# How History Shapes India's Foreign Policy Goals

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Since India gained its independence from Great Britain in 1947, it has developed institutions and processes to promote a strong foreign policy (Ogden 2014: 13-14). However, core values and ideas from India's history continue to inform India's foreign policy goals. Before 1947, India's position in international society was characterised by two distinct eras. The first was its period of economic and cultural dominance before British colonisation and the second was its period of subjugation during British colonisation. It is important to note that modern India has many simultaneous foreign policy goals. However, I will focus on its mission to be recognised as a Great Power and its objective to maintain complete independence from foreign powers, as these two foreign policy goals were formulated in direct response to the aforementioned periods.

The function of the past is to inform India's and other states' identities, which determine their interests and, thus, foreign policy goals. Section I of this essay will justify the use of constructivism to analyse how the past influences India's foreign policy goals by explaining how the theory permits a role for identity creation, social interactions and discourse. Sections II and III will connect India's history to its identity and interests, which are the bases of its foreign policy goals, by analysing discourse. Sections IV and V will use case studies to prove that the Indian identity is prominent in its foreign policy goals and decisions, thus revealing the function of history in its foreign policy objectives.

Section II will specifically argue that the period of Indian dominance before British colonialism led to India's foreign policy goal of obtaining great power status. This section will also posit that great power status is achieved based on mutual recognition, not objective criterion. Section III of this essay will contend that India's period of subjugation by the British inspired India's foreign policy goal of maintaining *purna swaraj* (complete independence) through non-alignment and modernisation. Lastly, this essay will use one case study from during the bipolar, Cold War system and one case study from after the collapse of the Soviet Union to show that while India's two key foreign policy goals have remained constant, the tactics used to pursue these ends have changed based on the international order. Section IV and V will be analysing India's approach to, and discourse regarding, nuclear proliferation and its "Look East" and "Act East" policies.

**Constructivism's interpretation of the past**

Constructivism is the most relevant framework for studying the role of the past as neorealism and neoliberalism, the dominant paradigms of International Relations in recent decades, limit history's importance. Constructivism explains how the past influences states' foreign policy goals by arguing that it plays a role in socially constructing states' identities (Wendt 1999: 258). These identities mold states' interests and whether they cooperate or perceive other states as threatening, and are thus the determinants of interaction (Hopf 1998: 185). Sections II and III will argue that India's periods as a dominant power and as a colonised power shape its identity and interests by using the constructivist ideas of 1) historically co-constituted identities 2) identities as the bases of interaction and 3) discourse as a form of social construction. Sections IV and V will then use case studies to demonstrate that Indian identity, as forged by its past, shapes its foreign policy through the same three analytical aspects of constructivism.

Neither neorealism nor neoliberalism emphasise history because they are rationalist theories which conceive of states' identities and interests as primarily concerned with the pursuit of power (Mearsheimer 2013: 78-79). In

Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State, and War*, anarchy is defined as the possibility of wars because "there is nothing to prevent them," such as a higher authority (Waltz 2001: 232). Neorealists, such as John J. Mearsheimer, argue that the anarchic international system causes states to seek power as a means of self-preservation, as other states' motivations are unknown and assumed to be threatening (Mearsheimer 2013: 78-79). Since the pursuit of power defines states' interest, states act similarly and rationally to accumulate power in the form of military or economic capabilities (Mearsheimer 2013: 78-79). Therefore, states are conceived of as "black boxes," because their internal characteristics, such as culture and history, matter little in determining their foreign policy (Mearsheimer 2013: 72). Neoliberals adhere to a similar conception of international society as neorealists (Kubalkova 1998: 103). Thus, they also believe that domestic culture and the past are unimportant in states' modern foreign policy decisions (Kubalkova 1998: 103). However, neoliberals permit a role for iteration between states, and conceed that repeated interactions can facilitate cooperation to build norms and an interdependent international system (Hopf 1998: 189).

