

INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE AMBIVALENCE OF
POSTCOLONIAL MODERNITY

Priya Chacko

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ABSTRACT

India's foreign policy behaviour often challenges conventional theories of international relations (IR). Why for instance, did India wait 24 years after its first nuclear test to conduct another test? In the wake of its nuclear tests, why did the political leadership highlight the scientific achievements more than the military implications and why did it characterise India's nuclear program as being unique in terms of its restraint and its commitment to total disarmament? Why did India engage in a discourse of friendship with China rather than adopt the anti-communist stance of other democratic states? These are just some of the questions that cannot be adequately explained by the positivist and ahistorical traditions of IR that down-play the connection between state identity and foreign policy or analyse foreign policy as the product of pre-existing realities, subjectivities and interpretive dispositions. An approach that takes into account the historical and cultural context of the construction of state identity however, offers a fuller understanding of India's foreign policy behaviour. Using genealogy and the idea of identity performativity, this thesis analyses India's foreign policy discourse as a representational practice which, through various codings of sex, gender and race, enacts India's postcolonial identity.

The thesis uses the findings of five case studies – India's relationship with China, its nuclear politics, its relations with its South Asian neighbours and its interventions in Pakistan and Sri Lanka – to suggest that a deep ambivalence toward Western modernity lies at the heart of India's postcolonial identity and, therefore, the foreign policy discourse that enacts it. This ambivalence arises because, on the one hand, Indian nationalists accepted colonial narratives in which the backwardness of 'Indian civilisation' led to its degeneration, but on the other hand, they recognised the need to advance a critique of

Western modernity and its deep imbrication with colonialism. The result is a striving for a postcolonial modernity that is not only imitative but strives to be distinctly different and superior to Western modernity by being culturally and morally grounded. Thus, India is fashioned as a postcolonial civilisational-state that brings to international affairs a tradition of morality and ethical conduct which it derives from its civilisational heritage. This thesis argues that in order to comprehend the apparently inexplicable aspects of Indian foreign policy it is crucial to understand this self-fashioning.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available in all forms of media, now or hereafter known.

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1 INTRODUCTION

India, it seems, is ‘emerging’, ‘rising’ and ‘surging’ (Cohen, 2001; Foreign Affairs, 2006; Di Lodovico et al., 2001). These are just a few of the epithets that have become commonplace in discussions about contemporary India. In particular, there has been a preoccupation with the question of whether it will be – to borrow the title of the 2006 *Hindustan Times* Leadership Summit, an annual gathering of India’s political and business elite – ‘The Next Global Superpower’. At this conference Sonia Gandhi the President of the Congress Party, which led India to its independence from Britain in 1947 and has been a dominant force in Indian politics ever since, revealed that she was ‘somewhat uneasy with the very word “Superpower”’:

For too many of us, it evokes images of hegemony, of aggression, of power politics, of military might, of division and conflict. But that is not what India has been all about through the centuries and it certainly is not what I would like to see India become. During long periods of our past, India exercised a profound influence on the course of world history, and it did so without exercising any kind of overt power. Consider, for instance, how Gandhiji, mocked as 'a half-naked fakir' by the British, took on the Superpower of the day through the mere force of his values and ideas. We Indians have always known our place in the world even when the world was treating us lightly...Why should we think of ourselves as a ‘Global Superpower’? Why not instead work towards becoming a global force for Peace, Progress and Prosperity? (Gandhi, 2006).

This account of India’s civilisational uniqueness – its ability to exercise influence without overt power – is one of the narratives that have underpinned India’s foreign policy discourse for the last six decades. Taking as points of departure key foreign policy events and issues, such as the India-China war of 1962, nuclear disarmament and India’s relations with its regional neighbours, I trace in this thesis, using genealogy, how certain narratives within the metadiscourse of ‘Indian civilisation’ permeate India’s foreign policy discourse which, in turn, performatively enacts India’s postcolonial identity. In so doing, this study

offers a better understanding of India's foreign policy behaviour than is provided by studies that are grounded in the positivist and ahistorical theoretical traditions of international relations.

1.1 Discourse, Genealogy and the Modern Geopolitical Imagination

In order to situate this thesis within the theoretical literature that I am using to frame my research it is necessary to overview the terminology – genealogy, discourse, narrative, postcolonial identity and performativity – mentioned above.

Michel Foucault (1984c; 1984b) understood discourses as knowledge-power formations constituted by a system of rules that allow a bounded space in which some statements are made more meaningful than others. The system of rules that Foucault refers to is not a formalised, rigid structure but is a set of constraints, norms or conditions. These rules are enacted by discursive practices. The historical development and deployment of discursive formations such as Indian civilisation can be analysed through genealogy, a form of analysis Foucault derived from Friedrich Nietzsche. From his reading of Nietzsche, Foucault (1977, p. 140, 142) argues that genealogy ‘opposes itself to the search for “origins”’ for ‘this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession’ (Foucault, 1977). Rather, by listening to history rather than relying on metaphysics what will be found through genealogy is ‘not a timeless and essential secret’ behind things, but ‘the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 142). The analysis of descent in genealogy does not seek to show that the past exists in the present – it ‘does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a

people'. To the contrary, it seeks to 'maintain passing events in their proper dispersion' and attempts to identify '...the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us...' (Foucault, 1977, p. 146). Thus, genealogy is a form of historical analysis that can account for the constitution of a discursive formation without having to refer back to a constituent subject that is posited as transcendental or constant throughout history (Foucault, 1984b, p. 59). Moreover, genealogy is a way of 'writing the history of the present' without resorting to finding parallels between the past and present or showing the present to be the result of a teleological march forward (Foucault, 1984a, p. 178). Rather, Foucault's approach to historical analysis 'explicitly and self-reflectively begins with a diagnosis of the current situation' through the location of acute manifestations of a particular 'meticulous ritual of power' or 'political technology of the body' to trace how it arose, took shape and became dominant (Rabinow & Dreyfus, 1982, p. 119).

Genealogical works are not common in International Relations (IR) and are even rarer in analyses of Indian foreign policy.¹ Yet genealogy is essential for delving 'below the immediate surface of events and their representation' and is a method that brings 'rhetorics of national identity and economic, defence and foreign policy into an analytical whole' (Burke, 2001, p. xxxiii). Genealogy illuminates the power-knowledge formations that structure contemporary politics in different societies and demonstrates that these structures are not universal but, rather, have specific histories. For this reason, this thesis is a genealogical study which traces the deployment and evolution of the power-knowledge formations that structure Indian identity and foreign policy. In particular, I analyse 'Indian civilisation' as what Jean Francois Lyotard (1989, p. xxiii) calls a metanarrative or

¹ For exceptions see Campbell (1992) and Burke (2001).

metadiscourse – a ‘grand narrative’ which gives rise to smaller narratives and provides them with cultural meaning, purpose and legitimacy. As Lyotard (1989) argues, the narrative form is the most basic form of linguistic communication and is responsible for creating and maintaining social reality. As Hayden White (1987, p. 45) notes, ‘the narrative figurates the body of events that serves as its primary referent and transforms these events into intimations of patterns of meaning that any literal representation of them as facts could never produce’.

In examining the metadiscourse of Indian civilisation I am attempting to trace the history of a manifestation of a ritual of power that John Agnew (1998) has called a modern geopolitical imagination. The metadiscourse of Indian civilisation is a material effect of the regulatory power of the modern geopolitical imagination and cannot be theorised apart from it. A modern geopolitical imagination treats the world as a single unit, regards the state as an organic entity which is locked in a struggle to survive in a world filled with other state-organisms, treats the territorial state as the political ideal, sees Europe as the pinnacle of social development and measures other regions against this standard (Agnew, 1998). It was a key feature in the emergence of European modernity and was constituted through Europe’s encounters with the non-European world. As such, the modern geopolitical imagination developed with a deeply embedded Eurocentrism and particular hegemonic codings of race and gender. To explain this further it is useful to consider the Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s (2000) theorising of European modernity.

According Hardt and Negri the discourse of Eurocentrism was forged as a temporary solution to the crisis that marked the emergence of European modernity (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 76-77). In their theorisation of the relationship between modernity and colonialism they argue that European modernity was not a unitary concept but rather,

occurred in two modes (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 70-71). The first of these modes was a radical revolutionary process, the result of the European ‘discovery of the plane of immanence’ between 1200 and 1600, during which humanity was conferred with the powers previously thought to be held by the heavens, opening up new possibilities of freedom, democratic politics and scientific inquiry (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 70). However, the revolution of European modernity provoked a counterrevolution that sought to dominate the new forces and movements in order to ‘reestablish ideologies of command and authority’ by seeking to ‘transplant the new image of humanity to a transcendent place, relativise the capacities of science to transform the world, and above all oppose the reappropriation of power on the part of the multitude’ (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 74-5). In the midst of this crisis, during the development of Renaissance thought, Europe made the discovery of other territories and populations drastically different to their own. This discovery strengthened the revolutionary forces challenging the accepted orthodox Christian history of the world and bolstered the idea of human equality initiated by revolutionary Renaissance humanism. Europe’s outside thus became another front on which the opposing counterrevolutionary forces had to wage their war of containment in the struggle over the paradigm of modernity. The discourse of Eurocentrism was forged precisely for this purpose, coming into being at the moment when the counterrevolutionary forces became conscious of Europe’s ability to subject these newly discovered populations to their domination (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 76-77).

The concept of the state of nature – the lowest stage of social development – underpins the hierarchisation of societies that is a key feature of the modern geopolitical imagination. It was a crucial idea in the development of European political thought, particularly that of the social contract theorists, during the Enlightenment and had its origins in the Spanish ‘discovery’ of native American peoples in the 15th century. The encounter posed a

fundamental challenge to the religious Christian conceptions of human nature, history and destiny that had thus far underpinned European society. Hence, Spanish writers such as Las Casas, drew on the old religious concept of the state of nature – the condition of humans before their exit from Eden – and reinvented it as a secular and historical first stage of human development exemplified by the native American. In this way, they were able to explain the existence of native American communities so different from their own and develop the political and moral framework to interact with them while pursuing the goals of wealth accumulation and religious conversion that had been their original aims in the Americas (Jahn, 2000, p. 50). Moreover, the state of nature ‘brought with it a worldview based on a hierarchy of cultures which served as the basis for a theory of unequal relations between political communities’ (Jahn, 2000, p. 96). The metadiscourse of Indian civilisation was built into the edifice of this hierarchy of cultures and was intrinsic to the development of the European Enlightenment. Most colonial writings granted India the right to call itself a civilisation – that is, Indian society was thought to have experienced significant development since its emergence from the state of nature. However, it was a degraded and stagnant civilisation that was far from the lofty heights of Western civilisation. This hierarchising aspect of the modern geopolitical imagination produced a complex set of dominant representations by which the non-European Other was produced as the West’s contrasting image, a practice which was termed orientalism by Edward Said (1995).

The construction of the system of reason that underpins Western thought was imbued with specific hegemonic norms of race and gender. The non-European was inscribed with the ‘irrational’, ‘feminine’ quality of passion, regarded as a source of chaos and danger, which the West had excised from its culture through the modernist project of conquering nature, acquiring knowledge and technology, and creating order. Yet, while placing the non-

European in this specifically inferior location as a utility for the organisation of Enlightenment thought, it also came to represent the West's lost 'spiritual values'. In this way, the non-European Other 'operates as both poison and cure for Europe' constituting its greatest threat: disorder, passion and irrationality, while at the same time, signifying the best hope for its regeneration (Young, 1990, pp. 140).

1.2 Indian Civilisation and Postcolonial Identity

In understanding how India has engaged with the modern geopolitical imagination, Foucault's (1984d, p. 39) characterisation of modernity as an 'attitude' rather than as a period of history is highly pertinent. The attitude of modernity is 'the will to "heroise" the present' combined with 'a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is' (Foucault, 1984d, p. 40, 41). In addition, to be modern is to take up the task of inventing oneself – to constitute the self as an autonomous subject (Foucault, 1984d, pp. 41-2). India's postcolonial modernity can be similarly thought of as an attitude but, in its desire to constitute the Self, India faces the problem that it has already been constructed as the Other of the Western modern. 'Postcolonial' has been a term of some controversy and debate regarding its meaning and implications (Gandhi, 1998; Ahluwalia, 2001). Here, the term is not being used to signify the end of colonialism but its continued presence, particularly as a part of the epistemological dimension of Western power, which is such that the dominant Western ways of knowing and understanding the world have come to set terms of debate for non-Western thinkers, even for those that seek to reject them (Euben, 2002, p. 45). As Ashis Nandy (1983, p. ix) puts it, 'the West is now everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds'.

A key concept that has been used to understand the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser in postcolonial theory is 'mimicry'. For Homi Bhabha (1994, p. 85), the 'epic intention of the civilizing mission...often produces a text rich in the traditions of *trompe-l'oeil*, irony, mimicry and repetition' with mimicry, in particular, emerging 'as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge'. According to Bhabha (1994, p. 86), 'mimicry represents an *ironic* compromise' for it is 'the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference' (emphasis in original). Yet the 'mimic man' – because he is like the coloniser but not quite – not only disrupts the authority of colonial discourse, but 'becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a "partial" presence' by revealing the inability of the coloniser to replicate itself (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86).

Mimicry is both resemblance and menace to the coloniser but the same is also true for the colonised mimic – albeit for different reasons. For the colonial and postcolonial subject mimicry of the coloniser is thought necessary to an extent. However, *complete* resemblance would constitute menace for it would imply a complete lack of difference. 'Difference' played a vital role in the development of the discursive formations of Indian civilisation and Western civilisation. India's difference from Europe was thought to be the source of its backwardness and inferiority and, therefore, was the driving force behind the civilising mission of British colonialism. The complete lack of difference was as inconceivable for the colonised as for their colonial oppressors. For the latter, it would mean the elimination of their rationale for the colonial project and for the former it would

amount to complete submission to the colonial ideology of the civilising mission. Here it is important to consider the work of Partha Chatterjee and Gyan Prakash.

Chatterjee (1993) has argued that the hegemonic nationalist movement in India was built upon a split between an inner and outer distinction. According to him, nationalists sought to erase cultural difference from the outer or ‘material’ domain of the state which included statecraft, science and technology. Difference could not be justified in the material domain, in which the coloniser was sovereign because the nationalist movement had accepted the colonial discourse of India’s material backwardness as the reason why India succumbed to colonial rule. To overcome this domination the colonised had to learn the West’s superior methods of organising material life. The nationalist movement was partly driven, therefore, by the desire for a postcolonial state that could more effectively establish and reinforce – or in other words, to more closely mimic – modern forms of disciplinary power (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 74). Yet, imitating the West in all aspects would threaten India’s self-identity and, indeed, was unnecessary because in the ‘spiritual’ domain, which constituted the ‘true self’ and was more important than the material domain, the East was distinctive, superior and had nothing to learn from the West.

For Chatterjee (2001, p. 156) this inner/outer distinction was also gendered:

Now apply the inner/outer distinction to the matter of concrete day-to-day living and you get a separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*, the home and the world. The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents our inner spiritual self, our true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interest, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world – and woman is its representation. And so we get an identification of social roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*.

