoniousness which is required for broader contribution.

Stephen P. Cohen

Cohen, a senior fellow of Brookings Institute, a leading think tank in USA, has written much about Indian nuclear policy. Among a lot of his works, an article “Why Did India “Go Nuclear”?” (Cohen 2000: 13-35) is distinguished in the sense he sorts out factors affecting Indian nuclear policy into three time frames: long-term (since 1964), medium-range (after 1990), and short-term (in 1998). After examining variables in each time-frame (see Table 2.2, in the next page), he simply concludes that “[t]he bomb tests have important strategic consequences, but Indian strategic decisions are also at the mercy of an increasingly tumultuous domestic political system” (Cohen 2000: 31). This conclusion is too general and less fruitful.

Table 2.2 List of variables by Cohen (2000)

<p><u>Long-term variables</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Shift of moral impetus from one against nuclear weapons to one against nuclear “haves”○ Perception of nuclear weapons as instruments and symbols of national power○ Necessity of nuclear technology to maintain an independent civilian nuclear programme <p><u>Medium-term variables</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Deteriorated India’s strategic environment (Pakistan’s nuclearization, Chinese support for Pakistan, and domestic insurrections)○ Diminishment of the financial burden to develop nuclear weapons○ Political calculations (all political parties were vulnerable to pressure) <p><u>Short-term variables</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Internal BJP consideration (BJP-RSS nexus)○ Electoral calculations (a nuclear test would be a major accomplishment)○ The <i>Ghauri</i> test by Pakistan○ The Clinton visit and false “signals” (the likely Clinton visit was perceived as a signal hinting that non-proliferation was not a critical issue)

Source: Cohen (2000: 15-28)

He also shows suggestions to two single-variable models for predicting Indian nuclear policy (Cohen 2000: 31-32). First, he argues that realists’ explanation that states go nuclear when posed to security threats cannot explain why India kept restrained before Pokhran II. Second, he points out that an argument by “arms controllers” that “prestige is a critical variable in the decision to go nuclear” cannot grasp “why even the most serious security threat would lead a state to develop a weapon that seemingly cannot be used for any rational military purpose” and also fails “because of the evident reluctance—stretching over decades—of many successive Indian governments to test or to declare India to be a nuclear weapons states without a test.”

As mentioned above, three-range time framing of this study is influenced by this work, while each period differs.

Karsten Frey

Frey (2006: 28-46) is unique in the sense that he offers a quantitative analysis on perception of India's strategic elites about nuclear weapon policy. He examines a random sample of 705 nuclear-related editorial and opinion articles collected from India's five major English-language daily newspapers, *The Hindu*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Indian Express*, *The Times of India*, and *The Statesman*, in order to assess elite opinion on the nuclear issue over time (Frey 2006: 34). He shows which issue was dominant in specific periods (mid-1986 to mid-1991, mid-1991 to mid-1996, mid-1996 to mid-1998, and mid-1998 to mid-2005).

Although Frey (2006) does not directly answer to the "why then" question about Pokhran II, the results of his quantitative analysis is suggestive. For example, on the contrary to the official statement by the government soon after the tests, China was the third most addressed country in the dataset, behind Pakistan and USA (Frey 2006:45).

Kanti Bajpai

Bajpai (2009: 25) asks two questions: what were the domestic political incentives for the BJP and what were the domestic politic effects of the BJP's decision to test nuclear weapons. The latter question is omitted here as it is beyond the scope of this study. Regarding the former question, Bajpai (2009) tries to show that domestic politic model can offer better explanations about the specific timing of the conduct of Pokhran II than international security perspectives. This literature by Bajpai is reviewed here with special carefulness, because its arguments are in direct opposition to this study which supports regional security model as an explanation to Pokhran II.

Table 2.3 List of variables by Bajpai (2009)

<p><u><i>International politics and the security imperatives</i></u></p> <p>(1) Increase in international pressure against nuclear proliferation and a closing window opportunity for India</p> <p>(2) India's vulnerable strategic position by the collapse of the Soviet Union</p> <p>(3) Deteriorating regional security environment: military growth and increased cooperation between China and Pakistan</p> <p><u><i>Domestic political imperatives</i></u></p> <p>(1) Political and strategic culture of the BJP</p> <p>(2) Political survival of Prime Minister Vajpayee</p>
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Source: Bajpai (2009: 27-46)

For international security variables, Bajpai (2009: 27- 35) sorts out three major explanations (see Table 2.3 above) and dismissed the explanatory power of each explanation. The first explanation is that developments of international proliferation politics were as like “closing windows” of opportunity for India (Bajpai 2009: 28). Bajpai (2009: 29-31) challenges four assumptions of this explanation: assumption (1) that nonproliferation measures were primarily aiming at India, (2) that India would not resist to the pressures, (3) that India was not able to show the credibility of its nuclear capability for deterrent without testing devices, and (4) that Indian nuclear scientists would lose their interests in nuclear bomb programme. He contests the validity of these assumptions and indicates that this explanation lacks good presupposition. The second explanation is that the deterioration of India's global security environment, especially by the collapse of the Soviet Union, drove India to go to nuclear testing in May 1998. Bajpai (2009: 31-33) does not pose questions on the deteriorating security environment, but he questions the rationality of the causal relation between the global security environment and the conduct of nuclear tests; He argues India's nuclear tests do not contribute to improvement of its global security



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environment and therefore the second explanation is problematic. The third explanation is that India conducted nuclear tests in May 1998 because India's immediate regional security environment had become dangerous in the 1990s (Bajpai 2009: 33-35). Bajpai denies the deterioration of India's security situation in terms of its relations with Pakistan and China at that time: he argues the developments of Pakistan's and China's were hardly new and India's relation with these countries was not worse than previous years. Additionally, he says earlier governments should have conducted nuclear tests if the regional security concerns were the primal driver (Bajpai 2009: 34).

Bajpai (2009: 35) argues the decision and timing of Pokhran II were explained by domestic political developments, rather than international security variables. It focuses on two major factors: (1) the political and strategic culture of the BJP, which emphasizes the importance of keeping promises and which is obsessed with national power and prestige; and (2) the political survival of Prime Minister Vajpayee and his personal ability to consolidate power after a narrowly won election (Bajpai 2009: 35). In terms of the political culture, Bajpai (2009: 38-39) offers an explanation on the difference between Prime Minister Rao who refrained from conducting nuclear tests in 1995 and Prime Minister Vajpayee who did conduct the tests by focusing on their personal character: Rao was a risk-averse leader, whereas Vajpayee was a risk accepting leader. Regarding the perspective of political survival, Bajpai (2009: 39-46) points out three meanings for Prime Minister Vajpayee: (1) for managing the opposition and allies in order to make his government durable, not as his earlier short tenure in 1996; (2) for warding off the hard-liners within the party and its power base, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS); and (3) for reshaping the Prime Minister's image as a tough leader.

Bajpai (2009) would be a critically important counter argument against my work in this dissertation. Therefore, I would like to show later in the conclusion part of this study how my research has led me to another answer to the same puzzle while the empirical facts we base on are not different.

Karthika Sasikumar and Christopher Way

Sasikumar and Way (2009: 68-105) try to apply the theories of nuclear proliferation based on experiences of other countries into the case of nuclear weapon acquisition by India and Pakistan. Their work assesses the importance of some variables (listed in Table 2.4, in the next page) by employing a methodology of counterfactual quantitative analysis: it shows how the cumulative probability of acquiring nuclear weapons is changed by deleting a specific variable, such as immediate enduring rivalry. Variables examined in their paper are followings (Sasikumar and Way 2009: 80):

- (1) great power military alliance,
- (2) participation in ongoing enduring rivalry,
- (3) increase in frequency of militarized interstate disputes,
- (4) industrial capacity threshold,
- (5) increase in per capita gross domestic product (GDP),
- (6) increase in per capita GDP (\$500 at high level),
- (7) higher level of democracy,
- (8) democratization,
- (9) increased participation in international institutions,
- (10) higher level of trade openness,
- (11) trade liberalization, and
- (12) greater domestic political instability.

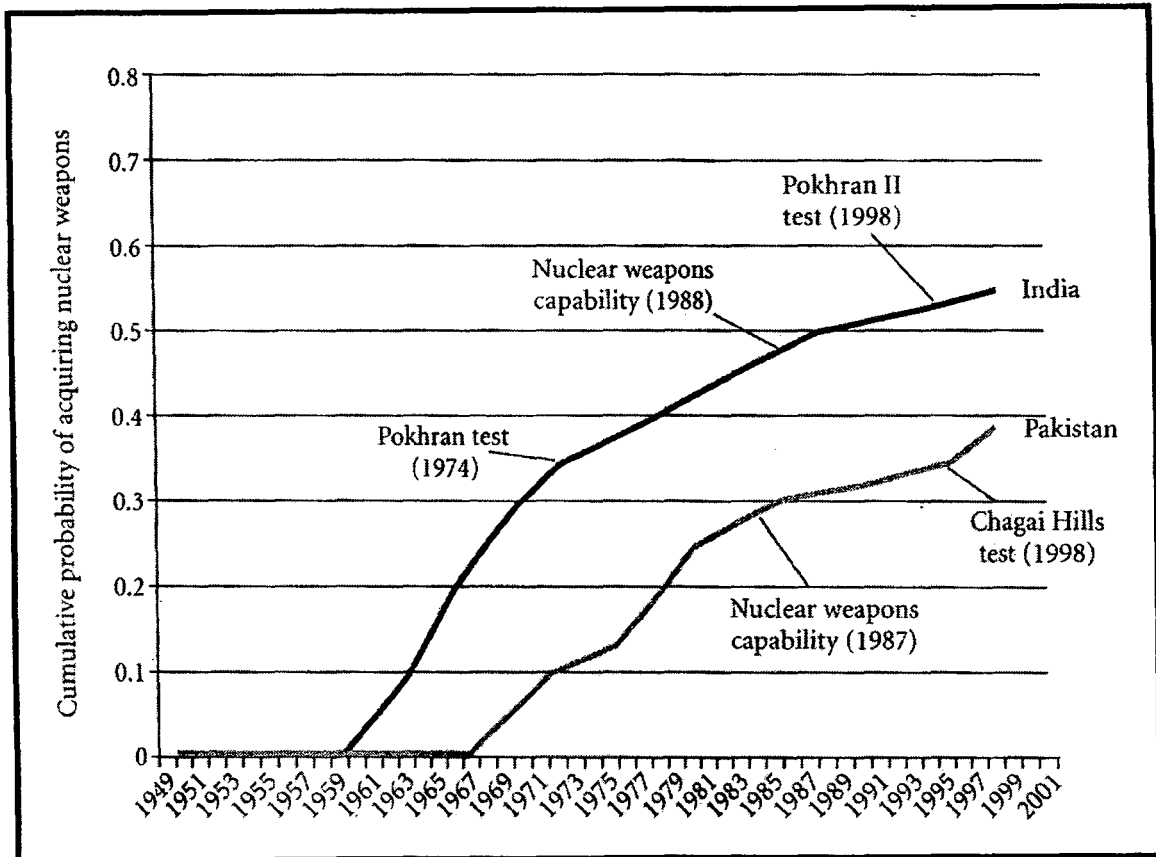
Table 2.4 List of variables by Sasikumar and Way (2009)

Explanatory variables	Anticipated direction of effect	Operationalization
<i>Theoretical determinants</i>		
level of development	positive	(1) GDP per capita and its square; (2) energy consumption per capita
industrial capacity	positive	index based on steel production and electricity-generating capacity
sparse responses / microstate	negative	dummy variable if population less than 1 million
<i>External determinants</i>		
security threat	positive	(1) participation in enduring rivalry; (2) frequency of militarized interstate disputes
security guarantee	negative	alliance with great power (nuclear weapons state)
integration into international system	negative	membership rate in international organization
<i>Internal determinants</i>		
democracy	negative	Polity IV democracy scale
democratization	uncertain	change in Polity IV democracy scale (over a 5-year period)
exposure to global economy	negative	(exports plus imports) / GDP
economic liberalization	negative	change in trade ratio (over a 5-year period)
political instability	positive	index of anti-government demonstrations, general strikes, and crises threatening government's survival

Source: Sasikumar and Way (2009: 73)

As a basis of the analysis, they present a figure of predicted likelihood of acquiring nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan (Figure 2.1, in the next page) based on their quantitative analyses of the variables and other cases.

