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REGIME'S RESPONSE TO FOREIGN POLICY : A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE UNITED FRONT AND BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY GOVERNMENTS

Abstract

The paper undertakes a comparative study of foreign policy responses of the United Front (UF) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led governments in India. Theoretically, the study broadly relies on the 'Decision Making Theory' of international politics. The study starts with the assumption that though both the UF and the BJP were coalition governments, facing identical historical reality and being in power at the similar juncture of history, their foreign policy behaviour was entirely different. This paper then raised the inevitable question: why the two governments responded quite differently in the similar situations? In doing so, the study highlights how the United Front Government engaged the neighbours through Gujral Doctrine taking a principled stand on nuclear and other international issues, and how the BJP-led Government responded primarily in terms of its nuclear policy. The paper concludes that both the Governments were fundamentally different in their approaches. For instance, while a pragmatic-idealist perspective guided the UF Government, the BJP was influenced by the realist version of international politics.

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1. Theoretical Framework

Foreign policy is an exercise in tuning national interest to international order. When either of the two (international order or national interest) changes, the nation state has to evolve new foreign policy responses to maintain a delicate balance between the two. This task is normally performed by the ruling political regime, which has the final responsibility to articulate national interest in terms of foreign policy. Since various political regimes may have different political and ideological orientation, political and economic priorities and internal foreign policy responses may not be the same. Moreover, their foreign policy responses depend to a large extent upon their perception of national interest under given domestic and international circumstances. For example, since the mid-1990s India's internal conditions and external environment have not changed much. Nevertheless, the foreign policy responses of the United Front (UF)¹ and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)² Governments (which have ruled in succession since 1996) have been entirely different. To the United Front Government, India's national interest (in terms of foreign policy) lay in strengthening friendship with neighbours, expanding geographical and other dimensions of foreign policy and taking principled and firm stand on international issues; to the BJP, possessing nuclear bombs and strengthening nuclear and missile capability became the primary national interest.

The present paper will make a comparative study of foreign policy responses of the United Front and the BJP Governments/regimes³ under the broader framework of the 'Decision

1 The United Front was a post-election coalition Government of initially thirteen and later on fourteen political parties led by the Janata Dal and supported by the Congress Party from outside.

2 It was a B.J.P.- led coalition Government of eighteen political parties in the first incarnation (1998) and of twenty-four political parties in the second incarnation (1999). This Government is also called N.D.A. (National Democratic Alliance).

3 The terms regime and government have been used here interchangeably.

Making Theory'⁴of international politics. Its central premise is that the key to understanding political actions lies in the way in which the actors (foreign policy makers) define the situation and that their image of the situation is built around the projected action as well as the reasons for the action.⁵ The starting point is the fact that both the United Front and the BJP were coalition Governments; facing identical historical reality (uncertainty and chaos of the New World order); being in power at the same juncture of history (1996 onwards), yet their foreign policy behaviours were entirely different. While the United Front Government responded to the challenges of the new world order by engaging the neighbours through Gujral Doctrine, activist and engaging foreign policy and taking a principled stand on nuclear and other international issues; the BJP Government responded primarily in terms of its nuclear policy. This raises the larger question: why is it that the United Front and BJP Governments responded quite differently to the same task in the same situation? The answer to the question may be given with reference to their political and ideological preferences; their internal and external agenda and their perception of India's national interest in the given situation. This may lead to hypothesizing that due to different political and ideological commitment, political and economic agenda and different ways of interpreting national interest in the context of given national and international situations, the UF Government's foreign policies were substantially different from those of the BJP. A framework for the comparative study of the UF and BJP Government's foreign policy can be presented in a tabular form as follows:

4 See Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin, *Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics* (Princeton, 1954).

5 Mahendra Kumar, *Theoretical Aspects of International Politics* (Agra: Shiv Lal Aggrawala & Company, 1984), p.171.

Table-1

		<i>Foreign</i>	<i>Policy</i>	<i>Approaches</i>	<i>Foreign</i>	<i>Policy</i>	<i>Responses</i>
		1	2	3	1	2	3
Government/ Political Regime	Nature of Government	Idealism versus realism	Influence of ideology	Inward versus outward looking	Neighbour ood policy	Foreign policy activism	Stand on international issues
Janata Dal Led U.F Govern ment	Post-electoral coalition of 14 Parties led by Janata Dal, a socialist party	Idealism mixed With Pragmatism	Least Influenced by ideology	Outward Going, from neighbours to other regions to global	Gujral Doctrine for friendship and regional cooperation	Expanding geographical and other dimensions of foreign policy	Opposed CTBT & principled stand on nuclear-non proliferaton
B.J.P Led N.D.A* Govern ment	A coalition of (18 parties)** 24 parties led by BJP, a rightist political party	Realist version of foreign policy	Greatly Influenced by Ideology	Inward looking confined to Indo-Pak relations	Indo-Pak- centric, marginalisati on of other countries and issues	Narrowed geographical focus, domination of national security concerns	Nuclear tests, lack of independent stand on issues of global terrorism & WTO

* National Democratic Alliance

** During the 12th Lok Sabha it was a coalition of 18 parties and in the 13th Lok Sabha the number increased to 24.

Broadly guided by the above framework, the study will proceed as follows. A detailed account of UF and BJP Government's major foreign responses will be given in the first part. The issues and policies through which these two Governments responded to the task will also be examined critically. Then on the basis of detailed accounts of their foreign policy responses, a comparative statement will be drawn at the end.

2. India's Setting

When the world was on the threshold of profound ideological, political, strategic and economic transformation at the end of Cold War; India had to negotiate with a series of social, political and economic (domestic) crises. This pari-passu development at domestic and international fronts created two-fold challenges before India's foreign policy. First, a new set of paradigms needed to be evolved to synchronize with the emerging world order as old terms of reference for India's foreign policy—anti-colonialism, non-alignment and just international economic order—had lost utility and appeal. Second, the new terms of reference for India's foreign policy had not only to command legitimate recognition and respect in the comity of nations but had also to carry conviction among the people of the country.

These two-fold tasks of adjusting national interest with international order were performed by different (successive) political regimes in the 1990s in different ways. The P.V. Narishima Rao-led congress-I Government that presided over major part of this turbulent-transitional phase (from 1991 to 1996) responded by articulating a low profile, isolationist foreign policy. His Government's preoccupation with solving unfolding domestic problems particularly serious financial crises led him to fashion a foreign policy that was dominated by economic content at the

marginalisation of political, military and strategic issues. He fashioned a foreign policy regime, which seemed to make a historical retreat from an activist foreign policy uncharacteristic of India's tradition. His government also demonstrated inability to make a long-term planning, imaginative capacity to judge evolving situation and remained inarticulate on major foreign policy issues.

This regime ended with the 1996 general elections when a coalition (United Front) Government headed by H.D. Deve Gowda came to power. The H.D. Deve Gowda-led coalition Government, being unable to work on difficult domestic front decisively because of the contradictions of coalition and unstable and shaky majority in Parliament, brought foreign policy making on the priority of government business. This Government under the leadership of H. D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral evolved an activist foreign policy which was characterized by positive and timely reaction on major international developments, launching of serious diplomatic exercise throughout the world, engaging the neighbours through unilateral concessions under Gujral doctrine and principled and firm stand on the issue of nuclear proliferation. I.K. Gujral, who headed the Foreign Ministry first as External Affairs Minister and then as Prime Minister with an ability to take the country into confidence and, above all, a pragmatic zeal to work, retrieved to India the honour and prestige of the Nehruvian era. The United Front Government lasted for a very short period – mid-1996 to March 1998, yet its impression on India's foreign policy will last long.

