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## South Asia on a short fuse

nuclear politics and the future of global disarmament

Draft foreword to the second edition of South Asia on a Short fuse: Nuclear Politics and the Future of Global Disarmament, to be published by Oxford University Press (India) in 2001. (First edition, 1999).

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A year and a half after the first edition of our book was sent to the press and over a year after the Kargil war (about which we had written a brief preface) we now have an opportunity to carry out a welcome review of developments since then. Indeed, we aim to do just that at three related but also different levels. First, we would like to look at what has happened to South Asian political equations since Kargil. We need to look at how the relationships between India, Pakistan and the US have changed because of shifts in the internal and external politics of the two countries and at the effects and implications of President Clinton's visit to this part of the world.

Second, we need to assess the overall consequences of certain developments on the nuclear weapons front. Here three issues in particular cry out for at least some, even if brief, comment. There is the US Senate's non-ratification of the CTBT. There is the May 2000 NPT Review Conference (the first major such review after the NPT's permanent and indefinite extension in 1995) whose outcome needs to be properly assessed. Most significant perhaps, is the question of whether US efforts to amend the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty so as to allow it a 'limited' National Missile Defence (NMD) system will succeed or not. If successful, then this could well mean the advent of a New Nuclear Age not only closing completely the window of opportunity on the nuclear disarmament and restraint front that emerged after the end of the Cold War era, but instigating another scenario of nuclear arms racing and burgeoning tensions between rival nuclear weapons states (NWSs).

Third, there have been a number of new books after the date of publication of our own first edition which have overlapped with a part of our own book in that these have also sought to provide an explanation for the Pokharan II tests of May 1998 and of what might or should be expected or hoped for from India in the future.<sup>1</sup> As to be expected, these works have their own distinctive strengths and weaknesses and it is not our intention in this foreword to provide a critique of any, let alone all, of them. But given this overlap, and some of the more sober and serious responses to the first edition of *South Asia On A Short Fuse*, we thought it appropriate to revisit some of the fundamental arguments and themes of our book.

In particular, we aim to reflect briefly once again on the moral dimension which is unfortunately effectively neglected or relegated to a position of little consequence in the more recent 'hard-headed' narratives which aim not just to explain why and how India did what it did but also take positions for and against Pokharan II. Moreover, in explaining those tests of May 1998 we assess once again, the crucial issue of what balance to maintain in respect of the issue of 'continuity and rupture'. How much was India's past nuclear programmes and the forces and vested interests associated with it responsible for what eventually emerged? Alternatively, how much weight is to be given to other factors such as the distinctive character and ideology of the Sangh Combine and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which led the coalition government at the time and took the decision (independent of its partners) to prepare and carry out the tests?

### South Asian Equations

If India virtually pushed Pakistan to test and declare itself a nuclear weapons power, then Islamabad's acquisition of a 'nuclear shield' of sorts undoubtedly was one important spur to its embarking on the Kargil misadventure. The political-diplomatic defeat for Pakistan over Kargil promoted serious dissent within the Pakistan armed forces and led to the attempt by the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to revamp the upper echelons. This in turn promoted the counter-coup that led to the establishment of the military dictatorship of Gen. Pervez Musharraf. There is a train of events then that connects India's decision to nuclearize South Asia to the emergence of direct authoritarian rule in Pakistan. This is not to directly blame India either for Kargil or for the advent of military dictatorship – these were internal choices in Pakistan. But as suggested in our book, the nuclearization of South Asia (initiated by India) would have certain general consequences one of which would be to greatly strengthen the forces of authoritarianism in Pakistan and as such would not augur well for India.

In the fall of 1999 with memories of Kargil still fresh, there was the take-over of an Indian Airlines plane carrying Indian civilian passengers at Kandahar in Afghanistan by hijackers of Pakistani-origin. Their demands for the release of certain Kashmiri militants imprisoned in Indian jails and for safe

passage across the Afghan border into Pakistan in return for the release of the plane and its hostages were acceded to by New Delhi. Within the country, following Kargil as it did, this incident was seen as yet another deliberate provocation by Pakistan and its outcome a deep public humiliation. The end result is that over the last year relations between India and Pakistan have touched a nadir. Never before in their 53 year history as independent nations has there ever been such a depth of hostility amongst its elite for each other. Although still a minority elite sentiment in both countries, the belief that Indian or Pakistani long term security can only be achieved through the break up or destruction of the other country, today enjoys deeper and wider support than ever before.

