Article

Emulated or National? Contemporary India's 'Great Power' Discourse

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Abstract

Its ubiquity notwithstanding, contemporary India's 'great power' discourse does not appear to reflect the concerns of the Indian multitude. Recognizing this condition and approaching the discourse as a political phenomenon that has real effects, this article makes the following suggestions. First, India's great power discourse comes into existence through a pedagogical project wherein the discourse's core assumptions about India's role and purpose in world affairs appear uncritically emulated from the historical experience of other great powers, primarily the United States. Second, even though the discourse is rooted in a historical experience external to the nation, it would be misleading to term the discourse as a 'wholly emulated' one. The agential participation of at least some Indian nationals in carrying out the emulation makes it a 'more emulated and less national' discourse. Third, though it is 'more emulated and less national,' the project normalizes the discourse by erasing the signs of its emulation; so that it can be passed off as a 'wholly national' discourse. This allows the discourse to appropriate the entire imaginative space of the Indian nation and, therefore, of India's international relations. Fourth, once aware of these workings of the pedagogical project, we can wonder how a democratic—that is, a 'more national and less emulated'—idea of India's role and purpose in world affairs could look like.

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Great powers, post-colonialism, non-western IR theory, Indian democracy, pedagogy, emulation, nation

> It is a remarkable feature of our times that so many individuals and collectivities are willing and some even eager to forego their right to design their own futures.
>
> Ashis Nandy (2007: 174)

A lot about contemporary India is easily ignored these days, especially its degrading poverty and the rapacious loot of its natural resources. But it would be difficult to miss the discourse on its 'great power' ambition. Over the past two decades, India's apparently impending great power status has become an abiding feature of most discussions that seek to redefine the country's role and sense of purpose in world affairs. Due to a prolonged period of symbolic, idealistic or naïve engagement with international politics, it is argued in various ways, India kept from realizing its true potential in world affairs. However, since the end of the Cold War, it has been carrying out a series of policy corrections that have created the possibility of its becoming a great power in world affairs. Given the enabling features it possesses—a democratic political system, demographic strength, territorial expanse, historical record, cultural strength, economic performance, and armed capabilities—India is a strong contender for a great power status. Indeed, if the country continues to stay and strengthen the course it has adopted, it would become a great power in a very short period.

Its ubiquity notwithstanding, the discourse seems to have little resonance with India's democratic processes. No general election has been contested on the agenda of making India a great power. No social movement in the country is struggling to influence the governmental apparatus to pursue this goal. No empowered group of ministers has been constituted to examine how India could become a great power; no study tours have been undertaken to capitals of former and current great powers to understand how a great power comes into being. While symbolic national addresses to the Indian multitude occasionally gesture toward India's rising profile in world affairs, the mention of an impending great

power status, to be achieved in a stipulated duration, has been generally absent. It would be reasonable to suggest that for an overwhelming majority of the country—*the most of India*—becoming a great power holds little meaning as it scarcely resonates with their more pressing concerns. Yet, among a section that can be described as *a part of India*, the great power fever lingers like other conceptual maladies that periodically afflict the intellectual space in the tropics.

Recognizing this discord between a ubiquitous great power discourse and India's democratic processes allows us to seek answers to some complex questions. Perhaps the most fundamental of them is about the nature of the discourse: is it national or emulated?[1] That is, are the core assumptions about India's role and purpose in world affairs that make up the discourse drawn from the concerns and aspirations of the most of India? Or do they reflect an uncritical adoption of the historical experience of other great powers? If the answer cannot be expressed in absolute terms, could we understand the discourse as being more emulated and less national? If the discourse is more emulated and less national, how does it manage to appropriate the entire imaginative space of the Indian nation? How is the discourse's ambition for making India a great power, which is shared by a part of India but is alien to the most of India, made to appear a natural and a desirable ambition for *all of India*? If the great power discourse is not national enough, is it possible to think of an idea of India's international relations that reflects the concerns of Indian democracy and is, therefore, more national? Though comprehensive answers to these questions may evade this article, its attempt to acquire a better understanding of India's great power discourse would be conscious of providing some helpful leads to them.

In trying to understand India's great power discourse, it is helpful to postulate the existence of a bi-national pedagogical project with which this discourse is intimately related. If this pedagogical project could be considered, following the Durkheimian rule, as a 'thing,' it becomes possible for us to advance the following suggestions. First, India's great power discourse comes into existence through a pedagogical project wherein the discourse's core assumptions about India's role and purpose in world affairs appear uncritically emulated from the historical experience of other great powers, primarily the US. Second, even though the discourse is rooted in a historical experience external to the nation, it would be misleading to term the discourse as a 'wholly emulated' one.

The agential participation of at least some Indian nationals in carrying out the emulation makes it a 'more emulated and less national' discourse. Third, though it is 'more emulated and less national', the project normalizes the discourse by erasing the signs of its emulation; so that it can be passed off as a 'wholly national' discourse. This allows the discourse to appropriate the entire imaginative space of the Indian nation and, therefore, of India's international relations. Fourth, once aware of these workings of the pedagogical project, we can wonder how a democratic—that is, a more national and less emulated—idea of India's role and purpose in world affairs could look like.

The plea to postulate a pedagogical project at this stage of the article is only partially based on the methodological necessity of creating a heuristic tool through which the ensuing narrative can be constructed. Two other equally important reasons necessitate this submission. One of them is the aptness of relating our efforts with those instances of postcolonial thought that have identified a pedagogical project mediating the discursive space of the colonial world. Scholars have argued that to fully understand the enslavement of the native mind it is useful to view colonialism as a pedagogical project.[2] Thus, Ashis Nandy argues that the trans-territorial theories that translated geographical space into chronological time, thus enabling different cultural zones of the world to appear inferior to Europe, illustrate how '[c]olonialism had become a pedagogical project' (2012: 40). 'The driving force of colonial modernity', writes Partha Chatterjee, 'is a pedagogical mission' (2011: 78); see also Bhabha (2004: 199–244) and Chakrabarty (2000: 6–16). A critical function of the colonial pedagogical project was to normalize the emulation of the western knowledge claims by the natives. At an advanced stage of colonialism, the workings of the project enabled the native elite to emulate western ideas of creating political communities by learning them from the West and then passing them to the native masses as nationalist thought (see Partha Chatterjee 1993). The pedagogical project identified in this article may be performing a similar function of normalizing the great power discourse by erasing the signs of its emulation. The other reason is based on one's primary impression of the great power discourse, which seems to possess an instructional intent. The prescriptive tone of the discourse is distinguishing. This instinctive sense is first abstracted and then employed to strengthen the

case for postulating a pedagogical project as necessary to the actual development of the article.

