Development of International Relations Theory in India: Traditions, Contemporary Perspectives and Trajectories

Siddharth Mallavarapu

The article seeks to do an audit of the state of International Relations theory (IRT) in India. It examines three facets of IRT in this connection. The first relates to the possibility of a tradition of thinking on issues of universal theoretical significance. The second pertains to an exploration of scholarly reflection on an important principle of Indian foreign policy, namely, non-alignment and the limits of theorizing it. The final facet examines the concerns that inform theorization by Indian scholars since the 1990s. In regard to the first facet, the article argues that there exists an Indian tradition of thinking on issues of order, justice and cosmopolitanism, even though it may not have been expressed in the language of IRT. With regard to non-alignment, the article argues that while it did not result in broader theoretical formulations, it raised a number of first order issues for further theorizing. Finally, it suggests that recent IRT invocations by Indian scholars reflect a more receptive conjuncture for such work, both in terms of India's own changing stature in the world system as well as an acknowledgement of more eclectic methods and possibilities in the broader world of the social sciences.

Keywords: International Relations Theory, India, Politics of Knowledge

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to broadly address three facets pertaining to the state of International Relations theory (IRT) in India (Acharya and Buzan 2007: 287–312). It begins by flagging some fundamental arguments advanced in IRT in

the non-American world. This exercise also entails a heuristic scrutiny of the relevance of 'tradition' in structuring thinking about theorizing in the sphere of International Relations (IR) in India.

After considering some of the basic questions regarding the generic status of theory and its importance for IR in India, the article deals with IRT in the Indian context. Detailed surveys of the state of IR prior to the 1980s have revealed some of the constraints on the growth of IR in India (Rana 1988). Focusing on the contemporary period, the article identifies some representative theoretical strands that either validate or qualify the claims of theoretical positions on specific issues. It also analyzes the efforts by some scholars to build on indigenous political traditions of thinking about India and the world, and seeks to map some of the eclectic domestic responses to contemporary IRT. The article chronicles some voices of skepticism raised about the utility of existing IRT. While some skeptics disagree with certain dimensions of existing IRT, others express unease with the metalogic of grand-theorizing in IR.

The concluding part of the article deals with the future of IRT in India. It argues that certain contemporary developments, more broadly in the social sciences, augur well in terms of creating a more conducive academic environment for theorizing from non-metropolitan locations. Perhaps, India's outward orientation and its growing relevance in the international order also provide room for renewed interest, both internally and externally, in the underlying assumptions, motives and explanations for its behaviour at the international level.

Is there a 'Tradition' of Indian Thinking on World Politics?

This section begins with two caveats. First, the term IRT is being used here in a conventional sense from the perspective of IR as a discipline. Thus, theories of realism, liberalism, constructivism as well as other critical approaches (post-colonialism, feminism, neo-Marxism) and post-structuralism would form an integral part of the discussion that follows here. Second, the expression, IR in India in this rendition has been used to connote engagement of Indian scholars with IRT, primarily based in India.

Theory represents a specific form of articulation of knowledge. At a generic level, one can advance a claim that theoretical engagement of some kind or the other is inevitable. This could either take the form of implicit understandings or manifest itself explicitly in explanatory schemas. A proponent of the former position, Pollock (2006: 32–33) argues in his extensive survey of linguistic cosmopolitianization and vernacularization in pre-modern South Asia:

[a]t the most general level of analysis, all perception is admittedly theory-laden, as many sociologists and philosophers have explained. We cannot cognize

the world around us without simultaneously fitting our cognitions—or prefitting or retrofitting them, whichever is the true sequence—into the linguistic and conceptual schemata that constitute our world; the formulation of empirical observations becomes possible only within some referential framework. Theory at so intimate a level is very hard indeed to resist.

Echoing a similar sentiment, Rana and Misra (2005: 78; Mallavarapu 2005a: 6–7) observe that '[i]n one sense, Indian writing does have a submerged "theoretical base", which may be difficult to conceptualize, but needs to be explicitly explored'. Thus, it might be appropriate to speak of a tradition of implicit theoretical thinking on fundamental issues concerning rule, political community and normative conceptions of order and justice.