If anything, the sentiment is probably stronger in India. It has been substantially reinforced by the deterioration of the situation in Kashmir where there has been a significant acceleration of violent actions by groups enjoying at least refuge in Pakistan if not some degree of unofficial support. References in the Indian public media to Pakistan as a terrorist state are now routine. The efforts to initiate serious and official dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad generally get nowhere with various kinds of pre-conditions demanded by the former. Even the efforts of the US to act as mediator (after Kargil) have not had much success.

President Clinton's visit to India earlier this year, the first in 22 years by a US President, was generally hailed in the Indian media as an epoch-making event, the harbinger of dramatic new alignments in the region. Although of real significance, it was much less than that. The visit did not signify US abandonment of Pakistan nor a new strategic realignment with a newly acquired Indian 'partner' against China or anyone else. Washington continues to benefit from its triangular relationship with Islamabad and New Delhi in which both perpetually woo the White House. The US continues to see benefit for itself in having a near client-ally in Islamabad both with regard to its wider considerations in Central Asia and the Middle East (the Saudi-Pakistan connection). But there is also a real worry about the growing Talibanisation of Pakistan, of where it is heading, of how reliable or unreliable it makes Pakistan as an enduring ally and strategic asset.

By contrast, to US eyes things seem more stable in India. Its democratic system endures. Today's Indian elite is strongly pro-American. The government and most members of the 'strategic community' would like nothing better than a new 'strategic partnership' with the US. The potential of the Indian economic market place attracts the considerable interest of foreign capital, both American and non-American. Furthermore, the nuclearization of the region does make Kashmir a distinctive 'flashpoint' which requires greater international attention and for Washington, its mediation, if things are not to go out of hand. Whether or not the US carries out a major strategic realignment vis-à-vis this region and decisively moves towards India and against Pakistan is something that will be decided not by Indian hopes or 'pressure' (which for all New Delhi's pretensions still does not count for much either in Washington or in any of the other big capitals of the world) but by future American reassessments of its foreign policy perspectives.

However, there is no doubt that Washington is paying more attention to the region than at any previous time since the end of the Cold War. New Delhi sees this as tribute to its new global status post-Pokharan II but it is more accurately read (as suggested in our book) as indicating its loss of diplomatic space and the emergence of the US as India's principal interlocutor as the latter seeks to 'normalise' its nuclear status. Also, after all that has happened in the last year-and-a-half, who can doubt that the Kashmir issue has been well and truly 'internationalised' as never before since the early years of independence.

The overall picture then, is not a happy one. The deep enmity between India and Pakistan, the parallel demonizations of the other country carried out by rightwing religious extremists, the desire in important Indian circles for 'revenge' against Pakistan for Kargil, Kandahar and Kashmir make the possibility of another outbreak of armed hostilities a real one. Meanwhile nuclear preparations in both countries continue. According to some reports, it is Pakistan that is ahead in the extent of weaponization and in the levels of accuracy of its shorter and medium range missiles. But these remain insufficiently corroborated conjectures. There are, however, two silver linings in the dark clouds that remain overhead.

Two years after Pokharan II, India has not yet openly deployed its weapons system. If a part of the reason for this is still international opprobrium for the path the two countries of South Asia have taken, another major reason is the continuing weakness and inadequacy of the command and control system that India would have to establish to make an openly deployed nuclear weapons system functionally viable. Pakistan's official policy remains the same – it will not be the first to openly deploy. There is thus still some space and time to fight for a nuclear freeze in the region, for fighting to prevent things from getting worse before fighting to make things better. The second silver lining is the slow emergence of an all-India network of anti-nuclear groups and activists in civil society who are opposed to what has happened and have begun to work together to raise mass awareness on the issue. Their tasks are two-fold and long term – to attack government (and civil society) legitimisation of India's nuclear policy, and then to build enough momentum to successfully attack and influence government policies themselves. These are arduous tasks but at least the struggle has already begun and moved ahead.

