ABSTRACT: Through the constructivist perspective, this paper explores the transformation of India’s nuclear identity from an unrecognized nuclear weapon power to a ‘de-facto nuclear power’ in the emerging international nuclear order. From a nuclear abstainer to a bystander and finally as a ‘de facto nuclear weapon state’, India has put forth its case as a unique and exceptional nuclear power on grounds of its unblemished international credentials as a responsible power, in opposition to other countries like Pakistan, Iran and North Korea with similar nuclear ambitions. This paper investigates the reasons behind international community’s gradual acceptance of India’s nuclear weapons capabilities and nuclear identity, particularly after the Indo-U.S. Nuclear Deal.

In this paper, the central concept of analysis is the inter-subjective nature of identity in the nuclear arena. India’s nuclear behaviour has been discursively constituted by India through evolving images of the ‘self’ and the ‘other.’ India’s sudden heightened global status is not solely the consequence of its 1998 nuclear tests but a calibrated projection as a responsible stakeholder in other spheres such as economic potential, market prospects, democratic credentials and so on. By examining India’s nuclear discourse this paper contends that India has used its material and discursive power in presenting a striking image as a responsible nuclear weapon power (though not yet a legal nuclear weapon state as per the NPT). By historicising India’s nuclear trajectory through an inter-subjective analysis of identities, this paper moves a step ahead in providing a theoretical interpretation of state actions and nuclear identity construction.

Keywords: Nuclear identity; India; Constructivism; International Stakeholder

INTRODUCTION

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- The views expressed are personal.
The very nature of international system makes the possession of nuclear capabilities a reasonable choice for some states; particularly those that can afford to have them. However, the destructive nature of nuclear weapons makes their possession problematic (Basrur 2009: 2). States have accordingly craved for as well as shunned nuclear weapons. Despite the fact that nuclear weapons have been not used since the bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, their potential use has not been ruled out. Precisely, due to this reason nuclear issue continues to occupy an important space in theoretical discussions of international politics.

As regards India, the last six decades have witnessed a transformation in India’s nuclear identity, from an unrecognized nuclear weapon state in 1974 to a target of international sanctions since then and particularly after the 1998 tests, and then to a de facto nuclear weapon power since 2005. India is often presented as a unique and exceptional case, as opposed to Iran, Pakistan, and North Korea with similar nuclear ambitions that have been labelled as ‘rogue states’. India’s nuclear behaviour represents a puzzle from the point of view of its own history and for IR theories. A plethora of theoretical perspectives have tried to explain India’s path towards nuclearization. Mostly, academicians and policy makers have understood and examined states nuclear behaviour through the realist framework. The role of identity in shaping a state’s behaviour, in general and nuclear behaviour in particular has been largely missing.

This paper explores the reasons behind international community’s gradual acceptance of India’s nuclear weapons capabilities and nuclear identity. Through the constructivist lens, the prime objective of this paper is to delineate the material and discursive power used by India in putting forth its case as a responsible nuclear power (though not yet a legal nuclear weapon state as per the NPT) \(^1\). To attain these objectives, the study is organised into three parts. The first part spells out the theoretical perspective within which transformation of India’s nuclear identity is explored. The broad configuration within which the self-identity of India is investigated is based on the notion

\(^1\) As per Article IX of the NPT, “a nuclear-weapon State is one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967.” Going by this definition, India falls outside the category of nuclear weapon state.
of identity as postulated by two prominent constructivist scholars Alexander Wendt and Ted Hopf. The second part provides a brief sketch of India’s nuclear journey since independence. The third section explores the various materialist and ideational discourses employed by India to portray itself as a responsible power with a growing stake in international politics.

I

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND NUCLEAR IDENTITY

Nuclear weapons are seen as serving important symbolic functions; both shaping and reflecting a state's identity. The potency of the nuclear weapons lies in its close nexus with the notion of national interests. In the constructivist perspective, it is not the weapons that matter but the perception of a state towards the state possessing nuclear weapons that counts.