Gyan Prakash (1999, p. 202), however, questions Chatterjee's distinction between an inner, spiritual domain and an outer, material domain in nationalist thought. Prakash agrees with Chatterjee (1993, p. 75) that the 'search for a postcolonial modernity has been tied, from its very birth, with its struggle against modernity'. Yet, unlike Chatterjee (2001, p. 156) who argues that the nationalist paradigm was an attempt to 'make modernity consistent with the nationalist project', Prakash sees a more adversarial, ambivalent relationship. He argues that Indian nationalism should be understood as a project based on critiquing Western modernity while establishing India as a modern nation (Prakash, 1999, p. 203). India was actualised as a 'culturally rooted moral community with a rational will to industrialize and achieve technological mastery' (Prakash, 1999, p. 109). Thus, India had to express itself in the language of modernity but its modern articulation had to be irreducibly different from its colonial expression (Prakash, 1999, p. 109).

This thesis seeks to show that Prakash is right in arguing against Chatterjee's distinction between an inner domain, where difference from the coloniser is preserved, and an outer domain, in which this difference is erased, by demonstrating that the 'material' domain of foreign policy has been a key postcolonial site where India's difference has been enacted. I argue that in the nationalist imaginary India's civilisational difference came to be epitomised by spiritual and moral strength. Yet, Indian nationalists were convinced that the past material weakness of Indian civilisation meant that a certain level of mimicry of the West was unavoidable if it were to survive in the modern world as a sovereign nation-state. The discourse of Indian civilisation, then, is a source of both danger and redemption in India's postcolonial identity. India's postcolonial insecurities stem from its acceptance of Western modernity's geopolitical imagination and are based on fears of reverting back to a pre-modern past marked by material weakness due to stagnation, conquest, and internal

disunity. To prevent such a decline, postcolonial India has sought to mimic modern Western governmental practices to reach similar levels of modern economic, scientific and military development, to establish a strong central government to stop the growth of fissiparous tendencies, and to maintain its independence as a sovereign nation-state. The mimesis of the postcolonial Indian state, however, is a *critical* mimesis that disavows identification, for it is a self-conscious imitation undertaken with an awareness of the limitations of Western modernity and the potentially damaging consequences of mimicry for the mimic. In particular, Indian nationalists critiqued the tendency in Western modernity toward exploitation, violence and material betterment at the expense of the community's moral and cultural values. By disavowing identification with these qualities and asserting the superior moral qualities of Indian civilisation the postcolonial state attempts to turn its project of modernity into a mimicry of subversion that undermines Western claims to superiority. However, as Diana Fuss (1994, p. 25) notes, a mimetic act can be disruptive and reversionary at the same time. Thus, India's mimicry of Western modernity may be an act of subversion but its basic acceptance of a modern geopolitical imagination means that it is also an act of subjugation.

1.3 International Relations, Postcolonialism and India

In this study, I suggest that India's search for a postcolonial modernity can be traced through its foreign policy discourse. In examining the connection between state identity and foreign policy in this way this thesis disputes conventional theories of IR that overlook this link or treat state identities as pre-existing or uniform. Realist theory posits a clear distinction between 'domestic' and 'foreign' policy and suggests that every state's foreign policy is driven by a concern for the 'national interest' which is defined in terms of the

quest for power.² Neorealist and neoliberal theories prioritise the analysis of the international system and, in general, give less regard to foreign policy analysis.³ Instead, the state is treated as a rational egoist and its behaviour is thought to be conditioned by the anarchical structure of the international system. Whereas for neorealists, regime-type is unimportant and a state's capabilities rather than its intentions are crucial, for liberal and neo-liberal scholars, regime-type is seen as shaping state identity according to normative and institutional logics. Thus, while the latter take into account the role of ideas in influencing state behaviour this is limited to the context of formal political structures rather than the broader cultural context.⁴ The more conventional constructivist scholarship also takes ideas seriously but assumes that state behaviour is shaped by certain pre-existing 'basic interests' and sets of social rules which have come about because of the dominance of a particular shared meaning system that has narrowed the ways in which actors understand the world.⁵

In contrast, my analysis treats utilises empirical research in order to understand the Indian state as historically and culturally embedded. By examining foreign policy as a discursive practice, my analysis moves away from conventional approaches that focus on explaining *why* particular foreign policy decisions are made, toward an approach that asks *how* the 'reality' that policy makers function in is produced and maintained and how this, in turn, makes decisions possible (Doty, 1993, p. 303). As Roxanne Lynn Doty (1993, pp. 297-8) has noted, conventional approaches to foreign policy analysis are limited because in asking *why* certain courses of action are taken they unproblematically assume the pre-existence of

² See Morgenthau (1967)

³ See for instance, Waltz (1979) and Keohane (1989)

⁴ See Russett (1993)

⁵ See Jepperson (1996) and Wendt (1994)

subjects, meanings and interpretive dispositions that make certain decisions possible. In contrast, asking *how* policy decisions are made entails an examination of the processes by which subjects, meanings and interpretative dispositions are materialised. *How* questions, therefore, pay attention to power as productive of subjects rather than treating power as something just wielded by subjects. Moreover, by focusing on discourses, we expand our understanding of what constitutes foreign policy for this approach suggests that the analysis of foreign policy should not be limited to an examination of temporally and spatially bounded ‘events’ (Doty, 1993, p. 303).

The thesis locates itself in a small but growing body of literature that explicitly seeks to bring postcolonial studies into dialogue with the discipline of International Relations in order to point out the latter’s deep and limiting Eurocentrism and its failure to confront the colonial system and its legacies.⁶ This move is also aimed at addressing one of the criticisms levelled at postcolonialism – that it remains a method of textual reading that does not engage with the political and has failed to transcend the disciplinary boundaries of literary and cultural theory (Ahluwalia, 2001, p. 15). For critics of postcolonial theory like Harry Harootunian (1999), instead of taking advantage of the opening provided by Edward Said’s assault on area studies as a contemporary Orientalist power-knowledge formation in his seminal *Orientalism*, postcolonialism ensconced itself in English departments where it became concerned with textual objects and methods and ignored the material aspect of power. While strongly defending postcolonialism’s impact on the studies of literatures and disputing the idea that area studies is somehow the proper domain of postcolonialism, Michael Dutton, Leela Gandhi and Sanjay Seth (1999, p. 124) suggest that postcolonialism should be seen as a ‘toolkit’, a

⁶ See for instance, Krishna (1993), Darby (2004; 1997; 1998; 2006b; 1994), Chowdhry (2002b), Krishna (1999; 2001), Grovogui (2001; 1996), Beier (2005), Persaud (1997), Ahluwalia (2001), Ling (2002), Muppidi (2004; 1999), Paolini (1999), Inayatullah (2004).

set of provisional strategies, protocols and concepts, which arise out of a certain recognition of, and approach to, difference. Needless to say, these tools get amended and reshaped according to the disciplinary contexts and the purposes for which they are used.

To this, Phillip Darby (2006b, pp. 4, 5) adds that ‘the idea of tools makes little sense without some notion of tasks’ and in the context of IR this includes, for instance, ‘disturbing received notions about what is international and what is domestic’ and ‘broadening established conceptions of the political’. To borrow Darby’s (2006a, p. 20) words, IR has ‘distanced itself from the processes that helped shape the future of more than two-thirds of the world’s peoples’ and there is an urgent need to draw attention to the interrelated workings of race, class and gender in the construction of contemporary global power hierarchies, something that has been neglected by both conventional and critical scholars of IR.

As Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair (2002a, p. 2-6) argue, conventional approaches to IR, such as realism and liberalism, obscure and naturalise the racialised, gendered and class based nature of power in international politics. Critical approaches to IR that engage, for example, with Marxism, postmodernism and feminism also generally fail to give due regard to ‘the cultural politics of the colonial past and postcolonial present, a politics that accompanies the contestations surrounding global hierarchy’ (Chowdhry & Nair, 2002a, p. 2). Writing from a postcolonial perspective Sankaran Krishna (1993, p. 388) critiques critical IR theories, in particular the postmodernist strand, for its ‘remarkably self-contained and self-referential view of the West’ and its obliviousness to ‘the intimate dialogue between “Western” and “non-Western” economies, societies, and philosophies that underwrite the disenchantment with modernity that characterizes the present epoch’.

As L.H.M Ling (2002, p. 50) puts it, 'where was the Other in postmodernism except as victim, exile, or utopian alterity? Where was the Other as Self?'

A study of Indian foreign policy is a study of the Other as Self. Since India as a modern nation-state emerged as a product of British colonialism, ignoring the politics of colonialism and postcolonialism is not an option for scholars of Indian foreign policy. Thus, even conventional works incorporate an account of the colonial legacy into their analysis. However, this usually goes no further than noting that the colonial experience has skewed Indian foreign policy toward the promotion of idealism and anti-Western sentiment but that over the years this has gradually given way to pragmatism and self-interest. This is essentially the assessment of Raja Mohan (2003, p. xix) whose recent work on Indian foreign policy, *Crossing the Rubicon*, argued that until the 1990s India viewed international and regional security issues through 'the prism of the Third World and anti-imperialism'. However, the end of the Cold War forced India to abandon its anti-Westernism and become interested in managing the international system 'and not remain just a protesting leader of the Third World trade union' (Mohan, 2003, pp. xx-xxi). Underlying Mohan's analysis is the realist assumption that self-interested power politics is the natural and normal mode of behaviour for states. He writes of India's nuclear tests in 1998:

For good or bad, and whether the world liked it or not, India decided to cross the nuclear Rubicon. Fifty years after Independence, India now wanted to become a normal nation – placing considerations of Realpolitik and national security above its recently dominant focus on liberal internationalism, morality and normative approaches to international politics (Mohan, 2003, p. 7).

However, as several scholars have shown the idea that political realism is equivalent to normalcy is a social construction rather than a universal and timeless truth (George, 1994; Tickner, 1992; Jahn, 2000).

Kanti Bajpai (1998) adds an element of complexity to his analysis by noting the colonial influence on Indian narratives of history and their impact on the postcolonial state's security policies. However, he then slips into a colonial narrative of Indian history himself, and India is characterised by what it lacks – in this case, mediating institutions. He argues that 'India traditionally seems to have lacked an ability to produce mediating institutions capable of sustaining social order without excessive coercion' (Bajpai, 1998, p. 161). However, British liberalism provided the solution and ever since, postcolonial India has had a 'predilection for institutions that promised order without an overreliance on force'. Thus, he depicts India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as a liberal institutionalist – a characterisation that does not take into account the seriousness of Nehru's concerns and criticisms of the international norms and institutions of the day. More generally, he argues that India's decision-makers adhere to a policy of 'modified structuralism' which, following Steven Krasner, he defines as the attempt to maximise interests and power in a world of similarly-minded states combined with a willingness to transcend individual calculations of interest under certain conditions. India's modified structuralism, argues Bajpai (1998, p. 195), is driven by expediency and conviction – the former because of India's material weakness and the latter due to the 'Gandhian norms and principles of nonviolence' imbued during the nationalist struggle. A serious consideration of the latter, however, is not undertaken and potential insights are lost due to Bajpai's insistence on using structural realism as his over-arching framework.

Stephen P. Cohen (2001) highlights another aspect of the colonial legacy and the nationalist movement – one that is particularly germane to this study. He argues that Indian nationalists came to define India as morally and spiritually superior which 'constructed (often in collaboration with Western scholars) a distinctive view of India's past that helped

shape their vision of India's future' (Cohen, 2001, p. 26). Thus 'Indian officials believe they are representing not just a state but a civilization' and 'contemporary Indian leaders also see India as playing a global, albeit benign, role' that is keeping with its intrinsic civilisational qualities (Cohen, 2001, p. 52). While at some points Cohen (2001, p. 26) seems to suggest that the idea of an Indian civilisation is socially constructed, in other places he appears to imply the prior existence of civilisational traditions which were simply revived during the nationalist struggle (Cohen, 2001, p. 51). Moreover, despite his insights, Cohen's analysis of Indian foreign policy proceeds to follow a fairly predictable path and is uncritical of the assumptions of the conventional theories of IR that implicitly frame his analysis. He argues that India's foreign policy tradition combines elements of both idealism and realism and that the gap between the two trends must be bridged in order to make Indian foreign policy more credible and predictable (Cohen, 2001, p. 308).

Sanjoy Banerjee (1994), on the other hand, employs an explicitly constructivist framework to link India's national identity, which he too argues is a civilisational identity, and its foreign policy discourse. Likewise, Sankaran Krishna (1999, p. 4) argues that 'an entity called "India" is coeval with a discourse called "Indian foreign policy"'. He goes on to examine Indian discourses on geopolitics, economic planning, science and national integration and argues that the postcolonial Indian state has held to a vision of the future that mirrored 'all that the west already was' while at the same time trying to differentiate it from the putative original Western model (Krishna, 1999, pp. 4, 9). Himadeep Muppidi (2004), in an analysis that includes an examination of the politics of economic liberalisation and nuclear non-proliferation in India also draws attention to this ambivalence between wanting to mimic the west while asserting its difference. He argues that external colonialism and internal pre-modernity constituted the defining boundaries of the nationalist imagining of postcolonial India. Of all the authors surveyed Krishna and

Muppidi, with their use of postcolonial theory, come closest to the reading of Indian foreign policy discourse I present in this thesis. However, I seek to clarify and build on the insights of these scholars by drawing attention to the extent to which India did not just wish to create a *different* modernity but sought a *better* modernity in which its pre-modern civilisational past could be a resource. This work also differs from that done previously because of its emphasis on the gender and race codings that constitute India's postcolonial identity.

1.4 Performativity, Foreign Policy and Identity: A Theoretical Framework

Richard Ashley (1987) was one of the first to suggest a reconceptualisation of foreign policy as a boundary producing political performance. Citing the Reagan administration's decision to invade Grenada and the Carter administration's Global 2000 Report as instances of foreign policy performance Ashley (1987, p. 53) argued that each performance only gained its significance through its ability to 'draw upon socially available cognitive resources – recognised precedents and shared symbolic materials – in order to impose interpretations upon events, silence alternative interpretations, structure practices and orchestrate the collective making of history'.

David Campbell (1992) in his path-breaking work on the foreign and defence policies of the United States (US), *Writing Security*, was similarly driven by the desire to escape the understanding of foreign policy as the behaviour of pre-given actors across pre-existing boundaries and made the performative constitution of identity a central theme. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) was influential in Campbell's thinking. Performativity, for

Butler, is the power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration. Rejecting the idea of the body as a pre-existing, blank slate devoid of value on which gender is inscribed, she argued that the gendered identity of the body is performatively constituted and as such, it has ‘no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality’ (Butler, 1990, p. 136). Thus, genders are neither true nor false but ‘are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity’ (Butler, 1990, p. 136). However, ‘gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity...rather gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space’ not through a founding act but through a ‘*stylized repetition of acts*’ (Butler, 1990, p. 140) (emphasis in original). Campbell (1992, p. 9) argues that the identity of the state can be similarly conceptualised. That is, the state can be thought of as having no ontological status apart from its constitutive acts, its status as the sovereign presence in world politics should be seen as the result of a discourse of primary and stable identity and the identity of particular states can be understood as tenuously constituted through a process of repetition (Campbell, 1992, p. 9). For Campbell (1992, pp. 10, 87) the articulation of danger in foreign policy discourse is a ‘privileged instance of the stylized repetition of acts’. However, it is more than just heuristically useful to treat the state as analogous to the body because historically, ‘the body politic’ has functioned ‘as a regulating and normalizing trope for “the political”’ (1992, p. 10). Consequently, just as the sexed body is disciplined by gender norms, state identity is similarly ‘inscribed with prior codes of gender which will in turn operate as norms by which future conduct is judged and threats are calculated’ (Campbell, 1992, p. 10).

