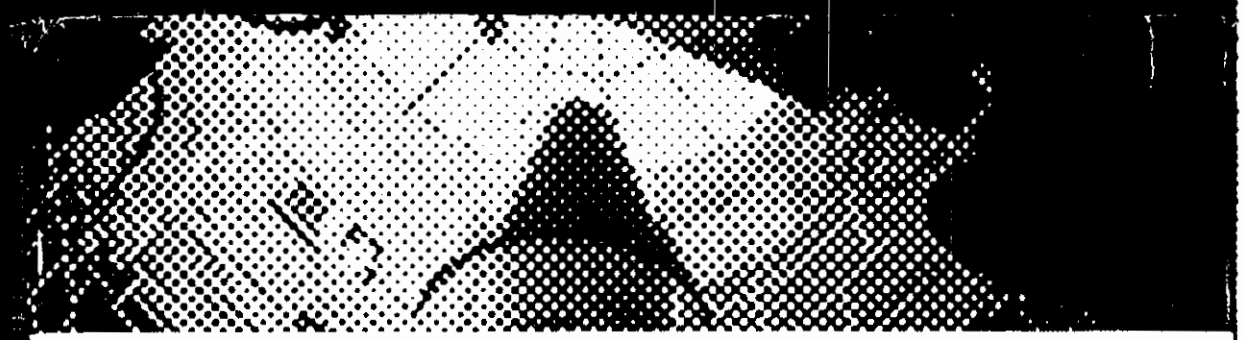

NUCLEAR INDIA IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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CHAPTER SIX

Why Do States Acquire Nuclear Weapons? Comparing the Cases of India and France

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Summary

Why did India suddenly decide to acquire an overt, weaponized nuclear deterrent in 1998 after resisting that temptation for so many years? The best way to investigate this question is to look at the Indian case in comparative context. In particular, much insight can be gained by drawing from the history of another nuclear weapons state: France. Using information gleaned from in-depth field research conducted in both India and France, it can be demonstrated that hypotheses for nuclear proliferation based on the objective security situation, the quest for international prestige or bureaucratic politics fall short. Rather, "oppositional nationalist" understandings of national identity were at the root of the bomb decisions in both the France of the mid-1950s and the India of the late 1990s. An oppositional nationalist identity combines a great antagonism toward an external enemy of the nation and an exaltation of the actual or potential strength of the nation. This type of identity produces a mix of fear and pride—an explosive psychological cocktail.

Introduction[1]

The Indian nuclear tests of May 1998 were a major surprise to the strategic communities in Washington and Delhi alike. Why did India suddenly choose to acquire an overt, weaponized nuclear deterrent after years of remaining on the other side of the nuclear threshold? An obvious hypothesis is that the tests

were an expression of the newly installed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government's most deeply held understandings of Indian identity—in particular its deep-seated fears of the Pakistani "other" combined with its fervent belief in India's capacity to prevail in that struggle. Surprisingly, the by now voluminous scholarly literature on the Indian tests has tended to soft-pedal the BJP's distinctiveness in favor of a teleological view that sooner or later this step was bound to come.[2] Indeed, the "BJP hypothesis" has become a straw man that the analyst sets up before going on to explain the supposedly "deeper" causes of the tests, which are said to be found in the objective security situation, in India's (not just the BJP's) desire for international prestige, and/or in the activities of India's scientific-bureaucratic "strategic enclave."[3] Those few who have given great weight to the "BJP hypothesis"[4] have found themselves tarred as "arms chair strategists" who know nothing about India.[5] But the fact that a hypothesis is obvious does not necessarily mean that it is wrong. In this chapter, I contend that while the BJP's unique understanding of Indian national identity is certainly not the explanation for why India was physically ready to test A-and H-bombs on such short notice in May 1998, it is by far the most powerful explanation for the decision to cross the threshold and become a nuclear weapons state.

I make this case using two basic methodological tactics. The first is a close analysis of the Indian case—the importance of doing this goes without saying. The other is a structured, focused comparison between the Indian case and that of France. Indian thought about nuclear weapons and the tortuous path of Indian nuclear history are in many respects undoubtedly unique. But the similar way in which India and France wrestled with the issue of acquiring nuclear weapons provides a substantial basis for separating mere local color from variables of true explanatory power.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. I first explain why the France-India comparison is of particular relevance for sorting out the relative strength of various hypotheses. I then consider the arguments that bureaucratic politics drove the French and Indian decisions for the bomb or that the quest for international prestige did so. Then I shift gears and explain my national identity framework as it applies to the choice to acquire nuclear weapons, and I follow this theoretical exposition with an empirical application of the framework to the French and Indian cases. I conclude by summarizing my empirical and theoretical findings and suggest what these findings may mean for predicting the future of nuclear proliferation.

A Comparison of the Indian and French Decisions to Acquire Nuclear Weapons

Why compare France and India? Besides the fact that France and India are major powers and intrinsically worthy of study, a number of theoretical con-

siderations drive this choice. First, both cases are clear anomalies for traditional realist theories of nuclear proliferation, as has notably been highlighted by Professor Scott Sagan.[6] Objective power and threat analyses simply do very poorly at explaining the nuclear histories of these two countries. Second, France and India are the only two nuclear states whose nuclear programs did not originate as military-driven bomb programs, and this fact undoubtedly created special dynamics in their nuclear proliferation decisions. Third, the proposed symmetry between a Western charter member of the nuclear club and an Asian developing country avoids the typical charge that analyses of nuclear proliferation tend to display a Western cultural bias against the nuclear aspirations of emerging regional powers.[7]

The empirical evidence is drawn in the main from my field research in both France and India, and I also benefited from archival sources in the United States and United Kingdom. In the French case, I undertook an exhaustive study of hundreds of previously classified documents on nuclear and security policies, in addition to interviewing several key decision makers from the crucial 1950s period. In the Indian case, the paucity of available internal Indian government documents led me to do a much greater number of in-depth interviews, over three dozen in total, with major players in the nuclear and security policy-making arenas. I followed up these interviews with letters in which I requested confirmation or further clarification of the statements that I had recorded.

I structure my account of the two cases around three plausible explanatory models. I first look at the two most popular explanations for each case: bureaucratic politics and the quest for prestige. I then turn to my own identity framework. All three models appear to have some justification in the historical record, but the evidence from these two cases above all confirms the identity approach.

Bureaucratic Politics and the French and Indian Decisions for the Bomb

Because of the seeming lack of explanatory value of objective external power and security variables for explaining the Indian and French nuclear decisions (and especially their timing), several scholars of each case have attempted to build explanations based on internal political factors. The "bureaucratic politics" literature on the French case, notably the major study by Professor Lawrence Scheinman, focuses attention on the atomic energy bureaucracy's manipulation of incentives for politicians, through political alliances and through the creation of technological momentum toward the bomb.[8] Similarly, in the case of India, a number of scholars contend that the Indian bomb was a product of an empire-building, politically popular atomic bureaucracy that had its way with weak-willed politicians.[9] Paying attention to these variables can certainly help us to understand why India and France began developing

various nuclear capacities that could eventually have military applications. But do they explain why particular governments in the two countries finally decided to acquire nuclear arsenals? I argue that the answer is no.