The root of constructivism is generally traced to the third debate in IR between the rationalists and the critical theorists that dominated the discipline throughout the 1980s. The collapse of the Cold War stimulated interest in constructivist analysis of world politics. Both realism and liberalism failed to explain the reasons for the end of the Cold war and thus the limitations of these dominant approaches to IR were exposed. Nicholas Onuf was the first to introduce constructivism into the IR theory debates in 1989 in his book World of Our Making (Weber 2001:81). Many scholars like Alexander Wendt, John Ruggie, Peter Katzenstein, Martha Finnermore, Ted Hopf and others have contributed to the evolution of the Constructivist tradition in IR.²

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Constructivism offers alternative understandings of a number of central themes in International Relations theory such as the meaning of anarchy, relationship between state identity and interest, elaboration on power constitution, relationship between structures and agent and so on (Hopf 1998: 172?). This paper does not intend to dwell upon the theoretical underpinnings of constructivism, rather it attempts to analyse the latter’s emphasis on social construction of identity and interests in relations to India nuclear behaviour.

The Constructivist research agenda incorporates an understanding of how identities are constructed and the role of discursive and materialist power in their reproduction. Identities provide a state with a perception about other states’ motives, interests, role and actions. The two broad variants of constructivism- conventional and critical- understand identities differently. Conventional constructivists wish “to discover identities and their associated reproductive social practices”, and then offer an account of how those identities imply certain action. But critical constructivists “explode the myths associated with identity formation” (Hopf 1998: 184-85). Conventional constructivism accepts the existence of identities and then tries to understand its reproduction and effects. The relation between structures and agent is not one-way but two ways: both construct each other.

As identity is the main concept used in this study, it is important to understand its meaning. The identity of a state broadly means a set of preferences driving state actions. In this study, the word is used in the sense used by Alexander Wendt. Identities has been defined by Alexander Wendt:

“Actors acquire identities-relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self-by participating in such collective meanings.23 Identities are inherently relational: "Identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially constructed world.” (Wendt 1992: 397)

It should be noted that the focus on identity does not reflect a lack of recognition for other elements in the constructivist approach, such as norms, culture, and institutions. In so far as identities are the most proximate causes of choices, preferences and action, I concentrate on them. For Wendt, identities and interests of an actor are inter-subjectively
constituted. It is this understanding of identity that is employed in understanding India’s transformation of nuclear identity. Identity is ‘mutually constructed’ and involves ‘evolving images of self and the other’ (Katzenstein 1996: 59).

II

INDIA’S NUCLEAR JOURNEY

Unlike other nuclear weapons state, India started its nuclear programme not for military purposes, but for peaceful purpose. The debates and decisions pertaining to India's nuclear weapons program can be divided into four distinct phases, each of which marked a policy of establishing a India’s self identity vis-à-vis the world. The first phase began with the creation of India's Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in 1948; the Chinese nuclear test in 1964 marked the beginning of the second phase; the third comprised the build up and execution of India's first nuclear test in 1974 and the policy of nuclear ambiguity; the fourth began in the aftermath of the 1998 tests and the signing of the Indo-US Nuclear Deal which marked the acme of India’s diplomatic clout and also the transformation in its nuclear identity.

The process of making nuclear choice arose from India’s own understanding of itself and the world order. In the initial phases, Indian nuclear programme was conceived as an instrument of economic development. Atomic science and development assumed a significant role in the technological development and the modernization of the country. Then India pursued the policy of keeping ‘nuclear option open’ by not being a party to the NPT. The overt nuclearisation of India in 1998 does not mark a shift in India’s nuclear ambitions: it merely led to exercise of the reserved option.

Astonishing its own people and the international community, India conducted three nuclear tests on May 11, followed by two more tests, two days later. Pakistan followed suit and conducted five nuclear tests at Chaigai Hills on May 28. The tests undermined the NPT just when it appeared to be in the process of consolidation. Within some time, powers of the world, including United States, France, Russia stated backdoor engagement with India. The most prominent being the Strobe-Talbott dialogue that
started within a month of the nuclear tests. Subsequent to the test, the National Advisory Board released a the “Draft Report of National Security Advisory Board on Indian Nuclear Doctrine” which outlined key elements of India’s nuclear doctrine such as minimum deterrence, no-first use, promoting global nuclear disarmament, voluntary moratorium on nuclear tests etc.

There exists a substantial literature, tracing the motivational factors and driving forces of Indian nuclear programme. In accordance with Chakma’s (2004) categorisation, there are four explanations for a states process of nuclearisation, namely security concerns, technological and scientific momentum, domestic considerations, national prestige and status.

