

Dynamics of India's Nuclear Identity

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Abstract : Through the constructivist perspective, this paper explores the transformation of India's nuclear identity from an irresponsible 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 as opposed to Iran, Iraq and North Korea with similar nuclear ambitions, who have been snubbed as 'rogue states' by the international community. This paper investigates the reasons behind international community's gradual acceptance of India's nuclear weapons capabilities and nuclear identity 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

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