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Clarifying Pokhran-II in a Multilinguistic Setting

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Clarifying Pokhran-II in a Multilinguistic Setting

by

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2017

Abstract

Clarifying Pokhran-II in a Multilinguistic Setting

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In May of 1998, India conducted its second nuclear test after a period of 24 years. This second test, known as Pokhran-II, caught the world by surprise and 17 days later it was followed by Pakistan's first test of a nuclear device. The international community sought clarification for these developments and Indian and Pakistani leaders issued messages to explain their respective country's rationale for testing. This report, focusing on the statements of then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, argues that India's motivations for testing can only be fully understood through consultation with both English and Hindi language statements. Four established models that explain why nations develop and test nuclear weapons are used to parse these sources to determine the contrast of rationale between each language. These models – gaining "security" from external threat, the interests of "domestic politics", nuclear weapons as one of the "norms" indicating modernity, and the centering of victimhood and entitlement in "post-imperial ideology" – are variously represented across the statements. This displays that the complete picture of why the tests were conducted only can be seen by studying statements made in both languages. The implications of these findings suggest that attempts to clarify events that originate in multilinguistic settings should be made via consultation with sources in all of the languages that constitute the setting of the original event.

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Chapter One: Introduction

BACKGROUND

May of 1998 was a pivotal time for both Indo-Pak and Indo-U.S. relations. In the span of 17 days, both India and Pakistan would conduct nuclear tests, putting the world on edge and creating mixed feelings within domestic and international spheres. There was an acute understanding that these tests would have repercussions with both domestic and international audiences. Euphoria was the dominant feeling in the publics of both countries[1, 2] but international reaction was less welcoming. U.S. President Bill Clinton remarked that the test "threatens the stability of Asia" and that it "tested the firm international consensus to stop all nuclear testing".[3] Indian and Pakistani political leaders recognized that statements were necessary and issued them accordingly. In the case of India, many of its leaders made statements in both English and Hindi. For key players, including the Clinton Administration, trying to gain clarification of the rationale and implications of the tests was crucial to their attempts to counter further nuclear proliferation.

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[1] Itty Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb (*London: Zed Books, 1998), 1.
[2] Feroz Hassan Khan, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 282.
[3] Bill Clinton, "Commencement Address at the United States Naval Academy" (address, Annapolis, MD, May 22, 1998).

PURPOSE

This report represents a probative study into addressing a single event, the 1998 Pokhran-II nuclear tests in India. This event occurred in a multilinguistic setting but was commonly comprehended by audiences in mono-linguistic settings. The inferences from this specific event are much wider as this phenomenon happens continuously. In short, an event occurs in one place and is understood and framed through the linguistic setting of first-hand observers. Next, that event is transmitted, often after acts of internal or anonymous[4] translation, to recipients who then engage with it in their own, often different linguistic tradition. This movement across linguistic settings provides fertile ground for the reshaping of emphasis, emotion, and depth. Using the 1998 nuclear tests at Pokhran, this report argues that the most comprehensive understanding of that event only comes through consultation of both English and Hindi language statements and that this provides insight for clarifying similar events in the future. To accomplish this, the rationale for testing revealed in these statements will be evaluated against four established "models" of compulsion that motivate states to develop and test nuclear weapons.

TOPIC SELECTION, LENS, AND FOCUS

Using the topic of nuclear proliferation and weapons development as the milieu for study is both an advantage and a challenge. The amount of work dedicated to the topic is substantial in the fields of security studies and international relations. The challenge is to navigate an inherently complicated topic and to produce something that qualitatively adds

[4] For more on the anonymity and lack of prestige bestowed on Hindi-English translators see Sujit Mukerjee, *Translation as Discovery* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1981), 135.

to the issue rather than simply increasing the quantity of available literature. That stated, this report is not primarily about nuclear proliferation, rather its central focus is the complementary processes of communicating and understanding. Nuclear weapons testing only serves as a backdrop for this line of study. It is a useful backdrop as there is an increased sense that messaging matters even more during such intense times.

This specific case is valuable because it has spawned many theories on why India's government decided to test the bomb. A mainstream theory on why nations build nuclear weapons was developed by Scott Sagan. His analysis[5] centers around three "models", namely security, domestic politics, and norms.[6] Another model that builds on Sagan's three models is the idea of post-imperial ideology as posited by Manjari Chatterjee Miller. She considers that this ideology, which is constituted by victimhood and entitlement, is the major influence that compelled India to test.[7] Both these understandings of why nuclear weapons are developed and the four models that comprise them will be used to classify the language to be analyzed.

Rather than look at a wide variety of speakers, this report focuses on the output of one person in particular, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Indian Prime Minister at the time of the Pokhran-II[8] tests. He was chosen for this report for two reasons. First, there is a substantial amount of available information on his language production related to the test. Transcripts and even videos of speeches on the topic are readily available in government archives and on the internet. Second, he can be directly connected to this major event that resulted in

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[5] Scott D. Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996-1997): 54-86.

[6] Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Wronged by Empire: Post Imperial Ideology and Foreign Policy in India and China*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 87-92.

[7] Ibid, 92.

[8] The operation name for these tests was Operation Shakti which means power. For the duration of the report it will be referred to as Pokhran-II.

him clarifying his and his country's position. It has been noted that very few individuals were involved in the decision to test[9] and so choosing one with such intimate knowledge and the authority to ultimately approve the action was essential.

There is existing literature about Prime Minister Vajpayee and nuclear testing and it often falls into categories such as hagiography, political science, or cultural studies. There are works that both critique him and the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) decision to test[10] as well as others that credit him as a visionary leader for testing.[11] All have been considered; however, most weight has been given to works of strategic studies that treat Pokhran-II as a historical event. A desire to go "beyond the disciplinary confines of strategic studies" has been espoused by Haider K. Nizamani in his book, *The Roots of Rhetoric*. Unfortunately, this report does not go much beyond the boundaries of security studies but rather offers a mild departure from its typical focus.

