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**India's Quest for Nuclear Weapons:
Linkages of Collective Identity and National Security**

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India and Pakistan joined the nuclear club in May 1998 by successfully testing their nuclear weapons. The potential implications of this event for regional and international security have brought fresh impetus to the non-proliferation debate. Unhindered by the West's concern to avoid an inadvertent nuclear war, India and Pakistan came close to a nuclear confrontation twice in the last three years. In 1999, they fought a full-fledged war over

Pakistani incursions into Indian held Kashmir. As a result, the Indian subcontinent has been variedly described as a “tinderbox waiting to explode” and as “the most dangerous place on Earth.” With the possible scenario that some of the nuclear arsenal in the subcontinent may slide into the hands of transnational terrorist groups, the subject of nuclear non-proliferation has returned to the forefront of international politics.

India’s sudden and unexpected nuclear outburst took the world by surprise. From an unequivocal nuclear abstinence posture between 1947 and 1964, India moved on to overt nuclearization by the late nineties. In the fifties, India’s first Prime Minister Nehru articulated a moral aversion to nuclear weapons, calling them “evil.” Four decades later, its leaders and masses celebrated nuclear weapons acquisition as a sign of India’s power and pride, signifying not only a seismic shift in India’s nuclear policy but also in its national psyche.

Internationally, the well-entrenched non-proliferation norms advocated by the NPT and CTBT regimes did not deter India from committing the “irresponsible” act. With its nuclear tests, India gave rise to bitter international censure and punitive reaction from the international community. The event also undermined India’s own hitherto strident role in pressing for universal nuclear disarmament. It was clear that economic sanctions and international isolation would follow nuclear “adventurism,” something that a fast growing economy like India’s, in desperate need of more foreign trade and foreign direct investment, could ill afford in the late nineties. Moreover, becoming a pariah state by violating the nuclear norms was clearly not to India’s advantage, especially when it wanted to establish its credentials for a permanent seat in the Security Council. Much of what I described above brings forth a puzzling aspect of India’s nuclear behavior. If India knew that it was clearly against its own professed ideals, opportunities for economic growth and international reputation, what explains India’s decision to go nuclear when it did?

The central question of my research is thus simple, but critical to our understanding of a world in which rising numbers of states as well as non-state actors possess or seek nuclear weapons. Why did India go nuclear when it did? It is derivative of a much broader question: Why do states seek nuclear weapons? Explanations span from the military to the political to the economic domains. They also traverse across the three levels of analysis. For analytical convenience, I follow a general distinction between ‘first-generation’ nuclear states and ‘second-generation’ ones such as India and Pakistan. This is due to a number of reasons. The obvious reason is that ‘second generation’ nuclear states are ‘middle powers’ whereas their predecessors in the nuclear club were great powers. Middle powers do not think in terms of hegemonic leadership of the system, although parallels can be drawn in a regional, sub-system setting. The distinction is also because of the fundamental changes in world politics brought

about by the end of Cold War. This does not, however, imply that behavior is a function of status or that motivations for the former group are not applicable to the latter group or vice-versa. First generation or second generation, states may be motivated to go nuclear for the same reasons.

Dependent Variable

The literature on nuclear weapons seems to be divided primarily along their research question. Some studies focus on the causes of nuclear weapon development while most seem to be preoccupied with the consequence of the same. I am interested in looking at the causes/motivations of overt nuclearization for a second-generation nuclear state like India. The dependent variable or the phenomenon to be investigated then is nuclear weapon acquisition. By nuclear weapons acquisition I mean nuclear weapons testing by a country and claims of possession of a nuclear weapon. Historical evidence testifies that India did possess and maintain nuclear weapons capability covertly since 1974 until the late nineties, a period in which its official policy favored "nuclear ambiguity." This kind of nuclear capability falls out of the scope of my study for I consider nuclear weapons acquisition as the *overt* admission of possession of a weapons program accompanied by successful detonations. The purpose of the study then is to identify the causal phenomena behind India's nuclearization. I do not presuppose that a complex phenomenon such as this in a large democracy can be explained in terms of one 'master variable' or simple causation. In fact, I am aware that the causal phenomenon behind nuclearization may be a complex or a chaotic one. Accordingly the purpose of the research is not to propound a grand theory or universal law, but to explain the individual case in terms of contingent variables. To establish the rationale for this research, I will examine some of the standard explanations offered in the literature and indicate their inadequacies in explaining the particular case at hand.