Various scholars have underscored the security model as the most pervasive reason for India’s nuclear tests in 1998. Bhumitra Chakma (2004) posits that India’s choice to pursue a nuclear weapons strategy “primarily relates to its perception that its security as a state was best preserved by doing so in a strategic environment dominated by an intractable security dilemma involving itself, China and increasingly after 1974, Pakistan” (Chakma 2004: 12). Ganguly depicts India's pathway to overt nuclear weapons as a zigzag response to external threats and to the failure of the big powers to provide India with nuclear security (Ganguly1999: 150). Generally, there are three first image explanations offered to highlight the role of the international system in compelling India to go nuclear in 1998. They were — increasing international pressure after the indefinite extension of the NPT and signing of the CTBT in 1998, collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the immediate regional security environment

Scholars like Itty Abraham, M.V.Ramanna, Srirupa Roy and others advanced a techno-centric view when they contend that Indian nuclear tests were a by-product of the scientific and technological momentum created by nuclear research and development programme. India’s quest for nuclear weapons were a ‘postcolonial state’s project of modernity’ and also highlights the secretive nature of the Indian nuclear establishment (Abraham 1998: 26). Analysing 705 nuclear related editorials and opinion pieces published in various English newspapers, Karsten Fray shows that the strategic community comprising of the retired military officials, nuclear scientists and civilian
strategists were agents in the creation of public opinion on the nuclear question (Fray 2006: 23)

The domestic model attributes India’s nuclear tests to the aggressive political ideology of BJP. For Kanti Bajpai (2009) it was the ideological inclination of the BJP and the need for the then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to consolidate his power in the coalition government that pushed India towards nuclear acquisition.

For others, the quest for greater international status propelled India towards overt nuclearization. There is an “enduring and deep-rooted aspiration” of India for a great power status and the possession of a nuclear capability is regarded as a “prerequisite for achieving that status” (Nayar and Paul 2003:3). K.Subrahmanyam has noted, “Nuclear weapons are not military weapons. Their logic is that of international politics and it is logic of global nuclear order… India wants to be a player in, and not an object of, this global nuclear order.” (Talbott 1999: 116).

Despite the dominance of realist analysis on India’s nuclear trajectory, there have been some works focusing on the creation of India’s nuclear identity through meanings attributed to it. Nizamanni (2003) shows how the nuclear weapons option was gradually converted from a national discourse into a strategic alternative by investing new political meanings to it. From a critical constructivist perspective, Runa Das (2009) in her studies highlight a discursive linkage between political leaders’ ideology, articulations of statist identities, and representations of insecurities in India’s nuclearisation policies. Fray (2007) writes that the parameters of India’s nuclear choice was set by a limited number of strategic thinkers and opinion leaders who created a social reality of its own, in which nuclear weapons became symbols of the idea the strategists have about what India stands for in the world.

There is a need to go beyond the security and strategic oriented perspectives and understand how India’s nuclear discourses have transformed with changing world politics, with a constant nuclear identity of recognition as a nuclear weapon power. It should be noted that this study does not dismisses the realist/liberal perspectives of security, instead it contends that a complete understanding of India’s nuclear picture is not possible without taking note of the constructivist analysis. By historicizing India’s
nuclear trajectory, the paper attempts to fill in a critical gap in the study of India’s nuclear behaviour by understanding the way in which India has sought to transform its nuclear identity through its responsible behaviour.

Since independence, Indian leaders maintained a normative repugnance to military use of nuclear weapons and giving a clarion call for global nuclear disarmament at various international forums. During most of India’s post-independence period the nuclear question was viewed as a taboo trade-off between its moral integrity as a non-nuclear weapons state on the one hand, and the pursuit of power politics on the other. But during the 1980s and 1990s, the choice was gradually reframed as a tragic trade-off: the nuclear taboo was broken for the sake of moral values attributed to the possession of nuclear weapons, above all the quest for an international nuclear order both just and equity-based (Fray 2007: 381).