METHODOLOGY

Looking into topics related to nuclear weapons programs is often fraught with issues. Itty Abraham discusses the challenges he faced when he wrote *The Making of the Indian Nuclear Bomb*, and surmised that due to matters of official secrecy he would work only with public sources.[12] This precedent will be followed again here as only unclassified material has been considered.

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[9] George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact of Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 416.
[10] See N. Ram, *Riding the Nuclear Tiger* (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 1999).
[11] See M.L. Sondhi and Prakash Nanda, *Vajpayee's Foreign Policy: Daring the Irreversible*, (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1999), 26-36.
[12] Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb*, 4.

It should also be conceded that this work is situated in American discourse on nuclear weapons and issues related to Hindi-English. The author is limited to English language sources, thereby presenting an occasion for bias.

Approach to Hindi and English

This report will present evidence from primary sources in both English and Hindi. These documents, including press releases, debate transcripts, and letters, will be included as figures and quotes when appropriate. The author does not assume that the reader has any knowledge of Hindi and will provide translations via footnote any time that language is utilized. Also, these sources are cited in their original form and include some uncorrected misspellings in both languages.

Omissions and Qualifications

Comprehensive works exist on the history of the nuclear weapons programs of both India and Pakistan. In particular, George Perkovich's *India's Nuclear Bomb* and Brigadier Feroz Hassan Khan's *Eating Grass* excel as members of this genre. Both were consulted heavily in the construction of this report. Here the aim is only a brief summary of those histories only to set the stage for testing and subsequent language production. These histories are also filled with multiple characters such as Homi J. Bhabha, A.Q. Khan and others who are infamous for their contributions. While they make ideal subjects for study at the confluence of strategic studies and linguistic communication their stories are not found in this work.

Another issue not deeply explored in this report is the scientific basis on which nuclear weapons work. That stated, a basic understanding of the nuclear fuel cycle and strategies for weapon construction and employment makes further study of proliferation

more efficient.[13] Knowledge of the science informs discourse on nuclear weapons and their proliferation and was vital in the construction of this report.

It is also important to note that this writing does not seek to make any type of value judgement on the decision to test, the Indian nuclear weapons program, or nuclear weapons in general. India's first nuclear test occurred over 43 years ago at the time of this writing. It is by now more of a historical reality than a debatable exigency.

THE WAY FORWARD

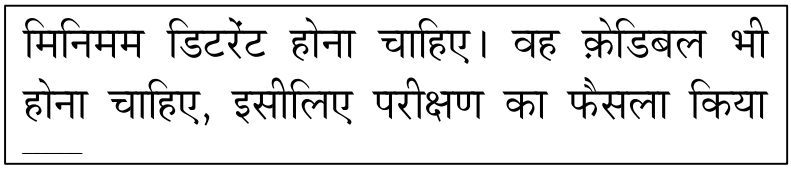
This report is organized into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the overall report and lays out relevant qualifications and constraints for its construction. Chapter Two provides an overview of proliferation history as well as the discourse that surrounded its evolution. Starting with the advent of the American nuclear weapons program during World War II and terminating with the decision to test at Pokhran in 1998, the chapter will rely heavily on works of political history and security studies. This chapter also provides the context for the environment in which the Pokhran-II decision was made. Chapter Three commences with the test itself and the immediate dispersion of English language statements explaining the event. Four sources in particular will be addressed - the Prime Minister's statement to the press on May 11th, 1998; the official press statement of the Ministry of External Affairs dated May 11th; Prime Minister Vajpayee's letter to President Clinton as published by the New York Times on May 13th; and finally, his statement before the Lok Sabha[14] on May 27th. The prominent messages and the rationales they reveal in terms of testing will be identified and discussed. Chapter Four will turn to communications made in Hindi by Prime Minister Vajpayee in the Lok Sabha. Prominent will be his

[13] For an extensive presentation on this topic from the Belfer Center at the Harvard Kennedy School see Matthew Bunn, "Nuclear 101: How Nuclear Bombs Work" (lecture), September 10, 2013.
[14] The lower house of India's parliament.

response during a debate in parliament on May 29th, 1998 as well as comments made in the same house nearly a year later on April 17th, 1999. These comments will reveal the compulsions, motivations, and criticisms he negotiated at home and abroad through domestic dialogue. Chapter Five will introduce one more piece of evidence, the transcript of a 2005 speech from the then former Prime Minister Vajpayee. Here, on the 8th anniversary of the Pokhran-II, he reflects upon the tests and provides more context on why they were conducted. This chapter will finish with a summary of the evidence, a conclusion, and a recommendation.

Chapter Two: Up to the Test

Figure 1: A Comment from P.M. Vajpayee on April 17th, 1999[15]



HISTORY AND THE RELEVANT DISCOURSE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The compulsions facing Indian leadership in 1998 were not isolated nor were they the product of a singular person or movement. Rather, they were representative of the evolution of all conceptions about nuclear weapons since their initial emergence less than sixty years earlier. The above statement from Prime Minister Vajpayee illustrates this intersection of global nukespeak[16] and India's existential challenges. In order to properly frame the messaging surrounding Pokhran-II a summary of relevant thought developments must be consulted. A chronological synopsis of those transformations is presented below.

THE BIRTH OF THE NUCLEAR AGE

The nuclear age grew out of the shadow of the Second World War. The United States, with support from the United Kingdom and Canada, is well known for developing the atomic bomb and for subsequently employing it against Japan in the closing days of the conflict. The discourse of this time is unique as it initially developed from concerns over an adversary obtaining the as yet unproven technology. This sentiment will be later echoed in the narratives of both India and Pakistan. In this case, the Americans and the

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[15] "There should be a minimum deterrent. It should also be credible, therefore the decision to test was done."

[16] For the origins of this term that illustrates the nuclear mindset see Stephen Hilgartner, Richard C. Bell, and Rory O'Connor, *Nukespeak: The Selling of Nuclear Technology in America*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).