Outlining some additional method-related aspects would be useful here. First, two phrases describing two distinct parts of populations within India are frequently used to sketch this article. The phrase 'a part of India' tries to describe that growing part of the Indian population which has been the prime beneficiary of economic liberalization. It is largely young or middle-aged, often newly rich, urban, literate, 'middle' and 'upper' caste, mostly male and Hindu. It dislikes politics, demands governance, is oblivious to history and understands democracy to mean an opportunity for exercising individual freedom rather than a mechanism to secure responsible social justice. Its most critical asset may be the visibility it sustains in the mass media, which enables it to articulate its aspirations such that they can frequently claim the entire imaginative space of the Indian nation. The phrase 'the most of India' tries to describe all of Indian population barring a part of India. It is so diverse that it defies singular characterization. It is comprised of Dalit people, indigenous people, religious minorities, progressive social movements, self-determination groups and women. Much of it lives in non-urban and non-metropolitan India, including in the forests, the hills and on the spatial margins of the Indian nation. Although its constituents differ radically with each other in their conceptions of democracy, they are united by their political determination to engage the avenues of Indian democracy to create emancipatory life conditions. Their politics has given rise to such democratic practices that cannot be traced back to the largely-liberal prescriptions of the Indian Constitution. However, despite its demographic strength and contributions to Indian democracy, its visions and aspirations do not receive fair representation in the mass media. They remain mostly unarticulated.[3] Second, pedagogy is used here not merely in the *lexical* sense of being 'the art, occupation or practice of teaching', as the OED records it, but also in an emphatically *political* sense, which would become clear during the course of this article. Third, although aware of the 'proper' meaning of 'great power' in specialist IR literature, this article works with a more contextual, diffused meaning of the term that obtains in contemporary India. Fourth, the term 'discourse' is used here in its familiar meaning of being a set of interrelated empirical and normative knowledge claims that constitute a whole which has

real effects. Fifth, empirical evidences used here are intended to *constitute* the overall argument rather than to illustrate its specific claims, even though the constitutive use of evidence does not undermine its illustrative function. Sixth, although its arguments have normative implications, the article offers an empirical analysis of the great power discourse, not a normative one. Finally, the subject of this article leads to unavoidable ambiguities. These may be overlooked on the plea that this article attempts an *exploratory* account of a political phenomenon, not a *conclusive* one.

Introductory

An unusual first step, of using a 'fictional' method, is needed for us to begin to see how the great power discourse emerges from the pedagogical project. Let us consider an imaginary pedagogue exercising an instance of retroactive pedagogy in the late 1990s. The pedagogue's pupil is the equally imaginary India—half a century old but lacking maturity and afflicted with numerous shortcomings that characterize a deviant. The pedagogue's purpose is to make the pupil realize its potential in international politics and to do so the pupil must be taught a lesson. After briefly laying down the elemental features of international relations, the pedagogue recounts the distinctive virtues of the system of states. It (the pedagogue) recalls how the system was forged over half a millennium in a merciless cauldron of wars, assassinations, treaties, trade, alliances, and revolutions. The pupil is informed, with special emphasis, about the Westphalian and Bretton Woods arrangements—two dominant trendsetters of the norm in international politics; two names (and two events) that lay down the code of conduct for states possessing certain material capabilities and ideational character in international politics.

The pedagogue carries on: although India as a sovereign state did not participate in these two events—during the first, its previous-previous avatar, the Mughal empire was busy building the Taj Mahal while during the second it was in the more urgent process of coming into being—yet India had the capability and the character to not just behave according to the norm set by the Westphalian–Bretton Woods system but also

excel to become a rare thing in international politics. India had the geography, the population, the political system, the westernized nationalist elite and the imperial background—all essential ingredients that could make it, had it played by the norm, that rarity of international politics: a great power.

The pedagogue feels indignant that India missed the opportunity and it wants the pupil to internalize that sense of loss. So it carries on. When the pupil was young, the leaders of the Westphalian–Bretton Woods world–also known as the Allies, the Democracies, the Free World, or the First World—had such eager expectations of India. Back then India seemed set to become the world's first non-western, liberal democratic, great power. The West expected India to adopt market economy, strengthen global institutions, join the war against Communism, and promote democracy. It wanted India to join the system and consolidate it. Instead, the pupil became delusional and lost its way. It does not matter what it wanted to do with that vagueness called Nonalignment. Transcend? Subvert? Or transform the system? May be; it does not matter anymore. What is clear is that the pupil, having been endowed with capabilities and character, and having shown early promise of becoming a party to the norm, had turned rogue, had turned deviant; it had become an exception.

The pedagogue now delivers the introductory lesson of the pedagogical project it wants the pupil to learn-by-heart. 'Listen carefully India the sovereign state: there are costs of being an exception. You didn't notice it despite your lichen-like growth rate, your caste-infected democracy, your trade-unionist Third Worldism, your thrashing in 1962 by a peasant state. You didn't notice it but behaving exception to the norm has severe costs. You began seeing it in the 1980s, when your pretense of syncretism, your grandiose ambition of governing a wide territory, your social experiment—more error, less trial—began unravelling faster than glacial recession. You barely scraped through. Others are not all that lucky. Remember the Soviet Union? It disappeared. Now here is a lesson you must learn from your past as an exception to the norm of international politics: if you stretch it too far, you may cease to exist as a sovereign state. If you play by the norm, you can become a great power.'

This fictional method of accessing the introductory lesson of the pedagogical project becomes necessary in the absence of prior

knowledge of the existence of the project itself. Our problem here is akin to that of the first nationalists who do not have evidence to establish the prior existence of the nation. The pedagogical project, like the nation, must be imagined into existence. However, once imagined into existence, it becomes possible to speak of the project, in much the same way as it becomes possible to speak of the nation, as a phenomenon that has real effects.

In what ways can these effects be understood? First, the introductory lesson makes available a psychological instrument through which a potential group of Indians can be tutored about normal and exceptional behavior in international politics, especially about the severe costs that exceptional behavior induces. Second, the lesson makes it possible to create a narrative which depicts India's Cold War international conduct as exceptional and deviant. Third, it follows that through adoption of proper policies India can embark on normal international conduct in the post-Cold War period, something that would prevent it from being punished again for exceptional behavior. Fourth, given that the US-led the group of countries that emerged victorious from the Cold War, it is the ideal country from which lessons about the normal international conduct can be learnt. Since India possesses all the prerequisites for becoming a great power, these lessons in normal international conduct would ensure that India realizes its potential in international politics. Thus, the introductory lesson creates a potential constituency of at least a group of Indians—a part of India—willing to learn the lessons in making India a great power. Since these lessons are to be based on the experiences of the US, it ensures the participation of some select persons, who share national or residential affinity with that country, to impart these lessons.

