



***NUCLEAR SYMBOLISM AND RITUAL—UPHOLDING THE NATIONAL MYTH:
A STUDY OF INDIAN AND PAKISTANI NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION***

BY

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The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



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ABSTRACT

This study suggests studying nuclear proliferation as an outcome of national myth. It begins by examining the theoretical role of myth in general and then specifically political myths. Ultimately, it describes myth as a conceptual entity that provides meaning and context to objective facts. Through the use of symbolism and ritual, ideas become reality. This study focuses on how national myth influences nuclear posture. It claims nations resist pressures from changes in environment to protect national myth by insuring the ritual and symbol remain congruent with the myth. The study examines this phenomenon by looking at the fifty-year history of India and Pakistan's path to full nuclear weaponization, ultimately concluding that analyzing a nation's nuclear proliferation as symbol and ritual provides insights that other reductionist theories cannot. Finally it suggests the study of nuclear symbolism and ritual of future nuclear proliferators, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, will prove useful for U.S. policy makers and their anti-proliferation agenda.



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Chapter 1

Introduction

I earnestly hope that the fearful nature of these [nuclear] weapons will lead not only to a total banning of their production, but also to the realization of that war itself should be abolished as a means of settling any problem.

Indian President Rajendra Prasad, February 21, 1955

We have a big bomb now

Indian Prime Minister Atal Bahari Vajpayee, May 13, 1998

On May 11th 1998, India successfully tested a nuclear weapon and thus became a nuclear-armed military power. Only days later, India's regional foe Pakistan accomplished the same feat. In hindsight, this series of events might not seem puzzling. India, threatened to the west by Pakistan and to the north by China, and also laden with domestic problems, had reasons to accelerate its nuclear program. Pakistan, with its inferior conventional force, in turn required a security guarantee vis-à-vis India. But little in international affairs is ever so simple. India and Pakistan had dealt with similar problems since each gained its independence in 1947; and while both states had previously dipped their toes in the murky waters of nuclear proliferation, they waited until 1998 to take the full leap. How do we explain this outcome? Why did India and Pakistan not go "all in" on nuclear weapons until 1998? And what drove these states to finally cross the nuclear weapons threshold?

Why Focus on India and Pakistan?

The answers to these questions may not only shed light on the proliferation choices of India and Pakistan, but could also illuminate why others states might seek to acquire nuclear weapons. Since 1945, 23 nations have had various kinds of nuclear weapons programs in various stages of development.¹ Of these 23, five are designated nuclear states under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT): the United States, the

¹ United Nations, *Disarmament, Critical Disarmament Issues, Delegitimizing Nuclear Weapons*. A Panel Discussion held by the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security on December 6 2010 (New York: UN, 2011), https://unoda-web.s3-accelerate.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/assets/HomePage/ODAPublications/AdhocPublications/PDF/DELEGITIMIZING_NUCLEAR_WEAPONS.pdf, 8.

Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, France and China. An additional four are currently recognized to have active weapons programs: India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel. With so few examples of past proliferation, it is critical to glean as much as possible from each case, so to better address the threat of proliferation in the future.

India and Pakistan's dyadic and adversarial relationship provide a unique observation. While it is safe to say that the proliferation decisions made by these two states were not wholly constrained or dictated by the dyadic relationship, the two nuclear weapons programs clearly coincided. Furthermore, India and Pakistan have long-viewed each other as major security threats. The case of India and Pakistan may thus prove useful for understanding the potential for nuclear weapons proliferation in other regional rivalries, such as that between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Why do States Choose Nuclear Weapons?

Scott Sagan identifies three models that provide explanation for why nations choose to acquire nuclear weapons. First is the "security model" which suggests states acquire nuclear weapons in response to external threats. Second, is the "domestic politics model" in which political leaders and policymakers use nuclear weapons to advance domestic or bureaucratic interests. Finally, there is the "norms model" in which nuclear weapons represent modernity and serve as a source of international prestige.² With India and Pakistan, one can see evidence of all three of these models at work. But even when combined, these three models cannot fully account for the content and timing of proliferation decision-making across the dyad.

India and Pakistan faced regional security threats. Throughout the 51 years between independence and overt nuclear weapons testing, India and Pakistan faced significant security threats. China tested its first nuclear weapon in 1964, and India has a history of border disputes with both China and Pakistan. Pakistan has long-viewed India as a major threat to its sovereignty. The tensions between India and Pakistan boiled over in the 1971 war over East Pakistan (what became Bangladesh) and again during the Brasstacks crisis of 1986-1987. Overall, there were plenty of security-related reasons to

² Scott D. Sagan "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons" *International Security*. Vol. 21, Issue 3 (Winter 96/97): 54-86.

acquire nuclear weapons prior to 1998, so the security model cannot fully explain the timing of proliferation.

India and Pakistan had domestic and bureaucratic reasons for weaponization.

India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru established the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and put it under the control of civilian scientists who largely maintained their independence from politicians and the military. As George Perkovich has shown, these scientists had significant influence over the nuclear program and also had bureaucratic motivations to expand and weaponize the program.³ Still, India's nuclear weapons program was metered and slow-going. Plus, in 1987, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was plagued by corruption scandals and ostensibly considered testing a nuclear weapon as a diversion; yet he refrained from doing so.⁴ Then, in 1998, Prime Minister Vajapayee authorized India's overt weapons test shortly after passing his first vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha; thus, there was little need to shore up domestic support.⁵ When examining Pakistan, the bureaucratic argument also falls short. The Pakistani military took over of the government in 1977 following a coup and subsequently controlled all aspects of the state's nuclear weapons program. The military had bureaucratic motivations for acquiring nuclear weapons, and General Zia sought to accelerate the weapons program in the early 1980s. Still, we did not see a major shift in policy until 1998.

India and Pakistan sought to gain international prestige by developing nuclear weapons. This explanation potentially provides considerable insight into India's path to weaponization. When India opposed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), it attempted to gain international prestige by refusing to be relegated to the second-class status of nuclear have-nots.⁶ India also proved its technical prowess to the world with the 1974 peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE). But why did India stop short of weaponization in the 1970s, when nuclear weapons still remained a main source of prestige? By the 1990s, international norms had changed to an extent in that states pursuing nuclear

³ George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*, Updated ed (Berkeley London: University of California Press, 1999). 33.

⁴ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 292.

⁵ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 409.

⁶ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 6.

weapons were considered rogue. Thus, India's refusal to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996 did not garner international prestige; instead, India became an aberration of the international norm.⁷ India further snubbed international norms with the 1998 test. Therefore, desire for prestige cannot account for all of India's actions or its restraint. In Pakistan, the nuclear program was a source of domestic pride, but Pakistani leadership was under no illusion that weaponization would yield international respect. Following the 1998 test, Prime Minister Sharif cautioned his people to steel themselves for the inevitable international backlash and resultant economic hard times coming.⁸

Examining Proliferation through the Lens of National Myth

So, why did India and Pakistan opt to overtly test nuclear weapons in 1998 after avoiding such behavior over the preceding decades? In looking at this problem, I offer a different approach, distinct from each of Sagan's three models. Rather than showing how nuclear weapons served a specific interest, whether one of military security, domestic standing, or international prestige, I instead propose the value of analyzing nuclear weapons proliferation through a lens of symbolism, ritual, and national myth.

National myth represents how a collective political actor views itself and its place in the world. While a myth is not observable, it is manifest in visible symbols and rituals. Symbols and rituals derive from and reflect myth, but they also serve to prop up or reinforce myth. National myths are resistant to change, even with significant changes in the surrounding environment. As a state's external and internal environments shift over time, new objective facts can challenge the national myth; and existing symbols and rituals cease to effectively support the myth within the new environment. When this occurs, there is an inherent tendency for the state, whether purposefully or reflexively, to moderate its symbols and rituals in order to preserve its national myth. Symbols and rituals thus evolve in response to the environment, but the myth remains relatively constant.

Nuclear weapons technology, development, testing, and usage doctrine together constitute a rich source of symbols and rituals. In the decades leading up to the overt

⁷ India, while not the only non-signatory to the NPT or CTBT, it was definitely in the minority.

⁸ "Sharif Addresses Nation on Nuclear Tests" *PTV Television Network* in Urdu 28 May 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network, FTS 19980528000977.

weapons tests by India and Pakistan, nuclear weapons programs (or lack thereof) in each state helped underpin their respective national myths. But by 1998, a confluence of internal and external events had created a new environment in which the symbols and rituals associated with nuclear programs, unique to each state, were increasingly incongruent with national myth. Accordingly, I argue that the moves toward overt testing and weaponization – what appeared as sharp change in policy -- reflected efforts by both India and Pakistan to sustain national myth.

Roadmap

In support of this argument, and to more generally assess the linkage between national myth and nuclear proliferation, the remainder of the thesis consists of four chapters and a conclusion. The next chapter, Chapter Two, looks at mythology in broad terms and then examines more specifically the characteristics of political myth and the potential role of nuclear weapons. Chapter Three provides an historical overview of the relationship between India and Pakistan, focusing on the dyad's fifty-year road to nuclear weaponization. Chapter Four contains analysis of India's national myth and how this myth contributed to India's choice to proliferate. Specifically, this chapter looks at four events in Indian history: India's refusal to sign the NPT in the late 1960s, India's PNE in 1974, the refusal to agree to the CTBT in 1996, and, finally, India's successful tests and weaponization in 1998. With each of these events I analyze the environment, how aspects of the nuclear program served as symbols, and the rituals associated with the program. Chapter Five likewise looks at the case of Pakistan. With this case, I explore Pakistan's response to India's PNE, the aftermath of the Brasstacks crisis, and Pakistan's response to India's 1998 tests.

For these case studies, I draw on a large pool of both primary and secondary sources. These sources include contemporary news articles, editorials, radio broadcasts and public speeches. Of particular utility were documents located in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) daily reports and the Open Source Enterprise. The U.S. government operates these databases for use by the intelligence community.⁹

⁹ The articles found in these databases are culled from numerous international newspapers, periodicals, and transcribed from radio shows for use by the US intelligence community, and do not represent a comprehensive archive. However, despite this, I have found these databases to be quite extensive, pulling from some of the largest national periodicals and often offering opposing

Within these databases, I accessed numerous texts of original Indian and Pakistani periodicals and reports, as well as third party summaries. Together, these sources provided valuable insight into the role of national myth in India and Pakistan leading up to the overt testing and acquisition of nuclear weapons.



views. These reports include both exact texts of original Indian or Pakistani periodicals and reports, as well as third party summaries. These articles, editorials, and speeches offer insight into the context, content, and language of the manifestation of myth surrounding major events in India and Pakistan's histories.

Chapter 2

Myth: Characteristics, Purpose and Its Role in Nuclear Proliferation

The notion of myth may conjure up stories used by ancient man to explain an environment that he little understood or of which he had little control. But myths exist today just as much as they did in ancient times, and they exist for many of the same purposes and for the same reasons. Just as ancient myths bolstered communal and cultural identity, modern political myths foster national identity. Myths serve an important role in how modern states frame their environments and justify their actions. Donald Verene suggests, “Man is surrounded by a reality that he did not make, that he has to accept as ultimate fact. But it is for him to interpret reality, to make it coherent, understandable, intelligible.”¹ This is the role of myth both in ancient times and today.

In 1945, Ernst Cassirer delivered a lecture at Princeton University in which he discussed the characteristics and uniqueness of modern political myth. He argued that myth is not merely “the outgrowth of a primitive mentality,” but rather “still has its place in the most advanced stages of human culture.”² He cautions though, that we might not be aware of the myths that shape our thoughts and behaviors. As illustration, Cassirer recounts, “In Molière’s comedy *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, the hero of the play, M. Jourdain, is very much surprised when he first learns from his philosophical teacher that he has spoken prose for more than fifty years without even knowing it. We are exactly in the same position; we are speaking myth without being aware of the fact.”³ In essence, one can easily lose sight of the role and power of myth, failing to recognizing where reason and logic stop, and emotion, symbol, and myth begin. This holds true with nuclear weapons. National myth can fundamentally shape nuclear weapons programs and proliferation decision-making for decades without us even knowing it.

¹ Donald Verene, ed., “Language and Art II,” in *Symbol, Myth, and Culture Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer 1935-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 166–95. 195.

² Ernst Cassirer, “The Technique of Our Modern Political Myths,” in *Symbol, Myth and Culture*, ed. Verene (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 242–67. 245.

³ Cassirer, “The Technique of Our Modern Political Myths.” 245.

This chapter examines myth in its most basic sense: what is a myth, what are the characteristics of a myth and what do myths achieve within a society. Building on Cassirer's work, it further explores modern political myth as distinct from ancient myth and presents a model incorporating the elements of environment, myth, and observable artifacts in the form of symbol and ritual. Finally, this chapter considers the linkage between national myth and nuclear weapons.

The Basics of Myth

Merriam-Webster defines myth as “a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon.”⁴ This definition identifies three key characteristics of myth: they revolve in some aspect around fact or verifiable events, they embody the worldview or values of a collective group of people, and they support or justify an act or practice.

It is not the story that makes the myth, but the purpose the story serves in a society. Therefore, to understand what constitutes myth, one must first understand *why* myths are created. What purpose do they serve? Traditionally, myths have dealt with three subjects: death and how to overcome or transcend one's own mortality, the social order or hierarchy, and the nature of the universe and where man fits into it.⁵ Myths do not just explain the natural world; they explain man's interaction with the natural world. Therefore, the primary role of myth “is not to explain physical phenomena but human actions.”⁶ And while myths explain actions, more importantly they provide a channel to explore and explain human emotions.⁷ Through myth one can tie actions and decisions to emotion and accordingly bridge the gap between the tangible and the intangible. Further, myth provides a *common* explanation shared by a community. It lets an individual know that if he or she believes in the myth, he or she is not alone; there are others who feel and think the same way.⁸

⁴ Merriam-Webster, Inc., ed., *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh edition (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 2014).

⁵ Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live by* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Arkana, 1993). 23.

⁶ Cassirer, “The Technique of Our Modern Political Myths.” 248.

⁷ Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946). 43.

⁸ Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*. 37

While myth exists purely in the ideational domain, observable rituals and symbols emerge from and in turn support myth. Rituals are behaviors and activities that represent the physical enactment of myth.⁹ It is through partaking in rituals that one is brought into a cultural social order.¹⁰ In this sense, myth can prompt new activity as ritual or can assign broader meaning to existing activities, to include the routine and mundane. As Cassirer explains, “Myth alone can provide such a meaning. It becomes the interpreter of rite; it enables man to understand what he does.”¹¹ Once a practice becomes associated with myth, and hence becomes a ritual, continuation of the practice helps perpetuate the myth. Thus, ritual and myth exist in a circular logic.

Symbols also play an important role. Much like rituals, symbols exist both because of and in support of myth. Symbols can include both physical objects and the language one uses to ascribe meaning to objects. Words objectify things perceived by one’s senses. By naming something, one gives it a symbol that represents the sense.¹² Symbols translate myth into something observable in the physical world.¹³ For example, the United States of America does not actually exist in the physical world, but with lines drawn in a map, money printed with its name, and flag to fly on a staff, an idea becomes something one can see and touch.

Political Myth

Dating back to the time of Neanderthal man, myths have shared similar basic characteristics.¹⁴ Modern political myths serve the same function as any other myth in that they offer explanation of how man interacts with his environment and the decisions he makes. Political myths offer a sense of collective belonging and feeling; and through associated symbols and rituals, myths bridge the gap between the intangible and the observable world. What makes modern political myth different is the conscious and

⁹ Campbell, *Myths to Live by*. 45.

¹⁰ Campbell, *Myths to Live by*. 45.

¹¹ Ernst Cassirer, “The Technique of Our Modern Political Myths,” in *Symbol, Myth and Culture*, ed. Verene (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 242–67. 249.