Security Dilemma

This is the most familiar and dominant explanation in the field. States develop nuclear weapons because of security concerns. Caught up in the perennial security dilemma in an anarchic, self-help system, states' ultimate goal is to increase their security by amassing power. Military capability is typically considered the most important element of power and development of nuclear weapons earns them the ultimate advantage in military capabilities by neutralizing inequalities in conventional weaponry. John Deutch writes, "the fundamental motivation to seek a weapon is that national security will be improved." This is a neorealist, systemic level explanation where security aspirations are the most important incentive for nuclearization.

Once developed, nuclear weapons serve as the most effective deterrent against an adversary. The reasoning is that states would be dissuaded from committing aggression due to their potentially dire consequences. Some realists buttress their deterrence argument by pointing out that states that have developed nuclear weapons or have shown

some interest in doing so (India, Pakistan, Israel, Iran, Iraq and North Korea) are in protracted conflicts or bitter security dilemmas (and hence in need of an effective deterrent).

Accordingly, the realists have a simple explanation for India's acquisition of nuclear weapons. Surrounded by Pakistan on the one hand - waging a constant proxy war in Indian-held Kashmir - and nuclear China on the other - engaging in illicit transfers of nuclear and missile technologies to neighboring countries - India was in an acute security dilemma and in need of an effective deterrent. This explanation, however, does not stand well against evidence or logic. India did not develop nuclear weapons in the 1960s to counter the threat from a newly nuclear China, especially after suffering a humiliating defeat in the Sino-Indian war of 1962. There is widespread recognition even within the Indian establishment that India's relationship with China has steadily improved since the seventies and has seen a qualitative change, especially in the post-Cold war era. There is simply no convincing evidence to argue that the strategic situation between India and China had been worsening in the years preceding the nuclear tests. On the other hand, India's clear advantage in conventional warfare and the reactive nature of Pakistan's nuclear diplomacy point to the hollowness of a Pakistan-oriented deterrence argument. There was no new or additional threat to India's security that emerged in the late nineties from either of these countries or from an alleged nexus of the two that can explain the timing of India's overt nuclearization. The classical nuclear deterrence theory further folds up as neither Pakistan nor India was deterred from engaging in a full-fledged (Kargil) war, a year after nuclear acquisition. Needless to say, the assumption of rationality of actors on which deterrence is built up is increasingly becoming anachronistic in a world of 'suicide bomber psyche.'

Proponents of a realist position go a step further in arguing that viewed as deterrents, nuclear weapons have conflict-inhibiting qualities in dyadic conflicts and lead to lower levels of conflict between archrivals. Such nuclear-optimists attribute the lack of inter-state warfare during Cold War to the presence of nuclear weapons. Their policy prescription then, is that the steady spread of nuclear weapons may serve to dampen conflict throughout the international system. Thus, the measured spread of nuclear weapons is more to be welcomed than feared.

Not only does this conclusion sound like a dangerous, costly and roundabout solution to reduction of conflicts between dyads or in the system in general, it seems flawed or inaccurate, at least in the case of South Asia. Conflict levels have not seen any significant reduction in Indo-Pak relations in the post-nuclear phase. Conversely, nuclear weapons have reinforced mutual distrust, fear, suspicion and paranoia as evident from the developments in the last three years. It has undermined regional security and global disarmament efforts.

Domestic Politics

According to the domestic politics explanation, motivations for nuclear weapons

are to be found in domestic politics. States go nuclear due to internal dynamics. Domestic political or economic concerns are far more causally significant than the anarchic system itself. States may choose to go nuclear as a result of domestic upheavals or as a means to divert the attention of the population from domestic problems. A well-timed nuclear test can bolster public support for a government. Going nuclear may serve the interest of nationalist parties or conservative elites. Change in the ruling political parties or public opinion swings may also force a state down the nuclear path. Bureaucratic, military and strategic elite politics might be another factor. Loss of popularity or political weakness might force political leaders to create a “rally around the flag” effect by nuclearizing.

This explanation has found increasing resonance among South Asian scholars. They point to the rise of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist political party into the national mainstream and into power as the main influential factors in India’s nuclearization. The appeal of scientific progress and jingoistic “nuclear nationalism” tremendously increased the popularity and hence stability of the eighteen-party fragile coalition government headed by the BJP. They claim that unlike the security dilemma explanation, this one explains why India did not develop nuclear weapons soon after China developed one (1964) and also why it did in 1998. They assert that India maintained a posture of “nuclear ambiguity” between 1974 and 1998 due to the lack of consensus in scientific, military and political circles on the need for nuclear weapons.

