

After the BJP victory - India's Nuclear Doctrine: Up for a Makeover?

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The Issue

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the then main opposition party in India and widely tipped to emerge as the largest party in India's sixteenth parliamentary election, released its election manifesto [1] in New Delhi on April 7 last, the day the nine-phase election stretching from April 7 to May 12 commenced.

Given the fact that a political party is usually expected to approach the electorate based on the promises made and visions outlined in its manifesto, this obviously delayed release is perhaps an indicator how much importance the BJP attaches to its manifesto.

Even then, a (rather brief) section appearing on the page 39 of the 42-page document has attracted attentions of the commentators, both within the country and also abroad. Never mind that the issue is really not a hot topic in this election. The section is captioned: 'Independent Strategic Nuclear Programme'. Evidently, the issue dealt with therein explains the extent of interest, in certain limited circles, triggered by it.

The content is quoted in full as under:

"BJP believes that the strategic gains acquired by India during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime on the nuclear programme have been frittered away by the Congress. Our emphasis was, and remains on, beginning of a new thrust on framing policies that would serve India's national interest in the 21st century. We will follow a two-pronged independent nuclear programme, unencumbered by foreign pressure and influence, for civilian and military purposes, especially as nuclear power is a major contributor to India's energy sector.

BJP will:

- Study in detail India's nuclear doctrine, and revise and update it, to make it relevant to challenges of current times.
- Maintain a credible minimum deterrent that is in tune with changing geostatic (sic) realities.
- Invest in India's indigenous Thorium Technology Programme."

Before we proceed to examine the central issue on hand, it may not be out of place to point out in

passing that the assertion that “nuclear power is a major contributor to India’s energy sector” is plain wrong. In fact, nuclear power, as on Feb. 28 2014, contributed just over 2% of total installed capacity for production of electricity - 4,780 MW out of total 237,743 MW, as against 12.4% (29,463 MW) contributed by renewables [2].

Now coming to what has been chosen here as the main issue, it needs be recalled that it is under the BJP-led NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee India turned an overtly nuclear weaponised state in May 1998 with five test explosions - three on May 11 and two on May 13. Initially it was claimed with a lot of chest thumping, in utter defiance of high-pitched global censure, that this development would now place India in an unassailable position as regards neighboring Pakistan [3]. But as things would turn out, Pakistan, in response, also went overtly nuclear with six test explosions, almost within a fortnight, on the following 28 and 30 (May). Then the apologists of the move claimed that (overt) nuclearisation, of both India and Pakistan, would stabilise relations between them [4]. What actually happened is that we had the Kargil War in the following May within a year of overt weaponisation because of armed intrusion from across the LoC after a gap of more than twenty seven years (since 1971 Bangladesh War). And an Indian Airlines plane would be hijacked the same year (1999) on December 24, and Indian Parliament would come under armed attack on December 13 2001. The biggest peacetime armed mobilisation along the Pakistan border, Operation Parakram - supposedly a measure of “coercive diplomacy”, which followed soon after causing exchange of threats of nuclear strikes by both the sides eventually ended in a whimper in about eleven months or so. In November 2003 India and Pakistan signed a ceasefire agreement. [5]

So one rather wonders what “strategic gains acquired by India during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime on the nuclear programme” the BJP manifesto is referring to which have been allegedly “frittered away by the Congress”?

Now, given the fact that the BJP has since cruised to a handsome electoral victory [6] under the leadership of its mascot, this time, and Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi, who is slated to formally take over as the Indian Prime Minister on the coming 26th May, the central promise made in the election manifesto to “revise and update” “India’s nuclear doctrine” demands close attention of all those who are concerned about the nuclear issue, in general, and India’s nuclear policy, in particular. What follows below is an attempt to figure out the shape of the things to come in the coming days in this particular regard.

