

CHAPTER 4

INDIA'S TESTS—OPERATION SHAKTI

'BUDDHA TODAY SMILED'¹

4.1 On Monday, 11 May 1998, India conducted three underground nuclear tests in the Pokhran Range in the desert of Rajasthan near the Indo-Pakistan border.² In defiance of world opinion, India followed these tests on 13 May with two additional explosions.

4.2 The tests, the first carried out by India since 1974, marked the culmination of years of work undertaken by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO). According to DAE and DRDO the three tests conducted on 11 May were with a fission device with a yield of about 12 KT, a thermonuclear device with a yield of about 43 KT and a sub-kilo tonne device. All were detonated simultaneously and the thermonuclear device was designed to meet stringent criteria such as containment of the blast to minimise any chance of causing damage to buildings and structures in neighbouring villages. The 12 KT weapon was designed for tactical purposes such as aircraft bombs, missiles and artillery shells while the thermonuclear weapons were normally intended for strategic purposes.³

4.3 The tests carried out on 13 May involved two sub-kiloton devices and were also detonated simultaneously. The yields of the sub-kiloton devices were in the range of 0.2 to 0.6 KT and produced data to be used for the computer simulation of nuclear design.⁴ DAE and DRDO maintained that the tests were fully contained with no release of radioactivity into the atmosphere.⁵ The two explosions on 13 May barely registered on global seismic equipment but this may have been because the bombs were set off in a deep sand dune.⁶

1 In his article 'Showcase of Technological Leap by Indian Nuclear Establishment', Mavendra Singh refers back to the message conveyed to Indira Ghandi on the occasion of the first nuclear test carried out at Pokhran on 18 May 1974. See *The Indian Express*, 12 May 1998.
Internet site: <http://www.expressindia.com/ie/daily/19980512/13250814.html> (15 January).

2 Public Diplomacy Query, Early Report 5/12, 'India Crosses Nuclear Rubicorn', 12 May 1998.

3 *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 26 May 1998; *Weekly Defense Monitor*, Center for Defense Information, 21 May 1998.

4 *Jane's Defence Weekly*, *ibid.*

5 Joint Statement by Department of Atomic Energy and Defence Research and Development Organisation, New Delhi, 17 May 1998. Internet site: <http://www.meadev.gov.in/govt/drdo.htm>.

6 *Jane's Defence Weekly*, *ibid.*

4.4 A scientist involved in India's nuclear weapons program stated: 'We have complete mastery over a range of nuclear weapon technologies and they are intended for different delivery systems. Also, we can do computer simulation of subcritical experiments in the future.'⁷ Dr Anil Kakodkar, Director, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, explained in an interview that their project was part of an ongoing activity:

We had planned the tests with an objective. Our objective was to prove a standard fission device and a thermonuclear device. The objective was also to generate data on the basis of which further work can be carried out. That is how the devices consisted of one standard fission device, one thermonuclear device and three sub-kiloton devices of different configurations...now, the total yield of these devices had to be limited in such a way that the seismic damage to the buildings in the nearby village, 5 to 5.5km away, is kept to a minimum. We did not want any damage to occur. So that put a limitation on the maximum yield.⁸

4.5 Several seismic experts have questioned India's estimation of the magnitude of the yield from the detonations. They believe the yields were smaller than those announced officially. In particular, some seismologists doubt Indian claims about their exploding a thermonuclear device; they suggest that it was simply a boosted atom bomb. Despite the scepticism, and in the absence of conclusive evidence, a number of analysts have accepted at face value Indian claims that the yields were kept deliberately low to minimise damage to the surrounding district.⁹ P.K. Iyengar, a former Chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission, stated simply:

Whatever the details, it is clear that India has graduated from the fission club to the fusion club,¹⁰ it has demonstrated that it can make a fusion weapon or hydrogen bomb.

India's Reasons

National Security

Direct military threat from China and Pakistan

4.6 It would appear as though India's public pronouncements on China made before the tests prepared the ground for the justifications that would follow the explosions. India had clearly indicated that it felt increasingly threatened by the provocative and belligerent activities of China and Pakistan. Official comments and

7 T.S. Subramanian, 'Technological, Scientific Success', *Frontline*, vol. 15, no. 11, 23 May–5 June 1998.

8 Interview with BARC Director, Dr Anil Kakodkar, 'We Have Got Everything We Wanted', *Frontline*, vol. 15, no. 12, 6–19 June 1998.

9 William J. Broad, 'Big Claims, Small Evidence', *Frontline*, vol. 15, no. 12, 6 June–19 1998; Andrew Koch, 'India: Building the Bomb', *Weekly Defense Monitor*, 21 May 1998; Terry C. Wallace, 'The May 1998 India and Pakistan Nuclear Tests', SRL Publications, September 1998. Internet site: <http://www.geo.arizona.edu/geophysics/faculty/wallace/ind.pak/index.html>.

10 Cover Story, *Frontline*, vol. 15, no. 11, 23 May–5 June 1998.

observations presented India as a nation under siege and fighting for its survival and honour.

4.7 The depiction of China and Pakistan by India as aggressors persisted without interruption or deviation after the tests. India unequivocally put forward security as the overriding motivation for conducting the nuclear tests. It argued that India could no longer be seen as complacent in the face of Pakistan's rapidly developing missile program or China's growing military influence in the region.¹¹ Indian strategic analysts such as Jasjit Singh and Brahma Chellaney clearly identified China as fundamental in their assessment of India's security interests. At one stage before the tests, Mr Chellaney warned that India's restraint in not demonstrating its nuclear capability:

is being challenged by China's growing military and economic power and its continuing covert nuclear and missile assistance to Pakistan.

...

The Sino-Pakistan umbilical cord will snap only if New Delhi can stand up to Beijing and the Chinese strategy of building up a countervailing power to tie India down south of the Himalayas. But at present, India does not have even the conventional military resources to deter direct or indirect Chinese threats to its security.¹²

4.8 Strengthening this theme of self-defence, the Ministry of External Affairs issued a press release immediately following the tests which stated:

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.

4.9 The Prime Minister also sent a letter to President Clinton, dated 12 May, in which he wrote of the deteriorating security situation, especially the nuclear situation, faced by India. In part he said:

We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962...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 neighbour we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years. And for the last ten years

11 'India and Pakistan: News Analysis', *Missile Resources*, CDISS, May 1998.