Unlike neorealism and neoliberalism, constructivism uses historically co-constituted identities and self-conceptions to analyse a state's foreign policy. Alexander Wendt, a leading constructivist, posits that anarchy is a social construct (Wendt 1992: 392). This concept creates space for states' actions to be influenced by factors beyond the pursuit of material capabilities, such as history. History influences states' identities, as they are co-constituted based on repeated interactions and context (Wendt 1999: 258). This co-constitution occurs because comparison provides a "distinct posture or orientation of the Self toward the Other" (Wendt 1999: 258; Wendt 1992: 398). State identity can be "understood as shared beliefs about the Self and the Other" and can "play an important role in sustaining 'we-ness"' (Alexandrov 2003: 36). To this end, culture is relevant in constructivism as defined as "socially shared beliefs" (Alexandrov 2003: 34). Wendt argues that, "Identities are the basis of interests," not "power" as traditional IR paradigms would suggest (Wendt 1992: 398).

These historically formed and co-constituted state identities determine the ways in which states interact and, thus, their foreign policy goals. Constructivism proffers that the "identities and interests" of one state determine whether other states will perceive interaction as an opportunity for cooperation or as a threat (Hopf 1998: 189). Constructivism's analytical framework of identity is valuable because states' interaction can be motivated by forces beyond rational reactions to power dynamics, as neoliberals and neorealists would suggest (Hopf 1998: 185). Critical constructivism offers a research programme to examine the theoretical foundations laid by constructivism through analysis of discourse and social hierarchies (Hopf 1998: 171-177). Despite neorealism's shortcomings, it shares the useful expectation with critical constructivism that international relations can be understood as "instances of hierarchy, subordination, or domination" (Hopf 1998: 185). Understanding identity is especially important under this assumption as critical constructivists argue that that hierarchies are formed and reproduced through interactions (Hopf 1998: 195). This is a helpful concept for understanding Indian foreign policy, as there are many instances in which India constructs social hierarchies through interaction and discourse which will be discussed later in this essay.

Discourse will be analysed in this paper as it elucidates the ways in which identity and foreign policy formation result from social interactions. Neorealists and neoliberals use material state characteristics to understand international society (Kubalkova 1998: 103). Yet, constructivists offer the compelling alternative that 'self-conception' and the language used to describe states can create "self-fulfilling prophesies" (Guzzini 2005: 449). In this way, socially constructed knowledge actually creates social reality (Guzzini 2005: 449). Thus, language can both create and reinforce social identities. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a valuable research method used by critical constructivists to analyse language.

This essay will analyse discourse through the tenets of CDA as it can reveal the aforementioned socially constituted identities and hierarchies through the assumption that discourse is "socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned (Guzzini 2005: 448). CDA considers discourse as a "social practice," which implies "a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them but also shapes them" (Blommaert 2000: 448; Wodak 2002: 7-8). Furthermore, CDA posits that analysing discourse is crucial since it can reveal "structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak 2002: 11).

**India's great power ambitions**

India's pre-colonial history as a dominant world power formed its self-conception of being a *moralpolitik* great power and foreign policy objective of being recognised by others as having great power status. Relying on the constructivist idea of co-constituted identities, this essay will consider great power status as dependent on recognition (Hurrell 2006: 4). This section will argue that the precolonial period of Indian greatness led India to conceive of its great power strategy as *moralpolitik,* which means "the aggressive use of morality to advance national interests" (Karnad 2002: 3). This approach can be seen as a combination of values and pragmatism. India's identity was constructed from history through discourse from sources, such as the *Mahabharata,* regarding India's ancient history as a great power. Additionally, the Mahatma Gandhi's interpretation of ancient India constructed its present-day self-conception as a *moralpolitik* great power.