### On the Verge of a New Nuclear Age?

Eighteen months ago when we sent our manuscript to the publishers we had, despite the Indian and Pakistani tests, more reason to be optimistic about the possibilities of promoting nuclear restraint and disarmament worldwide. If one subsequent development – the NPT Review Conference of May 2000 in New York – has given some small cheer, it has been more than outweighed by two seriously negative developments, the US Senate's non-ratification of the CTBT and the US efforts to go ahead and build an NMD.

The Review Conference turned out better than anyone had a right to anticipate. It was widely feared that it might founder on the rocks of intransigence shown by the NWSs. In the event, the NWSs agreed to some diplomatically hard-won concessions. They gave an “unequivocal undertaking” to “accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals”. They agreed to separate the issue of nuclear disarmament from total military disarmament no longer implying that the first was contingent on the achieving the second. They agreed to take steps to ensure greater transparency about their weapons systems, to reduce their stock of tactical weapons, and to reduce the “operational status” of their systems. This is a mild form of de-alerting which goes beyond simple de-targeting but falls well short of de-mating.

The single most important gain, however, was the emergence of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) of countries – Sweden, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt – as the main protagonist of disarmament and restraint, replacing the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as the driving force in opposition to the NWSs, and recognised by the latter as such. The NAC came out of the Review Conference more united and with higher collective morale than ever before. To be sure, what was gained were words and pledges. When unimplemented, the value of such pledges rapidly and steadily diminishes.

But words and commitments once stated cannot be taken back so easily either. Even as these are in the process of being betrayed they nonetheless provide newer points of potential diplomatic-political leverage and pressure. The struggle for nuclear sanity – namely total and complete disarmament – takes place on many fronts. It takes place indoors and outdoors, between and within governments, in civil society, in various forums. If the outcome of the sixth NPT Review Conference provides some small mercy then this should be acknowledged, appreciated and built upon. The anti-nuclear movement is not so strong and self-confident nor so assured of final victory that it can afford to repudiate or dismiss even the smallest of gains.

The US Senate's non-ratification of the CTBT reflects the victory of the most conservative, aggressively nationalist and belligerent forces of the American establishment located for the most part in the defence laboratories, the armed forces, in the most strongly rightwing sections of the intelligentsia, and in the most chauvinist parts of the Republican party. These are the forces that would brook no restraint whatsoever on the US's unilateralist drive to dominate the new world order.

For what they are saying is that the US should be free if need be to conduct more tests to develop better and newer weapons rather than accept any kind of collective and universal restraint regime as embodied in the CTBT. True, the Republican opposition to the CTBT so far declares that it has no intention to violate the current moratorium on testing but this is very different from the kind of permanent abnegation that CTBT accession and ratification demands. If the Republican party nominee, George Bush Jnr., wins the presidential elections of November 2000 then any chances of reversing the Senate non-ratification must be deemed remote.

It is testimony to the extraordinarily distorted character of the CTBT debate in India that those who opposed Pokharan II but also opposed the CTBT on the grounds that it was a 'hegemonic' ploy on the part of the US, continue to uphold this viewpoint even though it means sleeping next to the most reactionary and hidebound pro-nuclear elements in American society. As of now, Indian accession to the CTBT is not on the anvil. Pakistan is likely to sign only if India does although at one point over the last year it seemed that Pakistan might do so independently of its neighbour. India's decision will await the American elections and be strongly influenced by its outcome. Even a Democrat victory for its presidential nominee, Al Gore, may not suffice if he is unable to get Senate ratification. But the chances of a complete Indian accession (signature, ratification and deposition) and then of Pakistan's do become greater if he wins. The longer the CTBT remains out of force, without the required signatures and ratifications (China's ratification awaits the US's though Russia, France and UK have already ratified) the more dangerous it is.