Butler considerably refined and clarified the concept of gender performativity in her later work *Bodies That Matter* (1993). Distinguishing between common notions of identity construction and the idea of identity performativity, Butler (1993, p. 4) argues that the

former is underpinned by a nature/culture dichotomy whereby a culture is seen as acting upon and giving meaning to nature, which is perceived as a passive surface. This gives rise to a constructivism that is reduced to a singular, deterministic act alongside an undermining of human agency or a constructivism that treats the subject as having a godlike agency with the power to construct its identity through instrumental action (Butler, 1993, pp. 6-7). It is not enough, Butler (1993, p. 8) argues, to claim that subjects are constructed because the construction of a subject operates in an exclusionary manner whereby the subject is created against a non-subject and through a set of foreclosures and radical erasures. These sites of exclusion come to bound the subject as its constitutive outside and to 'haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation' (Butler, 1993, p. 8). Thus, for Butler (1993, p. 9), 'construction is neither a subject nor its act, but a process of reiteration by which both "subjects" and "acts" come to appear at all'. Instead of construction, then, Butler argues for '*a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity or surface we call matter*' (emphasis in original) (1993, p. 9). This process takes the form of performativity which is not a singular act but a 'reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition' (Butler, 1993, p. 12). As for the question of agency, Butler (1993, p. 5) argues that since the subject who would resist regulatory norms 'is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms', this means that agency is located 'as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power'. It is because identity is naturalised by the reiteration of norms that 'gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetition labor of that norm' (Butler, 1993, p. 10). In the idea of postcolonial critical mimesis mentioned earlier we have an example of Butler's understanding of how agency

becomes possible as a result of the reiteration of norms. Yet, as I will attempt to show in this thesis, while the reiterative performativity of mimicry is more than just a survival strategy, it is still a highly limited form of agency that, more often than not, reinforces some regulatory norms while it seeks to subvert others.

Like Campbell, Cynthia Weber (1999; 1996) has drawn on Butler's notion of performativity in her work on sovereignty and US foreign policy in the Caribbean, with an emphasis on the implications for the state and sovereignty of Butler's theorisation of sex, gender and sexuality – aspects that Weber (1998, pp. 78-79, f.n.7) argues were performatively underplayed by Campbell. In addition, Weber (1998, p. 81) draws on Butler to highlight the clear distinction between performance and performativity. While performance implies a discreet and deliberate act that has a definite beginning and end, and is a divergence from a society's 'naturally' determined standards of normality, performativity suggests that norms are constructed 'through citational processes that are always citations in relation to and of normative codes, that always produce the effects that they name' (Weber, 1998, p. 82). Applying this to IR, Weber (1998, p. 92) argues that foreign policy speeches, cables, press conferences and the like can be analysed as performative enactments of a state's sovereignty. Indeed, 'because foreign policy pronouncements are often moments when states traumatically confront the impossibility of "being" sovereign and thus insist upon their sovereign subjectivity all the more, foreign policy can be viewed as one place in which a "persistent impersonation that passes as the real" occurs, as the proliferation of performances at the very moments when representation seems to fail' (Weber, 1998, p. 92). Moreover, the 'foreign policy performative moments that affect sovereign states are themselves hopelessly crossed with sex, sexuality, and gender performances' (Weber, 1998, p. 93). Rather than accepting the conventional IR understanding of states as female and feminine in the domestic arena and male and

masculine in the international arena, Weber (1998, p. 94, f.n. 77) makes the important observation that ‘arguments about sex, sexuality and gender codings of a specific sovereign nation-state in a specific historical episode cannot be generalised to other states or even other performative activities of the state in question’. An application of Butler’s performative understanding of sex, sexuality and gender is, thus, crucial to revealing how ‘various particular, historically-bounded sex and gender codings participate in affecting the state and sovereignty’ (Weber, 1998, p. 93). Hence, we have in Weber a considerable refinement of Ashley’s early attempt at reconceptualising foreign policy as a boundary-producing political performance.

Yet, while Weber has drawn attention to sex and gender codings that are inherent in the materialisation of state identities, the discussion must be expanded to include race. Although the issue of racial representation informs the work of both Campbell and Weber, it remains marginal to their analysis. An exploration of the racial representations of Japan in US foreign policy formed the basis of one of the chapters in Campbell’s *Writing Security* while Weber’s *Faking It* discussed the US’s hegemonic identity as male, straight and *white*. However, neither Campbell nor Weber sought to theorise the racialised nature of state identity and world politics in the systematic and explicit manner in which they theorise gender and sex. In contrast, postcolonial theorists have recognised the construction of race to be one of the lasting legacies of colonialism and a key feature of contemporary world politics. Moreover, postcolonial feminist scholars have pointed out the deep imbrication of race and gender (Chowdhry & Nair, 2002b). Colonial discourse not only constructed a racial hierarchy of Europe and its Others but also a gender hierarchy of feminised or effeminised, non-white Others against a masculine, white Europe. This suggests the importance of considering the ways in which racial codings, in conjunction with gender and sex, participate in the performative enactment of state identities.

The reiterative and explicitly racial nature of mimicry – the mimic man is described by Bhabha (1994, p. 89, 92) as ‘almost the same but not white’ or ‘not quite/not white’ – suggests that it can be thought of as an example of race performativity. In an attempt to theorise performativity in relation to race Catherine Rottenberg (2003) juxtaposes Bhabha with Butler. Butler’s effort to conceptualise a performative understanding of race rested on a concern with refuting the notion that sexual difference is prior to racial difference or that the two are completely separate forms of social regulation. Butler (1993, p. 18) sought to show through a reading of *Passing* – Nella Larsen’s 1929 novella about African-Americans with skin light enough to pass as white – that gender norms and racial norms are constituted through one another. To theorise this process of co-constitution she suggested a rethinking of Freud’s idea of the super-ego as a ‘psychic force of social regulation’ that includes vectors of power such as race and gender (Butler, 1993, p. 182). However, this seems an overly generalised and ahistorical account of both gender and race. By contrast, Rottenberg takes a more nuanced perspective by drawing attention to the specificity of race norms. She claims that whereas heteronormative regimes reinforce their hegemony by ‘compelling *and encouraging* “women” to live up to norms of femininity and “men” to attempt to embody masculinity’, in the case of race, ‘certain subjects are encouraged to privilege and thus desire attributes associated with whiteness, but concurrently these same subjects are *forced* to identify as black’ (emphasis in original) (Rottenberg, 2003, p. 442). Drawing on Homi Bhabha, Rottenberg (2003, p. 442) argues that it is this ambivalence (‘identify as black (or else) but aspire to be white’) that constitutes the hegemonic category of race.

While Rottenberg’s theorisation is based on the context of 1920s United States, her use of Bhabha obviously indicates its relevance, albeit in a modified manner, for the issue of

postcolonial India's negotiation of global norms of race. The postcolonial state aspires toward a modernity that is racially coded as white. However, it voluntarily identifies as non-white and seeks to undermine global hegemonic race hierarchies because as it strives for a postcolonial Indian modernity that is irreducibly different and superior to Western modernity.

This study will be guided by a concern to analyse the role of significant foreign policy issues and 'events' as repeated and varied performative moments in the process of materialisation that produces India as a modern civilisational state that is fundamentally different from the nation-state of Western modernity. I will pay particular attention to how historically contingent codings of sex, gender and race are involved in this process. I concentrate mainly on moments of acute foreign policy crisis because boundary-producing practices become most evident during these periods. Hence, my genealogical study seeks to trace the history of the discursive structures and systems of knowledge and power that came into play during the India-China war, India's nuclear tests, and its military interventions in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It should be clear, however, that the performative constitution of identity is a continual process and that, in effect, the state is in a perpetual state of crisis. My research is mainly confined to the period between 1947, when India became an independent nation-state and 2004, when the coalition government headed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was defeated in the national election. I do, however, occasionally refer to more recent events and discourses, such as the Sonia Gandhi speech quoted at the beginning of this chapter, which demonstrates the continuing relevance of my analysis.

My documentary sources include foreign policy speeches, cables, white papers, press conferences, letters and interviews. These are all analysed as performative enactments of

India's postcolonial identity. The foreign policy documents I have looked at are those that are publicly available and many of them have been published in the Indian government's journal, *Foreign Affairs Record*. The few private notes or cables I have used have been published in the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*. There are two reasons for my lack of use of archival sources. First, unlike other democratic countries India does not follow the policy of opening its diplomatic archives to the public, or even to researchers through restricted-circulation, after a specified period of time. I would argue however, that this does not constitute a serious limitation to my study because – and this brings me to my second reason – in a study of state identity, it is the analysis of the public discourse that is crucial. Private documents are useful in revealing contending and conflicting knowledges and ideas. However, in order to be rendered meaningful, public statements must adhere to a society's general system of representation in a way that private documents do not necessarily need to. Thus, public statements are important because of what they tell us about dominant discursive structures.

The structure of the thesis

Instead of proceeding along a chronology of foreign policy 'events', the thesis is organised in a way that best illuminates the intersecting, conflicting, gendered and raced discourses that constitute India's postcolonial identity. I begin in chapter two with a genealogy of the metadiscourse of Indian civilisation through an analysis of Western and Indian writings. In Western discourses Indian civilisation frequently emerged as a backward, irrational Other to Western civilisation. Indian nationalists engaged with these notions, often in order to overturn them but – with, I suggest, the exception of M.K. Gandhi – they generally did not abandon the modern geopolitical imagination that underpinned them. Instead, Indian civilisation – which was gendered as female in both colonial and nationalist discourses –

became a source of both danger and redemption for a postcolonial state that was determined to make India modern without succumbing to the depravities of Western modernity. The subsequent chapters build on this general discussion in a more focused way by drawing out some of the narratives that constitute the metadiscourse of Indian civilisation and the conflicting ways in which they have been deployed in India's postcolonial foreign policy discourse.

Chapter three focuses on the India-China war of 1962 and India's discourse of danger which draws on a gendered and racialised narrative of Indian civilisation's vulnerability to invasion and conquest – a gendered narrative which depicts India as a repeated but resilient victim of rape. I argue that postcolonial India's attempt to forge a relationship based on civilisational friendship with China, partly as a repudiation of British India's geopolitical reasoning, was ultimately undermined by its commitment to the modern geopolitical preoccupation with the territorial state with defined borders. I suggest that eventually China was inscribed as a colonial Other in a discourse that reiterated the narrative of India's susceptibility to invasion and conquest.

Chapter four looks at India's discourse on nuclear technology which provides the context necessary for understanding India's nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998. I argue that, rather than drawing on the discourse of danger which is discussed in chapter three, India's nuclear discourse draws together narratives of Indian civilisation's economic and scientific backwardness as well as a narrative of Indian civilisation's uniquely moral sensibility. The first narrative is embedded within a modern geopolitical imagination in which Europe is the pinnacle of socio-economic development and gave rise to the notion that the mastery of nuclear science and technology is indispensable if India is to 'catch up'. The second narrative is an attempt to mark India's postcolonial difference as a nation-

state that is pursuing a different path to modernity and has resulted in a strong a consistent push for global nuclear disarmament. In this chapter I build on the gendered conceptions of India's postcolonial identity that I introduced in chapters two and three by focussing on the ways in which a politics of masculinity is also crucially implicated in this process of identity construction. In particular, I argue that the discourses surrounding India's nuclear policies reveal another layer to the gendering of India's postcolonial identity. Here postcolonial India becomes a woman cloaked in a garb of modernity by her state-building sons and daughters. Here I also point to how a politics of race informs India's nuclear politics and, therefore, its postcolonial identity.

Chapter five examines India's foreign policy discourses of friendship in Asia and kinship with its neighbours in the South Asian region. I argue against the common view that India has pursued a policy of regional hegemony akin to the United States's Monroe Doctrine by pointing to the rather different gendered discourses and historical narratives that come into play in India's case. I suggest that India draws on a historical narrative of Indian civilisation's benign cultural expansion – which is, again, a gendered narrative in which it is a maternal, civilisational well-spring – in order to enact an identity as a nation-state that abjures the domination of others and, rather, exercises influence through the force of its culture. The result, however, has not always been as benign as intended.

I use the findings of chapter five as a springboard from which to examine two major moments of foreign policy crisis, the India-Pakistan war in 1971 and India's troop deployment in Sri Lanka in 1987, in chapters six and seven respectively. In chapter six I analyse the first of these interventions – India's involvement in Bangladesh's secession from Pakistan in 1971. Given India's prior repudiation of power politics and hegemony, controlling the representation of this war in a way that secured India's postcolonial

difference as a moral and peaceful nation-state was crucial. Thus, I examine how India attempted to constitute the events of 1971 in a way that would allow it to carry out a decisive military intervention without damaging its identity as a nation-state that does not pursue power and hegemony. I look at the Bangladesh intervention in the broader context of India's foreign policy in the 1970s which, I suggest, cannot be separated from the general political turmoil of that decade.

Chapter seven considers India's second major intervention – its political and military involvement in Sri Lanka's civil conflict. In this chapter I examine how involvement in this conflict came to be seen as imperative for India in the 1980s but not before, during the 1970s when the strife began, or later, when the Sri Lankan government specifically asked for India's help. I argue that much depended on the inscription of South Asia as a space of fear and danger as well as on a leadership that was anxious to accelerate India's march to modernity and viewed mediation in Sri Lanka as a way to exercise the civilisational influence that was seen to be an important part of India's postcolonial identity. Finally, the Conclusion brings together the key points to be gleaned from the case studies and suggests that Indian foreign policy can only be fully understood when it is genealogically analysed as a representational practice that performatively enacts India as a sexed, gendered and raced subject that is structured by a deep ambivalence to modernity.

2 IMAGINING INDIAN CIVILISATION

2.2 Introduction

In this thesis I argue that the idea of ‘Indian civilisation’ forms an important part of India’s postcolonial identity and its foreign policy discourse. Yet, the discourse of Indian civilisation, as utilised by the postcolonial state, elides as much as it reveals and this makes an excavation of its rise even more necessary. Hence, this chapter is an examination of the Western scholarly works and the Indian nationalist responses that have shaped the metadiscourse of Indian civilisation, a grand narrative that gives meaning to the smaller narratives that write the postcolonial Indian nation-state. Following Romila Thapar (2002) I have divided the 18th and 19th century Western scholars into three groupings: the Orientalists, the Utilitarians and the Romantics. Their works constituted hegemonic texts during their time, influencing both official policy and public opinion. Many have written about Indian civilisation but only a few accounts have gained acceptance as ‘truth’, however temporary and contested. This has to do with the status of the writer and their position in their societies but, importantly, it also has much to do with the usefulness of their accounts in the simultaneous construction of the identity of their own societies. For instance, James Mill’s *History of British India* gained the status of a hegemonic text partly due to his reputation as a scholar and his association with the British East India company, but also because his depiction of Indian civilisation filled the position of Western civilisation’s inferior Other. This is method of dealing with the complexity of India has, I will argue, continued in Western scholarship right up to the present day.