The Road to Nuclear Doctrine

India’s “nuclear doctrine” was a consequential outcome of India going overtly nuclear weaponised in May 1998. It had essentially two triggers. As the five nuclear explosions had been carried out in May 1998 by the BJP-led NDA government, in a highly secretive manner and within barely two months of coming to power, without any formal exploration whatever of the geo-political situation and/or any cost-benefit analysis, the “doctrine” was supposed to provide a sort of post facto substitute for such analyses, also an attempt to find out the precise use of the newly acquired (nuclear weaponised) status. Apart from that, it also sought to formalise certain “concessions” made, going against the very grain of the logic of “testing”, in order to, at least somewhat, soften the utterly hostile reactions of the bulk of the international community - viz. (i) a possible/likely promise of “no first use” (NFU), and (ii) a non-binding - voluntary and unilateral - moratorium on further nuclear test explosions. These two “concessions” were sort of formalised first via a speech by the Prime Minister in the Indian Parliament on May 27 1998 together with a paper, *Evolution of India’s Nuclear Policy*, submitted to the House, the very same day [7]. In para 14 of his said speech, the Prime Minister

reiterated: "Government has already announced that India will now observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting underground nuclear test explosions. *We have also indicated willingness to move towards a de-jure formalisation of this declaration* (emphasis added)." In the para 10 of his speech, he had asserted: "India is now a nuclear weapon state. ... We do not intend to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country; these are weapons of self-defence, to ensure that India is not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion." The submitted paper, which was specifically mentioned in the speech, also emphatically made the same point (in its para 19), and went a bit further beyond: "Subsequent to the tests Government has already stated that India will now observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting underground nuclear test explosions. It has also indicated willingness to move towards a de-jure formalisation of this declaration. The basic obligation of the CTBT are (sic) thus met; to refrain from undertaking nuclear test explosions." In the para 14, it had said, "In 1994, we had proposed that India and Pakistan jointly undertake not to be the first to use their nuclear capability against each other. *The Government on this occasion reiterates its readiness to discuss a "no-first-use" agreement with that country, as also with other countries bilaterally, or in a collective forum* (emphasis added)." This evidently makes more explicit, and concrete, what was implied in the para 10 of the Prime Minister's speech: "We do not intend to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country; these are weapons of self-defence, to ensure that India is not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion. We do not intend to engage in an arms race." In para 20 of the above-referred paper, it is further stated: "*India has also indicated readiness to participate in negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty* (emphasis added)."

In his address to the 53rd UN General Assembly on Sept. 24 1998, these themes were again dealt with before an international audience. He said: "after concluding this limited testing program, India announced a voluntary moratorium on further underground nuclear test explosions. We conveyed our willingness to move towards a de jure formalization of this obligation. *In announcing a moratorium, India has already accepted the basic obligation of the CTBT* (emphasis added). In 1996, India could not have accepted the obligation as such a restraint would have eroded our capability and compromised our national security." [8] He, rather significantly, further added: "Mr. President, India, having harmonized its national imperatives and security obligations and desirous of continuing to cooperate with the international community is now engaged in discussions with key interlocutors on a range of issues, including the CTBT. *We are prepared to bring these discussions to a successful conclusion, so that the entry into force of the CTBT is not delayed beyond September 1999* (emphasis added)." Here, however, there was no talk of the NFU.

All in all, in the above, we have a clear cut commitment, even if as yet non-binding, not to carry out any further explosive nuclear tests; a hint of a promise of "no-first-use", provided Pakistan also makes the same commitment; and readiness to work towards the CTBT, FMCT, and, of course, global nuclear disarmament. All these accompany the declaration 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 others to grant. It is an endowment to the nation by our scientists and engineers. It is India's due, the right of one-sixth of human-kind." [9]

The Nuclear Doctrine in Place

"The "nuclear doctrine" was actually "promulgated in August 1999 [10], a little over a year after the nuclear test series conducted by India in May 1998 that were reciprocated by Pakistan. It was believed at this juncture that the nuclear doctrine promulgated was a response to the international criticism being voiced that India had conducted its nuclear tests without any concept of what it wished to achieve with its deterrent. The nuclear doctrine had been finalised by the National

Security Advisory Board [NSAB], which comprised a heterogeneous group of former civil and military officials, and non-officials from several walks of life having different convictions. ... The document was criticised in the media until the NDA government, then in power, virtually disowned the doctrine as being just a draft that was only meant to stimulate public debate and elicit opinion. Nothing further was heard in this matter until the Cabinet Committee on Security adjudicated the issues raised in the 'draft' doctrine and announced its decisions in January 2003." [11]