¹² Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946). 45

¹³ Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*. 45

¹⁴ The earliest known evidence of myth dates to Neanderthal man who lived circa 250,000 to 50,000 BCE, indicated by burial sites containing food tools, which indicate some kind of belief in life after death. See Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live by* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Arkana, 1993)., Chapter 2 for more discussion.

deliberate development of myth to achieve a specific set of political objectives. Having observed the use of myth in Nazi Germany, Cassirer, elaborates,

Myth had always been described as the result of an unconscious social activity. But here were men who acted very deliberately and “according to plan.” They knew their way very well and watched every step. From now on myth was no longer allowed to grow up freely and indifferently. The new political myths were by no means wild fruits of an exuberant imagination. They were artificial things made by very skillful and cunning artisans. To put it bluntly we may say that what we see here before our eyes is a new type of a completely rationalized myth. The twentieth century developed a *technique* of mythical thought which had no equal in previous history. Henceforth myths were invented and manufactured in the same sense and according to the same methods as machine guns or airplanes. And they were used for the same purpose, for internal and external warfare. This was an altogether unprecedented fact, a fact which has changed the whole face of our modern political life.¹⁵

As noted above, myths are expressed in terms of symbols, to include the use of symbolic language. It is not just the meaning that language conveys, but also its ability to create emotions and expectations that is so important. And when it comes to “cunning and skillful” use of the language of political myth, ambiguity is often more effective than specificity. Ambiguity serves several purposes. Abstract terms can evoke basic, uncomplicated and very strong emotions. Abstract terms can cause both anxiety and subsequently reassurance.¹⁶ To say something can “restore national security” implies that national security is currently threatened and that it can be reestablished. Further, abstract terms are vague enough to mean many things to many people. Thus, many people can seem in agreement with a policy, even if for vastly different reasons.¹⁷ Ambiguity also allows for manipulation of meaning overtime. Edelman discussed this specifically in reference to legal language, but it can be true in any type of political language. Using words that seem easily definable (security, employment, etc.) accomplish two things: it gives the public a sense of a definitive meaning, while it also leaves room for maneuver for those exploiting it.¹⁸

¹⁵ Cassirer, “The Technique of Our Modern Political Myths.” 253.

¹⁶ Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. 116.

¹⁷ Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. 116.

¹⁸ Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. 139.

The chronic use of ambiguous clichés can usurp the meaning of the phrase and turn it into a primary goal of both the speaker and audience.¹⁹ According to Edelman, “Such mutual supplying of inartistic gratifications by speaker and audience can become a hazard to rational action because it can prevent systematic analysis of one’s situation and interests.”²⁰ One can see this used in U.S. political discourse when someone speaks of the “American way of life,” or during the Cold War it was imperative to “beat Communism”. These clichés became goals. This is true in the negative sense too. Just by calling something “un-American” it evokes an emotion and an assumed response to eliminate whatever is “un-American.” In addition, it implies that doing the opposite of what is “un-American” must be “American.”

Finally, ambiguity is a very important aspect of effective hortatory language, or language aimed at motivating an audience to action. When attempting to appeal to the masses, and garner widespread support for something, ambiguous language can be extremely efficacious. Edelman offers examples such as “democracy,” “justice,” and “public interest.” “The hortatory style consists formally of premises, inferences, and conclusions, some stated and other implied. The conclusions, either promises or threats, amount to appeals for public support, and this generality of appeal is the style’s most conspicuous formal element.”²¹ The result of the hortatory style is that it evokes emotions in the audience, thus making the unobservable feelings real:

The emotional fervor convert or overt in political argument and in reactions to it conveys a sense of the reality of the battle, the importance of the stakes, the gripping quality of the great drama of the states. Through participation in it emotionally, it becomes a medium of self-expression, a rite which helps the individual to reflect in action his own interest in, and relationship to, what [Harold] Lasswell has called a “symbol of the whole.”²²

By causing individuals to emote in similar ways, hortatory language becomes a symbol of the collective and a ritual all its own. If one has similar emotions as the group then one is

¹⁹ Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. 124.

²⁰ Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. 124.

²¹ Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. 134.

²² Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. 137.

a part of the group. The ambiguity allows people to feel the same way for many different reasons and thus still feel they belong to the group despite those differences.

Within a given state, rituals associated with political or national myth can include pledges of allegiance and other such oaths, and formal ceremonies such as state of the union addresses and parades. These rituals are performed in public and assign group meaning to individual action. Even mundane functions of administration and bureaucracy can support myth in this way. By formalizing and reinforcing a myth through administrative techniques (forming cabinet positions, requiring regular reports, etc.), premises that underlie a myth become normalized and taken for granted.²³

In his 1964 book *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, Murray Edelman suggests that we often focus our attention too much on actions and decisions, while failing to recognize the environment or setting being cast in order to achieve those actions.²⁴ He makes the point that setting is more than the physical environment; it is also the assumptions made about motivations and the causation for actions.²⁵ Because the environment consists of subjective as well as material elements, it is malleable. This notion of environment is critical to understanding the functioning of political myth. A given myth, along with its associated symbols and rituals, exists within a constantly changing environment. Myth serves to filter or translate the external environment (see Figure 1). Those who adhere to a myth view the world through a specific lens or with a specific bias; and new facts and events that challenge a myth are intentionally or unintentionally distorted and manipulated to align with the myth. In this way, a national myth can persist and remain stable despite a changing environment.

But this manipulation or filtering only works to a point. Either by gradual and cumulative shifts over time or as result of a single drastic event, the balance between objective reality and subjective myth can reach a tipping point where the myth can no longer effectively “absorb” environmental changes. When this happens, the associated symbols and rituals – the observable manifestations of myth -- that previously seemed natural, right, or normal are increasingly perceived as antiquated, irrelevant, and

²³ Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. 71.

²⁴ Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964). 95.

²⁵ Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. 103.

inappropriate. In effect, the symbols and rituals no longer support the myth. This destabilizing incongruity between environment, myth, and the symbols and rituals linked to the myth requires either a change in the myth itself or a revision of underpinning symbols and rituals. In an effort to preserve and propagate the national myth, political actors are driven to alter or even reinvent symbols and rituals to express the old myth in new ways, ways that makes sense within the new environment. If this succeeds, the myth remains intact. If this fails, the myth collapses.

The observable artifacts of national myth may consist of policies, technologies, doctrines, international agreements, military postures, and weapons programs. Thus, the process described above -- the deliberate or reflexive altering of symbols and rituals to preserve national myth within a changing environment -- may help us understand the evolution of nuclear weapons programs and proliferation decision-making.

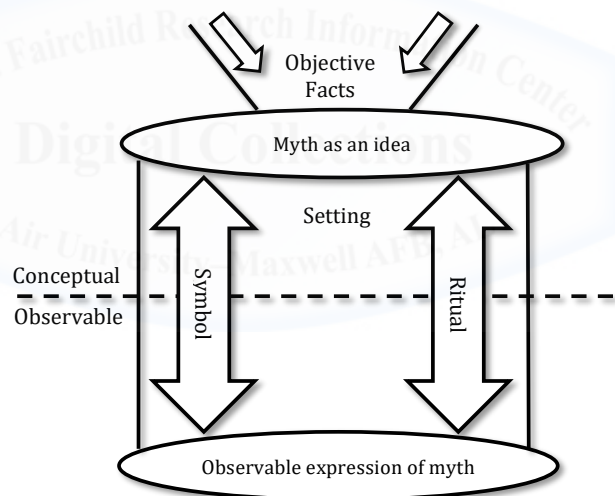


Figure 1 - *Myth to Reality*

Source: Author's original work

National Myth and Nuclear Weapons

Peter Lavoy's 2006 article, "Nuclear Proliferation Over the Next Decade" examined nuclear mythmaking, or what he described as the deliberate promotion of the idea that nuclear weapons are the answer to a national problem. Lavoy argues that successful nuclear mythmaking requires a conducive environment, as a hostile environment hinders the myth and therefore the myth must adjust to the existing

environment.²⁶ He further claims that success is dependent on decision-makers acting on their belief of the myth, with the indication of successful nuclear mythmaking being the increased prioritization of nuclear policy.

While Lavoy's work provides a useful perspective on the linkage between national myth and nuclear weapons, it is also somewhat short-sighted; and I offer a fundamentally different perspective of this linkage. First, as I propose above, myths are not merely subject to the environment but can also shape the environment, at least to a point. Also, Lavoy focuses on myths *about* nuclear weapons and thus does not capture the possibility that nuclear weapons can underpin a broader and more generalizable national myth. Thus, for Lavoy, a policy of non-proliferation represents a failure of nuclear mythmaking. By assessing nuclear weapons as artifacts of national myth, not as the basis or topic of national myth, one can conceive of scenarios in which a policy of non-proliferation effectively supports national myth. Conversely, successful proliferation or weaponization can be at odds with national myth. And, given different environments, policies of non-proliferation and aggressive weaponization can actually serve to underpin the same national myth.

Multiple aspects of nuclear weapons – to include technology, infrastructure, development, testing, and usage doctrine – serve as symbolic and ritualistic expressions of national myth. As such, these various aspects of a state's nuclear program are observable manifestations of national myth, both deriving from and reinforcing national myth. As a state's external and internal environments shift over time, new objective facts and events can challenge the national myth, making the associated symbols and rituals seem increasingly inappropriate and anachronistic. A shift in a state's nuclear policies and proliferation decision-making can thus reflect an effort to express the old myth in new ways, realigning environment, myth, and observable artifact. This perspective on national myth and nuclear weapons may shed light on the evolution of the Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons programs, to include the decisions to shift policy and engage in overt weapons testing in 1998.

²⁶ Peter Lavoy, "Nuclear Proliferation Over the Next Decade: Causes, Warning Signs, and Policy Responses," *Nonproliferation Rev.* 13, no. 3 (November 2006): 433–54. 436

Chapter 3

From Nationhood to Nuclear Weapons, An Historical Overview

India and Pakistan have a unique relationship to each other and to the nuclear weapon. Often grouped together and compared, India and Pakistan share a colonial history, adversarial rapport, and near simultaneous nuclear tests and weaponization. These two nations, perhaps more than any other, made deliberate and metered choices about their relationship with and use of nuclear weapons. In order to understand the meanings behind those choices, it is best to begin with a historical overview of both nations' road to proliferation.²⁷

India chose August 15, 1947 for its official independence day; not to be outdone, Pakistan chose August 14, 1947. The partition of British India into India and Pakistan was not without contention; however, the cultural, linguistic, and religious differences made the separation logical. From the beginning, this partition decision colored the relationship between the two infant nations and prompted three wars between 1947 and 1971. But despite the continued border disputes with Pakistan, India's first leaders focused primarily not on Pakistan, but rather the development and maintenance of India's role and standing in the world. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister and leader of the Congress Party, established India's nuclear science community to showcase and secure India's reputation as being a modern, non-aligned, peaceful nation. Unlike India, which eschewed alignment as part of a plan to be a major international player, Pakistan had more local, immediate problems. From the very start, Pakistan saw its continued existence as a separate nation as threatened. Partitioned from India due to its unique language, culture, and religion, Pakistan lived under a shadow of proving itself worthy of statehood.²⁸ As early wars with India confirmed its inferiority Pakistan did not shy away

²⁷ For an excellent and in depth history of Indian proliferation and the influences of India on Pakistan proliferation, I highly recommend, George Perkovich's *Indian Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*, Update ed (Berkeley London University of California Press, 1999).

²⁸ Haider K. Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric: Politics of Nuclear Weapons in India and Pakistan* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2000). 76.

from quickly aligning with other nations. Whether China or the United States, Pakistan found friendship with whoever could assist with the flow of conventional weapons and support. The significance of these relations ebbed and flowed over the next fifty years, as both China and the United States had their own agendas vis-à-vis Pakistan; but unlike India, which took great pride in outward independence, Pakistan had little hesitancy with seeking aid from outside sources. And while the results of these arrangements were threatening to India, they were not so threatening that India sought out its own alliances. This was the environment in which India found itself: attempting to prove its own peaceful right to independence in a bi-polar world living next door to a nation hell bent on defending its existence.

From the early days of independence, Nehru wanted to establish India as a modern nation, one that clearly had emerged from the shadow of colonialism and deserved equal footing with other great nations. Even before independence became official in 1947, Nehru established the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and made Homi Bhabha, a scientist, chairman. India's vast territory and huge population required energy on the cheap and nuclear power offered an inexpensive solution.

Indian nuclear power was a symbol of India's inherent modern capabilities, even if the facts belied something different. In 1948, the Indian government ensured the public monopoly of the entire nuclear energy sector.²⁹ This act, which established the AEC as the sole Indian nuclear program, also required that its actions remain secret. When questioned why a program, supposedly to be used for peaceful purposes only, would require secrecy, when a similar program in the UK only classified the defense portions of the program, Nehru stated, "I do not know how to distinguish the two [peaceful and defense purposes.]"³⁰

In fact, Nehru did not desire to distinguish the two. Nehru knew if India was to be respected as a modern nation, proving that it could develop a nuclear power would be useful; and allowing the potentiality of perhaps building a weapon intrigued Bhabha and

²⁹ George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*, Updated ed (Berkeley London: University of California Press, 1999). 15.

³⁰ As quoted in Ramana, M.V. "India's Nuclear Enclave and the Practice of Secrecy." Itty Abraham, ed., *South Asian Cultures of the Bomb: Atomic Publics and the State in India and Pakistan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). 46.

kept him committed.³¹ By putting the Indian nuclear program behind a wall of secrecy, Nehru could wash his hands of political backlash for spending, while the Department of Atomic Energy, (DAE) could operate in near autonomy. For example, in 1952 when pushed by the Minister of Finance about the huge amount of money funneled to the AEC, Nehru wrote back, “The work of the AEC is shrouded in secrecy. I try to keep in touch with it and get reports from time to time...I do not know how else we can proceed in this matter.”³² This ambiguity became emblematic of Indian nuclear policy. While claiming only peaceful motivations, the possibility of weaponization lurked in the shadows for the next 50 years.

In addition to laying the groundwork of the AEC, Nehru led the cause for one of India’s most important values: non-alignment. The USSR was still two years away from detonating its first nuclear weapon when India gained its independence in 1947, but the battle lines of the Cold War were already drawn. This environment of a world choosing sides was the environment in which India found itself. Fresh from shedding the mantle of colonialism, Nehru, set the standard that India would not be the puppet of the West or the Soviet bloc. Instead he advocated for a strategy of non-alignment.³³ He saw to it that India was neither for nor against the Soviet Union or the United States; but this did not mean he would avoid relations altogether. What he did want to avoid was becoming a pawn in someone else’s game of chess. In fact in 1955, when the USSR attempted to use a friendly visit with India to goad the West, Nehru quickly reminded the Soviets that he had no interest in the zero-sum Realpolitik, stating, “People in many parts of the world seem to think that if you are friendly with one person, that means you are hostile and inimical to the other—as if you can only be friendly with one to be hostile to another.”³⁴ While India felt great pressure and had great concern for its neighbor Pakistan, which partnered with both China and the United States over the years, India found great importance in maintaining an appearance of non-alignment.

³¹ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 14.

³² As quoted in Ramana, M.V. “India’s Nuclear Enclave and the Practice of Secrecy.” 41-67. Abraham, *South Asian Cultures of the Bomb*. 46.

³³ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 40.

³⁴ As quoted in Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 41.

Nehru served as Prime Minister of India until he died in 1964. He was replaced by Lal Bahadur Shastri, who ended up only serving two years. Despite his short tenure, Shastri made a contribution to India's eventual nuclear development. Beset by challenges to his role as Prime Minister, Shastri attempted to shore up support by increasing the success of India's nuclear program as an argument that he was also increasing India's success. Following China's nuclear explosion in October 1964, Indian policy makers quickly fell into debate over whether or not they should seek nuclear devices themselves. Following the 1962 border dispute war with China, China's newly demonstrated nuclear capability was seen as a real threat to India.³⁵ By November, after successfully convincing the Lok Sabha (India's lower legislative house) to vote down a motion by the opposition party to manufacture nuclear weapons, Shastri implored the Lok Sabha to remember that India stood for peace, stating, "We do not claim to be the noblest nation in the world. But certainly, we have some desire to save humanity from wars and annihilation. We cannot give up this stand."³⁶ He then went on to state India could build a nuclear bomb in "two to three years" if necessary, and those bombs could be used for peaceful civil programs such as building tunnels. This statement opened the door for the AEC to not just pursue energy programs, but explosive devices as well.³⁷ This statement also ushered in India's public policy of nuclear ambiguity.

India's next Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, continued the trend of ambiguity and non-alignment as she navigated India through contentious debates about the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. The early years of her tenure were marked by an increasing security concern over China and China's relationship with Pakistan. This security discussion, which was a common topic among India's defense professionals, focused on conventional capabilities. Whether it was because India strictly limited military involvement in its nuclear program or because civilian policy makers truly wanted to keep the program peaceful, developing nuclear weapons as a way to counter the Chinese threat did not enter the defense community's considerations.³⁸

³⁵ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 85.

³⁶ As quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 82.

³⁷ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 83.

³⁸ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 130.

India's public reasons to oppose the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) had little to do with furthering its own nuclear program. Rather, explanations centered on the idea that the treaty amounted to nuclear apartheid. India took issue with the treaty because it would permanently divide the world into those that were already recognized as nuclear states and those that never would be. To add insult to injury, four of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, just happened to be four of the five recognized nuclear states.³⁹ In 1968, India refused to sign the NPT. Under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan also chose not to sign the treaty. Pakistan tied its nuclear policy to that of India and decided it could not limit its ability to use nuclear weapons nor should it strike out on a path dissimilar from India.