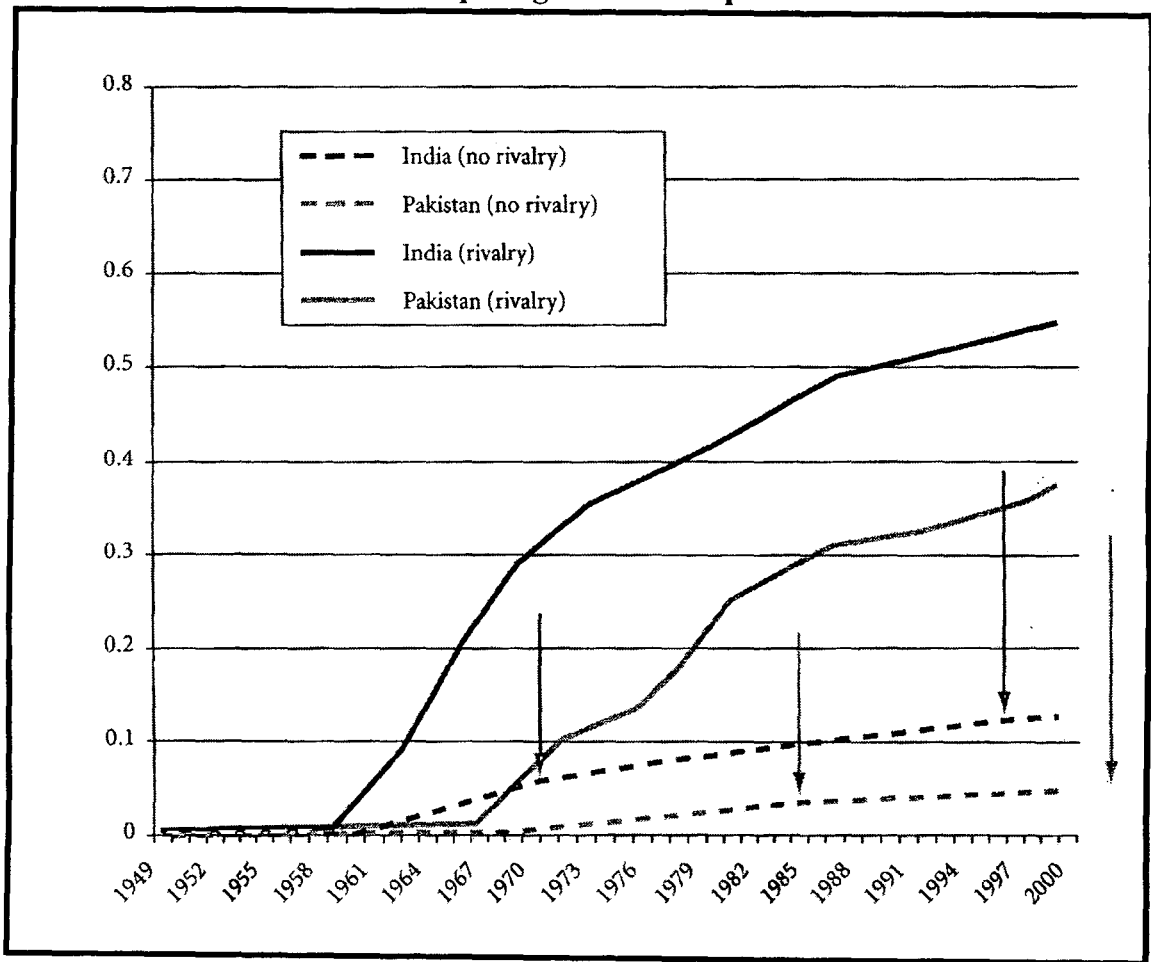
Figure 2.1 Predicted likelihood of acquiring nuclear weapons



Source: Sasikumar and Way (2009: 81)

Then they examine how the probability changes when a variable is omitted. First, the figure (Figure 2.2, in the next page) shows the likelihood when the rivalry between India and Pakistan is omitted. According to their prediction, India's chance of acquiring nuclear weapons by 1970 is decreased to 6%, compared to 30% in the baseline model, and the chance of doing so by 2000 is decreased to 13%, compared to 55% in the original (Sasikumar and Way 2009: 84). This analysis tells that the impact of the India-Pakistan rivalry is critically important for India's acquisition of nuclear weapons, according to their model constructed based on experiences cases of other countries.

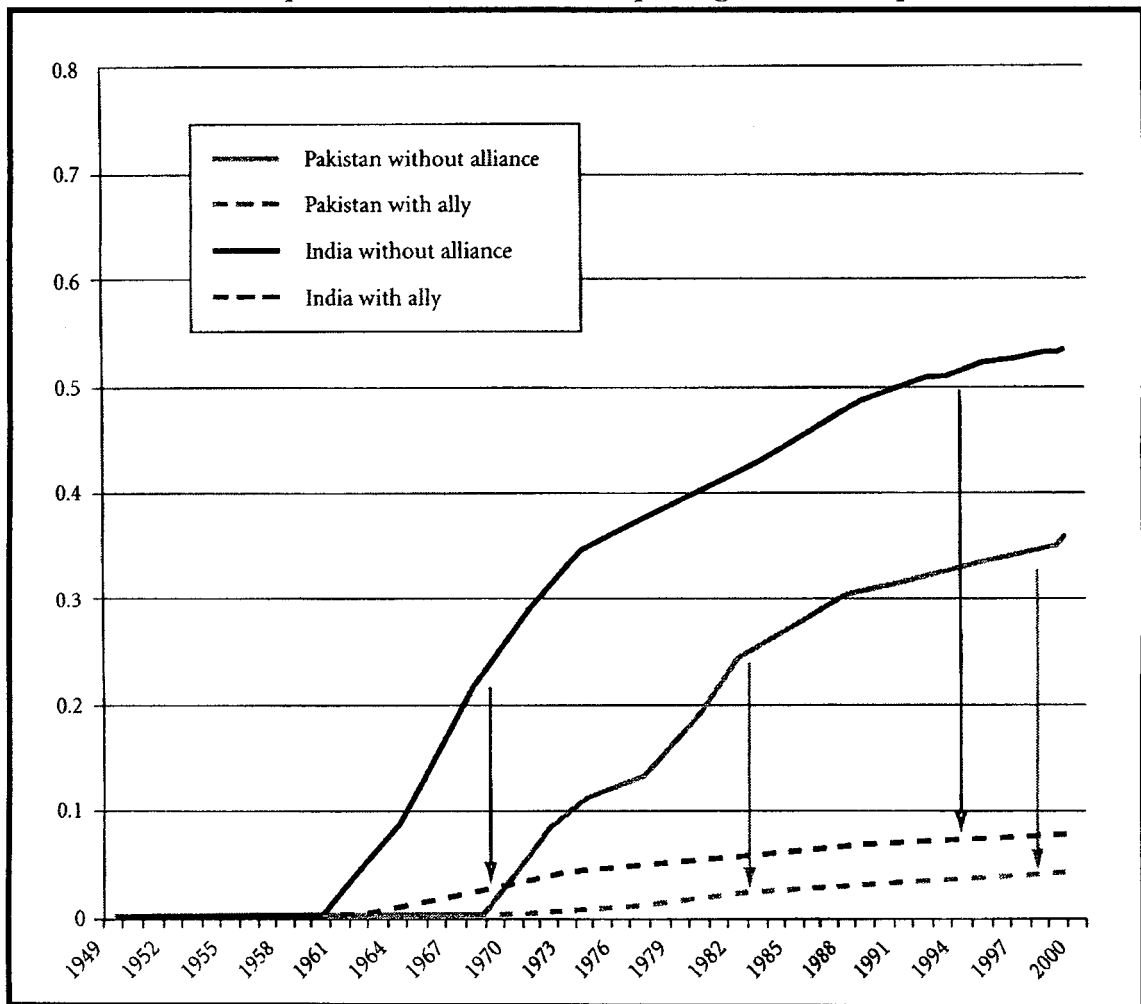
Figure 2.2 The effect of enduring rivalry on the predicted likelihood of acquiring nuclear weapons



Source: Sasikumar and Way (2009: 84)

Second, shown below (Figure 2.3, in the next page) is the predicted likelihood of India's and Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons in case a variable of lack of nuclear-armed powers is removed (in other words, the below figure shows the likelihood of acquiring nuclear weapons when India and Pakistan had had alliances of nuclear-armed powers). According to this analysis, India's chance to acquire nuclear weapons by 2000 is decreased to less than 10% from 55% (Sasikumar and Way 2009: 85). This also indicates that the absence of alliance of nuclear-armed power for India was influential factor for Pokhran II.

Figure 2.3 The effect of alliances with nuclear-armed powers on the predicted likelihood of acquiring nuclear weapons



Source: Sasikumar and Way (2009: 86)

According to the analysis by Sasikumar and Way, these two variables are the most influential for India's and Pakistan's nuclear weapon acquisition, while it is premised that the behaviour of India and Pakistan can be explained by this model based on other cases. Other variables, such as economic index or degree of political stability, do not have impact on the likelihood of acquisition when they are removed.

As reviewed in this chapter, there has been a lot of work on Pokhran II from different perspectives. Based on these previous literature and newly available materials, this study re-examines the reason why India conducted the nuclear tests in May 1998.

Before proceeding to re-examination of hypotheses, the next chapter reviews the historical backgrounds of India's nuclear policy leading to Pokhran II.

Chapter 3 Historical Backgrounds

This chapter offers historical backgrounds of this study. But comprehensive description of Indian nuclear development from its independence to Pokhran II would require a whole thick book, such as Perkovich (1999). Accordingly, this chapter does not try to offer a complete historical description of Indian nuclear policy, but it reviews some major turning points which seem to be directly related to weaponization and testing of nuclear capability, for the purpose of sorting out variables to explain Pokhran II in the following chapters.

Long Range: 1948-1995

This section tries to find out long-standing factors of India's nuclear policy by reviewing the history of Indian nuclear policy from its establishment of AEC in 1948 to the early 1990s. According to the research interest of this study which focuses on the reason of India's conducting nuclear tests, the genesis of the first nuclear test "Smiling Buddha," or Pokhran I, conducted on 18 May 1974, is carefully examined. Based on the research interest, this section is divided into three parts of periods: the origin of Indian nuclear programme (1948-1964), the way leading to Pokhran I (1964-1974), and the era of "open option" policy (1974-1995).

In the first period of 1948-1964, Indian nuclear programme was controlled by a scientist, Homi J. Bhabha, who initiated India's nuclear programme with cooperation of the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Even before India's independence, Prime Minister Nehru and the first AEC chairman Bhabha "sought to win for their country all the prestige, status, and economic benefits associated with being a nuclear power, including the option of building "the bomb" if necessary" (Perkovich 1999:

13), and Indian nuclear programme officially started in 1948 when AEC was established based on an Atomic Energy Act.

According to Perkovich (1999: 29), Bhabha was not only the man who led the technical development, but also the man “who would determine India’s strategy and diplomacy for protecting that option against international efforts to ensure that nuclear materials and technology were not diverted from peaceful to military purposes.” It is said Bhabha intended to develop dual-use nuclear capabilities in the 1950s, while almost all of his actual efforts then were dedicated to building a multifaceted civilian nuclear complex (Perkovich 2002: 27).

But whether then Indian government was considering to use nuclear technology for military purpose as a practical matter or not is not sure. Especially, the thinking of Prime Minister Nehru has not been cleared up. There is no consensus of opinion about whether Prime Minister Nehru intended to use nuclear technology for military purpose or not, partly because too many pieces of his words are available. For example, reportedly he said “[w]e have the technical know-how for manufacturing the atom bomb. We can do it in three or four years if we divert sufficient resources in that direction. But we have given the world an assurance that we shall never do so” in 1958 (Perkovich 1999: 35). Even before India’s independence, Prime Minister Nehru hinted potential defense purpose of India’s nuclear capability, by saying “... I hope Indian scientists will use the atomic force for constructive purposes. But if India is threatened she will inevitably try to defend herself by all means at her disposal” in a speech in 1946 (Perkovich 1999: 14). If one makes much of these citations, she/he would say Prime Minister Nehru was considering weaponization of nuclear technology seriously. But on the other hand, we can find Prime Minister Nehru’s

words asserting India’s nuclear programme must be limited to civilian purpose. For example, he said “we have declared quiet clearly that we are not interested in and we will not make these bombs, even if we have the capacity to do so” at the Lok Sabha in 1957 (Perkovich 1999: 13).

Table 3.1 Nuclear debates in India

	Period	Trigger / Theme
1	1964-1965	Chinese nuclear test
2	1968-1969	NPT
3	1988	Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s “Action Plan”
4	1995-1997	NTP extension and CTBT
5	1998-	Pokhran II

Source: Cohen (2001: 159-184)

The second period of the way to Pokhran I starts in 1964. Two years after India-China War of 1962, the imminence of Chinese nuclear test provoked a serious nuclear debate in India leading to Pokhran I in the summer of 1974 (Perkovich 1999: 64). It was the first nuclear debate in India (see Table 3.1). An important policy shift occurred between 16 October 1964, the day when China conducted a nuclear test, and 27 November 1964 (Perkovich 1999: 66-83). As a result of the debate, on 27 November 1964, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri gave permission for scientists to start preparing nuclear explosive devices and he declared that nuclear devices can be used both for destructive (in the sense of destructive usage for development, such as digging tunnels) and for peaceful purposes in his speech at the Lok Sabha on that day (Perkovich 1999: 82). Perkovich (1999: 83) argues “[t]he shift occurred as a result of Bhabha proposing directly to Shastri the notion of moving ahead to prepare for a peaceful nuclear explosion.” But the actual testing did not follow for about a decade. In the second nuclear debate around 1968, NPT was the crucial issue. Indian

government had decided in May 1967 not to sign the treaty without major accommodations to its demands (Perkovich 1999: 138). Perkovich (2002: 31) argues India's rejection of NPT is not because of its will to keep open its bomb-building option, but because of "an elite affair" within New Delhi: moral imperatives of politicians were crucial, he argues. In early 1968, scientists in the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre initiated "the most concerted effort yet to develop nuclear explosives" (Perkovich 1999: 139; 2002: 31).

One of important steps toward Pokhran I came on September 7, 1972, that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi authorized fabrication of a device for a peaceful nuclear explosion (Perkovich 1999: 171). But this was also not the final decision. Although official sources are not available as of this moment, it is said "the first of a series of final decisive meetings probably was conducted in February" (Perkovich 1999: 174). Three months later, the Indian first nuclear test was conducted on 18 May 1974 in Pokhran (see Table 3.4). Indian government led by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared the test "a peaceful nuclear explosion experiment" (Perkovich 1999: 178).

How can the timing of Pokhran I be explained? This case is very famous for being well explained in terms of domestic politics. As Sagan (1996: 65) writes, Pokhran I is "[t]he historical case that most strongly fits the domestic politics model." It is true that external security environment both in regional and global level, which had been improved in a few years before the decision, cannot offer the reason why India conducted the test in May 1974, and not in the late 1960s. If the purpose of the nuclear test was only to respond to Chinese nuclear tests, India should have conducted the test much before 1974. Sagan (1996: 67-68) argues the timing of Pokhran I can be accounted for in terms of domestic politics, because the decision was made when the

domestic support for the government had fallen to an all-time low in late 1973 and early 1974 due to a prolonged and severe domestic recession, the eruption of large-scale riots in a number of regions, and the lingering effects of the splintering the Congress Party. In short, Sagan (1996) says the test was a tool to acquire more domestic support for the government. However, this domestic politics model explanation fails to capture the developments in the middle range: it cannot account for the reason why Indian nuclear programme were accelerated after 1964.

The third period of 1974-1995 is the era of “open option” policy; a strategy which entails “the capability to assemble nuclear weapons quickly—within hours or a few days—paired with the expressed intention not to do so until a grave threat to its security arose” (Perkovich 1999: 3). India did not use the “option” till 1998.

The first influence of Pokhran I on Indian nuclear programme was deteriorated international environment around Indian nuclear programme. Pokhran I made international non-proliferation efforts active. For example, the establishment of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) was a reaction to Pokhran I. Countries which have helped Indian nuclear programme, such as USA and Canada, tightened their non-proliferation regulations toward India (Perkovich 1999: 190-199). Second, Pokhran I had a decisive impact on Pakistan’s perception of the need for nuclear weapons (Chakma 2009: 22). In the 1980s, the Pakistan nuclear capability became a major factor for Indian nuclear programme (Subrahmanyam 1998: 36-39). Indian nuclear capability also grew in the 1980s.