Discussion of the case for domestic politics-based explanations

The idea that atomic bureaucracies want to build the bomb is highly questionable.[10] In both India and France, in fact, bureaucratic actors did *not* exhibit a clear consensus over time in favor of going in for a nuclear bomb. For instance, the French *Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique* (CEA) of the 1950s was the scene of a great debate between its two chiefs; while the scientific chief was opposed to building the bomb, the administrative chief supported the idea.[11] This is quite reminiscent of the Indian story. After Homi Bhabha's death, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) can hardly be said to have spoken with one voice. Many of its top physicists, such as Raja Ramanna and P. K. Iyengar, may have been in favor of developing the military side, but there were brilliant exceptions such as Vikram Sarabhai; meanwhile, many of its engineers, such as M. R. Srinivasan, were quite opposed to that trajectory.[12]

Second, the idea that atomic bureaucracies can create technical momentum or offer technical opinions to cause political decision makers to decide for the acquisition of nuclear weapons is also quite dubious.[13] In France, Pierre Mendès France decided for nuclear weapons even though he had clear information that there was no technical urgency to make such a choice.[14] In the case of India, which initiated a study of nuclear explosions in the mid-1960s, then dropped it, then came back to it in the early 1970s, then dropped it again for several years before returning to it again in the 1980s, it is simply incredible to argue that the scientists were operating with a free hand. Moreover, the AEC tended to downplay the degree of advancement of the Pakistani nuclear program through the 1970s and 1980s, which goes against the idea that it was willing to use its position of technical expertise to promote its supposedly pro-bomb agenda.[15]

Third, the idea that cocky atomic bureaucracies can bully weak politicians into bomb decisions is also not supported by either case. In both India and France the bomb decisions to test were taken not by weak politicians trying desperately to cling to power, but rather by relatively strong leaders who were generally recognized to know what they wanted and to have the political courage to take risks. The father of the French bomb program, Prime Minister Pierre Mendès France, was the strongest prime minister of the French Fourth Republic, a man who in spite of an unstable weak coalition took bold political risks in every area of foreign and domestic policy.[16] Similarly, it was Atal Behari Vajpayee, a strong prime minister and someone who had been explicitly calling for this step for years, who ordered the Indian nuclear tests immediately upon coming to power in 1998. The bureaucratic politics hypothesis would presumably have expected one of the series of weak prime ministers who preceded him to be pushed into going for the tests.

In sum, while any policy is subject to the pushes and pulls of internal struggles, the French and Indian decisions to acquire nuclear weapons were essentially top-down decisions that can hardly be explained as an outcome of these bureaucratic battles. Clearly the bureaucratic politics story, while colorful and interesting, is of secondary causal importance.

The Desire for Prestige and the French and Indian Decisions for the Bomb

States' desire for international prestige is another proposed explanation for nuclear proliferation that has garnered much scholarly support. Scott Sagan argues that France's choice to develop its independent nuclear arsenal was primarily due to the desire to avoid the fate of being relegated to minor power status—a fate inconsistent with its understanding of its historical rank and role.[17] For the case of India, scholars such as Stephen Cohen point to India's deepest identity as a "frustrated great state" as being the ultimate reason why it drove towards nuclear weapons.[18] In a shorter-term time frame, many writers see the 1998 tests as the result of an intensification of India's frustration through the 1990s, a frustration brought to boiling by American diplomatic high-handedness in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations.[19]

Discussion of the case for prestige-based explanations

There is clearly ample evidence that for both of these countries, the quest for international prestige is a central motivation for their overall foreign policies. But although India and France are clearly "prestige-seekers," this hardly makes the quest for prestige an adequate *explanation* for their decisions to acquire nuclear arsenals. India and France have always pursued international prestige, yet their nuclear weapons policies shifted from abstinence to acquisition at a certain moment in time. A constant cannot explain a variable.

In the French case, a whole series of dramatic events in the first postwar decade—Hiroshima, the Russian bomb, the Russian and American H-bombs, the British bomb—did not spark the French decision to acquire nuclear weapons. Indeed, most French state elites in the early 1950s argued that the country's international prestige and diplomatic power would be most enhanced by development of a purely civilian nuclear program, combined with the maintenance of the legal option to acquire nuclear weapons at a later date.[20] This abstinence is hard to explain if we accept the view that nuclear weapons were desired by the French because they were "obviously" essential for maintenance of French great power status. So what happened in mid–to late-1954 to make some French decision makers suddenly feel the need to increase the country's international prestige, and why did they suddenly feel that nuclear weapons would do that for it? Clearly more than the mere desire for international prestige is needed to explain this shift.[21]

For the case of India, a similar story can be told. It is true that the Chinese bomb test of 1964 led to the creation of the Indian bomb lobby, a lobby that was evidently motivated by concerns for Indian international prestige or rank.[22] But Indian leaders before 1998 had consistently rejected the lobby's views, maintaining instead that steering clear of full weaponization was best not only for India's security but also for India's international standing.[23] Moreover, worldwide the prestige value of acquiring nuclear weapons had been fast declining for a decade and more.[24] And while it is certainly true that the United States put India in a tight diplomatic spot on the question of CTBT, the fact that successive prime ministers considered *and then shelved* the nuclear test option is hardly evidence that the supposed CTBT "window" made the tests inevitable—it is rather evidence to the contrary.[25] As with the case of France, the Indian decision to acquire nuclear weapons, while not a 180-degree shift, represented a dramatic turnabout in policy that cannot be explained without a comprehension of the particular mindset of those in power at the time.

Summary: The limits of traditional explanatory variables

The purpose of this analysis has not been to argue against any impact of objective security conditions, bureaucratic interests, and the desire for prestige on the overall shape and direction of Indian and French nuclear policies. Rather, it has been to argue that these factors were not determinant in the political decisions to acquire nuclear weapons. Such decisions, whether they come six years before the first test (as in the case of France) or 24 years after it (as in the case of India) are never mere ratifications of technical developments. India may have taken a decades-long "pathway to Pokhran II," but the final destination of that path was never predetermined until the BJP government chose it. Estimates of technical capability can never substitute for estimates of political intentions.

It is my hypothesis that we should locate the political choice for the bomb in particular state leaders' *subjective perceptions* of the nation's international situation. And in order to understand what led *these* people to *these* perceptions of their nation's security position and options, we must investigate their deepest understandings of national identity. We must equally investigate the understandings of those who did *not* draw the conclusion that the bomb was necessary. Such comparative analysis is the best method of discovering what factors were most crucial in pushing actors in one direction or another.