Pollock's argument about the inevitability of 'referential frameworks' begs the question of plausible designs in the Indian setting and ultimately leads one back to the question of whether they shape the tenor and tone of explicit Indian engagement with IRT. Ramanujam (2001: 34–51) argues from the perspective of linguistic structures that there are 'context-sensitive' societies as well as 'context-free' societies. This is not to suggest that contexts are of no consequence in some societies, but more significantly, there remains a 'preferred formulation' vis-à-vis different milieus. To substantiate his thesis, he argues that '[t]exts may be historically dateless, anonymous: but their contexts, uses, efficacies, are explicit. The *Rāmāyana* and *Māhabhārata* open with episodes that tell you why and under what circumstances they were composed. Every such story is encased in a meta-story'.

Thus, it may be relevant to gauge the extent of comfort among diversely located social and political actors with different forms of communicating knowledge. Theory, as we interpret it today, may not have been the preferred idiom of expression in ancient India. Further, if colonialism is treated as an important point of rupture from ancient Indian patterns of thinking, we need to address how modern institutional settings have conditioned the reflection of the political world in an inter-state system. This is not to suggest that colonial rule successfully dislodged all earlier thinking and instantiated itself on an entirely new *tabula rasa* (Cohn 1996; Sassen 2006). However, it fundamentally altered the terms of conversation and resulted in anxieties specific to the newly decolonized postcolonial states. A large part of the disappointment about the absence of a systematic tradition of explicit IR theorizing comes from this more recent slice of post-colonial history.

What was the mandate of social sciences in India, particularly in the early decades? Clearly, an overwhelming 'administrative' impulse tended to dominate the manner in which disciplines emerged in the Indian milieu (Das 2003: 1–29). An important choice was made during the early years in favour of institutionalizing the North American area studies model that broadly structured social and political

inquiry. Reflecting on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the School of International Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Rajan (2005: 195), for instance, noted that

> [t]he School's principal founders like Hriday Nath Kunzru and A. Appadorai, President and Secretary-General of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) respectively, envisaged it as an institution to train specialists in international affairs and area studies and thereby promote Indian expertise in the field.

In an indictment of the unsuccessful evolution of this tradition, Rajan (2005: 201) observes in one of his recent writings that our expertise with regard to even India's proximate neighbours leaves much to be desired, even after a considerable period of time has elapsed since the unfolding of the area study programmes in India. Critical global scholarship on area studies suggest that we might actually make more headway if we abstain from a 'trait' geography view of regions and open up to the 'process' geography view of regions (Appadurai 2006: 625–26).

The Context of IRT in India

Regarding the 'tradition' of IR thinking in India, some careful thought has already gone into why theory as a project remained unattractive both in the early years of the post-colonial state and continues to be inhibited even today. Rana and Misra (2005: 77) along with a host of other Indian scholars argue that theory remains a casualty in IR in India primarily because of an absence of familiarity with 'theory'. Besides citing an institutional failure to equip students of the field with the right set of skills, Rana and Misra (2005: 71–122) also point out that part of the problem lies in the lack of a 'disciplinary tradition'. Another reason relates to the expectations of the role of social sciences to assist in the task of nation-building during the formative phase. This meant that a critical perspective had to be eschewed which resulted in the development of an uncritical realism in IR in India (Rana and Misra 2005: 71–122).

Bajpai (2005: 17–38) draws attention to the puzzling state of IR in India and the unintended consequences of Jawaharlal Nehru's 'expertise' in IR. He argues that it stymied the possibility of the development of an autonomous community of independent-minded scholars of IR who could complement meaningfully Nehru's own well-honed understanding of the world. Two other reasons for diminishing the scale of theoretical enterprise in IR relate to the policy science aspirations of the discipline, which often resulted in some sort of disdain for armchair theorizing that was viewed as remote and irrelevant, and the more worrying apprehension that theory is complicit with the imperialist project.

However, of relevance to our interest are various attempts to widen the ambit of what forms of knowledge qualify as 'theory' in the first place. If the IR canvas

is broadly cast, could we make the argument that there exists an Indian tradition of thinking that may be harnessed to participate in a global conversation? Bajpai (2005: 30–31) reinforces the possible existence of such a tradition of thinking in India on IR and argues that

> ...[t]he *problematic* of International Studies is, I would propose, at base the following: how do and should entities which claim to be communities and have at their disposal the organized means of violence, who live in suspicion and competition with each other, but who are also economically, morally, and otherwise inter-linked, regulate their mutual relations? If this is the *problematic* of International Studies, then, there is a long recorded, and respectable body of Indian thought which can be profitably be interrogated.