As for the selection of nationalist writings I have primarily chosen to concentrate on those of Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohandas Gandhi and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. These three figures represented distinct responses to Western modernity, explicitly used the language of civilisation and have left lasting legacies on postcolonial India – Nehru, as the architect of the postcolonial state, Gandhi as the ‘father’ of Indian nationalism and Savarkar, as the founding ideologue of Hindu nationalism, an ideology which has had a fluctuating influence in India but has been ever-present. The advent of British colonialism provoked a number of different responses among Indians and I do not wish to suggest that the accounts discussed here were the only important ones. Anti-colonial resistance to the British, rather than being the seamless nationalist account that has been given official sanction, was in fact comprised of various 19th century struggles by peasants, soldiers and civil servants, none of which took the defence of ‘Indian civilisation’ as their driving motivation. However, Nehru, Gandhi and Savarkar represent three dominant strands of Indian nationalism, all of which engaged with the Western discourses on Indian civilisation in some way and have been vital in the construction of India’s postcolonial identity.

The next section of this chapter begins with a brief look at India in the medieval European imagination before moving on to the Orientalists’ rendering of India as a ‘Hindu civilisation’, the Utilitarian depiction of India as barbaric and barely a civilisation, and the Romantic portrayal of India as a land where ‘Imagination’ ruled. I then analyse the production of India in the post-World War II social science of Area Studies and, thereafter, in post-Cold War Western discourses. Following this, I examine the engagement of Indian nationalists with the Western construction of Indian civilisation, beginning with the early nationalists’ general acceptance of Western narratives of Indian history. I then analyse Savarkar’s construction of India as a Hindu civilisation, Gandhi’s subversion of Western

discourses of ‘civilisation’ and Nehru’s depiction of India as a plural but unified civilisational entity.

2.2 Indian Civilisation in the Western Imagination

2.2.1 India in Medieval European Thought: The Land of Desire

The India that inhabited the medieval European imagination was a distinctly different creation to the idea of India that became predominant in the 18th and 19th centuries. Medieval Europeans came to know India, or Al-Hind or Hindustan as it was referred to by the ancient Persians and Arabs, through Greek, Christian and Islamic accounts. These were largely drawn from fables and legends that told of a land of fabulous wealth, wisdom and miracles but were given the sanction of ‘scientific authority’ through their incorporation into works such as Pliny the Elder’s first century encyclopaedia *Historia Naturalia* (Le Goff, 1980, p. 192). This theme was reinforced in the period between the seventh and tenth centuries with the appearance of treatises based on apocryphal literary sources, such as the *Letter from Alexander to Aristotle*, dating from around 800 (Le Goff, 1980, p. 193). In the 12th century these accounts of India as a land of marvels gained new saliency through the legend of Prester John, a story shaped by the imagination of Europeans involved in the crusading movement. The legend of Prester John first appeared in 1145, following the loss of the holy city of Edessa to the Zengi of Mosul, which dealt such a severe psychological blow to Western Christendom that it created the conditions for the Second Crusade (Hamilton, 1996, p. 238). The legend originated in a letter supposedly written by Prester John and addressed to Western emperors, which was circulated throughout Europe in the 12th century. It described Prester John as a powerful priest-king who had attacked the easternmost lands of Islam and now ruled over a paradisiacal kingdom consisting of what

was then known as the three Indias, now known to be north Indian, south India and Ethiopia. Written in the form of a medieval encyclopaedic narrative, the letter promised a list of gifts including help in liberating the Holy Land, material wealth and a utopic future based on the peaceful coexistence of church and state. In this way, the letter conferred onto the East the attributes that the Western European reader of the letter could not possess at home, thus constituting the Other as an ideal version of the Self (Uebel, 2000, pp. 262, 268-9).

With European rulers anxious to find allies in their crusades, the fantasy of Prester John provided an important incentive for European exploration. Even after the crusading imperative had subsided however, the search for Prester John continued. The dream of a utopian Christian East persisted well into the 15th and 16th centuries as part of the ambition to achieve secular and religious harmony within a Christian empire extending over the whole world. Vasco de Gama on his first voyage to India, for example, carried with him a letter of introduction from King Manuel to Prester John and the Borgia map of the latter half of the 15th century marks the position of 'Prespiter Johannes' in India next to the marker for paradise, 'locus deliciarum' (Uebel, 2000, pp. 270-271). While this vision of a utopian India as the ideal of the European Self was not to last, aspects of the medieval exoticisation and feminisation of India as a land of desire continued to permeate later interpretations of Indian civilisation performing a vital function in the concurrent construction of modern, masculine Western identity.

2.2.2 The Orientalists: India as a Hindu/Sanskritic Civilisation

By the 18th century, certain Europeans in their quest for wealth and expansion had come to have more contact with India than ever before. By 1772, the English East India Company's

exploits in India had culminated in corruption scandals and the devastating famine of 1769-70. In an effort to improve its image and better administer its recently acquired territories, the Company adopted a policy of educating its officers about Indian society and its traditions and appointed Warren Hastings as the first Governor General of Bengal. As part of his reform scheme Hastings vowed that the East India Company would endeavour 'to adapt our Regulations to the manners and understanding of the People, and exigencies of the country, adhering as closely as we were able, to their ancient usages and institutions' (Quoted in Roosa, 1995, p. 139). Hastings was the first to espouse the view of the existence of an ancient Hindu constitution containing laws that had remained unchanged since ancient times and it was his view that to rule India successfully the British must understand and even respect these customs (Metcalf, 1994, pp. 9-10). Thus began the European codification of Indian culture, at roughly the same time as the word 'civilisation' was undergoing important changes in its English usage.

George Caffentzis (1995, p. 14) argues that 'civilisation' entered the English language in the early 18th century as a technical legal term generally referring to the process of assimilating the common law of the English King's courts to Roman civil law. However, by the last half of the 18th century the term had undergone a semantic change, which relegated its technical legal meaning to a secondary one (Caffentzis, 1995, pp. 14-15). This reflected the term's changing significance for the intellectuals of the Scottish Enlightenment, for whom the process of assimilating common law to civil law took on a heightened urgency after the 1707 union of England and Scotland. Scottish Enlightenment figures like John Millar and David Hume were convinced that the Scottish civil law tradition and its universalising Roman ethos with its basis in 'reason', 'principles' and 'certainty' was vastly superior to the English common law tradition based on judicial precedent and influenced by popular struggles (Caffentzis, 1995, p. 15, 18). Hume, in

particular, explicitly identified ‘civilisation’ with the principles of the civil law and argued that it had been the discovery of the last major compilation of Roman law, the *Pandects*, commissioned by Justinian in A.D. 530, that had restored Europe on its progressive path (Caffentzis, 1995, p. 18). For Hume, then, it was the job of the Scottish to civilise English law from its state of ‘rudeness’ by secretly transferring civil law practices into the English courts (Caffentzis, 1995, p. 19). Hence, by the time the Scottish Enlightenment thinker Adam Ferguson used the term in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* in 1767, the definition of ‘civilisation’ as the process of refinement through which a society reaches the highest form of social existence had come to the fore. Civilisation was thus now synonymous with enlightenment and the necessity of Europe to civilise/enlighten the non-European world (Bowden, 2004a, pp. 35-36). While ‘civilisation’ was gradually stripped of its equation with the ‘civilising’ agent of Roman civil law, it retained a distinctly legal basis, for the assumption remained that the essence of civilisation was law and convention (Caffentzis, 1995, pp. 28-9).

This was indeed the understanding of East India Company officials such as William Jones who set about studying and translating what he thought were pre-existing legal codes. In doing this, Jones and his colleagues assumed that the ancient Sanskrit texts they took to constitute India’s legal tradition were impartial, universally valid throughout India and took precedence over the living culture (Roosa, 1995, p. 140). Not only were these assumptions erroneous but, as Romila Thapar (2002, p. 3) has argued, the texts that were translated as legal books, for example the *Dharmashastras*, were in fact not codes but norms relating to social obligations and ritual requirements. Moreover, they introduced the idea that there existed distinctive and separate bodies of Hindu and Muslim prescriptive knowledge, a notion previously absent in indigenous Indian scholarship (Metcalf, 1994, p. 12). Finding parallels between the British and Roman empires, William Jones argued that

it was the responsibility of the British to rehabilitate these ancient texts in order to give Indians ‘a permanent security for the due administration of justice among them, similar to that which Justinian gave to his Greek and Roman subjects’ (Jones, 1970, p. 796).

Jones, a lawyer who came to Bengal to take up the position of chief judge, has the distinction of being considered the first of the English to learn Sanskrit. He was also largely responsible for the founding of the first Indological institution, the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, under the patronage of Warren Hastings. Along with colleagues such as Henry Colebrooke, Jones was dubbed an ‘Orientalist’ for his advocacy of the importance of studying Eastern languages and texts. It was these scholars/civil servants who, in attempting to make India accessible to Europeans, first established Indian civilisation as a Hindu and Sanskritic civilisation. The discovery that Sanskrit was related to Greek and Latin prompted Orientalists and philologists, scholars of the new science of language, to conclude that just as Greek was the classical language of Europe, Sanskrit was India’s classical language, which had thrived during the so-called golden age of Indian civilisation from the third to the seventh centuries AD. The study of Sanskrit and hence Indian civilisation became central to the 19th century discipline of comparative philology and, as such, an important part of the post-Enlightenment establishment of the social sciences (Ali, 1998, p. 99). ‘Classical’ Sanskritic texts were thought to be the Hindu equivalent to the Bible of Christianity and the Koran of Islam. The translation of these texts from Sanskrit to English therefore often contained a Christian undertone (Thapar, 1989, p. 218). Thus, the idea of Hinduism as a unified religion, in line with the Semitic model, was constructed as the foundation on which Indian civilisation was built.

As Thomas Blom Hansen (1999, p. 65) has argued, however, the ‘Hindu religion’, ‘Hindu culture’ and ‘Hindu’ as a distinct cultural category are all largely the result of the

interventions by European scholars, missionaries and administrators since the 18th century. Prior to this, argues Romila Thapar (1989, p. 222), the notion of a uniform religious community which could be identified as Hindu was largely absent. Rather, in India's early history there existed multiple communities based around locality, language, caste, occupation and sect. The earliest usage of the idea of a Hindu community in indigenous Indian sources emerged in the 15th century perhaps, as Thapar (1989, p. 224) suggests, as a reaction to being regarded as the Other in Islamic writings. It was only by the 18th century however, that the notion of a Hindu community as a clearly defined religious community came into existence. By then, the construction of India as a Hindu civilisation was indispensable in making it 'possible to identify the difference of the East from the West within a single conceptual grammar of civilizational order and hierarchy' (Hansen, 1999, p. 66). Thus, in keeping with the logocentric epistemologies that had come to dominate Western thought, the multitude of syncretistic religious practices found in India were given a previously unknown coherence and invented as a monolithic religion based around Sanskrit texts and a 'classical' Vedic high civilisation.

At the same time, India's Muslims were portrayed as belonging not just to a separate civilisation, but to an invading and conquering civilisation. This is a narrative which has been a trope in discourses of Indian civilisation from the earliest published British accounts of Indian history. Indeed, as Metcalf argues, one can see in the 18th century writings of Alexander Dow and Robert Orme the meeting of two Orientalist discourses. One, the older stereotype of the bloodthirsty, fanatical Muslim that was derived from the centuries-old European encounter with Islam, and the other, the effort to squeeze India into the mould of a society fashioned by Montesquieu's climatic determinism in which its tropical climate had produced a passive and effeminate population predisposed to Muslim tyranny (Metcalf, 1994, pp.8-9, 138-139). The latter discourse has been particularly enduring and I

will explore its contemporary manifestations in my discussion on India's nuclear politics in chapter four.

Orientalist scholars gained much of their knowledge about India's past from Brahmin pandits – who they took to be the 'priests' of Hinduism – and from texts written by Brahmins, which emphasised their dominance in the social order. As a result, the Orientalists came to the conclusion that Brahmins were the foremost group in Indian society and labelled Brahmin practices, which emphasised religious purity and vegetarianism, as high Hinduism while practices that were contrary to Brahminical theories of society were treated as deviant, lower forms of Hinduism followed by people of low castes whose oral traditions were considered unreliable sources of knowledge (Thapar, 2002, pp. 9-10) (Brimnes, 2002, p. 248). Hence, also, the Orientalist privileging of Sanskrit as India's 'classical' language and Henry Colebrooke's erroneous assertion that all major Indian languages derived from Sanskrit, an argument informed by the traditional Brahmin teaching that all the languages of the world were corruptions of Sanskrit (Trautmann, 1997, pp. 145-7).

Hinduism was considered by the Orientalists to be the basis of Indian civilisation partly because of the dominance of what they considered to be India's essential institution, the caste system. The caste system, for the Orientalists, was the marker of India's uniqueness and difference not only from Europe but also from other Asian societies (Inden, 1990, p. 49, 85). William Jones's translation of the *Dharmashastras*, which presents the Brahmin caste at the top of the Indian social hierarchy, was taken as the seminal and authoritative source for information about caste by British officials, thereby naturalising the Brahmin world-view as the standard of Indian civilisation. The privileging of interpretations of selected Sanskrit texts over living practices gave rise to the idea of caste as an unchanging

essence of a unique and timeless Indian civilisation in which the political domain was engulfed by the religious domain. Moreover, as John Roosa (1995, p.143) suggests, one can see in the Orientalists' selection of particular Hindu texts and interpretations the appropriation of an apparently indigenously sanctioned excuse for colonial practices. The Orientalist scholar, Charles Wilkins' translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* is a case in point. The ambiguities in the *Gita* have meant that as both a text and an oral tradition it has been read and recited in a variety of ways over the 2000 years of its existence. However, Wilkins had been informed by his Brahmin advisors that the text was among their most sacred and accepted their interpretation of it. This interpretation contained a rigid focus on caste duty and a philosophy of indifference to human suffering and, in this, British officials could find an apologia, of sorts, for the East India Company's economic exploitation and, eventually, a justification for colonial rule (Roosa, 1995, p.143).

Yet, caste was never simply a static religious system that dominated the social and political order, as scholars such as Susan Bayly (1999), Nicholas Dirks (1987) and Niels Brimnes (2002) have shown. Rather, it was a highly politicised institution in which the positions of groups were changeable and varied according to the nature of local conditions (Bayly, 1999, Ch.1).⁷ As Bayly (1999, Ch. 5), Dirks (1987, p. 9) and Brimnes (2002, p. 250) all point out it was not until the 19th century displacement of indigenous political authorities that, what we now call, the caste system became a reified, Brahmin-centred hierarchy.⁸

⁷ Dirks (1987, pp. 283-4), in his study of the South Indian princely state of Pudukkottai, reveals a social order cantered on the local kingly ruler rather than the Brahmin priest. Caste status was thus determined by relations with the king, which were dynamic, and constantly being renegotiated. Niels Brimnes' (Brimnes, , p. 250) work on early colonial South Indian port cities shows a caste system working within a social order that was not predominantly religious but, rather, was organized in patron-client networks in which caste factions were headed by powerful commercial castes instead of Brahmins.