The objective of India’s nuclear diplomacy has radically transformed after the tests. Until 11 May, the purpose was to create and sustain the option to make nuclear weapons for peaceful purposes. Since Pokhran II, the diplomatic task has been to defend India’s nuclear deterrent, reduce the political and economic fallout of exercising India’s nuclear option, and eventually gain international acceptance of its new status” (Nayar and Paul 2003: 225). There are various factors which have facilitated India’s nuclear recognition such as India’s strategic and economic potential, evident in its assertive business community and a world-class culture, along with the potential role as a balancer to rising China, call for democracy promotion, a victim of terrorism, an upholder of anti-proliferation, and threat from neighbouring states.

III

PROJECTION OF A NUCLEAR IDENTITY

In the first two decades after independence, Indian leaders maintained a strong moral and ethical repugnance against the acquisition of nuclear weapons. However, this aversion gradually weakened in the 1980’s, and it finally reversed into a pro-bomb attitude that was widely shared by all of Indian society in the late 1990’s. Today, nuclear
weapons are considered an indispensable element of India’s national identity.

Through a melange of factors, India has been able to depict itself in front of the international community as a responsible international stakeholder with a legitimate nuclear status. The signing of the Indo-US nuclear deal in 2008 “represented the fruit of many years of careful Indian diplomacy aimed at establishing its identity as a responsible possessor of nuclear weapons and forging a closer alliance with the US” (Sashikumar 2007: 825). While the nuclear deal, like most events were the product of a convergence of circumstances (such as the ideological orientation of the administration in the White House and the recent revelations about nuclear transfers out of Pakistan), the main enabling condition was India's strategy of constituting itself as a responsible nuclear power.

**Responsible Nuclear Power**

India has sought legitimisation of its nuclear status by projection of its unblemished record on non-proliferation of nuclear technology, peaceful use of nuclear energy, defensive posture of its nuclear doctrine and its conspicuous call of global nuclear disarmament. Despite being a rank outsider to the NPT, India has exhibited its adherence to the non-proliferation norms by signing the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963, actively participating in the various Conferences on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. As O’Hagan noted, “Discourses of identity play an important role in framing and constituting the political; they not only help to constitute actors but also establish what is possible, what is legitimate and what is desirable” (Commuri 2010: 11). This aspect of possibility, legitimacy and desirability is profoundly discerned in India’s nuclear behaviour.

The Indian government has long described the nation as having an “exemplary non-proliferation record” and one that supports the “highest non proliferation standards and goals” despite not being a member of the treaties and agreements that constitute the non-proliferation regime (Dormandy 2007: 121).

From the early days of independence, Indian leaders, especially Jawaharlal Nehru, took a very public and very vocal stand against nuclear weapons. But Nehru, a modernist,
was also convinced that nuclear technology had a role to play in national development. To a lesser degree, he also thought that nuclear weapons technology might have a role to play in national defence if efforts at nuclear disarmament should fail. Prime Minister Morarji Desai shut down the weapons program for a time. Even Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee, who ordered the nuclear tests in 1998, was more ambivalent two decades earlier, siding with Desai in voting against restarting the nuclear weapons program in 1979. (Rajagopalan 2009: 96)

In a Statement on the nuclear tests in Pokhran in Lok Sabha on May 27, 1998, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee declared that,

“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 other 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. Our strengthened capability adds to our sense of responsibility. We do not intend to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country; these are weapons of self-defense, to ensure that India is not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion. We do not intend to engage in an arms race.”

Although the Draft Nuclear Doctrine carved out the broad outlines of India’s nuclear doctrine, the formal doctrine was announced by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CSS) on 4 January, 2003. India’s nuclear doctrine as finally announced in 2003 by and large complied with the draft nuclear doctrine. Thus, through its Nuclear Doctrine India has presented itself as a responsible nuclear weapon state which has declared a policy of no first use and unilateral moratorium on testing and credible minimum deterrence reflecting the defensive posture of India’s nuclear programme.

India’s responsible nuclear behaviour is one of the many factors that have contributed to India’s heightened nuclear status. As George Perkovich rightly notes that “nuclear weapons are not sufficient to make a super power...if this is not, Pakistan too would qualify as a major power, as would Israel and perhaps North Korea” (Perkovich 2003: 129). India’s demonstration of itself as a state with nuclear weapons have been acknowledged by the Indo-US Nuclear deal and subsequent deals with France, Russia, Kazakhstan, Niger, Australia and Japan. However, the nuclear factor is not the sole
propellant behind this recognition. Various other factors like economic, demographic, cultural and diplomacy have reinforced India’s identity as a rising power.