It now becomes possible for us to conceptualize a bi-national class comprising some persons who impart the lessons in the art of making India a great power and some persons who learn these lessons. Belonging to two different nations and performing two distinct functions, they are nevertheless united in their goal of helping India become a great power. Their unity of purpose makes it possible to think of them as a distinct and autonomous class that shares a common intellectual space. For convenience, this bi-national class and space can be called 'Indo-US'. Collectively, these conceptual advantages allow us to think of the pedagogical project as a 'thing' in itself.

Creating the Discourse

The fully-formed great power discourse we encounter in contemporary India is created by the bi-national pedagogical project in two stages. In the first stage, those members of the project who are affiliated with the US use specific lessons—lessons being the essence of a pedagogical project—to initiate its creation. At least three types of lessons in the art of making India a great power can be identified. The first comprises some preparatory strategies which make it possible to *think* of India as a great power. As a part of these strategies, a constituency of new Indians is identified from among whom a new India can be imagined. A new understanding about this new India is created, especially about its current capabilities and its potential role in world affairs. Under the second lesson, some handholding gestures are initiated to help India get a *feel* of the great power politics. The third lesson draws attention to some *actions* that India, as an emerging great power, must take. These actions, the project suggests, would help India plan its rise as a great power, make its rise appear peaceful and enable it to contribute to the world as a great power.

Lesson One—Conceiving India as a Great Power

To begin its lessons, the pedagogical project must first establish the presence of a distinctly new India. This is necessary because there exist (at least) two older ideas of India that can undermine the project with their reticence and complacency, respectively. First, there is the old India, that is, the India of the Cold War period, which might be reticent to learn the new lessons on becoming a great power. Second, there is the India of more slippery vintage. Alternating between history and memory, it displays the complacency of having repeatedly achieved, and discarded, imperial, spiritual and rhetorical greatness. 'If I've been a great spiritual, imperial and rhetorical power before, why should I aspire to become one again?' it asks. Therefore, it becomes necessary for the project to imagine a 'new' India whose members can be taught to conceive India as a great power. Once they become capable of conceiving the country as such, actual instructions on making it a great power can be imparted to

them. This new India is imagined from among the post-liberalization generation of urban Indians, whose most distinctive quality is their young age.

The Indian youth is the ideal category to imagine a new India because it is emotionally distanced from the historical memory of post-independence impulses and appears nearly unbothered about deep history. Ontologically averse to considering the past as an avenue of understanding the present-self, this generation is future oriented. It can therefore be taught more effectively to dream about and aspire for values and life conditions that, although rehearsed with terrible consequences in other settings of the world, can be passed off as entirely novel and desirable. It is this youth that largely forms a part of India.

Having become the most appropriate site for imagining a new India, the youth gets marketed as both the primary purveyor and the beneficiary of India's potential great power status. The argument is that the success of their aspirations will make India a great power; and that India must become a great power to fulfill their aspirations. The merit of identifying its youth as the pivot of India's coming great power status is that it puts a time limit on the achievement of that status. For the peculiarity of a demographic dividend, which India apparently currently enjoys, is that it doesn't last forever; a decade or two, but no more. It appears pragmatic therefore that India's demographic advantage is not merely illustrated by demographers and economists (Basu 2007) but also the US president. Here is a specific, suggestively-instructive and hopeful Barack Obama: 'You are the future leaders, innovators, educators, entrepreneurs. In a country of more than a billion people, more than half the Indians are under 30 years. That's an extraordinary statistic. It speaks of a great sense of possibility' (Gaikwad 2010). The 'great sense of possibility' Obama is referring to is one of India becoming a great power. It is the Indian youth that makes it possible to think of this possibility.

Speaking to the Indian Parliament, President Bill Clinton had hoped that his visit 'will help the American people to see the *new India* and to understand you better' (*Press Information* Bureau 2000; emphasis added). This must have been a comforting statement for a part of India because lineally it belongs to a 'class of persons' (as Macaulay identified it) that has often understood itself through the eyes of the West. It is on this understanding of itself, whose contours are drawn in the West, that a

part of India could think of India as a great power. Not unusually, therefore, the first lesson also comprises initiatives that help produce such understanding about this 'new India' as might strengthen the conception of its becoming a great power.

These initiatives have taken at least two forms. The first involves the creation of new or separate institutional spaces in western (especially American) universities, think-tanks and learned societies to promote such understanding. Helping India realize its potential and cope with the many difficult challenges as it rises globally are the stated aims of these India 'Initiatives,' 'Institutes', and 'Projects' that have mushroomed lately. In 2009, an associate of one such institution identified 'significant shortcomings in India's foreign policy institutions' that prevent 'the country from achieving great-power status'. He then proposed 'steps that both New Delhi and Washington should take [to overcome these shortcomings], assuming they aim to promote India's rise as a great power' (Markey 2009). Institutional space is also made available for intellectual activities—writings and conferences, seminars, debates—about contemporary India's problems and prospects that have bearings on its great power trajectory.[4]

The second form is manifested in a new genre of writings about India that has emerged as a part of this preparatory strategy. The popular articles, long narrative pieces, policy papers, market reports and books that make up this genre share some related dispositions on knowledge about India in common. One, they emphasize the centrality of the contemporary as the legitimate site for truly understanding India. Two, they portray Indian past as a deficit period in its history that is being swiftly compensated by efforts of its business leaders, young entrepreneurs and new strategists. Three, they share a remarkably homogenous idea of new India which is largely Hindu, youngish, 'upper' caste, middle-upper class, mostly masculine and urbane. Four, they emphasize the growing demand in new India for governance rather than politics. If at all, they prescribe a politics that is devoid of history, tradition and culture, that is, a politics devoid of itself. Five, they suggest statistical figures as the proper indicators for understanding the new India and anticipating its future trajectory. These dispositions reflect and are constitutive of a part of India and therefore preclude the possibility of appropriately recognizing the concerns of the most of India. Following

Said and Nandy, it is not difficult to realize that though often ostensibly written for American and western readers, these writings seek to educate a part of India about the current capabilities of their country which make it a potential great power.[5]

These discursive exercises create a favorable general context from where images of India's potential contribution to international politics as a great power can be painted. Perhaps the most powerful of these images of India's impending influence are painted by western political leaders in general but more specifically by the American political leadership. To illustrate: the speeches of Presidents Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama have identified the possible roles India could perform as it becomes, with American efforts, a great power. For Clinton, these were four: strengthening bilateral (Indo-US) economic relations; sustaining global economic growth; moving the world from industrial to information age; and securing democracy and development from forces that could undermine them (*Press Information Bureau* 2000). For Bush, these were two: expanding the 'circle of prosperity and development across the world' and 'to defeat our common enemies by advancing the just and noble cause of human freedom' (*The Wall Street Journal* 2006). For Obama, these were three: promoting prosperity in both countries; strengthening shared security; and strengthening the foundations of 'democratic governance' at home and abroad (*The Indian Express* 2010).