This corpus could include the political thinking of well-known anti-colonial nationalists like Gandhi, Nehru, Tagore, Ambedkar, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan. It would also encompass a study of the political traditions initiated by pre-colonial figures like Kautilya, Ashoka, Akbar and Kabir whose philosophies continue to be of enduring relevance. Tradition, thus, far from being an inconceivable heuristic might actually help us acknowledge our intellectual debt to the past and help avoid the fallacy of assuming that everything is novel about the contemporary IRT today (Schmidt 2006: 3–22).

Contemporary Perspectives

The Non-Aligned Movement: An Assessment from the Eighties

If there is any single claimant to a master narrative status of modern India's role in world affairs, particularly in the early decades following independence, it inevitably gravitates towards an explication of the concept and dynamics of non-alignment. In the 1980s, a special issue of the journal of *International Studies* was devoted to an assessment of the doctrine and the practice of non-alignment. As a concept, non-alignment was particularly attractive because it addressed the concerns not only of India, but also of the decolonized states in the developing world. As Acharya (2008: 81) aptly suggests, '...we ought to seek theoretical insights from Nehru or Sukarno just as Western theorizing has drawn from Woodrow Wilson and Henry Kissinger'.

By the 1980s, the non-alignment movement had lost much of its appeal. The invitation of *International Studies* to reflect on the preceding decades of non-alignment provided an opportunity to its readers/contributors to theorize the movement with the benefit of hindsight. Appadorai (1981: 3) argued with a sense of self-esteem that non-alignment was an original conceptual contribution of Nehru '...to the vocabulary of international relations'. He was not alone in placing a certain degree of emphasis on the importance of such concepts and how they defined

India's foreign policy. The well-known Gandhian scholar, Gangal (1981: 197) also argued that

> [q]uite apart from the motivated origins and the rather duplicate character of the idea of third world, there is the basic question whether it is at all logical or otherwise appropriate to describe a large group of highly sensitive and self-respecting countries as constituting the Third World in an age when 'third' is a hated term.

In similar spirit, Misra (1981: 36–37) objected to the title of a book, *The Non-Aligned Movement: The Origins of a Third World Alliance*, by Peter Willets (1978). Misra pointed out that terms in IR tend to be rather loosely used on different occasions, which generate meanings quite contrary to their initial intent. Alluding to the works by Glen Snyder, Oran Young and Morton Kaplan, Baral (1981: 119) lamented that the existing crisis management literature ignored the small powers as a source of learning in this context. By the 1980s, he noticed that the non-aligned movement also failed to put up a cohesive front to criticize the management of international crises by the big powers of the day.

In another contribution, that bears a Wittgensteinian 'family resemblance' to the concept of human security, Muni (1981: 160) observed that '[o]ne may... legitimately ask as regards national security: Security of whom, by whom, for whom, and against whom?' His central argument was that non-alignment addressed the dimensions of security inadequately (Muni 1981: 172). He was also at some variance with regard to Gangal's reading of the concept of the Third World. He argued that '[t]he expression "Third World" neither denotes an inferior value structure, nor a descending numerical order. It represents a set of specific characteristics that are unique in more than one way to the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America' (Muni 1978: 128).

Rana's study on *The Imperatives of Nonalignment* drew attention to both questions of capability as well as political culture. In his evaluation of Nehru, Rana (1976: 294) argued that '[a]round one central issue, particularly, Nehru's conception of an improved international system came to rest: this was the avoidance of violence in international relations'. Rana (2003: 46) claimed later that '...Nehru's importance to India may come to lie in his leaving behind a foreign policy tradition that underlay but eventually went beyond non-alignment: a tradition that attempted a complex reconciliation between unit-level national security goals, and larger normative system-level concerns in world affairs.'