Victim of Terrorism

India has been constantly appealing to the international community about its vulnerability as a target of terrorist activities. The increasing violence in Kashmir due to cross terrorism and also in other parts of the country has claimed numerous innocent lives. Till 2001, terrorism was seen as an internal problem of India. The September 2001 terror attack in New York was a game changer in global geopolitics, and it made the US view India in a new light (Agrawal 2011: 63). After the 9/11 terrorist attack on Pentagon, the US war on terrorism produced greater empathy from United States on India’s concerns about terrorism.

Democratic credentials

India has played up the fact that it is the world’s largest democracy. As the largest democracy in the world, India appears to fit well in America’s push for democracy promotion in Middle East, Africa and China. Despite the fact no obvious link can be established between democratic system and legitimacy of nuclear weapons, the destabilizing tendencies of autocratic regimes in North Korea and Iran furnish such an argument with some basis. This has certainly helped in augmenting India’s nuclear credentials. Extolling the virtues of democracy, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said: “For us, democratic ideal is a heritage of mankind. Those fortunate to enjoy its fruits have a responsibility to share its benefits with others” (Mohan 2010: 109). Again, at a 2007 U.S.-India business conference in Washington, then-Secretary of State Rice laid out this new perspective by saying that:

“We in America look to the rise of India as an opportunity, a chance to work with a great fellow democracy to share not only the benefits of the international system, but indeed, the burdens and the responsibilities of maintaining it, of strengthening it, and defending it. We are eager to continue charting a global partnership with India, one that addresses the global challenges upon which the safety and success of every nation now depends: stemming nuclear proliferation, fighting terrorism, combating disease,
Civilizational and Cultural Connect

India is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguist country. In the recent years, the Indian government has undertaken various efforts to insert ‘culture’ into Indian foreign policy (Wagner 2010: 335). Karan Singh, President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) stated that “soft power is important and the idea behind[…] is to project India as a plural multicultural society and to achieve the goals of political diplomacy” (Shukla 2006: 24). Until 2009, the ICCR has set up 22 cultural centres in 19 countries. Numerous activities ranging from film festivals to book fairs and art events illustrate India’s new endeavours to use soft power in her foreign policy. Moreover, the Indian movie industry- Bollywood-based in Mumbai has carved out prominent presence in disparate markets of West and Central Asia, Southeast Asia, China, Russia, and the Caribbean (Pattnayak 2007: 86).

Strong Indian Diaspora

Indian Diaspora has also palyed a critical role in the project of transformation of India’s nuclear identity. The Indian diaspora has a powerful presence across the globe. The Diaspora, estimated at over 25 million, is spread across more than 200 countries with a high concentration in regions such as the Middle East, the United States of America, Malaysia, South Africa. 3

Commenting on the influence of growing Indian American community, Llyold Rudolph observed, “India has become one of the most effective foreign policy lobbying groups, the US–India Political Action Committee (US-INPAC) and the largest caucus in the US House of Representatives (155 members). Indo-Americans are now visible and effective

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players in US politics and in the making of US foreign policy.” (Rudolph and Rudolph 2006: 2)

Economic Potential

Since independence, India has used the rhetoric of industrial development to garner support for its nuclear programme. The idea that nuclear energy would spur development is still used; only the economic structure has shifted from state directed capital-intensive development to export-oriented growth led by the private sector. Indian economy has been witnessing a robust growth rate of around 7 per cent since past decade. Against this background, India has successfully presented itself as an attractive market for U.S nuclear reactors and other materials. This in turn has again encouraged major powers to endorse India’s nuclear credentials.

India’s Security Environment

India is positioned in a place, where two nuclear-armed neighbours, China and Pakistan, surround it. It has already faced four military conflicts with Pakistan and one with China. India has often used this threatening security environment to justify its possession of nuclear weapons. Indian Defence minister, George Fernandes had once branded China as “potential threat number one” (Fernandes 2008). The China threat as a legitimate strategic rationale for India’s nuclearisation is questionable, China has superior nuclear as well as conventional weapons capabilities vis-à-vis India. The most probable reason could be the fact that USA sees in India a potential balancer to China in Asia. India rise can balance, if not challenge Chinese growing dominance in Asia.