In December 1982, *Washington Post* alleged that Indian military advisers had proposed a preemptive attack on Pakistan’s nuclear facilities to Prime Minister Indira

Gandhi (Perkovich 1999: 240). Prime Minister Gandhi denied the reporting (Perkovich 1999: 240). In February 1983, *New York Times* reported India's capability to reprocess plutonium to weapons grade (Ganguly 1999: 163). In the same year, India started the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (Perkovich 1999: 244). In an Indo-Pakistan crisis of 1983-1984, India faced with Pakistan with possible nuclear capability (Sidhu 2000: 132-134). In 1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi approved "the preparation of ready-to-assemble devices, the number of such devices, movement of weapons components within the country" (Perkovich 1999: 294). India succeeded in testing the Prithvi missile in February 1988 and the Agni missile in May 1989.

After the end of the Cold War in 1991, regardless of dramatic changes of international strategic environment, such as demise of the Soviet Union and growing non-proliferation pressure on India, India did not exercise the "option." But in 1995, India came near to use the option.

Middle Range: 1995-1998

In May 1995, indefinite extension of NPT was decided. Negotiations on CTBT had begun since 1993. Jasjit Singh (1998: 24) describes such a situation like this: "[t]he combined effect of various policies of the weapon states and their allies has been to put an increasing amount of pressure on India's ability to maintain an open option and push policy toward the non-nuclear end, but without any movement toward the weapons states giving up their own weapons."

According to Perkovich (1999: 365; 2002: 42), Prime Minister Narasimha Rao responded to scientists Chidambaram's and Kalam's requests and explicitly

authorized preparatory work for nuclear tests in the late summer of 1995. But before conducting the tests, the preparation was reported by *New York Times* on 15 December 1995 (Perkovich 1999: 368). Perkovich's description is mainly based on interviews with officials of USA. Although Indian government denied the allegation (Perkovich 1999: 368), a careful examination of satellite images also shows some evidences of preparation for nuclear tests (Gupta and Pabian 1997: 102-149).

Talbott (2006: 37) shows that the Clinton administration was sure about certainty of India's attempt to conduct nuclear tests because they got photographs of cables "running through L-shaped tunnels, presumably to transmit data from an underground blast" in Pokhran. He also tells how the Clinton's government put pressure on India not to conduct the tests (Talbot 2006: 37-38).

The "near test" in 1995 has not been admitted by any piece of official material in Indian side so far as I know. It is natural that official publications like the Annual Report of Ministry of Defence (Ministry of Defence 1996) or Ministry of External Affairs (Ministry of External Affairs 1996) do not touch the allegation, as Indian government denied it. But Subrahmanyam (1998: 51) writes "Prime Minister Rao decided to hold the tests towards the end of 1995." And also he points out a continuity of nuclear programme from Prime Minister Rao to Prime Minister Vajpayee, by referring to Vajpayee's tribute to Rao as "the true father of Shakti nuclear test of May 11, 1998," and admits "India was under considerable pressure from the US to roll back its nuclear programme" during Rao's years (Subrahmanyam 2004). He also states in an interview "Rao wanted to conduct a nuclear test in 1995, but the American pressure prevented him from doing so" (Chand 2008).

Now, the near test is regarded as a historical fact in the western literature. For example, Harish Kapur, a professor emeritus at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland, refers to the attempt as a positive fact, as below

... and finally he [Rao] gave, clandestinely, the green light to Indian scientists to come up with a credible programme of nuclear testing as a result of which secret preparations were undertaken to go ahead with the project... And the Ministries of External Affairs and Finance, under instructions from Rao, had estimated the costs of US sanctions that would unavoidably follow. Even the office in the MEA, specializing in nuclear tests, had already prepared a statement justifying India's decision. (Harish Kapur 2009: 312)

Based on these literatures, this study assumes the alleged attempt of nuclear tests in 1995 was serious.

Not only the Rao government, but also the next Prime Minister Vajpayee also authorized to precede with nuclear weapons tests almost immediately after he had been sworn in as Prime Minister, but he was forced out from power within a month (Perkovich 1999: 374). Here, we can find the continuity of nuclear policy, regardless of change of prime ministers from Rao to Vajpayee. Subrahmanyam (2004) points out that these two Prime Ministers were in touch with each other, saying "he [Rao] appears to have kept Mr Vajpayee informed of the progress in the nuclear programme," and "[t]he evidence of this is that there was no pressure from the BJP in Parliament on the nuclear issue though there was a widespread impression in the country."

During the terms of the successive two governments, led by Prime Minister H. D.

Deve Gowda and Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, there is no indication of preparing nuclear tests. An important event for India's nuclear policy during these two Prime Ministers was a signature of CTBT on 10 September 1996. Regarding the reason of rejecting CTBT, then Foreign Minister Gujral told "national security considerations will be the governing factor in our decision making" on 15 July 1996 (Perkovich 1999: 381-382).

Table 3.2 Prime Ministers of India, 1991-1998

Tenure	Name	Party
10 Nov. 1990 – 21 June 1991	Chandra Shekhar	Janata Dal
21 June 1991 – 16 May 1996	P. V. Narasimha Rao	Congress
16 May 1996 – 1 June 1996	Atal Bihari Vajpayee	BJP
1 June 1996 – 21 April 1997	H. D. Deve Gowda	Janata Dal
21 April 1997 – 19 March 1998	Inder Kumar Gujral	Janata Dal
19 March 1998 – 22 May 2004	Atal Bihari Vajpayee	BJP

Short Range: March-May 1998

This section focuses on the process leading to Pokhran II from 19 March 1998, the day when Prime Minister Vajpayee was sworn in (see Table 3.3, in the next page), and it reviews some official statements about the reason why India conducted the tests.

Between BJP's coming to power on 19 March and Pokhran II on 11 May, there are two important events. One is a vote of confidence on 28 March. The first BJP government failed in the confidence vote and collapsed. This time, it won the vote by 275 to 260. Another is Pakistan's *Ghauri* missile testing on 6 April. Brajesh Mishra and Subrahmanyam argue the *Ghauri* missile test was the trigger of the decision for Pokhran II. Another source says the decision was made on 9 April (Nuclear Weapon Archive 2001). On the contrary, Perkovich (2002: 46) argues the decision was made

Table 3.3 Sequence of events March-May 1998

Date	Event
March	
19	Vajpayee was sworn in as Prime Minister
23	Pakistan hinted at the imminence of the <i>Ghauri</i> test
28	Prime Minister Vajpayee won a confidence vote, by 275 to 260 Prime Minister gave the go ahead for the tests, on the day or within days
April	
6	Pakistan's <i>Ghauri</i> missile tests Mishra asked Subrahmanyam "What should India do?"
9	Prime Minister Vajpayee met Chidambaram and Kalam; Go sign of nuclear tests?
26	President Narayanan's visit to Latin America (to 10 May)
May	
11	India's nuclear tests, Shakti 1, 2, and 3
13	India's nuclear tests, Shakti 4 and 5

Source: Chand (2008); Nuclear Weapon Archive 2001; Perkovich (2002); Jaswant Singh (2006).

before the missile testing. In this relation, there are some statements about the date of the final decision. This disagreement of opinion will be discussed in Chapter 5 (3).

After about one month from the decision, on 11 and 13 May 1998, India conducted nuclear tests in Pokhran (see Table 3.4, in the next page).

In a letter to President Bill Clinton of USA of 11 May 1998, Prime Minister Vajpayee argued the reason of tests was the threat from China, saying "[w]e have an overt nuclear-weapon state on our border ... a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962" (Perkovich 1999: 417). However, this "China threat" excuse disappeared in his statement in Parliament on 27 May 1998 (Vajpayee 1998). The statement emphasizes the discriminatory nature of international non-proliferation

Table 3.4 Indian nuclear tests, 1974 and 1998

Test	Device	Date	Yield claimed	Yield reported
	Fission device	18 May 1974	12-15 kiloton	4-6 kt
Shakti 1	Thermonuclear device	11 May 1998	43-60 kt	12-25 kt
Shakti 2	Fission device	11 May 1998	12 kt	??
Shakti 3	Low-yield device	11 May 1998	0.2 kt	Low
Shakti 4	Low-yield device	13 May 1998	0.5 kt	Low
Shakti 5	Low-yield device	13 May 1998	0.3 kt	Low

Source: Website of Federation of American Scientists, accessed on 28 February 2010, URL: <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/india/nuke/>.

order and security concerns without referring to any specific state, but it referred “the gradual deterioration of our security environment as a result of nuclear and missile proliferation” in the 1980s and 1990s (Vajpayee 1998). It is clear that this meant Pakistan’s growing nuclear capability with Chinese support, not China itself.

In this chapter, basic historical backgrounds are confirmed. Main arguments on variables explaining the Indian nuclear tests in May 1998 start in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 International Regimes and Pokhran II

This chapter tests a hypothesis that developments of international non-proliferation regimes urged India to conduct nuclear tests in three time frames. Variables dealt with in this chapter are (1) the developments of the international nuclear non-proliferation regimes which seemed discriminatory for India, and (2) India's status-seeking aspiration in the world politics, associated with the former.

One of possible variable of international level, global security perspective arguing that deterioration of India's international security environment, such as the demise of its *de facto* ally, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), drove India for nuclear weaponization, is omitted here, because it is not related to international non-proliferation regimes. While it is one of major explanations about the reason of Pokhran II, this argument is not covered in all of three hypotheses in this study. Then counter argument against this explanation is shown in the conclusion part of this study.

Long Range

The incremental development of India's nuclear programme in the long term cannot be accounted by any specific development of the international non-proliferation regimes in a sense that only continuous variables can rationally explain the incremental development of nuclear programme.

In this perspective, the long-standing factor of the discriminatory nature of international non-proliferation order is a candidate for the independent variable, as some authors argue. Therefore, let us check the explanatory power of this factor in

major turning points in this long-term range.

First of all, it is difficult to explain the reason why India started its nuclear programme in the 1940s from the long-range perspective of international non-proliferation regimes. This is easily demonstrated by a fact that international non-proliferation regimes did not exist when India started its nuclear programme. And also, the first major turning point of India's nuclear policy in November 1964, when India started to prepare the nuclear test Pokhran I in 1974, cannot be accounted for in this hypothesis.

But we could assume that one comparatively minor turning point in 1968, when Indian nuclear programme was reportedly accelerated toward Pokhran I, was driven by a development of the NPT (Perkovich 1999: 139). On 1 July of the year, the NPT was signed and opened for signature. It is no wonder that the NPT was behind the decision to go towards Pokhran I by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as one of factors in her mind, at least.

In terms of explanatory power of this non-proliferation regime variable, this minor turning point in 1968 is the only specific event which can be accounted for. The timing of the most important event in this time frame, Pokhran I in 1974, was not coincident with any development of non-proliferation regimes. It is also difficult to explain the build-up of nuclear capability in the 1980s.

As shown above, it would be difficult to argue that major turning points of India's nuclear policy were driven by the discriminatory international nuclear non-proliferation order. But we may be able to say that the long-standing variable of the international nuclear order after the NPT was introduced order is an explanatory

variable toward the incremental developments of the India's nuclear development programme. This is a stance of some famous authors who support this non-proliferation order explanation about Pokhran II. For example, T.V. Paul argues:

I look specifically at the nuclear behavior of India and argue that, although domestic factors may be associated with the timing of the 1998 tests, the tests are primarily the culmination of long-term systemic and sub-systemic processes that began in the 1960s. In other words, the overarching cause of India's nuclear behavior is located in the larger global and regional nature of the nuclear dilemma facing the country. (Paul 1998: 1)

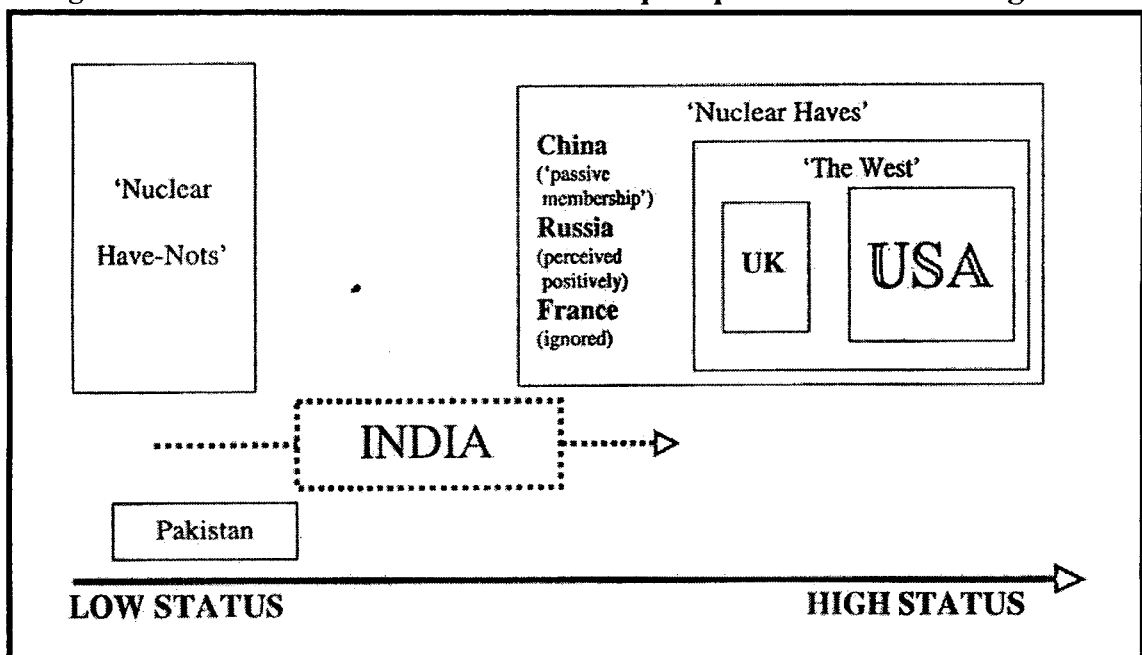
Jaswant Singh (1998: 41-52) is another example. He appealed the legitimacy of Pokhran II to international community by naming such discriminatory international non-proliferation order "nuclear apartheid," while his paper itself emphasized India's regional security concerns more than international regimes as the reason of nuclear tests in 1998.