Already the chorus calling on India to tie its decision on the CTBT to prior US ratification has become louder. Now that the success of the test of a thermonuclear device during the May 1998 series is being called into question from within Indian pro-bomb circles, the pressure for leaving open the option of further testing is growing. The view that India needs more tests if it is to build an adequate 'minimal deterrent' against China or any other rival, potential or actual, is securing more recruits and if the CTBT is allowed to remain in its current state of limbo for too long (a few more years) then the resumption of Indian testing cannot be ruled out. A US decision to go in for an NMD, even under a Democrat President, could, in passing as it were, put paid to Indian prospects of signing and ratifying the CTBT.

So dangerous are the implications of an NMD, and secondarily of Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) systems, especially the one that the US plans for East Asia (involving Taiwan, South Korea and Japan), that a failure to hold the line here will almost certainly usher in a New Nuclear Age. The US claims that it needs such missile shields to protect itself against what it once called "rogue states" but now calls "states of concern", namely North Korea, Iraq and Iran which it says could develop long range missiles with the capacity to hit the US mainland in around five years, and which could also develop nuclear weapons. To go in for such defences itself bespeaks of the fact that long-time devotees of nuclear weapons in the name of deterrence are themselves no longer prepared to believe in the efficacy of deterrence, at least with regard to these "states of concern".

Of course, the threat is greatly exaggerated and the real reasons have to do with the new world situation in which the US finds itself without serious rival in the game of nations and is therefore seeking a more unilateralist form of world dominance. At the moment there is a difference between those who wish to amend the bilateral ABM Treaty with Russia to allow for a 'limited' NMD (250 interceptors of great speed and range and with early warning and guidance radars outside US territory) and those who would reject the Treaty altogether. Such a "son of Star Wars" programme would not immediately affect Russian strategic nuclear retaliatory capacities but Russia is fully aware that once such a system is in place the US could easily and rapidly build hundreds of more interceptor missiles without detection (radar installations cannot be hidden, producing interceptors can) to augment its small force. Since for economic reasons Russia has no choice but to go in for major reductions in its intercontinental missile force, it has every reason to fear such a possible 'breakout' in the future.

Moreover, any amendment of the ABM to allow for an NMD, howsoever limited to begin with, sets a precedent and could be the thin end of the wedge. Many powerful forces in the US have by no means

given up on the old Reagan administration ambition to build a full-fledged multi-layered (ground, air and space-based attack systems) Star Wars programme. The aim here is two-fold. The first is to develop the combined capacities to destroy all the enemy's nuclear missiles without suffering serious damage to oneself. This would come about through a massive first strike by the US leaving the shield, even if it worked at 'sub-optimal efficiency' to mop up the remaining missiles that the enemy might have or launch. Such a situation would of course, completely undermine the whole deterrence logic (inadequate though it is even in the best of circumstances) of security through nuclear weapons and thus lead to a spiralling arms race in which the opponent tries to build more and more missiles to 'overload' the shield. The second aim is a more long term one. The very process of building the technologies associated with such a multi-layered shield will, it is hoped, enable the US to eventually dominate space itself for a whole range of activities from conventional warfare to surveillance capabilities to global communications control, etc.

For China the prospects are far more troublesome. Beijing is clear that both the NMD and the East Asian TMD programmes have the Chinese nuclear capacity as its main focus, not that of the "states of concern". With at most 20 missiles (all land-based) capable of reaching the US mainland, it is China's second-strike capacity (feeble as it currently is) that is most seriously threatened by even a limited anti-ballistic missile shield of the kind envisioned. China would have little option if US plans go through but to both MIRV its missiles and build many more long-range missiles including developing a major submarine arm which it currently does not have. The implications of such a development for India are obvious. Any strengthening of the Chinese nuclear weapons system in numbers or quality would push India to continuously ratchet upwards its own 'nuclear deterrent force'. This would then have a knock-on effect on Pakistan. In short, an independent American decision, utterly uninfluenced nor capable of being influenced by India, would cause the latter to embark on an ever escalating and competitive arms race with its two neighbours.