International Institutional Engagement

Not only is India's growth rate soaring, but also it has entered the centre of multilateral diplomacy as a seasoned, accomplished and institutionally engaged player. To the 56 UN Peacekeeping missions established until 2003, India has contributed over 67 000 personnel to 37 missions (Narlikar 2007: 985). Today, India forms a part of the G20
group of finance ministers and central bank governors. Again as part of various regional sub-groupings like BRICS, IBSA, BASIC India is playing a decisive role in climate change negotiations. In 2003 India, Brazil and South Africa established the so-called IBSA initiative to strengthen South–South cooperation and to find common positions in the World Trade Organization (WTO). At the climate summit in Copenhagen in December 2009 India formed together with Brazil, China and South Africa the BASIC group that reached an agreement with the US. India’s strong multilateral engagement is still a good indicator for her soft power approach.

The nuclear choices of states are mostly explained through the realist paradigm of security concerns and liberal account of institutional thrust. However, little attention has been given to the constructivist notion of role of identity in understanding India’s nuclear behaviour. Through the constructivist lens, this paper analysed the meaning attributed to nuclear weapons by India and the range of material and discursive power India has designed to advance that nuclear identity. Constructivism argues that actors in international politics act in accordance with their understanding and interpretation of the world. In this act of understanding and interpretation, their surroundings around them, identities are constructed and give inter-subjective meanings to them. Thus, identities play a key role in determining interests. India’s identity of itself as a dominant actor in international politics has shaped its interests and consequently her behaviour since independence, particularly in the nuclear arena.

As O’ Hagan noted, “Discourses of identity play an important role in framing and constituting the political; they not only help to constitute actors but also establish what is possible, what is legitimate and what is desirable” (Commuri 2010: 11). This aspect of possibility, legitimacy and desirability is profoundly discerned in India’s nuclear behaviour.

What made the international community, which responded negatively in 1998 today consider India as unique case and no longer consider it as target of the non-proliferation regime? It is contended that the calibrated projection of India as a responsible stakeholder has facilitated India’s acceptance as a de facto nuclear weapon power by the global community. Despite being a rank outsider in the non-proliferation
community, in the last many years India has invoked various measures for normative adherence with international non-proliferation norms and rules that have helped project its status as a ‘responsible state.’

The position nations take on nuclear weapons is determined by the idea these nations have about who they are and which role they play in the international arena (Fray 2007:376). The signing of the Indo-US nuclear deal in 2008 “represented the fruit of many years of careful Indian diplomacy aimed at establishing its identity as a responsible possessor of nuclear weapons and forging a closer alliance with the US” (Sashikumar 2007: 825). While the nuclear deal, like most events were the product of a convergence of circumstances (such as the ideological orientation of the administration in the White House and the recent revelations about nuclear transfers out of Pakistan), the main enabling condition was India's strategy of constituting itself as a responsible nuclear power.

As constructivists contend, identity of ‘self’ is incomplete until and unless recognized by the ‘other’. To that extent, India used both materialist as well as ideational powers to get its identity recognized by international community. Through multiple ways — economic, strategic, cultural, diplomatic India has sought acceptance of its nuclear weapons from the global community. In the economic sphere, India has projected itself as a robust with an attractive market and profitable investment destination. Culturally, India has projected its multi-cultural and multi-ethnic ties with other states. Diplomatically, India’s relation with almost all major powers has improved tremendously. The Indo-US Deal of 2008 testifies the transformation of India’s nuclear identity from a hitherto violator of non proliferation regime to a unique exception to it. A state’s identity becomes complete only when the “others” recognise that identity. In order to obtain that recognition, India has practised sundry of discursive and material means.

CONCLUSION

India’s quest for a recognition of its nuclear capabilities as a first step towards projecting its image of a global power validates the basic assumption of this study, that is, identities and interests drive the actions of a state. India’s nuclear identity was not
endogenously given rather it was constructed by investing certain set of preponderant meanings to it. Through a calibrated manner and by using its discursive power, India has achieved the status of a de facto nuclear weapon state despite remaining outside the NPT.

The US–India nuclear deal is a bold recognition by the dominant power of the rising global profile of India and an attempt to carve out a strategic partnership with a nation with which it shares not only a range of significant interests but also a whole range of political and cultural values. More significantly, there is a sense in India that with this agreement the world has finally reconciled itself to India’s status as a nuclear power and a major global player.
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