Oppositional Nationalism and Decisions to Acquire Nuclear Weapons

I begin by making my case on the theoretical plane.[26] What ideal-typical understanding of national identity could produce the cognitive and emotional basis for a leader to decide to acquire nuclear weapons? I call it "oppositional nationalism." Oppositional nationalism is a combination of "oppositional"

and "nationalist" understandings of national identity. I define opposition as a national self-definition versus an external enemy that is thought to be fundamentally threatening to the nation's security and values.[27] Opposition leads to a feeling of fear in interactions with that enemy. I define nationalism as a national self-definition of having a natural or essential right to independence from, and influence over, others in the world. Nationalism leads to a feeling of pride in interactions with those other nations. Opposition and nationalism can be fused into a single understanding of national identity that I term "oppositional nationalism." Oppositional nationalism produces a strong predisposition to feel both emotions of fear and pride in interactions with the enemy. The principal theoretical argument I make is that it is the combination of fear of one's enemy plus pride in oneself that creates a uniquely explosive psychological cocktail.

One level on which the combination of fear and pride promotes the decision to acquire nuclear weapons is through biased perceptions of threat and capacity. Assume that a reasonably technically competent state A is faced with a state B that has the capacity and the intention to destroy it, and with whom an explicit or tacit compromise is impossible. If state A can find no credible third-party protection against this threat, and if a counter-threat of nuclear retaliation could well lead state B to back down, then state A is likely to decide to acquire nuclear weapons. Now, assuming that the real situation does *not* unambiguously merit state A's perception, the fear and pride felt by leaders under the influence of oppositional nationalism will cause them to ***think*** that the situation clearly does merit it. The nuclear bomb decision flows naturally from this belief.

The perceptual dimension is important, but fear and pride also affect the oppositional nationalist's decision making on a deeper level. Fear and pride are emotions, and these emotions can lead people to seek *symbols* of power whose practical utility may be doubtful, but which temporarily assuage the dread of imminent annihilation.[28] For leaders of one national group wracked by fear of another, a nuclear bomb can appear to be the ultimate power totem. Getting "the bomb," perhaps even just one bomb, is thus perceived as a general solution to the problem of the enemy menace.[29] The emotional basis for the decision means that it tends to be made without a clear idea of the particular scenarios in which the bomb might be applied politically or militarily, and certainly without a full consciousness of the likelihood of future developments that could trigger an arms race or even nuclear war.

Oppositional nationalism is not a mere synonym for nationalism. A nation can be proud, self-assertive, and desire to stand tall in the world even in the absence of a feared enemy; this is what I call "nonoppositional" nationalism. Nonoppositional nationalists, I hypothesize, should generally be against acquiring nuclear weapons, because they will see no justification for paying the high security costs of doing so. These same people, on the other hand, may well want to build nuclear technology and resist the nonproliferation regime, viewing it as a discriminatory arrangement. Resistance to the regime has often been

assumed by the Western nonproliferation community to imply "nuclear ambitions," but in fact there is no logical reason to make this assumption, as Indian diplomats long pointed out. Indeed, the mainstream Indian point of view for many years was that of AEC chairman Vikram Sarabhai (as summarized by his former colleague, Raja Ramanna): "Dr. Sarabhai did not believe in nuclear weapons, but more than that, he did not believe in signing inequitable treaties."[30] The distinction that I make between oppositional and nonoppositional nationalism provides the theoretical basis for disputing the facile idea of many in the West that "anti-NPT equals pro-bomb."

Having outlined the basic theoretical underpinnings of my "identity" framework for understanding states' nuclear choices, I now turn to an evaluation of the utility of this framework for the cases of France and India.

The French and Indian Decisions to Acquire Nuclear Weapons

The parallel empirical stories told in this chapter are summarized in table 6.1.

France[31]

As previously noted, the French nuclear program began as a purely civilian entity (indeed, one run by a Communist) in the early days after the country's liberation from Germany. The main reason for this civilian focus was that mainstream French strategic thinking in the decade after the end of World War II tended to take a dim view of the potential utility of a French nuclear arsenal. French diplomats and military men also took the view that the country's international position was best served by abstention from the pursuit of nuclear weapons. Their rhetoric on the subject in the late 1940s and early 1950s bore great similarity to that of pre-1998 India.[32] Then, in 1954, France suddenly reversed course and embarked on a quest for the bomb.

On the basis of my intensive historical research on the French case, I can affirm that the French decision to build nuclear weapons was born out of the combination of the rise to power of an "oppositional nationalist" leader, the Radical Pierre Mendès France, and an external political shock: The 1954 return to sovereignty and rearmament of the "hereditary enemy," Germany. The return of Germany—West Germany in particular—to the international power game was viewed as a significant blow not only to French standing in the Western alliance, but also to French security since the Germans were believed to lust for war.[33] But if France was united in its fear of German rearmament, it was far from united in believing that a nuclear arsenal was the right response. As argued above, it is not fear alone, but fear plus nationalist pride that leads to decisions to acquire nuclear weapons. In early-1950s France, there was division over that second element, nationalist pride. France in those days was split

Table 6.1

	France	*India*
Period of Abstinence	"Pro-Europeans" (oppositional, not nationalist) in power before 1954: No Bomb Decision Taken.	"Secularists" (nationalist, not oppositional) in power before 1998: No Bomb Decision Taken.
"Going Nuclear"	"Nationalists" (oppositional nationalist) in power from 1954: Bomb Decision Taken 1954.	"Hindu nationalists" (oppositional nationalist) in power from 1998: Bomb Decision Taken 1998.

by a newly emergent political cleavage—between those who believed in maintaining national sovereignty, and those who believed in "dissolving" France into the nascent European Community. This cleavage did not respect the traditional divisions of left and right, and even a relatively disciplined party such as the Socialists found itself riven in two by the issue.[34]

This "nationalist" versus "pro-European" cleavage showed itself most prominently in the parliamentary debates over the formation of a supranational European army, known as the European Defense Community (EDC), and it also was evident in the secret debate between state elites over the bomb.[35] The nationalists combined fear of Germany with self-assertive nationalism and can thus be categorized as oppositional nationalists. This group included such strange political bedfellows as the left-leaning Pierre Mendès France and the right-leaning General Charles de Gaulle.[36] When German rearmament became inevitable, their response was to seek the bomb. By contrast, while the pro-Europeans also feared Germany, they tended to draw from World War II the lesson that not only German but *all* nationalisms were outmoded. They were thus oppositional, but not nationalist. This was also a group of strange bedfellows, one that included for instance the socialist Guy Mollet and the businessman and European visionary Jean Monnet.[37] The pro-Europeans were opposed to a French nuclear deterrent because they feared that news of such an effort would lead to a renaissance of German nationalism, destroy the European project and cause a new spiral towards war.[38]

In a lively internal battle, the nationalists first defeated the pro-Europeans on the issue of EDC, and then they used their newly enhanced position to decide the question of the French bomb.[39] Certainly, given the weight of the Franco-German conflict over the previous 70 years, the nationalist argument was likely to prevail; but the fact that it did not come without a fight is significant for the explanation of the case. Not opposition alone, not nationalism alone, but rather oppositional nationalism led to the French bomb decision.