After the 1998 snap polls, another coalition Government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and headed by Atal Behari Vajpayee came to power. The Vajpayee Government dramatized the course of India's foreign policy by conducting a series of five nuclear tests, three on 11 May and two on 13 May 1998 of different magnitude and

variety under mysterious secrecy. These tests not only drew unprecedented global attention and reaction but also put India's foreign policy on an entirely new dock. Now India would have to reconcile its national interest with international order in a highly hostile condition. Vajpayee's historic visit to Lahore and, then, the episode of Kargil demanded very high attention on foreign policy. Like the previous Government it too had little space to work on domestic front and, hence, tried to create political space for the future by working on foreign policy. Working on foreign policy was also politically convenient because of the nature of the coalition partners and their terms and conditions of support to the government.

3. India's Foreign Policy under United Front Government

India's foreign policy went through a phase of active positivism from the mid-1996 up to the first quarter of 1998 under the United Front Government. This government adopted a three-pronged strategy to meet the challenges of the New World order. These were:

- a. To engage the neighbours through unilateral concession and strengthen the channels of regional and sub-regional cooperation to build an atmosphere of peace and prosperity in the South Asian region;
- b. To launch hectic diplomatic activity to expand the reach and contours of India's foreign policy and involve as many countries as possible in as many areas as desirable; and
- c. To articulate and exercise principled stand on international issues whether it is nuclear non-proliferation or world trade order.

3.1 Neighbourhood Policy: Gujral Doctrine

Certain immature and diplomatically incorrect decisions of the Rajiv Gandhi Government had vitiated India's neighbourhood

relations. Almost every neighbour was angry and psychologically burdened with India's misadventure in Sri Lanka and Maldives and arrogant process of mending the tie of friendship with neighbours, which was continued by the Narasimha Rao Government. But a real breakthrough could be achieved only by the United Front Government when it clearly enunciated its policy of engagement with neighbours on the basis of Gujral Doctrine, promulgated by the then Foreign Minister, I. K. Gujral, in a speech in London in August 1996⁶. The five key elements of Gujral Doctrine were as follows:

'Firstly, with its neighbours like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal, India doesn't ask for reciprocity, but gives all that it can in good faith and trust;

Secondly, no South Asian country will allow its territory to be used against the interests of another country of the region;

Thirdly, none will interfere in the internal affairs of another;

Fourthly, all South Asian countries must respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;

And finally, all countries will settle their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations'.⁷

Explaining other components of his neighbourhood policy, Gujral elaborated that his neighbourhood policy would also be guided by the concern for the accelerated development of every country in the sub-continent. Replying on his policy of India giving unilateral concession to her neighbours as being the biggest country in the region, he also wished to strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation under the umbrella of SAARC (South Asian Association

6 See *Frontline*, Vol. 14, No. 6, March 22-April 4, (1997), pp. 4-11.

7 *Ibid.*, p.5.

for Regional Cooperation). He envisioned developing sub-regional cooperation under SAARC by involving Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and North-Eastern states of India. Similar kind of arrangement for sub-regional cooperation could be made on the Western and Southern flanks of the sub-continent by engaging Pakistan and Western provinces of India in one block and Sri Lanka, Maldives and Southern provinces of India in another.

3.1.1. Neighborhood policy: Down the Road of Action

A characteristic feature of the United Front Government's foreign policy regime was to give equal emphasis on the implementation of the principles and policies enunciated by the Government. As a follow up action to its neighbourhood policy, this Government launched hectic diplomatic activities to transmute its doctrine into real actions. Some of the actions taken by this Government were as follows:

- (a) Resumption of interrupted dialogue with Pakistan unconditionally;
- (b) Signing of a 30-year Treaty on sharing of the Ganges waters down the Farakka barrage with Bangladesh on 12 December 1996;
- (c) Ratification of the Treaty on the Mahakali project with Nepal;
- (d) Liberalisation of visa regime for travel between India and Pakistan;
- (e) India's offer to Bangladesh for transit facilities to trade with Nepal and Bhutan; and
- (f) Positive cooperation with Bangladesh in solving the Chakma refugee problem.

3.1.2. *Critical Evaluation of Gujral Doctrine*

A sober and proper assessment of any foreign policy can be done with reference to its short-term and long-term objectives. Gujral doctrine too had its short-term and long-term objectives. It was designed to create an atmosphere of goodwill and cooperation in the short-run. But in the long-term, it envisioned promoting economic development of the region through regional and sub-regional cooperation. Since the United Front Government survived for a very short period it is difficult to assess the outcomes of its neighbourhood policy from a long-term perspective. However, in its short-term objectives, Gujral doctrine did an appreciable job in creating an atmosphere of goodwill and understanding, conversation and dialogue. For example, Indo-Bangladesh Treaty on sharing of the Ganges waters, Indo-Nepal Treaty on the Mahakali project and other vexatious issue like trade and transit facilities to the later, beginning of dialogue with Pakistan, etc. were its immediate positive developments. Gujral's certain gestures as noted above generated an atmosphere of normalcy and helped in reducing tension in the South Asian region. Most of India's neighbours responded positively to its good gestures. Even Pakistan, notwithstanding a feeling of being marginalised through the Gujral Doctrine, came forth positively on many occasions.

However, to critics, impacts of Gujral Doctrine have been only of cosmetic significance. As J. N. Dixit, former Foreign Secretary, Government of India, remarked: "It didn't make any qualitative impact on improving regional relations since 1996"⁸. He elaborates:

- 'Pakistan, while agreeing to resume dialogue, repeatedly stressed and continued to do so that a compromise on Kashmir

8 J. N. Dixit, *Across Border: Fifty Years of India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Picus Books, 1998), p. 373.

according to its wishes would be a pre-condition to the dialogue covering other subjects and resulting in general bilateral cooperation;

-Bangladesh remained reticent and distant about expanding economic, technological and political cooperation with India. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (B.N.P.), the then opposition party, denounced all the agreements, which the Sheikh Hasina Government had entered into with India;

-There has been no reaction of goodwill and trust from Nepal either, despite the friendly gestures by Gujral. The Treaty on the Mahakali project has been questioned by various political parties in Nepal since the end of 1997;

-The Government of India has not been able to meet the concerns of the government of Bhutan about infiltration by U.L.F.A (United Liberation Front of Assam) extremists into Bhutan'.⁹

-Gujral doctrine has also been criticised for its ruffling the feathers of Pakistan foreign policy establishment. Elaborating the first principle of his neighbourhood policy - unilateral concession to neighbours - I. K. Gujral deliberately omitted the name of Pakistan, which was viewed by the latter as a smart move by India to isolate it regionally. Any sensible policy of regional cooperation in South Asia would be incomplete and ineffective by isolating Pakistan or any other country for that matter.

-Another critical aspect of Gujral doctrine is that there is nothing new in this much-publicized doctrine. India has been following a policy of unilateral concessions to its neighbours for long. Only thing is that Gujral Doctrine articulated it as a foreign policy choice. Apart from that, elements second, third and fourth as noted above in the

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 372-273.

Gujral doctrine have been virtually borrowed from the 'Panchaseel'¹⁰ of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Chou-en-Lai. Moreover, the last element of his doctrine, i.e. settlement of disputes bilaterally is nothing but reiteration of India's previous stands.