Apart from these factors, George Perkovich points out that that states seek nuclear weapons as a short cut to national power and prestige. While China, the Soviet Union, and the United States clearly acquired nuclear weapons due to security threats or threat to their systems of government, countries like France, India, and the United Kingdom were driven by factors beyond security such as the quest for national grandeur, prestige, independence and national prowess.

While such explanations may go some way in explaining the phenomenon under investigation, their limitations are evident when we look at the fundamental change in the Indian national psyche on the question of nuclear weapons (from moral aversion to celebration) and on the near unanimous endorsement with which the country welcomed the nuclear tests. There was little, if any, opposition from other political parties who helped to keep India on a carefully crafted nuclear restraint hitherto, with a very active national debate on whether to exercise the nuclear option or not. Domestic politics explanations attach merely instrumental value to the nuclear weapons, of boosting the electoral prospects or popularity of the ruling regime. They do not capture the social, symbolic and moral significance of the bomb. Contemporary Indian history suggests that what drove nuclearization may not merely be strategic electoral gains, but a much more deep-rooted ideological project.

Domestic Politics arguments are essentially liberal arguments in so far as they exhort us to look within the states for motivations to acquire nuclear weapons, realizing the inadequacy of systemic theories. A related but somewhat different argument comes from the established correlation between democracy and disarmament. The ‘democratic

peace' literature posits that democracies are less likely to go to war with each other. Citizens of democracies are usually not willing to bear the costs of war. Democratic populations also avoid war due to its normative implications, and due to the complex processes of decision-making and numerous checks and balances that the institutional or structural framework democracy imposes on its leaders. If this is so, the implication is that democracies help prevent arms race and reverse nuclear proliferation. Hence, a reverse correlation can be established between lack of democratic practices and overt nuclearization. The resulting conclusion is: it is the lack of democratic form of government that drives countries to acquire nuclear weaponization.

This is a position that is historically unsustainable. There is no convincing correlation between democracy and nuclear non-acquisition. In fact, there is evidence to suggest the opposite. All current nuclear states except Russia and China acquired nuclear weapons when they were established democracies. Needless to say, this correlation fails in India's case too.

International Norms

Scott Sagan proposes a third, relatively recent normative explanation to state motivations for nuclear weapons. He suggests that states could be lured to nuclear weapons because of the symbolic functions that such weapons serve. State behavior is determined by norms and shared beliefs about what actions are legitimate and state actions are embedded in a social environment that promotes certain structures and behaviors as rational and legitimate and others as irrational and illegitimate. Sagan cites examples of France, which went nuclear in late 1950s, and Ukraine, which decided to give up its nuclear arsenal due to the shift in norms in the 1990s. France acquired nuclear weapons due to the then prevailing international norms concerning the acquisition of nuclear weapons. In the 1950s, it was desirable to go nuclear because it was symbol of great-power status and international prestige and hence influence and security of a state. In the 1990s, however, after the NPT regime had taken firm roots, there was a shift in norms. It became irresponsible and illegitimate to acquire or develop nuclear weapons. Renunciation instead of acquisition was the new short-cut to international prestige and countries which violated this norm were labeled "rogue states." The power of such new nuclear norms forced Ukraine to renounce its nuclear arsenal despite the possibility of using them as an effective deterrent against an expansionist Russia. It is argued that a host of other nuclear threshold countries such as Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Kazakhstan, South Africa and South Korea abandoned their nuclear weapons in the 1980s and 90s for the same reason. Thus, it is not security dilemma or dynamics of domestic politics, but the power of norms - the symbolic significance of the bomb internationally - that make them want it or renounce it.

Much as this sounds like a refreshingly new alternative to the long-dominant analytical perspectives of neorealism in security studies, the causal force of norms in this case is not fully convincing. This model does not give us a satisfying explanation for the norm-dissenter states India, Pakistan, Israel and a host of 'rogue' states like Iran, Iraq and North Korea. When it is in their interests to adhere to the norms and enhance their

international prestige and security, why have they opted for covert or overt nuclearization?