There were several important differences between the "draft" doctrine, released in August 1999, and the finalised one, of which only the (supposedly) salient points were disclosed, on January 4 2003. "The 1999 doctrine suggested a nuclear doctrine that was based on an unspecified minimum force but one which would also be credible and survivable. In addition, India would not use nuclear weapons first (no-first use of nuclear weapons or NFU) and will not use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries (Negative Security Assurance or NSA). The doctrine emphasized the need for credible nuclear forces that would be able to survive a first strike against it as well as the need for strict political control over nuclear forces. The NSAB document also emphasized India's nuclear disarmament objectives. None of these were new: what was new, however, was that the doctrine also talked about a nuclear triad of aircraft, long-range ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles." [12] In fact, "many of the elements of the [finalised] Indian nuclear doctrine [the highlights of which were released in January 2003] was (sic) the same as in the 1999 doctrine, but a number of caveats had been added, and some pledges especially that of the NFU and non-use against 100 Major Power's Nuclear Policies and International Order in the 21st Century non-nuclear powers had been diluted (emphasis added). There were also details about command and control aspects that were new." [13] There are also a few "variations of note in the new doctrine. First was the introduction of the notion of 'massive' retaliation to a nuclear attack on India. The 1999 doctrine had only talked of a 'punitive' retaliation that would cause 'unacceptable' damage." [14] Then, the "second significant variation was the dilution of both India's NFU pledge as well as the pledge not to attack non-nuclear countries (NSA). The original NFU pledge and the NSA [Negative Security Assurance] pledge not only in the 1999 doctrine but also in various official statements in and out of parliament was without any qualifiers. But in the 2003 version, there is an important qualifier: India will consider the use of nuclear weapons in response to a 'major attack' on India or on Indian forces anywhere with chemical or biological weapons (CBW). This dilutes both the NFU pledge as well as the pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states. It dilutes the NFU pledge because India could use nuclear weapons first against nuclear powers which decide to use chemical or biological weapons against India. For example, if Pakistan uses chemical weapons against India, India might use nuclear weapons in retaliation, though in such cases, New Delhi would also be violating its NFU pledge. Similarly, it dilutes the NSA because New Delhi could potentially use nuclear weapons against a state that does not have nuclear weapons. Hypothetically, if a country such as Bangladesh were to use chemical weapons against India, Indian leaders might be forced to consider the use of nuclear weapons in retaliation for such an attack, even if it is clear that Bangladesh does not possess nuclear weapons, thus violating India's non-attack against non-nuclear countries pledge." [15]

So, to sum up, it is under the BJP-led NDA government India's nuclear doctrine was originally drawn up as a consequence of overt nuclear weaponisation in May 1998. The "draft" doctrine was made available in August 1999, and, the salient points of the finalised document were released in January 2003. In the process, the NFU contained in the "doctrine" got pretty much diluted. The "doctrine" talks of "credible minimum deterrence"; envisages a nuclear triad - land, air and sea-based nuclear arsenals, in order to ensure an "assured massive retaliation". The "doctrine" itself, however, apparently has no word on moratorium on further explosive nuclear testing.

Now, to put things, as regards the commitment to NFU, in proper perspective, referring to a recent

editorial observation made in an Indian journal of considerable repute, the Economic and Political Weekly, may be quite in order: “India’s claims to follow a NFU policy should be taken with a pinch of salt. On many occasions of heightened tension with Pakistan, political leaders and army chiefs have threatened, in essence, to use nuclear weapons first. In early 2000, the then prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, reportedly warned Pakistan that India will not wait for Pakistan to drop a nuclear bomb on the country - a statement that goes against the spirit of a NFU pledge not to use such weapons first. In 2002, during Operation Parakram, both the then defence minister, George Fernandes, and the then army chief, General Padmanabhan, threatened Pakistan with the use of nuclear weapons.” [16]

The UPA Regime (2004 - 2014)

During the regimes of UPA - I & II, the issue of “nuclear doctrine” does not appear to have been raised in the official circles. But one related issue, “voluntary and unilateral moratorium on further explosive nuclear testing” - originally announced by Vajpayee himself, came to be aggressively challenged by the BJP in the context of the then External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, reiterating the same in order to facilitate the passage of the Indo-US nuclear deal meant to end India’s long penal exile from the global market for nuclear commerce. [17] An interview [18] given by the then External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, published on September 10 2008, provides a synoptic account of the controversy, albeit from his point of view. The opposition by the BJP, in a way, was based on, in turn, denial and disowning of the stand taken by the preceding Vajpayee regime [19].