This essay will consider India's goal for great power status as contingent upon recognition by other states, as identities are co-constituted. Mearsheimer writes that, "Great powers are determined on the basis of their relative military capability" (Mearsheimer 2001: 5). However, as argued in Section I, history shapes states' identities and influences inter-state interactions. As such, it is reductive to only consider the distribution of power in the international system, as neoliberalism and neorealism would. To address this problem, I will use the idea of Great Power as put forth by Andrew Hurrell. Instead of identifying objective "Great Powers," he uses the idea of the "great power club" (Hurrell 2006: 4). This club is "closely related to notions of legitimacy and authority" (Hurrell 2006: 4). Although a state is able to claim great power status, "Membership of the club of great powers is a social category that depends on recognition by others" (Hurrell 2006: 4). Therefore, India's foreign policy goal of achieving great power status is equivalent to a desire for other states to recognise India as a member of the "great power club."

The precolonial period of Indian dominance is the basis of its goal to be recognised as a contemporary great power. In ancient times, India was a cultural and religious leader. Buddhism began with Siddhartha Gautama's birth in then-India, now Nepal, in the sixth century BCE. The predominance of Buddhism rose throughout Central and South Asia until the eleventh century (Harvey 2013: 198). One factor influencing the decline of Buddhism was the "rising power of Hinduism," which is another Indian religion (Harvey 2013: 195). Throughout precolonial history, India's flourishing empires also made significant cultural and academic developments. For example, the Mughal Empire featured artistic and literary achievements including illustrated manuscripts of Hindu epics including the*Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (Bose 1998: 36). Both of these works deeply influenced the "religious and cultural life of the Indian subcontinent and much of the rest of Asia" (Basham 1967: 4). Also, during the Mughal Empire, India functioned as a "bridge" between the Middle East and East Asia through which goods and ideas could pass (Bose 1998: 44). This strategic location in the Indian Ocean made India an economic powerhouse for centuries as it was hub for agriculture and foreign trade (Ogden 2014: 53).

The discourse regarding this period of dominance in Indian history constructs Indian identity as a *moralpolitik* great power. India conceived of its unique great power role to be as a "guide to bring about a more spiritual, tolerant and moral world order" (Dixit 2004: 22). With India's "more ancient civilisation, longer religious and social traditions, and with its ancient literature and intellectual tradition," it conceived of itself as having a unique form of greatness that relied on morality (Dixit 2004: 22). Thus, when India became a state, its "value system" was characterised by defining "nationhood in Western terms but rooted in Indian history" (Dixit 2004: 22). This value-driven aspect of Indian foreign policy is characterised by Bharat Karnad as *moralpolitik* a combination of pragmatism and morality (Karnad 2002: 3).

India's self-conception as a *moralpolitik* great power is discernible by analysing rhetoric about India's ancient history as a Hindu power. The *Mahabharata* is one example of a literary work that continues to be invoked as evidence of an inevitably prominent Indian identity. The *Mahabharata* was originally written around 900 BCE and is a famous Hindu epic and "an irrefutable testimony to the greatness of India: its literary greatness, its spiritual greatness, its human greatness" (Bose 1998: 46; de Mora 2005: 137). The *Mahabharata* is notably different from Western literature in that the force of love triumphs, while in Western literature love is defeated by war (de Mora 2005: 137). This is an example of how the Indian identity is constituted by comparison with Western ideas. This work was recently referenced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he compared his detractors to Shalya, a character in

*Mahabharata* that was pessimistic about the fate of the country (Ians, 2017). His comment is significant because it reflects and reinforces the belief that India will return to the status of India portrayed in the *Mahabharata*. The idea of India's "manifest destiny" of achieving a distinct great power status can also be heard in the comment by the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, that, "Fate has marked [India] for big things" (Nizamani 2000: 27; Gordon 2014: xviii).