British were concerned that Nazi Germany would weaponize the atom first.[17] The final decision to actually employ an atomic weapon was conceived in the context of the battlefield situation in the Pacific Theatre of 1945. The bomb was considered by many to be a psychological weapon that could be used to induce surprise, shock and thus unconditional surrender.[18] There was debate as to whether the bomb could simply be demonstrated, rather than employed against the enemy, to induce these results.[19] In order to achieve maximum shock, the United States chose to employ the atomic bomb against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which resulted in an unprecedented loss of human life and physical destruction. The attack also resulted in Japan submitting to American demands for unconditional surrender which seemingly confirmed pre-attack discourse on the meaning of such weapons.[20] It is important to note that this first use of the bomb was a unique case. First, this technology would never again induce such complete surprise as the world became aware of this deadly armament. Issues relating to employment, control, and enemy response would be profoundly different in the future as this first use of the bomb occurred at the end of an already devastating war. The Japanese had limited capability to defend against aerial attacks, had almost no expectation of atomic attack, and no possibility of responding with corresponding weaponry. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, any discourse dependent on complete surprise would no longer be valid. Knowledge of the bomb made everything different.

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[17] Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 15.
[18] Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 17-18.
[19] Ibid 18.
[20] Ibid, 18-19. Note: the impact of the Soviet Union declaring war against Japan also played a role in the decision to surrender, the relative weight of the atomic bomb attacks and Soviet participation is a subject of historical debate.

Evolution of Nuclear Doctrine in the First Part of the Cold War

The end of World War II brought the globe into a new era that is often referred to as the Atomic Age. It also brought the advent of the Cold War, a geopolitical conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and both state's allies, partners, and satellites. From 1945, the United States maintained its monopoly on the tools of nuclear war and this continued to inform strategy. President Truman maintained civilian control over the nuclear weapons and pursued the first effort towards disarmament under the 1946 Baruch Plan.[21] In 1949 the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic device thus marking the end of American monopoly on this method of destruction. This led to new ways of thinking about nuclear weapons that would persist through the testing of 1998.

A key concept that comes from this period that informs the decision environment of 1998 is the idea of a nuclear deterrent based on assured destruction. Assured destruction is built on the idea that an adversary would be dissuaded from aggressive action due to the risk of having a major portion of its population and industry destroyed in a nuclear attack.[22] Another aspect of this policy was its fiscal nature, the argument being that possession of nuclear weapons allowed a nation to spend less money to achieve security vis-à-vis paying for a large conventional force.[23] This economic factor has direct influence on later Pakistani and Indian thinking about developing the bomb.

European Nuclear Developments

Two nations that previously maintained colonies in India have become declared nuclear states. The United Kingdom, as indicated earlier, had been involved with the American project to develop weapons during World War II. In fact, in 1940 they were the

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[21] Amos A. Jordan et al., *American National Security* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 349.
[22] Scott D. Sagan, *Moving Targets*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 11.
[23] Ibid, 78.

first country to identify the necessity of acquiring nuclear weapons.[24] After the war and the American decision to prohibit nuclear cooperation with foreign countries[25], the British chose to pursue an independent program and conducted their first nuclear test in 1952. The compulsions facing the British were simultaneous desires for independent capability and alternatively a resumption of cooperation with the American program. Past of its development plans hinged on showing "that it had something to offer" the Americans.[26] In 1958, the United States resumed cooperation with the United Kingdom on matters of nuclear defense.[27] In short, testing had not brought punishment or condemnation, rather it facilitated the resumption of cooperation.

France on the other hand had not cooperated with the United States on nuclear weapons during the Second World War but soon found itself part of the American led Cold War alliance. The French decision to develop its own program was built out of an aversion to dependence on the United States for nuclear protection.[28] In 1960 France conducted its first nuclear test, an atmospheric test which was conducted in Algeria. This test was protested by the developing world and the Soviet bloc as an act of "environmental colonialism and vandalism" as it was an atmospheric test conducted in one of France's overseas territories.[29] American and British reaction to the tests was muted, the Americans attempted to balance between not upsetting developing nations and maintaining its alliance

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[24] John Baylis and Kristan Stoddart, "The British Nuclear Experience: The Role of Ideas and Beliefs (Part One)," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23, no.2 (2012): 332-33.
[25] This prohibition came via the McMahon Act see Baylis and Stoddart, "The British Nuclear Experience," 335.
[26] Ibid, 340.
[27] Ibid, 341-42.
[28] Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 321.
[29] Mervyn O'Driscoll, "Explosive Challenge: Diplomatic Triangles, the United Nations, and the Problem of French Nuclear Testing, 1959–1960," Journal of Cold War Studies 11, (2009), 28.

with the French.[30] Regardless, the test was conducted and France escaped major condemnation or punishment from the major powers.

INDIAN LEADERSHIP AND TEST BAN TREATIES

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, is credited as being the first to propose halts to nuclear testing. He appealed to the United Nations with this call in 1954 and the notions it proposed set the "moral tone" for India for years to come.[31] He was publicly against the spread of weapons but held deep interest in what atomic energy could do for India.[32]

Proclaiming Prime Minister Nehru as having been defiantly against the development of nuclear weapons for India has been challenged.[33] He gave scientist Homi J. Bhabha significant autonomy in developing India's nuclear capabilities which included full domestic control of the fuel cycle makes the creation of a bomb possible. Nehru, for his part laid the "necessary foundations" for India to develop weapons at a later time.[34] Nehru's actions show a "duality and ambiguity"[35] of discourse that will be seen later in comments from Prime Minister Vajpayee.