3.2. *Activist Foreign Policy*

The United Front Government expanded the horizon of India's foreign policy from East Asia to Central Asia, Indian Ocean countries to African and Sub-Saharan countries, America to Russia, China to Japan. The concerns of foreign policy were extended to political and other aspects of diplomacy, which were ignored by the Narasimha Rao Government in obsessive pursuit of getting foreign direct investment. This Government used all the channels of economic and political diplomacy to promote India's foreign policy objectives. Attracting foreign investment was no longer the sole guide of India's foreign policy as it was during the Narasimha Rao Government.

The 'Look East' policy of the previous Government was further strengthened by several visits of I. K. Gujral to East Asia. He visited Malaysia and Singapore to enhance economic links with the two emerging powerhouses of Asia-Pacific. His visit to Jakarta coincided with India being given the status of a full dialogue partner in ASEAN. An economic sub-regional grouping - BIST-EC¹¹ (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand-Economic Cooperation Forum) was launched by roping the countries of South Asia and East Asia. The main objective of this group was 'to create economic development through

10 Panchsheel literally means five principles of behaviour. Panchsheel is a doctrine of foreign policy, which was enunciated by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, along with Chou-En-Lai, the then Prime Minister of China, in 1954.

11 See *World Focus*, Vol. 18, No.6, (1997), p.23.

identification and implementation of specific cooperation projects in the sector of trade, investment and industry, technology, human resource development, tourism, agriculture, energy, infrastructure and transportation'.¹² I.K. Gujral also participated in the First Ministerial Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)¹³ held in Mauritius on 5-7 March 1997, to formally flag off IOR-ARC consisting of 14 nations from three continents under one economic group.

After strengthening friendship ties first with immediate neighbours in South Asia and then with East Asian countries; the United Front Government looked forward to improving relations with Central Asian countries, which has been not only of historical significance to India but of high strategic importance. To strengthen the bond of friendship and element of cooperation with Central Asia, the United Front Government roped Turkmenistan and Iran in a tripartite agreement for a trade route. Gujral was deeply concerned with the emerging strategic interests and groups in Central Asia for its huge reserves of oil, gas and other natural resources. There were talks of the making of a coalition consisting of the West, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan. India's response was in developing another coalition consisting of Russia, Armenia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and India.

The Gulf region has always been of strategic importance to the world of its huge oil reserves. But to India this region derives importance also because of its Islamic appeal. The Republic of Iran due to its influence upon Islamic countries has been of political and

¹² *Ibid.*, p.23.

¹³ The 14 participating countries of IOR-ARC were Australia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Yemen.

diplomatic importance to India. Recognizing this factor, Gujral paid an official visit to Iran to strengthen relations. During the visit, he signed a fertilizer plant agreement with Iran and also initiated a project for laying gas pipeline from Iran to India across Pakistan. The two countries entered into another agreement that would facilitate the Indian Railways in laying out railway lines there.

The United Front Government reinvigorated Indo-Russian friendship, which has drifted in to cold relations in the post-Soviet Union era. Gujral made a trip to Moscow for the Indo-Russian Joint Commission meeting. During his visit, he was able to get commitment regarding the supply of cryogenic engine from the Russian Government, which the latter had refused under the pressure of the U.S.A. The then Defence Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, also led a high level delegation to finalise the purchase of 'Sukoi-30' multi-role aircraft. The Russian Government also signed an agreement with India to supply two 'thousand-megawatt' nuclear power reactors.

Sino-Indian relationship was improved with the visit of the Chinese President Jiang Zemin to New Delhi in November 1996. The Sino-Indian Joint Working Group had been doing a good job in confidence building measure, which was boosted by the visit of the Chinese President.

But Indo-U.S. relations remained bitter throughout the period. The initial thaw created by the P. V. Narasimha Rao Government did not last for long. Once India marched on the road of free market economy, the United States showed and developed keen interests in India. For the first three years of Narasimha Rao Government, Indo-U.S. relations moved forward. However, on the issue of N.P.T. (Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty), and C.T.B.T. (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), India's principled stand annoyed the U.S

Government and the honeymoon ended very soon. Both the countries entered into a critical phase of relations after India's refused to sign the C.T.B.T in 1996. The final decision not to sign the C.T.B.T was taken by the United Front Government and, therefore, throughout its tenure, the United Front Government had to face hostile US. After becoming Prime Minister, I. K. Gujral tried to mend relations with the United States and for that purpose met President Bill Clinton in New York in September 1997. This meeting was not successful because of the U.S. government's unwillingness to accept India's genuine security concerns for not signing a discriminatory treaty. The relations nose-dived further due to some other incidents as well. A scheduled discussion between the Indian Defence Secretary and officials of the US Defence Department in 1997 was cancelled over the issue of Americans not giving due acknowledgement to the status and seniority of the personnel of Indian delegation. A statement by I.K. Gujral on Iraq issue on January 31, 1998 in Calcutta that the Government of India would not tolerate any military action against Iraq when the US was planning to punish Saddam Hussein for his non-compliance with the Security Council resolutions also invited US anger. Indo-US relations remained at a critically low level during the tenure of the United Front Government that became an issue of criticism of its foreign policy. Thus Gujral's claim that the United Front Government had brought out a political balance between India's North and South after 15 years of imbalance is only partly true.

3.3. Principled Stand on Nuclear Non-Proliferation

The United Front Government's response to the question of nuclear non-proliferation was clear and firm that was not to sign unequal, discriminatory treaty, whether it was the N.P.T, the C.T.B.T or the proposed F.M.C.T. (Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty).

Affirming India's own choice in foreign policy in general and nuclear policy in particular, the then Foreign Minister, I.K. Gujral, asserted in his London speech:

"Independence of mind and autonomy of action, then, has been the hallmark of Indian foreign policy as much as with the first Indian Government headed by Jawahar Lal Nehru as with the new Indian Government headed by a farmer from the southern state of Karnataka".¹⁴

On India's nuclear options, he clarified that India's restraint from weaponisation after undertaking peaceful nuclear explosion at Pokhran in 1974 was self-imposed. Referring to India's security environment, he emphasized that it would never give up its security options under any external pressure, as India was living in a "dangerous security environment". India is surrounded by nuclear weapons from Diego Garcia in South to China in North. Hence, India cannot abdicate its right to protect its citizens and territory from any external threat. Therefore, "We have no desire to go nuclear unless and until we are forced to. But we cannot give up our nuclear option".¹⁵

Guided by this principled stand, India refused to vote in favour of CTBT in September 1996. Replying to a question on the signing of the CTBT in Parliament, I. K. Gujral made it firmly clear that 'India will not sign the CTBT in its present form- now or later'.¹⁶ India's objections to the CTBT were primarily two: one, it was a discriminatory treaty and India would not sign any discriminatory treaty; two, the present draft of the CTBT did not pledge towards complete nuclear disarmament within a reasonable time-frame.

14 C.F. *Frontline*, Vol. 14, No. 6, (1997), p. 9.

15 *Ibid.*, p.9.

16 *Ibid.*, p.9.

India's decision to remain outside the CTBT was treated by the West as an act of defiance of world opinion. Therefore, in subsequent months when India made a bid to get elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, the West was predisposed to punish India. Consequently, India lost the seat to Japan by a huge margin. It was later on hinted by the West that India lost the seat of Security Council as a matter of punishment. Foreign Minister of Germany, Klaus Kinkel, accepted it openly at a press conference that India was punished because of its stand on the CTBT. The loss of Security Council non-permanent seat to Japan became a matter of severe criticism of foreign policy handling by the United Front Government in the domestic circle. Nevertheless, in spite of a very short tenure, Deve Gowda- Gujral's phase in India's foreign policy will be remembered for its following policy responses: (1) perceptible and workable Gujral doctrine; (2) engaging and activist foreign policy and (3) principled stand on nuclear non-proliferation.