12 Brahma Chellaney, 'Why India, Pushed Against the Wall, Could Go Overtly Nuclear', 20 September 1996, *Pacific News Service*.
Internet site: <http://www.pacificnews.org/pacificnews/jinn/stories/2.20/960920-india.html> (16 July 1998).

have been the victim of unremitting terrorism and militancy sponsored by it in several parts of our country, specially Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.¹³

4.10 A number of witnesses before the Committee agreed with Chellaney's assessment and with the Indian Government's main justification for conducting the tests. Dr Mohan Malik submitted that China was 'the most important actor inducing India to exercise its nuclear option, and that 'India's nuclear and missile capabilities owe much to the dynamics of Sino-Indian rivalry'. He maintained:

The singlemost objective of China's Asia policy has been to prevent the rise of a peer competitor, a real Asian rival to challenge China's status to Asia-Pacific's Middle Kingdom...

...

Since the 1962 India-China War, China has built up Pakistan as a military counterweight to India so as to tie India down south of the Himalayas. India, on its part, has always perceived Sino-Pakistani military nexus as 'hostile', and 'threatening' in both intent and character.¹⁴

4.11 He argued that China had 'taken advantage of Burma's isolation since 1990 to satisfy its own great power ambitions, especially its desire to counter India in the Indian Ocean, and to ensure the control of vital sea lanes by drawing Burma tightly into its sphere of influence'.¹⁵ He further cited the presence of Chinese troops in Tibet, the extension of runways in that country and China's military modernisation program as developments that worried India's military community.¹⁶ Dr Malik had no doubt that:

No other Asian country has ever backed and armed another Asian country as China has backed and armed Pakistan over the last 30 years in such a consistent manner over such a long period of time. So there is obviously a key strategic objective that Pakistan and now Burma fulfil in China's strategy for the 21st century. They tie India down to the south of the Himalayas and thereby prevent its rise as a major challenger to China's primacy of the Asia-Pacific.¹⁷

4.12 According to Dr Malik, India's concerns were further heightened at signs 'that far from balancing China, the US had been drawing it into a close embrace, seemingly oblivious of its implications for regional security.'¹⁸ He acknowledged India's claims

13 India's letter to President Bill Clinton on Nuclear Testing, *New York Times* (Late edition), Wednesday 3 May 1998, p. 14.

14 Submission no. 24, vol. 2, pp. 4, 6.

15 Submission no. 24, vol. 2, p. 7.

16 Submission no. 24, vol. 2, pp. 7-8.

17 *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 49; Submission no. 24, vol. 2, p.10.

18 Submission no. 24, vol. 2, p. 9.

that by detonating the nuclear weapons it has ‘corrected the asymmetry in power relationship with China and restored strategic balance of power in the Asia-Pacific which had tilted in China’s favour following the withdrawal of the former Soviet Union from the Asian region’.¹⁹ In summary Dr Malik asserted:

...India sees China as the mother of all its security concerns from the Bay of Bengal to the Persian Gulf.²⁰

4.13 Dr Debish Bhattacharya supported Dr Malik’s thesis and told the Committee that India had become more concerned in the 1990s about there being some kind of encirclement of India. He explained to the Committee:

On the east, there is Burma and Bangladesh, and the United States wants influence in Bangladesh. On the north nothing has been done about the Chinese exporting missile technology to Pakistan and, there is Pakistan.²¹

4.14 It should be noted that from his analysis of English and Hindi language newspapers, Dr Peter Friedlander found that India’s English speaking elite and the foreign press, perceived China as the prime reason for India’s nuclear tests. But a study of the Hindi press revealed a preoccupation with Pakistan and a coverage of the nuclear tests that emphasised the Pakistani threat and rubbed in insults from Islamabad.²² He did point out that the only times when the mention of China did arouse interest was when the press ‘reminded people of the Indo-Chinese war in 1962 and when there was a great deal of talk about the need to maintain awareness on all fronts for defence purposes’.²³

Failure of the international community to move toward nuclear disarmament

4.15 India strengthened its ground for claiming it acted in self-defence by focusing on the failure of the international community to deal with the deteriorating security situation in South Asia. India argued there was no element of adventurism on its part but rather Indians were left with no other option especially given China and Pakistan’s

19 Submission no. 24, vol. 2, p. 12.

20 Submission no. 24, vol. 2, p. 10. See also Dr Jim Masselos: ‘Pakistan’s perceived links with China fuel Indian unease as does the apparent closeness of US ties with China. The net of interlinked relationships is seen as being fundamentally hostile to India and its objectives. Until these fears can be allayed...then the situation of the subcontinent will continue to impose problems’. Submission no. 31, vol. 2, p. 149 and in *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 24.

21 *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 4. Professor McPherson also drew attention to evidence of covert missile build-up in Pakistan aided by the transfer of missiles from North Korea and China, Chinese aggression and military build-up in Tibet and Chinese assistance to the Pakistanis to develop their nuclear program. See Submission no. 5, vol. 1, pp. 22–5; and also The Australian Greens, Submission no. 15, vol. 1, p. 158; Medical Association for Prevention of War (WA Branch), Submission no. 21, vol. 1, p. 208; and the Hon. Jim Kennan, Submission no. 43, vol. 3, pp. 197–98.

22 Submission no. 44, vol. 3, p. 206.

23 *Committee Hansard*, 7 August 1998, p. 340.

collaboration in missiles development and nuclear technology and the inaction shown by the world community.

4.16 Mr K. Subrahmanyam, former director of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses in India, had no doubt that 'India was compelled to join the nuclear club because the international community legitimised nuclear weapons when they indefinitely extended the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT)'.²⁴

4.17 Similarly, on 27 May 1998, the Prime Minister Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee tied India's security worries with the international community's inability to guarantee a secure environment. He told the Indian Parliament:

The decades of the 80s and 90s had meanwhile witnessed the gradual deterioration of our security environment as a result of nuclear and missile proliferation. In our neighbourhood, nuclear weapons had increased and more sophisticated delivery systems inducted. In addition, India has also been the victim of externally aided and abetted terrorism, militancy and clandestine war.

At a global level, we see no evidence on the part of the nuclear weapon states to take decisive and irreversible steps in moving towards a nuclear-weapon-free-world. Instead, we have seen that the NPT has been extended indefinitely and unconditionally, perpetuating the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the five countries.

Under such circumstances, the Government was faced with a difficult decision. The touchstone that has guided us in making the correct choice clear was national security. These tests are a continuation of the policies set into motion that put this country on the path of self-reliance and independence of thought and action.²⁵

4.18 Not only did India portray itself as a defender of its people and its territory but as a staunch advocate of nuclear disarmament as the following official press release showed:

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, non-discriminatory and verifiable arrangements for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The Government would like to reiterate its support to efforts to realise the goal of a truly comprehensive international arrangement which would prohibit underground nuclear testing of all weapons as well as related experiments described as sub-critical or 'hydro-nuclear'.