The next major security challenge for India and Pakistan occurred in 1971. India's support for the Bengali independence movement in East Pakistan resulted in the third war between the two since independence. The result was the loss of Pakistan's territory into what became Bangladesh. Pakistan despised Indian interference and saw this conflict as proof that India wanted to destroy Pakistan.⁴⁰ By all accounts, India won this conflict and once again proved its conventional superiority over Pakistan. India, however, did not see the results of the war so clearly. During the height of tensions, the US sailed the USS Enterprise into the Indian Ocean and sat off shore. India interpreted this as the US attempting to influence a private matter. While there was some question as to when exactly Gandhi authorized a test explosion, Perkovich's detailed research places the initial decision in late 1971 and the work began in 1972.⁴¹

While it took nearly two years of preparation, by spring of 1974 India was ready to test its first nuclear device. In the month leading up to the detonation, the US had irritated Indian policy makers with the idea of building a military base on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. News articles and speeches show just how incensed India was at the thought of the US building a base for its signature nuclear bomber, the B-

³⁹ The US, USSR, France, England and the Republic of China (ROC) are the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. While the Peoples Republic of China was recognized as a nuclear power, they did not take over for the ROC on the Security Council until 1971.

⁴⁰ Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 80.

⁴¹ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 172.

52, in India's own back yard.⁴² Just weeks before India's historic detonation, Indian national commentary decried the use of nuclear weapons outright.⁴³ Regardless, on May 11th, India crossed a threshold and detonated its first nuclear device.

India immediately branded this detonation, "peaceful." India insisted that the explosion paved the way for mining and exploration of natural resources.⁴⁴ Pakistan thought otherwise and took issue with what they saw as clearly provocative. Bhutto, who saw only the coercive utility of nuclear power, vowed never to succumb to "nuclear blackmail" by India.⁴⁵ And while both the Indian press and diverse political parties lauded the inaugural explosion, by the August annual Independence Day address to the nation, Gandhi saw fit to mention India's nuclear proliferation only once.⁴⁶ As appeared to be a trend, the public debate and controversy over India's nuclear proliferation would ebb and flow.

One distinct change though, was the formalization of India's "nuclear option." Once again, Indian and Pakistani nuclear strategies would move into the realm of opacity and ambiguity. Perkovich notes, "India possessed the technological capacity to develop nuclear weapons if security interests required it, but it would refrain from exercising this military option."⁴⁷ This policy allowed India to maintain a disarmament argument, while still attempting to deter threats from Pakistan and China.⁴⁸

Pakistan, meanwhile, was technologically and scientifically behind its threatening neighbor, and Bhutto, also struggling domestically, felt pressure to catch up. At times, he

⁴² "Parliament Discusses Defense Needs" *Delhi Domestic Services* in English 25 Apr 1974. FBIS Daily Report. Middle East & Africa Edition 26 Apr 1974. U1.

⁴³ India/Yugoslavia Joint Communiqué, 1 April 1974. FBIS Daily Report, Eastern Europe Edition 30 April 1974. I5.

India/Poland Joint Communiqué, 15 March 1974. FBIS Daily Report, Eastern Europe Edition 18 March 1974. G9.

⁴⁴ "Reportage on 'Peaceful Nuclear Explosion Test' Initial Report" *Delhi Domestic Service* in English 18 May 1974 FBIS Daily Report, Middle East & Africa Edition 20 May 1974. U1.

⁴⁵ "Bhutto Address" *Karachi Domestic Service* in English 19 May 1974. FBIS Daily Report Middle East & Africa Edition 21 May 1974. T1.

⁴⁶ Mohan Sunderrajan interview of Dr. Rajaram Remanna 18 May 1974. *Delhi Domestic Service* in English, 18 May 1974. FBIS Daily Report Middle East & Africa Edition 20 May 1974. U1. "Gandhi Addresses Nation on Independence Day" *Delhi Domestic Service* in Hindi 15 August 1974. FBIS Daily Report Middle East & Africa Edition, 15 August 1974. U2.

⁴⁷ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 189.

⁴⁸ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 189.

was overbearing in his attempts to openly and clandestinely purchase a centrifuge and other necessary equipment. The US clamped down on international sales with the 1978 Nuclear Nonproliferation Act and the 1980 Pressler Amendment.⁴⁹ These actions reduced conventional weapon sales to Pakistan as long as Pakistan sought nuclear weapons technology. However, with the rise of General Zia ul-Haq, as the head of the Pakistani government, the nuclear program improved. The opposite of India, in Pakistan, the nuclear program was under the control of the military. Now that the military and the policy side merged, General Zia was able to push policy that matched nuclear ambitions. When the USSR invaded Afghanistan, the U.S. became much more willing to certify Pakistan's non-nuclear status and became more amenable to supplying Pakistan with conventional weapons.⁵⁰

The Indian military exercise known as Brasstacks would thrust the question of nuclear proliferation back into the forefront. Brasstacks was an arguably ill-conceived military training event which took place May 1986-February 1987. While the extended exercise took considerable planning and was designed to showcase Indian conventional capability, India failed to inform Pakistan of the scale of the event. When two armored divisions, one mechanized division, and six infantry divisions coalesced on India's border with Pakistan, Pakistan leadership was understandably concerned.⁵¹ By January 1987, Pakistan had reinforced its side of the border as well. With tensions escalating quickly, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (Indira's son), was faced with the prospect that this exercise could result in war. Talks between the two nations were initiated and a settlement was reached to gradually withdraw troops from the border. The crisis fizzled out just as quickly as it came. But just as it faded away, another controversy was brewing.

On March 1, 1987, the father of the Pakistani nuclear program, A. Q. Kahn, was quoted in the British newspaper *The Observer* as saying Pakistan had developed a nuclear

⁴⁹ Samina Ahmed and David Cortright, "Pakistani Nuclear Opinion and Nuclear Weapons Policy" pp3-27. Samina Ahmed and David Cortright, eds., *Pakistan and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options*, Notre Dame Studies on International Peace (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998). 10.

⁵⁰ Samina Ahmed and David Cortright, "Pakistani Nuclear Opinion and Nuclear Weapons Policy" pp3-27. Ahmed and Cortright, *Pakistan and the Bomb*. 11.

⁵¹ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 278-279.

weapon and would use such weapon “if our existence is threatened.”⁵² Kahn immediately denied the statement, saying it was “false and concocted.”⁵³ India then chastised Pakistan, and the two nations traded claims of clandestine motives while they professed their own peaceful intentions. Once again, the nuclear programs ebbed back behind a myriad of other pressing problems for both nations.

In the following years, India would continue to promote its policy of a “nuclear option.” India’s strict moral stance against nuclear weapons, as well as a series of other domestic economic and political concerns, reduced the likelihood of India weaponizing its nuclear capability. Instead the focus shifted to weapon delivery, specifically, missile technology, should India ever need to “go nuclear.”⁵⁴ Rajiv Gandhi was able to justify the costs of the new Prithvi and Agni missiles because of the growing perceived threat from China.⁵⁵

Pakistan, meanwhile, continued to work on its nuclear program. In 1992, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Khan pronounced that Pakistan had the capability to make a nuclear weapon; and in 1994, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif declared they had weapons in their possession.⁵⁶

By 1995, a new attempt at international nuclear restraint was taking form in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). India, which had long advocated for nuclear disarmament, advocated against signing the treaty. Arguing that it was a mere extension of the nuclear apartheid of the NPT, Indian policy makers took issue that the major nuclear states could still accomplish sub-critical testing. Furthermore, they argued that the CTBT did not limit the major powers from expanding their nuclear arsenals, as they had advanced their technology to the point where they could do so without full yield testing.⁵⁷ India contended this treaty merely removed the ability of other nations to

⁵² As quoted in “Nuclear ‘Expert’ Denies Report” *Hong Kong AFP* in English 1 Mar 87. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition 2 Mar 1987. F4.

⁵³ As quoted “Nuclear ‘Expert’ Denies Report” *Hong Kong AFP* in English 1 Mar 87, FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 2 Mar 1987. F4.

⁵⁴ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 295.

⁵⁵ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 302

⁵⁶ Ahmed and Cortright “Going Nuclear: The Weaponization Option.” 89-107. Ahmed and Cortright, *Pakistan and the Bomb*. 91.

⁵⁷ Satish Kumar “Who Sets the Tone?” *The Hindustan Times* in English 7 Jul 1995. 11. Open Source Network “Article Views Influence on Test Ban Treaty” FTS 19950707000036.

develop weapons. Finally, the BJP party led a campaign that claimed security threats were too great to place any limits on India's nuclear capabilities.

Pakistan refused to sign the CTBT unless India did. The international political and diplomatic gains that could possibly be reaped from signing the CTBT could not outweigh the internal domestic politics that disallowed a unilateral action that would limit Pakistan and not India.⁵⁸ In the end, neither became signatories.

Two years later, India held elections for Lok Sabha ministers. The results put the BJP party in power, led by Atal Bahari Vajpayee. As part of the Indian election tradition, the BJP party issued their manifesto prior to the election, listing their priorities and programs. This manifesto included maintaining the option to induct nuclear weapons, establishing a national security council and performing the first ever strategic defense review.⁵⁹ On May 11th, just shy of the 25th anniversary of the 1974 "Peaceful Nuclear Explosion," India inducted its first nuclear weapon. On the 13th, India concluded its fifth test.⁶⁰ Vajpayee proclaimed, "We have a big bomb now." He followed by saying his government would "not hesitate to use these weapons in self-defense."⁶¹ Soon after, the Prime Minister's office modified that statement, clarifying, "India will not be the first to use nuclear weapons against anyone."⁶²

Just over two weeks later, on May 28th, Pakistan announced on national television, "Today we have settled a score."⁶³ Pakistan conducted a self-reported six explosions.^{64,65} Just like that, after over fifty years of espoused peaceful nuclear programs, both nations rather unceremoniously crossed a threshold into weaponization.

⁵⁸ Pervez Hoodbhoy "Pakistan's Nuclear Future" 69-87. Ahmed and Cortright, *Pakistan and the Bomb*. 83.

⁵⁹ Ashok K. Mehta, "Securing National Interest, BJP Style" *Indian Express*, 4 Apr 98 p.8, Accessed on Open Source Network, FTS19980404000430, 29 Jan 17.

⁶⁰ Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz "Indian an Pakistan Nuclear Weapons: For Better or Worse?" 135-174 Scott Douglas Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*, 3rd ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2013). 135.

⁶¹ As quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 420.

⁶² As quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 420.

⁶³ As quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 433.

⁶⁴ Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz "Indian an Pakistan Nuclear Weapons: For Better or Worse?" 135-174 Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*. 135.

⁶⁵ Pakistan conducted simultaneous explosions; so verifying numbers or yields of individual explosions is difficult. Although there is no doubt that they did bring weapons to yield, there is debate concerning the size and number of explosions.

What about this time and place allowed weaponization to make sense? This question can be examined by exploring the congruence and incongruence of symbols and rituals, which derive from and support national myth.



Chapter 4

India: Myth, Nukes, and Aspirations

We are different from others, and ours is not an aggressive policy.
Union Minister for Industrial Development Subramaniam

When India emerged from British control in 1947, it strove to prove two things to itself and the world. First, India deserved to be counted among the great powers; and second, India held a moral superiority over the other great states of the world.¹ These two core beliefs make up India's national myth. The expression of this myth can take many forms, both in international and domestic politics. The focus of this chapter is how this myth influenced India's nuclear posture. India did not make a quick and sudden leap into the world of nuclear weapons. Instead there was a slow and uncomfortable ease into it. For a nation outwardly committed to peace and nuclear disarmament, the fact that India ever took this route makes for a unique case study. Why did India take the actions it did when it did? This chapter will explore these questions by looking at four events over the nearly half century-long path India took to full, demonstrated weaponization. These four events are India's failure to sign the NPT, the PNE in 1974, India's refusal to ascend to the CTBT in 1996, and finally the overt weaponization tests in 1998. These events represent the contradiction of India's disarmament goals and its proliferation achievements, and they provide clear examples of how national mythology explains these apparent inconsistencies. I analyze each of these events, first by defining the environment or setting that existed during each event. Then I explain the symbolism of nuclear weapons at the time, and the rituals surrounding India's nuclear program. Finally, I analyze whether the symbols and rituals produced a nuclear posture congruent with Indian national mythology. Ultimately, this chapter shows India's posture and myth were mutually supportive through the NPT and PNE events; however, the decision to not sign the CTBT disrupted the congruency, thus the weaponization in 1998 was a mechanism for realigning the environment, symbol, and ritual with national myth.

¹ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 448.

Post-Colonial India Sets the Standard for the NPT

India's decision not to sign the NPT was its first foray into international nuclear politics. India's national myth provided the lens through which India's elite saw the events of the day. The 1960s ushered in a decade of turmoil around the world. The U.S. was getting further involved in Vietnam, the USSR had recently shot down a U.S. U-2, and changes were rampant throughout the continent of Africa. What made a great power a great power was changing rapidly. India saw this unstable environment through the lens of its national myth and created a setting characterized by a commitment to nonalignment, universal disarmament, and a fiery protection of its independence.

India saw its policy of nonalignment as crucial to its achievement of great power status. The world was divided between two camps, the Soviet Bloc and the West, and where one stood on all other issues reflected the camp to which one belonged. India, however, saw only danger in aligning with either camp. Prime Minister Nehru reminded his Congress Party in 1960 that this policy had proved to be the "correct policy in the 'historical crisis'" the world was facing.² He saw the brinkmanship of the USSR and US as indicative of what nuclear weapons could mean.

Nehru said that all this espionage is carried out because nations are in the 'grip of fear.' There are tens of thousands of planes armed with nuclear weapons flying all the time. There is terrible strain on pilots and others and it is possible that as a result of an accident or nervous breakdown of a pilot, the whole world might be engulfed in war...Nehru said that what is happening in the world shows the wisdom from every point of view of the policy of nonalignment followed by India. Those who are aligned today in military blocs are worried and frightened and the problems are indeed very great. They do not know what will happen to them. People are realizing in these aligned countries how much better has been India's policy. Even the half-witted people can.³

Nehru painted the picture of danger, not from an enemy state, but rather from choosing a side. Nonalignment was seen as the only choice. To be drawn into either of the two

² "Nehru Speaks to Congress Party Session" 6 Jun 1960. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 7 Jun 1960. O1.

³ "Nehru Speaks to Congress Party Session" 6 Jun 1960. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 7 Jun 1960. O4.

superpowers' orbits was to accept not only associated security threats, but also erosion of India's independence.

To achieve great power status also meant India had to maintain its independence. In 1964, *Delhi Domestic Service* summarized Prime Minister Shastri's statement before the All-India Congress Committee, where he eschewed an offering of nuclear protection from the US should he sign the NPT. According to Shastri, "India will neither manufacture an atom bomb nor accept a nuclear umbrella which will (word indistinct) our political and economic independence."⁴ And while one can only speculate as to what exact word Shastri used, its meaning is clear: accepting nuclear protection from an outside power would diminish India's independence.

Finally, India, as a morally superior nation, pushed for universal nuclear disarmament. As shown above they saw nuclear weapons as a pathway to war and unacceptable danger. They frequently advocated for and pushed the nuclear powers to disarm. Nehru stated in 1960, "It is obvious that every country, certainly India, is deeply interested in this question of disarmament because of the consequences of not finding a solution...Therefore, I think, the most vital question in the world as it is today is disarmament."⁵ What was critical though, is that every nation was part of the same policy. To allow some nations to maintain nuclear weapons while others committed to not acquiring them was nothing more than nuclear apartheid, an extension of colonialism, by which India could not abide.⁶

Nuclear Symbolism

India's use of its nuclear program served as a symbol that directly played into the belief of great power status and moral superiority. In the leadup to India's decision to not sign the NPT, nuclear capability meant two things. India saw nuclear weapons as corrupt, and a symbol of what was wrong with the world. At the same time, they viewed nuclear power, and the science behind it, a symbol of India's strength and capability.

⁴ "Nonofficial Resolution" *Delhi Domestic Service in English* 9 Nov, 1964, FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition 10 Nov 1964. P6.

⁵ "Nehru Speaks on India's Foreign Policy" *Delhi ISI in English* 31 Aug 1960, FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition 1 Sep 1960. O1.

⁶ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 138.

Nuclear weapons were seen as corrupting. As shown above, Nehru saw them as the root cause of the dangers the world was experiencing. To choose to manufacture nuclear weapons would be to expose India to such corruption and preoccupation with war.⁷ To manufacture weapons, even while still nonaligned, was unacceptable to India. Therefore, by altogether refusing to manufacture them, the absence of a nuclear weapons program became a symbol in and of itself. Nuclear power, however was a different thing altogether.