Implications of the BJP Manifesto

The manifesto itself is rather cryptic and only asserts that the BJP (if it comes to power) will “(s)tudy in detail India’s nuclear doctrine, and revise and update it, to make it relevant to challenges of current times”. A Reuter report [20] on the release of the manifesto is, however, quite helpful in making sense of the widespread reactions to it. In fact, this report appears to provide the basis for many of the reactions. It says: “Unveiling its election manifesto, the party gave no details, but *sources involved in drafting the document said the “no-first-use” policy introduced after India conducted a series of nuclear tests in 1998 would be reconsidered* (emphasis added).” (The Indian Express report [21] on this issue, also mentioned below, went a bit beyond; it named names: “[Sheshadri Chari, convener of the BJP’s foreign affairs cell and a member of the group that formulated this section of the party’s manifesto (emphasis added)] told The Indian Express that India needed to re-consider the no first use policy, keeping in view changes in strategic realities and threat perceptions.”) The very same (Reuter) report, also at the same time, mentioned: “Murli Manohar Joshi, head of a committee that framed the BJP’s nuclear policy, declined to spell out whether no-first-use could be discarded. “Read the manifesto,” he told Reuters.” The fact nevertheless remains that the release of manifesto immediately sparked off a spate of intense speculations as regards the likelihood of doing away with the “no first use” policy, in the event of the BJP coming to power. [22] Generally, strong concerns were expressed about any such prospect. Consequently, the BJP’s Prime Ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, the very pivot of the party’s electoral campaign and who had very much been present on the occasion of the release of the manifesto, did an about turn in about a week’s time. He spoke to the television channel ANI, the video of which was released on April 16. The Reuter reports: “Striking a statesmanlike tone, he upheld a doctrine defined by former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who declared a policy of no first use of atomic weapons after testing several bombs in 1998. “No first use was a great initiative of Atal Bihari Vajpayee - there is no compromise on that.

We are very clear. No first use is a reflection of our cultural inheritance [whatever that may mean!],” Modi said.” [23]

While Modi’s subsequent “clarification” has indisputably added to the confusion [24], given the actual track record of the BJP, and its mentor - the RSS, all along championing a hawkish foreign policy, in general, and nuclear policy, in particular, and the specific commitment made in the manifesto, which had been drawn up presumably after long and detailed deliberations, and the clarification reportedly provided by Sheshadri Chari on the very occasion of the release of the document (even if from the sidelines), the possibility of a future BJP government scrapping the “no first use” policy can in no way be ruled out. Such a possibility remains very much on the table, even though jumping to any definitive conclusion at this stage would be too premature. And, in the event of such a possibility actually materialising, it would not only have a palpable adverse impact on the prospects of any forward movement towards global nuclear disarmament, it would also raise the level of uncertainty as regards a possible nuclear strike by India and make the adversaries (armed with nuclear weapons) - Pakistan, in particular - even more jittery and prone to resort to nuclear strike at a significantly lower level of perceived provocation/threat. The consequences could just be disastrous.

Apart from that, a BJP-led government may very well proceed to trash the “voluntary and unilateral moratorium” on further nuclear test explosions, as originally committed by the Vajpayee government and subsequently reiterated by the Congress-led government headed by Manmohan Singh as a necessary pre-condition for clinching the Indo-US nuclear deal meant to end India’s punitive exile from the global nuclear market, with or without any advance notice. More so, as the manifesto is talking of “strategic gains” being “frittered away by the Congress”. Test explosion of a Hydrogen Bomb, or even a (miniaturised) “tactical nuclear warhead”, is expected to vastly strengthen BJP’s ultra-nationalist hardline credentials before the domestic audience and further expand and consolidate its support base. A BJP government may, of course, also like to project itself going in for faster expansion of India’s nuclear arsenal, even if it does not in any way add to the level of “deterrence”, and/or opt for mating of the nuclear warheads with the delivery systems to attain “launch on warning” (LOW) status. [25] Any such move would, apart from having a profound negative impact on the prospects of global nuclear disarmament, tend to trigger accelerated nuclear arms race in the region and heighten the temperature.