None of this was anticipated by the 'strategic experts' of India when they justified Pokharan II. Indeed, they were to a man and woman, dismissive of all fears of escalating arms races between India and Pakistan, India and China. Things would have been bad enough on these fronts without worrying about the NMD and TMDs. With them, matters become even worse. Neither Russian nor Chinese opposition nor their combined pressure might prove decisive in preventing US movement in these directions. There also has to be sufficient resistance from the US's European allies (most of whom including Britain are unhappy about and opposed to the NMD) and growing internal opposition within the US. Regarding the first, it remains to be seen whether, when push comes to shove, the Europeans remain adamantly opposed or buckle under US pressure, for example, to geographically extend its radar facilities. Regarding the second factor, it has still to emerge as a significant opinion-shaping and policy-shaping force in the US.

Overall, there is reason for less optimism about the future now than when we wrote this book a year-and-a-half ago.

### Two Issues

There are two kinds of moral arguments that can be used against nuclear weapons and its logic of deterrence – ontological and consequentialist. The use of nuclear weapons we have argued is so unacceptable because of its consequences, that it is immoral. What, however, about the threat of its use? Here our moral opposition has been essentially ontological – regardless of whether they are used or not, it is wrong to have them. Nuclear weapons are immoral in themselves, partly because of their evil consequences but also because to threaten evil consequences becomes an evil in itself. It is thus also ontologically wrong. These are powerful moral arguments against even the installation of a nuclear weapons regime. They apply even to a regime of nuclear ambiguity (India's situation between 1974 and 1998 and Pakistan's situation from the mid-eighties to 1998) or opacity (Israel's current situation). But an additional moral argument against such a weapons regime practising deterrence would also be consequentialist in nature.

In developing this aspect of the moral case against nuclear weapons we would have had to take a closer and more systematic look at the negative relationship between the establishment, preservation and strengthening of such a regime and the democratic character of the Indian polity. Furthermore, it would not be enough simply to point out the wastefulness of expenditure on such a regime when so many other economic and social needs are begging to be addressed (the standard economic opportunity cost argument), but to make a more reasoned case for the economic and social immorality of such negligence when the alternative form of expenditure -- on a deterrence regime -- reinforces a structure with deeply anti-democratic effects. In short, we would have needed to provide an outline and evaluation of the 'political economy of a deterrence or nuclear weapons regime' from which would flow a consequentialist moral critique of having such a regime.

We are acutely aware that for reasons of both competence and space, we have not pursued this track in our book with the seriousness that it deserves. But we hope that others who respect Indian democracy would explore this inherent conflict between the demands of democracy and therefore the question of public control over nuclear weapons-related activities (which are truly life-and-death issues for tens if not hundreds of millions) and the secretive, unaccountable and undemocratic structures that effectively decide on such 'security' issues. Understandably, pro-nuclear 'experts', even when they consider themselves to be deeply democratic, can hardly be expected to seriously agonise over such contradictions detrimental to the political fabric of their respective countries.

In explaining why India decided to go openly nuclear in 1998 we have separated fundamental causes (the political and ideological rise of Hindutva, and the accession to power of the BJP backed by its cohort organisations in the Sangh Combine) from more proximate, secondary and complementary factors. Accordingly, we have insisted that the main causes are domestically located. But even where others have agreed on the domestic origin of primary causes, it is striking that the focus has not been on what we have highlighted as the fundamental factors but precisely on those that we have considered secondary -- the pressure of the upper echelons of the nuclear-related scientocracy, the influence of sections of the 'strategic community' which together with a very small group of politicians-administrators are said to comprise the 'strategic enclave'.<sup>2</sup>

Over the last twenty five years there has been a worldwide ideological-political shift to the right which has taken different regional and national forms. But the shift itself is undeniable and its effects, economically and politically, have been nothing less than profound. The world has literally been turned upside down. The US seeks to dominate the game of nations as never before since for the first time in over a century it has no serious rival to its global military-political ambitions. In all parts of the world there has been a dramatic resurgence of the politics of cultural exclusiveness and, all too often, aggressive nationalistic belligerence. There has been the rise of Jewish, Christian and Islamic fundamentalisms; the growth of Buddhist and Hindu chauvinisms; the rise of irredentist nationalisms in ex-USSR and ex-Yugoslavia; burgeoning anti-immigrant and racist xenophobia in the advanced Western world.