Additionally, Mahatma Gandhi's interpretation of ancient India constructed the Indian identity as a *moralpolitik* great power. Gandhi was a formative figure in Indian identity and during the fight for independence from Great Britain, characterised India as a British colony as the "God of War" and ancient India as the "God of Love" (Allen 2008: 102). In this statement, he is returning to the dichotomy introduced in the *Mahabharata* of love and war as opposing forces. Upinder Singh argues that by connecting the independence movement with "the ancient Indian intellectual and philosophic tradition, Gandhi created the impression that non-violence was rooted in a unique way in the Indian psyche" (Singh 2017: 5). This created the concept of *ahimsa,* or non-violence, that remains an influence on Indian foreign policy (Singh 2017: 5). However, Gandhi was also willing to compromise on principles "when circumstances demanded it" (Singh 2017: 3). In this way, Gandhi modelled the idea of *moralpolitik,* through which morality would be pursued, but not at the cost of pragmatism. The Indian identity that Gandhi helped create through discourse "conjured up the idea of a morally superior India professing scruples, having ethical bearings and offering a war-weary world an alternative path to peace and reconciliation" (Karnad 2002: 1).

**India's pursuit of *purna swaraj***

This section will discuss how India's history of subjugation during British colonisation led to its suspicion of foreign powers and its foreign policy goal of maintaining *purna swaraj*. India's self-perceived importance and foreign powers' inherent threat were co-constituted through discourse and repeated interactions. *Swadeshi,* or economic independence, is one important aspect of India's pursuit for *purna swaraj* (Ogden 2014: 53-54). However it will not be discussed regarding Indian foreign policy goals as its relevance is limited to economic affairs. Thus, this section will focus on India's foreign policy goal of maintaining *purna swaraj* through non-alignment and modernisation.

India's period of colonisation informs its skepticism of the international system, and thus its desire to maintain foreign policy autonomy. India first became colonised in the 1700s by the East India Company, after a century of the company primarily focusing on trade (Mukherjee 1974: 301). As the Mughal Empire declined and the French East India Company rose in power, the British East India Company (EIC) expanded its territorial control to most of the Indian subcontinent (Mukherjee 1974: 118). As the EIC created a monopoly on trade, "Whatever margin there had been between trade and plunder began to grow conspicuously thin. The merchants were now rulers" (Mukherjee 1974: 301). The exploitation stemmed from the exchange of "maximum goods for the minimum payment," so that the surpluses in production were siphoned off to Britain (Mukherjee 1974: 301). During this period, a widespread resentment of British rule led to the uprising of Indian Rebellion of 1857. This rebellion ended the EIC's rule of India but led to the British Crown's rule in India. Under the British Raj, India continued to be exploited for its wealth of resources and strategic location (Mukherjee 1974: 431). India was a "subordinate trading partner" with Britain, since it supplied raw materials and foodstuffs to Britain and consumed the finished products" (Singh 2008: 23). When India became independent in 1947, it did not forget this history of subordination and exploitation.

Discourse and repeated interactions constitute India's self-conception of being inherently important. In addition to the British, India had fought off invaders for thousands of years, including Alexander the Great and Mohammed Bin Qasim, a Muslim conquerer (Mahajan 2015: 61). Therefore, some Indians consider the British as simply one "among a long line of invaders," yet internalised the idea of India as the "jewel of the Crown" and a "strategic lynchpin" (Bajpai 1998: 160; Mahajan 2015: 61). As theoretically established in Section I, these repeated interactions constituted India's identity. Although India's colonisation was an act of subjugation, the language used to describe India's colonial status gave its national identity a sense of self-importance.

Additionally, foreign states are perceived by India as threatening since they oppressed it in previous interactions, so India pursues *purna swaraj* through non-alignment. During the independence movement, Nehru described Great Britain as a power that "deprived the Indian people of their freedom" (Nehru 1936). Thus, the British and other

dominant foreign powers are perceived as potentially oppressive, as they were oppressive in the past. Based on interactions during India's colonial period, India is suspicious of foreign powers and avoids being susceptible to their influence. India's leadership of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) is the most prevalent example of its avoidance of foreign influence. While the Cold War divided the world into two blocs, India's NAM championed "principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, the rights of peoples to self-determination and non-intervention in matters which are essentially within the jurisdiction of states" (Strydom 2007: 5).