24 'Sign of Self-Confidence, Say Experts', *Hindustan Times*, 12 May 1998.

25 Suo Motu Statement by Prime Minister Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee in Parliament, 27 May 1998. Internet site: <http://www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/980527-india-pm.htm>

India remains committed to a speedy process of nuclear disarmament leading to total and global elimination of nuclear weapons.²⁶

4.19 India's preoccupation with China as a major threat to its security seemed inconsistent with a growing trend toward friendly relations between the two countries. In 1994, India and China had signed the Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement which addressed their dispute over their Himalayan borders.²⁷ The visit by President Jiang Zemin of China to India in 1996 marked the high point of improved relations between the two countries. In November 1996, China and India agreed in principle on mutual troop withdrawals from disputed areas along a 2,500 mile frontier and pledged that neither would use its military capability against the other.²⁸

4.20 A number of commentators and analysts, aware of the trend toward improved relations between these two neighbours, regarded India's stated fear of China's military intentions as exaggerated. They felt that any suggestion that China posed a major threat to India's national security interests 'flies in the face of ten years of Chinese military reforms, the improvement in Sino-Indian relations since Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1988'.²⁹

4.21 Similarly, they discounted the argument that the Chinese-Pakistani nexus posed a real threat to India's security interests. They maintained that nothing had happened recently in India's security environment that warranted even a mild qualification of this proposition. A prominent Indian journalist Praful Bidwai argued:

It is irrelevant to cite, as some of India's hawks do, Sino-Pakistan nuclear cooperation. Apart from being old hat, such cooperation is of limited, non-strategic nature. No state has recently threatened India with nuclear weapons or acted more belligerently than before.³⁰

4.22 Before the Committee, several witnesses also drew on this record of growing detente between India and China, to question the genuineness of India's justification.

26 Official Press Statements, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 13 May 1998. There are numerous similar official statements, for example in response to the United Nations Security Council presidential statement of 14 May, the Indian Government again made clear that the tests were not directed against any country but were conducted because 'of the continuing threat posed to India by the deployment, overtly and covertly, of nuclear weapons in the lands and seas adjoining us that we have been forced to carry out these tests, so that we can retain a credible option to develop these weapons, should they be needed for the security of India's people, who constitute one-fifth of the world's population'. New Delhi, 15 May 1998.

27 Raju G.C.Thomas, 'The South Asian Standoff', *Foreign Service Journal*, February 1998.

28 See Major. Gen. Dipankar Banerjee (retd), 'India-China Relations and Southeast Asia', *Asian Defence Journal*, no. 6, June 1998, p. 7.

29 Eric Arnett, Project Leader on Military Technology at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Sweden, 'What Threat?', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March/April 1997, vol. 53, no. 2. Without hesitation he asserted that 'in 1997, there is no China nuclear threat to India, and no plan to create one.' See also Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, 'A Very Political Bomb', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *ibid.*; and Dr Samina Yasmeen, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 1998, p. 173.

30 Praful Bidwai, 'Seeking a Paradigm Shift', *Frontline*, vol. 15, no. 8, 11-24 April 1998.

DFAT and the Department of Defence noted India's stated concern about China being its main security threat but held that 'such perceptions appear to give little weight to the improvement in Sino-Indian relations over the last decade'.³¹

4.23 Following this same line of argument, Mr Hamish McDonald maintained that prior to the election of the BJP government there had been 'a longstanding process of confidence building with the Chinese and substantive negotiations on the border question'.³²

4.24 In support of this view, Dr Samina Yasmeen argued that the reference to the presence of a Sino-Pakistan axis fails to take account of the reality of a changed Chinese position vis-à-vis South Asia. She asserted that the Chinese Government has consistently pursued a policy of improving relations with India. According to Dr Yasmeen, India responded positively to China's approach and 'Sino-Indian rapprochement had become a reality of the South Asian scene'.³³ She pointed to India's need for prestige and recognition in the post-Cold War era, arguing that domestic factors provide a more realistic understanding for New Delhi's decision to test nuclear weapons. Indeed, she suggested that India may have been reinforcing its claim to a better status in the post-Cold War era.³⁴

*Strength respects strength*³⁵

4.25 The extent to which the Indian Government deliberately played on the China and Pakistani threat in order to gain domestic and international approval for their actions is difficult to determine. Nevertheless, India's apprehensions about its security situation must be acknowledged as a significant but not the only factor which determined its foreign and defence policies.

4.26 Undoubtedly India perceived China as a rival and potential security threat. India's reasons, however, for exploding the nuclear bombs go beyond the necessity to deter overt conventional and nuclear attack from neighbours or to preserve its territory from incursion or secessionist movements, for example in Kashmir. India's argument about national security is not confined to the defence and preservation of its territory and its people. India's security interests encompass a much broader context that takes in the protection and enhancement of national integrity and independence.³⁶ India felt that it needed to be able to resist intimidation from potentially hegemonic powers. It was concerned about the ability of powerful nations with interests in the region, such as the United States and China, to intrude into its affairs and those of South Asia.

31 Submission no. 33, vol. 3, p. 9.

32 *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 79.

33 Submission no. 30, vol. 2, p. 137.

34 *ibid.*

35 Rashme Sehgal, 'Abdul Kalam Hits Out at Anti-Nuclear Zealots', *Times of India*, 8 August 1998.

36 Refer to Steven A. Hoffmann, 'The International Politics of Southern Asia', *Journal of Asia and African Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1 February 1998.

Witnesses said that India saw nuclear weapons as a political tool to be used in pursuing foreign policy as well as in military operations.

4.27 Some witnesses developed this line of argument further. They appreciated that India sought to preserve its territory and to protect its integrity as a sovereign nation, but that India's nuclear tests, were also a means to enhance its prestige. The nuclear weapons were not only a deterrence against military attack and political coercion but were a way of becoming a major regional and global power to be respected and to be taken seriously.

4.28 The desire by Indians to be recognised as a great nation permeates Indian society. A poll by the *Times of India* conducted in six cities within 24 hours of the first set of tests revealed that 91 per cent of those interviewed approved of the explosions.³⁷ Indeed, expressions of joyous pride followed the announcement of India's nuclear explosions—people greeted the news with public displays of enthusiastic support; they danced in the streets and distributed sweets.³⁸ They were confident that it would earn their country the international recognition and status due to a powerful nation. The Indian tests were seen as an assertion of national greatness in defiance of the hostility of the major powers.