Given the fact that for the RSS/BJP the core mobilising strategy is to whip up hateful passions, and violent aggression, against the carefully chosen, and craftily constructed, adversarial “others” - “internal” and “external”, the manifesto, at any rate, makes it chillingly clear that the BJP may once again very well opt to go in for relaunching India with renewed vigour on the path of “nuclear nationalism”, notwithstanding a certain degree of fogginess admittedly prevailing at the moment, with possible horrendous consequences for the billion plus inhabitants of the sub-continent, and, for that matter, the whole world unless of course forestalled by powerful resistance from within and without.

Sukla Sen, 25 05 2014

P.S.

* The author is a peace activist associated with the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP), India since its very inception in 2000.

Footnotes

[1] See: <http://bjpelectionmanifesto.com/pdf/manifesto2014.pdf>.

[2] Ref.: table 5 at http://www.cea.nic.in/reports/monthly/executive_rep/feb14.pdf.

[3] See, for example: "On May 18 [1998] a candid Advani spelt out the Indian intent. One that 'Islamabad should realize the change in the geo-strategic situation in the region and the world and roll-back its anti-India policy, especially with regard to Kashmir.' Two that 'India's bold and decisive step to become a nuclear weapon state has brought about a qualitatively new stage in Indo-Pakistan relations, particularly in finding a solution to the Kashmir problem.' Three that it 'signifies India's resolve to deal firmly and strongly with Pakistan's hostile designs and activities in Kashmir' and that India will now take 'proactive' measures against Kashmir militancy.' Almost as if building a case for a rapid strike, Advani referred to the Kashmiri freedom fighters as 'foreign mercenaries.'" at <http://www.defencejournal.com/sept98/kashmirfactor.htm>. Also see: <http://freepresskashmir.com/india-warns-pakistan-over-kashmir-after-n-tests/>.

[4] "Leading strategic thinkers on the subcontinent expressed confident hopes back then [i.e. after May 1998] that going public with nuclear capabilities would have stabilizing effects by relieving anxieties and facilitating diplomatic efforts to normalize relations." [Source: <http://krepon.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/3996/what-ever-happened-to-minimum-credible-deterrence>.] In fact, the author, Michael Krepon, further went on to quote J.N. Dixit, K. Sundarji and Jasjit Singh, from the Indian side, to substantiate his contention.

[5] For a detailed discussion on the history of India's nuclear weaponisation and its effects in the aftermath, see mine Indian Nationalism, Hindutva and the Bomb at <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article10225>. Also see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kargil_War, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Airlines_Flight_814, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001_Indian_Parliament_attack and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001%E2%80%932002_India%E2%80%93Pakistan_standoff.

[6] The detailed results announced on May 16-17 are available at <http://eciresults.nic.in/PartyWiseResult.htm>.

[7] For the respective texts, see.: <http://www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/980527-india-pm.htm> and <https://www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/980527-goi1.htm>.

[8] See.: <http://www.acronym.org.uk/textonly/sasia/spsep98.htm>.

[9] Ref. para 10 of the PM's speech in the Indian Parliament on May 27 1998 (at <http://www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/980527-india-pm.htm>).

[10] For text, see: <<http://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999...>> .

[11] Source: India's Nuclear Doctrine: An Alternative Blueprint by Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies at <http://www.ipcs.org/Indias-Nuclear-Doctrine.pdf>.

[12] Source: India's Nuclear Policy by Rajesh Rajagopalan at http://www.nids.go.jp/english/event/symposium/pdf/2009/e_06.pdf.

[13] Idem.

[14] Idem.

[15] Idem.

[16] See.: Finger on the Nuclear Trigger at <http://www.epw.in/editorials/finger-nuclear-trigger.html>.

[17] See, in particular: "External affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee's statement yesterday [i.e. on Sept. 5 2008] that India was committed to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and maintaining a voluntary, unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing played a crucial role in bringing on board the sceptics [at the NSG]." at <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2008/20080907/main1.htm>, "Statement by External Affairs Minister of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee [on Sept. 5 2008] on the Civil Nuclear Initiative. That: - "We remain committed to a voluntary, unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing. We do not subscribe to any arms race, including a nuclear arms race. We have always tempered the exercise of our strategic autonomy with a sense of global responsibility. We affirm our policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons. We are committed to work with others towards the conclusion of a multilateral Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament that is universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable."" and (consequently) "the NSG grants nuclear waiver to India [on Sept 6 2008], opening the doors of global nuclear commerce for New Delhi after 34 years" at http://www.academia.edu/1749508/The_123_Agreement, for example.