India

It is my contention that the BJP's coming to power is the single most important fact that explains the Indian decision to move beyond nuclear ambiguity and acquire nuclear weapons. Of course, the BJP could not have made such quick work of its decision to "go nuclear" in 1998 unless the way had been prepared for such a decision. There is no question that India was closer to the bomb in 1998 than it was in 1988 or in 1968. But the notion of being a certain number of weeks or months away from having the bomb assumes a certain technical teleology that the Indian case and many others clearly disprove. In May 1998, India had been "two weeks from the bomb" for years, and few observers saw any reason to believe that such a stance could not continue indefinitely. The surprising shift in India's nuclear weapons stance was due to a political decision by the newly elected BJP government. Why? What did the BJP have or think that the other parties did not? I find the explanation for the 1998 Indian decision in the same place I found it for the 1954 French one: oppositional nationalism.

Why Indian leaders chose not to acquire nuclear weapons before 1998

The history of India's relationship with nuclear weapons can be divided into five distinct stages[40]:

- From independence to 1964, characterized by a clear desire to increase Indian mastery of nuclear technology but no sense of urgency for, indeed a strong moral revulsion to, anything that smacked of nuclear weapons development[41];
- From 1964 to 1972, characterized by a less moralistic view of the nuclear weapons option, but still a strong feeling that building the bomb would have significant negative consequences for Indian prestige and security;
- From 1972 to 1989, characterized by much more significant work on preparing the nuclear option, but a continued avoidance of weaponization in spite of Western doubts about this distinction;
- From 1989 to 1998, a period of true strategic ambiguity;
- From 1998 to the present, characterized by the clear decision to acquire a nuclear arsenal.

Here I begin the story in the late 1980s, when the move to strategic ambiguity took place.

In 1986, India's massive military exercises near the Pakistan border led to the most serious military crisis in the subcontinent in more than decade. At the end of the crisis, Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan granted an interview to the Indian journalist Kuldip Nayar and asserted that Pakistan had developed the bomb.[42] This was generally interpreted in India, probably rightly, as a mix of true revelation and nationalistic bombast.[43] Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had already considered and rejected the idea of acquiring nuclear weapons in 1985, in large part due to American assurances that Pakistan's nuclear program would be held in check.[44] But the 1987 Khan interview and

other information showed that these were hollow assurances. At the same time, Gandhi's cherished "Action Plan" for world nuclear disarmament fell on deaf ears. So in 1988 or 1989, Rajiv Gandhi did start proceeding with weaponization, and in this respect P. K. Iyengar of the AEC and V. S. Arunachalam from the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) were to be key players.[45] The affair was so secret that even Rajiv Gandhi's closest associate on nuclear policy, the diplomat Muchkund Dubey, only learned of the plans because a scientist contacted him for an estimate of how long India would have to complete bomb assembly in a crisis, and also how many bombs it might need.[46]

The decision to move toward weaponizing India's nuclear capacities was a serious decision. It was not just a ratification of the work that had gone before. Weaponization, according to the AEC and DRDO, involved "design, testing and production of advanced detonators, ruggedized high volt trigger systems, interface engineering, systems engineering and systems integration" as well as various "contributions in aerodynamics, arming, fusing, safety interlocks, flight trials etc."[47] But in terms of weaponization Rajiv Gandhi gave Iyengar and Arunachalam not a green light but a flashing yellow one, requiring them to ask for permission for every forward step they took.[48] The idea was never to prepare a test series as soon as possible and thereafter to proceed to the "induction" of nuclear weapons into Indian military practice. Rather, as Dubey's statement indicates, the idea was rather to have everything ready in order to be able quickly to "go nuclear" in the full sense of the term *if circumstances changed*—the most likely scenario being a Pakistani nuclear breakout.

Until this ultimate decision to acquire nuclear weapons came, there was a limit to what the AEC and DRDO could do. India could not build reliable warheads unless it had more data than that gleaned from its 1974 "peaceful" test; it could not build reliable weapons systems unless it fitted missiles with the warheads and tested and trained with the ensemble; and it could not develop a safe and reliable deterrent unless it trained its military in the handling of the weapons.[49] The political leadership was well aware of these facts—indeed, how could it not be given the bomb lobby's incessant reminders?[50] Yet it stayed put. Through several governments of different political configurations, the final order required for India to become a nuclear-weapons state never came.

These governments' inaction was hardly due to a belief that India already had nuclear weapons. They well understood the vast difference between holding virtual and real nuclear arsenals.[51] Estimates that India had already stockpiled dozens of warheads by the late 1990s are simply fantastic.[52] They chose to remain shy of the nuclear-weapons threshold because believed that a South Asia without nuclear weapons was more secure than the alternative. India's stopping just short of the nuclear weapons threshold was the result neither of elite incompetence nor of Gandhian moralism. Indian leaders before 1998 believed that since India faced no clear and present nuclear threat, to acquire nuclear weapons would simply—in Indira Gandhi's words—"bring danger where there was none before."[53]

There has been much discussion of the 1995 consideration of nuclear testing by the government of P. V. Narasimha Rao. It is definitely true that American satellites picked up suspicious activities underway at the Pokhran test site.[54] But the idea that the American knowledge of test preparations forced them to be scrapped is highly suspect.[55] In fact, a decision to test had not been taken, and information that has come to light recently indicates that Rao—like Indira Gandhi in the early 1980s—decided that the security and economic costs of testing outweighed the political benefits.[56] In sum, the 1995 Indian non-test, far from proving that an Indian nuclear breakout was inevitable in the late 1990s, demonstrates the continuing resilience of the policy of remaining just shy of the nuclear threshold—a policy that India had already maintained for a decade or even longer.[57]

Why Indian leaders chose to acquire nuclear weapons in 1998

In the spring of 1998 the BJP came to power and immediately, without waiting for the strategic review and without consulting its coalition partners or the civil service, broke the nuclear equilibrium on the subcontinent. The BJP's tests surprised not only American intelligence but all seasoned India observers, who had not registered any change in the security situation and who could not believe that the BJP was actually implementing what they considered to be its "ridiculous rhetoric."[58] In his heavily researched inside story of India's nuclear weapons program, the journalist Raj Chengappa has recounted how the new Prime Minister cut off discussion and debate on the merits and the likely consequences of testing and simply ordered it done. According to Chengappa, Vajpayee said, "There was no need for much thought. We just have to do it."[59]

The disarray of government spokesmen, including the prime minister, in the wake of the tests indicated that more thought could have been useful. In the days following the tests, Vajpayee and other top governmental officials argued that such a step was necessary because of Pakistan's "covert" bomb and its recent Ghauri missile test, Chinese encirclement, Western hypocrisy, India's legitimate aspirations for great power status, and anything else they could think of.[60] The public fishing for reasonable explanations makes it clear that the need for nuclear weapons seemed so "obvious" to the new government that it had not made any attempt to clarify its thinking beforehand. More than three years after the tests, confusion about how nuclear weapons fit into India's foreign policy goals remains rampant, and the continuing silence on strategic doctrine and command and control is deafening.[61] Events since September 11 have served to underscore how risky it was to break the non-weaponized deterrence equilibrium without first resolving these problems.