A large part of the early writings on non-alignment invested a fair amount of energy in clarifying what it is not, while spelling out the underlying rationale for the movement. While many of these contributions deal with the fundamental aspects of the movement, they are not by and large cast in the language of explicit theory. Misra's (1981: 36) formulation '...that *non-alignment is cognizant of power*

but rejects power politics with its attendant values' does draw attention to under-standings of power in the context of non-alignment. Similarly, Swarup's (1981: 64) question—'If non-alignment was reasonably successful in the 1950s, why was it not so in the 1970s?'—raise important theoretical concerns. These would include how one might explain the nature of political change and historical transitions, decide on the cast of actors who mattered, give consideration to what causal mechanisms account for change and how the broader international community responds to these developments. However, there were no attempts to formulate an explicit theory which looked at how middle powers/postcolonial states interpreted their material and ideational resources and what sort of policy outcomes these conceptions were likely to generate. Thus '...independent generalizations from the Asian experience that might have transregional or universal applicability...'(Acharya and Buzan 2007: 306), were absent in the literature. More recent efforts tend to break fresh ground in this regard (Abraham 2008: 195–219).

An important intellectual project that also co-habited the spaces of the non-aligned movement was the World Order Models Project (WOMP) which was also subjected to intellectual enquiry. In 1975, the journal, *Alternatives*, was launched at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi, under the stewardship of Rajni Kothari. In his opening editorial statement, Kothari (1975: 1) observed,

> [a] feeling of fundamental dissonance between not only what is and what ought to be but also between what is and what can be (if only human agencies inter-vened decisively) underlies the recent interest in seeking out alternative ways of attending to human problems. It implies two considerations: that the world is becoming too uniform, too standardized, too dominated by a single conception of life and its meaning, with little scope for other available cultural and historical propensies and potentialities: and that such domination of a single concep-tion has led to political and cultural domination by a single region of the world over all the others.

Alternatives carried interesting reflections on notions of justice, order and con-ceptions of human well-being. It provided an important platform for leading intellectuals of the Global South in particular to engage and critique dominant understandings of issues in the developing world. However, these engagements were not invariably cast in the language of IRT, even by way of critique.

Recent Indian Engagements with IRT

The small community of IR scholars in India who apply theory in their work demonstrates a considerable degree of familiarity with IRT. Almost all the major strands of mainstream IRT are evident in their works. There are also attempts to

use more critical approaches to gain a better understanding of prevalent struc-
tures and processes mostly in the South Asian context. Some variant or the other
of classical realism of Morgenthau has been used extensively. However, Waltzian
structural realism has taken a longer time to emerge as an influential theoretical
paradigm in the Indian context (Rajagopalan 2005: 142–72). It is interesting to
probe the status of realism in India during the pre-colonial, colonial and early
years of decolonization. Mearsheimer (2005), while doing an audit of realism in
the English world, came to the conclusion that it might well prove to be an impos-
sible task to locate a single realist theorist in Britain today. Many British com-
mentators in their response disagreed with Mearsheimer's characterization of IR
in the UK today and argued that even in the era that E.H. Carr's dominated, the
apparent divide between realists and idealists was more rhetorical than substantive
(Mearsheimer et al. 2005). However, in the contemporary Indian context, it has
often been argued that given the emphasis on classical high politics, there is a
tendency to privilege the realist lens in order to be more policy relevant. How-
ever, the term realism has been used rather loosely in public discourse, and it is
often taken as a synonym for being realistic. It is also observed that nationalism
has often been equated with piecemeal realisms. Those arguing from a nationalist
standpoint tend to conflate their stance with realism of one kind or the other. All
these add to the confusion regarding realism in the Indian context. Further, works
like Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in the ancient period are treated as endorsements of
realism predating the modern period. But, it is necessary that historical figures
like Kautilya need to be carefully audited in terms of the totality of their work,
prior to labelling them through realism or any other 'ism'.

The 'English School', which advocated an 'international society' approach
had its influence on pioneering figures in IRT in India like A.P. Rana. Liberalism,
Constructivism, Marxism, Feminism, Postcolonial theory and Post-modernism
also have influenced the contemporary IRT in India (Bajpai 2002; Chenoy 2004;
Harshe 1997; Mallavarapu 2007; Ramakrishnan 2005a; Rana 1991; Samaddar
2002). The work of J. Bandhopadhyaya of Jadavpur University represented a
methodological inclination to use quantitative techniques and demonstrated recep-
tivity to strategic choice theory in modelling arms control dynamics. However,
this represents more of an exception than the norm as far as the theoretical pre-
ferences of Indian scholars are concerned.

It is perhaps pertinent to also enquire about the status of Realism's other Lib-
eralism in the Indian context. It is intriguing that despite liberal internationalist
strands in Indian nationalism during the colonial era, and Nehruvian foreign policy
in the post-colonial period, liberalism does not seem to enjoy a significant influence
on IRT in India. A plausible reason could be the thinning of liberalism more gen-
erally in the Indian political culture over the last few decades (Zakaria 2003).