Nuclear energy was also seen as a symbol of India's potential, capable of pulling India out from under the shadow of colonialism. To Nehru, "a newly trained technical cadre committed to national growth, and by extension, national pride, would transform the state and make it 'developed.' This was not just sensible policy; the very legitimacy of the state depended on it."⁸ Prime Minister Shastri continued this rhetoric. For example, in 1964, when answering questions to the upper house of parliament, he made the point that most of the work being done in atomic research and in the AEC is being done solely by Indian Scientists.^{9, 10} India's nuclear program was clearly a matter of pride.

In addition, nuclear power became synonymous with nuclear power for peaceful purposes, further reiterating a moral high ground in comparison to the US and USSR. In speech after speech, whenever India's nuclear program is mentioned, it is reiterated that the program existed only for peaceful purposes. Frequently, it is even explicitly stated India will not manufacture a weapon. The government wanted to make it perfectly clear that India would not go down the ill-conceived route of weaponization. Speaking at the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization in 1964, shortly after China tested its first atomic bomb, the Indian Educational Minister, M. C. Chagla, was reported to

⁷ Jacques E. C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). 176.

⁸ Scott Douglas Sagan, ed., *Inside Nuclear South Asia* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Security Studies, 2009). 121.

⁹ "Shastri, Foreign Minister Responds to Questions" Delhi Information Service of India in English 22 Sep 1964. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition 23 Sep 1964. P1.

¹⁰ The idea that India was solely developing its nuclear program was more important than the reality. In fact, India benefited greatly from technology, equipment, and the expertise from many foreign countries to include the United States and Canada. This reality, however, was downplayed for an appearance of an independent nuclear program.

have said, “India could make an atom bomb...but it neither had the desire nor the intention. India will use nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes.”¹¹ This expression succinctly sums up what nuclear power symbolized to India. It was proof of its great power potential, but moral scruples and discipline ensured India would not be lured into going all the way to weaponization.

Nuclear Ritual

The manner in which India treated its nuclear program underscored the myth of India’s greatness. Through both the tacit support by Indian media and the disassociation from the military, the program was normalized. M. V. Ramana’s study of India’s nuclear program shows how the media supported the program and rarely offered critical viewpoints. In addition, the DAE and journalists worked together to educate the public on the benefits of the program. The DAE even published pamphlets celebrating the program’s successes.¹² Each accomplishment resulted in press releases for major media outlets, while promising more success in the future.

The myth of moral superiority was further supported by who was not part of the program. From the very beginning, the military community was purposefully excluded from India’s nuclear program. Scientists held all the initiative to what shape the program would take. As far as policy went, neither the press nor parliament was interested in asking the military establishment its opinion.¹³ Nehru felt that involving the military would corrupt the program into the very thing that India was trying to rise above.¹⁴ Prime Minister Shastri also felt that the AEC and military should not co-mingle. He actually instructed the AEC to not make any contact with the Ministry of Defense laboratory, so to limit the chance of the AEC weaponizing its nuclear technology.¹⁵ For a program that represented peaceful intentions, any military involvement would be antithetical.

The NPT as nuclear posture

¹¹ “India Urges CPR Admission to United Nations” Delhi Information Service of India in English 21 Oct 1964, FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition 22 Oct 1964. P1.

¹² M. V. Ramana “India’s Nuclear Enclave and the Practice of Secrecy” 41-67. Abraham, *South Asian Cultures of the Bomb*. 50.

¹³ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 130.

¹⁴ Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 31.

¹⁵ Hyman, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*. 179.

When taken as a whole, one can see why India would be motivated not to sign the NPT. Originally, they had been supporters of a non-proliferation treaty, *as a step toward a disarmament treaty*. However, as the treaty took form, this was not to be the case; rather it was designed solely to prevent proliferation, not limit those countries that had already ascended to nuclear power status. This institutionalized world of have and have-nots smacked of nuclear apartheid.¹⁶ Perkovich notes, “Nuclear weapons were the manifestation and symbol of the world’s dominant white nations; the nonproliferation treaty represented an effort to keep this power from the developing, mostly dark-skinned world.”¹⁷ The NPT would entitle the existing nuclear powers to nuclear weapons, but no one else. This agreement would reward the existing nuclear powers for immoral behavior that held the world hostage. India, however, being morally superior, non-aligned, and clearly moved by peaceful intentions, was able to stand up to such an affront. With its program that symbolized peaceful intentions, and that was led by scientists, not the military, India would not be limited by outside nations. If India were to sign the NPT, it would undermine the argument for their moral superiority. For if India signed, it would refrain from manufacturing weapons because such action was prohibited, not because India was morally superior. In addition, signing the NPT would place external controls and limits on both India’s nuclear program and the scientists who controlled it. Signing the NPT would result in an observable manifestation that would be incongruent with the national myth. However, with the refusal to sign the NPT, India’s national myth remained intact.

India’s Peaceful Nuclear Explosion

Just seven years after India resolutely decided not sign the NPT, it progressed further into world of nuclear weapons, this time with a self-proclaimed “Peaceful Nuclear Explosion.” The prime minister at the time was Nehru’s daughter, Indira Gandhi. She, like her father, openly subscribed to India having great power potential. She was committed to non-alignment, disarmament, and was fiercely committed to maintaining India’s independence in all matters. Nehru used the NPT to build up India’s myth; his daughter used the PNE to protect it.

¹⁶ Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 36.

¹⁷ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 138.

The events that took place in the early 1970s represented a world that did not respect India. Three items in particular demonstrate how India national myth provided the lens to see current events. Events such as the Chinese threat, the United States' growing relationship Pakistan, and the United States' growing interference in regional matters all seemed to threaten India's national myth.

On the surface, China posed a substantial security threat to India. In 1962, India had fought a major border war with China. Two years later China demonstrated its nuclear capabilities, and in 1970 China test fired a long-range missile capable of threatening India. And while the Indian Institute of Public Opinion commented that the effect was to question India's national security and even raise the question of its nuclear policy, it more so had a humbling effect and hurt national pride.¹⁸ K. Subrahmanyam, long an advocate for developing nuclear weapons, expressed dismay when noting that China's actions had not hardened the view that China was a security threat, but instead provided opportunity to recommit to Nehruvian moral idealism.¹⁹ Gandhi was not interested in responding in kind to China's saber rattling.

Gandhi, like her father before her, was fiercely committed to independence, something she saw being threatened by U.S. involvement in Pakistan. Pakistan represented a roadblock to India becoming a regional hegemon.²⁰ The threat, however, was not interpreted as Pakistan acting alone, but rather Pakistan acting as a puppet of the United States' interests in the region. Indian author V.P. Dutt wrote that Gandhi observed the U.S. pumping conventional arms into Pakistan while attempting to sell economic aid to India at the price of political leverage. According to Dutt, the U.S. was not trying to aid the region, but rather trying to make the region dependent on the U.S. "Washington did not look kindly upon strong independent countries in Asia, did not apparently wish to see the emergence of a strong India."²¹ This was an affront to Indian great power status and independence.

But perhaps the biggest insult to India's autonomy in the region was the overt move of the U.S. into the Indian Ocean. This began late into the 1971 war with Pakistan

¹⁸ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 151.

¹⁹ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 157.

²⁰ Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 49.

²¹ As quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 167.

partially over East Pakistan's bid for independence. The U.S. ordered the aircraft carrier, *USS Enterprise* and its nine associated warships into the Bay of Bengal. Whatever the U.S. offered for its reasoning, India would have none of it. To India, this was clearly the U.S. attempting to influence the outcome of a private regional matter.²² And even though Pakistan offered a cease-fire soon thereafter, and by all accounts India won the 1971 conflict, the incursion by the U.S. into the matter was emblematic of its lack of respect for India.

This only intensified when the U.S. sought to build a base in the Indian Ocean on the island of Diego Garcia. This was seen as an erosion of Indian independence and an incursion on their sphere of influence. On March 6, 1974, the Delhi newspaper, *The Patriot*, printed an opinion piece stating, "Diego Garcia represents the opening moves in a campaign of threat and blackmail to which the peoples round the Indian Ocean must get accustomed...Neither America nor the two other imperialist powers who are taking over the Indian Ocean are accustomed to heed protests from militarily weak governments. The only language they understand is the language of 'nuclear capacity' which is the language in which we should perhaps now begin to talk."²³ Thus, as India dealt with the international environment, it saw itself still very tied to the Nehruvian national myth. This is the setting in which Gandhi approached the decision to invoke nuclear symbolism to reiterate and strengthen the national myth.

Nuclear Symbolism

The PNE of 1974 supported the national myth, for it symbolized both India's power and moral superiority and made sense given the interpretation of the environment of the time. Whereas nuclear power production once served to prove the capability and potential of India, now India needed others to recognize and respect that capability. India needed an event as equally drastic to the U.S. as the *USS Enterprise* and Diego Garcia was to India.

²² Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 164.

²³ "'Patriot' scores Moynihan's remarks on Diego Garcia" Delhi PATRIOT in English 6 Mar 1974 FBIS Middle East and Africa Edition, 14 Mar 1974. O1.

From the very first announcement of the test, the label of “peaceful” was essential so that the symbol remained complementary to India’s myth of moral superiority.²⁴ Some of the first reports of the explosion on May 11th emphasized the scientific utility of the explosion, pointed to its role in the peaceful use of nuclear weapons, and categorically denied any intention to build nuclear weapons.²⁵ “It is a proud day for India,” the chairman of the AEC declared upon, “when the mighty atom has been used for a laudable objective—a peaceful purpose. On this historic occasion let me recall the words of Jawaharlal Nehru: ‘Whatever might happen, whatever the circumstance, we shall never use this atomic energy for evil purposes.’ The prime minister reiterated this determination today. This experiment opens up new vistas for constructive activity in our country.”²⁶

In the days to come, more reports hailed India’s achievement using language vague enough to please those extolling the peaceful uses as well as those advocating for weaponization and a full-on nuclear deterrent strategy. The FBIS summary of news noted that the *Patriot*, which tended to lean pro-soviet and pro-weaponization, characterized the test as a warning to any nation that sought an “aggressive adventure” against India. In contrast, the *Hindustan Times* praised India for not only breaking the “nuclear monopoly” but also for doing so solely for peaceful purposes.²⁷ This is what made the PNE such an effective symbol of India’s national myth. It reinforced the great power potential of India and its nonalignment goals to the perfect extent. The NPE did not go so far as to diverge from the moral superiority set in place by Nehru, while it still demonstrated that India demanded the respect of a nuclear nation. No longer did that respect reside solely among the white nuclear powers; India too was now a part of that club even while rising above the fray of militarization.

Nuclear Ritual

²⁴ It is interesting to note, that nothing really made the 1974 explosion “peaceful” other than India’s labeling it as such. Granted, the device detonated was not “weaponized” but that is true, too, of the U.S. Trinity test and that never had “peaceful” intentions.

²⁵ Multiple summaries from the May 20, 1974 FBIS Daily Report, Middle East and Africa Edition, India subcategory, “U” pages.

²⁶ “Experts Interview on Test” Delhi Domestic Service in English 18 May 74, FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition 20 May 74. U2.

²⁷ “Press Views Experiment” Hong Kong AFP in English 19 May 74 FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 20 May 74. U5.

Like during the NPT, the military played essentially no role in the PNE. This was both a direct result of and support to India's myth of moral superiority. The fact that India chose not to weaponize their nuclear device in 1974 made sense given the organization and ritual surrounding the decision to test at all. The program had always been managed by the AEC, a scientific community, with direct control in the hands of the Prime Minister. While there is debate as to when Indira Gandhi ordered the test, and whether she did so of her own volition or was pressured into by the AEC, there is no doubt the military, both the uniformed members and the civilian Minister of Defense, were excluded from the decision process.²⁸ The defense establishment lacked any official influence before, during, and after the test.²⁹ To incorporate the military into the planning of the test would not enhance the national myth, but undermine it. After all, India claimed that nations who made nuclear weapons the backbone of their security regime suffered from an unexorcisable evil. After the test, the exclusion of the military helped create a posture that was congruent with the myth. Immediately following the test, India's Defense Minister Ram, confirmed this, stating India's nuclear capability would never be used for military purposes. "Our armed forces know this is not for their use."³⁰ At no time was the military consulted about what the explosion meant for their strategic planning, doctrine, or budgeting.³¹

The nuclear option maintains the alignment

After the 1974 PNE, India proved it had the capability to bring a nuclear device to yield. Theoretically then, it could weaponize, but had the sense not to. There is evidence Gandhi ordered the test in 1972, shortly after winning the war with Pakistan.³² By the mid-1970s, India was not militarily weak given its security environment; the 1971 war proved quite the opposite was true. What Gandhi did see was a nation absent of international respect, something that challenged the national myth and that she could not tolerate. Whereas India's nuclear program was a symbol used to express India's

²⁸ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 176.

²⁹ Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*. 183.

³⁰ "Ram on Nuclear Uses" *Bombay PTI* 19 May 1974, FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 20 May 74. U5.

³¹ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 177.

³² Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*. 185.

capability and independence in the 1960s, now it would reinforce the myth. With India incensed by the possibility of a US base at Diego Garcia, the test in May 1974 was perfectly timed. The fact that military never played a role in this decision only supported the symbolism of a peaceful nation, worthy of the same standing as the great nations, but morally superior enough to hold back. In this way, Indian policy makers were able to speak from both sides of their mouths: India deserved the respect of a powerful nation with nuclear weapons, for it was capable having them, but, at the same time India was charitable enough not to build them. The condemnation from the United States and other countries only played right into the narrative:

...[T]he Government of India fails to understand why India is being criticized on the ground [*sic*] that the technology necessary for the peaceful nuclear explosion is not different from that necessary for the weapons program. No technology is evil in itself. It is the use that nations make of technology which determines its character. India does not accept the principle of apartheid and matter and technology is [*sic*] no exception.³³

The PNE, as tangible proof of India's nuclear option, showed India's nuclear posture was still congruent with the national myth.

CTBT Tips the Balance

The ambiguous policy of a nuclear option, started under Nehru and reinforced by Gandhi after the PNE, served India well for nearly twenty years. By the early 1990s, India had refrained from conducting another nuclear test and managed to keep its nuclear capabilities "peaceful" even through tense trials, such as Brasstacks and A. Q. Khan's sudden, if later walked back, statements regarding Pakistan's nuclear capabilities. Whereas the failure to sign the NPT and the decision to go ahead with PNE fell in line with India's national myth, one will see this was not the case for the CTBT. In fact, the result caused an imbalance that would last until 1998.

India long defined its great power potential and moral superiority in contrast to Cold War bi-polarity. By the early 1990s this world was crumbling. India had built itself up in stark contrast to the two nuclear powers holding the world hostage with posturing and games. Now India could not be defined in contrast to that which no longer existed.

³³ "Gandhi renews nuclear technology offer to Pakistan" Delhi ISI in English 22 Jul 74 FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 23 Jul 1974. U5.

Nuclear arms reduction treaties were in vogue, negotiations were being floated toward a permanent NPT, and India sponsored the idea of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Prime Minister Gujral declared that Pokhran was a thing of the past, and many supporters of the CTBT agreed that while flawed, it was a step in the right direction.³⁴ But things quickly proved more complicated.

The changing environment challenged India's great power myth; and the long-time opposition party, the BJP, saw an opportunity to manipulate the setting to express the national myth in a new way. The early 1990s in India was a time of economic distress and political uncertainty. Budget cuts were common, especially to India's military.³⁵ This drawdown was in stark contrast to the influx of U.S. weapons to Pakistan in the 1980s during the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. Even after Pakistan's supposed forays into nuclear weapons development, the Brown amendment allowed continued U.S. weapon sales to Pakistan.³⁶ Furthermore, the Congress Party was growing weak and losing its hold on the Lok Sabha. The BJP, long advocates of India's nuclear program, had a message that took hold.

The BJP painted India as feeble and being held back from fulfilling its great power potential because not only the great powers, but also its neighbors, were embarrassing India. Old messages of nuclear apartheid surfaced again, but the nuance was different. During the NPT discussion in the 1960s, it was about India standing up to the white powers that sought to deny the brown nations; this time it was the world against India. Haider Nizamani writes, "At this juncture, Indian authors mention New Delhi's principles stand against the nuclear apartheid in the form of the NPT. Hence the Pakistani proposals are termed as ploys to demean the Indian status form a principled great power to a regional adversary of Pakistan—an identity unacceptable to India due to its size and being a civilizational entity."³⁷ The BJP became the voice of the opposition to the CTBT, and the voice of a strong India.