Discourse attributing India's colonisation to domestic disunity informs India's foreign policy goal of maintaining independence through internal development. According to Nehru and other Indian nationalists, the British and other colonial powers had been able to colonise India because of its "relative backwardness" and "internal disorder" (Bajpai 1998: 160). Nehru said that India "fell behind in the march of technique, and Europe, which had long been backward in many matters, took the lead in technical progress… and it was easy for them to spread out and dominate the East" (Bajpai 1998: 160). However, this belief bore the idea that India could return to its previous stature by modernising and developing its internal structure (Bajpai 1998: 160). Nehru further captured this sentiment in his "Tryst with Destiny" speech to say that once India received independence, it would modernise and bring about, "the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity" (Nehru 1947). After independence, India sought to recreate its identity as a modern power, and remove the reputation for poverty that she received during colonial times (Ogden 2014: 3). Further, India's foreign policy goal of having autonomy from foreign powers can be seen in its emphasis on maintaining sovereignty and the territorial integrity of its borders (Ogden 2014: 75-76). India's mission to develop can be seen throughout its existence, and with current Prime Minister Modi saying, "What India needs is modernisation, not westernisation" and investing heavily in development projects to project India's sovereign and developed identity to the world (Ani 2013).

**Nuclear proliferation**

India's historically constructed foreign policy goals of being a *moralpolitik* great power and maintaining *purna swaraj* can clearly be seen in its response to nuclear proliferation. This section will analyse India's two-fold approach to the nuclear arms race: both building its nuclear capabilities and calling for disarmament (Perkovich 1999:14). Additionally, it will analyse India's decision to both call for increased regulation, yet refuse to join the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) or sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT). India's foreign policy goal of being recognised as a great power can be seen in discourse which reflected a hierarchy in which India was the same status as nuclear weapons states. Additionally, this case study illustrates India's pursuit of *purna swaraj* through non-alignment with international regimes and modernisation.

Around the time that India gained its independence, the structure of international society was bipolar as there were "two poles of distribution of power in international politics" (Mohd 2014: 121). The USSR and the US began building up their nuclear arsenals as they faced a perceived security dilemma, with the United Kingdom, France, and China following suit (Perkovich 1999:4). As previously established, identities are the basis of interactions. Nuclear states' identities were threatening as the potentiality of nuclear warfare threatened states' existence. India remained true to its *moralpolitik* identity and responded with pragmatism and morality. Reflecting the pragmatic side, Nehru said, "As long as the world is constituted as it is, every country will have to devise and use the latest devices for its protection. I have no doubt India will develop her scientific researches" (Perkovich 1999: 14). Meanwhile, the value of *ahimsa* and morality led India to call for nuclear disarmament, so Nehru followed that statement with his wish that, "India in common with other countries will prevent the use of atomic bombs" (Perkovich 1999: 14).

Regimes to monitor nuclear weapons grew with the development of nuclear weapons themselves, however India decided not to comply with these organisations. In 1956, the IAEA was formed to provide a "safeguard system of inspectors and materials accounting to detect any diversion for military use of materials in declared facilities" (Nayan 2012: 76). However, at a conference to draft the IAEA statute, Dr. Homi Bhabha, the head of India's nuclear research institute, said, "We stand on the brink of a dangerous era sharply dividing the world into atomic 'haves' and 'have-nots' dominated by the Agency" (Weiss 2010: 259). The same issue of dividing the world amongst "haves" and "have-nots" arose during the negations for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. This 1968 treaty divided states among "non-nuclear weapons states" (NNWS) and "nuclear weapons states" (NWS) (Karnad 2002: 226). Article 2 of the

treaty stated that NNWS must not acquire nuclear weapons, yet did not include provisions for NWS to completely disarm (Karnad 2002: 226). Thus, India decided not to join the non-proliferation regime. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi explains this reasoning by saying that:

India's refusal to sign the NPT was based on enlightened self-interest…nuclear weapon powers insist on their right to continue to manufacture more nuclear weapons. This is a situation that cannot be viewed with equanimity by non-nuclear countries, especially as they are called upon to undertake not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons for their own defense… It is only through nuclear disarmament that discrimination would be eliminated and equality between nations established (Paddock 2010: 24).