4.29 Indeed, nationalism and India's self image were fundamental to India's policy-makers in deciding to become a nuclear weapons power. The nuclear tests touched a strong current of national pride in the Indian people and met a deep underlying need to be acknowledged not only as a self-reliant and autonomous nation but as a major international force with authority and power.³⁹ Defence Minister George Fernandes stated bluntly 'India has to restore its pride and its place in the world'.⁴⁰

4.30 The nuclear tests also provided an opportunity for Indian scientists to demonstrate and receive accolades for their skill and ability. Indeed, the scientific community and their desire to 'show off their excellence' may well have fed into the overall domestic approval for India to demonstrate their nuclear prowess.⁴¹ On a practical and technical level the tests gave them the opportunity to build on these tests and to move further ahead with developments in nuclear technology. Dr Malik observed:

37 Tim Healy, 'A Nuclear Test Makes Good Domestic Politics but Lousy Foreign Policy', *AsiaWeek*, 22 May 1998; *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 19 May 1998.

38 Refer to Dr Jim Masselos, Submission no. 31, vol. 2, who gives a comprehensive description of the reaction to the Indian tests in India.

39 See Dr Masselos, *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 19.

40 Interview with Georges Fernandes, 'Action Will Follow a Review', Cover Story, *Frontline*, vol. 15, no. 8, 11–24 April 1998.

41 See comments by Associate Professor Ian Copland, Submission no. 4, vol. 1, p. 17 and Dr Masselos, Submission no. 31, p. 91.

While Pakistan was in possession of tested Chinese nukes and missiles, Indian scientists were not absolutely certain of whether they had usable and reliable nuclear weapons which form the basis of stable nuclear deterrence. Moreover, the five NWSs had gone in for smaller, and hence more usable nukes or designer nukes because advances in nuclear and missile technology afforded the opportunity to use nuclear weapons in regional conflict without causing collateral damage. Making small nuclear bombs (miniaturisation or mini-nukes) necessitates testing.⁴²

4.31 As noted above, DFAT and the Department of Defence maintained that their assessment of India's motivations for conducting the tests do not necessarily concur with reasons given by India and that India overstated its fear of China. Both departments argued that the fundamental reason for India's tests is tied up with its place in the international community. Mr Griffin from DFAT told the Committee:

The conducting of the tests in the first instance was to prove in an anachronistic way that they could shoot their way into the top boardrooms which they felt disgruntled about being excluded from for so long. Having demonstrated that they could do what...the big boys do, that demonstration effect is, in terms of prestige, all they need.⁴³

4.32 India's drive for international status was frustrated by its inability to gain recognition as a global power. Dr Malik told the Committee that during the Cold War, the Soviet Union provided a nuclear security umbrella for India, but in the post-Cold War world India, as a growing power, found itself increasingly 'friendless and lonely'.⁴⁴ Its exclusion as a permanent member of the Security Council, of ASEAN and of APEC deepened its sense of isolation. According to a number of submitters and strategic analysts India felt left out of international affairs; it believed that it was not taken seriously and that its voice was not being heard.⁴⁵

4.33 Dr Jim Masselos submitted that Indians have 'a sense of a new kind of world imperialism which excludes them and which tries to dominate them, and there is that sense of apartheid by...first world nations'.⁴⁶ Along similar lines, Dr McPherson argued: 'Indians often feel that the West dismisses the reality of their achievement in remaining a democracy and accord more respect to the repressive and far from democratic nuclear power, China'.⁴⁷ This feeling of neglect, even alienation, sharpened India's ambition to be recognised as a major power.

42 Dr Mohan Malik, Submission no. 24, vol. 2, p. 11.

43 *Committee Hansard*, 21 July 1998, pp. 95.

44 *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 46; see also p. 57.

45 For example, see Jim Kennan, Submission no. 43, vol. 3, p. 198.

46 *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 21 and Submission no. 31, vol. 2, p. 147. See also Dr Malik, *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 57 and Submission no. 24, vol. 2, p. 4.

47 Submission no. 5, vol. 1, p. 20.

4.34 Professor Stephen Cohen described how deeply Indians felt about being overlooked:

This sense of isolation cuts across the entire political spectrum, and is compounded and heightened by an awareness of economic failure (compared with the fast-growing economies to the east), and a belief that India was not accorded the respect due to it because of its civilizational and cultural qualities, its population, and its potential, let alone its dominant position in South Asia.⁴⁸

4.35 It is important to keep in mind the association made between the possession of nuclear weapons and great nation status. Witnesses in evidence said that India saw the tests as a means to earn international respect and recognition. This connection between nuclear capability and national might is clear in a number of public statements made by Indian officials which promote an image of India as a strong, self-reliant nation.

4.36 After the tests the Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee announced that ‘India is now a nuclear weapon state...the decision to carry out these tests was guided by the paramount importance we attach to national security...the tests...have given India shakti, they have given strength, they have given India self-confidence.’⁴⁹ In a similar vein, Dr R. Chidambaram, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, explained after the tests that ‘India must be strong. The greatest advantage of recognised strength is that you don’t have to use it.’⁵⁰ Clearly Indians associated national strength with the possession of nuclear weapons. The link between nuclear weapons and national status is a fundamental and unquestioned assumption at the heart of India’s drive for international standing.

4.37 Further evidence of the strong association between India’s self image as a global force and the possession of nuclear capability can be seen in the reaction of the people of India to the news of the nuclear tests. The *Hindustan Times* wrote:

The ‘smiling Buddha’ of 1974 has now blossomed into a new assertion of the country’s right to arm itself in a manner which it believes is best suited to its security interests.⁵¹

4.38 Witnesses before the Committee also drew attention to this tight connection between the possession of nuclear weapons and national prestige. According to Professor Ian Copland, India believed ‘understandably, that possession of nuclear weapons is one of the distinguishing marks of great power status’. He went on to say ‘It reckons that going public on its nuclear capability will give it leverage with

48 Professor Stephen P. Cohen, ‘An Overview of India’s Nuclear Tests’.
Internet site: http://acdisweb.acdis.uiuc.edu/homepage_docs/resource_docs/test_docs/CohenHAsia.html

49 N. Ram, ‘The Perils of Nuclear Adventurism’, *Frontline*, vol. 15, no. 11, 23 May–5 June 1998.

50 T.S. Subramanian, ‘Key Players in Pokhran’, *ibid.*

51 ‘Moment of Pride’, Editorial, *Hindustan Times*, 12 May 1998.