These enumerations of India's responsibilities as a potential great power have been invariably preceded by a tactical move that erases all meaningful differences between the two democracies. More specifically, it makes Indian democracy appear similar to American democracy in its normative political goals in the domestic realm and its vision for the world at large. Thus, Clinton claimed that 'India and America are natural allies, two nations conceived in liberty, each finding strength in its diversity, *each seeing in the other a reflection of its own aspiration for a more humane and just world*' (*Press Information Bureau* 2000; emphasis added); Bush read 'freedom' as the dominant political goal of Indian democracy (*The Wall Street Journal* 2006); and Obama noted how the constitutions of the two countries began with the same words 'We the people' (*The Indian Express* 2010). This is a crucial pedagogical move. It educates a part of India about the nature of Indian democracy, which otherwise appears too complex to understand. The epistemic claim that

the two democracies share a similar vision about domestic and international politics makes it possible to suggest that India as a great power can perform the same roles that the US performs as a great power. This enables the pedagogical project to strengthen the idea of making India a great power among a part of India; for the knowledge that the ambition coheres with the normative aspirations of Indian democracy provides it extraordinary legitimacy. This move also sharpens the differences between the two ideas of Indian democracy held by a part of India and the most of India. Educated by the pedagogical project, a part of India believes that the goal of making India a great power is mandated by the workings of Indian democracy. As we would later see, the most of India disagrees with the belief that Indian democracy can be compatible with any ambition of making India a great power.

Lesson Two—Getting a Feel of the Great Power Politics

If the first lesson makes it possible to conceive India as a great power, the second lesson helps it get a feel of great power politics. This is done through handholding gestures that help an 'emergent' great power familiarize with the strenuous ways of international high politics. It is possible to identify a remarkably coherent, decade-long trail of remarks from high-ranking US officials that convey American commitment and actions to help India become a great power in a manner that resembles a father's commitment to help his teenage son negotiate the ways of the world; or the way the school teacher educates its students in the proper civic conduct.[6] In 2000, for instance, the soon-to-be National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice noted that 'India is not a great power yet, but it has the potential to emerge as one' (Rice 2000: 56). By 2005, it was possible to speak of a conscious US decision 'to help India become a major world power in the twenty-first century' (Tellis 2005: 9). By 2010, President Obama could accept before Indian legislators America's handholding efforts: 'And let me say it as clearly as I can: the United States not only welcomes India as a rising global power, we fervently support it, and *we have worked to help make it a reality*' (*The Indian Express* 2010; emphasis added). In that speech and while speaking elsewhere in India, Obama also declared that American handholding of India had been

successful: 'United States does not believe, as some people say, (that) India is a rising power. We believe that India has already risen. India is taking its rightful place in Asia and on the global stage. And we see India's emergence as good for the United States and the world' (Gaikwad 2010). Nearly every US statement on India, made by US officials in the context of Indo-US relations during this period, invoked the element of 'help' or 'assistance' that the former was willing to provide the latter along its way to great power status. India, in the official US estimate, went within a decade from being an emerging great power to one that had already emerged. These verbal assurances haven't been conceptual alone as the US has often offered to help India resolve its disputes with Pakistan and China and also assist it in its 'fight' against terrorism—all of these seen as impediments to its great power status.

That the handholding gestures are not confined to verbal cushions alone became evident from the US efforts to secure a position for India in the nuclear club. It is possible to view the over three years of American diplomatic efforts, during which various stages of the civilian nuclear deal were negotiated, as a concrete instance of its handholding of India. The nuclear deal was at least as much about symbolism as about strategic, diplomatic and economic interests. The impressions of the deal in relevant quarters are of its being a rite of passage for India's great power ambition, its first step toward joining the big league. Such images invariably made the US the patron that helped an Indian client get a feel of an elite space in international politics. The deal was also a striking evidence of the existence and the effectiveness of the bi-national class which utilized the common bi-national space to swiftly and dramatically mobilize convergent views to secure it.[7]

Lesson Three—Acting Like a Great Power

While the first two lessons are concerned with the intellectual and affective dimensions of making India a great power, the third is about action. Here, attention is drawn to actions that India as a rising great power must take. The project suggests that these would help India plan its rise as a great power, make its rise appear peaceful and enable it to contribute to the world as a great power.

Three concepts gained salience in the post-Cold War American international relations discourse: soft power, grand strategy, and democracy promotion. Soft power, Joseph Nye's influential concept which fascinated the academic and diplomatic communities for over a decade, was seen as the new tool for the US to retain its leadership in a world devoid of concrete ideological adversaries. Similarly, the need for a new American grand strategy suited for a more fluid, less predictable world was also underlined. Finally, promotion of western liberal democratic values—'democracy promotion'—became a key element of US foreign policy. Thus, the three were seen as crucial to redefining US role as a great power in the post-Cold War world. As the word on India's rise as a great power gained traction, the necessity for India to also adopt these three concepts was underlined by the project.

George Tanham's observations on India's strategic thought can be seen as the moment through which it became possible for the project to emphasize, subsequently with increasing effect, that India must have a grand strategy (Tanham 1992). It is not difficult to come across writings that note India's peculiar strategic culture (Cohen 2002: 37–91, for example), making it possible to imply that the country must adopt a grand strategy. Similarly, numerous writings counseling India to identify and employ its soft power to facilitate its 'rise' as a great power can be found (see Mullen and Ganguly 2012; also, Wagner 2010). Finally, as the world's largest democracy India has been identified as one of the core contributors to the project of promoting western liberal democratic values through various political interventions. Efforts to enlist India in western democracy promotion initiatives began toward the end of the Clinton presidency and have continued till date; though complaints about India's unenthusiastic response to western overtures have also grown lately. While in the context of the US, the three concepts seem to serve a common purpose of helping the US retain its leadership and influence in world politics, they serve potentially different purpose in the context of India. Thus, grand strategy, it has been argued, would help India plan its rise—making its international relations more or less immune to domestic political conditions, and allowing it to employ its resources in a more focused fashion. Soft power would enable India to charm the world with what is natural to the country—its culture—lending it comparative advantages that neither China nor Pakistan, its

two primary adversaries, possess. And given that India is a 'successful' democracy, it is natural that its role as a new great power involves promotion and safeguarding of a democratic world.

Emulation and Normalization of the Great Power Discourse

Thus, during the first stage, the pedagogical project initiates the creation of the great power discourse. However, the discourse remains partially formed at this stage; it would become fully formed only after a part of India participates in the process of its creation. In this second stage, the discourse is adopted by a part of India. More specifically, it is adopted by the vanguard that not only represents a part of India but also belongs to the Indian side of the bi-national class that constitutes the pedagogical project. It is evident that adopting the discourse requires that the vanguard learn-by-heart the lessons in the art of making India a great power. We must record the evidence of this learning before allowing ourselves to be surprised by one of its outcomes.