Although there is a burgeoning bulk of literature on the role of global norms, their causal influence is yet to be fully developed in any detailed theoretical form. Again, normative pressures do not always shape or determine state behavior unless backed up with punitive repercussions. If this is so, power or coercion might be the real causal factor rather than norms. Further, because states' desire to conform to the norms is couched in terms of their motivations to increase their prestige and influence and by extension their security, this ends up becoming an argument that is analogous to the realist one.

While these explanations indeed contribute to understanding the problem, they are insufficient in explaining the puzzle. These are three very different, equally plausible accounts, however, unable to capture the crucial causal factor in India's behavior.

Against the above three explanations, I propose a fourth one, which shares some common ground with the third one. It advances an ideational causal variable - the symbolic significance of identity factors - in influencing national security decisions, such as nuclear acquisition. It offers a unit level, social psychological perspective on the politics of nuclear weapons as opposed to a structuralist or rationalist one. Along a constructivist persuasion, I postulate that ideological projects aimed at the construction of a new national collective identity may be causally significant in explaining nuclear behavior. An underlying theme of this proposition is the socially constructed nature of identity - the assertion that identities are constructed and re-constructed through historical action - against notions of identity as essential, natural, fundamental, unitary and unchanging.

A second lurking idea is the manipulation of collective identities by political entrepreneurs to further not only material, instrumental purposes (political power) but also symbolic and ideational ones. Identity cleavages created and radicalized by the hyper-nationalist elite for political, social and ideological projects lead to entrenched beliefs of difference and historical enmity, resulting in extremely antagonistic and conflict-prone relationships. Nationalist propaganda involves selective interpretation of history, invention of traditions and careful articulation of 'chosen glories' and 'chosen traumas.' *Symbols* of strength, masculinity and virility are generously used to invoke the nostalgia of a glorious past and the promise of a strong future. Guided by these broad theoretical cues, I propose the following hypothesis to examine the particular case under investigation.

It was the symbolic potential of the nuclear weapons, in the construction of a new hegemonic national collective identity (hinging on a Hindu/non-Hindu axis) that was the crucial factor in India's decision to go overtly nuclear.

To test this hypothesis, I will use research techniques such as 'process tracing' and

'discourse analysis.'

Process Tracing tries to identify the causal chain between independent variables and the dependent variable. It will, in this case, help establish how India's posture of "nuclear celibacy" during the Nehru period (1947-64) transformed into "nuclear ambiguity" (roughly 1965-97) to overt nuclearization in 1998. What drove the issue of nuclearization to amazing levels of popularity in a country of poverty-stricken masses? It will also probe into how the nuclear bomb suddenly rose to the pedestal of being the singularly decisive determinant of national identity since the early nineties when the country saw an entire rightward shift in the political spectrum, with heightened rhetoric of national unity and national pride. It will explore how changing but constructed threat projections from 'the other' made the bomb not only desirable but also an indispensable national security imperative.

Discourse Analysis will unpack the coded use of ideas, threats, strategies, slogans, and policies of the nuclear rhetoric as a whole. It will expose how symbols and language are used to sustain certain types of viewpoints and curtail others. It will unpack the symbolic, political coding of the bomb that facilitated its transformation from being the national anathema to the icon of national pride.

Unpacking the causal force identity factors is possible only by examining how the *Sangh Parivar* – a cluster of militantly Hindu-nationalist organizations- used the whole nuclear discourse as a space to carve out and sustain a particular vision of the national self. They posit *Hindutva* or Hinduness as the cornerstone of this new national self, the authentic cultural quality that is supposedly shared by all Indians. The essence of India is its Hinduness and therefore Indian national identity is coterminous with being Hindu. This new hegemonic, majoritarian national identity is distinctly different from the old secular, liberal-democratic one, envisioned and advocated by the leaders of independent India such as Nehru.

The desire to redefine the national self along a Hindu/non-Hindu axis is triggered by a sense of powerlessness experienced by the traditionally privileged upper castes and middle classes due to two reasons: the increasing assertion of the lower castes and minorities of their rights, and the perceived corruption of Indian culture by Western values. Both factors are projected as constituting imminent threat to the very existence of the age-old Hindu nation and hence the need to defend the nation with a renewed sense of collective identity. On the one hand, the Indian (Hindu) culture is contaminated by the hybridization of Indian values by Western globalization; on the other, it is decayed by "plebeianization," the "encroachment" of Muslims and untouchables in the public domain.