In the following section, the article illustrates the forms in which theoretical
questions have been posed and answered in the Indian context and, what this

augurs for broader development of IRT in India. It is important to note here that IRT in India is not a purely 'received' discourse. The discussion begins with an exploration of scholarly reflection on broader issues like order and justice. Bajpai (2006) in a fascinating account of Indian perspectives on order and justice in IR highlights a distinction between the Nehruvian, Gandhian, Hindutva and Liberal approaches. This is an illustration of the 'reconstruction' project based on domestic strands of thinking. Bajpai (2006: 384) concludes that '...all four conceptions seem to see the state and sovereignty in a much more contingent way than in the modern Westphalian conception as rendered by Bull'.

Similarly, Chimni (2005: 389) interrogates domestic eclectic perspectives on just world order. He suggests that

> ...six distinct visions of just world order [are] reflected in recent academic and political discourse in India. These perspectives may be designated as establishment, left, Dalit, subaltern, anti-modernist and spiritual. Each of these perspectives offers a certain understanding of the state, society, globalization, and international institutions.

Of particular value here is the attempt to 'reconstruct' the work of the well-known anti-colonial nationalist figure, Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950). Chimni (2005: 398–99) argues in this connection that

> ...Sri Aurobindo is among the few Indian thinkers to have paid explicit attention to the creation of a world state; his reflections on the subject also have a contemporary resonance. Based on a coherent theory of evolution of human society, Sri Aurobindo argued that the ideal of human unity would inevitably be realized. But the ideal of human unity must have spiritualism at its foundations if it is to contribute to the individual and collective growth of nations and peoples. It is important to emphasize, however, that Sri Aurobindo did not dismiss material progress, and his way of thinking therefore does not fit the neat stereotype of the materialist West and the spiritual East.

These efforts to recover Indian traditions of thinking in the light of contemporary IRT are not very widespread but such 'reconstruction' not only merely adds to the heterogeneity of the global knowledge pool but also promises to go beyond theory-testing to eventual theory-building premised on these findings. An important issue that needs to be raised here relates to the aspirations of the IR scholars in India. Scholars like Paul argue that they must focus on modest middle-level theorizing, eschewing emphasis on grand theory. Bajpai also observes that at a moment when grand theorizing appears to have exhausted itself in some sense, whether it makes any sense at all to pursue what was once the Holy Grail. Such ambitious attempts run the risk of re-inventing the wheel and thus concern has been voiced as to

whether there is anything new left to be said as far as global IRT is concerned. Should the attention of Indian IRT scholars not be focused on current global problems like climate change that might potentially generate new answers and create room for modest theoretical innovations? Given the current levels of engagement and interest in theory in India, it would be unrealistic to expect some fundamental shifts in the manner in which we conceive of IRT. However, it is important to evaluate Indian contributions to IRT through a global yardstick. Bajpai provides some useful criteria in this context. He asks if the presence of an Indian Kenneth Waltz (or in the same vein an Alexander Wendt) would help redeem IRT in India. To put it differently, the establishment of a collective body similar to the British Committee set up by Martin Wight or launching of a journal on IRT with regular Indian contributions and a general familiarity with the terms of discourse of global IRT could represent signs of a growing acceptance of IRT. Of all these criteria, perhaps the most important is the presence of exemplars of theoretical scholarship within the milieu. Ideally, these exemplars need to be located in Universities and carry on the task of inspiring a new generation of students to think theoretically.

Apart from mainstream IRT, with very rare exceptions, theoretical paradigms from the non-western world have not been elaborated or applied in India. An exception in this regard is Sahni's (2001: 27) effort to analyze foreign policies of Mexico and Argentina (1988 onwards) from the perspectives of peripheric realism and complex interdependence. Both the frameworks have been used, without rejecting one in favour of the other. He concludes that '...peripheric realism and complex interdependence are not competing but complementary theories'.