The BJP party led an all-out assault against the CTBT in the public forum, using arguments that were a new interpretation of the national myth. In an opinion article

³⁴ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 399, 381.

³⁵ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 322.

³⁶ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 366.

³⁷ Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 58.

published on June 12, 1996 in *The Times of India*, long time nuclear weapons supporter, K. Subrahmanyam wove together traditional and new arguments:

It could have been anticipated from the very beginning and we are not faced with the harsh truth that the Western powers are determined not to yield an inch on their stand that the CTBT is to be imposed on non-nuclear nations, especially on the three undeclared nuclear weapon powers, Israel, Pakistan, and India, while they move on to new technologies of computer assisted designing, testing, and manufacturing, with no commitment to nuclear disarmament. The US defence secretary and national security adviser have declared that they need nuclear weapons for the next 50 years and beyond...The appropriate thing to do is to withdraw from the Committee on Disarmament at this stage and declare that India's supreme security interests are being jeopardised by the treaty itself...Our objection on security grounds should be based on geostrategic reasons of being caught between China and Pakistan, the two countries allegedly having an ongoing nuclear technology relationship.³⁸

The idea that nuclear weapons should factor in as part of India's security establishment, and furthermore, that somehow India now faced a unique security threat, was a new argument in nuclear policy. By 1996, the BJP's argument had won out; India did not sign the CTBT.

Nuclear Symbolism

In 1974, India's nuclear program had been about expressing India's capabilities. While the success of the test demonstrated India's potential, it did not assist in improving the existence of the majority of Indians. By the mid-1990s, India was subject to a host of domestic problems and a setting that depicted a significant security threat. When India chose not to sign the CTBT, it was clear that India's "peaceful" nuclear program did not align with the changing environment.

During this time, India's nuclear program began to symbolize something new. It was a dividing line between the Congress Party, quickly falling out of favor, and the BJP party eager to restore India's greatness. Subrahmanyam explains, "With the condemnation of nuclear weapons now serving as an expression of dissent rather than consent vis-à-vis the existing regime and the political status quo, antinuclear discourses were invested with an additional and radical charge, namely, a *politics of anger*"

³⁸ K. Subrahmanyam "Banning Nuclear Tests Hard Decisions in the Making" *The Times of India* in English 12 June 1996 Accessed from Open Source Network FTS 19960612000685.

(emphasis original).³⁹ The BJP's eighty-page Party Election Manifesto published in April 1996 uses both hortatory language and fear to insight the feeling that there is an urgent need to protect India. Party leaders declared that if elected, they would “reevaluate the country’s nuclear policy and exercise the options to induct nuclear weapons”⁴⁰ It is critical to note in this manifesto, the nuclear program comments falls under “External Security,” and not the science program, energy program, or any other section of the eighty-page manifesto.⁴¹ The “peaceful” nuclear program no longer represented greatness nor moral superiority. It now was a symbol of weaknesses and was out of touch with the new environment.

Nuclear Ritual

Similar to the symbolism of the “peaceful” nuclear program, the organization of the program was falling out of step with the setting. The scientific community and AEC ran the program while the military was still excluded from the nuclear argument. The idea of the military wading into the debate about weaponization or nuclear policy used to cause controversy. Now the military leadership had begun to express concerns with Pakistan’s nuclear program, especially in the late 1980s following Pakistan’s declaration of nuclear capability. The Congress party, however, preferred to focus on India’s conventional capability. There was little chance of developing any kind of nuclear doctrine, as India lacked any kind of national security policymaking infrastructure. The military simply did not have a forum in which to work with policy makers to influence or formulate strategy, conventional or otherwise.⁴² There was some movement inside the Defense department to change this in the late 1980s, but the sitting government preferred to dictate policy, and the service chiefs preferred developing their own conventional military strategy. For both sides, merging the two reflected losing territory.⁴³ Prime Minister V.P. Singh attempted to form a National Security Council in 1990, consisting of

³⁹Srirupa Roy “The Politics of Death: The Antinuclear Imaginary in India” 113-132. , *South Asian Cultures of the Bomb*. 117.

⁴⁰ Central Office of the Bharatiya Janata Party “Bharatiya Janata Party Election Manifesto” April 1996. Accessed from Open Source Network FTS 19970321001655.

⁴¹ The BJP won the right to form a coalition government in this election, even though it proved unable to survive its first confidence vote. Soon after the Lok Sabha reverted back to Congress Party control.

⁴² Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 231.

⁴³ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 297.

academics, scientists, parliamentary ministers, even journalists, but it disbanded after one meeting. Policy makers just did not have an appetite for changing *how* the country thought about its external threats.⁴⁴ The tide was changing though.

The military began to get more vocal about the consequences of its absences from policy making. In 1995, Minister of Defense, Arun Singh lamented, “Politicians don’t have the time or interest to read...millions of learned words about nuclear weapons. If arguments seem useful to us, well, then maybe we will use them; if not we’ll ignore them.”⁴⁵ The BJP stated that India’s ad hoc nature of security planning was due to the lack of institutions.⁴⁶ This complaint fed directly to the BJP Manifesto calling for the formation of an NSC.⁴⁷ In summary, while the organizations had failed to change, the call for them to do so was growing louder.

Out of Alignment

In just over twenty years since the PNE, India’s tune had changed considerably. The Cold War was over, and many of the solutions that India once endorsed, the world was now seemingly ready to embrace. India had also changed. As the potential for a CTBT became reality, old insecurities rose up with a new veneer. While the United States was willing to cease underground testing, its ability to carry on nuclear testing through computer modeling seemed to be a new expression of nuclear apartheid. But where India’s nuclear program once was a symbol its value no longer held currency as the perceived security threat took hold. If the CTBT was not signed because of a serious and immediate security threat, then a “peaceful” nuclear program based in scientific research did nothing to address this. It did not bolster India as a global power, nonetheless a regional power. Furthermore, if India could not defend itself, any moral argument was moot. In fact, India’s morality was being challenged in new ways.

In the debate over the CTBT, western media expressed concern of a resultant weapons race between India and Pakistan. C. Raja Mohan, a journalist who later served

⁴⁴ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 306.

⁴⁵ As quoted in Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 356.

⁴⁶ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*. 372.

⁴⁷ Central Office of the Bharatiya Janata Party “Bharatiya Janata Party Election Manifesto” April 1996. Accessed from Open Source Network FTS 19970321001655.

on India's National Security Advisory Board under a BJP government wrote an article for *The Hindu*, in which he argued,

The United States and Pakistan seem to be preparing the grounds for the argument that India will be solely responsible for the overt nuclearisation of the Indian Subcontinent...Many voices in India and outside will warn of the consequences of a nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. But India and Pakistan are not predestined to follow the nuclear logic of the United States and the erstwhile Soviet Union. There is a strong argument that overt nuclearisation of India and Pakistan could end the current charade of making South Asia nuclear free, and encouraging the two countries to adopt realistic and much needed stabilizing measures that will reduce the danger of a war in the subcontinent.⁴⁸

This argument shows two things. First, after failing to sign the CTBT, a “peaceful” nuclear program no longer proved India's moral superiority, and second, weapons had the possibility to restore it, as India saw itself as uniquely capable of avoiding an arms race.

Pokhran Changes the Game

What was set in motion with the decision not to sign the CTBT came to fruition in 1998. The BJP won enough votes in the 1998 election to form a coalition government. It survived its first vote of confidence and was able to start implementing its manifesto. In it, they called for an NSC and inducting nuclear weapons.

The BJP set forth to finally secure India as a great power. The party campaigned on many of the same promises as 1996, with much of the same rhetoric. Shortly after the election, Pakistan provided a fitting example of the supposed security threat facing India. On April 6th, Pakistan tested its Ghauri missile. This medium-range missile did not only indicate Pakistan's bolstered military capability, but India was convinced it also proved China was exporting missile technology to Pakistan.⁴⁹ The BJP party, known for being tough on security, immediately labeled this test a threat, and called for a study into its strategic effects, utilizing a newly formed NSC.⁵⁰ Given the BJP's historical support of nuclear weaponization, critics were quick to see the writing on the wall. Opinion pieces warned of what could be a break with India's ideals. Just days after the test, *The Kashmir*

⁴⁸ C. Raja Mohan “N-Issue: U.S., Pak Lineup Against India?” *The Hindu* in English 9 Mar 1996 Accessed from Open Source Network FTS 19960309000488

⁴⁹ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 410.

⁵⁰ Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*. 197.

Times published, “BJP wants India to cross the nuclear threshold...Underlying this are two premises: first, nuclear weapons are legitimate and second that India needs them for her security. Both violate the stand that New Delhi has taken for decades.”⁵¹ This was published weeks later: “India has never accepted—whether in 1964 (when China first tested), 1974 (Pokharan), 1990 (after revelations about Kahuta) or 1995-96 (CTBT debate and World Court judgment)—that [nuclear weapons] are necessary for security or have any strategic rationale.”⁵² But “the stand New Delhi had taken” for decades no longer held currency.

India’s old expression of great power -- nonalignment and remaining above the fray -- proved antiquated with the rejection of the CTBT. In the past, nuclear weapons had no purchase in public debates about security, but the CTBT debate changed that. In the first real security situation since, nuclear weapons suddenly figured into how to deal with the environment. India now saw the question of great power through relative military strength. In the same article, published less than a month before a series of weaponized tests, Bidwai wrote, “[O]ur elite’s nationalism has become uneasy and insecure thanks to the collapse of the Nehruvian consensus. What exists by way of a foreign policy perspective now is an uneasy amalgam: passive acceptance of unequal globalization, realpolitik reflexes favouring pursuit of India’s ‘natural regional pre-eminence’ coupled with a lingering Third Worldism. Unable to solve age-old problems of poverty and illiteracy, the elite is looking for shortcuts to high stature.”⁵³

Just as the situation with the Ghauri missile test was manipulated into a serious threat before the overt weapons test on May 11th, the setting after the test was also manipulated to reflect the myth, as the myth was now understood. On May 28th, India became aware of Pakistan’s nuclear tests. While it was clear Pakistan’s tests were in response to India’s tests, Vajpayee was loose with the facts. He used circular logic to state that Pakistan’s reactive tests “vindicated” his decision to weaponize just weeks

⁵¹ Praful Bidwai “BJP’s Dangerous Nuclear Agenda” *The Kashmir Times* in English 11 April 1998, Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980413000403.

⁵² Praful Bidwai “Beggared by the Bomb” *Mumbai The Times of India* in English 21 April 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980421000740.

⁵³ Praful Bidwai “Beggared by the Bomb” *Mumbai The Times of India* in English 21 April 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980421000740.

earlier.⁵⁴ Whether vindicated or not, the 1998 tests cemented a new meaning to the symbol of India's nuclear program.

Nuclear Symbolism

The weaponization of nuclear weapons provided a symbol that aligned the myth with new environmental pressures. If the CTBT had been an insult to India, and Pakistan's Ghauri missile test a symbol of India's relative weakening, then it is no wonder that Vajpayee deemed that the 1998 tests gave India "Shakti" or strength:

Millions of Indians have viewed this occasion as the beginning of the rise of a strong and self-confident India. India has never considered military might as the ultimate measure of national strength. It is a necessary component of overall national strength. I would, therefore, say that the greatest meaning of the tests is that they have given India *Shakti*, they have given India strength, they have given India self-confidence.⁵⁵

These intentions were echoed in the editorials across India. For example:

The Vajpayee government's decision to exercise the nuclear option has made every Indian feel inches taller. And more self-assured, more secure. This is not jingoism, not even chauvinism. It is national interests, the need to survive as a nation, head held high. With one stroke we have told the world that this vast land mass of a billion people will no longer allow itself to be trifled with, pushed around, dictated to, that the era of lapdog-tail-waggism is over.⁵⁶

Whereas India's avoidance of nuclear weapons once symbolized independence through non-alignment, now that symbolism morphed to demonstrate an independence from foreign influence. In response to potential sanctions, one editorial stated, "Maybe these tests will evoke a fickle response from nations who feel that nuclear weapons are their monopoly, or the United States who threatens strong anti-Indian measures, but India has to gather its will to stand up to these threats. Countries like India cannot ignore their sovereignty, integrity, and defense in temptation of foreign assistance."⁵⁷

Nuclear Ritual

⁵⁴ As quoted in "Vajpayee: Pakistani N-Test Create 'New Situation'" *Doordarshan Television Network* Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980528000945

⁵⁵ Vajpayee, as quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 443

⁵⁶ Sumar Kaul "A Decision at Last!" *The Hindustan Times* in English 19 May 1998. Access in Open Source Network FTS 19980520000379

⁵⁷ "Hindi Daily Supports Indian Nuclear Tests" *Dainik Jagran (Internet Version)* 12 May 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980512000457.

Vajpayee not only altered the symbolism, but all the nuclear ritual, thus aligning myth with nuclear posture. Vajpayee and the BJP party made good on its manifesto promises and involved the military in the nuclear conversation in a way that it had never been before. One of the most telling pieces of evidence of just how deliberate this was is to look at how Vajpayee introduced this new ritual. It was in the days following the Ghauri test that he secretly ordered the weaponization tests in Pokhran, but publicly he sought to create a different perception. On April 10th, he formed a special council to advise on how to form the NSC, which would in turn advise on what to do about the Ghauri test.⁵⁸ Vajpayee had already decided to demonstrate India's nuclear weapon capability, but he needed the appearance of a council focused on security that would also reach the same decision he had already set in motion. This move would reinforce the idea that weaponization was the answer to a security risk.

The military community was happy to weigh in on the matter in a way they had never done before. State television quoted Army Chief of Staff General V. P. Malik as saying a “strategic deterrent to counter the merging nuclear and missile challenges was the need of the hour.”⁵⁹ The role of the military was also popularized amongst the public. Unlike in 1974, in which the tests were absent of military and security associations, in 1998, this was just the opposite. The *All Indian Radio Network* highlighted the work of the AEC and scientists, but also referenced a statement by K. C. Pant: “The former defense minister, Mr. K. C. Pant, described the test as courageous and historical. Mr. Pant, who is the chairman of the task force set up to study the defense needs, said the test would add to the strength of country not only militarily but also psychologically.”⁶⁰ In another article, just one day after the test, an article in *Chennai The Hindu* highlighted the importance of integrating the two. The article stated, “Plans for a National Security Council in India have come not a day too soon. Perhaps, the Government could take a

⁵⁸ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 411.

⁵⁹ As quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 413.

⁶⁰ “Reaction to Nuclear Test, US Sanctions” *All India Radio Network* in English 11 May 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980511001117

more pro-active role and approach the security issues at the national, regional and global level.”⁶¹

This first official foray of the military community and the newly formed NSC meant that when the bombs exploded in May, a nuclear doctrine had yet to be established. But this time, Vajpayee did not let the NSC wither on the vine; by August 1999, Vajpayee issued a draft of India’s first nuclear doctrine, which had been developed by the National Security Advisory board. Nuclear weapons were now part of India’s official security strategy, and the Ministry of Defense was a part of national policy.⁶² This institutionalized document also established a new ritual—India refused to be the first to use a nuclear weapon in a conflict,⁶³ thus demonstrating its moral fortitude when others perhaps could not. A new ritual had emerged to ensure India’s national myth and nuclear posture were in alignment.

Realignment

Was weaponization proof that a new myth had taken hold in India? This is not the case. India’s national mythology revolved around the ideas that India was a great power and that it was morally superior to her contemporaries. When India failed to sign the CTBT, its claim to moral superiority was threatened, as was its great power potential. As one of only a few pariah nations that refused to sign, India was no longer the symbol of the have-nots standing up to the morally corrupt superpowers. Furthermore, the rhetoric of a grave security threat from Pakistan and China in the wake of military spending cuts made India seem weak. The military, once pridefully excluded from nuclear decision-making, now seemed lame at a time of perceived crisis. With weaponization though, things fell back into line. India was strong, and nuclear weapons could provide the security needed to keep India safe from Pakistan and China. The military and the NSC developed a plan to do so. India could be a great power. And despite the threat of those neighbors, it could *choose* not to attack them. Thus, India demonstrated its moral superiority by developing a no-first use policy. India did not just

⁶¹ V. Jayanth “India’s Security Issues” *Chennai The Hindu* in English 12 May 1998 Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980512000947.

⁶² Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 65.

⁶³ Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 65.

reclaim its myth through the interpretation of the environment, symbolism and ritual; India reinterpreted it.