A concrete success that was in line with the visions of Prime Minister Nehru is the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT). Coming into force in October of 1963 and ultimately signed by over 100 nations, it represented a positive move for the environment as it prohibited nuclear testing in the atmosphere, in space, and underwater.[36] It does not

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[30] Ibid, 53-54.
[31] David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo, "Indian Public Opinion," in *India and the Bomb*, ed. David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 6-10.
[32] Sumit Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II, The Prospects and Sources of New Dehli's Nuclear Weapons Program," *International Security* 23, no. 4 (1999): 150.
[33] Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 14-15.
[34] Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II," 151.
[35] Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 14.
[36] For text of the the treaty see "Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water," accessed October 11, 2017, http://disarmament.un.org/treaties/t/test_ban/text.

however prohibit conducting contained tests underground. From the first tests conducted in 1945 until this treaty went to effect, the quantity of dangerous isotopes in the atmosphere increased radically. Since the inception of the PTBT, the quantity of these isotopes has dramatically declined.[37]

Greater attempts to achieve Nehru's visions of complete bans on testing and eventual disarmament have also continued across the globe. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) represent international attempts at halting both the spread and testing of nuclear weapons. Unlike the PTBT, these agreements have not been signed by India. The NPT, which came into force in 1970, was rejected as it required non-nuclear states to remain so, yet allowed nuclear states to continue without any hard requirements to dismantle their atomic arsenals.[38] Signing the NPT would have closed off the option to eventually test its own weapons. The CTBT, which came into force in September of 1996 was initially supported by India but eventually rejected due to considerations of national security, domestic pressure, and what was viewed as the continuing hypocrisy of nuclear states not disarming themselves.[39] To date neither India nor Pakistan has signed either treaty.

NUCLEAR CAPABILITY IN CHINA

The entrance of a new nuclear weapons country has been and will likely remain a significant event. For India, the fifth entrant to the nuclear club posed very immediate challenges. China conducted its first test in October of 1964, two years after fighting a border war with India. The test prompted heavy discussion inside India about the effects

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[37] "The Technical Details: The Bomb Spike: Nuclear Testing and Its Own Fingerprint," accessed October 11, 2017, https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/outreach/isotopes/bombspike.html

[38] See "IAEA Information Circular: Treaty On The Non-Proliferation Of Nuclear Weapons," accessed November 4, 2017, https://www.iaea.org/publications/documents/infcircs/treaty-non-proliferation-nuclear-weapons

[39] Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 378-84.

on national security if they did not develop their own bomb.[40] This led to two developments: India would seek security guarantees from nuclear states as a hedge against China; and India would thereafter see a potential nuclear threat in its neighborhood.[41]

SMILING BUDDHA

Pokhran-II was not India's first nuclear test. The first test, also conducted at Pokhran, was carried out on May 18th, 1974 under approval from then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This detonation of a single device was deemed a "peaceful nuclear explosion" by its architects and was given the name "Smiling Buddha". The blast was contained and adhered to the PTBT however the peaceful nature of the explosion was contested internationally.[42] The United States was harsh in its response, passing legislation that would limit aid to India and hamper any further attempts to develop the Indian nuclear program. The London Suppliers Group was also created in the wake of this test to further restrict the exchange of nuclear technology. The net effect was punishment, not just for India, but for Pakistan as well.[43] In the end, the decision to test was considered to be built on the rationale of achieving international status and domestic self-respect.[44] Notably, the opposition party of which future Prime Minister Vajpayee was a member, welcomed the test.[45] This did not however mean that India had immediately usable nuclear weapons. The path to that ability is longer. India's scientists would continue to improve its capabilities over the coming decades and would have more advanced designs ready to test in 1998.[46]

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[40] Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II," 151-55.
[41] Ibid, 155-59.
[42] Ibid, 160-61.
[43] Khan, *Eating Grass*, 121.
[44] Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 178.
[45] Ibid, 179
[46] The account of this development is covered at length in George Perkovich's *India's Nuclear Bomb*

SIGNALS FROM PAKISTAN

The story of the development of nuclear weapons in Pakistan is both astounding and troubling. The scientists, politicians, and military leaders involved showed great ingenuity and determination in this development. Less than three weeks after Pokhran-II, Pakistan conducted its own successful tests at Chagai on May 28th and 30th, 1998. The nation took pride in its ability to complete this task without help; this was their own success.[47] Troubling is how its successes in nuclear technology were covertly proliferated outside of Pakistan via the network of Pakistani nuclear scientist, A.Q. Khan.[48]

India was aware that Pakistan could conceivably test a bomb within days of its own test as both countries had long been considered de facto nuclear weapons states. Each was thought to be capable of producing a useable weapon in a short time frame.[49] Much like the Allied concern that Nazi Germany would develop a bomb first, the Indian government feared that Pakistan would induct its own nuclear weapons. In January of 1987, A.Q. Khan commented to journalists[50] that his country was already in the possession of a functional bomb. Additionally, Pakistan tested its Ghauri intermediate range missile on April 6th, 1998 which further deepened India's concern regarding the security of its neighborhood.[51]

THE BJP COMES TO POWER

March of 1998 represents a pivotal point in Indian politics as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power via a multi-stage election with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its Prime Minister. Nuclear weapons were part of the party's manifesto in that they promised to "re-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons"

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[47] Khan, *Eating Grass*, 283.
[48] Ibid, 359-76.
[49] Rodney W. Jones et al., *Tracking Nuclear Proliferation* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1998), 111,131.
[50] Khan, *Eating Grass*, 225.
[51] Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II," 170-71.

however the explicit intention to test was not explicated.[52] Long a part of the BJP's strategic culture, nuclear weapons were something that the BJP desired for India.[53] This political change foregrounds the decision to test and put Prime Minister Vajpayee in the position to execute the test two months later.

[52] Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb* (New York: Norton, 2007), 433,443.
[53] Kanti Bajpai, "The BJP and the Bomb," In *Inside Nuclear South Asia*, ed. Scott D. Sagan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 35-37.