In the decision to test, however, Vajpayee's thinking seems to have been remarkably unclouded by such likely complications. Rather, Vajpayee permitted a glimpse into his real motivation with the simple yet menacing statement, "We have a big bomb now."[62] Vajpayee must never have felt so sure of any decision in his life; indeed he showed the same dead certainty twice, once in his short-lived government of 1996 (which fell before the decision could be imple-

mented) and again when he returned to power in 1998. The combination of supreme confidence in the correctness of this decision and the inability to articulate a clear strategic rationale for it is a clear indication that the basis for the decision was emotional. It is not at all unusual for decisions to be based primarily on emotion; indeed, how could one ever hope to calculate with any degree of certainty all the likely consequences of such a revolutionary act as the acquisition of nuclear weapons?[63] The aim here is not to criticize Vajpayee for making an emotional decision; rather, the aim is to answer a simple empirical question: What made this decision so easy for him when it had been so hard for all his predecessors in power?

The answer is that it was Vajpayee and the BJP's oppositional nationalism that provided it with the emotional motivation to embrace what earlier governments had deferred or shunned. The Indian case shows the importance of differentiating between oppositional and non-oppositional forms of nationalism. The BJP does not have a monopoly on Indian nationalism. The Indian National Congress made Indian nationalism at home and abroad central to its appeal. But there is a major difference between the BJP and the secularist *versions* of Indian nationalism. Jawaharlal Nehru's nationalism, as exemplified by his book, *Discovery of India,* was an inclusive, nonoppositional nationalism that exalted communal diversity as the key to Indian greatness and did not envision any permanent enemies, not even Britain. By contrast, Hindu nationalism is oppositional, pitting Hindu against Muslim—and by extension India against Pakistan.[64] Indo-Pak relations have of course always been tense, but the BJP "difference" is that it places that tension at the very center of its narrative of Indian history and its vision of Indian destiny.[65] Professor Christophe Jaffrelot has shown the decades-long continuities in this distrust, fear and loathing of the Muslim "invaders"—a mindset he calls a "majority complex of inferiority."[66]

With such an understanding of Indian identity, it is no wonder that the BJP has perceived Pakistani nuclear achievements and intentions in the darkest possible colors, nor that the Pakistan question was at the heart of the BJP's desire for nuclear weapons.[67] The centrality of Pakistan in the BJP's nuclear calculations is often denied, but in fact the historical record is clear. The BJP's current interest in nuclear weapons dates specifically from July 1985, when in response to new reports about Pakistani nuclear progress, the party adopted a resolution in favor of an Indian nuclear bomb.[68] This resolution stated, "Reports from Pakistan indicate that the threat of a Pakistani nuclear bomb is real and an immediate response to this is necessary. The BJP, therefore, calls upon Government to take immediate steps to develop our own nuclear bomb."[69] No other developments in other countries were cited in justification of this shift in the BJP's position. The failure to mention China is particularly telling.

The singular focus on Pakistan in the 1985 resolution was hardly an anomaly for the BJP; it came as part of the party's dramatic post-1984 rhetorical escalation against Pakistan and Muslims.[70] The call for the bomb thus dove-

tailed with the BJP's overall political strategy, but it would be wrong to view the BJP's bomb as an electoral gimmick. If it was that, it failed miserably, as Indian voters in the first elections after the tests, the regional elections in December 1998, punished the BJP for the soaring price of onions and potatoes. But in fact the BJP can be given credit for greater political acumen than that. The BJP was well aware of the short-lived popularity that Indira Gandhi's blast had given her, and that foreign and security policies have historically been of minor electoral importance in India.[71] And indeed the government did not attempt to cash in politically as some of its supporters were recommending; for instance it scotched the idea of setting up a Hindu temple on the site of the blasts.[72] A more credible starting point than pure electoral politics is to see both the BJP's political strategy and its nuclear ambitions as two parallel consequences of a deep-seated fear of Pakistan and Indian Muslims combined with a strong sense of Indian (or Hindu) pride.

It is true that the BJP is not monolithic; within it "moderates" contend with "purists" for dominance.[73] Moreover, since the 1998 election victory, the "moderates" have seemingly been more firmly in the drivers' seat than ever before.[74] But the nuclear issue was one place where that internal political contest was less relevant. The dispute between "moderates" and "purists" is not over fundamental ideals but over tactics for gaining and holding power.[75] The nuclear issue was not on the front-burner of electoral politics, and it was not likely to upset the governmental coalition with minor and regionalist parties. So this issue held no cause for disagreement between the two wings of the BJP.

Whether "moderate" or not, BJP leaders wanted the bomb. This was nowhere more true than in the case of the BJP's chief "moderate," the Prime Minister himself. Ashis Nandy cites a poem by a young Vajpayee, which apart from explicit reference to (in Nandy's words) "the victimization of the Hindus in history" at the hands of the Muslims, offers a chilling reminder of the link between Vajpayee's long-standing oppositional nationalist sentiments and his bomb decision as prime minister:

> This is the identity of the Hindu body, the Hindu soul and the Hindu life,
> I am that rage of Shankar, which can destroy the earth and reduce it to ashes,
> I am the devastating sound of his drum to which death dances,
> I am the unquenched thirst of the goddess of war, I am the divine laughter of Durga,
> I am the doomsday call of the god of death, the burning fire from the funeral pyre,
> If with this fire raging inside me, I burn the earth,
> And the water, earth, sky, soil go up in flames on their own, do not be surprised.[76]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that the Indian decision to acquire nuclear weapons, like the French decision more than four decades before it, was fundamentally driven by the oppositional nationalism of the leaders who made it. Oppositional nationalism on the part of Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pierre Mendès France sparked an explosive emotional cocktail of fear and pride. It was this combination of fear and pride that produced the two decisions to acquire nuclear weapons.