Over the last two decades in India, the steady rise of Hindutva-related ideology and politics has caused the most dramatic rupture with India's whole past history, including the decades of its National Movement for independence. Indeed, any Indian political scientist worth his or her salt, regardless of political inclination, would testify to the remarkable changes this has wrought in the country, in civil society and the state, in policies and politicking. It is truly *extraordinary* but true that it remains possible for security analysts to believe that these great changes are of peripheral or minimal, indeed of negligible, consequence for explaining and unfolding the story behind Pokharan II! It is vital to understand the reasons for this remarkable intellectual-political lapse.

It is only because of this lacuna that it becomes possible to confine the domestic story of the whys and wherefores of Pokharan II to the changing patterns and inter-relationships between the constituent parts of the strategic enclave. This story is either accompanied or overshadowed by explanations pertaining to the 'external', the dimension concerning assessments of the changing pattern of threats related to the foreign policy behaviour of other 'relevant' countries. Pakistan and China feature here but not only them since matters of relative prestige and status ranking among the 'top' nations of the

world are also seen as important national security considerations. It is here that the whole issue of 'continuity and rupture' in regard to India's nuclear past must be situated.

Of course, there are always significant elements of continuity that one must examine if one is to achieve proper balance and accuracy in detailing the history behind Pokharan II. We can, therefore, only welcome the growing body of work which details this larger picture. But the central point remains – where must the crucial and decisive weight of explanation fall, on the factors of continuity or rupture? And what are the factors of rupture, if indeed rupture is the decisive phenomenon? To begin with, we note that a country's nuclear past, India's included, pertains to matters of preparations and the politics of preparations and to matters of security and strategic policies.

A focus on nuclear preparations and the decisions and politicking behind it will naturally enough reveal many continuities as also the enduring pressure (across different governments and Central administrations) of the nuclear scientific-bureaucratic elite ensconced in India's Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and its related bodies. This pressure has generally been directed towards advancing nuclear weapons preparations and capabilities, to testing before 1974 and to further testing and constant upgrading of the option after 1974 and even to pushing for open declaration of India as a nuclear weapons power. Given the dismal performance of this scientocracy in the field of civilian nuclear power generation in India, pressing for a nuclear weapons regime has been the one way to give itself higher profile, more status and importance as well as to divert attention from DAE failures. The main point here has not been its fairly consistent pressure in favour of exercising the option as much as the fact that this pressure was generally kept under check and not allowed to alter doctrinal commitments and postures.

This is the nub of the matter. Security doctrines and policies are more important than preparations in assessing whether a country will ultimately go nuclear or not. And here the record of India before the late nineties is unequivocal. From 1974 and the advent of the posture of nuclear ambiguity, no political party except the BJP and its previous incarnations ever called for the exercise of India's nuclear option even as they did not advocate its closure either. The minimal common position across the political spectrum then was a constant technological upgrading of the option which partly satisfied the scientocracy. But it is doctrine and the factors that help change doctrine, never the continuity of nuclear preparations or the 'continuous' pressures from this or that lobby within the strategic enclave that is decisive in explaining why India crossed the Rubicon in 1998. After all, the decades long continuity of nuclear preparations is evident in the histories of South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Pakistan and Israel. But in none of these cases was it inevitable that a cumulative pressure from vested interests tied to the politics and institutions of preparation would crucially determine the ultimate outcome. Pakistan would not have gone nuclear if India had not done so first. Israel even today is not destined to cross the threshold to open nuclear status.