4. India's Foreign Policy Under Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government

India's foreign policy entered into a radically different phase with the formation of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition Government at the Centre in March 1998. First Pokhran, then Lahore and finally Kargil not only dramatised the tenor of India's foreign policy but also heralded a new era of foreign policy. Incidents of Pokhran, Lahore and Kargil not only reflected new postures of India's foreign policy but also articulated foreign policy vision of the Vajpayee Government. While Pokhran-II tests crystallized its commitment towards making India a powerful and strong nation state; Lahore epitomized its adherence to collective wisdom of India's foreign policy and Kargil demonstrated its determination to protect and preserve the territorial integrity of the country firmly and

responsibly. Agra and developments after the incident of terrorist attack on Indian Parliament (on 13 December 2001) too reflect upon the foreign policy thinking of the Vajpayee Government. But it is the nuclear policy of the Vajpayee Government, which holds key to understanding BJP's vision of India's foreign policy. For, Lahore, Kargil and Agra are derivative developments of the Pokhran-II tests.

4.1. BJP's Nuclear Vision: Compatible with Domestic Political Agenda

Experts and analysts have explained the Pokhran-II tests as a BJP's foreign policy response to international factors like changing regional and global security environment, the CTBT deadline, Sino-Pak nuclear collaboration, etc. For example, the uncertainty and chaos of the aftermath of the Cold War period was still there in 1998. India's regional security environment had deteriorated by Sino-Pak clandestine nuclear cooperation. Political uncertainty in Afghanistan was looming large. The United States was increasingly demonstrating its interest in Central Asian region. In spite of the end of the Cold War, the United States was unwilling to wind up its military stations having nuclear weapons from Diego-Garcia in the Indian Ocean, East Asia and Gulf region. China's ambition to emerge as a regional and global superpower was becoming ardent. As a result of all these factors, India's security environment deteriorated sharply and acquiring nuclear weapons became an urgent matter of national security. These factors were definitely important considerations for Pokhran-II tests.

But there were elements of domestic politics as well, which have been missing in most of the analyses. The Bharatyia Janata Party and its earlier incarnation, the Jana Sangh, have been consistent advocates of nuclear bombs. Even during the various parliamentary elections, the BJP has prominently projected its agenda of making

nuclear weapons in speeches of its leaders and election manifestoes. For example, its manifestoes of 1996 and 1998 parliamentary elections affirmed its stand on nuclear and other issues of foreign policy that:

- (a) 'To the BJP, the national security on which depends very much the survival of the country is the arch-pillar of its foreign policy building.
- (b) Though the BJP supports the concept of a nuclear weapons free world, its commitment to a nuclear weapon free world should not be treated as a posture of surrendering the option of nuclear bomb.
- (c) The party reiterates its commitments to reevaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.
- (d) The party stands to oppose discriminatory nuclear treaties like the CTBT, NPT and the upcoming FMCT."¹⁷

Amidst the heat and dust of the 1998 general elections, Brajesh Mishra, the then foreign policy spokesperson of the BJP, made it clear that if elected to power, the party would induct nuclear bombs. The party was also very much assertive on the expeditious development of Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile- Agni - that needed to be tested further that was allegedly stopped during the Narashimha Rao Government under the US pressure. The BJP's stand on the nuclear issue remained the same even when the party was voted to power. While seeking the vote of confidence in Parliament, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, stated, 'Our party feels that India should have the bomb since it will place the country in a strong position vis-a-vis the outside world.'¹⁸ Moreover,

17 See Cover Story, The BJP And Bomb, *Frontline*, Vol.15, No.8, (1998), pp.4-8.

18 *Ibid.*, p.5.

to the BJP, possessing nuclear bombs is not only a currency of power but also a matter of faith. It is also compatible with its political vision, which ardently pleads for a strong nation state (Rashtra) vis-a-vis civil society (Samaj). If the nation state is put at the preeminent position, it is but natural that it has to be strong and powerful-economically, politically and militarily. But to work on all the fronts simultaneously needed huge amount of efforts and resources apart from political determination. Besides, this is a long-term project, which cannot be materialised in haste and without clear political mandate. The 1998 parliamentary elections neither gave a clear verdict in favour of the BJP nor did it ensure its five-year term. Therefore, the BJP had to translate its political vision within the constraint of a shaky coalition government. The nature of the coalition partners and their conditional support allowed little space for the BJP to work upon its other domestic agenda like construction of Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya, abolition of article 370 which gives special status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir in the Indian Constitution, uniform civil code and construction of Hindu Rashtra, etc. But working on nuclear front was politically convenient as well as compatible with its agenda. For, it needed neither too much of efforts and resources nor too much of time. At the same time, it would have hardly created any serious political differences among the allies as most of them were regional parties whose political fortunes are least affected by the issues of foreign policy. The BJP was also looking for a suitable issue to expand its political and electoral base, which had saturated after the loss of political appeal of the Ram Mandir issue. Nuclear bomb had the potential of becoming that catchy issue and, in fact, the BJP reaped political crops of nuclear explosion in the 1999 parliamentary elections.

Thus influenced by the above international and domestic factors, the BJP Government conducted a series of five nuclear tests of

different devices-three on May 11, 1998 and two on May 13, 1998. The three underground tests conducted on May 11, 1998 were of three different devices - a fission device, a low-yield sub-kiloton device and a thermo-nuclear device. The subsequent two tests on May 13, 1998 were low-yield devices in the sub-kiloton range.

4.1.1. Pokhran-II Tests: Timing, Rationale and Objectives

These tests surprised the nation, scared the neighbours and stunted the world by its timing, perfection of technology and its foreign policy objectives. However, its timing has been more intriguing. Why did India end its self-imposed restraint after 24 years? What were the imperatives to go for tests when the country had been focussing its attention on new economic policy with awareness that the repercussions would not be good for economic reconstruction programme? Were the imperatives of such a degree that the Government did not think it proper to discuss the matter first? What were the foreign policy objectives of the tests?

The answer to these questions may be found in the suo-moto statement of the Prime Minister and the paper 'Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy'. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, made a 'suo-moto statement' in Parliament on May 27, 1998 and also laid a paper "Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy".¹⁹ In his statement and the paper, the Prime Minister presented a brief outline of India's nuclear doctrine and its gradual evolution. Various justifications for the Pokhran-II tests have also been advanced in the paper.

- 1) The first and the foremost important message in the paper is that India's nuclear policy has been solely guided by her national

¹⁹ "Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy", Enclosure to PM's *suo moto* statement in Parliament on 27 May 1998, Press Information Bureau, Government of India, New Delhi, 27 May 1998.

security concerns and even in future national security will be the only touchstone of her nuclear and foreign policy. He made it very clear that the present series of tests were not aberrations in India's nuclear policy. Rather it was a graduated response to our deepening security concerns. It was also highlighted that in the 1990s India appealed to the world and the nuclear weapon countries to stop nuclear weapon testing. In the 1960s with China becoming nuclear and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean becoming the US military base with nuclear weapons, India appealed to the superpowers to extend to it security umbrella, which was refused. India responded to her deepening security concerns by nuclear explosion on May 18, 1975. Since then India has maintained her nuclear options. The end of the Cold War did not result in any serious efforts to make the world nuclear weapon free. Rather the NPT has been extended indefinitely and unconditionally, perpetuating the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the P-5 countries (Five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council). The Prime Minister stated: "Under such circumstances the government was faced with a difficult decision. The touchstone that has guided us in making the correct choice was national security. These tests are a continuation of the policies on the path of self-reliance and independence of thought and action."²⁰

- 2) The second important reason for the Pokhran-II tests as quoted in the paper is progressively deteriorating regional security environment as explained by the Prime Minister. "The decades of 1980s and 1990s had meanwhile witnessed the gradual deterioration of our security environment as a result of nuclear and missile proliferation. In addition, India has also been a victim

20 *Suo Moto Statement* by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in Parliament on 27 May 1998, Press Information Bureau, Government of India, New Delhi, 27 May 1998.

of externally aided terrorism, military and clandestine war".²¹ The most disturbing part of deteriorating regional security environment is clandestine Sino-Pak nuclear and missile cooperation.