To understand the broader context of the above-mentioned existential anxiety of the Indian middle class, we have to look at the wide spectrum of social, political and economic changes that the Indian polity underwent from the seventies to the nineties. During the 70s and 80s, numerous emancipatory and social justice movements took firm root in India, such as the

anti-caste and *dalit* movements, clamor for minority rights, the women's movement, environment and peasant movements etc. The Shah Bano judgment by the Supreme Court, the political mobilization and ascension of lower castes to power in many Indian states, the Mandal Commission report, the collapse of the Congress Party were all concrete manifestation of this "democratic revolution." These movements opened up the socio-political arena so much that there was a plethora of interest groups and demands on a polity that could hardly deliver to all. This led to a realignment of forces at every level of the society. This new visibility of the marginalized groups, namely the lower castes, minorities and the *dalits*, their ascension to jobs, power and social recognition resulted in a distinct sense of "encroachment" on their social world to the traditionally privileged overlapping alliance of upper castes and middle classes. Beyond the material ramifications, these structural transformations had enormous implications for the construction of meaning. An ideological project that sought to re-cast the battle-lines along Hindu/non-Hindu lines, by indiscriminately homogenizing the vast diversity within Hinduism into one overarching Hindu identity and demonizing the Muslims as the other, was a cleverly thought out reaction to this political and cultural metamorphosis.

This ideological project to construct a new, hegemonic national identity along a Hindu/non-Hindu axis further connected meaningfully with the everyday anxieties and dislocations of the middle classes, in life under globalization. Globalization (a Western conspiracy for the Hindu nationalists) and its attendant modern ways of life have challenged the traditional value systems since the liberalization of the economy in 1991, "corrupting the Indian culture" with diffusion of Western values. Moreover, the "hypocritical," "morally bankrupt," "permissive" and individualist West is perceived as not granting India its rightful place in world politics. India's ambition, since independence, of its due place at the high table of great nations has not materialized causing considerable frustration. The hypocrisy of the West or the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) in attempting to bring into effect a biased nuclear non-proliferation regime, what India calls "Nuclear apartheid," also added to India's annoyance with the West.

Thus, the definition of the new national self is contingent upon the construction of difference, contrasted with the 'Muslim other' and the 'Western other.' If on the one hand, it is the West that is the main threat to the Hindu nation, on the other, it is the Muslims and Pakistan. As a result, Pakistan becomes a more credible threat to India's strategic elite than the nuclear capable China. Pakistan is portrayed as a parochial theocracy and a fertile ground for dictatorships as opposed to the secular democratic India. Massive doses of anti-Pakistan rhetoric are poured through the Indian media and official channels for generous public consumption. Pakistan as a nation and Muslims as individuals are portrayed as 'barbaric,' 'backward,' 'uncivilized,' 'lustful' and 'animalistic.' History and religion are linked in ingenious ways to present Pakistan as the successor of the medieval Muslim invaders and hence morally responsible for the past carnage. This results in the demonization of Muslims within and outside India. Their very existence is projected as a threat to the cultural purity of the Hindu nation. Nuclear weapons or the bomb becomes the crux of national salvation

amidst such projected threats. In such a political project the bomb transforms from being a weapon into being the central icon of Indian national identity. The Indian bomb is, hence, a Hindu bomb and distinctly anti-Muslim. Thus, as a discourse, nuclear weapons become a central icon with which a new national identity is created and maintained.

Further, the promise of the *Sangh Parivar* to recreate the glory of an ancient Hindu nation – the strong, glorious 'Bharat' of the past – against the impending Western hegemony feeds the desire of the 600-million strong Indian middle class, which comprises some of the world's most intelligent and best educated people, to be respected as the "civilizational-other" or equal of the West and as a global player. Nuclear weapons have enormous potential in this jingoistic project. Here the bomb becomes the icon of the resurgent Hindu India. The promise of the *Sangh Parivar* to elevate the average Indian from a sense of powerlessness to one of global recognition gives the bomb a life of its own.

Thus conceived, nuclear politics in contemporary India has no existence devoid of its correlations to the new national identity. Islam or the West is homogenized as monoliths and portrayed as a danger to Hinduness. Any dissenting voice, attempting to climb out of the totalizing and hegemonizing Hindu discourse is met with marginalization, isolation and even violent repression. Internal dissenters become agents of the enemy. On the whole, the above analysis points to the direction of a strong causal link between identity factors and nuclear discourse in contemporary India.