The strength provided by the unambiguous emergence of India as a nuclear weapon state allowed a reconciliation of incongruence caused by the CTBT and India's long held national myth. As Raminder Kaur argues in his essay "Gods, Bombs, and the Social Imaginary,"

...[Mahatma] Gandhi's stress on nonviolent spirituality becomes easily channeled into Hindu nationalism. *Ahimsa* [non-violence] as a resurrected discourse from historical anticolonial struggle facilitates the claims of legitimacy to nuclear armament. India's public profile as a nuclear weapon state (NWS) has allowed the *ahimsa*/non-violence discourse to be resurrected for a modern purpose, in what critics consider a distortion of Gandhi's ideas. This "new use of *ahimsa*" is about weaponization but with no intention to use the weapons, accompanied by rhetoric of the need to protect India and promote regional peace.⁶⁴

By weaponizing, India could incorporate the rhetoric of its security dilemma while still claiming a peaceful purpose. Peace could now be achieved by instituting regional security through the very weaponization that was avoided in 1974. India as a nuclear weapons state had successfully transformed weaponization as a symbol of corruptness that India sought to avoid, to a symbol of strength, which India harnessed to bring peace to the region.

Myth, symbols, and ritual exist in a circular logic. They influence and reinforce each other. Thus, as one changes, so will another if they are to remain congruent. The events surrounding the CTBT decision disturbed this congruency, but weaponization restored it. India was now a great nuclear power, still morally superior to her contemporaries.

⁶⁴ Raminder Kaur "Gods, Bombs, and the Social Imaginary" 150-172. Abraham, *South Asian Cultures of the Bomb*. 153.

Chapter 5

Pakistan: A Story of Nuclear Pacing

*[Pakistan] is not a man-made country...it is a blessing from Allah...a
God-made country.
Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto*

*Even if Pakistanis have to eat grass, we will make the bomb.
Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto*

Pakistan was created in 1947 as a result of the end of British colonization of the Indian sub-continent. Separate from India in language, culture, and religion, Pakistan began its young existence laboring under the fear that one day, India would seek to erase this newly created border. The manner in which Pakistan was formed played a significant role in its national myth. This myth consists of two main themes. The first is that God, not man, created Pakistan.¹ While the formality of the border and other such details were reached by a man-made agreement to end colonization, Allah made the country. Therefore, it is the role of every Pakistani citizen to protect this gift from Allah. This idea leads directly to the second theme of Pakistan's myth: India is a menace that threatens to force reunification and take that which came from Allah.² Unlike India, Pakistan never wanted to be a regional hegemon; it just wanted to continue to exist. Two ideas are required for this myth to be made manifest: Pakistan needs to remain slightly behind a competitor in order to maintain the perception of threat to what was a gift from Allah, and Pakistan needs to be in a constant struggle so that Pakistanis can stand in defense.

Just as in the case of India's national myth, Pakistan's myth was expressed and reinforced in many ways, but the focus of this chapter is how Pakistan's national myth was expressed through its nuclear posture. It is perhaps all too easy to categorize Pakistan's nuclear program and posture as simply reactive to that of India, or as a response to the overwhelming conventional superiority of India's military. And while the

¹ Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 76.

² Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 76.

tit-for-tat nuclear tests that took place between India and Pakistan in the spring of 1998 seem to exemplify this explanation, a closer analysis reveals more nuance. Therefore, I have chosen three events in which India posed great threat to Pakistan and yet Pakistan did not always respond with in-kind threats. Like the Indian case studies, national mythology provides a logic to the apparent inconsistency. By exploring Pakistan's response to India's 1974 PNE, its response to the A. Q. Kahn supposed nuclear revelations following the Brasstacks crisis, and Pakistan's nuclear response in 1998, I will show the relationship between Pakistan's national myth and its nuclear program. While Pakistan remained crouched in a defensive posture with regards to India, and its nuclear program revolved around the Indian security threat, the analysis of these three events will show that Pakistan's nuclear program was much more a political tool than a military weapon, used to keep near parity with India while reinforcing the national myth of holy defense against an unwavering, secular threat.

Pakistan Responds to the PNE

By the mid-1970s, Pakistan had lost yet another war with India, the latest defeat including a humiliating loss of territory. With help from India, East Pakistan now claimed its own independence as Bangladesh. It seemed the fear that India would dismantle Pakistan was coming true. This latest loss only proved the severity of Pakistan's military inferiority. This was a time that required Pakistan to increase its military capability in order to defend against India's military might. It is no wonder then, that Pakistan harshly criticized India's PNE.

Pakistan's overwhelming response to the PNE was to call into question India's peaceful motives. The day after India's self-proclaimed peaceful explosion, a Pakistani Foreign Office spokesman questioned the peaceful purpose of the test stating, "It is an incontrovertible fact that there is no difference between the explosion of a so-called peaceful nuclear device and the detonation of a nuclear weapon."³ What Pakistan's leadership did not call for was drastic measures. India had always been a threat, so the PNE, while questionable in its intentions, did not represent anything new. Karachi Domestic Service summarized Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's address to the

³ "Concern Voiced Over Indian Nuclear Explosion" *Karachi Overseas Service* in English 19 May 1974. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 21 May 1974. T1.

nation: “[A nuclear weapon] is primarily an instrument of pressure and coercion against nonnuclear weapon powers. [Bhutto] said the threat of using the weapon is designed to have effects as lethal politically as the actual use from the devastation physically. Were we to become fearful or alarmed over India’s nuclear demonstration it will indicate that we have already succumb to the threat. This will be disastrous for our national determination to maintain the fullness of our independence.”⁴ With this framing, India’s test did not produce any new threat, but rather reinforced the myth of India’s menacing aspirations to steal what had been gifted by Allah. Pakistan’s strength then lies in its calm and measured response to bolster the state’s weaknesses.

Nuclear Symbolism

The symbolism of Pakistan’s nuclear program following India’s PNE reinforced it as mostly a political tool. India’s actions were easy to cast as a threat to support Pakistan’s myth, but Bhutto still needed to show near parity with India. This is where the symbolism of Pakistan’s nuclear program became critical. To do this, Bhutto needed to make some relative gains compared to India. He could accomplish this by making the nuclear program a symbol of Pakistan’s near parity with India.

In order to support the myth of Pakistan’s divine right to exist, Pakistan had to keep near parity with India, and Pakistan’s nuclear program had to be a symbol of that balance. Unfortunately, having only secretly begun its nuclear program just two years earlier, Pakistan was in no place to immediately answer India’s test in kind.⁵ Publicly, however, Pakistan was ready to announce indigenous milestones of its own. Just three days after India’s test, Dr. Munir Ahmed Khan, chairman of Pakistan’s Atomic Energy Commission, said, “Pakistan will start to develop its uranium deposits very soon.” His interview was summarized for FBIS:

[Dr. Khan] said that the priorities in Pakistan’s well-defined nuclear program, initiated after 1971, were fixed taking into account Indias [*sic*] clear intentions. Replying to a question, Dr. Khan said that what the country needed basically to be nuclear was raw materials in the form of

⁴ Summary of Z. A. Bhutto’s remarks at a news conference in Lahore, *Karachi Domestic Service* in English “Bhutto Address” 19 May 1974. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition. 21 May 1974. T1.

⁵ Zahid Hussein “Deliberate Nuclear Ambiguity” Ahmed and Cortright, *Pakistan and the Bomb*. 32.

uranium and plutonium, as the know-how to explode a nuclear device was well known.

Dr. Khan stated that Pakistan had a number of brilliant scientists, recognised internationally, and that a programme was under way to train the manpower needed. The commission will carry out the task assigned to it, he added.⁶

Such promises of progress added to the idea that Pakistan was able to keep pace with India, and Pakistan's true trump card was her beloved scientist, Abdul Qadeer Khan.

A. Q. Khan is the face of Pakistan's nuclear program and a symbol of Pakistani accomplishment. In the West, his name may be synonymous with nefarious nuclear proliferation, but in Pakistan, Khan has near cult status.⁷ In 1976, Bhutto convinced Khan to return to Pakistan from Holland where he was working to aid Pakistan's nuclear program.⁸ When Khan agreed, Pakistan did not just gain a gifted scientist with less than ethical means of acquiring centrifuge plans, it gained a *Pakistani* scientist. Again, in this "us versus them" game, it was critical that Pakistan's progress toward nuclear parity was obtained by seemingly indigenous efforts.⁹

In response to India's PNE, Bhutto was able to manipulate Pakistan's nuclear program into a symbol of Pakistan's strength relative to India. Through small demonstrations, or at least promises, of progress by its organic program, Bhutto was able to reinforce Pakistan's national myth of its inherent right to exist and India's threat to that existence.

Nuclear Ritual

When India detonated the PNE, Pakistan had barely begun its nuclear program, but two nuclear rituals served to support and realize the national myth. The first was how

⁶ "Development of Raw Materials for Nuclear Program" *Hong Kong AFP* 22 May 1974. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition 22 May, 1974. T3.

⁷ Abraham, *South Asian Cultures of the Bomb*. 5.

⁸ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 196.

⁹ In his book *India's Nuclear Bomb*, George Perkovich offers some evidence that indicates Bhutto secretly negotiated with China on his 1976 visit for China to provide material assistance to Pakistan's program. While this may be true, such facts are interesting, but irrelevant to what was portrayed to the Pakistani public. What is important to the symbolism is that it supports the myth and aids in realizing an observed truth. By the implication that A. Q. Khan, a native son, was responsible for Pakistan's nuclear progress, inconvenient facts for both China and Pakistan were kept a closely guarded secret.

Pakistan placed its nuclear weapons under the control of the military. This should not be misunderstood as wanting to weaponize or make the weapons part of its national security strategy. Pakistan's leaders, who saw the weapons as a political tool, did not trust the political arm with the program. By aligning Pakistan's nuclear program under the military, Pakistani leaders accomplished two things. First, they reinforced the idea that they were always under threat, and second, they ensured near parity while curtailing political ambitions.

Pakistan's nuclear weapon program existed as a clear response to a security threat posed by India. Spending the nation's treasure in response to the Indian threat was nothing new for Pakistan. Nearly half of all central government spending between 1947 and 1967 was allocated to the military.¹⁰ The fact that the nuclear program went under the military only makes sense. This was not a prestige program, or a symbol of Pakistan's benevolent nature; it was a necessary program given India's desire to deny what was given to Pakistan by Allah. But one should not assume this meant that Pakistan was interested in immediately weaponizing the program either, for as was shown above, it was seen as a political weapon. As such, the fact that Pakistan kept it out of the hands of the political wing speaks volumes.

By keeping direction and ownership of the nuclear program within the military, while specifically denying input from the political wing, Pakistani leadership ensured the program was not used in a way that was contrary to the national myth. Ahmed and Cortright elaborate, "Nuclear policy remains the domain of the Pakistani military, which has been the dominant domestic actor for most of Pakistan's history. There is little or no input on nuclear policy making from senior political leaders and no involvement from the wider public. While civilian actors in the country's powerful bureaucracy...play some role in determining the options available all decision making...is exercised by the military establishment."¹¹ While this has been attributed to a lack of trust of senior political leaders, using the mythology framework also offers up another explanation. As the program was seen as a political weapon, one that could be used to manipulate India,

¹⁰ Zia Mian "Renouncing the Nuclear Option" Ahmed and Cortright, *Pakistan and the Bomb*. 64.

¹¹ Samina Ahmed and David Cortright "Pakistani Public Opinion" Ahmed and Cortright, *Pakistan and the Bomb*. 7.

as well as great power allies, leaving the decision making up to the military excluded the program from being overly politicized or used in an escalatory way. Much like India eliminated military influence, so as not to be seen using their program for security reasons, Pakistan, did not want its nuclear hand to be over dealt politically. Without the ability to make decisions about the direction of its national program, Pakistan's political leaders had to move creatively to answer the PNE and that is exactly what they did.

The second form of nuclear ritual was the process by which Pakistani identity and patriotism was tied to the program as a whole. By the start of the 1970s, Pakistan had a literacy rate of only 25 percent, with much academic debate concerning the program happening in English.¹² Therefore the debate over Pakistan's program was not one for the public domain. What was in the public domain was instruction on how Pakistanis should feel about the program. Just as Pakistan was a gift from Allah to all Pakistanis, all Pakistanis in turn had a responsibility to protect it. During the 1971 war, "[e]very true patriot was given the duty of praying for the security and solidarity of Pakistan."¹³ Similarly, in 1974, support for Pakistan's nuclear program and response to the PNE became a symbol of patriotism. Nizamani highlights the importance of Bhutto's choice of words in his retort to the 1974 test. By repeatedly using the word "we," Bhutto embraces the whole nation in his response. In an environment defined by an "us versus them" conflict, if one is not a part of "us" and does not support "our program," then he must be supporting "them."¹⁴ Karachi Domestic Service provided this in the summary of Bhutto's address, "The prime minister called upon his countrymen to close their ranks, refuse to be unduly disturbed and have full confidence that the efforts of the government will ward off any danger to Pakistan's security. He said if we remain united, there is no weapon, nuclear or otherwise, that can shake or subvert our will to live in freedom and our refusal to accept a subservient role."¹⁵ In this way, Bhutto made agreement, calm, and support a ritual that served to uphold Pakistan. This of course implied that panic, disagreement and dissent were indicative of being against Pakistani success.

¹² Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 76.

¹³ Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 81.

¹⁴ Nizamani, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. 86.

¹⁵ "Bhutto Address" *Karachi Domestic Services*, 19 May 1974, FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 21 May 1974. T2.

Pakistan's Nuclear Option

Pakistan, like India, also had a nuclear option, but it should not be confused as being the same as India's. In fact, the option had less to do with weaponizing should Pakistan feel threatened, for Pakistan was always a nation in fear, than it did with political gamesmanship. Pakistan's nuclear option had more to do with how it could benefit from exercising restraint. Pakistan had no use for nuclear weapons in 1974. Nuclear weapons would set Pakistan uneasily ahead of India, when Pakistan would rather keep near parity. Pakistan had no interest in hegemony or regional leadership; Pakistan simply wanted to exist unmolested. What Pakistan did want though was conventional weapons, and Pakistan promising restraint as well as allowing external influence gave the great powers something they could not get from India. Thus, given the setting of a continued threat from India, Pakistan developed nuclear symbols and rituals that milked the most benefit from a barely existent nuclear program.

Pakistan, who immediately following the India's PNE refused to be subject to blackmail from India, found that blackmail, if one is on the right side of it, perhaps is not so bad after all.¹⁶ Just months after the test, Bhutto used the threat of a Pakistani nuclear program to entice the U.S. to lift an arms embargo against Pakistan. In an interview with the New York Times, summarized in *Press Trust India*, Bhutto is reported to have said, "the supply of American arms to this country would blunt this nation's yearning to develop a nuclear device....Asked if Pakistan would limit her nuclear programme if the U.S. lifted the arms embargo, Mr. Bhutto gave no categorical reply. 'If security interests are satisfied, if people feel secure and if they feel they will not be subject to aggression, they would not want to squander away limited resources in the [nuclear] direction,' he said."¹⁷ Whether or not Pakistan's military would have actually gone forward with a weapons program or not is irrelevant; what matters is that for now the threat of weaponization was a tool to get conventional weapons.

¹⁶ "Bhutto Address" *Karachi Domestic Service* in English 19 May 1974. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition 21 May 1974. T1.

¹⁷ "PTI: Bhutto Says Country will go Nuclear if U.S. Arms Not Resumed" *Bombay PTI* in English 14 Oct 1974. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 16 Oct 1974. T1.

India's PNE dealt Pakistan just one more blow in a series of losses at the hands of its most serious threat. While India was looking to gain credibility and respect from great powers such as the United States, Pakistan was seeking survival and to keep near parity with India. The PNE was easy enough to categorize as threatening, only adding to the many examples of India as an existential threat. But through the symbolization of nuclear weapons, and most importantly as a political tool, the Pakistani program remained restrained. There was no in-kind response, this time, but there was the opportunity for Pakistan to use its nuclear program, or more correctly, *threat* of a nuclear weapons program to acquire more conventional weapons to keep near parity with India.

Brasstacks Tests Pakistan's Nuclear Politics

In the summer of 1986, India began a near six month-long series of military exercises on its border with Pakistan. These exercises, dubbed "Brasstacks" set off a crisis between the two nations. As troops amassed in India, Pakistan, which received no prior warning of the exercises, feared that India was preparing to invade. Tensions mounted, finally coming to a head in late January 1987. As urgent talks were initiated between the two sides and hotlines were installed, on February 4, 1987 Pakistan and India finally reached an agreement to systematically withdraw troops and end the crisis.¹⁸ Before the effects of the agreement had even finished taking hold, a new problem mounted when on March 1st, a British paper, *The Observer*, published an interview by an Indian correspondent with Dr. A. Q. Khan stating Khan had "revealed that his country has a nuclear bomb and will use it 'if our existence is threatened.'"¹⁹ This became a moment of decision for Pakistani leaders. They could let the claim stand, perhaps claiming some military superiority over India, or they could deny it. Either way, the answer, of course, had to be congruent with the national myth.