What does the India-France parallel imply for the future of India's nuclear weapons policies? In fact, it would be wrong to impute too much continuity between the original motivations for nuclear weapons acquisition—the histories outlined here—and the eventual domestic and international uses to which the bomb is put. One of the reasons why both Indian and French leaders long abstained from acquiring the bomb was that they fully understood that it would have revolutionary implications that could not be predicted with any certainty before the deed was done. Now India is living in that whirlwind, and all that can be said is that it has yet to find its way in the new nuclear order in South Asia.[77]

What does the India-France parallel imply for the future of nuclear proliferation? One strong implication is that fears of runaway proliferation due to copycat testing in other regions of the world are unfounded.[78] No states will feel a pressing need to build nuclear weapons in order to keep pace in a status competition with India and Pakistan. The overall thrust of this chapter has been to argue that state leaders do not take nuclear weapons decisions lightly. It is the gravity of the choice to "go nuclear" that best explains why so few such decisions have been made. The oppositional nationalists studied in this chapter understood the gravity of the decision every bit as much as their predecessors in office. Their beliefs that nuclear weapons would benefit their countries' security may have been inchoate, but they were sincere. Not mere prestige-seeking, not bureaucratic politics, but a combination of fear and pride on the part of top leaders drives nuclear weapons decisions. The international norm of non-proliferation will continue, not primarily because of redoubled efforts by American diplomats, but because almost all states understand that nuclear weapons offer them limited military and political value.

Notes

1. I would like to thank the many dozens of scholars, archivists, and policymakers in France, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States who consented to share their information, recollections, and wisdom. Thanks also to all those who reviewed and commented on this and related papers, including Michael Barletta, Michael Desch, Bertrand Goldschmidt, Seung-Young Kim, Aaron Lobel, Jorge I.

Domínguez, Stanley Hoffmann, Alastair Iain Johnston, Devesh Kapur, Jeffrey Knopf, Thomas Lienhard, Dinshaw Mistry, Gilles Pécout, M. V. Ramana, Pramathesh Rath, Stephen Rosen, Scott Sagan, Albino Santos, Kenneth Scheve, Michael Tomz, Maurice Vaïsse, and Jim Walsh. Special thanks to Georges Ripka, president of the French Pugwash Association, to Eduardo Ortiz of Imperial College, London, and to Maurice Vaïsse of the *Centre d'Etudes d'Histoire de la Défense* (France) for inviting me to present my work before their groups. For research support I would like to thank the Krupp Foundation, the Institute for the Study of World Politics, the Harvard University Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, and the Stanford University Center for International Security and Cooperation. It goes without saying that I accept all errors as my own.

2. Amitabh Mattoo neatly encapsulates the mainstream position: "While the BJP may have taken the decision to test ... virtually every prime minister since Independence is implicated in the development of India's nuclear weapons programme." Amitabh Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Policy in an Anarchic World," in Mattoo, ed., *India's Nuclear Deterrent: Pokhran II and Beyond* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1999), p. 16.
3. Most authors offer some combination of these variables, while leaning toward one of them to explain the actual 1998 decision to test. The "objective situation" hypothesis is promoted most forcefully by Jasjit Singh, ed., *Nuclear India* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 1998); T. V. Paul, "The Systemic Bases of India's Challenge to the Global Nuclear Order," *Non-Proliferation Review* Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall 1998), pp. 1-11; and Ashok Kapur, "India and Multipolarity in the Asia-Pacific Regional Sub-System," paper delivered at the 1999 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, September 1999. The international prestige element is placed in the foreground of explanation by Mattoo, "India's Nuclear Policy," and Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, "The Challenge for Indian Diplomacy" in Mattoo, ed., *India's Nuclear Deterrent*; Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to be a Nuclear Power* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2000); and Sumit Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II: The Prospects and Sources of New Delhi's Nuclear Weapons Program," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 148-177. "The "strategic enclave" hypothesis is highlighted by George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Itty Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State* (London: Zed Books, 1998). The most balanced statement is Stephen Cohen, "Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in South Asia," paper presented to the Harvard/MIT Transnational Security Project, November 1998 [viewed on the web at http://www.brook.edu/views/articles/cohens/1998TSP.htm].
4. Two who have argued for the "BJP hypothesis" are Achin Vanaik, "The Indian Nuclear Tests: Causes, Consequences, and Portents," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* vol. 18, No. 1 (1998), see esp. p. 54; and Dinshaw Mistry, "India and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty," *ACDIS Research Report*, September 1998, see esp. p. 47.
5. For instance, Ashok Kapur has written, "It is irresponsible for an arms chair strategist, who is far removed from the Indian Subcontinental zone of conflict, and whose judgement does not entail any risk-taking or decisionmaking concerning issues of war and peace in the region, to dismiss the strategic and pres-

tige aspects of Indian nuclear behavior. It is also illogical to locate the issue in BJP party politics and not Indian strategic policy when successive Indian governments have declined to join the NPT and have insisted on keeping their nuclear weapons option open." Kapur, "India and Multipolarity," p. 3.

6. Scott Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security,* Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996-97), pp. 54-86.
7. Martin Van Creveld, *Nuclear Proliferation and the Future of Conflict* (New York: the Free Press, 1993), esp. pp. 123-124.
8. Lawrence Scheinman, *Atomic Energy Policy in France under the Fourth Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).
9. Apart from the authors listed in footnote 3, see the earlier work in this vein by Peter Lavoy, "Nuclear Myths and the Causes of Proliferation," in Zachary S. Davis and Benjamin Frankel, eds., *The Proliferation Puzzle*, special joint issue of *Security Studies* vol. 2, Nos. 3/4 (Spring-Summer 1993); Scott Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?"; and Dhirendra Sharma, *India's Nuclear Estate* (New Delhi: Lancers Publishers, 1983).
10. For more on this point, see Jacques E. C. Hymans, "The Strangelove Fallacy," *The Telegraph* (India), July 6, 2000.
11. In fact, there were two scientific chiefs in succession who opposed the bomb: Frédéric Joliot-Curie and Francis Perrin. The administrative chief was Pierre Guillaumat. See Dominique Mongin, *La bombe atomique française 1945–1958* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1997), pp. 294-307.
12. Even the engineer Homi Sethna, who as AEC chairman was deeply involved in the preparations for the first Pokhran blast in 1974, argued against more than a single symbolic test at that time. Homi Sethna, personal communication, Bombay, December 8, 1998.
13. For more on "epistemic communities," see Peter M. Haas, "Do Regimes Matter? Epistemic Communities and Mediterranean Pollution Control," *International Organization*, vol. 43, No. 3 (Summer 1989), pp. 377-403.
14. Mongin, *La bombe atomique française*, pp. 318-19.
15. Indeed, Indian technical experts such as Homi Sethna have remained to this day highly skeptical of Pakistan's nuclear achievements: "Based on information which I gathered while working with the Dept. of Atomic Energy, to reach high enrichment levels, the design of the [model for the Pakistani] centrifuge particularly its size has to be increased. I do not think that Pakistan has the wherewithal to develop that technology on its own. Therefore I have my reservations about the capability of Pakistan, in the area of the design of the device as well as in the area of the production of materials required for the device." Homi Sethna, "Nuclear Energy in the 21st Century," unpublished manuscript, December 1998, p. 3.
16. Jean Lacouture, *Pierre Mendès France*, translated by George Holoch (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984).
17. Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?" Sagan has support in the historical literature. See especially Georges-Henri Soutou, "La politique nucléaire de Pierre Mendès France," *Relations Internationales*, No. 59 (Autumn 1989). The desire to remain influential in NATO is seen as important but not determinant by Maurice Vaïsse, "Le choix atomique de la France (1945-1958)," *Vingtième Siècle*, No. 36 (1992) and by Mongin, *La bombe atomique française*.