⁸ As Brimnes (Brimnes, , p. 250) suggests, while caste may be a distinctive feature of Indian society, before the 19th century it was not all that different from other types of social stratification and identity. This puts in doubt the notion of caste as the essential social institution that defines Indian civilization. Indeed, Ronald Inden (1990, p. 82) argues that this supposedly distinctive institution of Indian civilization did not appear in

The Orientalist construction of Indian civilisation rested on the premise that since the so-called Vedic age of the classical period it had been in constant decline. William Jones, in particular, did much to establish this notion of a now degenerate but once venerable Indian civilisation. No matter 'how degenerate abased so ever the Hindus may now appear' he argued, it cannot be doubted that 'in some early age they were splendid in arts and arms, happy in government, wise in legislation and eminent in various knowledge' (Jones, 1788b, p. 421). In doing so, even though he often did not explicitly use the term, Jones played an important role in establishing 'civilisation' as a descriptive concept (Brimnes, 2002, p. 252). His preoccupation with writing a universal history of humankind within a biblical chronology meant that India, with its mythology that went back much further in time than permitted by the Bible, presented a unique problem. His solution was to contort India's history to fit his theory of universal human history by shortening the Indian chronology and by tying Indian mythology to Greek and Roman mythology. Thus, India could be situated within the European master narrative as a lost wing of European culture (Jones, 1788b, pp. 425-426; Brimnes, 2002, pp. 252-3; Ali, 1998, p. 99). Subsequently, Sanskrit literature, especially the Vedas, could be depicted as one of the earliest statements of human life and as documentary evidence of humans in their 'primitive' state (Trautmann, 1997, p. 193). According to the Orientalists, this ancient branch of European culture had been in stagnation since the Vedic age and, just as native Americans were assumed to offer a glimpse of Europeans in their original state, contemporary Indians were thought to present an image of how Europeans may have appeared in their childhood stage of development. According to William Jones (1788b, p. 419) the present-day inhabitants of

anything similar to its modern form until the 13th or 14th century following the break down of kingship systems. In his effort to break with the colonial constructions of caste, Inden (1990, p. 218) has sought to reconceptualise caste as a form of subject-citizenry in which citizenship and subjecthood were combined rather than opposed to one another. Thus, in his formulation, caste becomes a form of citizenship that is defined by distinctions and differences of degree as well as by oppositions.

India were living examples of a distant past: ‘the primitive religion and languages of the *Hindus* prevail at this day with more or less of their ancient purity’. As such, the ‘Hindus’, he argued, were ‘incapable of civil liberty’ and they ‘must (I deplore the evil, but know the necessity of it)...be ruled by an absolute power’ (Jones, 1970, pp. 712-13). Jones (1970, p. 713) found his ‘pain much alleviated by knowing that the natives themselves...are happier under us than they were or could have been under the Sultans of Delhi or petty Rajas’.

This image of India as a stagnant civilisation lost in time and in need of rescuing from cruel despots was to prove an enduring one that was put to good use in subsequent depictions including, as we shall see later, in those of Indian nationalists who urged the modernisation and industrialisation of India. It was also an image that was particularly prominent in the Utilitarian critique.

2.2.3 The Utilitarian Critique: India’s Barbarism

Unlike the Orientalists, Utilitarians of the 19th century like James Mill saw no value in Indian culture, ancient or otherwise because, in his opinion, it lacked rationalism and individualism, the qualities by which he determined the extent to which societies were civilised. Mill, an employee of the East India Company, is famous for writing a textbook on Indian history that remained hegemonic throughout the 19th century, despite the fact that its author had never visited the country. Mill subscribed to the historicist ideals of the Scottish Enlightenment tradition and made the notion of ‘civilisation’ central to his depiction of India. However, Mill (1848a, p. 156) was critical of what he saw as William Jones’s wanton use of the term as ‘attached to no fixed and definite assemblage of ideas’ but ‘applied to nations in all the stages of social development’. Thus, where in the work of the Orientalists one can see an implied descriptive conception of civilisation, in Mill,

civilisation was firmly seen in terms of a scale of social advancement. The liberal tradition from which Utilitarian thought originates is imbedded with a strident universalism which forms the basis of its understanding of civilisation. Showing that India did not possess civilisation was, therefore, driven by the need to buttress the liberal rationalist notion that only contemporary European culture, and particularly British culture, had achieved that level of advancement. Mill's *History of British India*, which was a standard textbook at Haileybury College, where East India Company officials were trained until 1855, combined the work of the Orientalists with ideas from the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, in particular the notion that civilisation was reliant on the commodification of natural wealth. Mill (1848a, p. 153) was unimpressed by William Jones's valorisation of ancient Indian culture, arguing that the state of India's arts, sciences, laws and institutions indicated 'but a few of the earliest steps in the progress to civilization'. Further, an examination of 'every ancient writing, which bears any reference to the matter of history, the historical poems, the Puranas, hold up to view a state of society, the reverse of tranquil; perpetual broils, dethronements, injustice, wars, conquests and bloodshed' (Mill, 1848a, p. 179). As we shall see in chapter three, this narrative of Indian history – in which India is acutely susceptible to invasion and fragmentation – would become an important part of India's postcolonial geopolitical imaginary.

Mill (1848a, p. 214) did, however, agree with Jones that the 'the manners, institutions and attainment of the Hindus, have been stationary for many ages; in beholding the Hindus of the present day, we are beholding the Hindus of many ages past; and are carried back, as it were, into the deepest recesses of antiquity'. This evaluation of Indian culture was reiterated by Thomas Macaulay (1952, p. 722) who in his 1835 *Minute on Education* declared that he could not find a single Orientalist 'who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'. For

Macaulay (1952, p. 704) who spent four years in India reforming the criminal code and setting up a British-style educational system, the British had ‘established order where we found confusion’ and had quelled the ‘petty dynasties’ which had been ‘generated by the corruption of the great Mahometan empire, and which a century ago, kept all India in constant agitation’.

The Orientalist notion of the centrality of caste and Hinduism to Indian society was also accepted by Mill. India, for Mill (1848a, pp. 479-522) was a Hindu society and its Muslim inhabitants belonged to a separate and foreign Muslim civilisation, which was much superior to that of the Hindus. Moreover, Muslim rule, though defective, did much to improve the lot of the Hindus although it was not advanced enough to alleviate the worst of Hindu degeneracy. According to Mill (1848b, pp. 177-201), the caste system had initially been developed to negotiate the changes accompanying advancement into civilisation. However, rather than aiding this process, caste had disabled India’s progress from the lower to higher stages of civilisation. This was the result, Mill claimed, of the priestly caste, the Brahmins, gaining control of the political system and inhibiting the growth of political consciousness through the propagation of theological dogma to the ‘ignorant masses’ which emphasised Brahmin superiority in a hierarchical order that perpetuated hereditary occupations and kinship ties. Thus, for Mill – who was a staunch secularist – India provided a prime example of what can happen in a society in which religion plays a strong role (Ali, 1998, p. 104).

Mill was responsible for the classification of Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and British epochs. This is a periodisation that has become so naturalised that it continues to inform scholarly work on India to this day. As Thapar (2002, p. 5) argues, this is despite the fact that this periodisation has led to a ‘distorting of Indian history and has frequently thwarted

the search for causes of historical change other than those linked to a superficial assessment of religion'. Moreover, rather than being an accurate depiction of Indian history, this periodisation is more reflective of European racism and historicism. Hence, the 'classical' Hindu period is equated with the ancient, the 'despotic' Muslim period with the medieval and the 'progressive' British period with the modern.

It was Brahmanical despotism however, rather than Muslim despotism that was a prominent theme in the liberal rationalist characterisation of Indian society. The notion of despotism in Western political thought has its origins in early Greek writings on their antagonists, the Persians who were characterised as upholding an absolutist system of governance and, thus, presented as radically culturally alien and inferior. After falling into disuse the concept was reprised as part of 18th century Europe's arsenal in the construction of a superior Western Self opposed to a despotic Asian Other (Metcalf, 1994, pp. 6-7). In the Indian context, Mill was convinced that, in their 'state of weak and profligate barbarism' despotism was 'the natural condition of government among such a passive people as the Hindus' (Mill, 1848a, p. 492). In keeping with their civilising mission ideology, Utilitarians sought to improve this with the introduction of an English-style rule of law, although, given the 'moral habits left in their minds by superstition and despotism', there was 'formidable resistance' and a 'far more perfect system of legal and judicial provisions, than what is witnessed in England, is indispensably required' (Mill, 1848c, p. 576).

2.2.4 The Romantics: India as the Land of Imagination

The liberal desire to transform India from a barbaric society with despotic institutions into a civilised society with liberal institutions and values was dependent on the constant

articulation of India's difference or radical Otherness, a preoccupation they shared with the Romantics.

More than any other group of scholars, the Romantics – through the interpretation of selected Sanskrit literature – established India as a land of mysticism, a fundamentally non-rational civilisation. In doing so they externalised onto India Europe's internal Other, 'a feminine, visceral, immanent Imagination' that posed such a necessary threat to the desire for a 'purely masculine, spiritual, transcendent Reason' for the Western Self (Inden, 1990, p. 130). Concerned about an excessive focus on discipline and rationality due to the rapid industrialisation of their societies, the Romantics constructed Asia, in general, and India, in particular, as a site of hope and fantasy – the source of an Oriental Renaissance, which would liberate Western scientific man from its obsession with rationalism (Schlegel, 1889, pp.519-20).

The Romantics adhered to the basic Enlightenment idea of a universal human nature but rather than treating it as abstract and fixed they saw it as being specific and changing. Friedrich Schlegel, the foremost of the German Romantics, divided human nature into four faculties, ordered into two pairs, Understanding and Will, Reason and Imagination. Rather than seeing these components as cumulative in Western man, Schlegel argued that they were distributed among the four nations of the ancient world, the Egyptian, Hebrew, Chinese and Indian. Whereas the Egyptian and Hebrew nations were endowed with Understanding and Will respectively, the Chinese were dominated by reason and India, by the faculty of Imagination (Inden, 1990, p. 68).

The Romantics were prone to a more favourable view of Indian civilisation because of their position as critics of the West. Schlegel (1889, p. 520) for instance, argued that 'even

the loftiest philosophy of the Europeans, the idealism of reason...appears, in comparison with the abundant light and vigour of Oriental idealism, like a feeble Promethean spark...ever ready to be extinguished'. While the Romantics commended India's 'spirituality' as opposed Europe's 'materialism' this did not, however, necessarily entail a fully-fledged approval of what they saw as Indian values. Schlegel argued that if Western culture had gone to the one extreme of valuing rationalism over all else, then Indian culture was weighed down in superstition. Thus, while 'the early Indians possessed knowledge of the true God' a 'fearful and horrible superstition' had 'crept into the entire system, profaning and polluting every thing it touched' (Schlegel, 1889, p. 471).

Moreover, the Romantics, like the Orientalists and Utilitarians, had little interest in the living culture of Indian civilisation but were, rather, concerned with ancient Sanskrit texts, such as the Vedas. Like these other scholars, they saw in India an ancient primitiveness from which they could discern Europe's origins. Schlegel (1889, p. 470) for example, urged the study of 'ancient Indian doctrine' as 'the earliest authentic monument of the human intellect'. Some familiar Orientalist and Utilitarian convictions underlay the Romantic construction of Indian civilisation. Hinduism was thought to be its essence and the laws of Manu, which are a part of the *Dharmashastras*, were said to constitute the basis of Indian life (Schlegel, 1889, p. 468). India's religious and cultural diversity bred disunity and it was particularly prone to foreign conquest (Schlegel, 1889, p. 509, 510).

The representations of India discussed above can be seen to have provided the foundation on which the discursive formation of Indian civilisation has been built. Hegel's India, for example, was a synthesis of Romantic idealist and Utilitarian discourses. Thus, India was a land 'which has remained stationary and fixed, and has received a most perfect home-sprung development'. It was moreover, dominated by an 'Idealism of imagination, without

distinct conceptions;—one which does indeed free existence from Beginning and Matter...but changes everything into the merely Imaginative’ (Hegel, 1956, p. 139). As a result ‘we have only the soul in a state of emotion – a soul, however, in which the death of free self-reliant Spirit is perceptible’ (Hegel, 1956, p. 140).

Karl Marx’s writings on India bear the mark of both Hegel and Mill and were shaped by his need to fit Indian society into his simplistic notion of a static and unchanging ‘Asiatic mode of production’. He agreed with Hegel (1956, p. 163) that ‘Indian society has no history at all’ because it had never experienced self-driven change. Indeed, until the British arrived India’s social condition had, for Marx, ‘remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity’ (Marx & Engels, 1959, p. 16). Whereas Europe had moved beyond the village communism that characterised the universal first stage of human development, India had not, and instead remained organised in ‘small semibarbarian, semi-civilized communities’, which, although they appeared ‘inoffensive’ were the ‘solid foundation of Oriental despotism’ having ‘restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies’ (Marx & Engels, 1959, p. 18). Like Mill, Marx (1959, p. 14) denied the existence of a ‘golden age of Hindustan’ but placed India’s ‘Hindu civilisation’ higher on the civilisational ladder than had Mill. Thus, the ‘barbarian conquerors’ of India like the Arabs and Moguls had been ‘conquered themselves by the superior civilization of their subjects’ according to the ‘eternal law of history’. According to Marx (1959, p. 30), the ‘British were the first conquerors superior, and, therefore, inaccessible to Hindu civilization’.

The quest to demarcate and define an Indian civilisation continued throughout the period of British colonial rule and, indeed, did not finish with the end of European colonialism.

Western discourses on Indian civilisation dating from the 18th century have been instrumental in the assembly of a discursive formation that continues to shape the contestations over the identity of the modern Indian nation-state. in both contemporary Western and Indian discourses.

2.2.5 Indian Civilisation in Contemporary Western Discourse

Before moving on to an examination of Indian civilisation in nationalist discourses, I will undertake here a brief analysis of contemporary Western discourses on India, beginning first, with the depiction of India in discourses in Area Studies.

Post-WWII area studies

India achieved its independence at the end of World War II in the midst of the ascendancy of the United States (US) as the military, economic, cultural and intellectual centre of the West. European forms of knowledge about the non-Western Other were thus eclipsed by the intellectual project of the American social sciences. This project has been termed American Orientalism by Edward Said because of its implication in maintaining a world order based on US hegemony and expanding the reach of Western capitalism (Said, 1995, pp. 290- 296; Inden, 1990, p. 198).⁹ Nonetheless, while the circumstances had changed, the desire to essentialise and control the non-Western Other remained, as did the dichotomies that underpinned the discourses on India's 'barbarity' and 'despotism'. These were now, however, expressed in a different language since, by the 1950s, the scale of civilisation had been displaced by a discursive shift toward the modernisation paradigm and its scale of development (Escobar, 1995; Mehmet, 1995; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997).

⁹ While I have already used the term 'Orientalist' to refer to a specific group of Indologists, Said's 'Orientalism' refers to the general practice of producing a non-Western Other – the overarching project that Orientalist, Utilitarian and Romantic Indologists were all engaged in.