These arguments also reveal another important fissure while thinking about IRT and South Asia, which relates to the issue of whether there is any South Asian exceptionalism that militates against broader theoretical formulations. The strongest case for such exceptionalism has been made by some scholars outside the IR discipline in the Indian context. Nandy (1998), for instance, has argued that India relates to its past through 'myth' rather than history, which he characterizes as an enlightenment modality of relating to the past. Similarly, he has argued that the attempt to model the post-colonial state along the lines of the Westphalian state results in particular excesses and Indian scholarship needs to be open to '... a semi-articulate public awareness in these societies which has a place for the vernacular' (Nandy 2005: 378–79).

Notwithstanding such arguments of exceptionalism, some Indian IR scholars contend that there is nothing really exceptional about the Indian case. One such formulation appears in the form of a response to George K. Tanham's characterization of Indian strategic thought. Sahni (1996: 161) points out that Tanham's invocation of Kautilya '...seems to suggest that there is something uniquely Indian about regarding one's immediate neighbours as potential adversaries over whom

some sort of control is therefore desirable'. However, he again argues that '[f]ar from being distinctly Indian, this strategic notion forms the bedrock of how most large countries view their place in the world'.

A plausible point of departure to examine the range of concerns that fall within the ambit of IRT scholarship in India is to re-visit two recently co-edited volumes Bajpai and the author brought together with several objectives in mind (Bajpai and Mallavarapu 2005a). The most important of these was to recognize a community of scholars in India who actively engaged with IRT. While the bulk of contributions were drawn from articles that had appeared largely in the 1990s in *International Studies*, some chapters were freshly commissioned. It is important to acknowledge that the contributors were not from Delhi alone. They were drawn from other parts of India as well. The volume consciously sought to avoid Delhi-centrism. Another concern that guided the effort was an explicit recognition that Indian IR theorists sought to engage in a global dialogue and were particularly wary of any expression of nativism.

The first volume takes part of its title, *Bringing Theory Back Home* (Bajpai and Mallavarapu 2005b), from an earlier article by Bajpai on the state of IRT in India. This volume deals with Realism, Postcolonial theory, Marxism, Feminism and specific issues like human security, human rights and political economy. The issues of state, nationalism and modernity in the South Asian context were also integral to this collection. Based on the interventions in this volume, it might be relevant to note that scholarly interest in security tends to trump political economy concerns in most of the Indian writings. Rahul Mukherji's chapter on 'Economic Sanctions as a Foreign Policy Tool' remains an exception in this context.

The companion volume, *International Relations in India: Theorizing the Region and Nation*, focuses on a wide range of issues. These include both realist and culturalist arguments of Iranian foreign policy, Waltzian explanation of the Indo-Pakistan conflict, the limits of colonial geopolitical imagination and strategies to transcend them, ethnic sub-territoriality, Indo-Chinese border negotiations and skepticism of 'hyper-realist' readings on terror. One of the contributions also uses regime theory to explain international political economy from a developing world's standpoint.

Another edited book by Samaddar (2002) carried an interesting subtitle, *New Readings in International Politics*. It brought together some exciting contributions which revisited the questions of identity and territoriality. The opening chapter in the volume by Chaturvedi (2002) draws on the subfield of critical geopolitics and asks provocatively 'Can there be an Asian Geopolitics?' Chaturvedi (2002: 24) concludes that

...there can be an Asian geopolitics, in the sense of a critical geopolitics that resists the takeover of Asia by globalisation and regionalisation 'from above'—that is, not an 'Asian geopolitics' with the connotation of some native,

independent theory of strategic spaces but a forever critical practice *for* and *in* Asia, based also on people's struggles and on ecological practices.

Banerjee (2002: 41) problematizes South Asian thinking on the question of borders in the same volume. She observes that

> [a]s South Asians, we are yet to come to grips with border studies, and are producing Western imitations not only because we have not been able to formulate a South Asian concept of borders. To us, borders remain 'rimlands', difficult to govern, and Western hegemony, even in the realm of ideas, has made it imperative that for the purposes of 'sovereignty' these borders be converted into watertight lines.

Samaddar (2002: 182) focuses on the limitations of IRT in his chapter. He is rather scathing in his indictment of IRT because of its inability to address some key questions that are of particular urgency to the global South. In this connection, he points out that

> [i]mmigration studies and refugee studies present a paradox in international relations theory. International relations theory was bound by the reality and rhetoric of the cold war to such an extent that the world which lay beyond the cold war and the 'Great game' of the post-1945 era was ignored; so much so that 'international' concerns actually became very 'provincial'.