18. Cohen, "Nuclear Weapons and Conflict"; this argument is also quite explicit in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*.
19. Ganguly, "India's Pathway," Kapur, "India and Multipolarity," and Mattoo, "Indian Nuclear Policy," all agree on the centrality of this variable. Jasjit Singh, "Why Nuclear Weapons?" in Singh, ed., *Nuclear India*, tries to give this hypothesis a "realistic" twist by contending that India had to test before September 1999 to avoid facing worldwide sanctions under the CTBT regime. But Mistry easily rebuts this argument, citing the numerous official statements that the September 1999 CTBT conference "would not entail sanctions against states not signing the CTBT." Mistry, "India and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty," p. 46.
20. Pierre Mendès France, verbatim transcript of interview conducted by Georgette Elgey, August 20, 1969, in the Fonds Elgey (archives privées), Archives Nationales, Paris.
21. One could argue that France before 1954 had not given the issue much thought because it was technically unready to build the bomb. But even in 1954, the first nuclear test was 6 years away. Indeed, this secret "too early" decision is in its own right a puzzle for the "international prestige" hypothesis.
22. Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb*, p. 126.
23. The arguments for this position were succinctly stated in P. R. Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Standoff: The Role of the United States* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995), pp. 94-96.
24. Nina Tannenwald, "The Nuclear Taboo," *International Organization*, vol. 53, No. 3 (Summer 1999), pp. 433-68.
25. This is a point also made by Achin Vanaik, "The Indian Nuclear Tests," p. 54.
26. For a more extended discussion, see Chapter 2 of Jacques E. C. Hymans, "Pride, Prejudice, and Plutonium: Explaining Decisions to Acquire Nuclear Weapons," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, September 2001.
27. Richard Cottam's similar conception of this enemy-based variety of nationalism is described in Daniel Druckman, "Social Psychological Aspects of Nationalism," in John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern, eds., *Perspectives on Nationalism and War* (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 1995), pp. 47-98.
28. Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), esp. pp. 186-187.
29. This perception is often proven incorrect after the deed is done, which leads to a felt need for ever-increasing stockpiles of bombs.
30. Raja Ramanna (personal communication), New Delhi, November 19, 1998.
31. Here I can only provide the most bare bones skeleton argument of this case. For a fuller treatment see chapter 6 of Jacques E. C. Hymans, "Pride, Prejudice, and Plutonium."
32. See Jean-Christophe Sauvage, "La perception des questions nucléaires dans les premières années de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes de Défense Nationale 1948-1955," in Maurice Vaïsse, ed., *La France et l'Atome: Etudes d'histoire nucléaire* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1994), esp. pp. 77-78.
33. One can see this perception clearly in the debates over German rearmament that took place in the French Parliament. An extreme example is the speech by Adolphe Aumeran, *Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats Parlementaires—Assemblée Nationale*, 2e Séance du 29 Août 1954, pp. 4436-4439.

34. Alfred Grosser, *La IVe république et sa politique extérieure* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1961), pp. 113-14.
35. The "nationalist" versus "pro-European" cleavage was not limited to the security sphere; it also showed itself in a range of other areas, such as economic integration. See Daniel Lerner and Raymond Aron, eds., *France Defeats EDC* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1957).
36. The diplomat Jean-Marc Boegner recalls that the first time Mendès France privately declared his support for the bomb (in October 1954), the Prime Minister put it this way: "I know that General de Gaulle is in favor of making the atomic bomb, and he is entirely right." This was a rare doffing of the cap to a political opponent. Jean-Marc Boegner, personal communications, Paris, January 27 and 30, 1998; see also Mongin, *La bombe atomique française*, op. cit., p. 321.
37. François Duchêne, *Jean Monnet: The First Statesman of Interdependence* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1994.
38. Pierre Guillen, "La France et la négociation du traité d'Euratom," in Michel Dumoulin, Pierre Guillen, Maurice Vaïsse, eds., *L'Energie Nucléaire en Europe: Des Origines à Euratom* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994).
39. The key documents that reflected the victory of the pro-bomb forces are the internal memoranda "*Projet de Décision*" and "*Conceptions Stratégiques,*" both dated Dec. 26, 1954, in the "*Energie Atomique*" file of the Institut Pierre Mendès France, Paris, France.
40. I share with Sumit Ganguly the periodization of the first two stages, but I differ on the last three. Ganguly, "India's Pathway."
41. In this short chapter I am unable to explore fully this Indian particularity of moralism in foreign policy, but it is undoubtedly one of the key elements of a complete description of the Indian case.
42. A. Q. Khan interview in *The Observer*, cited in Sumita Kumar, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapon Programme," in Jasjit Singh, ed., *Nuclear India*, p. 174.
43. K. Subrahmanyam argues that until May 1998, "China did not allow Pakistan an entirely autonomous capability. Pakistani nuclear weapons, therefore, were strictly not military weapons capable of being used against India." K. Subrahmanyam in "India's Nuclear Policy—An IIC Debate," June 8, 1998 on web at http://www.ipcs.org/issues/articles/113-ndi-banerjee.html. Subrahmanyam seems to have taken a more robust view of Pakistan's nuclear attainments before May 1998 in the Kargil Committee report, however.
44. K. Subrahmanyam, "Indian Nuclear Policy—1964–98," in Jasjit Singh, ed., *Nuclear India.*
45. P. K. Iyengar, personal communication, Bombay, December 8, 1998.
46. Muchkund Dubey, personal communication, New Delhi, December 15, 1998.
47. "Joint Statement by Department of Atomic Energy and Defence Research and Development Organisation," New Delhi, May 17, 1998, on web at http://www.indianembassy.org/pic/PR_1998/May98/prmay1798.htm.
48. Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, p. 335.
49. That the military had not been exposed to the weapons was a point strongly made to me by Gen. V. N. Sharma, personal communications, New Delhi, December 16, 1998, and in a follow-up letter of February 18, 1999. For a careful discussion of various concepts of weaponization, see Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 2001).