Chapter Three: Testing and English Clarification

THE TEST

On the morning of May 11th, 1998 India executed nuclear tests in its western state of Rajasthan. Three devices of varying designs and yields were detonated. This test was primarily carried out under the supervision of scientists and not the military. Only a handful of individuals were aware of the test prior to its public announcement. Senior members of the Indian government and military were only informed hours before.[54] Another two tests were conducted two days later on May 13th and no further tests have since been conducted. Unlike the response to British and French testing, the United States government openly condemned Pokhran-II. The Clinton Administration would pursue economic sanctions against India within days.[55]

Figure 2: Pokhran Test Site Location in relation to New Delhi and Pakistan[56]

THE MODELS OF SCOTT SAGAN AND MANJARI CHATTERJEE MILLER

Before we look at English language statements, it is necessary to return to the theoretical models that could clarify the decision to test. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Scott Sagan proposes three models that motivate states to acquire nuclear weapons and Manjari

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[54] George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 416.
[55] Ibid, 420, 436.
[56] From Jones et al., *Tracking Nuclear Proliferation*, 126. Pokhran can be spelled Pokaran as per this illustration. The former was used throughout this report as it matched the spelling used by the Press Information Bureau of the Indian Government.

Chatterjee Miller added a fourth model to explain Pokhran-II specifically. Sagan's three models are "security" from external threat, the interests of "domestic politics", and a state viewing nuclear weapons as one of the "norms" that indicates its identity and modernity.[57] Miller's model of "post-imperial ideology" posits that a state's international actions are influenced by the trauma of colonial domination that manifests itself in present day victimhood and entitlement.[58] In the case of Pokhran-II, she argues that a sense of victimhood at the hands of the international nonproliferation regime, coupled with the feeling that India was entitled to possess nuclear weapons, motivated India to test in 1998.

In each of the statements in the next two chapters, the degree to which each of these models is reflected will be measured. These will be combined with elements of discourse from Chapter Two to illustrate what Prime Minister Vajpayee is advocating and which model is influencing that element of his argument. The assumption is made here that multiple models influenced the decision to test at Pokhran.

INITIAL STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

On May 11th, 1998 Prime Minister Vajpayee stood before the press in New Delhi and delivered a statement in English to announce the tests. The audience for this first release of information was both domestic and international and is recounted in its entirety in the figure below.

[57] Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?," 55.
[58] Miller, *Wronged by Empire*, 2.

Figure 3: Prime Minister Vajpayee's Statement on Pokhran-II[59]

> Today at 1545 hrs., India conducted three underground nuclear tests in the Pokhran range. The test conducted today were with a fission device, a low yield device and a thermonuclear device. The measured yields are in line with expected values. Measurements have also confirmed that there was no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere. These were contained explosions like the experiment conducted in May 1974. I warmly congratulate the scientists and engineers who have carried out these successful tests.

While this statement is brief it addresses the security, domestic politics, and norms models of choosing to build and test nuclear weapons. The phrase about the types of devices is reflective of the security model in that it indicates to external threats that India could now produce a low yield device which could feasibly be weaponized via a missile or carried by aircraft. Additionally, it indicated that they could produce a thermonuclear weapon,[60] the most powerful type of nuclear device and capable of producing the most harm to an enemy. Next, the domestic politics model is addressed in referring to the 1974 test, a reminder that the opposition party had once authorized a similar test. This is actually a denial of the domestic politics model, making it clear that both parties made the decision not of their own benefit but rather for the security of the nation. Lastly, the norms model is addressed in the production of a thermonuclear device, in the contained nature of the explosion, and in the congratulations offered to the scientists and engineers. India, as a normative and fully modern state, would employ scientists and engineers with the capacity to produce the more complicated device while adhering to the Partial Test Ban Treaty which the state signed in 1963. The Prime Minister's statement does not in any meaningful way reflect the post-imperial ideology model.

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[59] Press Information Bureau Government of India. "Latest PIB Releases." Accessed 29 October 2017. http://pib.nic.in/archieve/lreleng/lyr98/l0598/PIBR110598.html

[60] Often referred to as a Hydrogen bomb.

MAY 11TH, 1998 OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT[61]

The Prime Minister's initial statement was quickly followed up by a press release from the Indian Government. It contains components that address each of the four models. Excerpts of this release will be parsed below.

Figure 4: May 11th, 1998 Official Press Statement; Excerpt 1

> These tests have established that India has a proven capability for a weaponised nuclear programme. They also provide a valuable database which is useful in the design of nuclear weapons of different yields for different applications and for different delivery systems. Further, they are expected to carry Indian scientists towards a sound computer simulation capability which may be supported by sub-critical experiments if considered necessary.

This excerpt noticeably reflects the security and norms models. Under the security model it announced to the world that India had a nuclear program with weapons capability and the intention to further develop deliverable bombs. Under the norms model it shows that India had professional scientific capability and this reinforced its identity as a modern state.

Figure 5: May 11th, 1998 Official Press Statement; Excerpt 2

> The Government is deeply concerned, as were previous Governments, about the nuclear environment in India's neighbourhood. These tests provide reassurance to the people of India that their national security interests are paramount and will be promoted and protected. Succeeding generations of Indians would also rest assured that contemporary technologies associated with nuclear option have been passed on to them in this the 50th year of our Independence.

[61] Press Information Bureau Government of India. "Latest PIB Releases."

This excerpt combines the security and domestic politics model. It specifically addressed potential nuclear threats that India sees in its immediate vicinity. This is unquestionably a reference to both Pakistan and China. Additionally, it also shows concern regarding cooperation between those undeclared and declared nuclear states on technical matters related to the bomb.[62] The domestic politics model is also evident here as an appeal is made to the people of India and the security the tests promised. The BJP had intentions to solidify its hold on the government through the test as its victory in the March election placed it at the head of a coalition government, but without an outright majority.[63]

Figure 6: May 11th, 1998 Official Press Statement; Excerpt 3

> It is necessary to highlight today that India was in the vanguard of nations which ushered in the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963 due to environmental concerns. Indian representatives have worked in various international forums, including the Conference on Disarmament, for universal, nondiscriminatory and verifiable arrangements for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

In a final excerpt from this press statement, both the norms model and a small suggestion of the post-imperial ideology model are present. Its leadership in creating and adhering to efforts to curtail proliferation speaks to its identity as a modern and prominent state. The use of the term "nondiscriminatory" to describe a potential arrangement for disarmament evokes an Indian view of the existing nuclear club as being "unequal, unfair and racist".[64]

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[62] Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II," 163.
[63] Kanti Bajpai, "The BJP and the Bomb," 39-43.
[64] Miller, *Wronged by Empire*, 83.