[18] Available at <http://www.rediff.com/news/2008/sep/10inter.htm>.

[19] See: Nuclear deal: BJP questions 'no testing' commitment by Neena Vyas at <http://www.hindu.com/2006/06/30/stories/2006063004431200.htm>.

[20] See: BJP puts 'no first use' nuclear policy in doubt by Sanjeev Miglani and John Chalmers at <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/04/07/india-election-bjp-manifesto-idINDEEA3605820140407>.

[21] See: Will 'revise and update' India's n-doctrine, says BJP manifesto by Shubhajit Roy at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/will-revise-and-update-indias-n-doctrine-says-bjp-manifesto/>. Also relevant: "Sheshadri Chari, convener of the BJP's foreign affairs cell and a member of the group that formulated this section of the party's manifesto, said: "Why should we tie our hands into accepting a global no first use policy, as has been proposed by the Prime Minister recently?""", cited in the same report.

[22] See, for example:
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/07/indian-election-bjp-manifesto-nuclear-weapons>,
<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/xno41g9Q3UYyKzPhv3guXP/BJP-election-manifesto-says-will-revise-Indias-nuclear-doct.html>,
<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/will-revise-and-update-indias-n-doctrine-says-bjp-manifesto/>,
<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/comments-analysis/need-to-revisit-indias-nuclear-doctrine-as-a-lot-has-changed-since-2003/articleshow/33465727.cms>,
<http://newsanalysisindia.com/post/BJP-manifesto-Rethink-on-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-Zero-tolerance-on-External-Internal-security.aspx#.U0VGs6iSz3F>,
<http://rpdefense.over-blog.com/2014/04/is-india-about-to-abandon-its-no-first-use-nuclear-doctrine.html> ,

<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/indias-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-may-change-under-nda-rule/463354-37-64.html>.

[23] Source: Modi says committed to no first use of nuclear weapons by Douglas Busvine at <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/04/16/uk-india-election-nuclear-idINKBN0D20QB20140416>.

[24] Also see: "Following a media uproar, the Bharatiya Janata Party is moving to quell speculation that it wants to end India's longstanding no-first-use nuclear arms policy." In Indian Party Backpedals on Provocative Nuclear Policy Remarks at <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/indian-party-backpedals-provocative-nuclear-policy-remarks/> and India needs to change backward 'no first use' nuclear policy by Ajai Shukla at <http://www.sify.com/finance/india-needs-to-change-backward-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-news-columnists-oepckicbbii.html>. No doubt, contradictory and confusing signals are emanating. Quite significantly, while a very senior leader of the BJP, Nitin Gadkari, party's national president only in the recent past, issued an open threat of military strike against Pakistan, in case of a terror attack on India, in a live TV programme on May 17 last (see.: <http://www.indiatimes.com/video-cafe/trending-now/Nitin-Gadkari-to-Pakistan-We-re-Not-Congress-Will-Hit-Back-Hard-429.html>) - and the video clip has gone viral in the Hindu Nationalist circles, the Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi has invited all the heads of the neighbouring SAARC nations to his oath taking ceremony including Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, which he has eventually accepted (see: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/elections2014/the-big-story/pakistan-prime-minister-to-attend-inauguration-of-indian-prime-minister/article1-1222347.aspx>). In the new government, Narendra Modi is expected to play the decisive role (not unaided by his chosen coterie of advisers though), given the arithmetic of numbers and his own track record, even in matters of external affairs and military policies; and the only things known about him, in these contexts, are that he has been schooled as a Hindu Nationalist for over four decades or so and he has strong predilections for Realism-pragmatism (without any formal academic training of course). These two traits are, understandably, not always in perfect alignment.

[25] See: Updating India's nuclear doctrine by W. P. S. Sidhu at <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/rkEybo3sf1wA2vWbxXr0GM/Updating-Indias-nuclear-doctrine.html>.