It is only in 1996 that for the first time ever a non-BJP government even accepted publicly the doctrinal position that nuclear deterrence was relevant to Indian national security! Earlier occasions during which the possibility of further nuclear tests were considered, only to be ultimately rejected (such as in 1982 and December 1995), in the absence of any doctrinal break should be situated in the context of an ongoing discussion in key government circles on how best to maintain and upgrade the option while maintaining ambiguity rather than be seen as suggesting a decisive break with this posture. It is revealing, to say the least, that after the 1998 blasts, the Congress was caught completely by surprise and never claimed that it had at any time in the past considered crossing the policy Rubicon even though under the Indira Gandhi and Narashimha Rao governments further tests had been considered.

In our book we have stressed two important turning points, both to be explained by policy ruptures not by the continuity of practices and pressures. The first shift was from abstinence to ambiguity, from the Nehru era to the post-Nehru era. The second is the rupture constituted by the rise of Hindutva and the BJP's accession to power in 1998. Many an informed commentary has suggested that despite Nehru's formal doctrinal and policy posture opposing India's acquisition of even nuclear capability there were a few occasions on which he expressed reservations and hinted or indicated that a future

India was not bound by his dominant commitment not to acquire such capability. Moreover, on some private occasions these qualifications about future possibilities were more clearly expressed. Finally, the actual organisation of a civilian nuclear energy regime inevitably provided the wherewithal to develop military-related nuclear capacities and that the secrecy surrounding the activities of the DAE, fully known to, indeed endorsed in law by Nehru, indicates his own ambivalence in this matter.

These commentaries are helpful in showing a Nehru somewhat more hesitant than his public persona. But this is precisely the point! What is important is the *overwhelming thrust* of Nehru's *public* commitments and of his Congress government's *official* policies not his much more infrequently expressed reservations about future political uncertainties that might occasion reconsideration of India's nuclear abstinence, ponderings about which usually the few rather than the many were privy to. Even Nehru's recognition of the dual capacities and potential of the DAE is hardly the most pertinent issue. It was the dominant public posture, not the private or closed-door Nehru, the mostly adamantly anti-nuclear Nehru rather than the rare, hesitant Nehru, that was decisive in determining the nuclear *policy doctrines* of his government. It does grave injustice both to the overall sensitivity and integrity of Nehru's thinking about nuclear weapons to make him out to be some kind of closet nuclear ambiguitist which he was not! Indeed, it was the public legacy that he attached to the Congress on this issue that ensured the *continuity* of Congress official policy against nuclear deterrence thinking for decades after Pokharan I, and because of this continuity, the abiding reluctance of the Congress to cross the nuclear threshold.

The second shift – from ambiguity to open development and declared status – is also a break. But certain lobbies or currents have a vested interest in downplaying this and instead stressing not just continuity, but a cumulative dynamic that supposedly made the 1998 tests virtually inevitable. Clearly, those who desired India to go nuclear in 1998 or came around to supporting and endorsing this decision find it very convenient to deflect criticism on this score by painting such an outcome as effectively unavoidable and largely determined by a prior unfolding political or practical 'logic'. So to this extent the Sangh, for example, wishes to stress factors of continuity with the past. Where it does wish to stress some kind of break with the past is to highlight its own singularity in being the one force with the courage and ideological commitment to do what external and internal requirements had long demanded but was not done because of the pusillanimity of other political forces which admittedly had partially paved the way.

The other two constituents of the strategic enclave besides reigning policy-makers, the scientocracy and the strategic community, had reason to stress continuity even more strongly. The first could thereby exaggerate its own importance and had any way been less ambivalent about the bomb than many others. Most of the second group, now that it had come around to endorsing the 1998 tests, had cause to obscure their own prior inconsistencies and hesitations, their previous flip-flops between advocating ambiguity consistently and open nuclear status only occasionally and that too more in the speculative mode than as an outright and urgent demand. They after all, had even lesser input than the scientocracy which also did not have much say in the BJP-led government's decision. Indeed, the top leaders of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) had far more say in the decision to go ahead with Pokharan II than either of these lobbies, an inference that should be obvious to even the most casual observer of the Indian scene and to the nature of the interconnections within the Sangh. But then this reality doesn't fit easily nor well with the picture sought to be drawn of how important the strategic enclave has been in determining the overall nuclear trajectory of the country right up to the final denouement.