- 3) The third factor was the uncertainty of the new world order and a huge stock of nuclear weapons in the hands of P-5 countries. Even after the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapon countries were unwilling to forego nuclear weapons. As of May 1998, the USA possessed 12,070 nuclear warheads, Russia 22,500, France 500, UK 380 and China 450.²² Elaborating upon the issue, Prime Minister Vajpayee expressed his concerns in the paper thus: "The end of the Cold War marks a watershed in the history of the 20th century. While it has transformed the political landscape of Europe, it has done little to address India's security concerns. The relative order that was arrived at in Europe was not replicated in other parts of the globe. At the global level there is no evidence yet on the part of the nuclear weapon states to take decisive and irreversible steps in moving towards a nuclear weapon free world. Instead, the NPT has been extended indefinitely and unconditionally, perpetuating the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the five countries, which are also permanent members of the UN Security Council. Some of these countries have doctrines that permit the first use of nuclear weapons; these countries are also engaged in programmes of modernization of their nuclear arsenals."²³
- 4) The fourth factor was India's desire to become a frontrunner country in the sphere of advanced technology. "At a time when development in the area of advanced technologies is taking place

21 *Ibid.*, p.2.

22 C. F. J N Dixit, *ibid*, p. 424.

23 "Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy", *Ibid*, p.8.

at the breathtaking pace, new parameters need to be identified, tested and validated in order to ensure that skills remain contemporary and succeeding generations of scientists and engineers are able to build on work done by their predecessors. The limited series of tests undertaken by India was precisely such an exercise.²⁴

- 5) The fifth factor could be the prospect of restrictive and discriminatory international regimes being put in place. The NPT, a discriminatory nuclear treaty, was extended indefinitely and unconditionally in 1995. In 1996, another discriminatory treaty, CTBT, was finalised and a clause was inserted to coerce entry of India into the treaty. Another treaty, FMCT, (Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty) was in the pipeline. These treaties and double intentions: first to deprive the non-nuclear countries permanently of acquiring nuclear weapons so that the P-5's monopoly over nuclear weapons would remain for ever and, second, to deprive the developing countries of the advantages of the spin-off effects of nuclear and space technology. India was also bitter about the way the US coerced Russia not to supply cryogenic engine technology to India even though it was desired only for civilian purposes. India was also aware of the fact that Brazil, Argentina, South Africa rolled back, or capped, or eliminated their nuclear capacity under the pressure of the West. On the other hand, France and China had overcome this pressure by going nuclear. It is learnt that one of the motives behind the test was that India like France and China wanted to overcome this pressure.
- 6) Lastly, the BJP's coming to power worked as a catalyst. Nuclear bombs suited BJP's political vision and agenda as has been explained above. Therefore, with or without international

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.8.

developments, as alluded above, the BJP Government would have conducted nuclear tests. The haste with which this government gave nod to scientists for preparing nuclear tests also testifies this theory. Finally, the other reasons for tests were present even during the tenure of previous governments and it is reported that India had come very close to exercising nuclear test in 1995. However, it is the BJP Government that did it and not the others. This also adds weightage to the argument.

Thus, as a cumulative result of all these factors, India ended two decades of voluntary, self-imposed restraint. The exercise was done in the final and primary interest of national security. "The only touchstone that guided it (Pokhran II tests) was national security. Tests conducted on 11 and 13 May are a continuation of the policies set into motion that put this country on the path of self-reliance and independence of thought and action. 1998 was born in the crucible of earlier decisions."²⁵ The rationale for the government's decisions is based on the same policy tenets that have guided the country for 5 decades. The present decision and future actions will continue to reflect a commitment to sensibilities and obligation of an ancient civilization, a sense of responsibility and restraints, but a restraint born of the assurance of action, not of the doubts or apprehensions".²⁶

4.1.2 Pokhran-II and its Criticisms

Notwithstanding the above justifications, the decision of the BJP Government to conduct a series of tests has been criticized both from idealist and moralist positions.

Firstly, to the idealists and moralists, India has abandoned its (qualified) commitment not to acquire nuclear weapons without any

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13.

valid reasons. India has been opposing all kinds of discriminatory nuclear disarmament treaties on the ground that they do not address its concerns for total and universal nuclear disarmament. Now its principled stand on nuclear disarmament gets morally weak. It will no longer oppose such treaties with the same moral strength. At the same time, India, which has been known as a land of Buddha and Gandhi who gave to the world principles of 'Satya' and 'Ahimsa', has attacked on its own civilizational principles. Further, India will no longer command the respect of the world as a peace loving country.

Secondly, Pokhran-II has adversely affected Indo-Pak relations. Pakistan responded quickly' by conducting its own tests on May 28 and 30. To the critics, this defeated India's purpose of getting the upper hand in the South Asian region. Pakistan was unequal to India in conventional warheads. However, its acquiring nuclear weapons negated India's upper hand in conventional military arsenals that will have serious political, diplomatic and security implications for India. It is apprehended that Pakistan may use its nuclear weapons as a leverage to reactivate the Kashmir issue. Moreover, in the future any tension between India and Pakistan (on Kashmir or otherwise) would draw much more attention from the world community because of the apprehension of both countries indulging in nuclear warfare. This may also help Pakistan in internationalization of the issue of Kashmir and seeking mediation by a third party a possibility. Besides, there is all possibility that Sino-Pak clandestine nuclear and missile cooperation will increase further which will have a negative impact on the regional security environment from India's point of view.

However, in defense of the above criticism, one may say that Pakistan had already acquired nuclear weapons before its public demonstration. India's decision to acquire nuclear weapons should not be treated as a cause of Pakistan acquiring nuclear weapons. But

it should be treated as an effect of Pakistan's clandestine nuclear programme and open nuclear utterances. Apart from that too, as it had worked during the Cold War period between the erstwhile USSR and the USA, the fears of mutual self-destruction (MSD) would encourage both India and Pakistan to engage in serious bilateral discussions with a more rational and pragmatic approach.

Thirdly, in the post-Pokhran-II phase, Sino-Indian relations deteriorated precipitously, which had been improving since 1988 after Rajeev Gandhi initiated the process of mending relations. This was further boosted in 1993 when the P V Narashimha Rao Government entered into a confidence building agreement with China. There were some other good postures by both sides. However, the nuclear tests by India seem to have nullified the positive developments of the previous years. More than nuclear tests, it was the letter of the Indian Prime Minister to the then US President, Bill Clinton, and Defence Minister, George Fernandes, going to the press calling China India's enemy number one, that damaged Sino-Indian relations badly. China has taken a belligerent posture against India in the post Pokhran-II phase. The change in the Chinese perception can be seen from a paper entitled 'India's nuclear tests and China's security' prepared by the Beijing Military Academy. The paper says that China may find it more difficult to resolve the border issue with Indian to its advantage following last May's nuclear tests. The paper recommended that China should work to isolate India at international level. It should seek western help in putting effective sanctions against India. Moreover, it recommends that China should penalize India for its alleged "anti-China" stance and highlights India's hegemonistic design. And finally it recommends deployment of medium and long-range missiles against India.