The Lessons Learnt

One, the lesson of the imaginary pedagogue in the cost of exception is now a staple of India's foreign policy narratives. Most contemporary mainstream accounts lend credence to the thesis that the Cold War period was one of lost opportunity for India and that the state's deviant ways had brought it on the verge of possible disintegration.[8] These narratives thus reflect the pedagogue's framing of the problematic and approve of the policy correctives undertaken by the Indian state.

Two, the notion that India is becoming a great power is now firmly shared by an influential section of Indian IR intellectuals and public commentators. In these spaces, the debate is no more about ascertaining the validity of the notion or the desirability of pursuing policies that reflect a 'rising' great power. It is rather about identifying the obstacles (which are held to be chiefly domestic and arising from the workings of

Indian democracy) that can prevent India's 'rise' to great power status and setting the agenda of action for a great power India.

Three, India's 'youth' is increasingly becoming the all-encompassing center-point of its aspirational politics. Young age now appears the most desirable quality to claim political leadership, relegating older requirements such as political acumen and imagination. The literature, both written and oral, advising young political and business leaders of India on how to make India great can remind us of the 'advice for princes' genre of writings that prevailed in early modern Europe (of which Machiavelli's *The Prince* is an example). The lesson in the brevity of the demographic advantage has hit home, alerting political leaders and intellectuals alike to the necessity of taking swift policy actions. Thus, the human resource development minister notes with concern that India has a 'window' of a decade to reform its education system, failing which the country would be 'destined to mediocrity' (Chopra 2012). And a leading public intellectual reminds in his open letter to the 'most eligible' young person of Indian politics that, 'time is of the essence. Our demography is giving us a short-term boost. Despite global uncertainty, this is a huge moment of opportunity for India. But this opportunity will not last, and if we miss this decade, we shall forever be condemned to poverty' (Mehta 2011). It is understood that overcoming poverty and reforming an education system that reproduces mediocrity are prerequisites to the great power status.

Four, knowledge about contemporary India is being increasingly anchored in statistical indicators. These include present and projected numbers depicting India's GDP growth rate, length of its national highways, size of its nuclear arsenal, strength of its 'middle' class, range of its inflation, and so on. Due to this dominance of numbers, reflective (that is, non-statistical) means of assessing the life-world, used by the most of India, are becoming marginalized.

Five, proclaiming the intent to set 'global standards' in every field of activity is becoming a widespread practice. For instance, the term 'world class' is overused and can be found indiscriminately prefixed to material structures such as buildings and roads as well as more complex sites like cities, universities, and their faculty.

Six, 'good governance', considered necessary for making India a great power, has become entrenched in metropolitan India's imagination.

Absence of good governance is now cited as the reason for all that is wrong with contemporary India, including its politics. Politics, it is being argued, must be replaced by governance, implying that the two are opposite conditions.

Seven, new writings describing contemporary and future India often betray fraternal gratitude to the idea of India being promoted in the West, especially in the US. Examples of these are books that 'rediscover', 'imagine', and outline the 'idea' of India for a new generation of 'doers' (see Desai 2009; Khilnani 2012; Nilekani 2010). There are other writings that, in order to facilitate an understanding of India for the great power constituency, simplify the nature of its politics, including its democracy, secularism and practices of citizenship. At the very least, these gloss over the political frictions of Indian politics that give Indian democracy its unprecedented character (Ganguly and Mukherjee 2011; Varma 2009). Furthermore, scholarly writings that claim that early tenets of India's foreign policy such as Nonalignment were of little meaning and utility by establishing their apparent political and strategic vacuity can also be identified (Ganguly 2012: 1–10). Also identifiable are writings that suggest compatibility between India's early foreign policy and contemporary western impulses such as promotion of liberal democratic values (Bhagavan 2012; Muni 2009).

Eight, indicating that it has acted on the handholding gestures, the government has subtly shifted the emphasis of its nuclear policy from pursuing disarmament to that of promoting non-proliferation.

Nine, the concern for India's 'global image' has begun bordering on anxiety. This anxiety is manifested in various ways. When a western magazine questions the political acumen of the 'most eligible' young person of Indian politics, it is widely debated in certain sections of the media. When the prime minister is criticized by the western media the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) steps in to ensure damage control. Downgrading of its economy by credit rating agencies draws animated responses from the highest offices of the government. India's global image is also said to be dented by corruption, investor-unfriendly climate and lack of bureaucratic reforms.

Ten, at least some influential Indians seem to have internalized the third lesson in acting like a great power. Much emphasis is laid on making the Indian state apparatus realize the importance of using its soft

power, which can make India a 'global leader.' Among others, this argument has been forwarded consistently by the former deputy external affairs minister Shashi Tharoor. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), a state institution, has taken lead in projecting India's soft power, which for it can mean the global appeal of Bollywood and the power of yoga, around the world (Madhusree Chatterjee 2009). Acknowledging the general absence of a 'strategic culture' in India, influential Indians have also begun offering their systematic thoughts on an Indian grand strategy that would help it act like a great power.[9] Finally, it is becoming increasingly common for influential Indians to claim, contentiously,[10] that because India is a 'liberal' democracy, it must join the western powers in their efforts to bring about 'political modernization' (a euphemism for promoting liberal democracy) of the world, especially in the Middle East, but also in southern Asia (Joshi 2006; Mohan 2006, 2007, 2010a). Evidently, the three concepts—soft power, democracy promotion, and grand strategy—have become central tools in the new India's 'cultural grammar of "great power" aspiration' (to borrow Siddharth Mallavarapu's (2007) phrase).

We face an interesting phenomenon here. As is evident, the vanguard that represents a part of India has thoroughly and uncritically learnt the lessons in the art of making India a great power. Its learning completes the process of the creation of the great power discourse, causing a fully-formed discourse to emerge.

However, this learning is actually emulation. The great power lessons were made in a context external to the Indian nation. They reflect the ways of international conduct not of the Indian nation but (mostly) of the US. Since it is on these lessons that the discourse is built, it follows that the fully-formed great power discourse is not nationally generated but is emulated from outside the nation. Cunningly, however, the vanguard does not acknowledge that it has learnt the art of making India a great power from outside the nation. It does not acknowledge therefore the existence of the pedagogical project either, thereby implying that these ideas about making India a great power, about India's role and purpose in world affairs, that constitute the great power discourse, are nationally generated. At this moment, the vanguard, on behalf of a part of India, claims the fully-formed great power discourse to be a national one. From here onwards the vanguard can further nationalize the discourse,

educating on its own a part of India in the art of making India a great power and recruiting new adherents to the great power ambition. It can now look forward to acquiring a hegemonic position: appropriating the entire imaginative space of the Indian nation, and therefore of India's international relations, and delegitimizing any challenge to the great power ambition.