India's rationale not to join the IAEA or sign the NPT reflect its foreign policy goal of being recognised as a great power. As discussed in Section I, states' identities are co-constituted based on definitions of the "Self" and "Other." India perceives of itself as a great power and thus sees itself as the same status as the "haves," or the NWS, so it would not concede to permanent status with the "have nots," or the NNWS. This rhetoric is clearly revealing the hierarchy that India perceives to exist. Further, since discourse has a "dialectical relationship" with the discursive event, India's grouping of itself with NWS shaped other states' perceptions of India. When India became a nuclear state, it presented itself as a responsible power and was eventually recognised by other states as a "de facto NWS" (Sasikumar 2007: 825).

Additionally, India's decision not to partner with foreign governments and to develop nuclear capabilities reflect its foreign policy goal of maintaining *purna swaraj* through non-alignment and modernisation. As established, interactions construct identity and India's experience with colonialism led it to view foreign powers as threatening. Indira Gandhi's suggestion that the NPT is unjust because it reinforces an unequal distribution of nuclear powers, through which NWS are a threat to NNWS, reflects a suspicion of foreign powers and the international organisations designed by foreign powers. India's foreign policy goal of autonomy was pursued by resisting membership in international regimes, so that it would not be susceptible to foreign interference. Additionally, narratives attributed India's colonisation to lagging technology. Thus, India's goal of maintaining *purna swaraj* through modernisation can be seen in its decision to develop nuclear powers.

**India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' policies**

In addition to its two-fold response to nuclear weapons, India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' policies were formed as a function of India's *moralpolitik* great power and *purna swaraj* ambitions. India's promotion of an "Asian century" founded in Buddhism constructs a hierarchy in which India is a dominant power and reveals its foreign policy goal of being regionally and globally recognised as a great power. Additionally, India's partnership with smaller states reflects its goal of *purna swaraj* from other great powers by pursuing modernisation in the region.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, international society became unipolar and there was a growth in "multilateralism and regionalism based upon common interests" (Ogden 2014: 36). The 'Look East' initiative was declared by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in 1994 with the intention of creating "closer economic military and diplomatic relations" with South Asian countries (Jaffrelot 2003: 46; Ogden 2014: 91). India's External Affairs Minister Inder Gujral justified its emphasis on Asian countries as they are "geographically inseparable, culturally conjoined, and… economically and strategically interdependent and complementary" with India (Scott 2007: 125). The 'Look East' initiative was a response to the collapse of the USSR, as it lost a valuable economic and military partner as well as an "important model of centralised economic planning" (Jaffrelot 2003: 45). The 'Look East' initiative was intended to help India secure regional alliances and "escape Westernization" as India was more "favorably inclined toward Asianism as an alternative to the American capitalist model" (Jaffrelot 2003: 45). Additionally, India experienced a balance of payments crisis in 1991, which compelled India to "liberalise its economy under the authority of the International Monetary Fund" (Jaffrelot 2003: 45). Lastly, India wanted to build alliances to solidify its status as the "natural hegemony" in the region in the face of a rising China (Ogden 2014: 91).

The 'Look East' initiative has gone through several phases since its founding, with the most recent being Modi's 'Act East' policy, which was announced in November 2014 (Bajpaee 2016: 203). Through this policy, Modi reinvigorated

India's engagement with East Asia, as shown by his high profile visits to Japan and China (Bajpaee 2016: 203). Like India's 'Look East' policy, its 'Act East' policy is also influenced by rivalry with China, which has been forming closer military and economic ties with states in the Indian Ocean Region (Scott 2007: 129).