Henceforth, the leading centres of Indian studies, such as the University of Chicago, began to focus their attention on the issue of how 'traditional' civilisations such as India's could be opened to capitalist development with the least resistance. Chicago's 'Comparative Civilisations Project', which lasted from 1951 to 1961, aimed to compare what were considered the world's three great civilisations, Western civilisation, Muslim civilisation and Indian civilisation in order to explain why only the West had successfully modernised. In a way reminiscent of the East India Company efforts in the 18th century, the project sought to identify the cultural traditions that needed to be changed, while the complementary 'Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations' was set the task of finding ways to coerce the 'masses' with their atavistic tendencies into accepting the changes (Roosa, 1995, pp. 152-3). As indicated by the shift away from 'civilising' discourses towards 'modernising' discourses, by this time there was recognition of the need to avoid ethnocentric biases when studying other cultures. Yet, the depiction of Indian civilisation remained trapped within colonial constructs that portrayed it as monological and ahistorical. Indian civilisation essentially remained a Hindu civilisation with caste as its distinctive marker.

For example, Milton Singer's *When a Great Tradition Modernises: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilisation* contains a chapter critiquing the various exaggerated Western images of India. However, although he succeeds in presenting a much more multi-faceted depiction of Indian civilisation, it ultimately centres on what he regards as the guiding light of all Indians, the 'Great Tradition of Sanskrit Hinduism' (Singer, 1972, p. xiii). Singer (1972, p. 48) was struck by how much India's 'modern national culture' was dependant on 'traditional Hinduism' and argued that 'this dependency is quite understandable in a civilisation where religion and culture have been practically

coextensive for thousands of years'. It is this assumption that leads to his equation of Hinduism with Indian culture. Thus, the lives of the 'ordinary people', we are told, continue to be shaped by the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Arthashastra*. However, with the demands of modern life increasingly intruding into the lives of Hindus, Singer sought to understand how they adapted their cultural traditions as a means of understanding the 'structure and change of Indian civilization and perhaps of other civilizations as well' (Singer, 1972, pp. xiii-xiv). Indian civilisation here is clearly understood here as unchanging tradition while the modern is always change imposed from the outside.

The reduction of complexity to simplistic dichotomies can also be found in Rudolph and Rudolph's *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*. Seeking to place the 'Indian manifestations of tradition in the foreground of observation' in order to 'explore its internal variations and potentialities for change' the book focuses a great deal of attention on caste as a 'traditional structure' and its role in modern politics (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967, p. 10). Likewise, the authors also considered the ways in which 'indigenous high-culture law', by which they mean the Dharmashastras, had 'aided in establishing a national legal framework' (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967, p. 12).

It is also important to mention the work of the French scholar Louis Dumont because of its influence in shaping the dominant understanding of caste in Western discourse, in general, and in American social science discourse, in particular. Dumont (1970, pp.4-5, 11) regarded caste as the defining feature of Indian civilisation, a term he used interchangeably with Hinduism, and argued that it was an indicator of India's fundamental unity. Indeed, the study of caste for Dumont (1970, p. 5), 'throws into relief the largely illusory character of Indian diversity'. By portraying caste as the common thread holding together the

‘traditional higher, sanskritic, civilization’, the ‘lower, or popular level of civilization’ and the various local, regional and social diversities he is able to banish the ‘nightmare of perpetual diversity which haunts the naïve observer’ of Indian society (Dumont, 1970, pp.4-5). The caste system makes for a stark binary distinction between India and Western society. Where India operates with an institutionalised inequality whose basis is a homo hierarchicus, Western society, according to Dumont (1970, pp. 13-14) has gone out of its way to develop a system based on equality whose characteristic individual is a homo aequalis. Moreover, India’s hierarchical nature makes it resistant to new ideas replacing the old; rather, the two coexist ‘making India a sort of history museum’ (Dumont, 1970, p. 15). Dumont’s writings on India were thus exemplary of the reductionist, binary and ahistorical currents of Western discourse on Indian civilisation.

The way that the depiction of India as a Hindu, Sanskritic civilisation seeped into US foreign policy discourse of the time is an indicator of the firmness with which it had entrenched itself. For instance, Henry Kissinger’s memoir about his time as foreign policy advisor to the Nixon administration invokes almost every possible orientalist myth and stereotype about India. The caste system is said to have made India ‘impermeable’ thus ‘enabling Indian civilization to survive, occasionally even to thrive through centuries of foreign rule’ (Kissinger, 1979, p. 843). Channelling the spirit of James Mill, Kissinger (1979, p. 844-845) then goes on to strip Indians of human agency altogether claiming that it took the efforts of the British to give India a political identity. Moreover, Hindu-Muslim tensions are explained as originating in the antipathy felt by Hindus toward low-caste converts to Islam, a conflict that has continued on in the form of the India-Pakistan conflict. This was because ‘few neighbours have less in common, despite their centuries of living side by side, than the intricate, complex Hindus and the simpler, more direct Moslems’ – evidence for which Kissinger (1979, p. 845) found in the contrasting

architecture of temples and mosques and forts. Similar depictions of Indian civilisation, albeit less crude than Kissinger's, can still be found in post-Cold War Western scholarship and it is to this era that I now turn.

Post-Cold War new world disorder

At the end of the Cold War, bipolar certainties were replaced with multipolar visions of a new world order/disorder. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* brought a civilisational analysis of international politics back to the fore. Rejecting the 'parochial conceit that the European civilization of the West is now the universal civilization of the world', he argued that 'in the twentieth century the relations among civilizations have...moved from a phase dominated by the unidirectional impact of one civilization on all others to one of intense, sustained, and multidirectional interactions among all civilizations' (Huntington, 1996, p. 53, 55). Moreover, he claimed that since only the West had generated significant political ideologies, religion continued to be central to non-Western civilisations. Thus, 'the intracivilizational clash of political ideas spawned by the West is being supplanted by an intercivilizational clash of culture and religion' (Huntington, 1996, pp. 54). Subsequently, Huntington's characterisation of Indian civilisation adheres to the 18th century standard. In his *Clash of Civilizations*, 'Indian civilisation' is used interchangeably with 'Hindu civilisation' but at the same time, it is said to be divided by a civilisational fault line between Hindus and Muslims (Huntington, 1996, pp. 137-138). Proving that not that much has changed, however, 'modernization' still appears as the necessary and unquestioned goal and paradigm with which to analyse non-Western societies, just as it was in the 1950s. Thus, we find Huntington (1996, p. 77) still asking the question 'are there some non-Western societies in which the obstacles the indigenous culture poses to modernization are so great that the culture must be substantially replaced by Western culture if modernization

is to occur'. He answers in the negative with regard to India because 'Hindu' society possesses an 'instrumental culture' in which 'traditions' are used in such a way that changes associated with modernization appear not to affect existing social institutions (Huntington, 1996, p. 77). India, it appears, has followed the University of Chicago's prescriptions and has successfully modernised. The achievements of Indian civilisation in this regard are contrasted with the failures of Muslim civilisation in doing the same, the latter being a recurring theme in Huntington's text. The trouble that Islamic societies have had with modernisation, we are told, stem from their 'consummatory systems' in which the society, the state and authority are all guided by religion (Huntington, 1996, p. 77).

India as a success story of modernisation and democratisation in contrast to the Muslim world is an increasingly common depiction in Western discourse but this too serves the function of constructing the centrality of the Western Self. Indeed, we can see here a continuation of the Romantic preoccupation with portraying India as a site of hope and fantasy. Only now, India serves as the proof that West is not only superior but universal after all. The writings of the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman are a case in point. Comparing India with the Middle East, he argues, 'India is developing call centres and Saudi Arabia is developing madrassas. One is calling the world, in a perfect accent' (by which Friedman means an American accent), while 'the other is calling God, in only one language' (Rediff, 2004) (Friedman, 2004). Likewise, in Huntington's work, finding similarities between Indian civilisation and Western civilisation is at times more important than portraying its radical Otherness. 'Hindu civilisation' is said to be the only civilisation, apart from the West, that makes a distinct separation between religion and politics (Huntington, 1996, p. 70). Moreover, unlike the Islamic and Sinic civilisations, which Huntington paints as the two great threats to Western civilisation because of their 'very different' cultural traditions, India is said to be a 'swing' civilisation, variously alternating

its support between the three (Huntington, 1996, p. 185). Contemporary U.S. foreign policy discourse has buttressed these conceptualisations. During Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the United States in 2005, President George W. Bush made a clear demarcation between 'good' and 'bad' nuclear powers describing India as 'a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology' that 'should acquire the same benefits and advantages as other such states' (United States & India, 2005). As we shall see in chapter four, this recognition has long been sought after by India. The Bush Administration's efforts to achieve full civil nuclear energy cooperation with India followed a decision made by the US, according to senior officials in a background briefing in March 2005, 'to help India become a major world power in the twenty-first century' (Quoted in Tellis, 2005, p. 1).

Thus far, I have analysed the historical evolution of Western conceptions of Indian civilisation and its coeval emergence with the idea of Western civilisation. These conceptions of Indian civilisation gave rise to some powerful narratives of Indian history, including those of India's backwardness, its vulnerability to invasion and conquest and its spiritual superiority. Moreover, Indian civilisation in Western thought has implicitly been gendered as feminine as the desirable, irrational, exotic and passive Other of a rational and masculine Western civilisation. As we shall see in the next section and throughout the thesis, this feminisation of India was an important aspect of nationalist discourse, although here it served rather different purposes.

2.3 Indian Civilisation in Nationalist Discourse

I now turn to how Indian nationalists engaged with Western conceptions of Indian civilisation. The choice of Calcutta as the capital of British India gave rise, in the first half of the 19th century, to a movement championing reason and modernity in opposition to superstition and tradition and described ‘with a profound imperialist irony’ as the ‘Bengali Renaissance’ (Spivak, 2001, p. 58). At the instigation of Bengal’s land-owning and business elite, civic institutions such as the Hindu School, the Landholders Society and the British India Association were established and a close collaboration with East India Company officials was encouraged, especially after the Asiatic Society of Bengal began accepting Indian members in 1829. Ram Mohan Roy and other members of the Bengali elite who were at the forefront of the ‘Bengali Renaissance’ were in agreement with the Orientalists that Indian civilisation was essentially a Hindu one (Roosa, 1995, p. 148). Moreover, while they spoke of ‘India’ their characterisations were almost exclusively based on Bengal, which they treated as the geographic equivalent of India. Their negotiation of an Indian identity was based on the Orientalist notion of a glorious Hindu past and the acceptance of colonial rule since a common view at this stage among this group was of the superiority of Britain’s civilisation (Raychaudhuri, 1988, p. xii, 2).

This conviviality did not, however, survive. As Britain’s economic exploitation of India increased and its colonial racism became entrenched, disillusionment with Western civilisation replaced the previous sense of admiration (Roosa, 1995, p. 148-9). Using the tools provided by European Romantic nationalism, the early Indian nationalists set out to recover the ‘authentic’ cultural nation, which more often than not involved a resort to the idea of Hindu superiority and exclusivity (Bhatt, 2000, p. 23). In this view, while it was seen to be important to learn from the West, Indian civilisation remained vastly superior

because it had reached a far more advanced level of philosophical and religious learning before its current state of degradation.

The prominent Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee located the reasons for India's subjugation in India's other-worldliness, its fatalism and the lack of unity in Hindu society which, he argued, had resulted in an absence of national solidarity. Bankim, who was well-schooled in European philosophy and literature and was greatly influenced by Auguste Comte's positive philosophy, in particular, reinforced the idea of India as Europe's Other – as a culture dominated by fatalism¹⁰. This, he argued, had consigned India to the status of a subject nation for seven centuries, beginning with the Muslim invasions and culminating in India's present subjugation under the British, who he nonetheless favoured over the tyrannical Muslims. His solution was the creation of a new national religion in the form of a purified Hinduism which, he argued, contained elements that were more in accordance with the scientific rationalism of the modern age than anything in Western religion or philosophy (Lal, 2003a, pp. 41-8; Chatterjee, 1986, Ch. 3).

This fusion of a Hindu ideal with nationalism was most fully formed in the work of Swami Vivekananda who, like Bankim, was well-versed in contemporary Western thought and made good use of Romantic notions of the spiritual superiority of Hinduism, proclaiming it to be the very basis of India. Vivekananda agreed with the Orientalists and Bankim that Hinduism had been glorious in the ancient past but argued that since having diverted from textual Brahmanism and the martial valour of Ksatriyahood it had lost its most potent virtues (Nandy, 1983, p.24).

¹⁰ See Bhatt (2000, pp. 26- 31) for a discussion of the influence of Comte's positive philosophy in Bankim's work.

The efforts of Vivekananda and Bankim to rid Hinduism of its degeneracy and take it back to its 'pure' form were underlain with an obvious hostility toward Islam. Muslims were seen as the original invaders against whom Hindu authority had to be established before the British could be confronted. In Bankim's case this was most probably fed by both the biases of the upper caste Hindu Bengali elite at the time as well as the prejudices of European post-Enlightenment culture. For both Bankim and Vivekananda however, their antipathy toward Islam was shaped by the need to define Hinduism as a paragon of tolerance and spirituality unlike the Muslim faith, which was portrayed as intolerant and unethical (Chatterjee, 1986, p. 77).

The problems faced by early nationalists in negotiating the 19th century construction of separate Hindu and Muslim identities into a cohesive movement points to a fundamental difficulty with nationalism itself. As an ideology nationalism demands of the community a certain degree of uniformity no matter how secular or plural the terms in which it is conceived. In India's case, the creation of Hinduism as catch-all term for India's multitude of religious practices and the Orientalist endowment of 'classical Hinduism' with the great qualities of tolerance and spirituality led to the identification of Hinduism as a basis of Indian civilisation and modern Indian nationhood. Not only could it be said that the majority of the Indian population adhered to it but it was thought to possess the very qualities that were needed for making of a viable and distinct Indian nation-state.

2.3.1 Savarkar's Hindu Civilisation

The tension between the nationalist ideal of one nation and the reality of India's diversity was an ongoing problem which V.D. Savarkar sought to resolve by making India Hindu. For Savarkar, the revitalisation of 'Hindu civilisation' was central to freeing India from

British rule. Savarkar played a leading role in the anti-colonial, violent revolutionary nationalism that became influential in the wake of the first partition of Bengal in 1905 before Gandhian nationalism established its dominance in the 1920s. Savarkar's brand of revolutionary nationalism stressed the legitimacy of armed, violent resistance to colonial rule, a militarist masculinity and an ideological framework that drew on 19th century European ideas of nationhood (Bhatt, 2001, pp. 78-81). Like many other Indian nationalists, Savarkar studied in England and was well versed in European thought. He was particularly influenced by Herbert Spencer's evolutionary sociology which stressed the 'natural law' of aggressive competition between nations and the writings of Giuseppe Mazzini in whose work he found a blueprint for a nationalism that was strongly modernist and emphasised cultural exclusiveness and homogeneity (Bhatt, 2001, p. 90). Hence, Savarkar's model for the nation-state tolerated no ambiguity of identity and required Indian civilisation to be defined as strictly 'Hindu'.