I would like summarize the arguments about this variable in this time range. First, specific developments in India's nuclear programme are not accounted for, except for the minor turning point in 1968. Second, the origin of programme cannot be covered in this perspective. Third, the international nuclear regimes after the NPT would be an explanatory variable to the incremental acquisition of India's nuclear capability after the 1960s. To sum up, the explanatory power is limited: both perspectives of specific tuning points and long-term developments are accounted for partially only.

Another possible variable is India's aspiration to be a global major actor in international politics, associated with the international nuclear order. It is sure that this

variable is not directly related to the international nuclear non-proliferation regimes. But it is included in this chapter because Indian elites' perception of nuclear order was associated with their aspiration to upgrade India's international prestige, like argued by Frey (2006: 197-198, see Figure 4.1): for some of India's strategic elites, having nuclear weapons seemed to be a necessary condition to obtain high international status. In this line, for some authors, the India's nuclear tests are understood as India's attempt to meet its unrequited goals for prestige and status in the international system (Ganguly 1999: 174).

Figure 4.1 Nuclear status distribution in the perception of India's strategic elite



Source: Frey (2006: 198)

The explanatory capability of this variable is, however, very limited. We may say that this durable variable is able to explain the incremental nature of India's nuclear capability acquisition. But supporting evidence for this explanation is lacking. It is difficult for such a conceptual variable to provide a reason of a specific development in India's nuclear programme. In addition, this variable cannot offer any good reasons

for explaining major turning points in this time range, such as 1948, 1964, and 1974. Counter arguments against this “status-seeking” explanation can be found in some works. For example, Jasjit Singh (1998: 9), advocate of the influence of international non-proliferation order to India’s nuclear weaponization, firmly rejects this, by saying that “*India does not require nuclear weapons for prestige or status*” (italicized by the original author). He argues “India’s prestige and status, in the ultimate analysis, will be decided by the way we solve our problems and how we conduct ourselves in the face of evolving geo-strategic and geo-economic realities,” not by nuclear weapons (Jasjit Singh 1998: 10). Ganguly (1999: 174) also refuses this explanation, arguing that this point of view cannot explain why other regimes did not conduct nuclear tests. In other words, if the “status-seeking” was the primary driver, India should have done nuclear tests earlier, he argues.

Therefore, according to methodology of this study, this variable in this time scope can be dismissed.

To summarize this section, validity of this hypothesis, that developments of international non-proliferation regimes urged India to conduct nuclear tests, is limited. It cannot be denied that the international non-proliferation order had always been behind consideration of policy makers about nuclear programme after 1960s. But this variable cannot provide a single-variable explanation for Indian nuclear tests in the long term, as major turning points of India’s nuclear programme were not associated with developments of non-proliferation regimes in this long-term perspective. India should have gone to nuclear tests far earlier, if the discriminatory nature of the order was the only driver.

Middle Range

In the middle range perspective focusing on the near tests in 1995 and 1996, there seems to be possible to offer a good explanation from this perspective, by saying India's policy shift toward nuclear weaponization was driven by developments of international non-proliferation regimes, especially by the unconditional and immediate extension of NPT. This explanation is well in accordance with the actual sequence of events. The NPT extension was done in May 1995. The decision going for the "near tests" followed in the late summer 1995 and May 1996. The timing of authorization of the tests by Rao government in the late summer of 1995 is especially well associated with the timing on the light of this international regime perspective.

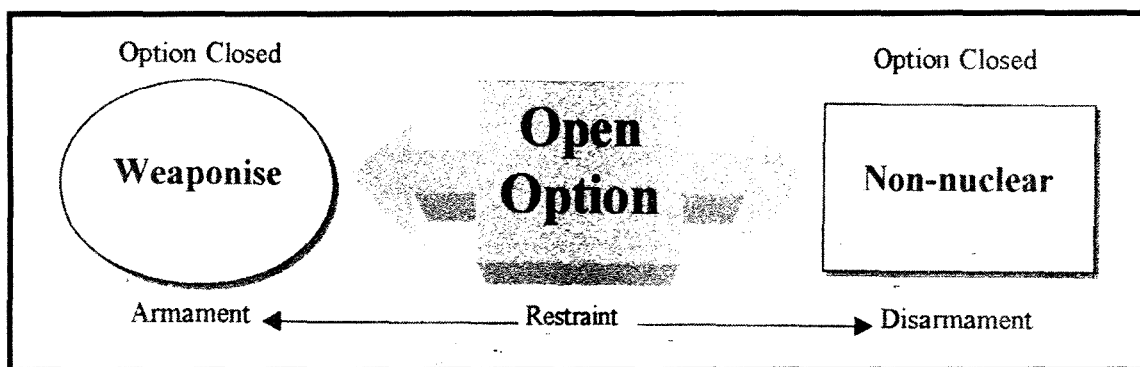
This explanation is one of popular understandings about the reason of India's conduct of Pokhran II. Let us examine one example. Jasjit Singh, a former director of New Delhi based Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA), is an advocate of this explanation. His argument is typical among arguments of this line. He (Jasjit Singh 1998: 25) argues:

The situation that India faced by early 1998 was that if the stranglehold of the non-proliferation order continued to tighten around the open option, and India did not take steps to break out of it, very soon it would be no option left (italicized by the original author).

According to Jasjit Singh (1998), India thought its bomb-building option was being closed by non-proliferation order (see Figure 4.2 and 4.3, in the next page) and therefore India decided to go towards nuclear tests. This argument may seem to be an official work in a sense that a person of the governmental side (Jasjit Singh was the director of IDSA, India's governmental entity, when the work was published in 1998)

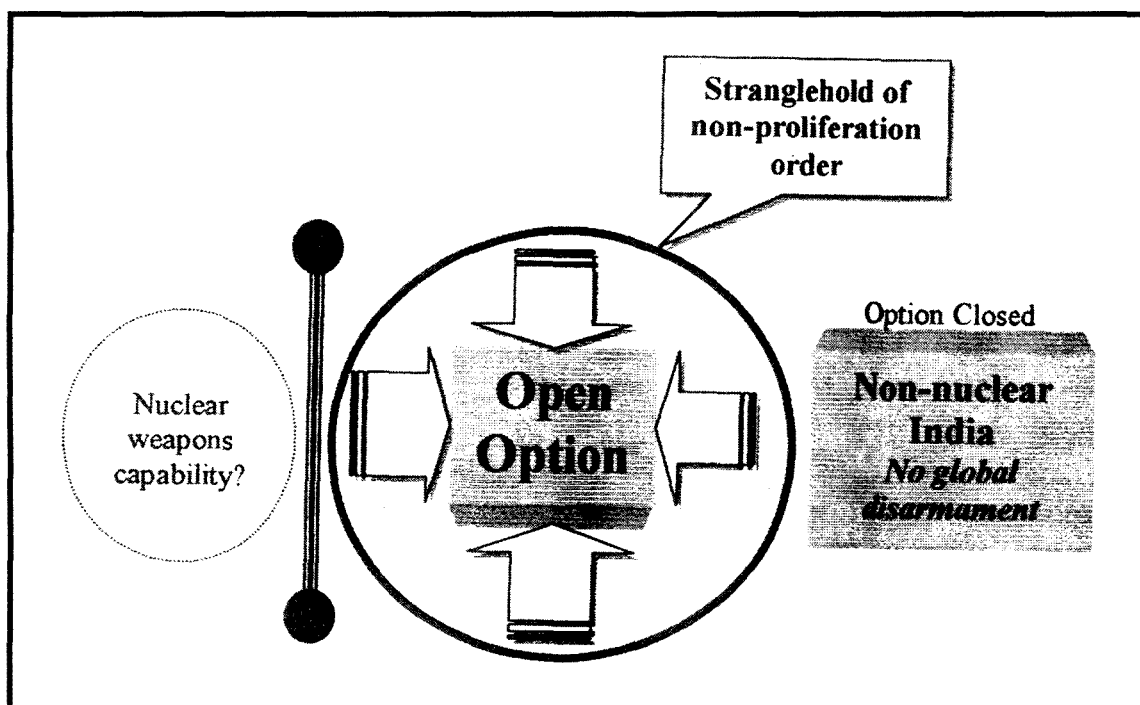
would try to legitimate India's behavior. But, at the same time, it is no wonder that the NPT extension had psychological impact of Indian strategic elites as Jasjit Singh (1998) explains.

Figure 4.2 Open nuclear option



Source: Jasjit Singh (1998: 21)

Figure 4.3 Closing nuclear option



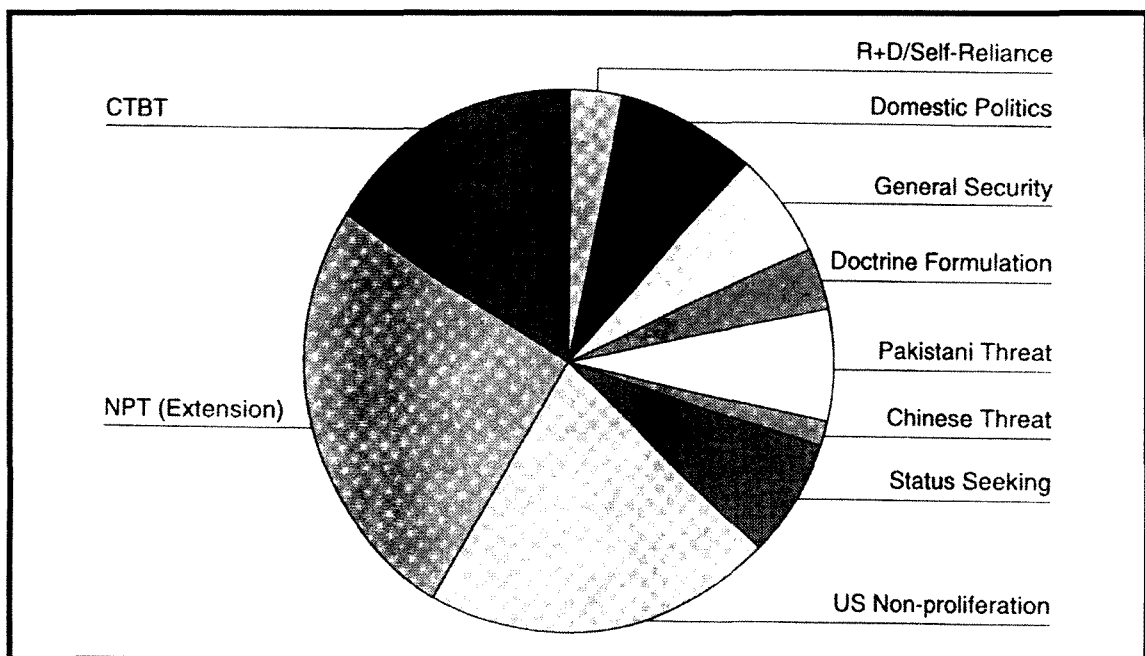
Source: Jasjit Singh (1998: 24)

This explanation is supported not only by India's governmental people like Jasjit Singh but also by scholars in India and abroad. For example, William Walker (1996:

61) argues that “Post-Cold War arms reductions, more vigorous nonproliferation policies, and negotiations towards CTBT are causing India to suffer a serious loss of positional advantage in the international nuclear arena.”

High attention to non-proliferation issues in that period is sure. According to Frey (2006), which analyzes coverage of editorial and opinion articles between mid-1991 and mid-1996 in selected major English newspapers, there were more coverage on non-proliferation issues (the NPT extension, USA’s non-proliferation policy, and CTBT) than other issues, such as domestic politics or external security issues (Frey 2006: 35, 40, see Figure 4.4). This investigation demonstrates that the fourth nuclear debate in 1995-1997 (see Table 3.1) was mostly dominated by non-proliferation issues.

Figure 4.4 Issue-wise nuclear reporting, mid-1991 to mid-1996



Source: Frey (2006: 40)

Another potential variable in the hypothesis of this chapter, status-seeking aspiration,

is omitted in this section because it does not offer any good reasoning in this time range. While such aspiration did exist in this period in the middle of the 1990s, it cannot say anything about why the “near tests” happened in that time.

To wind up this section of the middle-range point of view on nuclear non-proliferation regimes, the hypothesis has passed the test. The reason why India came near to conduct the nuclear tests in 1995 and 1996 is well explained by the developments of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, especially the extension of NPT in May 1995, while we do not have positive evidence for this explanation telling how the developments of non-proliferation issues influenced the decisions for preparing nuclear tests.

Short Range

In terms of the relationship between developments of nuclear non-proliferation regimes and the specific timing of Pokhran II in May 1998, there is one possible explanation.

Paul (1998: 7) offers an example of this argumentation. He focuses on a CTBT Review Conference in September 1999. He argues:

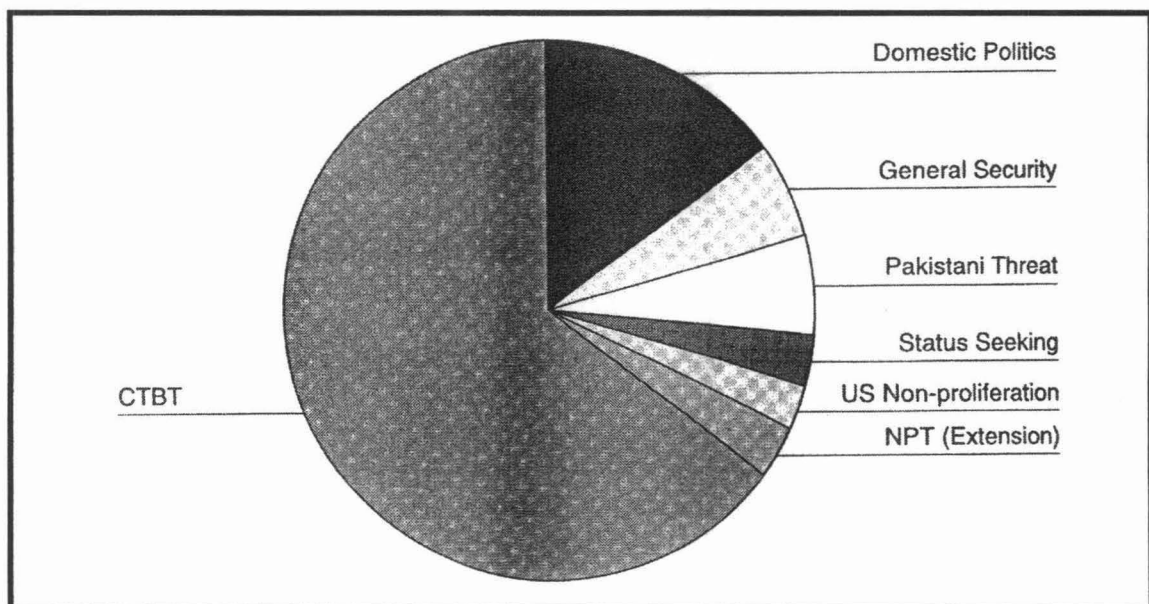
“[t]he indefinite extension of the NPT and the possibility that the CTBT would enter into force after a September 1999 Review Conference caused concern among all the major parties, but these international developments were especially alarming to the BJP” (Paul 1998: 7)

It may be difficult to understand the relation between the Review Conference and Pokhran II, without taking situation at that time into account. His argument is based

on a prediction at that time that the CTBT would possibly enter into force soon after the CTBT Review Conference, although the prediction was shattered by a failure of ratification of the treaty in the Senate of the United States in October 1999. Therefore, this is an argument that India rushed into the nuclear tests before the CTBT would enter into force in the near future.