As mentioned before, the intention of my research is not to reject other hypotheses or explanations but to expand the range of hypotheses on the causality of nuclear weapons acquisition. The study will set the stage for empirical research also in other directions that have traditionally been ignored or neglected. Viewed as such, my research objective is not so much prediction but explanation. It aims at inductively identifying new variables and causal mechanisms. Though the scope of this study is limited and its generalizations more narrow, it can bring out insights that promise new avenues of empirical research for a relatively nascent theoretical orientation within IR. Constructivist research has largely dealt with construction of meaning at the structural level with some attention recently on the domestic-international interaction. This research calls for more attention into the constructions at the second-image level, with consequences for the systemic level. I am aware that a single case research design is prone to criticisms of selection bias or over-generalization of results, but I hope to avoid such

pitfalls. A variety of justifications for selecting the particular case follow.

Case Selection

Bennett and George suggest that the primary criterion for case selection should be relevance to the research objective of the study, not because they are “interesting, important, or easily researched using readily available data.” A number of factors have influenced the selection of India as a suitable case for this study. Lack of the available cases is certainly one of them. India and Pakistan are the only ‘second-generation’ nuclear states and Pakistan’s nuclearization was a reaction to the Indian one, although workings of similar variables are distinctly traceable in the Pakistani case as well.

Despite the far-reaching, dangerous potential of worsening India-Pakistan relationship - something that can have a lasting impact on IR on a global scale considering their nuclear capabilities— the region has not merited adequate attention from IR scholars, especially from IR theorists. It is imperative that more scholarly attention be paid to the dynamics of South Asian politics, home to the world’s fastest-growing markets, fastest-rising military expenditures, and most serious hot-spots including the epicenter of international terrorism. Pakistan’s drift toward disorder has spurred the threat of losing some of its nuclear weapons to fundamentalist sections of its society with close connections to the transnational terrorist networks. This will have far reaching implications for regional as well as international security.

Despite decades of scholarly attention on non-proliferation, there is precious little theoretical contribution to the literature from a non-security oriented perspective. As a result too much attention has been focused on material factors, such as distribution of capabilities or national interests. Powerful ideational variables, which are potent enough to be causally significant at all three levels of analysis, have been largely left out. In the emerging scenario, thorough examinations of such variables seem urgent. The increasing possibility of non-state actors possessing nuclear weapons forces us to look beyond explanations that are typically framed in terms of a state-centric world with national security as the primary preoccupation. The fact that nothing can be more potent than the mix of terrorism and nuclear weapons beckons our urgent attention to non-security motivations of nuclear power. The Indian case does precisely that.

In the aftermath of recent developments, religious identities and the political manifestation of such identities, which have hitherto been the *forte* of comparativists or sociologists, are emerging as an important area of research in International Relations.

Implications of the Research for Theory-building

The research area fits well with the comeback of identity and cultural factors in social theory in general, and in IR theorizing in particular. With the global eruption in

identity-driven civil, ethnic, religious and tribal conflicts, even the “mainstream” IR community has begun to open up the black box of domestic politics and has started examining phenomena which were traditionally considered ‘second-image’ and hence inconsequential for IR. If the postulated hypothesis can be tested successfully, it would entail a further boost to the extant research agenda on domestic influences on international politics. On the whole, though in small measure, the project promises to inject new life into the IR theoretical enterprise.

The research will have implications for the traditional assumptions – already weakened by the emergence of contending IR discourses, but still important – about how we study politics. First and foremost is the view that ideational/cultural factors are epiphenomenal. This view is particularly entrenched in security studies (the issue-area under consideration), which is excessively preoccupied with ‘material’ capability. If it is so that immaterial factors such as collective identity can have causally significant implications for security environment and security policies, IR scholars will need to pay more attention to these.

A second, but related assumption that will be challenged is the fixed and given nature of the identity of actors. Such research questions beckon the mainstream IR perspectives to shed their ‘asocial’ view of the actors and recognize the historically and culturally contingent nature of actor identities, interests and preferences. The social worlds of states, domestic and international, shape their identities and they must be studied in their concrete historical setting. It also points to the problematic nature of methodological incompatibility arguments of identity factors and positivist/empiricist modes of scientific analysis. Studies in other disciplines have proven that it is possible to engage with identity without compromising scientific rigor.