Taken as a whole, the models that dominate this press statement are security and norms. Domestic politics is also acknowledged but there is only slight evidence of post-imperial ideology prompting the decision to test.

LETTER TO PRESIDENT CLINTON

On May 13th, 1998, *The New York Times* published a short letter written by Prime Minister Vajpayee to President Clinton. The letter sought to clarify why the tests were conducted and to ask for understanding. This document was leaked to the press and was subsequently scorned by members of Lok Sabha in a debate on May 29th.[65] Excerpts are presented below.

Figure 7: Letter to President Clinton; Excerpt 1

> I have been deeply concerned at the deterioriating security environment, specially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state. At the hands of this bitter neighbor we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years.

In this first excerpt, the security model elaborated. Noticeably, the two states alluded to, China and Pakistan, are never mentioned by name. This will be consistent across all the English language statements consulted here. A reference to the four wars, three with Pakistan[66] and one with China is utilized to frame the threat that India envisions.

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[65] "Further discussion on the statement made by the Prime Minister in the House on 27th May,1998 on the recent nuclear tests in Pokhran raised by Shri Indrajit Gupta on the 27th May, 98." accessed September 29, 2017. May 29, 1998. http://164.100.47.194/Loksabha/Debates/Result12.aspx?dbsl=157

[66] Wars between India and Pakistan occurred in 1947-48, 1965, and 1971.

Figure 8: Letter to President Clinton; Excerpt 2

> We value our friendship and cooperation with your country and you personally. We hope that you will show understanding of our concern for India's security. I assure you that India will continue to work with your country in a multilateral or bilateral framework to promote the cause of nuclear disarmament. Our commitment to participate in non-discriminatory and verifiable global disarmament measures is amply demonstrated by our adherence to the two conventions on Biological and Chemical Weapons.

In this next excerpt, the Prime Minister conforms to the norms models. He requests understanding based on India's reputation as a responsible and cooperative state. He references India's adherence to two conventions - the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). Both seek to inhibit the proliferation of those types of weapons.[67] Lastly, he once again uses the term non-discriminatory to reference the type of agreements with which India is willing to engage. Here again there is just a subtle element of post-imperial ideology. The domestic politics model is not intimated in this letter.

MAY 27TH, 1998 STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER[68]

16 days after the first test at Pokhran, Prime Minister Vajpayee delivered an English language statement in the Lok Sabha regarding the nuclear development. Before proceeding into excerpts from this speech it is worth pointing out an example of this statement being used to further an argument. Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu has written a superb chapter entitled "India's Nuclear Use Doctrine" which is part of a larger work entitled *Planning the Unthinkable*. He traces the development of the use doctrine for

[67] Jones et al., Tracking Nuclear Proliferation, 118.
[68] "XII LOK SABHA DEBATES, Session II, (Budget)." accessed September 29, 2017, http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/lsdeb/ls12/ses2/04270598.htm.

India's newly created nuclear arsenal. Here the author uses two quotes[69] from Prime Minister Vajpayee which are both from this statement. The quote he used to open the chapter is given below.

Figure 9: May 27th Statement by Prime Minister; Excerpt 1

> India is now a nuclear weapon state. This is a reality that cannot be denied. It is not a conferment that we seek; nor is it a status for others to grant. It is an endowment to the nation by our scientists and engineers. It is India's due, the right of one-sixth of humankind.

This quotation is notable as it is the most representative of the post-imperial ideology model so far examined and its selection by Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu shows its importance. According to the statement the decision to test was built upon India's due right. The immediate audience for this statement was the other members of the Lok Sabha and was the most domestically directed English statement of the group.

Figure 10: May 27th Statement by Prime Minister; Excerpt 2

> We had taken a number of initiatives in the past. We regret that these proposals did not receive a positive response from other nuclear weapon states. In fact, had their response been positive, we need not have gone in for our current testing programme.

This extract furthers the post-imperial ideology model argument. It references the previous normative efforts of India to curb nuclear proliferation and the failure of the international system to respond accordingly. It positions India as a victim forced to test because of the unfair policies of other states.

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[69] Wahegru Pal Singh Sidhu, "India's Nuclear Use Doctrine," In *Planning the Unthinkable*, ed. Peter R. Lavoy, Scott D. Sagan, and James J. Wirtz (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2000), 125-26.

Figure 11: May 27th Statement by Prime Minister; Excerpt 3

> The Lok Sabha debated the issue on 5th April, 1968. Prime Minister late Shrimati Indira Gandhi assured the House that "we shall be guided entirely by our self-enlightenment and the considerations of national security". This was a turning point and this House strengthened the decision of the then Government by reflecting a national consensus.

This is another example of denying that the domestic politics model was the impetus for testing. Like former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister Vajpayee claims to have taken the decision to test based on consideration of national security. In total, this statement before the Lok Sabha addressed all four of the models being evaluated but was the most first to significantly address post-imperial ideology.

THE FIRST PART OF THE PICTURE

The English language sources above identify several things. First, the most dominant models in these three statements are security and norms models. Domestic politics is mildly addressed in the form of denials and post-imperial ideology is even less prominent. As the Prime Minister's audience skewed domestically he was more likely to make arguments that refuted the domestic politics model and display the influence of the post-imperial ideology model. The question that remains is whether the balance of emphasis will be the same in statements made in Hindi.

Chapter Four: The Hindi Side of Clarification

INTRODUCTION

This section of the report will explore the other side of clarifying Pokhran-II. Here two debates will be consulted which occurred in the Lok Sabha where Prime Minister Vajpayee addressed the nuclear tests. These debates are multilinguistic settings in themselves. Many members speak in English and other speak using Indian languages such as Hindi. Notably in these two debates regarding the decision to test, Vajpayee uses Hindi to make his argument, often responding to questions and debate that were framed in English.