Fourthly, people questioned the legitimacy of a minority government to take such a challenging decision. However, one may

say that definitely it was a decision of a minority government but it was ratified by mass popular support of the country as the post-test public opinion surveys indicated. The major test was 1999-parliamentary elections itself which brought the party once again to power. This was also a vote on Pokhran II tests.

Fifthly, critics also lambasted the BJP Government for not consulting various political parties including allies before taking such a challenging decision. They say that the matter should have been first discussed in Parliament and in various other public fora. However, they miss the point that such kind of decision, which involves high level of secrecy, cannot be made public in its formative stage. Precedents of our own tests of 1974 and those of other nuclear weapon countries suggest that it would be unwise and diplomatically immature to disclose the matter before its materialization. It is learned that in 1995, India had to stop the test under the pressure of the United States once it was leaked to the press.

Sixthly, critics were also sore over the issues of economic sanctions and political isolation, which were imminent in the post-test period. Immediately after the test, the US Government announced its decision to impose economic and military sanctions on India. Many other countries followed the US. New Zealand and Australia reacted by recalling their high commissioners posted in New Delhi. This had created serious diplomatic challenge to India's foreign policy.

But careful handling of diplomacy in the post- Pokhran II phase and restrained behaviour during the Kargil operation helped India in convincing the world that its nuclear weapons would not be used unwisely. India's stand on no- first-use of nuclear weapons acquired diplomatic legitimacy during the Kargil operation when it restricted its military response only to conventional weapons. Other foreign policy gestures of the BJP Government resulted in substantial

realization among the major players of the world that India's nuclear stand has serious validity.

4.2. Lahore Declaration

Lahore Bus diplomacy was a foreign policy response of the BJP Government to meet the nuclear reality of South Asia. India's nuclear tests were followed by those of Pakistan's the same month. Nuclear explosions followed by mutual recriminations had vitiated Indo-Pak relations. Dialogue broke down and political rhetoric reached crescendo. Sentiments of the people of both the countries were raised to an alarming level. The world was watching nuclear and diplomatic developments of these two countries with consternation and apprehension. External pressures were increasing on India and Pakistan to initiate dialogue through diplomatic channels. There was also a realization on the part of both India and Pakistan to sit at the negotiation table to evolve new terms of references for foreign policy to meet the strategic reality of nuclear South Asia. The Prime Minister of India, Atal Behari Vajpayee, rode in a bus to reach Lahore to put his thumb on 'Lahore Declaration' along with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Nawaz Sharif, on 21st February 2001.²⁷

The Lahore visit by Atal Behari Vajpayee, culminating in signing the Lahore Declaration along with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, was another strand of foreign policy response of the BJP Government. Through the Lahore Declaration, the BJP Government demonstrated to the world that in spite of its decision to acquire nuclear weapons, it would not deviate from the well established traditions of India's foreign policy. It further reiterated India's commitment to the principle of peaceful co-existence. Moreover, it

27 The Hindu, 22 February 1999.

was a move in convincing the world and immediate neighbours that India's nuclear weapons were primarily for self-defence and not for offence.

The 'Lahore declaration' was a serious effort in improving bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. Both the countries sharing a vision of peace and stability were convinced that durable peace and development of harmonious relations have not only become a matter of friendship but have acquired an urgency for their survival after nuclearisation of the region. Recognizing the nuclear dimensions of new security environment they committed themselves to the principle of peaceful co-existence. Both the countries reiterated their determination to implement the Shimla Agreement in letter and spirit.

Through 'Lahore Declaration' both the countries agreed that their respective governments: "shall intensify their efforts to resolve all issues including the issue of Jammu & Kashmir; shall refrain from interference and intervention in each other's internal affairs; shall take immediate steps for reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons".²⁸ They also reaffirmed their commitment to the goals and objectives of SAARC; and their condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The Foreign Secretaries of the two countries also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 21 February 1999 during Vajpayee's Lahore visit. Under the MOU both the countries agreed to the following:

- (a) "The two sides undertake to provide each other with advanced notification in respect of ballistic missiles and shall conclude a bilateral agreement in this regard.

28 *Ibid.*,

- (b) The two sides shall engage in bilateral consultations on security concepts, and nuclear doctrines, with a view to developing measures for confidence building in the nuclear and conventional fields.
- (c) The two sides undertake to provide each other with advanced notification in respect of ballistic missile flight tests and shall conclude a bilateral agreement in this regard.
- (d) The two sides are fully committed to undertaking national measures to reducing the risks of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons under their respective control.
- (e) The two sides further undertake to notify each other immediately in the event of any accidental, unauthorized or unexplained incident that could create the risk of a fallout with adverse consequences for both sides, or an outbreak of a nuclear war between the two countries, as well as to adopt measures aimed at diminishing the possibility of such actions, or such accidents being misinterpreted by the other.
- (f) The two sides shall continue to abide by their respective unilateral moratorium on conducting further nuclear tests unless either side, in exercise of its national sovereignty decides that extraordinary events jeopardized its supreme interests.
- (g) The two sides shall periodically review the implementation of existing confidence building measures and setup appropriate consultative mechanisms to monitor and ensure effective implementation of these CBMs.
- (h) The two sides shall undertake a review of the existing communication links, and to provide for fail-safe and secure communications.
- (i) The two sides shall engage in bilateral consultation on security, disarmament and non-proliferation issues within the context of negotiations on these issues in multilateral fora".²⁹

29 *Ibid.*,

Apart from Lahore Declaration, the Indian Prime Minister made some other good gestures to improve relations between the two countries. By visiting Minar-e-Pakistan, he touched the cordial knot of the people of Pakistan for whom the Minar-e-Pakistan is a symbol of the nation of Pakistan but for India it is a vestige of the two nations theory. Pakistan has a very deep-rooted perception that so far India has not accepted Pakistan as a nation. But this visit for the first time by any Prime Minister of India would make positive impression on the people of Pakistan. Moreover, the Lahore Declaration reiterated some of the commitments of the Shimla Agreement that gave it a new significance. Therefore, this visit was not only of historical importance but evoked tremendous contemporary relevance. Thus Lahore Declaration was another important foreign policy response of the BJP Government.

4.3. Kargil: Pakistan's Misadventure and India's Response

When the Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, was signing the Lahore Declaration on 21 February 1999, the Pakistan military was intruding into Indian Kashmir across the LoC in the Kargil sector and by the end of March 1999 they had occupied many of the Indian posts in the Kargil sector. When the report came in, the Vajpayee Government came in for severe criticisms in the domestic circles for its poor understanding of Pakistan's defence and foreign policy. Critics say that the Vajpayee Government's decision to sign the Lahore Declaration was based on wrong reading of Pakistan's power structure. For, during his Lahore visit, the then Chief of Pakistan Army, General Pervez Musharraf, had refused to salute the Indian Prime Minister. This was a hint that Pakistan military was opposed to Lahore Declaration and held different lines of thinking with respect to Indo-Pak relations. Therefore, they plotted Kargil to derail Lahore bus diplomacy.