While this article hints at the tendency in IRT in India to focus on classical 'high politics', nuclear developments in South Asia have attracted considerable scholarly attention in this context. A very useful addition in this regard is a volume edited by E. Sridharan (2007). In his opening chapter on 'International Relations Theory and the India-Pakistan Conflict', Sridharan (2007: 26) asks '...how adequate is the theory of deterrence when applied to South Asia?' He is critical of IRT in India for assuming a unitary state model without acknowledging the relevance of 'sub-systemic levels'. Sridharan (2007: 40) concludes that '...the best explanation for Indian and Pakistani conflict behaviour and their dyadic focus on each other is from a combination of the subaltern realist perspective and the regional security complex approach, building on the approaches of Ayoob, Buzan and Waever'.

In the same volume, Basrur (2007: 146) demonstrates

> '...that IR theory helps validate minimum deterrence; and second, that minimum deterrence has important effects on IR theory.' The effect on IR theory is explicated in his key finding that 'minimum deterrence ...permits diverse behavior patterns with respect to conflictive relationships. India's contrasting relationships with China and Pakistan are illustrative.'

Another valuable addition is a book titled *Second Strike* by Rajagopalan (2005b). Rajagopalan (2005a: 171) examines the claims of nuclear proliferation optimists and pessimists and concludes from a neorealist perspective that '[n]uclear weapons are not any more dangerous in South Asia, than it is anywhere else'.

A particularly nuanced theoretical work on underlying ideational assumptions and 'schools of thought' in the post-Pokhran II context is offered by Bajpai (2000). He makes a distinction among the rejectionists, pragmatists and maximalists within the mainstream Indian strategic community. Bajpai (2000: 300) argues that while there remain important differences among the three strands in terms of desirable nuclear posture and issues related to the size of the nuclear arsenal, they are convinced of the utility of nuclear weapons for the maintenance of Indian security. However, what is striking from a theoretical stand-point is the linkages of all the three perspectives with different conceptions of India's grand strategy.

Another arena where one might expect a fair amount of theoretical literature relates to foreign policy. In this context, it is necessary to draw attention to the co-edited volume by Harshe and Seethi (2005: 5) titled *Engaging with the World: Critical Reflections on India's Foreign Policy*. The introduction to the volume, jointly authored, points out that

> [t]he global setting today, in the post-cold war era, presents a complex formation within which a variety of actors, ranging from states and international organisations, to classes, social movements, transnational corporations, non-governmental organisations and communication media operate and interact in diverse, yet intricate, ways. These complex processes and interactions call for new methods of investigation and analysis.

In the same volume, Ramakrishnan (2005b: 29) examines the connection between globalization and foreign policy and draws attention to the limitations of existing IRT to help elucidate the links between the role of capital and foreign policy in a systematic fashion. He observes: 'Given such extremely generalized notions of globalization in IR writings, the utility of a major chunk of these IR perspectives in grasping the relationship between global capital and the politico-economic determinants of foreign policy is very limited'.

Harshe (2005: 320–21) deals with regional co-operation in South Asia and argues that

> ... the postcolonial South Asian states would like to conceive a qualitatively different notion of South Asia as a viable region. These states are seeking to work out horizontal forms of interdependence amongst themselves in the process of constructing their notion of a South Asian region.

According to Harshe, the presence of ethnonationalism and disputed borders hinder prospects for regional co-operation in South Asia.

Behera's (2008) recent volume titled *International Relations Theory in South Asia* also brings together a wide range of contributions. She claims that '... it may well be necessary to step *outside* the disciplinary core of IR to redefine its various problematics' given the weak 'epistemic foundations' of IR in South Asia (Behera 2008: 1–50, 40). In an attempt to systematically explore South Asian reality from a constructivist perspective, Chatterjee (2008) pays attention to both intra- and inter-state South Asian conflict in the same volume. He acknowledges that his '...study is a tentative case of alternative frames and their application for under-standing conflicts in the South Asian region' and concludes that '[r]ealism is at-tractive given the pervasiveness of inter-state conflicts in South Asia. But its appeal of elegance comes at a price. Its boundaries are its limits. Constructivism opens the boundaries of realism' (Chaterjee 2008: 205).