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE & HINDI

Establishing Prime Minister Vajpayee's status as a proficient Hindi speaker is perhaps best done through unconventional means. A technical look at his speaking ability would be unfitting so rather this assessment should be made via an account featured in a glowing biography[70], where his oratory skills have been described as containing "thoughtful content" and a certain "style of delivery". His Hindi was described by journalist Mani Shankar Aiyar as "impeccable" and almost completely free of English words.[71] In another account he was able to embarrass his Pakistani counterpart by speaking "chaste Urdu" at a banquet in Pakistan. In short, Vajpayee's abilities in Hindi and even Hindustani are acknowledged as those of a skillful speaker.

MAY 29TH, 1998 DEBATE IN THE LOK SABHA

18 days after the first nuclear test in Pokhran, Prime Minister Vajpayee responded to debate regarding the statement he made on May 27th. In the interim, on May 28th,

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[70] See Kingshuk Nag, *Atal Bihari Vajpayee, A Man for All Seasons*, (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2016), 86-87.
[71] Ibid, 87.

Pakistan conducted its first nuclear test. The debate opens with considerable discord in the audience. In the framework of the domestic politics model, several members accuse Vajpayee of choosing to test for political gain.[72] The Prime Minister was the last to speak.

Figure 12: May 29th, 1998, PM Vajpayee Responds to Debate, Excerpt 1[73]

> एक बात मुझे याद आ रही है जब पोखरण ठप्रथम' पर चर्चा हुई थी १९७४ में, तो उस समय मैं चर्चा में उपस्थित था, कामरेड इन्द्रजीत गुप्त भी उपस्थित थे और संसद में दो ही सदस्य हैं जो उस समय भी उपस्थित थे, आज सदन में मौजूद हैं।

Here Prime Minister Vajpayee makes the claim against domestic politics influencing his decision to test by reminding his audience of the 1974 tests and the debate of that time. He references Indrajit Gupta, a fellow member of the Lok Sabha in 1974 and in 1998. He was the member who requested this debate and Vajpayee wishes to show how his own position is consistent and while it is the position of his opponents that has wavered.

Figure 13: May 29th, 1998, PM Vajpayee Responds to Debate, Excerpt 2[74]

> पाकिस्तान ने परीक्षण किया।... पन्द्रह दिन के भीतर कोई देश परमाणु परीक्षण की तैयारी नहीं कर सकता।

The security model is elicited in this phrase by showing that the external threat perceived from Pakistan was validated by the test. It is also noteworthy that this is the first time the name of Pakistan has actually been used. In previous phrasing in English it always

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[72] Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 423-24.

[73] "There is one thing that I am remembering about when there was a discussion on Pokhran-1. In 1974, at that time I was present in the discussion, Comrade Indrajit Gupta was also present, there are two other members which were also present, that are here today in parliament."

[74] "Pakistan tested. No country can prepare to conduct nuclear tests in 15 days. This preparation went on for years."

referred to by insinuation. China is also mentioned by name in other parts of the debate not cited here.

Figure 14: May 29th, 1998, PM Vajpayee Responds to Debate, Excerpt 3[75]

पोखरण की चिलचिलाती धूप में, गर्म बालू में, पचास के करीब टेम्प्रेचर में जो वैज्ञानिक काम करते रहें, जो जवान काम करते रहे, उनके मन में एक ही भावना थी और एक ही भावना है कि देश की रक्षा होनी चाहिए।

Here Prime Minister Vajpayee makes reference to the determined sentiment of the scientists and military who toiled in the adverse conditions of the desert to make the test successful. There is a stylistic element to his phrasing; it is more colorful than anything seen in the English statements. It also supports the norms model because the struggle to accomplish this task is part of the country's identity as nuclear state.

Figure 15: May 29th, 1998, PM Vajpayee Responds to Debate, Excerpt 4[76]

वे (महाशक्तियां) भेदभावपूर्ण संधि को दुनिया पर लादना चाहते हैं, तो सबने मिल कर फैसला किया, इकट्ठे फैसला किया कि CTBT पर हस्ताक्षर नहीं करेंगे।

The concept of discrimination is once against raised with this statement in regard to the nature of nonproliferation treaties. This conception is similar to the brief references seen in the May 11th press statement and the letter to President Clinton; however, there is

[75] "In the scorching sun of Pokhran, in the hot sand, in temperatures around 50 Celsius in which the scientists kept working, in which the soldiers kept working, in their mind there was only one feeling, and that one feeling is that the nation should be secure."

[76] "They (the Great Powers) want to saddle the world with a discriminatory treaty, so after everyone saw it the decision was made. United together, the decision was made not to sign the CTBT.

a difference from those English languages sources. This is the first time that agency is given to the parties responsible for the discrimination - the great powers of the existing nuclear club. This is the type of victimhood that Manjari Chatterjee Miller envisions motivating the decision to test via post-imperial ideology.

Figure 16: May 29th, 1998, PM Vajpayee Responds to Debate, Excerpt 5[77]

हम जब अणु परीक्षण करते हैं और अणु परीक्षण के मामले में जब अन्य देशों के साथ मिलकर आवाज उठाते हैं और महा-देशों को कहते हैं कि आप अपने अस्त्र नष्ट करिये।

This excerpt highlights the frustration India has with the international non-proliferation regime. India has often seen the NPT and CTBT as unequal.[78] Under these treaties the existing nuclear club would be able to maintain their monopoly on nuclear weapons while also gaining the ability to penalize those countries who were on the outside. In this arrangement, India was the victim and the great powers were the victimizers. In total, these five excerpts from May 29th display all four of the models that could explain the desire for nuclear weapons. Substantially, this is first time that the post-imperial ideology model is elaborated. Also, Pakistan and China are mentioned by name and the tone becomes more emotional and stylistic.

APRIL 17TH, 1999 DEBATE IN THE LOK SABHA

Nearly a year after the test of Pokhran-II, Prime Minister Vajpayee once again engaged the topic in the Lok Sabha. He did so as he faced an impending motion of

[77] "When we do nuclear testing and when we meet with other countries on the matter of nuclear testing we raise our voice and to the major power nations we say, you, please destroy your own weapons."
[78] Miller, *Wronged By Empire*, 83.

confidence for his government which would be lost by the end of the day. Below are portions of that speech that are relevant to his discussion regarding the previous year's nuclear test.