Once the report came in that Pakistan military had intruded into Indian territory in the Kargil sector, the hawkish elements inside India became aggressive and pressurized the Government to counterattack Pakistan. They also pleaded to convert it as a final battle with Pakistan to liberate POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir). Inside Pakistan too, the same elements who were not happy with the Lahore Declaration, tried to escalate it into a full-fledged war with the option to use nuclear weapons. It was later on reported that, in fact, the script of Kargil was written by those who were opposed to the Lahore Declaration. Indo-Pak relations reached the position where it was after the nuclear tests. Rather the situation became more tense, because of the apprehensions that in case of escalation of war, desperate Pakistan might use nuclear weapons to settle score with her traditional enemy.

Thus Kargil created unprecedented challenge before the just one-year-old Vajpayee Government. The immediate task was to evacuate the Pakistani regulars and irregulars from Indian territory without letting it to escalate into a full-scale war. Its diplomatic challenge was to salvage the Lahore Declaration and keep away external interference to as minimum as possible. Politically, the Government needed to convince the people and the opposition political groups that territorial integrity of the country would be safe in the hands of the BJP-led Government. This became more pressing because of the fact that for the first time the BJP was leading the government at the Centre.

The Vajpayee Government fashioned following responses to meet this challenge:

Firstly, when it was brought to the notice of the Government, it decided quickly and ordered the military to evacuate the Pakistani intruders from the Indian side of the LoC. The Indian military

accomplished this task by 26 July 1999, which was celebrated as Vijay Divas.

Secondly, the BJP Government did all possible actions and commanded the defence forces to localise the affairs. Even though the air force was mobilised to cooperate with the army; the latter was given categorical instruction not to cross the LoC in its operation. Although there were demands from various sections to open another front on Indo-Pak border to divert concentration of Pakistani military, the incumbent BJP Government did not favour the idea. Though it did cost India dearly in term of money and manpower, it endeared India at the global level for its restrained behaviour.

Thirdly, the incident of Kargil testified the theory of many an analyst that Pakistan may indulge in military misadventure to internationalise Kashmir after the acquisition of nuclear weapons. However, by localising the military operation, India not only nullified Pakistan's intentions but also managed to keep the issue of Kashmir away from the affairs of Kargil.

Fourthly, India kept the major players of the world informed of its operational strategy and it is learnt that most of them appreciated India's restrained behaviour. On the other hand, Pakistan instead of getting pat from its Western mentors and allies received mild to harsh rebuke for its unprovoked military misadventure.

Fifthly, the incident of Kargil alarmed the world community for its escalation in nuclear warfare. However, they trusted India's commitment and cautioned Pakistan against the danger. India by remaining unprovoked helped in convincing the world that it would not use nuclear weapons first. Moreover, it gave legitimacy to India's nuclear doctrine of no first use.

And lastly, the BJP Government was also successful in handling domestic politics. Opposition parties were regularly informed of the

day to day developments. People at large were mobilised to support the cause of the Government.

4.4. Agra and Developments after Terrorist Attack on Indian Parliament

If Lahore was a diplomatic response to the changed strategic reality after nuclear explosions, Agra summit was a response to heal the wounds of Kargil. But as Lahore Bus diplomacy was derailed by Kargil, the failures of Agra were made bitterer by the terrorist attack on 13 December 2001 on Indian Parliament. During the Agra summit the Vajpayee Government's tough postures were reciprocated by Pervez Musharraf's adamant attitude. India insisted on Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism; Pakistan did not budge an inch from its position on Kashmir. The summit ended without any declaration or joint statement. The results of the summit were a foreknown conclusion, for neither Pakistan nor India had done any serious groundwork. Moreover, Musharraf who declared himself President of Pakistan just a few days before the summit had to demonstrate to the domestic constituency that he would be tougher in dealing with India in comparison to the deposed Prime Minister, Mian Nawaz Sharif. Similar kinds of considerations were in the mind of the Vajpayee Government, which did not want to commit political hara-kiri by losing the victory of Kargil on the table of Agra. The Indo-Pak relations remained as bitter as they were after the Pokhran-II tests and during Kargil.

Rather the terrorist attack on Indian Parliament created a very tense atmosphere as India demanded from Pakistan to crack down on terrorist groups operating from Pakistan and on the refusal by the latter it mobilised nearly half of its troops on Pakistan border. Even during Kargil operation, troops were not mobilised in such a massive way. The deadlock is still there as India has avowed not to withdraw its troops till Pakistan stops cross-border terrorism and surrenders to

India terrorists involved in attack on Indian Parliament and other terrorist acts in India. (A list of twenty terrorists has been given to Pakistan for the purpose). India's open and unconditional support to the US in fight against global terrorism after the terrorist attack on the US on September 13, 2001 helped India in mobilising opinion against Pakistan after attack on Indian Parliament. Since then the Vajpayee Government has launched hectic diplomatic activities to isolate Pakistan as a terrorist sponsoring state apart from putting pressure through massive mobilisations of troops on the border.

5. Comparative Statement

The above accounts of major foreign policy responses of the two Governments suggest that whereas the UF Government responded to the task (of adjusting national interests with international order) through Gujral Doctrine, activist and engaging foreign policy and principled stand on nuclear issue, the BJP-led Government responded primarily through its nuclear policy. Other issues and actions were incidental upon its nuclear policy. Foreign policies of the two Governments were different both in terms of approaches and responses.

5.1. Approaches

a. Idealism versus Realism: The foreign policy approach of the UF Government may be called pragmatic idealism as it combined pragmatism with idealism in exercising foreign policy options. (I am carefully using the word pragmatism not realism). For example, the unilateral concession of Gujral Doctrine was a pragmatic realisation of the fact that a proportionally larger country with bigger economy should not expect and demand reciprocity in trade, commerce and other areas of exchanges from smaller countries particularly from neighbors. Will it be ideally correct for India to demand equal tariff

from Nepal even though it would not be politically incorrect? Moreover, the principle of reciprocity cannot be demanded like Shylock's pound of flesh where friendship and fraternity have to be given prominence. Apart from that, can a country afford to be surrounded by hostile neighbors even if they are smaller and not so powerful? This pragmatic realisation on the part of the UF Government was governed by idealism of regional cooperation, peace and prosperity in the South Asian region. Similarly, its decision not to sign the CTBT yet not going for nuclear tests was an idealistic-pragmatic position. Because, for India, it would be difficult to catch up with nuclear weapon powers even if it decided to go for nuclear weapons. But if India insists on complete elimination of nuclear weapons from the earth, it would achieve some kind of equalization with them.

On the other hand, the BJP was solely guided by the realist version of international politics that pursuit of power is the primary national interest of a country. This power politics has to be pursued both at regional and global level. The BJP's nuclear policy and other derivative actions were guided by the sole consideration of making India militarily stronger in the comity of nations. This Government has nothing to claim in terms of idealism in foreign policy.

b. Role of Ideology: The UF Government in its foreign policy approach was less influenced by its ideological position. On the contrary, the BJP's foreign policy bears clear imprint of its ideological commitment. The BJP subscribes to rightwing ideology. And it is a well-known fact that rightist political regimes have clear preference for narrow nationalism and militarily stronger nation states.³⁰ By all counts the BJP is committed to 'Hindu Rashtra' and to

30 Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism were two most obvious examples of narrow nationalism. Both of them were also subscribers to aggressive nationalism and their foreign policy concerns were largely confined to their neighbouring countries.

making India militarily very strong. Its nuclear policy and other foreign policy actions hint at its agenda and ideological influence.

c. Inward Looking and Outward Looking: The UF Government moved from local (South Asia) to regional (East Asia, Central Asia, African and Sub-Saharan countries) to global (Nuclear non-proliferation). Contrarily, the BJP Government remained doggedly imbedded in local affairs particularly Indo-Pak relations. The former was outward going in its approach; the latter has been inward looking.