Revitalizing scientific inquiry with the inclusion of identity factors requires, to some extent, a reconstitution of our ontologies. If there are testable hypothesis to the causal force of identity factors, it will no longer be possible to sacrifice identity at the altar of theoretical parsimony. Reification of actors from their social and historical context will no longer be a viable enterprise. It will also alert us to the policy oriented, material power centric and first world oriented nature of security studies.

After decades of research on nuclear proliferation, the motivations of states remain as puzzling as ever. Much of the literature is policy-oriented prescriptions from a realist understanding of world politics. Despite revolutionary changes in world politics, there has been remarkably little effort on rethinking our analytical categories.

Given the fact that the extended nuclear deterrence umbrellas of big powers no longer exist, it is likely that more middle powers will develop nuclear weapons. There is also a strategic interest for every state to develop one, if its neighbor does so. These structural incentives point to the fact that the world will soon be seeing more states going nuclear. The findings of this research will offer an alternative explanation to why states may want to develop the ultimate weapon. At a time when the West is coming to grips with the “civilizational-threat” posed by states as well as non-state actors, looking

beyond traditional explanations of nuclear proliferation, into more ideational factors such as identities, seem not only a fruitful but necessary enterprise.

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See David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo, *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996).

India was one of the first countries to articulate the goal of nuclear non-proliferation. See George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 99-105 and Hamish McDonald, "Threshold trauma: India opts to stay outside the NPT," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 158.16 (Apr 20, 1995), p. 21.

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For studies on causes, see Scott Sagan, "Rethinking the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation: Three models in Search of a Bomb," in *The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, U.S. Interests, and World Order*, Victor Utgoff, ed., (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000);

William Epstein, "Why States Go and Don't Go Nuclear." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 430 (March 1977), pp. 16-28. Also George Perkovich, "Nuclear proliferation," *Foreign Policy*, 112 (Fall 1998), pp. 12-23. For region-specific studies on consequences, see Perkovich (1999) and Devin Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998).

India conducted its first nuclear test in May 1974 and called it a "Peaceful Nuclear Explosion." The stated purpose of the test was the exploration of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. India denied any intention of starting a nuclear weapons program at this point. See Brahma Chellaney, *Securing India's Future in the New Millennium* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1999), p. 228.

This distinction between covert and overt weaponization is not a trivial or inconsequential one because the benefits that countries aim to tap from possessing nuclear weapons are dependent on their own admission and wider recognition to that effect. For example, deterrence effect of nuclear weapons cannot be operationalized if the enemy state does not know of the existence of the same.

John Deutch, "The Nuclear Threat," *Foreign Affairs*, 71.4 (Fall 1992), pp. 124-125. Other scholars who identify security as the most important incentive are Epstein, (1977), p 17; Stephen Meyer, *Dynamics of Nuclear Proliferation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Bradley Thayer, "The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation and the Nonproliferation Regime," *Security Studies*, 4.3 (Spring 1995), pp. 463-519; Benjamin Frankel, "The Brooding Shadow: Systemic Incentives and Nuclear Proliferation," *Security Studies*, 2.3-4 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 37-38.

Kenneth Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *The American Political Science Review*, 84.3 (September 1990), pp. 731-745 and *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 188.

John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, 15.1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5-56. However, there are other states involved in inter-state conflicts that have not demonstrated the need or desire to acquire nuclear weapons. (e.g., Turkey and Cyprus)

See Jaswant Singh, "Against Nuclear Apartheid," *Foreign Affairs*, 77.5 (Sept/Oct 1998), pp. 41-52 and Chellaney (1999). For a discussion of a variety of explanations with regard to India's nuclearization, see Perkovich (1999).

Vanaik and Bidwai (2000), pp. 70-71.

Kargil war in the spring of 1999 was the only large-scale, land-air confrontation between two nuclear states. Human casualties were estimated to be around 1500 to 2000, according to official reports. With in a span of 35 days, India and Pakistan exchanged nuclear threats 13 times during the Kargil War. See Vanaik and Bidwai (2002), pp. xi-xii.

Robert Jervis, "Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence," *World Politics*, 41.2 (January 1989), pp. 183-

207, Mearsheimer (1990), Waltz (1990) and Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*, 18.2 (Autumn 1993), pp. 44-79. I think that the great power politics during Cold War and its associated nuclear dynamics was different from the contemporary regional nuclear politics. Since I am interested in looking only at 'second generation' nuclear states, I do not venture into an analysis of primary motivations of the great powers in going nuclear.