Figure 17: April 17th, 1999, PM Vajpayee Responds to Motion, Excerpts[79]

-हम प्रतिपक्ष में थे फिर भी स्वागत किया था क्योंकि वह देश की रक्षा के लिए किया गया था। [...]

-क्या रक्षा के मामले में हमें आत्मनिर्भर नहीं होना चाहिए? केवल एक पड़ोसी नहीं, हमारे अनेक पड़ोसी हैं। [...]

-पोखरण-II टैस्ट कोई आत्म-श्लाखा के लिए नहीं था। वह कोई पुरुषार्थ के प्रकटीकरण के लिए नहीं था, लेकिन हमारी नीति है और मैं समझता हूं कि यह देश की नीति रही है कि मिनिमम डिटरेंट होना चाहिए। [...]

-१३ महीने के अपने कार्यकाल में कभी हमने अंतरराष्ट्रीय दबाव में आकर कोई फैसला नहीं किया, न आगे करेंगे! [...]

These excerpts once again show elements of all four explanatory models. An attempt is made to dispel both the domestic politics and norms models while the security model is made central in his arguments for why the decision was made. The post-imperial

[79] -"We were in the opposition yet we welcomed it because it was for the security of the country."
- "Yes or no, in the matter of security shouldn't we be self-dependent? There isn't just one neighbor, we have several neighbors."
-"The Pokhran-II test wasn't for self-congratulation. It was not for displaying manliness, but our policy is [...], and I understand that the policy of the country continues to be that there should be a minimum deterrent".
-"In the 13 months of our tenure we have not made any decision under international pressure, nor will we."

ideology model is also present in his exclamation that his government would refuse to allow India to bow to international pressure and thus become victims of the unfair non-proliferation regimes. In available video of the speech he delivers this line with additional emphasis and emotion.

THE SECOND PART OF THE PICTURE

The Hindi side of the argument from Prime Minister Vajpayee has been complementary in clarifying the rationale for why India tested nuclear weapons in 1998. All four models that explain why states build nuclear weapons are present. Efforts are made to dispel the notion that the compulsions of domestic politics or the pursuit of certain identities were the dominating motivation. Vajpayee makes it clear that it was the security calculus, specifically the external threats in the region, that prompted his decision to test. Sentiments that would corroborate post-imperial ideology as the motivation to test are also extant and expressed openly.

Chapter Five: Postscript, Conclusion and Recommendations

POSTSCRIPT

There is a noteworthy speech[80] from 2005 that offers a retrospective look at the period of Pokhran-II. On the May 11th anniversary of the tests, former Prime Minister Vajpayee addressed attendees at a function planned by the BJP. In clear terms and in English he openly made the case that India saw the nonproliferation regime of the international community as being unbalanced and unequal. He stated, "to safeguard our national interest, to serve the needs of national security, and to reject the notion that it is the security of only some in the world that was important and all others were irrelevant, we had to boldly and resolutely assert the autonomy of our decision making." In total, the speech reified his explications of 1998 and 1999. He placed pursuit of national security as the central rationale for conducting the test while showing the influence of post-imperial ideology. India had rejected the international community's discourse. It would not be a victim and was entitled to take the necessary steps to ensure its security.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This report used the models of Scott Sagan and Manjari Chatterjee Miller to frame the argument that a full clarification of Pokhran-II could only come through consultations with both English and Hindi statements. At no point did Prime Minister Vajpayee contradict himself between the statements but there were differences in emphasis and tone. The most striking difference between the two sets of statements is the degree to which each emphasized different models for understanding why nuclear weapons were pursued and

[80] "Pokhran: Today's Perspectives." accessed September 29, 2017. May 11, 2005. http://www.bjp.org/media-resources/speeches/shri-atal-bihari-vajpayee-speech-on-pokhran-today-s-perspectives.

tested. Miller's argument that only post-imperial ideology could explain the decision to test in 1998 is bolstered by the findings of this report.[81] In short, the influence of victimhood and the feeling of entitlement due to colonial trauma were only fully evident when the Hindi statements were parsed. There were also differences in emotion and style. The Hindi statements contained elements that were more expressive and more personal in tone. The most reasonable explanation for these differences is Vajpayee's understanding of his audience. He was aware that invoking India's sense of victimhood at the hands of the international non-proliferation regime was effective for explaining his decision to the domestic audience of parliamentary debate. Conversely, he understood that an international audience would not find those same elements of post-imperial ideology as meaningful explanations for Pokhran-II. Making those arguments in English and with a passionate tone may have been counterproductive for his political goals. The larger question raised in this report was not whether the audience mediated expression, rather it asked whether there were differences across the English-Hindi divide of the multilinguistic setting of Pokhran-II. In summation, there was a difference, and thus the clarification of the test was more complete when both languages were consulted.

In this report, it was important to use Sagan and Miller's models or a similar framework as doing so without would have negated the ability to sort and classify the compulsions facing Prime Minister Vajpayee. It is worth assuming that an alternative framework, as long as it facilitated the classification of motivations, could have shown a similar result.

The inferences that can be made from the findings of this report are somewhat broader than the immediate case of Pokhran-II. Events occur daily in multilinguistic

[81] Miller, *Wronged by Empire*, 26.

settings and parties in other locations attempt to understand what occurred and why. Often these narratives are reframed into mono-linguistic statements, news reports, and other mediums. These mediums will always provide a picture of what happened but, as these findings on Pokhran-II show, sometimes that picture is incomplete. In some cases, a key player will clarify their position with a tailored focus for different audiences. For those who seek to clarify future events that occur in multilinguistic settings, it is recommended to consult sources in all the languages that constitute the setting of the original event. This lesson is particularly salient when looking to clarify events in India and South Asia more generally. The multilinguistic settings of these regions are fertile ground for variations in emphasis and focus between sources.

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