Rhetoric surrounding India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' policies primarily involve promises of a, so-called, "Asian century" (Jaffrelot 2003: 47). Prime Minister Narasimha Roa said in 1994 that, "The Asia-Pacific could be the springboard for our leap into the global market place" and categorised the next century as a "century of partnership" between Asian-Pacific countries (Jaffrelot 2003: 46). The discourse surrounding the 'Look East' and 'Act East' policies emphasise India's shared history and culture with Asian countries. Indian leaders highlighted their respect for "Asian values," and Narasimha Rao declared in Kuala Lumpur in 1995 that he wanted a single "Asian identity" to emerge (Jaffrelot 2003: 49). One aspect of this "Asian identity" includes the centrality of Buddhism (Pethiyagoda 2014: 15). During the 'Look East' period, Indian leaders showed video cassettes of Buddhist sites in India to Thai and South Korean leaders to inspire the sense of a shared culture and history (Jaffrelot 2003: 49). During in the 'Act East' period, Modi propagated this same idea through statements like, "Without Buddha this century cannot be Asia's century" (Pethiyagoda 2014: 15). This emphasis on Buddhist culture is also intended to limit China's soft power, as "it was Indian Buddhism that helped shape Chinese civilization" (Pethiyagoda 2014: 15).

India's formation of regional alliances through the 'Look East' and 'Act East' policies reflect its foreign policy goal of being recognised as a *moralpolitik* great power. Through rhetoric of the "Asian identity," India is constructing the "Self" as India and other Asian countries and the "Other" as non-Asian, but implicitly Western, nations. India is trying to create a "Self" which incorporates the supremacy of Buddhism. This emphasis places India at the core of the Asian identity and creates a strong contrast with the West, which is "known for its materialism and individualistic, anomic society" (Jaffrelot 2003: 38). Additionally, references to Buddhism create a power hierarchy in which India is ranked above China, as India was able to culturally dominate China through Buddhism. This positioning and grouping reflects India's foreign policy goal of being recognised as a great power, as it is seeking both recognition from small states of its great power status and recognition from international society of its leadership in Asia.

Additionally, India's bolstered relationship with Asian countries demonstrates its foreign policy goal of maintaining independence through non-alignment and development. New economic and political alliances seem to contrast non-alignment. However, 'Look East' and 'Act East' are intended to avoid interference in the region from threatening great powers by partnering with smaller, less threatening, states. In the new international system, there is a "necessity of cooperation and independence" (Basrur 2001: 14). These policies help to exclude "great powers from South Asian affairs" by removing incentives for Asian states to call upon other powers for assistance (Bajpai 1998: 178-79). Additionally, India uses rhetoric of Asian self-sufficiency and modernisation, to deter Western powers from interfering in the region. By partnering with smaller states, India is pursuing a "hedging approach" in which it pursues *purna swaraj* by "precluding the imposition of excessive influence by—and constraining the bargaining power of— strong partners" (Basrur 2001: 14-15). India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' policies are steps towards ensuring that India has complete independence from other great powers in the Asian region.

## Conclusion

This essay has argued that the past informs India's and other states' identities, which then determine their interests and foreign policy goals. This essay analysed how India's history as a dominant and an oppressed power affected co-constituted states' identities, social interactions and discourse. It then posited that these identities and interactions resulted in India's foreign policy goals of being a *moralpolitik* great power and achieving *purna swaraj* through non-alignment and modernisation. India's response to nuclear proliferation and its 'Look East' and 'Act East' initiatives revealed that the identities constructed through historical interaction were prevalent in its foreign policy goals. This essay has shown that the past plays a critical role in India's foreign policy development. Thus, as India continues to rise and its goals have greater implications for international society, it is important that India's foreign policy be analysed through a historical lens.

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