Nuclear Symbolism

Prior to Khan's supposed announcement in *The Observer*, Pakistani elite had referenced the nuclear program to express how capable Pakistan was in comparison to its

¹⁸ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*. 280.

¹⁹ "UK Daily Cited on Existence of Nuclear Bomb" *Hong Kong AFP* in English 1 Mar 1987. FBIS Daily Report Middle East and Africa Edition, 2 Mar 1987. F4.

enemy, India. Khan was eager to sing the praises of Pakistan's accomplishments in a 1984 interview with a Pakistani magazine *Nawa-e-Waqt*:

By the grace of God, Pakistan is now among the few countries in the world that can efficiently enrich uranium...India was far ahead of us in the nuclear field...Now the [Pakistani] Atomic Energy Commission staff is doing its best to fill the vacuum...If similar work is done in other fields with the same interest, then God willing we will reach the level with India in a short time...Unfortunately, our country has limited resources and it is on this account that we are dealing with our program in a gradual way... Although Western countries do all they can to put obstacles in our way, somehow or other we do succeed in getting the required items.²⁰

Pakistan's nuclear program was clearly a symbol of how Pakistan was able to keep pace with India. Pakistan did not seek great power status, but rather the nuclear program represented Pakistan's right to exist. As Khan pointed out in the interview, Pakistan was able to overcome its lack of resources because God wills it. Pakistan and the nuclear program were synonymous; if one existed then so did the other.

During the Brasstacks crisis, Pakistan focused its efforts on the peaceful uses of its program, publicizing its nuclear technology sharing relationship with China as a means to ease Pakistan's energy woes. In a September 1986 speech, Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo focused on the peaceful purposes of the program and the partnership. He highlighted the materials were for research and would be "governed by the safeguards of the International Atomic Agency," in order to develop agriculture, medicine, and power. He specifically cautioned against a military program:

Pakistan believes that nuclear technology for military purposes used by the Third World countries is a luxury, which they can ill afford. It has held that to build a nuclear arsenal would not only take much time to be of any use but is likely to promote an armaments race, which could not serve any useful purpose. It has always aligned itself with those countries who want the Indian Ocean region to be nuclear-free zone. The immense capital invested for the purpose can more suitably be utilized for raising the standard of living of the people. [sic] This exactly what Pakistan is aiming at.²¹

²⁰ "Scientist Explains Nuclear Program, Research" *Lahore Nawa-e-Waqt* in Urdu 10 Feb 1984. FBIS Daily Report, South Asia Edition, 16 Feb 1984. F1.

²¹ "Commentary Defends Nuclear Agreement with PRC" *Karachi Domestic Services* in English 26 Sep 1986, FBIS Daily Report South Asia Edition 30 Sep 86. F3.

Therefore, Pakistan not only reiterated that its nuclear program existed for peaceful purposes but it was doing nothing more than what India had already done. President Zia-ul-Haq said in an interview, “Yes, there are actually suspicions regarding Pakistan’s nuclear program for peaceful purposes. India and some other countries view this project as a project with military tendencies...If India calls its nuclear tests peaceful programs, then it has no right to question Pakistan or to raise suspicions on Pakistan’s modest experiment program to obtain nuclear energy.”²² By remaining in near parity with India, Pakistan was able to justify its own actions, while claiming to not go as far as India who Pakistan was able to paint as the true aggressor. This nuclear symbolism was challenged when *The Observer* printed its interview with Khan.

Nuclear Ritual

During this period, there was little to no change in the manner in which Pakistan dealt with its nuclear ritual. The program was still controlled by the military and remained largely out of the public eye. This served Pakistan just as well during the Brasstacks crisis as it had following the PNE. As politicians wrangled for arms and assistance from outside nations, the nuclear program did not need to be taken accidentally to a level from which Pakistan could not recover. In his 1984 interview, Khan stated,

As far we are concerned, [sic] I and my colleagues, we have only done our duty. Sacrifices were made by Pakistanis when Pakistan was created. Then later, the patriots sacrificed their lives in 1965 and 1971 without any grudge. My sacrifices and those of my colleagues are nothing compared with those referred to above. This is our country and it is our duty to serve and safeguard it.

...We are grateful for those praises lavished on us by our brothers and sisters and we ask that when they pray, they should include us in their prayers and sacrifice everything for the progress and development of our country and nation. We are very fortunate that God has given us this land...We should safeguard our country more than our own lives.²³

The Walk Back

²² “Al-Sharq Al-Awast Interviews Ziaul Haq” London Al-Sharq Al-Awast in Arabic 23 Aug 1986 FBIS Daily Report South Asia Edition, 11 Sep 1986. F1.

²³ “Scientist Explains Nuclear Program, Research” *Lahore Nawa-e-Waqt* in Urdu 10 Feb 1984. FBIS Daily Report, South Asia Edition, 16 Feb 1984. F6.

The same day *The Observer* published its shocking interview, Khan, the “Father of the Islamic Bomb,” responded by calling the interview a “false and concocted”.²⁴ The next day, a spokesman from Pakistan’s Foreign Office provided the following statement: “Pakistan’s policy on the nuclear issue is abundantly clear. It calls for no further spread of nuclear weapons and keeping South Asia in particular free from nuclear weapons. In pursuit of this commitment...Pakistan is prepared to accept international inspections and safeguards on its own nuclear program in a global, regional, or bilateral context.”²⁵ The possibility of not just having an arms race with India, but *starting* an arms race with India did not align with Pakistan’s national myth. Yes, India was a threat; Brasstacks just demonstrated that, but that crisis had also just been resolved. To now claim a nuclear capability, beyond that of India’s capability, challenged the myth of Pakistan’s motivation to defend itself. The supposed claim in *The Observer* interview, relative to the timing of when it was published, did not represent the actions of the nation seeking survival or one seeking to protect what was given by God. Rather, it played as an action stoking the fires of conflict, just as they were dying down. There is no doubt why Pakistan had to walk back from and deny this supposed claim made by its beloved Dr. Khan.

As a side bonus, the walk back itself was able to further the claim of India acting as an ever-threatening presence. At the conclusion of the same statement made by the foreign office cited above, the following was offered, “It is obvious that the Indian correspondent used devious means for obtaining access to Dr. A. Q. Khan in order to lend credibility to a transparently motivated piece of journalism.”²⁶ How and when the interview ever actually took place, and what Dr. Khan actually claimed, or why he claimed what he did, is the subject of speculation.²⁷ What actually matters, is the setting

²⁴ “Nuclear Expert Denies Report” *Hong Kong AFP in English* 1 Mar 1987. FBIS Daily Report South Asia Edition 2 Mar 1987. F4.

²⁵ “Spokesman Says Nuclear Policy ‘Clear’” *Karachi Domestic Service* 2 Mar 1987. FBIS Daily Report South Asia Edition, 2 Mar 1987. F4.

²⁶ “Spokesman Says Nuclear Policy ‘Clear’” *Karachi Domestic Service* 2 Mar 1987. FBIS Daily Report South Asia Edition, 2 Mar 1987. F4.

²⁷ George Perkovich offers an explanation to why contents of the interview included a claim to Pakistani nuclear weapons in his book *India’s Nuclear Bomb*, summarized on pages 280-281. He claims that Dr. Khan gave the interview before the Brasstacks crisis was settled, hoping, when published, it would strong arm India into a favorable settlement. Perkovich claims Dr. Khan did not expect the Indian journalist to “shop around” the story for the highest bidder for three weeks, not allowing the story to be published until after the crisis had been settled. If this were true, it

created by interpreting objective facts through the lens of national myth, then maintaining the myth through symbol and ritual. At this moment, Pakistan needed to maintain *near* parity with India, not superiority. An arms race Pakistan could not afford, coupled with international condemnation, would do nothing to further this goal. Thus, at this point in time, even after a major security crisis such as Brasstacks, Pakistan walked back any claim to a nuclear weapons program. This would all change in the decade to follow.

Evening the Score in 1998

When India detonated its five nuclear weapons beginning on May 11, 1998, Pakistan did not react to the situation as a crisis, rather an expected escalation by its neighbor determined to erase the borders that created Pakistan. Thus, the role of the Ghauri missile test was not cast as a cause for the Indian tests, or even mentioned in the coverage, but rather the Indian tests were a culmination the BJP party's intention to induct nuclear weapons to threaten Pakistan's existence. In a commentary broadcast on *Radio Pakistan Network*, on May 12, 1998, Martin Fiqri argued, "The entire world knows this truth full well that all the aggressive activities and war preparations of India are against Pakistan only and that it had fought two or three [as heard] wars against Pakistan; and because of India's aggression only, Pakistan had to sacrifice its eastern part. Now that Bharatiya Janata Party has come to power, its aggressive designs against Pakistan have been exposed in a better way."²⁸ With these tests, Pakistan no longer maintained near parity with India—the balance had shifted.

True to the national myth, Pakistan elite framed the situation as a proof that Pakistan need to respond in such a way as to defend Pakistan through a rebalancing. Pakistani foreign minister, Mr. Gohar Ayub Khan, provided an official government statement saying the Indian tests did not come as a surprise to Pakistan, but that "Pakistan's defense will be made impregnable against any Indian threat, be it nuclear or

would have served to further convince the Pakistan military elite of the dangers of over politicizing the nuclear program. Either way, secret intensions and motivations have little impact on real world events, thus Pakistan had to deal with the supposed revelation as it happened, thus denying the accuracy of the interview.

²⁸ "Commentary Assails India's Nuclear Tests" *Radio Pakistan Network* 12 May 1998 Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980512001178.

conventional.”²⁹ There was no desire to remove any Indian threat, but rather a desire to demonstrate a credible defense of Pakistan’s sovereignty. On May 12, 1998, the Islamabad paper *Khabra Urdu* published an article summarizing the views of numerous former military officials all calling for Pakistan to conduct its own nuclear explosion, stating, “Only then will India come to know how strong we are,” and “If the Government of Pakistan remains silent at this point war will come closer to us. General Hamid Gul said that if we do not conduct a nuclear explosion, it will give the impression that we do not have any nuclear capability.”³⁰ This was the setting in which nuclear myth and ritual existed when Pakistan answered India’s five explosions with five of its own on May 28, 1998.

Nuclear Symbolism

As had been the case since India’s PNE, Pakistan’s nuclear program served as an example of Pakistan’s ability to keep pace with India. As such, the manner in which Pakistan embraced its own nuclear tests in late May 1998 became a symbol of Pakistan settling the score with India and a balancing between the two rival nations so that they could go forward peacefully. Immediately following India’s tests, the Pakistani Chief of Army Staff, General Jahangir Karamat told Islamabad based, *The News*, that Pakistan was “not in a race of any kind with India but has taken steps for its defense and security.”³¹ What the general meant is the Pakistan was not in a race to win, or remove the Indian threat entirely, but he did advocate responding in kind to prove Pakistan’s strength. The nuclear program as proof of capability, and proof of Pakistan’s God-given right to exist, dominated the rhetoric after the May 28th tests.

The official response to Pakistan’s five successful nuclear tests demonstrated exactly what these tests meant to the nation—a necessary action sanctioned by the will of Allah. Unlike India’s test which resulted in great excitement and praise for India and what it had accomplished, Pakistan’s internal reaction was much more subdued. Prime

²⁹ “Pakistan Considering ‘Appropriate Responses’ to Tests” *Radio Pakistan Network* 11 May 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980511001451.

³⁰ Khabrain Staff Reporter “Pakistan Retired Generals Want Nuclear Test” *Khabra Urdu* 12 May 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980512000344.

³¹ “Pakistan Army Wants ‘Proper’ Response to Indian Tests” *The News (Internet version)* 12 May 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 1998051200164.

Minister Nawaz Sharif addressed the nation saying, “Today we have fully settled the account of the nuclear tests conducted by India and have carried out five successful nuclear tests.”³² The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. Akram Zaki’s statement was similar in tone, “...it has become necessary for Pakistan to conduct a nuclear test for maintaining a military and psychological balance in South Asia...Pakistan has no other alternative and it have become extremely essential for its stability.”³³ This action was described as being taken for the defense of Pakistan and nothing more, an action forced upon Pakistan by India’s aggressiveness. In his national address, Prime Minister Sharif reiterated this, saying:

Today, God the great has bestowed us with the courage and determination to enable us to make a decision to take a defensive step, which has become inevitable for the sake of our country’s security...By the grace of God, our troops are imbued with the spirit of faith in God and are ready to face the enemy at every front with full determination. Our nuclear scientists and technicians too, by the grace of God, are endowed with divine capabilities and the strength of faith in God. Our nuclear explosions have eradicated the uncertain situation that had been created by the enemy’s explosions. The Pakistani nation pays tribute to these great sons of the nation. No enemy, God willing, can carry out cowardly nuclear attack on our country.³⁴

This statement instructed the Pakistani public of two things: first, that India was a threat, and would remain so. Pakistan’s tests were not taken in order to remove the overarching threat of Indian motivations, but instead to nullify the “uncertain situation” caused by the Indian tests. Pakistan had no desire to remove the Indian threat outright, as it was critical to its national myth of always being on the defensive. The myth did require that Pakistan seek to defend what was given to them by Allah, and so the tests were labeled and brought to symbolize Pakistan’s willingness to defend itself by achieving parity. Pakistan’s leadership was also keenly aware of the consequences of such an action; and

³² “FYI-Sharif Announces 5 Successful Nuclear Tests” *Islamabad Pakistan Television Network* in Urdu 28 May 1998 Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980528000849

³³ “N-test Said ‘Extremely Essential’ for Pakistan Stability” *Radio Pakistan Overseas Service* in English 28 May 1998 Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980528000251.

³⁴ “Sharif Addresses Nation on Nuclear Tests” *PTV Television Network* in Urdu 28 May 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network, FTS 19980528000977.

the responsibility for those consequences were deflected onto all Pakistanis (and away from leadership) through the use of nuclear ritual.

Nuclear Ritual

Recognizing the potential adverse consequences of Pakistan's nuclear tests, political leadership made the nuclear program the success of the entire nation, and also the responsibility of the entire nation. They turned any hardship into a ritual of good citizenship. Thus, any hardship due to this event was well earned as it was about Pakistanis protecting what was given by God to Pakistan. In his initial national address following the May 28th tests, Prime Minister Sharif wasted no time connecting austerity to proof of Pakistani success:

My dear countrymen, without sacrifices, no nations can either stand on its feet, or become strong and worthy of respect. To construct a future, numerous comforts of the present have to be given up...By the grace of God, we do not lack resources. We are not using them properly. We have been mercilessly wasting them. We cannot continue to do that any longer. We have to use these resources for the country and the nation under the spirit of a holy war. Those who have secured billions of rupees in loans and put them in their pockets will have to return the nation's money. The ailment of tax evasion has destroyed our economy like a termite. In this hour of trial, we cannot allow anyone to evade taxes... Regardless of whether you are an employee at a government office or in a private firm, whether you are at a shop or a plantation, you must make yourself aware of your duties and make a pledge that you will only use the things which have been earned by honest means...If a time of difficulty has come now, then its outcome, God willing, will be good for common Pakistanis. I pray to God so that he will make this period of difficulty a very brief one. If we remain honest, maintain discipline, and fear God and fulfill our responsibilities to the people, then this period, God willing, will really prove to be a brief one.³⁵

The forthcoming difficulties became proof of Pakistan's commitment to defend the land gifted by Allah. This theme was repeated in the days to come, "The sanctions being imposed on Pakistan should be disregarded totally. Because, we have the strength and unity of the people which has been demonstrated in the streets. We developed our nuclear and missile system under embargoes and sanctions and under very difficult

³⁵ "Sharif Addresses Nation on Nuclear Tests" *PTV Television Network* in Urdu 28 May 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network, FTS 19980528000977.

conditions and the people of Pakistan sacrificed for it.”³⁶ By tying good citizenship habits of paying taxes regularly, repaying government loans, and accepting the hardships to come as proof of support for Pakistan’s nuclear program, Pakistan leadership transposed nuclear ritual into the hands of everyday Pakistani citizens. This created physical and observable actions to support the potentially controversial decision. It also provided an observable way for citizens to participate in the national myth of protecting the nation given to them by Allah. Thus, nuclear ritual moved from the responsibility of the military to that of the entire nation, implying that if one supported Pakistan, then one must also support the decision for detonation tests and the consequences that followed.