Savarkar was of the view that the ancient Hindus had laid the basis for a 'great and enduring civilization' long before the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians (Savarkar, 1938, p. 7). He argued that a sense of nationalism had been present in the subcontinent for more than five thousand years in the 'Vedic nation' and that a cultural self-consciousness had developed through geographical interconnectedness (Savarkar, 1938, pp. 101-2). In this, Savarkar was drawing on the work of Bal Gangadhar Tilak who, along with Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, his colleagues in the 'extremist' wing of the Indian National Congress, emerged at the end of the 19th century as prominent proponents of a political mobilisation based on the primacy of Hindu culture. Tilak disagreed with the Orientalist dating of the Vedic period to 1500 BC and pushed it back to at least 4000 BC. He argued that the origins of Hindu civilisation could be traced back even earlier to 8000 BC, making it not only the oldest civilisation in the world but the 'mother' of all world civilisations. It

was this heritage, which he called Hindutva or the feeling of Hinduness, that bound Indians together as a nation (Bhatt, 2001, p. 35-6). Nevertheless, neither Tilak nor his like-minded nationalist colleagues went so far as to advocate an exclusively Hindu nation. Instead, they continued to envision modern India as a composite of its various religious communities (Hansen, 1999, p. 76). It took Savarkar to turn Tilak's narrative of the primordial Hindu nation into the ideology of a fully-fledged religious nationalism that had always been, according to him, the source of India's unity.

In his key text *Hindutva*, Savarkar (1938, p. 147) cites three main criteria for membership of the Hindu nation: territorially bounded descent, a bloodline that can be traced back to the Vedic nation and a common culture. Together these constituted a common race and civilisation which were the basis of Hindutva. Savarkar's civilisational paradigm rested on that which had already been shaped by European Enlightenment thought: 'civilization is the account of what man had made of matter' (Savarkar, 1938, p. 115). Thus 'the story of the civilization of a nation is the story of its Thoughts, its Action and its Achievements. Literature and art tell us of its thoughts; history and social institutions of its actions and achievements' (Savarkar, 1938, p. 116). In the case of the civilisation of the Hindus, Savarkar drew on the Orientalist conception of a Vedic, Sanskrit-based civilisation built and maintained by upper-caste, North Indian Hindus. Hindu civilisation then, was 'represented in a common history, common heroes, a common literature, a common art, a common law and a common jurisprudence, common fairs and festivals, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments' all of which were articulated in their 'common classic language [sic] Sanskrit (Savarkar, 1938, pp. 126, 147-8). Above all, however, a Hindu considered India his Holyland as well as his Fatherland (Savarkar, 1938, p. 144). This meant that Muslims and Christians, because 'they do not look upon India as their Holyland' could not be regarded as Hindu. Savarkar argued that 'since their adoption of a

new cult they had ceased to own Hindu *sanskriti* [civilisation] as a whole. They belong, or feel they belong, to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one' (Savarkar, 1938, p. 127).

Muslims figure prominently in Savarkar's explanation for why the ancient and advanced Hindu civilisation succumbed to British rule. Hindu civilisation had degenerated, Savarkar argued, initially because of the expansion of Buddhism and the subsequent decline of military prowess and then because of repeated invasions, most disastrously by 'tyrannical Muslims' who took India into a dark age of oppression and persecution (Savarkar, 1938, pp. 54-6). The influence of James Mill's periodisation of Indian history is evident here although unlike Mill, Savarkar thought Hindus to be far superior to Muslims.

Thus, the issue of difference in Savarkar's work was dealt with in a starkly coercive manner whereby it was simply identified, marked as dangerous and excluded. In this way, Savarkar planted the seeds of an exclusivist cultural/religious nationalism that continues to underpin contemporary Hindu nationalism as represented in mainstream Indian politics by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

2.3.2 Gandhi's True Civilisation

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's meetings with revolutionary nationalists, including Savarkar, in London in the early twentieth century played an important role in the development of his political thought. Gandhi's (1938, p. 104) engagement with the idea of 'civilisation' was central to his campaign for Indian home-rule or *swaraj*, which he defined as 'self-rule or self-control'. Gandhi expressed his views on the subject most clearly in one

of his earliest writings, *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule*, which he penned in 1908 in his native Gujarati, during his sea voyage back to South Africa from London, and then translated into English. *Hind Swaraj* was written in response to the revolutionary nationalists he had met in London whose bravery had impressed him but whose zeal for violence he thought misguided. The book is therefore written in the form of a dialogue between Gandhi ('Editor') and an interlocutor ('Reader') who wishes to use violence to win India's independence. Gandhi's (1938, p. 16) aim was to replace 'violence with self-sacrifice' and pit 'soul force against brute force' for it was only by doing this that India could achieve *swaraj*.

Key to his argument was a condemnation of 'modern civilisation'. In Gandhi's view, Western civilisation was beholden to modern civilisation, which he condemned as 'a civilization only in name' that 'takes note neither of morality nor religion,' (Gandhi, 1938, p. 34, 37). It should be noted, however, that the word Gandhi translates as religion is *dharma* which denotes a devotion to truth or path of duty rather than revealed scripture or organised religion. Rather, modern civilisation was contrasted with true civilisation which was not bound to any region or religion. The true meaning of civilisation, for Gandhi (1938, p. 61) was 'that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty'. According to him, the 'performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing we know ourselves'. Achieving true civilisation was, therefore, crucial in achieving *swaraj*.

If India copied England, however, it was Gandhi's (1938, p. 34, 37) opinion that 'she will be ruined' for modern civilisation was 'eating into the vitals of the English nation' Among England's specific problems were the profligacy and corruptness of its Parliament, the

dishonesty of its press and its enslavement to the temptation of money. The general malaise affecting Europe was that it was 'intoxicated' by a civilisation that makes 'bodily welfare the object of life' (Gandhi, 1938, pp. 31-4). Characterising this civilisation as a disease, he proclaimed it to be:

irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people in Europe that those who are in it appear to be half mad. They lack real physical strength or courage. They keep up their energy by intoxication. They can hardly be happy in solitude (Gandhi, 1938, p. 37).

So, for Gandhi, modern civilisation promoted selfishness and isolation from others and this was contrary to the teachings of all religions: 'Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and all other religions teach that we should remain passive about worldly pursuits and active about godly pursuits...' (Gandhi, 1938, p. 42). Only by remembering that 'the more we indulge our passions, the more unbridled they become' and that 'happiness was largely a mental condition' could true civilisation be achieved (Gandhi, 1938, p. 61).

Unlike Bankim and Vivekananda, Gandhi did not consider India's status as a subject nation to be the result of its weakness, backwardness or stagnancy. Indeed, Indian civilisation had survived through the millennia because it remained 'sound at the foundation' (Gandhi, 1938, p. 60). Rather, 'the English entered India for the purposes of trade. They remain in it for the same purpose and we help them to do so' (Gandhi, 1938, p. 40). India, according to Gandhi had been seduced by the allure of materialism offered by modern civilisation and that was why it had succumbed to British rule: 'the English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength but because we keep them' and 'we keep the English in India for our base self-interest. We like their commerce; they please us by their subtle methods and get what they want from

us'. However, 'To blame them for this is to perpetuate their power' (Gandhi, 1938, p. 38, 40). As for the current state of India, it was Gandhi's (1938, p. 38, 41) 'deliberate opinion that India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization'.

For Gandhi (1938, pp. 61-2), the limitless urge for consumption inherent to modern social systems of production had been the moral downfall of the English and if India were to avoid a similar fate it had to look to its ancestors who 'set a limit to our indulgences', because they knew that 'happiness was largely a mental condition' and that if we became reliant on machinery and systems of 'life-corroding competition' we would 'become slaves and lose our moral fibres'. Gandhi's desire to 'restore India to its pristine condition' did not however, involve a return to the mythical Hindu golden age of other nationalist writers, nor did he deny India's 'defects'. He did, however, argue that while Western civilisation was inclined toward the propagation of immorality, 'the tendency of Indian civilisation is to elevate the moral being' (Gandhi, 1938, pp. 61-63). Although he conceptualised Indian civilisation's original form as the changeless, 'traditional' India of self-sufficient villages, he did so because for him it epitomised the true form of social organisation, one that had achieved *swaraj*. This was because, as Akeel Bilgrami (2003, p. 4163) has argued, in Gandhi's moral philosophy exemplary action takes the place of moral principles and moral action by individuals is most visible in small communities rather than large cities. Bilgrami (2003, p. 4163) argues that, for Gandhi, the generation of moral principles allows a place for the criticism of others and, hence, has the potential to create the environment for violence. On the other hand, with exemplary action as the basis of a moral community, there is no generality in truth and no basis to subject others to criticism. Thus, Gandhi (1938, p. 61) argued against the charges that India was 'so uncivilized, ignorant and stolid that it is not possible to induce them to adopt any changes', not simply by refuting them

but by arguing that ‘what we have tested and found true on the anvil of experience, we dare not change’. At the same time his was no blind celebration of tradition for as he put it, ‘it is good to swim in the waters of tradition, but to sink in them is suicide’ (Gandhi, 1999k, p. 64).

Gandhi made constant recourse to the image of the nation as a family. Muslims, for example, were brothers who, although they had changed religions, still shared the same blood and ancestors as Hindus (Gandhi, 1938, p. 50). The result, Prakash (1999, p. 223) argues was the imposition of a ‘stifling organic unity of love and kinship on difference’. Gandhi’s advocacy of pluralism then, according to Prakash, was ultimately hamstrung by his commitment to nationalism, his inability to deal with the question of inassimilable difference and his unwillingness to depart from a depiction of India as a unity in diversity. However, the following passage from *Hind Swaraj* seems to suggest that what Gandhi had in mind was actually more of a diversity in unity, a nation grounded in its differences:

A country is one nation only when such a condition obtains in it. That country must have a faculty for assimilation. India has ever been such a country. In reality there are as many religions as there are individuals; but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another’s religion. If they do they are not fit to be considered a nation. ...The Hindus, the Mahomedans, the Parsis and the Christians who have made India their country are fellow countrymen, and they will have to live in unity, if only for their own interest (Gandhi, 1938, p. 49).

Ajay Skaria (2002a, p. 427) argues that although Gandhi may have understood Indians to be a people, this understanding was based not on a nationalist logic of transcendence, in which the particularity of locality is transcended by the generality of the nation, but on a politics of neighbourliness which was a rendering of *ahimsa* (non-violence). He suggests that Gandhi’s references to brotherhood should not be read literally but should take into account his simultaneous emphasis on friendship. Indeed, Faisal Fatehali Devji (2005, p.

97) makes the point that the idea of brotherhood that Gandhi used was most probably one specific to the Gujarati language, in which the terms brother and sister (*bhai* and *ben*) are attached to all names, whether they belong to relatives or strangers. Brotherhood in the Gujarati usage thus has no naturalist or nationalist connotations.

According to Skaria (2002b, pp. 975-80), Gandhi's 'neighbourly nationalism' assumed that neighbours had nothing more in common apart from the kinship of all life. Faced with this absolute difference which could not be transcended by a shared history or culture, relations between neighbours had to be produced through *tapasya* (suffering or selfless sacrifice). The nature of *tapasya* depended on the kind of absolute difference between neighbours. Between equals, there could be *mitrata* (friendship) based on absolute difference and full equality and built on a willingness to unconditionally share in the suffering of the neighbour.¹¹ With the subordinate there could be *seva* (service) that would initiate practices that would bridge the gulf between the dominant and the subordinate by sustaining kinship and perhaps building friendship.¹² With the dominant, *satyagraha* (truth force or soul force) could be employed to show the dominant that it was the cooperation of

¹¹ Thus, writing on the duty of Hindus to Muslims, who were equals but nonetheless absolutely distinct from one another, he said: 'What is the duty of the Hindu towards his Muslim neighbour? His duty is to befriend him as man, to share his joys and sorrows and help him in distress. He will then have the right to expect similar treatment from his Muslim neighbour and will probably get the expected response' (Gandhi, 1987a, p. 497).

¹² If, for instance, Hindus were numerically greater than Muslims and relations between them were, therefore of an unequal nature, then: 'the duty of the majority towards the few Muslim neighbours is increased manifold, so much so that the few will not feel that their religion makes any difference in the behaviour of the Hindus towards them. The Hindus will *then* earn the right, not before, that the Muslims will be natural friends with them and in times of danger both the communities will act as one man. But suppose that the few Muslims do not reciprocate the correct behaviour of the many Hindus and show fight in every action, it will be a sign of unmanliness. What is then the duty of the many Hindus? Certainly not to overpower them by the brute strength of the many; that will be usurpation of an unearned right. Their duty will be to check their unmanly behaviour as they would that of their blood brothers' (Gandhi, 1987a, p. 497).

the subordinate that made their authority possible, thus, highlighting the basic kinship and equality between the dominant and the subordinate.¹³

Gandhi made clear that his advocacy of unconditional friendship did not amount to a denial of difference or a tolerance based on syncretism. As Skaria (2002b, pp. 277-8) suggests, syncretism is a concept that focuses on the miscibility of religions and therefore does not escape from the problematic of secularism. In contrast, Gandhi said:

I hope that nobody will bring up here the history of the attempts by Guru Nanak¹⁴ and Kabir¹⁵ to unite Hindus and Muslims; for the effort today is not for uniting the religions, but for uniting hearts, despite the differences of religion. The efforts of Guru Nanak and others were towards uniting the two by showing the basic unity of all religions. The attempt today is for cultivation of tolerance. Its aim is to see that the orthodox Hindu remains what he is and yet respects an orthodox Muslim and sincerely wishes him prosperity. This attempt is altogether new but it springs from an ideal which is at the very root of Hinduism (Gandhi, 1999c, p. 289).

The last sentence in the passage quoted above, in its gesture to both a modernising cosmopolitanism and a vernacular traditionalism is evocative of what Debjani Ganguly (2006), borrowing from Homi Bhabha (2001), describes as his ‘vernacular cosmopolitics’ – the bringing together of ‘historically disenfranchised “small” narratives’ into dialogue with ‘firmly entrenched “world-enveloping” ones to generate radical transformations in both’. Ganguly focuses on Gandhi’s conceptualisation of non-violence through the terms

¹³ In the case of Princes and *ryots* (peasants) for example: ‘The former’s duty is to act as true servants of the people. They will rule not by right granted by some outside authority, never by the right of the sword. They will rule by right of service, of greater wisdom. ...If they fail to perform this simple and primary duty, the *ryots* not only owe no return duty but the duty devolves on them of resisting the princely usurpation. It may be otherwise said that the *ryots* earn the right of resisting the usurpation or misrule. But the resistance will become a crime against man in terms of duty if it takes the form of murder, rapine and plunder. Force that performance of duty naturally generates is the non-violent and invincible force that *satyagraha* brings into being’ (Gandhi, 1987a, pp. 497-8).

¹⁴ Guru Nanak was the founder of the Sikh religion.

¹⁵ Kabir was a 14th century saint and poet.

ahimsa, *satyagraha* and *sarvodaya* (welfare of all) and points out that he constantly emphasised the vernacular connotations of these concepts in order to highlight the incompleteness of their English expressions. Writing in 1914, for instance, he said:

It is totally untrue to say that it is a force to be used only by the weak so long as they are not capable of meeting violence by violence. This superstition arises from the incompleteness of the *English* expression [passive resistance]. It is impossible for those who consider themselves weak to apply this force. Only those who realise that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him, and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively be Passive Resisters. This force is to violence and, therefore, to all tyranny, all injustice, what light is to darkness (Gandhi, 1987b, p. 21).