Has the pedagogical project been abandoned? And is it the fate of the pedagogical project to be abandoned by an ungrateful pupil? Perhaps not.[11]

A Familiar Function

We confront here a familiar function of the pedagogical project where it has, after facilitating the emulation of the lessons in the art of making India a great power, the lessons which create the discourse, erased the traces of that emulation. The familiarity and the significance of this function can be better appreciated if we recall the prevalence of the phenomenon, during colonialism, of the emulation of the colonizer by the native nationalist elite. The paradox of anti-colonial nationalism was that the emulation of the colonizer was necessary to prove that the colony was capable of self-rule and hence deserved sovereignty, a status that could arrive only with the colonizer's exit. The persistence of colonial rule was justified by claiming that the native was ignorant of the civilized ways of modernity and colonialism helped the native learn those ways. Emulation of the colonizer was therefore binding on the native nationalist elite in order to get rid of the colonizer. However, this paradox ceases to exist in the postcolonial ambition of becoming a great power. Here, the postcolonial elite (that is, the vanguard of a part of India) is under no binding obligation to emulate the lessons in the art of making India a great power. This is because unlike the nationalist goal of attaining sovereignty, attaining great power status appears, at least to the most of India, not a necessity but a choice.[12] It follows that the most of India could object to efforts by the vanguard and a part of India to commit scarce Indian resources to a superfluous goal. To make its opposition to the great power ambition effective, the most of India would have to establish that the discourse which legitimizes this ambition is not generated from

within the nation but outside of it; that it is emulated. To deny the most of India the opportunity to make its opposition effective, the vanguard must ensure that the traces of emulation, which was necessary to help the great power discourse become fully formed, must be erased.

When the traces of emulation are erased, the great power discourse would become normalized. It can then be marketed as a national discourse. This would also render ineffective the most of India's opposition to the great power ambition.

Normalizing the Great Power Discourse

It is the pedagogical project that normalizes the discourse. For the project, the key to normalizing the great power discourse is to expand the bi-national class by recruiting and admitting new members. India's economic reforms have created many opportunities for mobility that suit individuals with entrepreneurial spirit to become successful in their respective fields. The project draws such individuals, especially if they are Indians born, raised and professionally occupied in India, into the bi-national class. A common process for their recruitment and admission is to ensure their constant presence in key strategic spaces such as the mass media. A curious feature of debates on contemporary issues that take place in the Indian media, especially in its English language media, is that even on very specific matters of international relations such as foreign policy, economic policy or relations with major powers, there is less participation of academics and specialists and more of non-specialist figures who are better known. Thus, it is increasingly common to find businesspersons, management professionals, senior journalists, former diplomats, soldiers and bureaucrats, political writers, film actors, advertisement persons and some savvy political leaders keenly and repeatedly expressing their broadly similar views on how India's international relations should be conducted.[13] Drawn from those fields of contemporary India whose practitioners have benefitted immensely from its liberalization processes, this group of persons becomes the ideal vanguard of a part of India that aspires to follow their footsteps. Their constant presence in the mass media helps the vanguard socialize a part of India into its worldview.

This convergence of mostly non-specialist commentators and opinion-makers creates a cohesive group whose members share similar views about India's potential in world affairs, namely that it can become a great power. The similarity between their views and those of the bi-national class causes them to be easily inducted into the bi-national class, thereby expanding it. These commentators and opinion-makers thus become the new Indian members of the bi-national class. How does the expansion of this class enable the pedagogical project to normalize the process of emulation? A likely mechanism can be outlined.

Although the bi-national class as a whole is constituted by members of two nationalities that share a broadly similar vision about India's potential in world affairs, they perform two different functions based on their affiliations with the two nations. We have seen how the lessons in the art of making India a great power are created by those members of the bi-national class that share greater affinity—through either birth or residence; national or intellectual—with the US. This is because these members are better placed to abstract the experience of the US as an existing great power, create lessons from that abstraction, and make them available for learning by a part of India. It is on these lessons that India's great power discourse rests. The new Indian members of the bi-national class learn/emulate these lessons because they consider the US a desirable model. However, the logic of numbers becomes operational here, which begins erasing the traces of emulation from the very beginning of the phenomenon of emulation. The more number of Indians emulate these lessons for their purpose, the more national does the discourse become. This is because the emulators, who were born and raised in India and who have accepted these as desirable lessons for India, are also constituents of the Indian nation. Analytically, this nationalization of an emulated discourse takes place in two stages: first, through the acceptance of the lessons that the discourse is made of by the new Indian members of the expanding bi-national class, that is, the vanguard; second, the wider adoption of this fully-formed discourse by a part of India that follows the vanguard. The involvement of conscious human agency of Indian nationals—comprising the vanguard and a part of India—empties the act of emulation of its meaning, replacing it with agential human choice. This makes it possible to portray the great power discourse as a national discourse.[14] Thus, by expanding the bi-national class through

recruitment of new Indian members, the pedagogical project ensures that the emulation involved in the creation of the great power discourse cannot be called emulation anymore. And thus, although India's great power discourse acquires the actual character of being more emulated and less national, it can also be posed, with the help of hegemonic tools, as wholly national.

The Democratic Alternative to the Great Power Discourse

The Hegemony of the Great Power Discourse

We can now say, with a degree of assuredness, that India's great power discourse is more emulated and less national. Its emulated character comes from its being modeled on the experience that is external to the nation; its national character comes from its acceptance and further articulation by the nationals who form a part of India. However, by erasing the traces of emulation, the pedagogical project normalizes the discourse and makes it capable for being brandished, marketed and further articulated as a wholly national discourse. Thus, a more emulated and less national discourse reinvents itself as a wholly national discourse. For its next step, this great power 'national' discourse does not require the pedagogical project. It appropriates, in a hegemonic fashion, the entire imaginative space of the Indian nation, and therefore, of India's international relations. Its privileged bi-national setting and access to strategic resources allow the great power discourse to deny the emergence of any national normative or empirical alternatives to the great power ambition that it articulates. The voices that question the salience of the great power ambition are dubbed infantile and a throwback to the past. By terming these critiques as forms of morality mongering, the great power discourse does not merely insulate the great power ambition from a moral challenge, it also renders illegitimate the possibility of a moral challenge to the ambition.[15]

However, it is the discourse's management of the more credible empirical challenge—that of Indian democracy—to its appropriation of the entire imaginative space of the nation, and so of India's

international relations, that deserves more attention. It is useful to recall that India's state apparatus appears relatively less enthusiastic about attaining great-power status than the ubiquitous great power discourse would want it to be. Some part of this caution may be rooted in prudence. But a lot of this caution also comes from the awareness that despite a burgeoning class that swells the ranks of a part of India, there is a sizable constituency—the most of India—that disagrees with the great power ambition. The disagreement may be implied in the political language specific to the government and the governed, but it cannot be ignored; especially when this most of India is also the primary stakeholder of the country's democratic processes. Aware of this empirical challenge, the discourse plays an obstructive role. It prevents the political ontology created by India's democratic processes from becoming the basis of an articulated alternative imagination of India's role and purpose in world affairs.