5.2. Responses

a. Neighbourhood Policy: The Gujral Doctrine of the UF Government was not only a policy pronouncement but a working agenda to improve relations with the neighbours and to create positive atmosphere of regional and sub-regional cooperation for overall peace and prosperity of the South Asian region. Guided by the above agenda, the UF Government resumed interrupted dialogue with Pakistan; resolved years long water dispute with Bangladesh by signing a 30-year Treaty on sharing of the Ganga waters down the Farakka barrage; ratified the Treaty on the Mahakali project with Nepal; liberalised visa provision for travel between India and Pakistan and offered to Bangladesh transit facilities to trade with Nepal and Bhutan. This Government also initiated a process of strengthening sub-regional cooperation on the eastern and southern flanks of the sub continent.

In contrast to all these, the BJP Government neither theorized any neighbourhood policy nor developed any working agenda for engagement with the neighbours. Rather the positive development of the Gujral phase were washed out mostly by Pokhran-II tests and by other incidents as well. Indo-Pak relations touched the bottom after

the nuclear tests conducted first by India and then by Pakistan. Both the countries indulged in a new arms race combined with diplomatic and political rhetoric. Amidst all that an effort was made by the Vajpayee Government through Lahore visit to reduce tensions and create an atmosphere of peace. But since fundamental conditions for peace had been changed forever after the nuclear tests and there were no efforts to reverse the process, Lahore bus diplomacy was bound to be derailed. Kargil and terrorist attack on Indian Parliament and development afterwards have only made the things worse. Though other countries- Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan- reacted silently to Pokhran-II tests yet it was not without salience. They were filled with a feeling that nuclear weapons in the hands of India, the biggest military and economic power in the region, might not be good for them. The Vajpayee Government flagged off a bus service between Dhaka and Calcutta but commitments of the UG Government to provide transit facilities to Bangladesh to trade with Nepal and Bhutan were not moved forward in a meaningful way. Rather intrusion by Jawans of Indian Border Security Force into a Bangladeshi village and their brutal murder by villagers only made the bilateral relationship bitter amidst allegations and counter-allegations. Indo-Nepal and Indo-Sri Lanka relations too did not move any further except for a few exchanges of visits by dignitaries. The SAARC became a victim of Indo-Pak controversies. The proposed summit of SAARC in 2000 was postponed over the issue of Vajpayee Government's refusal to share dais with General Pervez Musharraf, as he was not a democratically elected Head of Government. However, the same Vajpayee Government invited Musharraf for talks at Agra in 2001 and later on sat with him also at SAARC summit held in Kathmandu in 2002. This lack of inconsistency in policy not only harmed Indo-Pak relations but also damaged SAARC process unnecessarily. Even the issue of sub-

regional cooperation did not receive any serious attention of the BJP Government. In contrast to the UF Government's more balanced and forward-looking neighborhood policy, the BJP Government confined it to Indo-Pak relations.

b. Foreign Policy Activism: There were two main components of foreign policy activism of the UF Government: first, to expand geographical dimension and, second, to harmonize politico-strategic and economic concerns of foreign policy. Geographically, the BJP Government's foreign policy remained narrowly focussed. In the South Asian region, either by choice or by compulsions of circumstances (created by the BJP itself), thrust of its foreign policy remained Indo-Pak relations. Beyond South Asia, the West and particularly the United States became the epicentre of its foreign policy activities, and other regions and countries were pushed to the margin. The steps that were taken by the UF Government with respect to Look East policy like forming various groups such as BIST-EC (later became BIMSTEC), IOR-ARC, enhancing trade, attracting investment, etc were not moved forward. Central Asia and the Gulf region remained in the shadow area of foreign policy of the BJP Government. Relations with big powers were virtually reduced to Indo-US relations. Indo-Russia relations were confined to negotiation for purchase and supply of arms and weapons. It has been groping for political meaning since the formation of the BJP-led Government at the Centre. Neither during the nuclear tests nor later on, Russia was given any serious diplomatic importance. After the Pokhran-II tests, the Vajpayee Government clarified to the US its position through a special letter whereas Russia was informed through normal diplomatic channel. On the other hand, the United States obtained unprecedented attention. On almost every issue of foreign policy, the US has been consulted by this Government. Quite

a number of dignitaries from the US have officially visited India during this period either to give advice or to consult the Government. The tilt in favour of the United States seems to be complete during the tenure of this Government. Sino-Indian relations deteriorated due to absolutely wrong way of handling the things. Chinese nuclear weapons were alluded as a reason for the Pokhran-II tests as it was stated in the Prime Minister's letter to the then US President, Bill Clinton. The Defence Minister of the Vajpayee Government, George Fernandes, kept harping in public statements that China was India's enemy number one. The efforts of the previous two governments in improving relations with China were jolted by this Government.. It seems that the Vajpayee Government in effort to appease the United States overlooked the other major powers as well as many other countries of the world whereas the UF Government tried to be in good terms with as many of them as possible.

Moreover, the UF Government's efforts at combining economic policy objectives with foreign policy agenda were abandoned in the light of overloading foreign policy with political and military concerns. In a sense, the BJP Government brought India's foreign policy to the era of the Narashimha Rao Government with the difference that the former prioritized political and military aspects by marginalising economic dimensions, while the latter did vice-versa. Foreign economic policy was pushed to the margin because of overindulgence in politico-military objectives. Rather economic and technological sanctions imposed by the major western powers and other countries like Japan, Australia created difficulties for the ongoing economic reform programme. The focus of the foreign economic policy that was to get maximum FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) shifted to getting economic and technological sanctions lifted. Thus, in contrast to the UF Government, the BJP Government

narrowed down the concerns of foreign policy both in terms of content and direction.

c. Stand On International Issues: The UF Government's firm and principled stand on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation and the decision not to sign the CTBT were guided by concerns for India's national security. So was the decision of the BJP Government in conducting nuclear tests. However, the UF Government insisted on complete elimination of nuclear weapons from the earth, and so long this objective was not achieved India would keep its nuclear options. But by conducting nuclear tests, the BJP Government weakened India's moral position on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation. India would no longer oppose discriminatory nuclear-non-proliferation treaties with the same moral force. On other international issues too, this Government did not develop any independent outlook. For example, on the question of global terrorism, which all of a sudden (after September 11, 2001) became an important issue for the USA and the West; India blindly followed the US lines. No doubt terrorism is a global menace and India has suffered a lot on this account. But is the cost of terrorism different for developed and developing countries? India should have boldly put this question in the face of the United States before jumping on to the US bandwagon. Instead the Vajpayee Government behaved like a US satrap. Similarly during the Doha Ministerial Conference of the WTO, this Government after initially taking independent lines succumbed to the pressure of the West and the US.

6. Conclusion

Thus in terms of neighbourhood policy, expanding the geographical and other dimensions of foreign policy and taking principled stand on international issues, both the Governments behaved quite differently. They not only responded distinctly to

various concerns of foreign policy but they were fundamentally different in their approaches. The UF was guided by a pragmatic-idealist perspective whereas the BJP was influenced by realist version of international politics. The former was outward looking in foreign policy behaviour, while the latter has been largely inward looking. The BJP Government defined national interest principally in terms of national security, while the UF Government took a broader vision of national interest, which was to create conditions for overall development of the country. The BJP Government's foreign policy has been substantially influenced by its ideological commitment, domestic political agenda and its vision of nation state. The UF Government was able to create autonomous space for its foreign policy.