America, Britain, Russia, France and (perhaps especially China) that it has not had in the past.⁵² Mr Harun Rashid, former Bangladesh Ambassador to Australia, argued that India's main purpose in conducting the tests was to signal to China and Pakistan that it was a 'regional player with nuclear capability' and to the world that it 'should not be ignored as a global power.'⁵³

4.39 Mr McDonald agreed that great power status is equated with nuclear weapons possession and noted that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council are the five recognised nuclear-armed powers.⁵⁴ He strongly supported the view that national status and prestige were major factors driving India's decision to detonate the weapons. He believed that India, equating great nation status with nuclear weapon ownership and desiring standing as a world power, had kept the China threat alive to justify keeping its nuclear option open.⁵⁵

4.40 Also using the Security Council as a yard stick of international influence, the People for Nuclear Disarmament pointed out that since its inception the composition of the UN Security Council had been dominated by the permanent members who were also declared nuclear weapon states. It went on to conclude 'it is little wonder that countries such as India should see that their international status would be enhanced by possession of the bomb'.⁵⁶ Mr Richard Leaver pointed out that the BJP government believed that the nuclear tests would pave the way to a seat on the UN Security Council.⁵⁷

Domestic politics

4.41 Indian nationalism and India's annoyance at the lack of international recognition were significant factors guiding government policy. Some commentators and submitters argue further that domestic party politics finally pushed India into going overtly nuclear: that the newly elected BJP was, for political gain, prepared to take that final step in openly demonstrating India's nuclear capability.

4.42 Clearly, the desire of many Indians to see their country given international recognition as a global power was an important force in influencing decision-makers within the BJP. To explain India's decision to demonstrate its nuclear weapons capability, some observers within India cited the rise of Hindu nationalism which, to them, had altered the language of Indian politics and was beginning to transform the

52 Associate Professor Ian Copland, Submission no. 4, vol. 1, p. 17. See also Sanaka Weeraratna, Submission no. 8, vol. 1, pp. 45–6; The Australian Greens, Submission no. 15, vol. 1, pp. 158–59 and statement by Dr Samina Yasmeen, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 1998, p. 174.

53 Submission no. 10, vol. 1, p. 57.

54 *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 80. See also evidence by Dr Roderic Pitty, *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 1998, pp. 262–64.

55 *Committee Hansard*, 20 July 1998, p. 80. pp.79, 80.

56 Submission no. 9, vol. 1, p.51.

57 Richard Leaver, Submission no. 12, vol. 1, p. 119.

character of Indian society. They saw the BJP as the catalyst that propelled the decision to conduct the nuclear tests. Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, who assert that the timing of the tests was determined solely by the fact that the BJP-led coalition took power six weeks before the event, wrote:

India's nuclearization reflects the belief of the BJP-RSS as well as growing sections of the Indian elite that nuclear weapons constitute a shortcut to establishing the country's stature as a major actor—in Prime Minister's Atal Bihari Vajpayee's words, the nuclear tests 'show our strength and silence our enemies'.

The near-hysterical adulation this act initially drew cannot be properly understood without recognizing that the groundwork was laid through the growing acceptance of the way in which the BJP has transformed the discourse of Indian nationalism. Despite resistance from the left and the center, it is the right's version of the 'cultural' essence of India, of national security, of national 'greatness' that are setting the direction of Indian politics, both external and internal.⁵⁸

4.43 The BJP clearly sought to tap this deep current of national pride. It saw the political advantages to be gained from building on and further invigorating strong nationalistic sentiments. The party promoted the call of Hindutva which is a plea for national greatness. According to the BJP, Hindutva '...is a call to all Indians to their highest capabilities'.⁵⁹

4.44 To stir nationalistic fervour, the BJP drew on the assumption that the possession of nuclear weapons would bring national strength and greatness. In outlining its policy on major issues, Drs Krishna Bhatta and Mahesh Mehta maintained that they believed in making India strong and able to maintain peace in the region. They noted that with China and Pakistan possessing nuclear capabilities, then India must also have nuclear weapons.⁶⁰

4.45 A number of witnesses before the Committee supported the view that the accession of the BJP to government was a significant factor precipitating the nuclear tests. They believed that the BJP saw the demonstration of India's nuclear capability as politically advantageous, and as a means of generating and galvanising public support.

4.46 DFAT and Defence clearly identified domestic political considerations as an important force behind India's decision to go nuclear. They stated:

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition government was seeking to consolidate its hold on power. It had been in office for less than two months

58 Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, 'A Very Political Bomb', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *ibid.*

59 M.V. Kamath, 'Give Us This Day Our Sense of Mission', BJP, April 1996, *BJP Homepage*, *ibid.*

60 'Nuclear Issue', *Policy on Major Issues*, BJP, *ibid.*

and comprised a coalition of eighteen constituent elements with internal divisions and every prospect of infighting. The BJP apparently concluded that it could gain electoral support and a consolidation of the coalition, as a result of its decision to test. As popular support for the tests subsequently demonstrated, it may have been correct in this, at least in the short term.⁶¹

4.47 Professor Copland maintained that the BJP-led coalition, holding a majority in parliament of just ten seats, was conscious of its vulnerability. It ‘saw the tests as an easy way of winning mass support...more especially it wanted to shore up its core constituency who were getting restless following the BJP’s dropping of other core planks’.⁶²

4.48 Supporting this argument, Dr Yasmeeen maintained that the BJP coalition was not expected to stay in power for longer than a few weeks. She suggested that the Indian Prime Minister ‘may have exercised the option to test nuclear weapons in order to establish his government’s credibility as a “good and strong” representative of Indian people’.⁶³

4.49 Not all agree that the BJP acted for purely domestic political gain. Dr Kenneth McPherson rejected the notion put forward by a number of commentators that the Indian bomb was ‘a child of the recently elected right wing BJP government and was paraded as evidence of India’s resurgent Hindu nationalism’.⁶⁴ He suggested, rather, that the nuclear bomb had wide bipartisan support.⁶⁵ Although he acknowledged that the BJP were prepared to take the ultimate step to resume nuclear testing he noted that the nuclear program was an evolutionary process.⁶⁶ He referred to a study that had shown that there existed in India overwhelming support for the possession of nuclear capability two years before the election of the BJP.⁶⁷

4.50 The BJP itself denies that its actions were politically motivated. Its general secretary, Mr Venkaiah Naidu, refuted suggestions that the timing of the tests was influenced by party political considerations by pointing out that the BJP had always advocated making a bomb and that this was stated in the party’s manifesto and incorporated in the National Agenda of Governance of the government. He asserted that ‘We would not have undertaken the nuclear tests for partisan political purposes. It was part of our known programme and there is no question of using this for electoral gain.’⁶⁸

61 Submission no. 33, vol. 3, p. 9.

62 Submission no. 4, vol. 1, p. 18. See also Harun Rashid, Submission no. 10, vol. 1, p. 57.

63 Submission no. 30, vol. 2, p. 138.

64 Submission no. 5, vol. 1, p. 24.

65 *ibid.*

66 *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 1998, p. 218.

67 *Committee Hansard*, 22 July 1998, p. 219; Submission no. 5, vol. 1, p. 24.