In the above discussion, the article has sought to identify the manner in which IRT has been applied in the Indian context. Evidently, most of the works on IR deal with issues of security, and other issues like political economy have not at-tracted as much attention among IR scholars. This has probably to do with absence of good training in political economy and a tendency to concede all ground to the more powerful mainstream discipline of Economics. A large part of the theoretical engagement is with problematizing concepts that do not seem to accurately reflect the world as viewed from an Indian imaginary. While this is very useful from the perspective of critically analyzing knowledge claims that emerge from more pri-vileged settings, it still leaves unanswered the question of possible trajectories ahead. It is to this question that I now turn my attention towards.

Trajectories

The story of IRT in India, as elsewhere, is an unfolding and dynamic process. It is embedded in the broader global milieu. The current state of reflection, particularly in the dominant American variant, does have a bearing in terms of the orientations and predispositions of the global discipline of IR. I argue that the conjunction of global developments in the social science with the changing status and perception of a middle power, both internally and externally, will provide a receptive climate for theoretical work in India. The prevailing domestic ontology itself presents an inviting context for Indian scholars to theorize transitions, successful and unsuc-cessful. What eventually transpires in terms of enhancing the general standing of theory is an index of institutional reform of disciplinary structures, evolving cur-ricula and pedagogical innovations to socialize a new generation which would be eventually comfortable with theory.

Goodin and Tilly (2008: 7) argue that we must pay increasing attention to the political effects of context, which can be disaggregated into its various constituent units—philosophy, psychology, ideas, culture, history, place, population and tech-nology. Thinking about the social and political world through these filters provides

an excellent stratagem to widen our theoretical repertoire of what we may consider as legitimate sources of influence and how these various elements of the domestic–international continuum might contribute to a more nuanced understanding of both existing IRT claims as well as in the fashioning of new innovations in IRT flowing from global South habitués.

It is interesting to observe that the recently published *Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Smits and Snidal 2008) does not carry a single contribution from any resident Asian, African or Latin American scholar. However, of particular significance is the presence of a thematic rubric focused on 'reimagining' the discipline of IR. In this regard, Katzenstein and Sil (2008: 110–11) lay out a case for 'analytical eclecticism' and advance the case for 'problem-driven' rather than 'paradigm driven' approaches. This is not really an invitation to go back to the drawing board with regard to our fundamental ontologies and epistemologies in IR. While more fundamental issues relating to the power of certain sites of social enunciation and the broader politics of knowledge are not touched by their formulation, it is still some indicator of how the discipline itself is coming to view itself and the need to avoid being overly enamoured by any single approach in terms of crafting research designs.

Another welcome development in the social sciences comes from history. At least one strand of history that goes by different names, 'global history', 'lateral history' or 'connected histories', makes the argument that it is no longer possible to write pristine or hermetically contained national histories (Bayly 2004; Subrahmanyam 1997). This argument also rejects the view that the colonized were '...simply the West's supine victims' (Bayly 2004: 3). This reading is not entirely novel, but it creates an important opening. While it may be unwise to expect Indian IR scholars to re-invent themselves as historians, it nevertheless makes a heuristic suggestion to explore systematically the complex intermeshing of civilizations through fresh theoretical positions.

In the ultimate analysis, knowledge systems are anchored to internal modes of economic organization. The opening up of the Indian economy brings a glut of images and comparative perspectives that were woefully missing in the days of economic autarchy. The challenge is to be better informed about ourselves and the world if we are to participate more meaningfully in the global discipline of IR. It does not behoove Indian IR to be particularly anxious about replicating the latest turn in American or European IR. However, we should be minimally aware of the ongoing theoretical developments and contribute meaningfully to the global IR discourse. What we are witnessing in India may be a preliminary step in the right direction.

One cannot however be too sanguine about contemporary developments. Despite the emergence of new Indian scholarship in recent years, there has not been a thorough and systematic collective soul-searching among the IR scholars in India about the status of IRT in the Indian setting as well as how they may contribute

to the larger world of IRT. Votaries of theory also need to demonstrate more tangible outcomes in terms of generating fresh ideas about theory creation, theory testing and theory revision. Theory development also has its own crucial tipping points. In India, theory is still fundamentally a marginal enterprise and the absence of a discursive process of learning impairs the development of sound theoretical scholarship. It is crucial to impart rigorous and imaginative training in IRT to enable a new generation of scholars who will have the confidence and the skill to explore new horizons in the Indian variant of IRT and contribute meaningfully to enriching the global discourse of IR.

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