The most serious failure of analysis, however, has another and more distinctive root. It lies in the very nature of conventional Realist thinking that so dominates the approach of almost all who have written with any seriousness about the causes of Pokharan II. Realism separates the domestic from the external and pays the former little attention. The sub-discipline of Foreign Policy Analysis does look at the domestic but only to the extent of trying to find out who took what key decisions and how they were arrived at. Inevitably, this becomes a story of 'key' personalities, their psychologies and predilections, and of the intra-government or intra-bureaucratic tensions and manoeuvrings in which they are involved. What is missing, of course, is any attempt to provide an understanding of the much

wider and deeper web of social relations in which individuals and even the strategic enclave itself is immersed. In short, Foreign Policy Analysis is only a minor addendum to Realism and does little to correct its fundamental weaknesses.

Neither Realism nor Foreign Policy Analysis provides a serious historical sociology of power nor even a sociology of the intelligentsia or of the elite or of professionals. For example, the strategic enclave is decisively shaped by wider social and political currents in India which themselves undergo change over time. Within the intelligentsia and within the enclave, certain currents count for much more than others, above all the political guardians. Accordingly, the ideologies, beliefs and wider political and social networks with which they are associated should be given due weight but is not. Of the modern intelligentsia it can be accurately said that by and large they are the servitors of power and the status quo rather than its critics or confronters, and this has a great deal to do with precisely the issue of the distribution of power in modern societies and the relationship of professionals of all types (whether scientists, bureaucrats, members of the strategic community, media-people, or whatever) to these particular patterns of distribution and their variations in different national settings. In short, the professionals do not so much set the pace and direction of politics in India as generally follow and legitimise the direction set by others with far greater socio-political-ideological weight than themselves.

In the last twenty years who with democratic sensitivities can seriously doubt that the general direction that Indian society has taken has been deeply disturbing and that the political-ideological pace-setters in this regard have been the forces of the Sangh. It is only because Realism is so barren and inadequate an explanatory paradigm that it becomes possible to elide altogether the issue of Hindutva in accounting for Pokharan II. In our book we can hardly claim to have provided that deeper sociology of power or a well-constructed sociology of the Indian intelligentsia that would properly situate it and the strategic enclave in the wider field of forces that traverse Indian society and polity. But we can claim to present two virtues to our readers.

We recognise the profound limitations of Realism and insist on avoiding its pull. It is not a guiding framework for our analysis either explicitly or implicitly. We also provide what we consider to be the crucial *mediating concept* by which the domestic can be properly and fully linked to the explanation of the causes of Pokharan II and the overall nuclear trajectory of India. To portray the whole story, much more work needs to be done and at least other and newer works have, and hopefully will continue, to contribute in their own ways to this common endeavour. We certainly do not claim to have provided a complete portrayal in our book. But we do believe that we have provided at least the skeletal framework on which the larger story can be constructed. It is given by the concept of *elite nationalism* and the story of why India went nuclear must above all be the story of how this elite nationalism has changed so as to enable the political and ideological pre-conditions to emerge that finally made India cross the nuclear Rubicon.

There follows from this a major programmatic conclusion. To contest Indian nuclearization is also to contest precisely the current form of this elite nationalism. To reverse the nuclear path India has set upon will require us to oppose the highly aggressive and belligerent, the intolerant and exclusivist form of Indian nationalism that today has far too many people, albeit in the elite, under its partial, substantial or complete sway. We hope there will be many among our readers who will join this endeavour.

#### NOTES

1. G. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*, Oxford University Press, India, 2000; Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, Harper Collins, India, 2000; Raja Menon, *A Nuclear Strategy for India*, Sage Publications, India, 2000.
2. This notion, useful within limits, was first presented in Itty Abraham's, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1998. This book deals

with the period up to 1974 and the first explosion. Unfortunately, subsequent writers seeking to explain Pokharan II have thought it fit to make this strategic enclave, whether or not they have called it that, not merely the central, but almost the sole, arena of their investigations in order to explain the causes behind Pokharan II.