Glimpses of the Democratic Alternative

Although the initial design of Indian democracy was emulated from the liberal, constitutional models of democracy available in the West, its observers have highlighted the distinctive nature of the consolidation of Indian democracy since independence. They have pointed out that the practices of Indian democracy do not resemble the past or contemporary experiences of western liberal democracies. Having begun with a liberal, constitutional intent, Indian democracy has come to comprise practices that are unprecedented and must therefore be understood on their own terms. Neither properly liberal nor adequately social, India, Partha Chatterjee has suggested, is principally a 'postcolonial democracy' (2011). These readings of Indian democracy foreground the increasing agency claimed by the Indian multitude to act upon its life-world. Even though some of these agential instances may be undesirable—the consolidation of caste, for instance—they represent the most of India's refusal to conform its practices to the expectations, expressed at the independence, that were based on the emulation of the western experiences of democracy. Given that Indian democracy's liberal, constitutional intent was authored by the nationalist 'class of persons', its

postcolonial practices represent its distinctiveness from, and not the emulation of, the western political experience. Rather than fashioning a faux-ontology on an epistemic tradition borrowed from the West, the practices of Indian democracy have created a distinct political ontology that has overcome the pedagogical intent of the nationalist class.

The most of India has used the democratic openings accorded to it by the nationalist elite to act upon and radically (the word is used diagnostically) transform the national political context. Yet, very little of this deeply significant transformation has been acknowledged by broader IR discourses of contemporary India. It is possible to hypothesize a conceptual stance that treats the processes of Indian democracy as phenomena of 'domestic' politics that have little or no bearing on India's international relations. A more acute version of this stance is evident in the hegemonic great power discourse, which views the political contestations of Indian democracy as a 'factor' that constrains India's emergence as a great power.[16] It is naïve to believe that in contemporary times, when local and national actions have global repercussions, democratic actions of the most of India can have bearings only on the national context; that their practices may not hold directions for India's international conduct.[17] If international forces affect its life conditions, the most of India must have some empirical assessments of and normative judgments toward these forces. It is reasonable, therefore, to wonder how this sense of the world can be treated either as irrelevant to India's international relations or as constraints on the country's impending great power status that must be overcome through proper governmental action.[18] And also ask how representative of the social diversity and democratic aspirations of the most of India is India's IR.

Nevertheless, by bracketing Indian democracy into the 'domestic' sphere, and by framing it as a constraining 'factor', India's IR discourses more broadly and the great power discourse in particular foreclose the option of considering the implications of Indian democracy for its international relations. This foreclosing also discourages the possibility of attempting to articulate, through careful interpretive exercises, a vision for India's international relations that is derived from the experiences of its democracy and that can become an alternative to the great power discourse.[19] Such a vision, interpreted and articulated, would comprise a set of claims and preferences about India's international relations based

on an autonomous political ontology created by the democratic workings of the most of India. It may be unenthusiastic about promoting democracy or devising a grand strategy that commits national resources for ambitious restructuring of the world. It is also doubtful if the most of India would see any merit in reinventing culture as soft power. But this vision would be more representative of the social diversity and democratic aspirations of the most of India.

If the most of India has refused to learn the lessons in 'proper' (read liberal) democratic conduct which were offered by the nationalist class at the onset of democracy, it is scarcely likely to accept the lessons on becoming a great power offered by the bi-nationalist class.[20] Rather than passively accepting the great power discourse on how India must conduct its affairs in the world, the most of India would offer a vision for India's international relations that is not emulated from elsewhere but is rooted in the experiences of its political struggle. A careful articulation of that vision would show that it would disagree with the great power discourse not for sentimental, normative, or indigenist reasons. It would disagree for a modest reason of ensuring that the Indian state's conduct in international affairs does not undermine the gains of Indian democracy. It would discourage foreign economic policies that allow rapacious loot of its natural resources by global corporations and their national subsidiaries. It would discourage foreign security policies that keep borders inviolate but citizens insecure. It may not counsel for the state to assume a moral high ground in world affairs, but it will question the defense and space policies that expend huge amounts of scarce resources on status and symbolic achievements, that are leveraged by some, at the cost of basic sanitation facilities for the most of India. It would suggest that human development indicators and not GDP growth rate be the correct measure of India's standing in the world. These would be empirical disagreements. It is these empirical disagreements that India's great power discourse prevents from becoming evident. It does this by posing itself as wholly national when it is actually more emulated and less national. As a result, a part of India's vision for India's international relations continues to be seen as the only legitimate and practical vision available; a possible alternative, offered by the most of India, remains obscure and in need of articulation.

Pedagogical Projects: Old and New

Is ensuring that the more emulated and less national discourse becomes capable of positioning itself as a wholly national discourse the last act of the pedagogical project? Perhaps not.

It is now well established that the intellectual enslavement of the native played a central role in sustaining colonialism. The emphasis on colonialism's epistemic manipulations has allowed scholars to show how it was largely by colonizing the native imagination that an illegal system of exploitation could be passed off as a form of rule that benefitted the colonized more than the colonizer. Scholars have suggested that viewing colonialism as a pedagogical project helps us fully understand the nature of this enslavement of the native mind. As a pedagogical project, colonialism was responsible for creating a sense of deep inadequacy in the native imagination about being able to act upon its own life-world in modern conditions. Confronted with the adept ways of the colonizer in negotiating the strange and strenuous ways of modernity, the native's sense of inadequacy also turned into a feeling of inferiority. Colonialism as a pedagogical project thus created an empirical (inadequacy) and a moral (inferiority) lack in the native imagination, which, it then claimed, could be overcome through 'proper' education in modern vocations. We now know that the highest vocation, where the empirical and moral deficiencies of the colonized were claimed to be most difficult to overcome, was the art of modern self-government. It was only after a 'class of persons' showed signs of having learnt this art that formal colonialism ended.

It is possible to detect an affinity between the former colonial and contemporary bi-national pedagogical projects. Like the southern Asian native of the past, the Indian native of the present, especially the young, is conceptualized as an organic mass that can be taught to think grand, aspire big and thus, through its successes, help make India a great power. Like the past, a distinct 'class of persons' is being co-opted in the pedagogical project of educating the native Indians; the difference being that while the earlier class consisted wholly of the native nationalists, the contemporary class is bi-national in character and operates from a relatively autonomous bi-national space. If the highest vocation for the native southern Asians was to learn the art of modern self-government,

the highest vocation for contemporary native Indians is learning the art of making India a great power. Given these similarities, it is pertinent to wonder about the purpose of this pedagogical project. If the object of the earlier project was to make a system that illegally exploited resources and humans appear necessary and beneficent, what purposes does the current pedagogical project seek to serve? Though its answer cannot be attempted here, the question is nevertheless significant.