This explanation is again supported by the media coverage survey by Frey (2006). For the two years before Pokhran II, the Indian nuclear debates on English dailies were occupied by nuclear non-proliferation issues, especially the CTBT this time (Frey 2006: 42, see Figure 4.5). Articles regarding the CTBT issue constituted 64.71 percent, and 14.71 percent were about domestic politics matter, which was the second most referred issue (Frey 2006: 41). It can be said that the CTBT matter had much more attention than domestic politics' (rise of BJP) impact on nuclear policy and regional security problems.

Figure 4.5 Issue-wise nuclear reporting, mid-1996 to mid-1998



Source: Frey (2006: 42)

However, this variable of international regime hypothesis cannot offer a good explanation for the particular timing of Pokhran II on 11 and 13 May 1998. First of all, the Review Conference in September 1999 is too far from the date of Pokhran II to explain the exact timing of conduct of the nuclear tests: it is not able to answer to “why then, not later.” Other two hypotheses can offer better explanations which are more contiguous to Pokhran II, as elaborated later. In addition, if the developments of non-proliferation regimes were the decisive factor, India should have conducted nuclear tests before the CTBT finalization, as like France (-January 1996) and China (-July 1996). Instead, India did not conduct nuclear tests before May 1998 as a matter of fact, although the CTBT had been negotiated since 1993. But there is also no rational reason to wait the Review Conference in September 1999. In fact, Paul (1998: 7-8)’s argument largely depends on the characteristics of BJP in order to explain the reason why Pokhran II was conducted in May 1998, not in earlier years.

Another potential variable in this chapter, aspiration for global prestige, seems not to offer single-variable explanation to the timing of Pokhran II. As a nature of the variable, such a conceptual and long-standing variable is not good at accounting for the exact timing of an event. On the other hand, in case this variable is associated with the domestic politics hypothesis, as Bajpai (2009: 36-39) argues, it cannot be dismissed easily. We may be able to argue that the BJP-led government which has a stronger tendency to seek prestige in international society. But this possibility of explanation, where the domestic politics factor is privileged the best, is beyond the scope of this chapter and the single-variable approach of this study.

To conclude this section of short-range exploration from the non-proliferation perspective, the reason why Pokhran II occurred then is not explained well. The only

potential single-variable explanation here focusing on the impact of the Review Conference in September 1999 is not contiguous enough to offer reasoning about the reason of Pokhran II.

Finally, I would like to review and wind up this chapter. In the long-term scope of time, this international regime hypothesis does not offer any powerful explanation for Pokhran II. In the middle range, the extension of the NPT in 1995 and the CTBT negotiation provides persuading accounts for the “near tests.” In the short time range, a potential explanation focusing the Review Conference in September 1999 based on the non-proliferation order hypothesis is less persuading. As a whole, the explanatory power of this hypothesis is limited to the middle range perspective.

The next chapter deals with the second hypothesis in this study, regional security hypothesis. This second hypothesis is also focusing on external variables for India, as same as the first hypothesis examined in this chapter. It has been a conventional viewpoint in the security studies. But in these days, more attention is paid to domestic and normative factors. The next chapter revisits the importance of security factors in three frameworks of time-range.

Chapter 5 Regional Security and Pokhran II

This chapter tests a hypothesis that the regional security threats from Pakistan or/and China urged India to conduct nuclear tests in 1998, by employing three different time-range frameworks. It not only follows a general explanation that states decide to have nuclear weapons because of security threat(s), but also examines how specific events in Indian nuclear policy can be explained by developments of India's regional security in detail

As mentioned earlier, in this study the term "region" only means an area of India and its neighboring countries, not meaning the South Asia region. Therefore, threats from China are considered as a regional threat for India in this study, while it is sure China is not considered to be located in the South Asia region. But China has been a fundamental element for security of South Asian countries (Singh 2000: 31). In other words, the word "region" in this study corresponds to the term "sub-system" in contrast to the term "system" meaning the whole international states system.

Long Range

It would be difficult to deny that Pakistan has been a continuous threat for India since the Partition in 1947, though some right-wing strategists in New Delhi may say Pakistan is not a threat to India any more. Neither is there denying that China has been a source of threat for India in its strategic consideration for a long time, except for earlier days of friendship between India and China. Therefore, this regional security threat hypothesis seems to offer a valid explanation for Pokhran II in the long term, in the sense that the long-standing regional security threats seem to be able to account for the India's long-term incremental acquisition of nuclear weapon capability.

Hereafter, the actual presence of regional security considerations is examined in the following three terms: (1) years of civilian programme, before 1964, (2) years going for Pokhran I, from 1964 to 1974, and (3) years after the Pokhran I, the latter half of 1970s and 1980s.

It is difficult to find out serious security considerations in the developments of Indian nuclear programme before 1964. First of all, the nature of nuclear programme before 1964 was civilian, although the master of the programme, Bhabha, is said to have aimed to have dual use technologies. Previous works point out that security considerations are not important in these early years of India's nuclear programme before 1964. For example, Perkovich (1999: 59) argues "[t]he main motivations for India's initial plans to acquire the means to produce nuclear explosives had more to do with Bhabha's and Nehru's beliefs that nuclear technology offered India a shortcut to modernity and major status." Subrahmanyam (1998: 26), who was then a Deputy Secretary in India's Ministry of Defence, writes that "[u]p to that date [16 October 1964, the day of Chinese nuclear test] India also only thought of developing a capability which could be converted into a nuclear weapon option, if it became necessary" in a context of description of the situation of 1964.

Contrary to the lack of security considerations in the nuclear programme before 1964, it is clear the turn to Pokhran I stems from Chinese nuclear test in 1964. Again Subrahmanyam (1998: 27) explains that "India's nuclear security concern goes back to 1964 and was directly linked with the Chinese nuclear test." This explanation is well accorded with the historical process that the Chinese test provoked India's nuclear debate and the decision going for Pokhran I was made in November 1964, a month later from the Chinese nuclear test (Perkovich 1999: 81), while there must be

some debates about nuclear weaponization before that (Singh 2007: 289-290). And also, it is natural to assume that the Sino-Indian War of 1962 would have contributed the constitution of a perception of Chinese threat secondarily (Singh 2007: 290).

However, the particular timing of conduct of Pokhran I is not well explained by this regional security threat hypothesis. In the some years preceding Pokhran I, Indian security environment had been improved, especially by Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in August 1971 and India's victory of Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, instead. Therefore, the regional security considerations cannot provide rational reason for the timing of conduct of the nuclear test Pokhran I: India should have conducted Pokhran I earlier, in terms of regional security considerations.

Indian nuclear programme after Pokhran I had both aspects of expansion and restraint: India continued to build up its nuclear arsenal but it did not go to overt nuclear weaponization (which is called "open option" strategy). The regional security hypothesis can offer an explanation for the expansion aspect of the programme of that era, while it cannot explain the restraint aspect of the programme: India's rapid growing nuclear military capability in the 1980s is explained from emergence of possible nuclear Pakistan (the historical developments are abbreviated here as they are written in Chapter 3). Subrahmanyam states in an interview that "[w]ay back in 1979, as chairman of the joint intelligence committee, I had argued for the need for India to test nuclear weapons. Pakistan was going to go nuclear and therefore India will have to go nuclear" (Chand 2008).

To recapitulate this section, India's long-existing perception of regional security threats seems to offer an excellent explanation for the long-term incremental

acquisition of India's nuclear capability. We would be able to say that the weaponization of India's nuclear capability was triggered by the Chinese threat. But some of specific events of India's nuclear programme are not accounted for in terms of regional security considerations. Especially, the specific timing of the conduct of Pokhran I is a nonnegligible deviant for the regional security hypothesis: If the security variable was the most important, India should have conducted the first nuclear test much earlier.

Middle Range

In the middle range, the regional security hypothesis offers a possible explanation for the "near tests" in 1995 and 1996 when Pakistan's acquisition of ring magnets for centrifuges as well as means of delivery of nuclear weapons from China was coming out. The continual endeavours for nuclear testing by Rao government and Vajpayee government can be explained by this perspective. But the restrained behaviours by Gowda government and Gujral government are anomalies for this hypothesis.

The specific key incident for this section is a revelation of shipment of M-11 missiles from China to Pakistan, which was reported in July 1995 in sources of USA (Kumar 1998:182). On 3 July 1995, *Washington Post* reported about

“an apparent internal disagreement within the Clinton Administration over how to respond to evidence that Pakistan had acquired M-11 medium-range ballistic missiles from China” [and that] “the missiles have been in Pakistan since November 1992, and before an October 1994 commitment by China not to export such missiles” (quoted from Cronin 1996).

M-11 was believed to have sufficient payload capability to carry a nuclear warhead,

capable of a range of 300 km with carrying 800 kg payload or 250 km range with 1,000 kg payload (Tellis 2001: 47). Perkovich (1999: 362) points out that Chinese nuclear test on 15 May 1995 (just four days after the NPT extension) and the revelations by USA that China had shipped at least thirty M-11 missiles to Pakistan heightened Indian insecurities.

The shipment itself had been done before 1995, but what was important was the acknowledgement in India. India had not acknowledged the arrival of M-11 missile in Pakistan as of 1994, according to Subrahmanyam (1998: 50). Therefore, this incident is well consistent with the timing of Rao government's authorization of preparation for nuclear tests in the "late summer of 1995" (Perkovich 1999: 365). We could say that soon after the revelation of Pakistan's acquirement of means of delivering nuclear warhead, M-11, Indian government decided to go for nuclear tests. Although we cannot know what was discussed in the government at that time as a matter of fact, we may be able to assume that the successive authorizations of nuclear tests by two governments (Prime Minister Rao and Prime Minister Vajpayee) were provoked by Pakistan's growing nuclear capability.

The variable of regional security for India well explains the two near tests, one by Rao government and another by Vajpayee government. The explanatory power of this hypothesis in this middle-range is comparable to that of international-regime hypothesis, which performs the best in this time-frame. But the restrained behaviours after the near tests are not covered by this regional security explanation. The Gowda government and Gujral government did not go for nuclear tests, although international non-proliferation pressure on India was going high. Their restrained posture is anomaly for the regional security threat hypothesis in this middle range.

Short Range

The key event to account for the specific timing of Pokhran II from the regional security viewpoint is Pakistan's *Ghauri* missile testing on 6 April 1998. This section tries to test an assumption that the *Ghauri* missile test was the immediate trigger for India to decide to conduct nuclear tests on 11 and 13 May 1998. The liquid-fueled *Ghauri* missile, according to the official claim by Pakistan, has a possible range of 1,500 km with a payload of 700 kg (Perkovich 1999: 409). Tellis (2001: 48) points out Pakistan's acquisition of the *Ghauri* was a "complete shock to the Indian body politic" because Indian analysts discounted the progress of the development of *Ghauri* missiles. The indispensable impact of *Ghauri* missile test-firing on India's missile programme is pointed out by Chintamani Mahapatra (1998: 363-372), then a research fellow of IDSA.

Subrahmanyam (1998) strongly supports this assumption. He argues "the Indian nuclear tests became inevitable and they were triggered by the *Ghauri* missile test by Pakistan on April 6, 1998, and again the US permissiveness on North Korean proliferation to Pakistan" (Subrahmanyam 1998: 52). He also states, in an interview, that "I believe the then government, under the influence of Mishra, decided to test nuclear weapons soon after Pakistan conducted *Ghauri* missile test" (Chand 2008). His argument is based on his own experience that he was asked "[w]hat India should do?" by Mishra on the day of the *Ghauri* testing (Chand 2008).

Mishra, then Prime Minister's principal secretary, told "actually discussion (on the nuclear policy) took place two weeks or so after the Prime Minister took oath (on March 19, 1998) and we left it at that," and "[t]hen came the missile and all the claims from the other side, of a war. And at that point, the Prime Minister said, ok, lets go

ahead” (Press Trust India 2000). This is an important supporting evidence of the “*Ghauri* trigger” explanation by a key person, who is said to have been the primal advocate of nuclear tests in the decision (Chand 2008).

Perkovich, in his book published in 1999, hinted a possibility that the *Ghauri* test was the immediate trigger of Pokhran II. He refers to some reports saying that Prime Minister Vajpayee authorized nuclear weapon tests on April 8, 9, or 10, and admits “[t]his dating made the decision seem to come in response to Pakistan’s *Ghauri* missile test” (Perkovich 1999: 412). But he is doubtful about the causal relations between the *Ghauri* test and Pokhran II, because he thinks “[t]he basic decision to proceed toward testing was most likely conveyed to the weaponeers in late March” (1999: 412).