68 *The Hindu*, ‘BJP Denies Political Angle to Tests’, 14 May 1998, p. 11.

4.51 Indeed, India had been teetering on the threshold of going nuclear for many years. The former Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Dr Raja Ramanna's recent comments indicate that the preparations for the tests would have started many months previous to the tests.⁶⁹ A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Director-General of the Defence Research and Development Organisation, explained that the process of nuclear weaponisation involves many stages. He stated that India's five tests marked the culmination of many steps; that before the tests there were simulation, design, verification and many laboratory experiments.⁷⁰

4.52 Undoubtedly there were strong domestic political motives for India to declare its nuclear weapons status—the BJP clearly thought that it would be a politically wise move. But other factors such as national security and the desire for recognition as a world force came into play and indeed fed into one another. Opinions differ as to which factor should be given greater weight. Nevertheless, in seeking solutions to the issue of the nuclear tests, all three factors should be taken into consideration, especially India's security concerns and its need to be seen as an important and valued member of the international community.

International Reactions to India's Nuclear Tests

4.53 Generally countries throughout the world condemned the tests. Some focused narrowly on India and others looked more broadly at global disarmament; some imposed sanctions, others simply urged restraint. The following selection of countries and their reactions to India's nuclear tests provides an indication of the range of responses at the bilateral and multilateral level.

Pakistan

4.54 Pakistan's reaction to India's nuclear tests was immediate, strong and unequivocal. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan stated that the resumption of nuclear testing by India was not a surprise, that for the past twenty-four years Pakistan had consistently drawn the attention of the international community to India's nuclear aspirations. He maintained that India had 'become a nuclear weapon state, openly for the first time. India has owned up. India has bared its nuclear fangs and claws'. In turning to Pakistan's situation, he asserted that: 'We have made it absolutely clear in the past that any step of nuclear escalation by India will find a matching response from Pakistan. We stand by that commitment'. Finally, with unmistakable resolve, he went on to say:

I wish to assure the nation that Pakistan has the technical capability to respond to any threats to its security. The ideological and geographical frontiers of Pakistan, are by the grace of Almighty Allah secure and impregnable. Pakistan will take all appropriate steps which are within its

69 Anand Parthasarathy, 'For A Weapons Delivery System', *Frontline*, vol. 15, no. 12, 6–19 June 1998.

70 Interview with A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, *Frontline*, vol. 15, no. 19, 12–25 September 1998.

sovereign right of self-defence. No outside pressure will deflect us from pursuing the path of self-reliance. We alone will determine what is essential for our security.⁷¹

4.55 The Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif made it clear that Pakistan saw India's actions as directed unequivocally at them. He wrote to leaders of the G8 countries telling them that India's nuclear testing 'of a whole range of weaponry, including systems which are Pakistan specific, has multiplied the immediacy and the magnitude of threat to our security'. He stated that the 'BJP government has already made its aggressive designs against Pakistan a fundamental article of its policy agenda...in the face of these ominous developments which pose an immediate threat to our security, we cannot be expected to remain complacent'.⁷²

4.56 The overriding message that Pakistan sent to the international community was of a dangerously changed security landscape in South Asia and of its rock-solid commitment to ensure Pakistan's safety.⁷³

4.57 On 23 May, Nawaz Sharif explained further that 'No amount of condemnation or sanctions have changed the immediacy or magnitude of the threat to us. Practically sanctions mean little and change nothing. The reality on the ground remains.' The Prime Minister went on to say that the whole nation had shown a sober and mature approach to developments in the region. He reiterated:

We have not taken any action in haste. We have not behaved in a tit-for-tat manner. We have not let any madness engulf us. Whatever decision we will eventually take it will be in our supreme national interest.⁷⁴

Clearly, the Pakistani government had put India and the rest of the world on notice that they would not, under any circumstances, allow their country to be put at risk.

United States of America

4.58 The US responded promptly to the Indian tests. President Clinton expressed deep disappointment at the nuclear explosions, threatened to punish India for its underground testing, and urged India's neighbours to refrain from taking the nuclear route. On 12 May, he made the following statement:

71 Statement by the Foreign Minister of Pakistan in the Senate of Pakistan, 11 May 1998 and Opening Remarks made on 12 May 1998 by the Foreign Minister in the Senate of Pakistan on India's nuclear test.

72 The text of this letter was reproduced in *Dawn*, 17 May 1998.

73 A Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram in the UN Conference on Disarmament, 14 May 1998 underscored this message. On 14 May he told the UN Conference on Disarmament that the series of nuclear tests conducted by India had significantly altered the strategic and security equation in the region and that they presented a 'direct and most serious challenge to Pakistan's security'. Although noting that Pakistan had consistently acted as a responsible member of the international community and never resorted to adventurism and provocation, he insisted that Pakistan alone would decide on and take the measures required to guarantee its security.

74 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's statement on the Indian nuclear tests, Press Conference, 23 May 1998.

This action by India not only threatens the stability of the region, it directly challenges the firm international consensus to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. I call on India to announce that it will conduct no further tests, and that it will sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty now and without conditions. I also urge India's neighbours not to follow suit—not to follow down the path of a dangerous arms race...our laws have very stringent provisions, signed into law by me in 1994, in response to nuclear tests by non-nuclear weapons states. And I intend to implement them fully.⁷⁵

4.59 President Clinton invoked the relevant legislation almost immediately. In a memorandum to the Secretary of State dated 13 May he announced:

In accordance with section 102(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, I hereby determine that India, a non-nuclear-weapon state, detonated a nuclear explosion device on May 11, 1998. The relevant agencies and instrumentalities of the United States Government are hereby directed to take the necessary actions to impose the sanctions described in section 102(b)(2) of that Act.⁷⁶

4.60 The sanctions imposed and required by Section 102 of the Arms Export Control Act, otherwise known as the Glenn Amendment, are as follows:

- termination of assistance under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, except for humanitarian assistance for food or other agricultural commodities;
- termination of sales of defence articles, defence services and construction services under the Arms Export Control Act, and termination of licenses for the export of any item on the United States munitions list;
- termination of all foreign military financing under the Arms Export Control Act;
- denial of any credit, credit guarantees, or other financial assistance by any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government;
- opposition to the extension of any loan for financial or technical assistance by any international financial institution;
- prohibition on United States banks making any loan or providing any credit to the Government of India, except for the purpose of purchasing food or agricultural commodities; and

75 Letter dated 14 May from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the Conference on Disarmament transmitting remarks by President Clinton at a Press conference on 12 May concerning Indian nuclear testing, CD/1505, 14 May 1998.