Kenneth Waltz, "More May Be Better," in Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), pp. 1-45. Mearsheimer (1990). Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and William Riker in "An Assessment of the Merits of Selective Nuclear Proliferation," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 26.2 (June 1982), pp. 283-306 argue nuclear proliferation serves the interests of peace.

Francine Frankel, *Bridging the Nonproliferation Divide: The United States and India* (New York: University Press of America, 1995), pp. 78-79. Jack Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18.4 (Spring 1988), pp. 666-672.

See Vanaik and Bidwai (2000), pp. 76-82.

In a May 1998 poll, 86 percent of those polled supported nuclearization. See "Solid Support," *India Today*, XXIII.21 (May 25, 1998), p. 15.

Perkovich (1998), pp. 12-23.

Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). This is an extrapolation, as democratic peace literature does not explicitly make the linkage. For a similar argument, see Peter Beinart, "The Return of 'The Bomb,'" *The New Republic*, 219.5 (August 3, 1998), pp. 22-27.

Sagan, "Rethinking the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation: Three models in Search of a Bomb," in *The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, U.S. Interests, and World Order*. Victor Utgoff, ed., (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000), p. 38.

Michael Klare, *Rogue States and Nuclear Outlaws* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

Perkovich (1998), pp. 12-23.

A work that comes closest to this objective is Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1996. It should, however, be noted that Katzenstein's conception of 'norms' is much broader than a merely 'regulative' one as understood in Sagan's argument. In Sagan's model, norms are internalized by actors as a result of their utility functions and are animated by material factors, such as increased power and security. As a result, although norms themselves are ideational factors, the whole argument does not advance an ideational causal variable, in my view.

I define 'identity' as a socially consequential, social category, following James Fearon and David Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," *International Organization*, 54.4 (Autumn 2000), p. 848.

Examples are plenty from recent history, former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Congo, Angola, Sudan, Turkey, Georgia, and Chechnya. See Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). For books on South Asia, see Stanley Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Achin Vanaik, *The Furies of Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization* (London; New York: Verso, 1997). For use of the term 'hypernationalism' see Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," *International Security*, 15.3 (Winter 1990), pp. 7-57.

Fearon and Laitin, (2000), pp. 845-877.

Andrew Bennett and Alexander George, "Research Design Tasks in Case Study Methods." Paper presented at the Mac Arthur Foundation Workshop on Case Study Methods, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (BCSIA), Harvard University, October 17-19, 1997. Andrew Bennett Home Page, March 20, 2002, <<http://www.georgetown.edu/bennett/RESDES.htm>>

G. Mirchandani, *India's Nuclear Dilemma* (New Delhi: Popular Books, 1968), p. 49.

In the aftermath of the weapons explosion, there were outbreaks of jingoistic expressions of patriotism, celebration of militarism and masculinity across the country. "Explosion of Self-esteem," "Road to Resurgence," "A Moment of Pride" were some of the headlines in Indian dailies in the days following nuclear test. Quoted in Vanaik and Bidwai (2002), p. xxiv.

Sangh Parivar or Sangh Combine is a cluster of political, cultural and social organizations including the ruling BJP, owing ideological allegiance to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS (National Volunteer Corps). This is the formation that has envisioned, brought about and sustained the religious resurgence in Indian politics. They are known for their right-wing authoritarianism.

Thomas Blom Hansen. *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999): 8.

Dalit means oppressed. It is the collective name given unto themselves by former outcastes and untouchables.

Hansen, p. 145.

Singh (1998), pp. 41-52.

For an impressive account of the construction of stereotypes of Muslims in the current Hindu nationalist movement, see Pradeep Dutta and Sumit Sarkar, "Manufacturing Hatred: The Image of the Muslim in the Ramajanamabhumi Movement" in Arslan Mehdi and Rajan Janaki (eds.) *Communalism in India: Challenge and Response* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1994).

'Bharat' is another term for India. Taken from ancient history, the term is often used by religious nationalists to invoke the continuity of the nation from a heroic past.

Bennett and George, <<http://www.georgetown.edu/bennett/RESDES.htm>>

Brahma Chellaney, "Fighting Terrorism in Southern Asia: The Lessons of History," *International Security*, 26.3 (2002), p. 96.

Chellaney, (2002), p. 95.

See Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner, 1996).

Katzenstein (1996) makes a strong case for the same.

I recognize that emerging IR research has already challenged some of these assumptions, but they continue to form the so-called mainstream.