Perkovich’s stance became clearer in his later work published in 2002. He denies the *Ghauri* trigger explanation positively. He argues “[n]or was the decision to test precipitated by Pakistan’s April 6 *Ghauri* test as many commentators have suggested” (Perkovich 2002:46). The logic which Perkovich employs to deny the *Ghauri* trigger explanation is simple. He points out that the *Ghauri* test could not influence the decision to Pokhran II, because the decision going for Pokhran II was done on 28 March, when the *Ghauri* test had not been conducted (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Logic of Perkovich denying the “*Ghauri* trigger” explanation

(i)	The decision for Pokhran II was done on 28 March
(ii)	The <i>Ghauri</i> test was conducted on 6 April
(iii)	Therefore, the <i>Ghauri</i> test could not be the trigger for Pokhran II

Source: Perkovich (2002: 46)

However, Perkovich’s logic has a defect. His argument is based on a tacit assumption that India’s leaders did not know Pakistan’s preparation for the *Ghauri* test. If New Delhi had acknowledged Pakistan’s preparation, the *Ghauri* missile can be a trigger for the decision which precedes the actual testing of *Ghauri* missile. In fact, Perkovich wrote the *Ghauri* test was surprise to India in his earlier work (Perkovich 1999: 410). But this assumption was denied by a newly available source. A memoir by Jaswant Singh (2006: 123) states “on 23 March Pakistan had hinted at the imminence of the test.” Dipankar Banerjee, a director of a New Delhi based private think tank, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), and P. R. Chari, a research professor of IPCS, told me that they had also known the imminence of the *Ghauri* test before the conduct of the missile test, in a conference held in Tokyo, Japan, on 29 January 2010. Even if the decision was made before 6 April, alternative logic presented here (see Table 5.2) can support the “*Ghauri* trigger explanation”: because India had acknowledged the imminence of the *Ghauri* missile testing, the *Ghauri* can influence the decision of Pokhran II logically.

Table 5.2 Alternative logic supporting the “*Ghauri* trigger” explanation

(i)	India acknowledged the imminence of the <i>Ghauri</i> test on 23 March
(ii)	The decision for Pokhran II was conducted after 28 March
(iii)	Therefore, the <i>Ghauri</i> missile testing could be a trigger for Pokhran II

Although Perkovich (2002: 46) refuses this “*Ghauri* trigger” explanation, other reliable sources are supporting the explanation. First of all, Mishra, who was at the centre of the decision-making, says the go sign came soon after the missile test (Press Trust India 2000). In case the decision was made before the missile test, we cannot directly reject this *Ghauri* trigger explanation, because some reveal that New Delhi

had acknowledged the imminence of the missile test.

To conclude this chapter, the regional security hypothesis provides valid explanation in each time-range at least to some extent. In the long term, the long-standing nature of regional security threats is accordance with the incremental acquisition of India's nuclear capability, although this variable cannot capture the specific timing of conducting Pokhran I. In the middle-range, the consecutive near tests are explained by Pakistan's build-up of nuclear capability (including delivery capacity) supported by China, while the restrained period is not accounted by this perspective. The short-range examination in this chapter may be controversial, but this study is for the regional security explanation on the exact timing of Pokhran II. The *Ghauri* missile testing was the direct trigger of authorization of Pokhran II. Newly available sources are supporting this explanation. As a whole, the explanatory power of the regional security hypothesis is valid in each of time-range.

The next chapter examines the domestic politics hypothesis. This seems to be a new dominant perspective on nuclear policy of India. Influential scholars, such as Perkovich and Bajpai, employ this perspective to explain the reason why India conducted the Pokhran II nuclear tests in May 1998. Their works are critically examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Domestic Politics and Pokhran II

The hypothesis tested in this chapter is that domestic political considerations led India to conduct nuclear tests. There are some possible variables in this point of view. First, the necessity of domestic political support, or considerations of domestic political interests, could be a reason of nuclear tests. As a matter of fact, the conduct of nuclear tests Pokhran II was positively accepted by the majority of Indian people. The second variable is that the role and/or characteristics of a specific individual or group. In the long term of Indian history of nuclear programme, the continuous role of scientists can offer an explanation of this variable. In the short-range perspective, some authors have paid attention to the specialty of BJP government and/or Prime Minister Vajpayee. The status-seeking aspiration, which has already referred in Chapter 4, may be able to offer an explanation for Pokhran II if associated with the second variable. This possibility is omitted in this chapter, because this combination of variables is beyond the framework of this study which is limited into single-variable examinations, as observed in Chapter 4.

Long Range

Each of two variables in this chapter has potential to constitute an explanation for India's long-term incremental acquisition of nuclear capability.

Firstly, the potency of nuclear tests as means to gain domestic political interests may be able to constitute a long-term explanation: India continued to develop its nuclear capability in order to gain public support by acquiring nuclear bombs. This explanation may be applicable at any time. In a democratic country, every policy is likely to be related to this perspective. Focusing on some turning points of Indian

nuclear programme, this perspective can offer explanations on “why then” questions regarding turning points. As a matter of fact, people in India generally welcomed the conduct of Pokhran II. Most importantly in terms of this long-term range, the first Indian nuclear test Pokhran I is explained well by its domestic political situation, where Indira Gandhi government was seeking more domestic support, as Sagan (1996: 67-68) argues. He argues ten years delay of Pokhran I in 1974 after the Chinese nuclear test in 1964 cannot be explained by security imperatives or normative factors. Although Sagan’s argument is persuading enough, however, such a short-term political consideration cannot cover all the duration of the history of Indian nuclear development. Political interests differ from time to time, while India’s nuclear development has been incremental and continuous. This point is in accordance with Ganguly (1999: 174), who argues that this perspective is problematic because it “cannot account for the long-term investments in nuclear infrastructure that enabled her [Prime Minister Indira Gandhi] to order the nuclear test.” In other words, the nuclear programme was going on even when the political situation was stable, such as the era of Prime Minister Nehru. In addition, most of history of weaponization of nuclear capability had been kept secret at least in official appearance. In other words, India’s nuclear weaponization programme had not been used for gaining political interests in terms of public opinion except for specific event. Therefore, in the long-term perspective of this study’s methodology, this domestic political consideration is dismissed.

Secondly, the role of scientists in India’s nuclear programme would be valid as the variable of characteristics of specific individual or group in long-term perspective. Presence of scientists has been apparent in some of major turning points of Indian nuclear policy, on the contrary to the lack of involvement of military people. Bhabha

had been the master of India's nuclear programme from India's independence to his sudden death in January 1966. It is said he persuaded Prime Minister Shastri to give him authorization to start preparation for a nuclear test (Perkovich 1999: 83).

In the 1990s, the presence of Chidambaram and Kalam, then leading nuclear scientists in India, can be found in the decisions of two "near tests" and Pokhran II. If we assume the constant important place of scientists in the decision-making of India's nuclear policy based on these empirical facts, this continuous variable of role of scientists can provide a valid explanation on India's incremental developments of nuclear weapon capability. However, as a nature of such a pervasive factor, explanatory power of this variable for specific turning points is limited. For example, the decision of Pokhran I is not covered by this variable: why India restrained from conducting nuclear tests for ten years after the policy change in 1964 is not accounted for. There seems to be no reason for scientists to refrain India's nuclear programme. Therefore, this variable cannot grasp the restraint nature of India's nuclear programme, for example seen in the "open option" policy in the 1980s.

In this section, two variables have been examined. First, the variable of domestic political interests for governments is dismissed because changing political interests cannot constitute a long-standing factor associated with incremental and stable development of Indian nuclear programme, while it can account for some events, such as Pokhran I. Second, the continuous important role of scientists in the decision-making of India's nuclear policy is a potential variable, in the sense that the long-standing nature of scientists' role is accorded with the incremental nature of India's nuclear development. But two problems are shown: it cannot provide reasoning for some of specific turning points and for why India had been restrained

from weaponization of nuclear capability. Both of two variables have advantages and disadvantages.

Middle Range

In this middle-range point of view, the domestic political hypothesis provides one possible explanation focusing on the political interests in two senses. This section elaborates these two explanation based on this variable. An argument paying attention to characteristic of a group or/and individual is not valid in this time scope; political leadership of two “near tests” were different, and the “role of scientists” explanation (employed in previous section) cannot tell why India rushed into nuclear tests in the 1990s.

Back to the political interests’ variable, firstly, in a narrow sense, both of “near tests” in 1995 and in 1996 can be hypothetically accounted by this perspective, as it is necessary for both of Rao government and Vajpayee government to acquire political support. By early fall of 1995, Rao government was politically endangered (Perkovich 1999: 367-368). Then the Congress Party was declining, while BJP was emerging and the next general election (held in April and May 1996) was looming. Vajpayee government was also politically endangered when it ordered to prepare nuclear tests in May 1996. In fact, the Vajpayee government did fail in the confidence vote and collapsed on 1 June 1996.

Secondly, in a broad sense, we may say that there were incentives for governments in the 1990s to seeking political support in common in the era of coalition politics of the 1990s, when the Congress Party could not form a single-party government any more. In other words, each Indian government in the 1990s was generally fragile, not only

when the near tests and Pokhran II were authorized. Therefore, this broad sense understanding of this variable indicates a problem of this variable: explanation fails to account for the reason why other governments did not go to conducting nuclear tests if the variable is primal factor.

To recapitulate this section, the domestic politics hypothesis focusing on political interests for government provides a durable explanation for nuclear programme commonly applicable to the 1990s. Therefore, it is dismissed because it cannot explain why some governments in the 1990s went to prepare nuclear tests and others did not do so.

Short Range

In this short time-range perspective trying to explain the specific timing of conduct of Pokhran II, there are two possible variables associated with each other: (1) political interests for then government, and (2) specialty of BJP or/and Prime Minister Vajpayee. Bajpai (2009: 25-67) is the typical example of this line of argumentation, as discussed in Chapter 2. The “role of scientists” variable is dismissed here again because it cannot provide any reasoning about the specific timing of the nuclear tests.

The first variable examined in this section is political interests of the government. As argued in the previous section, necessity of political support for governments commonly existed in the 1990s, the era of coalition politics. But this argument cannot show “why then” of Pokhran II. In the short range, we need to focus on the specific political situation of the BJP government at the timing of decision to conduct nuclear tests. One candidate for the short-range explanation is that the BJP government, which failed to win a confidence vote in 1996, hastened to conduct nuclear tests, in order to

make the government stable by getting public popularity. Looking at sequence of events leading to Pokhran II, we can guess domestic politics would be related to the timing of decision. Pokhran II was authorized within days after the confidence vote on 28 March 1998, according to Jaswant Singh (2006: 122). Focusing on this contiguousness of the dates of the authorization and the confidence vote, seemingly the timing can be explained by domestic politics perspective. However, the contiguousness is telling only coincidence of these two events (the authorization of nuclear tests and the confidence vote), not causal relation between them. Another problem is that this argument cannot account for the reason why other governments did not do nuclear tests. If the domestic political consideration is the leading variable, previous Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral should have conducted nuclear tests, before moving out of power. The variable of necessity of public popularity is not monopolized by the BJP-led government on that time.

Secondly, there is an argument that the decision to carry out the tests be attributed to the rise of the BJP to dominance in India's government in March 1998. In other words, it is argued that Pokhran II is explained by the characteristics of the BJP or/and its leadership. This is one of major explanation about why the Pokhran II occurred then. From this perspective, it can be said that the particular political and strategic culture differentiate the BJP from other parties and therefore the nuclear tests were conducted in May 1998 soon after the BJP came to power in March 1998 (Bajpai 2009: 36-39). Especially, the characteristics of a few leaders who made the decision is tend to be focus of this argument. For example, Bharat Karnad (2006), a hyper realist in the strategic circle of New Delhi, focuses on the preference of Prime Minister Vajpayee and his Principal Secretary Mishra, writing

“[t]here is little doubt about that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee’s decision to resume nuclear testing, made during his first brief (thirteen day) stint in office in 1998, and implemented in his second tenure, at one level, sprang from his personal desire to disprove he was a weak leader” (Karnad 2006: 392)

and

“he [Mishra] is essentially a person with a risk-averse mindset, orientated towards short-term objectives, and unwilling to think far enough ahead or rigorously enough about the issues involved to fashion a definite and sustainable game-plan” (Karnad 2006: 395).

In terms of the short-time range point of view, this variable has a valid explanatory power about the reason why Pokhran II was conducted then.

This “BJP specialty” argument is seemingly able to offer a good explanation not only about Pokhran II, but also about the near test in 1996, which was ordered by the BJP-led political leadership. However, this BJP specialty argument is counterfactual in a sense, according to the historical description shown in Chapter 3 of this study. It cannot grasp the continuity of policy from Rao government to Vajpayee government: only half-year before the “near test” of Vajpayee government in 1996, Rao government had tried nuclear tests in 1995. Later, Vajpayee admitted Rao as “the true father of Shakti nuclear test of May 11, 1998,” according to an interview article with Subrahmanyam (2004). In short, the short range consideration focusing on the specialty of BJP and its leadership is problematic, when combined with the middle-range point of view.

Summing up this section, two variables are examined here. The both variables, one focusing on political interests and another focusing on the culture of BJP, are

seemingly able to explain the exact timing of the nuclear tests in May 1998. That is true in a sense, if we limit the scope of analysis into this short-term period. But in terms of historical continuity, both of these variables face difficulty. The political-interest variable cannot grasp the reason why other governments in the 1990s did not go to conducting nuclear tests. The variable of character of a group or/and individual, BJP factor, fails to account for a near test in 1995 by the Congress-led administration. Both variables are attractive but also problematic.

The next conclusive chapter demonstrates the result of examination of three hypotheses in this study and examines some possible counterarguments against this study.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

The previous three chapters have examined explanatory power of three hypotheses in three time frames. The below table 7.1 shows the result of analyses. Parentheses in the table mean that the variable within parentheses has limited explanatory power compared to others.

Table 7.1 Variables explaining Pokhran II

	International regime	Regional security	Domestic politics
Long term	✓ (Nuclear apartheid)	✓ Pakistan and China threat	✓ Scientists
Middle term	✓ NPT extension and CTBT negotiation	✓ Pakistan threat with Chinese support	✓ (Political interests)
Short term	✓ (CTBT Review Conference)	✓ Pakistan <i>Ghauri</i> missile testing	✓ BJP factor ✓ (Political interests)

Let us review the arguments by each time-framing.

In terms of long-range viewpoint, the continuous and incremental nature of Indian nuclear programme is well explained by long-standing variables. Three potential explanations based on each of three hypotheses are shown in this respect: (1) the discriminatory international non-proliferation order after the NPT from the international regime hypothesis, (2) India's perception of regional security threats from Pakistan and China, and (3) the pressure from nuclear scientists in domestic politics hypothesis. But the first one, non-proliferation order, cannot account for the origin of nuclear programme. Therefore, remaining two variables, regional security threats and role of scientists, are answers in the long-term range analyses.