Tit-for-Tat

Given the fifty-year adversarial relationship with India, Pakistan had to respond in some way to India’s 1998 test. Pakistan’s nuclear program was never a tool for demonstrating Pakistani great power or even regional power potential. The national myth delineated that Pakistan was a gift under constant threat. It was the requirement of the Pakistani people to defend against that threat. There is no need to attempt to remove that threat outright, as that would throw off the myth. Ultimately, Pakistan’s nuclear program was a symbol of its responsibility to defend the gift from Allah; it was something Pakistan had to do. From the first announcement of Pakistan’s tests, though, it was not a cause for great celebration, but a somber matter of requirement, that brought grave consequences and forced austerity on the nation. However, through turning the difficult times ahead from a burden into proof of good citizenship and support for Pakistan, nuclear ritual became an observable testimony of Pakistan’s national myth. As long as India exists, then Pakistan exists only as long as it remains in a defensive crouch. By testing the weapon and openly accepting the consequences, Pakistan crafted a setting that enabled symbol and ritual to enhance its own national myth. India remained a security threat, but Pakistan has met the challenge and stood ready to defend what Allah had given them.

The study of Pakistan’s proliferation shows how consistent a state can be in its commitment to a national myth. Pakistan’s national myth provides the lens that keeps

³⁶ M.Z. Shuail “Khan Says Pakistan United in Facing Sanctions” *PTV Television Network* in English 31 May 1998. Accessed in Open Source Network FTS 19980531000331.

Pakistan in a defensive posture. Pakistan's nuclear program exists as an answer to the threat of India's nuclear program, but to assume then that the sole purpose of the program is to enhance its security misses the nuance of the situation. It is true that Pakistan sees India as a threat, and it is true that Pakistan will defend itself against any existential threat, but it is not enough to just exist, it must exist in a way that does not threaten its national myth. By exploring Pakistan's nuclear program as an outgrowth of its national myth, the peculiarities of its nuclear posture becomes apparent. Pakistan has never sought to win out over India; in fact, Pakistan needs India to exist as a foil to how Pakistan sees itself. It is the underdog, with special protections from Allah in heaven. Therefore, Pakistan has never sought to use its nuclear program to outpace India, to threaten India, or to force capitulations from India. Rather, the nuclear program is a symbol of proof of Pakistan's ability to keep pace with India. Furthermore, the nuclear ritual of the militarization of the program helped to eliminate the dangers of the over politicization of the program. When the program was forced to finally test in 1998, ritual gave ownership of the program to all of Pakistan, cementing support and tying Pakistan's defense to every citizen. The result fell in lock step with the national myth: a nation willing to answer any threat from its nemesis, India, filled with a population ready to defend Allah's gift.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The battle went on and on. That's how battles between gods are. Both sides are immensely powerful, after all. But the longer the battle endured, the clearer it became to all that a victor was unlikely.

Norse myth of war

In his book *Analogies at War*, Yuen Foong Khong studies the effect of historical analogies on policy makers' decisions. By using what he calls the Analogical Explanation, Khong explores how policy makers use analogies as "devices" to both understand a given situation and evaluate options.¹ Khong goes on to discuss the pitfalls of depending on analogies, showing that they can become heuristics subject to availability and representational biases.² These warnings should especially be heeded when making nuclear proliferation policy decisions. With only a limited number of nations ever having a nuclear program at all, and even fewer ever reaching fully weaponized status, it is easy to fall into reductionist traps and use analogies as a heuristic to make comparisons.

Using generic and abstract rules to make proliferation decisions can also prove to be dangerous in the high stakes games of nuclear weapons. Khong defines such abstractions as "schema" or theories "about how the social or political world works."³ And while schemas can have utility when categorizing decisions, they can become a hindrance when they are used to fill in missing information. Khong notes that the default values expressed within schema can be used to fill holes left behind by missing information.⁴ Sagan's three models explaining why states are driven to proliferate exhibit characteristics of the schema that Khong shows as both useful and potentially misleading. I am not attempting to discredit the work done by Sagan, as these models do yield significant understanding into why states choose to weaponize. But, as with all reductionist theories, they do not tell the whole story. I argue more insight can be

¹ Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992). 10.

² See Chapter 8 of *Analogies at War* for a detailed discussion of the heuristic effect of analogies.

³ Khong, *Analogies at War*. 28.

⁴ Khong, *Analogies at War*. 29.

garnered by studying proliferation choices as part of a continuous string of choices woven together by their relationship to national myth.

A state's national myth casts a long shadow over a host of policy decisions, and this monograph looked specifically at its influence on nuclear policy. National myth is tied closely to national identity providing meaning and context to happenings and situations in which a nation finds itself. National myth is conceptual, but through symbols and ritual an observable truth can be created. This truth exists as both a product of myth and it in turn influences and supports the myth. Thus, by studying myth, we don't just look at objective facts and attempt to find causation to the eventual outcome, but rather we travel the path of why decisions occur, therefore allowing a better understanding of why decisions, even seemingly uncharacteristic decisions, are made when they are made. India and Pakistan provide excellent examples of the influence of national myth on nuclear posture decisions.

Analyzing the role of national mythology in Indian nuclear proliferation shows the lengths to which a nation will go to hold onto its myth. India's strongly held national myth of great power potential and moral superiority influenced its controversial decisions. By not signing the NPT, India stood against nuclear apartheid and any action that did not move the world toward total disarmament. India used its own nuclear program to symbolize India's peaceful intentions and its unique ability to eschew a nuclear program for security purposes. Meanwhile, India reinforced these values by excluding any military influence in its program. India's peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974 also served as a reinforcement of India's great power potential and moral superiority. And while the events leading up to the explosion fall neatly into Sagan's prestige model, it does not fully explain the nuance behind the continued ritual of excluding military involvement, or the maintenance of peaceful symbolism. By detonating a self-labeled *peaceful* nuclear detonation, India was able to gain the prestige it desired but still have a nuclear posture congruent with its national myth. If prestige is what India desired, then the backlash she garnered from not signing the CTBT did not help.

The CTBT proved to be a watershed point in India's struggle to protect the national myth. The national myth, which was expressed in part by using symbolism and

ritual to show moral superiority over the Cold War great powers, now floundered as the Cold War ended. With India and the Congress party suffering from domestic problems, the BJP offered a contrary view, which included a new interpretation of nuclear symbolism. Introducing a new role for nuclear weapons as a symbolic answer to a supposedly growing security threat, the BJP party also pushed national myth, symbol and ritual out of alignment with nuclear posture. If one believed that India could not sign the CTBT because of the serious security threats of China and Pakistan, then maintaining a “peaceful” nuclear program and excluding military input did not make sense. The 1998 nuclear tests would bring about a realignment.

India’s national myth of great power potential and moral superiority was challenged when it did not sign the CTBT, but the weaponization tests of 1998 re-established congruency between national myth and its nuclear posture. Proving its ability to weaponize and provide a defense against threats by China and Pakistan, India reinvented what it meant to have great power status, and through its no-first use policy and benevolent choice not to use nuclear weapons against its neighbors, India also maintain its moral superiority.

This study of Indian myth shows the lengths a nation will go to protect its national myth. After Pakistan’s Ghauri missile test, the symbol of a peaceful nuclear program and the ritual of the sidelined military no longer supported India’s myth in the newly adopted security-minded setting. Either the myth or the symbols and rituals had to change. India chose to change its symbols and rituals.

In contrast to India, Pakistan shows how a nation can be dedicated to a myth, even when it seems to be acting contrary to it. Pakistan’s national myth springs from the way in which it found independence. Partitioned from what was once British India, Pakistan constantly lives under the shadow that India will want to, one day, reclaim the territory. The concept of India as a constant existential threat underpins the national myth that Pakistanis have a collective responsibility to protect the land given to them by Allah. Therefore, nuclear policy in Pakistan was always couched as a necessity to keep pace with Indian threats. The Indian threat was never seen as something that could or should be eliminated, one, because Pakistan did not have the resources to take on India, and two,

in order to fulfill the duty to protect Allah's gift, there had to be something to protect it from.

This defensive mentality influenced the symbols and rituals used to create Pakistan's nuclear posture. Following India's PNE, Pakistan's immature nuclear program was unable to answer in kind, however there was a need to keep near parity with India. Thus, Pakistan used the threat of nuclear weaponization to blackmail the West into trading conventional arms in order to enhance its own security posture. In addition, by announcing and promising milestones of its supposedly indigenous program, Pakistan used its nuclear program as a symbol of keeping pace with India. At the same time, Prime Minister Bhutto tied Pakistani patriotism to the nuclear program creating a ritual in which individual responsibility as a citizen was directly tied to supporting the program. Furthermore, by defining the program a political weapon more than one of military utility, Pakistan limited a runaway of the program by placing it, not under politician control, but military control. This ensured that the program did not exceed its goal of supporting the national myth of defending against India, by attempting to surpass India. This ideal was challenged in the weeks following the tenuous conclusion of the Brasstacks crisis.

A. Q. Khan's alleged claim following the Brasstacks crisis that Pakistan possessed nuclear weapons challenged a critical component of Pakistan's national myth. To claim to have nuclear weapons before India made Pakistan both the leader and the aggressor. This did not align with the myth or ritual set in place by Pakistan. From a security perspective, there may have been utility in claiming nuclear weapons capability. The Brasstacks crisis had ensued because India had amassed troops on its border with Pakistan, and Pakistan felt threatened by India's superior conventional superiority. One could argue that making India believe that Pakistan had nuclear weapons could possibly serve to prevent such crises in the future. But for Pakistan to do this would be incongruent with its own myth. To do so would put Pakistan in the lead comparative to India's own nuclear policy at the time, a position that Pakistan did not desire if it were to stay true to its national myth. Instead, Pakistan adamantly walked back from the alleged claim, declaring it a fabrication. Meanwhile they reiterated the existence of their peaceful nuclear energy program still controlled by the military.

In 1998, when India detonated their five weaponized tests, Pakistan quickly followed suit, and in doing so reinforced its national myth through symbol and ritual. As had been the case throughout its nuclear program, Pakistan's nuclear tests symbolized Pakistan's responsibility to keep pace with India, regardless of the consequences. Prime Minister Sharif was also able to use ritual to support the decision to weaponize even in the face of international sanctions. Framing sanctions as something Pakistanis had to endure if they were to protect their country, Sharif called on bureaucratic ritual such as paying taxes and repaying loans as a way for individual citizens to take part in defending Pakistan.

By studying Pakistan's relationship between national myth and nuclear posture, one can see how consistent a nation can be, even when it appears that they are backtracking. Pakistan's walk back in 1987 was not a sign of weakness or inconsistency, but rather it was a way of keeping myth and observable manifestations congruent. Had one simply used Sagan's security schema to explain Pakistan's nuclear posture decisions over time, the walk back after Brasstacks would be an inexplicable blip, when in reality it shows a commitment to national myth.

What is the lesson to be learned?

As stated above, analogies and schema can lead to oversimplifications and mental heuristics. By studying the relationship of Indian and Pakistani national myth and nuclear posture, I am not attempting to offer an analogy, but I do aim to show that there exists a utility in this type of analysis. The United States cannot be so short sided as to look at discrete decisions by other nations and fit them into one of three proliferation models. Nor should the U.S. seek to gain immediate non-proliferation or even conventional regional goals without looking at the long-term role and effect of national myth.

What this analysis shows is that actions that appear to be taken in response to a specific event or an adversary capability actually finds roots that go back to national myth. The problem of India and Pakistan is not a problem of just India's threat to Pakistan, or Pakistan's threat to India, but rather a problem of preserving national identity and national myth. When taken as individual events, actions can be confusing. India's tests in 1998 came as a surprise to U.S. policy makers. Perhaps it was befuddling that

India, a nation overtly committed to nuclear disarmament, would refuse to sign either the NPT or the CTBT, or that soon after handing Pakistan a sound defeat in 1971, it would cross a threshold with a nuclear detonation. Perhaps, it seems contradictory for Pakistan, forever under threat from India, to denounce a nuclear capability after a security crisis that, once again, proved Pakistan's conventional inferiority. At each of these events, the U.S. attempted to gain influence and squash the resultant nuclear posture when instead it may have been better to address ways to influence the manner in which symbol and ritual supported national myth. And while looking back on what the U.S. could have done better is academically interesting, it does not change history. Rather, the real lesson lies in what to do in the future.

A Case for Saudi Arabia and Iran

In the future, the U.S. needs to address national myth in its attempts to encourage disarmament and anti-proliferation. It is not enough to try to achieve a result solely congruent to what the U.S. wants, it must also work to achieve a result that is congruent with the target state's national mythology. Just as events are interpreted into a setting in which symbol and ritual express myth, U.S. actions must also be considered in how they too will weave into myth. It is not enough to wait until the tipping point of weaponization, as symbol and ritual are derived from and influence the interpretation of myth over time.

Consider this phenomenon in reference to Saudi Arabia and Iran. Saudi Arabia has a national myth of its own that it must protect and express through symbol and ritual. Part of this myth is its role as protector of the Two Holy Shrines, Mecca and Medina, as well as the Sunni branch of Islam. Furthermore, the Saud royal family also has to reinforce its own myth as the rightful rulers.⁵ Part of this myth is the idea that the Saud family tamed the warring peninsula into a civilized and modern society.⁶ And while Saudi Arabia "categorically does not believe in nuclear means and nuclear weapons because they would annihilate human life,"⁷ Saudi Prince Turki stated at a 2011 Gulf

⁵ Norman L Cigar and USAF Counterproliferation Center, *Considering a Nuclear Gulf: Thinking about Nuclear Weapons in Saudi Arabia*, 2013. 28.

⁶ Cigar and USAF Counterproliferation Center, *Considering a Nuclear Gulf*. 24.

⁷ Prince Sultan as quoted in Cigar and USAF Counterproliferation Center, *Considering a Nuclear Gulf*. 12.

Cooperation Council (GCC) meeting that, “It is necessary and indeed it is our duty on behalf of our [GCC] nations and peoples for us to examine all possible options, including our own acquisition of nuclear weapons.”⁸ This seemingly contradictory messaging begs the question, how are nuclear weapons being used, or how *can* they be used to express and reinforce the national mythology? Will they be used as symbols of modernity, or will the lack of a weapons program symbolize civility? Will the nuclear weapons debate find itself in discourse concerning security of the Holy Shrines for all Muslims, or just in regards to securing the Sunni sect, or not at all? Where do the current nuclear elites and opinion makers reside? In the military, in the royal family, in the scientific community? The same questions must be asked of Iran.

Iran poses one of the most immediate threats to U.S. anti-proliferation goals. Attempting to reconcile U.S. goals with those of Iran are not only challenging because of the adversarial relationship that exists between Iran and the U.S., but also because of the lack of access the U.S. has to Iranian society. Shahram Chubin notes, “...the Iranian regime is not easy to understand. There is a gap between its rhetoric and its actions; between its sense of grievance and its inflammatory behavior; and its ideological and national interests.”⁹ Perhaps by using the national mythology framework suggested in this monograph, more sense will be made between Iran’s rhetoric and their observed policies.

Much of Iran’s national myth revolves around its role as a Shia leader and a beacon to Shia Muslim’s who are discriminated against throughout GCC nations. Iran’s national myth includes proving superiority over Sunni held lands by undermining the prestige of Saudi Arabia.¹⁰ How, then, could Iran include a nuclear weapons program in symbol and ritual to make this myth an observed reality? Are there ways to push Iran to use more acceptable means to express this myth? The above case studies show that nations are more apt to adjust symbol and ritual than their national myth.

⁸ Prince Turki as quoted in Cigar and USAF Counterproliferation Center, *Considering a Nuclear Gulf*. 13.

⁹ As quoted in Fredrick R. Strain “Discerning Iran’s Nuclear Strategy: An Examination of Motivations, Strategic Culture, and Rationality”, Air War College, 1996. 2.

¹⁰ Darren A. Sundys “Iran and Saudi Arabia: Potential for Conflict or an Uneasy Peace?” U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1997. 36

The answers to these questions will begin to flesh out the role of a nuclear weapons program relative to the national myths of Saudi Arabia and Iran. If that can be understood, then it stands to reason that it can be influenced. This paper also serves as a caution that any actions these nations take or do not take must be justified in terms of their respective national myths. By looking at each nation's unique mythology, the U.S. stands a better chance of affecting the observed outcome, than by relying on schema in which one substitutes default values for unknowns. At the same time, the U.S. is operating within its own myth and setting. U.S. aims to lead the world to peace and prosperity, while having a visible hand in outcomes favorable to the liberal world order, may prove to be in conflict with the aims of Iran and Saudi Arabia. How to reconcile these competing myths is the challenge the U.S. faces, and hopefully it will meet.



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