50. One dramatic attempt to shake the political leadership into action was Army Head General K. Sundarji's polemic book, *Blind Men of Hindoostan* (New Delhi: UBS Publishers, 1993).
51. Michael J. Mazarr, *Nuclear Weapons in a Transformed World : The Challenge of Virtual Nuclear Arsenals* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1997).
52. Given the need for additional tests on the bomb design, before May 1998 the AEC "would have considered it foolish to make 30 warheads, not knowing if it would work or not" (senior Indian nuclear engineer, name withheld upon request, personal communication, 2000. A recently publicized US estimate is that India even in early 2000 still had only about 5 warheads of dubious quality. Robert Windrem and Tammy Kupperman, "Pakistan Nukes Outstrip India's, Officials Say," MSNBC News report, June 6, 2000, available on web at http://www.msnbc.com/news/417106.asp?cp1=1. From February 2000, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board no longer has oversight responsibility over weapons-related nuclear facilities. This is indicative of round-the-clock production of warheads since that time.
53. Indira Gandhi, interview with Rodney Jones, quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 178.
54. Andrew Koch, "Nuclear Testing in South Asia and the CTBT," *The Nonproliferation Review* vol. 3, no. 3 (Spring-Summer 1996).
55. "Even after India's national security establishment . . . was ready, a political decision was necessary. In 1995, testing was averted not so much by prompt US action as by the fact that Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was not fully convinced." Aaron Karp, "Indian Ambitions and the Limits of American Influence," *Arms Control Today*, May 1998.
56. George Perkovich gives a good summary of the earlier episode: Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 242-244. The Rao episode was recounted to me by A. N. Varma and on the economic side by Manmohan Singh (personal communications, New Delhi, December 2 and 19, 1998) and was reinforced by the evidence in Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, p. 395.
57. This analysis is shared by Achin Vanaik: "That neither the Congress nor the UF went so far as to actually test also indicated, given their official position of ambiguity, that such a dramatic change of course could not easily be carried out without a minimum of political and ideological preparation by these political forces at least among their staunchest support bases." Achin Vanaik, "The Indian Nuclear Tests: Causes Consequences, and Portents," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* XVIII, No. 1 (1998), p. 54.
58. Sumit Ganguly in Henry L. Stimson Center, "Southern Asia Internet Forum V: Implications of a BJP-led Government in India" on web at http://www.stimson.org/cbm/saif/bjp.htm. See also Karp, "Indian Ambitions."
59. Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, p. 49.
60. "Suo Moto Statement by Prime Minister Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee in Parliament on May 27, 1998" and "Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy," paper presented by A. B. Vajpayee to the House on May 27, 1998, available on web at http://www.indianembassy.org/pic/nuclearpolicy.htm.
61. "Apparently, neither the long road beyond the tests had been visualized nor was an action plan thought through." V. R. Raghavan, "Dangerous nuclear uncertainties," *The Hindu*, March 13, 2000.

62. George Perkovich notes that an embarrassed government retracted this statement after it was printed in *India Today*. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 420.
63. One might have expected Pakistan to respond in kind; one would have to have been truly prescient to see that this would embolden the Pakistani military to launch the Kargil operation; but who would have been able to foresee that that fiasco's dénouement would prepare the ground for the 1999 military coup?
64. This is an example, in Theodore Wright's terminology, of the "interface of foreign and domestic conflict" in South Asia. See Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "The BJP/Shiv Sena Coalition and the Muslim Minority in Maharashtra: The Interface of Foreign and Domestic Conflict," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* XXI, No. 2 (Winter 1998), pp. 41-50.
65. I demonstrate this claim through an intensive, qualitative and quantitative content analysis of speeches at the Red Fort on Indian Independence Day in Chapter 11 of Jacques E. C. Hymans, "Pride, Prejudice, and Plutonium."
66. Jaffrelot, *Les nationalistes hindous*. Stephen Cohen has written that a similar psychological dynamic to the one I describe as "oppositional nationalism" has been at work in both India and Pakistan ever since Independence (he calls it "paired minority psychologies"). Stephen P. Cohen, *The Structural Dimensions of Conflict in South Asia* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 1997). But there is surely at least a major difference in degree between the secular and BJP "minority psychologies."
67. Indeed, so strong was the "Pakistan threat" thesis that the cognitive dissonance produced by the delay in Pakistan's reply "unnerved the BJP government" (Chaudhuri, "The Challenge for Indian Diplomacy," p. 207). Its officials began practically to beg Pakistan to follow suit. When it finally did, a clearly relieved Vajpayee explained that Pakistan's tests "vindicated" the previous Indian tests that had caused them to happen. The subcontinent was clearly on the other side of the looking-glass. CNN staff, "India reconsidering its pledge not to test," on web at http://europe.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9805/28/pakistan.india.reax/index.html and viewed May 21, 2001.
68. The BJP and its predecessor party, the Jana Sangh, were long on record in favor of an Indian nuclear deterrent. But this call had shifted into the background and was not even included in the BJP's election manifesto of 1984.
69. BJP manifestoes and resolutions, as well as those of other major Indian parties, are reprinted in the annual series edited by A. Moin Zaidi, *Annual Register of Indian Political Parties* (New Delhi: India Institute of Applied Political Research, 1972-1991).
70. Christophe Jaffrelot, *Les nationalistes hindous. Idéologie, implantation et mobilisation des années 1920 aux années 1990* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1993), esp. pp. 403-540.
71. "Foreign policy, even national security, has never penetrated very far as an electoral issue." Philip Oldenburg, *The 13th election of India's Lok Sabha (House of the People)* (New York: The Asia Society, September 1999) on web at http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/indian_elections.13.html.
72. Kalpana Sharma, "The Hindu Bomb," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (July/August 1998), available on web at http://www.bullatomsci.org/issues/1998/ja98/ja98sharma.html.
73. For an assessment of the forces behind BJP "moderation," see Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, eds., *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics*

in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), and Ashutosh Varshney, *India's 12th National Elections* (New York: The Asia Society, February 1998), available on web at http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/update_indian_elections.html.

74. For instance, in the 1999 election manifesto, written in cooperation with the BJP's National Democratic Alliance partners, the Ram temple issue did not get top billing. National Democratic Alliance, "For a Proud, Prosperous India: An Agenda," available on web at http://www.bjp.org.
75. This is one of the main points made in Jaffrelot, *Les nationalistes hindous*.
76. Cited in Ashis Nandy et al., "Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self" in Ashis Nandy, *Exiled at Home* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 55.
77. I have described this unstable period of searching in Jacques E. C. Hymans "Inside a Bomb Shell," *The Hindustan Times*, April 16, 2001.
78. Concerns about the effect of the South Asian tests on the global nonproliferation regime are ubiquitous. A clear-headed, representative analysis is George Bunn, "The status of norms against nuclear testing," *Nonproliferation Review* Vol. 6, No. 2 (Winter 1999), pp. 20-32.