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Notes

1. This article does not adopt the nationalist oppositional dyad of 'national v/s foreign' to understand India's great power discourse. As postcolonial thought has emphasized, the neatness of the nationalist oppositional dyad renders it unhelpful in exposing the complexities and ambiguities that characterize political discourses in the colonial and the postcolonial worlds. Using 'emulation' and 'nation' as comparable concepts may occasionally make the narrative difficult, but it helps gain more insights into the phenomenon. The basic criterion for judging the utility of the two terms is to ascertain whether or not the categories 'emulated discourse' and 'national discourse' enable us to imagine some ideational content. It is also useful to record that the terms 'nation' and 'national' are not used here in the sense that they imply in nationalist thought.
2. It is possible to consider pedagogy as an autonomous political phenomenon of modernity that is at least *formally* similar to other phenomena like hegemony and ideology. Though to be considered in such a fashion, intellectual groundwork identifying its lineage in Enlightenment convictions and its subsequent trajectory in colonial and post-colonial thought is necessary. For an attempt, see Chatterjee (2012: 185–263).
3. The idea of working with these phrases comes from Partha Chatterjee's helpful use of the phrase 'most of the world' to describe that part of the contemporary world whose politics disagrees with the dominant narratives and practices that forged the western high modernity (Partha Chatterjee 2004).
4. American magazines like *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy* have often provided space for such writings. Also, it is instructive that a lot of

ideation about making India a great power happens in western metropolitan spaces like London, New York, Washington, or Chicago, occasionally also in New Delhi, but seldom in centers like Aurangabad, Bastar, Cuttack, Jaunpur, Kohima, Ranchi, or Srinagar, which are more accessible to the most of India.

5. A title like *Think India: The Rise of the World's Next Great Power and What It Means for Every American* (Rai and Simon 2007) is representative of this genre of writings. Illustrative instances also include Friedman (2007), Luce (2006) , O'Neill and Poddar (2008), and Tellis (2005). However, the glimpses of this genre could be commonly found in most writings that celebrate and promote an 'aspirational' India.
6. Western media employed gendered and mushy metaphors to describe the phenomenon. While *TIME* found President Bush 'courting' India, CBS thought it was America's 'romance' with the one billion-strong democracy.
7. It is a measure of the bi-national convergence of interests that not only statespersons, diplomats, strategists and scholars but physicians and hoteliers pooled in their influence, especially in Washington, to ensure a successful conclusion of the deal.
8. Thus suggesting that they view India in the image of an asphyxiated bureaucratic nation-state rather than as a territorial patchwork of loose cultural affiliations which is as difficult to disintegrate as it is to unite.
9. For instance, the New Delhi-based Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) initiated a major project on India's national strategy, resulting in a volume on India's grand strategy (Venkatshamy and George 2012). In 2012, a group of influential Indians published a document 'Nonalignment 2.0, A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty-First Century' which similarly outlined a grand strategy for India.
10. For writings that help clarify why Indian democracy cannot be seen as liberal in any familiar sense of the term, see Chatterjee 2011, Kaviraj 2011 and Mehta 2003.
11. Here, an unyielding ambivalence plagues the vanguard's responses. Illustrations: Vijay Mallya, the businessperson whose public ways resemble the Englishperson Richard Branson, says: 'I don't want to be Richard Branson. I want to be Vijay Mallya' (Sanghvi n.d.). In an article that records the growing self-confidence of Indian media to be critical of its government, Shekhar Gupta also acknowledges: 'The *New York Times*'s Tom Friedman has done more to build the India story globally than many scores of Indian diplomats over these years' (2012). In 'regional' politics, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi claims that his model of governance is worthy of emulation by the centre, even other countries. But it is hard to miss his eagerness for an approval of his methods from the US, which a visa to that

country would ensure. The Indian prime minister appears keen on getting India rid of its 'poverty, ignorance and disease,' which he would know were also created through colonial rule. Yet, he notes: '[E]ven at the height of our campaign for freedom from colonial rule, we did not entirely reject the British claim to good governance. We merely asserted our natural right to self-governance' (Singh 2005).

12. For an argument suggesting that attaining a great power status is not a necessity, see Guha (2008).
13. This is not to suggest that such spaces are not available to academics and specialists. However, it is interesting that their numbers are tiny as compared to the non-specialist commentators. It is also the case that specialists who hold common views supporting the great power ambition are more visible than critics and dissenters. Finally, opinions of non-resident Indian experts and those of non-Indian experts of India, residing in the West and the US, are often sought to ostensibly create 'understandings' of how India's international relations should be conducted.
14. However, it is noteworthy that if numerical strength is accepted as the benchmark for judging a people's claim on the entire imaginative space of the nation, as is often the case in democracies, a part of India's claim that its great power discourse for India is a national discourse would be overwhelmed by the most of India's disagreement with that claim.
15. Consider, for instance, the contempt with which the articulators of the great power discourse dismiss left-oriented critiques from political parties, feminists, and environmental movements.
16. Thus, a scholar suggestively asks: 'Will Kashmir Stop India's Rise?' (Ganguly 2006). Through this form of framing, a deeply difficult challenge before India's democracy, which the state has managed so far by essentially refusing to engage it, is turned into an undesirable irritant that could be disposed of.
17. No such assumption is made about of a part of India's ability to influence India's international conduct.
18. Thus, in an article identifying the international conditions that would test India's great power status, a commentator suggests that the government should arrest its 'domestic policy drift' as a precondition for credible diplomacy (Mohan 2010b).
19. As Kaviraj's absorbing exposition of the discursive division in Indian society between the 'Indian elite' (a part of India) and the 'lower orders' (the most of India) shows, the latter's sense of the world has seldom found sympathetic articulation in the national, mainstream discourse (2010: 20–26).
20. 'Universal teaching', John Stuart Mill wrote in *Considerations on Representative Government*, 'must precede universal enfranchisement'

(1977: 470). The nationalist class made universal adult suffrage the basis of Indian democracy against this instruction. At the same time, however, the nationalist class became the pedagogue that expected to teach the 'proper' democratic conduct to rest of India. Belying this hope, at least the most of India has participated in political life without being educated in the 'proper' conduct. It is therefore that the political ontology borne of its democratic practices bears little or no resemblance with the pedagogical intent of both colonialism and the nationalist elite. As Kaviraj notes, 'The culture of the lower orders…has potent means of not learning, or insulating out the cultural instruction coming from the top' (2010: 20).

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