In the middle-range perspective focusing on the two times “near tests,” two variables have passed the testing of hypotheses. The first one is the non-proliferation regime explanation. Another is Pakistan’s growing capability with support from China. NPT extension in May 1995 and revelation of M-11 missile shipment in July 1995 are consistent with the timing of the authorization of nuclear testing by Rao government. Domestic politics hypothesis does not offer valid explanations in this time-range. While an explanation focusing on considerations of political interests would constitute valid reasoning of nuclear testing in the 1990s when political foundation for each government was fragile, it cannot offer the reason why others in that era did not go for nuclear tests.

Regarding the particular timing of Pokhran II of May 1998, the *Ghauri* missile testing by Pakistan based on regional security hypothesis and the BJP factor of domestic politics hypothesis offer powerful reasoning. A candidate of variable from the international regime hypothesis, the CTBT Review Conference in September 1999, can have only limited explanatory power. It cannot say about why the tests occurred in May 1998, not earlier or later. On the other hand, both variables of regional security and the BJP factor can explain the reason why Indian government authorized nuclear tests at that time.

On the basis of examinations above, this study concludes that the regional security threat can explain Pokhran II the best. In all three time-range of scopes, this regional security hypothesis can demonstrate the reason why India went to nuclear tests: (1) the long-standing security concerns were the basis of the reason, (2) Pakistan’s rapid build-up of nuclear capability supported by China led two times “near tests,” and (3) the *Ghauri* missile test by Pakistan constituted a direct trigger of authorization of the

Pokhran II nuclear tests. Consistent explanation is obtained only by this hypothesis.

By the way, a perspective of global security environment is not employed in this study, although it is one of previous explanations about Pokhran II, as observed in Chapter 2. Deterioration of international security environment is the point of argument of this explanation: India conducted the nuclear tests Pokhran II in order to improve its global security environment which had been deteriorated in the post-Cold War era, especially by the demise of USSR, India's *de fact* ally in the Cold War era. This explanation is dismissed firstly because it can only constitute a possible reason of nuclear developments in the short range, and secondary because it is counterfactual even in the short term. This explanation is invalid in the sense that the global security environment for India was improving, not deteriorated, at the time of Pokhran II. By 1997, U.S. foreign policy had changed to "greater engagement policy" which sought better relationship with India by putting non-proliferation issue on shelf (Tamari 2007: 119-120). This policy change was described by Talbott (2006: 40-41), who was U.S. Deputy Secretary of State. In addition, as a matter of fact, Pokhran II did not improve India's global security environment in the global level, especially in terms of its relations with USA, the only super power in the world. By conducting the nuclear tests, India's relationship with USA was worsened.

There must be a lot of counterarguments against this study. First, one may say the domestic politics model, argued by many authors such as Bajpai (2009: 25-67), seems more persuading than regional security hypothesis. Here, I would like to pick up and counter the arguments of Bajpai (2009), which dismisses international security model and support domestic explanations about Pokhran II. Bajpai (2009: 35) provides domestic-politics explanation of Pokhran II based on two major factors: (1) the

characteristics of BJP, and (2) the political interests of Prime Minister Vajpayee. Regarding the first point, while empirical foundation of this study is not different from that of Bajpai (2009), the directions of arguments are different. This difference of directions comes from a difference of perception about the “near tests” by earlier governments. On the one hand, Bajpai (2009: 36-39) focuses on an aspect of the difference: it asks why only the BJP government crossed the line to nuclear testing while earlier governments which had considered conducting nuclear tests were not able to cross the line. Then it argues that the difference can be explained by the specific characteristics of the BJP, which differ from other political groups. On the other hand, this study pays attention to an aspect of similarities: it considers some of earlier governments which came near to conduct nuclear tests were in similar situation with the BJP government in 1998. Ganguly (1999: 168) is along with my argument regarding this point: it argues that the near tests in December 1995 show the fallacy of the domestic imperatives arguments for Pokhran II. This study argues that USA factor can explain the reason why only the BJP government crossed the line. While Rao government refrained from conducting the tests because of pressure from USA Clinton government, the BJP government was able to conduct the tests without USA pressure. Although no one can know whether the BJP government could resist to USA pressure or not, the importance of USA pressure to the restraint of Rao government is supported by a lot of materials, such as Talbott (2006: 36-37). For the second argument of Bajpai (2009) supporting domestic politics model for Pokhran II, this study is able to have a stronger counterargument than that against the first point. Although Bajpai (2009: 39-46) argues the tests are explained by a perspective of political interests of Prime Minister Vajpayee and his government, those interests are not specific for them. Not only the Vajpayee’s government, all other governments in the 1990s, including Rao government, did not have stable majority in the Lok Sabha.

The political interests that were expected by conducting nuclear tests were not specific for the BJP. Therefore, this “political survival” argument is not appropriate for accounting for the reason why the Pokhran II was conducted in May 1998.

Second, one can say the methodology of this study which is seeking a mono-causal explanation is problematic. It is true that reality is always with much complexity. Some previous works offer multi-variable explanation, as shown in Chapter 2. Relations of those variables may be important. For example, Ashok Kapur (2001) is trying to show correlations of multiple factors of history of Indian nuclear policy. Such works would be more beneficial for understanding the fact of matter. However, a single-variable approach can be justified in terms of the nature of theoretical research. To be parsimonious is considered to be an attribute of good theories (Waltz 1979: 10; Evera 1997: 18). “Every factor is important” explanation could be near to reality, but such an explanation is useless. A simple conclusion is more likely to make theoretical contributions.

Third, it may be said that this study lacks originality compared with previous literature on this topic. It is sure that almost of all variables this study has examined are not original: they have been discussed in previous literature. But a new focus on the middle-range perspective, especially on the “near tests” in 1995 and 1996, introduces alternative arguments regarding the reason why India went to nuclear tests. For example, a possible correlation of revelation of M-11 missile shipment with Rao government’s decision to prepare nuclear tests is a new finding of this study, while the causal relation is not proved. An assumption, that the near test in 1995 was serious, helps to narrow down possible variables: the BJP specialty explanation is positively refused by introducing this assumption in the sense that not only the BJP-led

government but also the Congress Party-led Rao government tried to conduct nuclear tests.

Fourth, my arguments may look too defensive of positions of “insiders,” such as Subrahmanyam, Mishra and Jaswant Singh (Subrahmanyam was not the insider of Pokhran II decision, but he had been the insider of Indian nuclear policy for a long time). As their statements would be too defensive of India’s official position, my arguments could be reflecting India’s official stance too much. But as of now, when declassification of primary sources are not going on, we researchers cannot help depending on statements of insiders to some extent.

Lastly, the conclusion of this study, that security threat drove India to nuclear tests, seems too ordinary. The security point of view was a conventional understanding of states’ motivation seeking nuclear weapons, as Sagan (1996: 55) argued. But regarding Pokhran II, such a “conventional” view has not been conventional in this context, as Ganguly (1999: 172) says “[m]any foreign and several Indian political commentators have dismissed the security imperatives underlying the Indian nuclear weapons program as well as the Indian tests, while privileging other explanations based on considerations of status, prestige, and the short-term exigencies of domestic politics.” Therefore, the conclusion of this study has significance in the sense that it is swinging the debates about states’ motivation around nuclear policy back to the “conventional” place.

This study has demonstrated that the regional security hypothesis can explain India’s nuclear tests Pokhran II the best. But it is clear that there is room for considerably more work to be done in this area. Decision-making process of India’s nuclear policy

has not been revealed so much. More detailed examination of India's nuclear programme will make contribution to the study of security studies and international relations. This case of India's acquisition of nuclear weapons is a precious case, one of a few cases of nuclear weaponization in non-Western world. In addition, as India emerges as a new major power, importance of this field of research seems to be growing higher.

Appendix

Appendix 1

Suo Motu Statement by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the Indian Parliament on May 27, 1998

1. On 11 May, India successfully carried out three underground nuclear tests. Two more underground tests on 13 May completed the planned series of tests. I would like this House to join me in paying fulsome tribute to our scientists, engineers and defense personnel whose singular achievements have given us a renewed sense of national pride and self-confidence. Sir, in addition to the statement I make, I have also taken the opportunity to submit to the House a paper entitled “Evolution of India’s Nuclear Policy”.

2. In 1947, when India emerged as a free country to take its rightful place in the comity of nations, the nuclear age had already dawned. Our leaders then took the crucial decision to opt for self-reliance, and freedom of thought and action. We rejected the Cold War paradigm and chose the more difficult path of nonalignment. Our leaders also realized that a nuclear weapon-free-world would enhance not only India’s security but also the security of all nations. That is why disarmament was and continues to be a major plank in our foreign policy.

3. During the 50’s, India took the lead in calling for an end to all nuclear weapon testing. Addressing the Lok Sabha on 2 April, 1954, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, to whose memory we pay homage today, stated “nuclear, chemical and biological energy and power should not be used to forge weapons of mass destruction”. He called for negotiations for prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons and in the interim, a standstill agreement to halt nuclear testing. This call was not heeded.

4. In 1965, along with a small group of non-aligned countries, India put forward the idea of an international non-proliferation agreement under which the nuclear weapon states would agree to give up their arsenals provided other countries refrained from developing or acquiring such weapons. This balance of rights and obligations was not accepted. In the 60’s our security concerns deepened. The country sought security guarantees but the countries we turned to were unable to extend to us the expected assurances. As a result, we made it clear that we would not be able to sign the NPT.

5. The Lok Sabha debated the issue on 5 April, 1968. Prime Minister late Smt. Indira

Gandhi assured the House that “we shall be guided entirely by our self-enlightenment and the considerations of national security”. This was a turning point and this House strengthened the decision of the then Government by reflecting a national consensus.

6. Our decision not to sign the NPT was in keeping with our basic objectives. In 1974, we demonstrated our nuclear capability. Successive Governments thereafter have taken all necessary steps in keeping with that resolve and national will, to safeguard India’s nuclear option. This was the primary reason behind the 1996 decision for not signing the CTBT, a decision that also enjoyed consensus of this House.

7. The decades of the 80’s and 90’s had meanwhile witnessed the gradual deterioration of our security environment as a result of nuclear and missile proliferation. In our neighbourhood, nuclear weapons had increased and more sophisticated delivery systems inducted. In addition, India has also been the victim of externally aided and abetted terrorism, militancy and clandestine war.

8. At a global level, we see no evidence on the part of the nuclear weapon states to take decisive and irreversible steps in moving towards a nuclear-weapon-free-world. Instead, we have seen that the NPT has been extended indefinitely and unconditionally, perpetuating the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the five countries.

9. Under such circumstances, the Government was faced with a difficult decision. The touchstone that has guided us in making the correct choice clear was national security. These tests are a continuation of the policies set into motion that put this country on the path of self-reliance and independence of thought and action.

10. India is now a nuclear weapon state. This is a reality that cannot be denied. It is not a conferment that we seek; nor is it a status for others to grant. It is an endowment to the nation by our scientists and engineers. It is India’s due, the right of one-sixth of humankind. Our strengthened capability adds to our sense of responsibility. We do not intend to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country; these are weapons of self-defense, to ensure that India is not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion. We do not intend to engage in an arms race.

11. We had taken a number of initiatives in the past. We regret that these proposals did not receive a positive response from other nuclear weapon states. In fact, had their response been positive, we need not have gone in for our current testing program. We

have been and will continue to be in the forefront of the calls for opening negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, so that this challenge can be dealt with in the same manner that we have dealt with the scourge of two other weapons of mass destruction – through the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

12. Traditionally, India has been an outward looking country. Our strong commitment to multilateralism is reflected in our active participation in organizations like the United Nations. This engagement will continue. The policies of economic liberalization introduced in recent years have increased our regional and global linkages and my Government intends to deepen and strengthen these ties.

13. Our nuclear policy has been marked by restraint and openness. We have not violated any international agreements either in 1974 or now, in 1998. The restraint exercised for 24 years, after having demonstrated our capability in 1974, is in itself a unique example. Restraint, however, has to arise from strength. It cannot be based upon indecision or doubt. The series of tests recently undertaken by India have led to the removal of doubts. The action involved was balanced in that it was the minimum necessary to maintain what is an irreducible component of our national security calculus.

14. Subsequently, Government has already announced that India will now observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting underground nuclear test explosions. We have also indicated willingness to move towards a de-jure formalization of this declaration.

15. The House is no doubt aware of the different reactions that have emanated from the people of India and from different parts of the world. The overwhelming support of our citizens is our source of strength. It tells us not only that this decision was right but also that our country wants a focused leadership, which attends to their security needs. This, I pledge to do as a sacred duty. We have also been greatly heartened by the outpouring of support from Indians abroad. They have, with one voice, spoken in favor of our action. To the people of India, and to Indians abroad, I convey my profound gratitude. We look to the people of India and Indians abroad for support in the difficult period ahead.

16. In this, the fiftieth year of our independence, we stand at a defining moment in our history. The rationale for the Government's decision is based on the same policy

tenets that have guided us for five decades. These policies have been sustained successfully because of an underlying national consensus. It is vital to maintain the consensus as we approach the next millennium. In my statement today and in the paper placed before the House, I have elaborated on the rationale behind the Government's decision and outlined our approach for the future. The present decision and future actions will continue to reflect a commitment to sensibilities and obligations of an ancient civilization, a sense of responsibility and restraint, but a restraint born of the assurance of action, not of doubts or apprehension. Avoiding triumphalism, let us work together towards our shared objective in ensuring that as we move towards a new millennium, India will take its rightful place in the international community.

Source: *India News*, May 16-June 15, 1998, pp. 1-2.

**Paper laid on the table of the House on Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy,
May 27, 1998**

1. On 11 May, a statement was issued by Government announcing that India had successfully carried out three underground nuclear tests at the Pokhran range. Two days later, after carrying out two more underground sub-kiloton tests, the Government announced the completion of the planned series of tests. The three underground nuclear tests carried out at 1545 hours on 11 May were with three different devices — a fission device, a low-yield sub-kiloton device and a thermonuclear device. The two tests carried out at 1221 hours on 13 May were also low-yield devices in the sub-kiloton range. The results from these tests have been in accordance with the expectations of our scientists.

