

## ABSTRACT

While the subjects of nuclear politics and India's nuclear policy in particular have received considerable attention ever since India's tryst with nuclear technology, however relatively few works have approached these issues from a constructivist perspective. This work seeks to examine how a constructivist approach to India's nuclear policy can help deepen our understanding of India's nuclear behaviour and the rationale behind India's overt nuclearisation. This issues are addressed by applying a discourse-based constructivist approach to examine security and threat perceptions along with non security concerns for India's nuclear behaviour that motivated India's path to obtain nuclear capabilities. For this purpose the articulation of security/threat perception is examined emerging from nuclear armed China and Pakistan and at the same time the discriminatory nuclear regime have diminish India's national interest. Moreover India's nuclear discourses have transformed considerably with changing world politics, with a constant nuclear identity of recognition as a nuclear weapon power. It contends that a complete understanding of India's nuclear picture is not possible without considering articulation of threat perceptions since India shares border with nuclear armed countries and the role of interest and identity in portraying its clean non proliferation image which are important components of constructivist approach used in understanding India's nuclear behaviour. State's identity becomes complete only when the "others" recognise that identity. In order to obtain that recognition, India has practiced various discursive and material means. The prolific projection of its self-image has led to a partial, if not a complete recognition of India as an emerging power in world politics. This study tries to analyse India's nuclear trajectory and highlight not just the way India's nuclear behaviour has transformed but also how it transformed.

The very nature of international system makes the possession of nuclear weapons 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. 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. Meanwhile, the argument that their use lies in their non-use (deterrence) has gained credibility. Precisely, due to this reason nuclear issue continues to occupy an important space in theoretical discussions of international discourse. Regarding India, the last seven decades have witnessed a transformation in India's nuclear behaviour, from an advocate of

peaceful use of nuclear technology to irresponsible 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, as 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 attributing to factors like technological and scientific motives, domestic motives, status and prestige motives and security factor. Though this study does not underestimate these motives, but 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 study tries to analyse constructivist framework to explore the transformation of India’s nuclear identity.

Once a target of the global non-proliferation regime, India is now increasingly recognized as a ‘state with advanced nuclear technology’. Nuclear weapons have always been a controversial subject in India’s politico-strategic environment. India always had an ambiguous and uncomfortable relationship with nuclear weapons. During most of its post-independence period, the nuclear discourse in India maintained a strong moral 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. Scholars have divided India’s nuclear evolution into broad phases based on certain landmark events. Unlike other nuclear weapons state, India started its nuclear programme not for military purposes, but for peaceful purpose. India stayed focused on and restricted to peaceful use for over 70 years since independence. Owing to its rich cultural and civilization legacy and also its robust participation in international affairs, India desired a rightful place in the comity of nations. The evolving identities, interests and security concerns of India remained closely linked with nuclear decisions and have patterned those decisions at critical historical junctures.