76 Public Diplomacy Query, Text: Clinton's order to impose sanctions on India is issued 13 May 1998.

- prohibition on the export of specific goods and technology subject to export licensing by the Commerce Department.⁷⁷

4.61 Finally, a similar determination under section 2(b)(4) of the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945 directed that ‘the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank may not give approval to guarantee, insure, or extend credit, or participate in the extension of credit in support of United States exports to India’.⁷⁸

4.62 In summary, according to State Department spokesman, Mr James Rubin, the sanctions were ‘going to involve very stiff penalties on the Government of India, including development assistance, military sales and exchanges, trade and dual-use technology, US loan guarantees’. He explained further:

The requirement for the United States to oppose loans and assistance in the international financial institutions could potentially cost India billions of dollars in desperately needed financing for infrastructure and other projects. The prohibition on loans by US banks to the government of India and on Ex-Im and OPIC activities could cost hundreds of millions of dollars, affect projects already approved and could cause major US companies and financial institutions to rethink entirely their presence and operations in India.⁷⁹

4.63 The US administration also took steps to dissuade Pakistan from retaliating in response to India’s tests. President Clinton spoke directly to the Pakistan Prime Minister and decided to send a mission to Pakistan, headed by Deputy Secretary Talbott and General Zinni, the Commander in Chief of the regional command. Mr Rubin explained that the mission would work closely with the Pakistani Government to try to ensure that ‘the actions by the Indian government does not spawn a nuclear arms race in South Asia and that all steps we can take are taken to encourage restraint and to try to stabilize what could be an increasingly dangerous situation’.⁸⁰

Japan

4.64 Japan, one of the largest bilateral donors of economic assistance to India, denounced the tests and announced it would freeze all grant assistance to India with the exception of those programmes of an emergency or humanitarian nature, and grassroots grant assistance. The Japanese Government indicated that it would inform the World Bank of its intention to withdraw Japan’s offer to host the India Development Bank chairmanship.⁸¹

77 Letter dated 14 May from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the Conference on Disarmament transmitting...the text of a statement by the White House Press Secretary on 13 May concerning India sanctions, CD/1505, 14 May 1998.

78 *ibid.*

79 Transcript: State Department Noon Briefing, State Department Spokesman James Rubin, 13 May 1998.

80 *ibid.*

81 Press Conference by the Press Secretary, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 15 May 1998.

4.65 On learning of India's second tests, Japan took additional measures which included freezing yen-loan to India for new projects and examining carefully the loans extended to India by international financial institutions. Japan also temporarily recalled its ambassador to discuss the matter.

4.66 Responding to Pakistan, Japan sent a special envoy to Islamabad with a letter from Prime Minister Hashimoto urging restraint. The Prime Minister also phoned Prime Minister Sharif to encourage him to shun the nuclear weapon option. Japan urged Pakistan 'to stop its nuclear development and tests, and to become party to the CTBT and the NPT, while calling on the international community to unite in addressing the situation of nuclear proliferation'.⁸²

China

4.67 China strongly condemned and expressed shock at the nuclear tests. It argued that the Indian Government had undermined the international effort to ban nuclear tests in defiance of universal condemnation so as to obtain hegemony in South Asia and had triggered off a nuclear arms race in the region. China refuted outright India's assertion that China posed a nuclear threat to India, arguing that: 'this gratuitous accusation by India against China is solely for the purpose of finding an excuse for the development of its nuclear weapons'.⁸³

United Kingdom

4.68 Mr Derek Fatchett, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, summoned the Indian High Commissioner to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to convey the Government's shock and dismay at the Indian tests. The British High Commissioner was recalled from Delhi for consultation on how Britain and Europe could most effectively convey to India their fears for the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and for the stability of the South Asia region. The Foreign Secretary, Mr Robin Cook, told parliament that the tests undermined the efforts of the international community to prevent nuclear proliferation and that Britain would seek to co-ordinate its response with that of its major international partners at the next G-8 Summit Meeting to be held the following day. He also informed parliament that Britain was urging Pakistani leaders to show restraint 'at what we acknowledge is a difficult time for them'.⁸⁴

82 Comments by the Chief Cabinet Secretary on Measures in Response to the Second Nuclear Testing conducted by India; and Comments by the Chief Secretary on the Nuclear Testing conducted by Pakistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 14 May and 28 May 1998; Press Conference by the Press Secretary, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 15 May 1998 and 19 May 1998.

83 Letter dated 15 May 1998 from the Permanent Representative of China to the Conference on Disarmament ...transmitting the text of the statement issued on 14 May 1998 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China concerning India's nuclear tests, CD/1508.

84 *Indian Nuclear Tests, Foreign & Commonwealth Office News*, 14 May 1998.
Internet site: <http://www.fco.gov.UK/news/newstext.asp?883>.

Russia

4.69 The Russian Foreign Ministry announced that Russia viewed the nuclear tests with alarm and concern and denounced the tests as unacceptable. It added that as a close friend of India, Russia regretted India's actions but would not support sanctions against that country. The Foreign Ministry called on India to reverse its nuclear policy and to adhere to the Non Proliferation Treaty and the CTBT.⁸⁵

Canada

4.70 Canada also promptly responded to the tests by expressing its deep concern and disappointment with India's actions. It took a two-pronged approach in addressing the problem of both non-proliferation and of disarmament. It acknowledged the risk of India escaping significant real censure or even gaining nuclear-weapon state status. Mr Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated: 'any widespread endorsement of *de facto* or *de jure* recognition that the five nuclear-weapons States of the Non Proliferation Treaty can become six, or seven or eight, will inevitably lead to pressures for further expansion of this club'. He maintained that Canada's actions in response to India's tests were intended to demonstrate its unwillingness to accept such an outcome. Canada took the following steps:

- recalled its High Commissioner;
- cancelled CIDA consultations, trade policy talks and the Joint Ministerial Committee;
- banned all military exports to India;
- opposed non-humanitarian loans to India by the World Bank;
- stopped non-humanitarian Canadian development assistance to India; and
- decided to offer Pakistan those aid funds withheld from India, should Pakistan agree to refrain from testing.⁸⁶

4.71 In addressing disarmament, Mr Axworthy announced that Canada would continue to pursue its disarmament agenda with vigour. He conceded that little progress had been made in turning the bilateral START process into reality, pointing out that the Russian Duma had refused to consider early ratification of the START II agreement.