2. In 1947, when India emerged as a free country to take its rightful place in the comity of nations, the nuclear age had already dawned. Our leaders then took the crucial decision to opt for self-reliance, and freedom of thought and action. We rejected the Cold War paradigm whose shadows were already appearing on the horizon and instead of aligning ourselves with either bloc, chose the more difficult path of non-alignment. This has required the building up of national strength through our own resources, our skills and creativity and the dedication of the people. Among the earliest initiatives taken by our first Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, was the development of science and inculcation of the scientific spirit. It is this initiative that laid the foundation for the achievement of 11 and 13 May made possible by exemplary cooperation among the scientists from Department of Atomic Energy and Defense Research & Development Organization. Disarmament was then and continues to be a major plank in our foreign policy now. It was, in essence, and remains still, the natural course for a country that had waged a unique struggle for independence on the basis of 'ahimsa' and 'satyagraha'.

3. Development of nuclear technology transformed the nature of global security. Our leaders reasoned that nuclear weapons were not weapons of war, these were weapons of mass destruction. A nuclear weapon-free-world would, therefore, enhance not only India's security but also the security of all nations. This is the principle plank of our nuclear policy. In the absence of universal and non-discriminatory disarmament, we cannot accept a regime that creates an arbitrary division between nuclear haves and have-nots. India believes that it is the sovereign right of every nation to make a judgment regarding its supreme national interests and exercise its sovereign choice.

We subscribe to the principle of equal and legitimate security interests of nations and consider it a sovereign right. At the same time, our leaders recognised early that nuclear technology offers tremendous potential for economic development, especially for developing countries who are endeavoring to leap across the technology gaps created by long years of colonial exploitation. This thinking was reflected in the enactment of the Atomic Energy Act of 1948, within a year of our independence. All the numerous initiatives taken by us since, in the field of nuclear disarmament have been in harmony and in continuation of those early enunciations.

4. In the 50's, nuclear weapons testing took place above ground and the characteristic mushroom cloud became the visible symbol of the nuclear age. India then took the lead in calling for an end to all nuclear weapon testing as the first step for ending the nuclear arms race. Addressing the Lok Sabha on 6 April 1954, shortly after a major hydrogen bomb test had been conducted, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru stated that "nuclear, chemical and biological energy and power should not be used to forge weapons of mass destruction". He called for negotiations for prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons and in the interim, a standstill agreement to halt nuclear testing. The world had by then witnessed less than 65 tests. Our call was not heeded. In 1963, an agreement was concluded to ban atmospheric testing but by this time, countries had developed the technologies for conducting underground nuclear tests and the nuclear arms race continued unabated. More than three decades passed and after over 2000 tests had been conducted, a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was opened for signature in 1996, following two and a half years of negotiations in which India had participated actively. In its final shape, this Treaty left much to be desired. It was neither comprehensive nor was it related to disarmament.

5. In 1965, along with a small group of non-aligned countries, India had put forward the idea of an international non-proliferation agreement under which the nuclear weapons states would agree to give up their arsenals provided other countries refrained from developing or acquiring such weapons. This balance of rights and obligations was absent when the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) emerged in 1968, almost 30 years ago. In the 60's our security concerns deepened. But such was our abhorrence of nuclear weapons and such our desire to avoid acquiring them that we sought instead security guarantees from major nuclear powers of the world. The countries we turned to for support and understanding felt unable to extend to us the assurances that we then sought. That is when and why India made clear its inability to sign the NPT.

6. The Lok Sabha debated the NPT on 5 April 1968. The then Prime Minister late Smt. Indira Gandhi assured the House that “we shall be guided entirely by our self-enlightenment and the considerations of national security”. She highlighted the shortcomings of the NPT whilst reemphasising the country's commitment to nuclear disarmament. She warned the House and the country “that not signing the Treaty may bring the nation many difficulties. It may mean the stoppage of aid and stoppage of help. Since we are taking this decision together, we must all be together in facing its consequences”. That was a turning point. This House then strengthened the decision of the Government by reflecting a national consensus.

7. Our decision not to sign the NPT was in keeping with the basic objective of maintaining freedom of thought and action. In 1974, we demonstrated our nuclear capability. Successive Governments thereafter have continued to take all necessary steps in keeping with that resolve and national will, to safeguard India's nuclear option. This was also the primary reason underlying the 1996 decision in the country not subscribing to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT); a decision that met the unanimous approval of the House yet again. Our perception then was that subscribing to the CTBT would severely limit India's nuclear potential at an unacceptably low level. Our reservations deepened as the CTBT did not also carry forward the nuclear disarmament process. On both counts, therefore, yet again our security concerns remained unaddressed. The then Minister for External Affairs, Shri I.K. Gujral had made clear the Government's reasoning to this House during the discussions on this subject in 1996.

8. The decades of the 80's and 90's meanwhile witnessed the gradual deterioration of our security environment as a result of nuclear and missile proliferation. In our neighbourhood, nuclear weapons increased and more sophisticated delivery systems were inducted. Further, in our region there has come into existence a pattern about clandestine acquisition of nuclear materials, missiles and related technologies. India, in this period, became the victim of externally aided and abetted terrorism, militancy and clandestine war through hired mercenaries.

9. The end of the Cold War marks a watershed in the history of the 20th century. While it has transformed the political landscape of Europe, it has done little to address India's security concerns. The relative order that was arrived at in Europe was not replicated in other parts of the globe.

10. At the global level, there is no evidence yet on the part of the nuclear weapon

states to take decisive and irreversible steps in moving towards a nuclear-weapon-free-world. Instead, the NPT has been extended indefinitely and unconditionally, perpetuating the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the five countries who are also permanent members of the UN Security Council. Some of these countries have doctrines that permit the first use of nuclear weapons; these countries are also engaged in programs for modernization of their nuclear arsenals.

11. Under such circumstances, India was left with little choice. It had to take necessary steps to ensure that the country's nuclear option, developed and safeguarded over decades not be permitted to erode by a voluntary self-imposed restraint. Indeed, such an erosion would have had an irremediably adverse impact on our security. The Government was thus faced with a difficult decision. The only touchstone that guided it was national security. Tests conducted on 11 and 13 May are a continuation of the policies set into motion that put this country on the path of self-reliance and independence of thought and action. Nevertheless, there are certain moments when the chosen path reaches a fork and a decision has to be made. 1968 was one such moment in our nuclear chapter as were 1974 and 1996. At each of these moments, we took the right decision guided by national interest and supported by national consensus. 1998 was borne in the crucible of earlier decisions and made possible only because those decisions had been taken correctly in the past and in time.

12. At a time when developments in the area of advanced technologies are taking place at a breathtaking pace, new parameters need to be identified, tested and validated in order to ensure that skills remain contemporary and succeeding generations of scientists and engineers are able to build on the work done by their predecessors. The limited series of five tests undertaken by India was precisely such an exercise. It has achieved its stated objective. The data provided by these tests is critical to validate our capabilities in the design of nuclear weapons of different yields for different applications and different delivery systems. Further, these tests have significantly enhanced the capabilities of our scientists and engineers in computer simulation of new designs and enabled them to undertake sub-critical experiments in future, if considered necessary. In terms of technical capability, our scientists and engineers have the requisite resources to ensure a credible deterrent.

13. Our policies towards our neighbours and other countries too have not changed; India remains fully committed to the promotion of peace with stability, and resolution of all outstanding issues through bilateral dialogue and negotiations. These tests were not directed against any country; these were intended to reassure the people of India

about their security and convey determination that this Government, like previous Governments, has the capability and resolve to safeguard their national security interests. The Government will continue to remain engaged in substantive dialogue with our neighbors to improve relations and to expand the scope of our interactions in a mutually advantageous manner. Confidence building is a continuous process, we remain committed to it. Consequent upon the tests and arising from an insufficient appreciation of our security concerns, some countries have been persuaded to take steps that sadden us. We value our bilateral relations. We remain committed to dialogue and reaffirm that preservation of India's security creates no conflict of interest with these countries.

14. India is a nuclear weapon state. This is a reality that cannot be denied. It is not a conferment that we seek; nor is it a status for others to grant. It is an endowment to the nation by our scientists and engineers. It is India's due, the right of one sixth of humankind. Our strengthened capability adds to our sense of responsibility; the responsibility and obligation of power. India, mindful of its international obligations, shall not use these weapons to commit aggression or to mount threats against any country; these are weapons of self-defense and to ensure that in turn, India is also not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion. In 1994, we had proposed that India and Pakistan jointly undertake not to be the first to use their nuclear capability against each other. The Government on this occasion reiterates its readiness to discuss a "no-first-use" agreement with that country, as also with other countries bilaterally, or in a collective forum. India shall not engage in an arms race. India shall also not subscribe to reinvent the doctrines of the Cold War. India remains committed to the basic tenet of our foreign policy — a conviction that global elimination of nuclear weapons will enhance its security as well as that of the rest of the world. It will continue to urge countries, particularly other nuclear weapon states to adopt measures that would contribute meaningfully to such an objective.

15. A number of initiatives have been taken in the past. In 1978, India proposed negotiations for an international convention that would prohibit the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This was followed by another initiative in 1982 calling for a 'nuclear freeze' — a prohibition on production of fissile materials for weapons, on production of nuclear weapons, and related delivery systems. In 1988, we put forward an Action Plan for phased elimination of all nuclear weapons within a specified time frame. It is our regret that these proposals did not receive a positive response from other nuclear weapon states. Had their response been positive, India need not have gone for the current tests. This is where our approach to nuclear weapons is different

from others. This difference is the cornerstone of our nuclear doctrine. It is marked by restraint and striving for the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

16. We will continue to support such initiatives, taken individually or collectively by the Non-Aligned Movement which has continued to attach the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. This was reaffirmed most recently, last week, at the NAM Ministerial meeting held at Cartagena which has “reiterated their call on the Conference on Disarmament to establish, as the highest priority, an ad hoc committee to start in 1998 negotiations on a phased program for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a framework of time, including a Nuclear Weapons Convention.” The collective voice of 113 NAM countries reflects an approach to global nuclear disarmament to which India has remained committed. One of the NAM member initiatives to which we attach great importance was the reference to the International Court of Justice resulting in the unanimous declaration from the ICJ, as part of the Advisory Opinion handed down on 8 July, 1996, that “there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control”. India was one of the countries that appealed to the ICJ on this issue. No other nuclear weapon state has supported this judgment; in fact, they have sought to decry its value. We have been and will continue to be in the forefront of the calls for opening negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, so that this challenge can be dealt with in the same manner that we have dealt with the scourge of two other weapons of mass destruction — through the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. In keeping with our commitment to comprehensive, universal and non-discriminatory approaches to disarmament, India is an Original State Party to both these Conventions. Accordingly, India will shortly submit the plan of destruction of its chemical weapons to the international authority — Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We fulfil our obligations whenever we undertake them.

17. Traditionally, India has been an outward looking country. Our strong commitment to multilateralism is reflected in our active participation in organizations like the United Nations. In recent years, in keeping with the new challenges, we have actively promoted regional cooperation — in SAARC, in the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation and as a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum. This engagement will also continue. The policies of economic liberalization introduced in recent years have increased our regional and global linkages and the Government shall deepen and strengthen these ties.

18. Our nuclear policy has been marked by restraint and openness. It has not violated any international agreements either in 1974 or now, in 1998. Our concerns have been made known to our interlocutors in recent years. The restraint exercised for 24 years, after having demonstrated our capability in 1974, is in itself a unique example. Restraint, however, has to arise from strength. It cannot be based upon indecision or doubt. Restraint is valid only when doubts are removed. The series of tests undertaken by India have led to the removal of doubts. The action involved was balanced in that it was the minimum necessary to maintain what is an irreducible component of our national security calculus. This Government's decision has, therefore to be seen as part of a tradition of restraint that has characterized our policy in the past 50 years.

19. Subsequent to the tests, Government has already stated that India will now observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting underground nuclear test explosions. It has also indicated willingness to move towards a de-jure formalization of this declaration. The basic obligations of the CTBT are thus met; to refrain from undertaking nuclear test explosions. This voluntary declaration is intended to convey to the international community the seriousness of our intent for meaningful engagement. Subsequent decision will be taken after assuring ourselves of the security needs of the country.

20. India has also indicated readiness to participate in negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. The basic objective of this treaty is to prohibit future production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices. India's approach in these negotiations will be to ensure that this treaty emerges as a universal and non-discriminatory treaty, backed by an effective verification mechanism. When we embark on these negotiations, it shall be in the full confidence of the adequacy and credibility of the nation's weaponized nuclear deterrent.

21. India has maintained effective export controls on nuclear materials as well as related technologies even though we are neither a party to the NPT nor a member of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group. Nonetheless, India is committed to nonproliferation and the maintaining of stringent export controls to ensure that there is no leakage of our indigenously developed know-how and technologies. In fact, India's conduct in this regard has been better than some countries party to the NPT.

22. India has in the past conveyed our concerns on the inadequacies of the

international nuclear non-proliferation regime. It has explained that the country was not in a position to join because the regime did not address our country's security concerns. These could have been addressed by moving towards global nuclear disarmament, our preferred approach. As this did not take place, India was obliged to stand aside from the emerging regime so that its freedom of action was not constrained. This is the precise path that has continued to be followed unwaveringly for the last three decades. That same constructive approach will underlie India's dialogue with countries that need to be persuaded of our serious intent and willingness to engage so that mutual concerns are satisfactorily addressed. The challenge to Indian statecraft is balancing and reconciling India's security imperatives with valid international concerns in this regard.

23. The House is aware of the different reactions that have emanated from the people of India and from different parts of the world. The overwhelming support of the citizens of India is a source of strength for the Government. It not only tells that this decision was right but also that the country wants a focused leadership, which attends to national security needs. This, the Government pledges to do as a sacred duty. The Government has also been greatly heartened by the outpouring of support from Indians abroad. They have, with one voice, spoken in favor of the Government's action. The Government conveys its profound gratitude to the citizens of India and to Indians abroad, and looks to them for support in the difficult period ahead.

24. In this, the fiftieth year of our independence, India stands at a defining moment in our history. The rationale for the Government's decision is based on the same policy tenets that have guided the country for five decades. The policies were sustained successfully because of the underlying national consensus. The present decision and future actions will continue to reflect a commitment to sensibilities and obligations of an ancient civilization, a sense of responsibility and restraint, but a restraint born of the assurance of action, not of doubts or apprehension. The Gita explains (Chapter VI-3) as none other can:

“Action is a process to reach a goal; action may reflect tumult but when measured and focused, will yield its objective of stability and peace”

Source: *India News*, May 16-June 15, 1998, pp. 3-6.

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