85 Dr Scott Parrish, 'Russia Reaction to the Indian Nuclear Tests', 13 May 1998, Centre for Non Proliferation Studies. Internet site: <http://cns.miis.edu/russia.html> (7 September 1998)

86 Notes for a Statement by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 'India's Nuclear Testing: Implications for Nuclear Disarmament and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Regime', 26 May 1998. *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* (Canada) Internet site: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/english/news/statements/98%5Fstate/98%5F040e.htm> (14 August 1998)

Sweden

4.72 The Swedish Government expressed its deep dismay at the Indian tests and urged the Indian Government to refrain from any further testing. The Minister for Foreign Affairs called in the Indian Ambassador to make clear Sweden's views. As a country strongly committed to nuclear disarmament, Sweden took the opportunity to express the view that the international community had 'reached a point where new political force is needed in nuclear disarmament work.' The Minister for Foreign Affairs drew attention to the Canberra Commission's proposals and noted they should be considered in depth in international disarmament fora with a view to their early implementation.⁸⁷

Germany

4.73 Germany condemned the tests and was one of the first countries to act against India by freezing fresh development aid to India and cancelling government talks with India on development policy.⁸⁸

Indonesia

4.74 Although Indonesia did not condone India's actions, it took a less condemnatory stand. It also turned the spotlight on the nuclear weapon states and their commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ali Alatas, stated:

Indonesia fully acknowledges the sovereign right of states to determine their own security requirements and the means to ensure them, but as a non-nuclear weapon state, we are of the view that such a security policy should be implemented without recourse to nuclear arms.

It is undeniable, however, that the possession of these weapons by the five nuclear powers has conferred untenable privileges, incompatible with the sovereign equality of all states as enshrined in the UN Charter. As long as these are maintained, there will always be an incentive for the non-nuclear weapon states to acquire nuclear-weapon capability. Hence, we call on the nuclear weapon states to fully implement both the letter and the spirit of agreements relating to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, and on all states to refrain from developing these weapons and thereby facilitate the attainment of the ultimate goal of the elimination of all nuclear weapons.⁸⁹

87 Address by the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Lena Hjelm-Wallen, at the seminar, 'Nuclear Arms - Phased Out or Back Again', Stockholm, 12 May 1998. Internet site: <http://www.ud.se/english/press/speformi/980512-0.htm> (14 August 1998)

88 The *Hindu*, 'PM Writes to Western Leaders on Nuclear Tests', 13 May 1998, p. 1.

89 Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ali Alatas, at the Ministerial Meeting of the Non Aligned Movement on India's Recent Nuclear Tests, Coordinating Bureau, Cartagena, 19 May 1998. Internet site: <http://www.dfa-deplu.go.id/english2/Nuklir-India.htm> (14 August 1998)

Saudi Arabia

4.75 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also expressed concern about India's tests and called for the complete prohibition of the deployment of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. It urged all members of the international community to refrain from conducting tests, which 'threaten all of mankind'.⁹⁰

Sri Lanka

4.76 After a noticeable delay, Sri Lanka finally responded officially to the tests. It noted with deep concern the missile and nuclear testings that had taken place in the South Asian region over the past few months. As with Indonesia it wanted to broaden the context of the debate to include global disarmament. A statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained:

Sri Lanka believes that the entire international community should continue with efforts to achieve global disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons without which peace and international security will continue to be in constant jeopardy.⁹¹

4.77 Foreign Minister Kadirgamar stated that Sri Lanka was not opposed to anybody becoming a nuclear power and did not think the nuclear club should be closed to only five members but rather there was the need for total global nuclear disarmament. In turning to sanctions, he said 'the application of sanctions includes a very judgemental decision, a sort of punishment. World affairs cannot be conducted on that basis because very few countries can afford to take a high moral ground on anything at all'. He added that the surrounding countries 'hoped that the tensions can be contained in whatever way possible as between two mature countries.'⁹²

Multilateral

UN Secretary-General

4.78 On 11 May, a spokesman on behalf of the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed deep regret that India had conducted three underground nuclear tests and called on all states for maximum restraint with a view to facilitating nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.⁹³

90 Council of Ministers Meeting, SPA:18 May 1998. Internet site: <http://www.saudi.net/press-release/98-spo/98-05-3.html>

91 *Sri Lanka News Update*, 15 May 1998. Internet site: http://lanka.net/lankaupdate/15_may-98.html (4 September 1998)

92 *ibid.*

93 Press Release SG/SM/6555. *FAS (Federation of American Scientists) News*. Internet site: <http://www.fas.org/news/india/1998/03/19980311-sgsm6333.html>

UN Security Council

4.79 Soon after India's second set of tests, the President of the Security Council issued a statement which strongly deplored India's actions. In part his statement read:

The Council strongly urges India to refrain from any further tests. It is of the view that such testing is contrary to the de facto moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and to global efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

The Council also expressed its concern at the effects of this development on peace and stability in the region.⁹⁴

Conference on Disarmament

4.80 The Conference on Disarmament resumed its 1998 session on 14 May amid a storm of global protest about the nuclear explosions. Over thirty countries took the floor to express their regret over India's tests.

G-8

4.81 On 17 May, the leaders of the G-8 countries—the US, the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia—agreed to a statement which condemned the nuclear tests. They expressed their grave concern about the increased risk of nuclear and missile proliferation in South Asia and elsewhere and urged India and other states in the region to refrain from further tests and the deployment of nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles. The G-8 leaders called upon India to rejoin the mainstream of international opinion; to adhere unconditionally to the NPT and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; and to enter into negotiations on a global treaty to stop the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.⁹⁵ The Group failed to take a collective stand on the imposition of sanctions and it was left to individual G8 members to decide what specific measures they would take.⁹⁶

Summary

4.82 The reactions of individual countries and of countries which came together in international fora covered much common ground. Overwhelmingly, the international community expressed grave concern over the tests and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Many countries called on India to refrain from further tests, some went further urging it to adhere to the NPT and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Other countries looked to the broader problem of nuclear proliferation and wanted greater commitment from the nuclear weapons states and the international community as a whole toward the elimination of all nuclear weapons. The approach toward the

94 Press Release SC6517, 14 May 1998, *FAS News*. (3 September 1998)

95 Text: G-8 Statement on Indian Nuclear Tests, 17 May 1998, USIS Washington file. *FAS News* (3 September 1998)

96 See Thomas Abraham, 'A Divided G-8, Cover Story, *Frontline*, vol.15, no.11, 23May–5 June 1998.

imposition of economic sanctions varied from approval through to outright disapproval.

4.83 In turning to Pakistan, the international community was aware of the pressure on that nation to match India's show of nuclear force. Some countries made direct representation to the Pakistani Government to dissuade the country from retaliating. Countries such as Canada offered the carrot of additional aid as an incentive for Pakistan to refrain from conducting nuclear tests. Others reminded Pakistanis of the heavy stick of economic sanctions that awaited them should they decide to explode their own nuclear weapons.