Gandhi's emphasis on the power of the vernacular *satyagraha* did not lessen his invocation of figures as diverse as Socrates, Christ, Tolstoy and Thoreau in explaining the etymology of his notion of non-violence.¹⁶ He did this, Ganguly argues, to 'distil into his Gujarati use of the term the combined connotative force of global registers of nonviolence available to him as his peripatetic inheritance and training'.

I would argue that the same sort of 'vernacular cosmopolitics' informs Gandhi's use of the term civilisation. As noted above, he was careful to point out the vernacular connotative force of the term *sudharo*, which he translates as civilisation:

Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization means "good conduct" (Gandhi, 1938, p. 61).

¹⁶ For instance, he attributes to Thoreau the expression 'civil disobedience' as the 'civil breach of unmoral statutory enactments' and incorporates it into his concept of non-violence as 'a branch of *satyagraha*' (Gandhi, 1999c, p. 452). In a speech in 1932 to a Gujarati audience, he presented Socrates as a model *satyagrahi* thus turning this foundational figure of Western civilization into a critic of modern Western civilisation (Gandhi, 1996-1997, p. 119).

The literal English translation from Gujarati of the last sentence in the passage is as follows: ‘This is the meaning of *su*, that is, good, *dharo*, [way of life]’. The original Gujarati text also added ‘The opposite is *Kudharo* [bad way of life]’ (Gandhi, 1963, p. 37).¹⁷ Complicating this further, the most prevalent understanding of *sudharo* by the late 19th century, as now, was ‘social reform’ (Skaria, 2006, p. 5072). This divergence between the English and Gujarati texts, on the one hand, and Gandhi’s translation of *sudharo* and its commonplace Gujarati understanding, on the other, indicates the desire to provoke a radical transformation in the dominant post-Enlightenment, developmentalist understanding of civilisation as well as in the domain of the colonised, many of whom had internalised the notion that social reform was necessary to develop India into a modern civilisation. If his definition was correct, Gandhi (1938, p. 61) wrote, ‘then India, as so many writers have shown’ – the appendix to *Hind Swaraj* contained ‘testimonies’ from ‘eminent men’ including Max Mueller and Friedrich von Schlegel – ‘has nothing to learn from anybody else, and this is as it should be’. Further elaborating he explained:

It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. ...They saw that kings and their swords were inferior to the sword of ethics, and they therefore, held the sovereigns of the earth to be inferior to the Rishis and the Fakirs. A nation with a constitution like this is fitter to teach others than to learn from others...The common people lived independently and followed their agricultural occupation. They enjoyed true Home Rule (Gandhi, 1938, pp. 61-2).

¹⁷ This translation is provided by the editors of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (1963), Volume 10.

2.3.3 Nehru's Discovery of Indian Civilisation

Jawaharlal Nehru and his illustrious family had a long and close association with Gandhi and Nehru considered Gandhi his mentor. Yet, Gandhi's relentless critique of modern civilisation often perplexed Nehru. He wrote in a letter to Gandhi in 1928:

You know how intensely I have admired you and believed in you as a leader who can lead this country to victory and freedom. I have done so in spite of the fact that I hardly agreed with anything that some of your previous publications – *Indian Home Rule*, etc. – contained. I felt and feel that you were and are infinitely greater than your little books (Nehru, 1928a, p. 97).

Nehru's dismissal of Gandhi's 'little books' drew a sharp reply from the latter who wrote:

I give you all the freedom you may need from the humble, unquestioning allegiance that you have given to me for all these years and which I value all the more for the knowledge I have now gained of your state. I see quite clearly that you must carry on open warfare against me and my views. For, if I am wrong I am evidently doing irreparable harm to the country and it is your duty after having known it to rise in revolt against me...The differences between you and me appear to me to be so vast and radical that there seems to be no meeting-ground between us. I can't conceal from you my grief that I should lose a comrade so valiant, so faithful, so able and so honest as you have always been (Gandhi, 1999j, p. 121).

Gandhi's retort was 'a bit of a shock and was painful reading' for Nehru (1928b, p. 99) who replied by desperately seeking to reassure Gandhi that:

No one has moved me and inspired me more than you...There can be no question of our personal relations suffering. But even in the wider sphere am I not your child in politics, though perhaps a truant and errant child? (Nehru, 1928b, p. 100).

Ultimately, Gandhi's 'truant and errant child in politics' remained his political heir despite the many differences between them. Nehru propounded a plural yet unified vision of Indian civilisation that inverted many of the European depictions of Indian civilisation but

still retained their framework and assumptions. His account thus remained firmly within the post-Enlightenment problematic. For Nehru, there was no doubting that India possessed a great civilisation that had been left behind because it had abandoned 'a rational spirit of inquiry' for '...irrationalism and a blind idolatry of the past' (Nehru, 1946, p. 54). Using – but modifying – the dream metaphor so prominent in Western discourses he argued that although India had long been in a 'condition of mental stupor and physical weariness' something 'vital and living continues' (Nehru, 1946, p. 55). It was this 'deep well of strength' that India would use to establish a modern, industrialised state and assume its 'proper station with others in the van of human civilisation and progress' (Nehru, 1946, pp. 55, 566).

Yet, while Nehru placed great faith in modern science and technology and in the modern state as the ultimate expression of the nation he was also a nationalist fighting against colonial domination who recognised Western modernity's deep imbrication with colonialism and understood the need to advance a critique: 'the world of to-day has achieved much, but for all its declared love for humanity, it has based itself far more on hatred and violence than on the virtues that make man human' (Nehru, 1946, p. 563). Nehru's critique, however, located the problem not in modernity itself but in its Western manifestation. Thus he argued that 'it would seem that the kind of modern civilisation that developed first in the west and spread elsewhere, and especially the metropolitan life that has been its chief feature, produces an unstable society which gradually loses its vitality' (Nehru, 1946, p. 554). As for the causes for this 'inner decay': 'Modern industrialism and the capitalist structure of society cannot be the sole causes, for decadence has often occurred without them. It is probable however, that in their present forms they do create an environment...which is favourable for the functioning of those causes' (Nehru, 1946, pp. 554-5). Echoing the Romantics, Nehru (1946, p. 555) pinpointed one factor in particular:

‘a divorce from the soil, from the good earth is bad for the individual and the race’. Unlike the old Greeks and Indians, who according to Nehru (1946, p. 555), are ‘children of nature’ modern industrialised communities ‘have lost touch with the soil’ and ‘do not experience that joy in nature’s rich life and infinite variety and that feeling of being intensely alive which came so naturally to our forefathers’.

Nonetheless, Nehru (1928a, p. 98; 1946, p. 81) thought that ‘the industrial civilization is bound to conquer India’ although with ‘many changes and adaptations’ and he argued that to seek ‘consolation in visions of past greatness’ – as, he implied, Gandhi did – was a ‘foolish and dangerous pastime’. Still, he sought to fashion a uniquely moral and humanistic form of scientific and technical advancement by harnessing pre-existing elements in Indian culture, in particular, the ‘spirit of renunciation with which India has been so familiar’ (Nehru, 1946, p. 559). The source of this ‘spirit of renunciation’ was ambiguous – at certain points Nehru seems to imply that it was an ancient wisdom garnered through experience and present in all ancient civilisations whether in the ‘Orient’ or ‘Occident’. Indeed the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident’ was a dichotomy he considered false since despite their differences, ancient India, Greece and China ‘all had the same broad tolerant, pagan outlook, joy in life and in the surprising beauty and infinite variety of nature, love of art, and the wisdom that comes from the accumulated experience of an old race’ (Nehru, 1946, p. 151).

This was as close as Nehru came to Gandhi’s notion of ‘true civilisation’ and I would also argue that his valorisation of India’s wisdom and strength was quite different from the Romanticist celebration of India’s spirituality. Indeed, Nehru (1946, p. 75) was a staunch secularist and his depiction of Indian civilisation studiously avoided assigning India a religious essence: ‘it is entirely misleading to refer to Indian culture as Hindu culture’. He

refused the labelling of India as intrinsically otherworldly and concerned only with the spiritual and argued that the reason why India may appear to be other-worldly lies in its status as a subject people: 'the poor and unfortunate in every country become to some extent other-worldly...for this world is evidently not meant for them' (Nehru, 1946, p. 81). For Nehru (1980b, p. 429) India's 'immemorial culture' had been secular rather than religious. In order to construct this golden age of Indian civilisation along the lines of the Orientalists while avoiding their equation of it with Hinduism, he refuted the understanding of the *Vedas* as revealed scripture. Rather, the *Vedas* 'were simply meant to be a collection of the existing knowledge of the day' (Nehru, 1946, p. 79). Likewise, the *Upanishads*, which were composed by 'some of the wisest of her [India's] children, at the dawn of history' epitomised the quest for 'light and understanding' and 'for knowledge, for enlightenment' (Nehru, 1980b, p. 430). In this way he was able to advance a vision of India that was in keeping with the post-Enlightenment European culture with which he was so comfortable while avoiding charges of outright mimicry by heralding it as a return to an 'authentic' ethos of an India of past ages.

While Nehru managed to avoid giving India a religious essence, since India's stability and cultural unity were key features of his discourse of Indian civilisation, he does not quite manage to avoid the inscription of certain other essences such as the caste system which, before it atrophied, had been 'successful in providing social security for the group...' (Nehru, 1946, p. 111). The caste system, however, was an essence that proved to be both an asset and a liability for in the end it proved a barrier to change and prevented the growth of nationalist sentiment (Nehru, 1946, p. 226). According to Nehru:

The basic thing in India, which has led to very undesirable results, and in my opinion led to our downfall in the last few centuries and weakened us, is our caste system...Our enemies came and

fostered disunity and weakened us by keeping us in separate compartments which prevented the growth of a strong nationalism (Nehru, 2003, p. 33).

For Nehru, disunity had been a major cause of India's backwardness:

It was after all our fault that we became backward. Our biggest faults were internal disunity, lack of foresight and our habit of getting involved in petty quarrels and feuds...I hope that there will be no opportunity for people to fight with one another because such things will retard progress while the world goes on. There are many good qualities in us but our greatest defect is the habit of internal feuds (Nehru, 2003, p. 33).

Even though India was prone to disunity this did not support the British claim that their rule was necessary to bring order to India's anarchy because despite its internal diversity, India was held together by a broader civilisational unity. His travels through India, he wrote, had taught him that:

Though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held all of us together for ages past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us. The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me: it was an emotional experience which overpowered me. That essential unity had been so powerful that no political division, no disaster or catastrophe had been able to overcome it (Nehru, 1946, p. 59).

Thus, Nehru (1946, p. 61-63) discussed at length India's diversity only to absorb it into the idea of India's timeless civilisational unity that could survive not only internal difference but foreign influence and change.

2.3.4 En-Gendering Indian Civilisation

As we have seen, Gandhi's neighbourly nationalism was far removed from Nehru's transcendent nationalism. The gendered nature of the latter is captured most evocatively in this passage from *Discovery of India*:

Sometimes as I reached a gathering, a great roar of welcome would greet me: *Bharat Mata ki Jai*—'Victory to Mother India.' I would ask them unexpectedly who was this *Bharat Mata*, Mother India, whose victory they wanted?...At last a vigorous Jat, wedded to the soil from immemorial generations, would say that it was the *dharti*, the good earth of India, that they meant. What earth? Their particular village patch, or all the patches in the district or province, or in the whole of India? And so question and answer went on, till they would ask me impatiently to tell them all about it. I would endeavour to do so and explain that India was all this that they had thought, but it was much more. The mountains and the rivers, and the forests and the broad fields, which gave us food, were all dear to us, but what counted ultimately were the people of India, people like them and me, who were spread out all over this vast land. *Bharat Mata*, Mother India, was essentially these millions of people, and victory to her meant victory to these people. You are parts of this *Bharat Mata*, I told them, you are in a manner yourselves *Bharat Mata*, and as this idea slowly soaked into their brains, their eyes would light up as if they had made a great discovery (Nehru, 1946, p. 60).

Hence, not only was Indian civilisation encumbered with various essences in both colonial and nationalist discourses but in both it was powerfully gendered as feminine. In the former, Indian civilisation fulfils the role of the superstitious and otherworldly Other of the rational and scientific Western civilisation. In the latter, as we see above, Indian civilisation is feminised as *Bharat Mata* or Mother India. In this section I will refrain from addressing the issue of gender in the writings of Savarkar, Nehru and Gandhi because detailed discussions of these inform the following chapters. Here I simply wish to trace the emergence of the idea of Mother India in the early stages of Indian nationalism.

The representation of India as Mother emerged initially as an important anti-colonial resource in colonial Bengal which allowed the colonial intelligentsia to ‘accommodate the public image of the foreign rulers into an unmistakable indigenous sign that would mark a colonial Bengali man as distinct from the alien rulers’ (Bagchi, 1990, p. WS 65). Mother India made her first appearances in Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay’s satirical story, *Unabimsa Purana* (1866) in Kiran Chandra Bandyopadhyay’s play *Bharat Mata* (1873) and most importantly in an English translation of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s historical novel *Anandamath* (1882). In all of these texts Mother India was represented as exclusively Hindu. Mukhopadhyay, for instance, depicted Mother India as Adhi-Bharati, the widow of Arya Swami, the quintessential Vedic man (Jha, 2004). In *Anandamath* Bankim built on an earlier essay in which he sought to describe an evolutionary history of India using ten successive forms of the mother goddess, including Dhumavati representing the misery of Muslim rule and Mahalakshmi as India’s prosperous future (Bagchi, 1990, p. WS 69).¹⁸ Mother India was given an early visual depiction in 1885 in a Bengali children’s magazine, *Balak* as an illustration to Bankim’s hymn to the Mother, *Bande Mataram* and more prominently became the subject of a painting by Abanindranath Tagore in 1905 (Ramaswamy, 2002, p. 173). Tagore later revealed in a memoir that while he had initially envisioned the image as Banga Mata or Mother Bengal, he changed the title to ‘Bharat Mata’ in the interests of a broader Indian nationalism (Bose, 1997, p. 53).

Jasodhara Bagchi (1990) has argued that the emergence of the Mother India figure during the ‘Bengali Renaissance’ was encouraged by the prevalence of the ‘mother cult’ in Hindu

¹⁸ The Hindu revivalist connotations of the hegemonic portrayal of Bharat Mata did not go unresisted. Rabindranath Tagore, who developed a heightened awareness of Muslim sensitivities, preferred to present Bharat Mata in terms of the natural land. On occasion, Tagore’s representation of the mother even took the form of resistance to Hindu orthodoxy. In his story *Gora* the mother, Anandamayi, is portrayed as open to difference and dissent – thus embodying the true spirit of India – in contrast to the character of Gora, her ultra-Hindu son whose concern is the search for the pure, authentic self through a reactive and masculine traditionalism.

religious practices in Bengal in the late 19th century, in which the mother goddess, Shakti, who is known by various names such as Durga, Chandi or Kali, is the focus of worship. This, combined with the valorisation of motherhood as the ideal identity for Bengali women in Bengali culture, produced an extremely evocative image of the long-suffering mother-nation who provides solace and inspiration for her humiliated, exploited and oppressed sons (Bagchi, 1990, p. WS 66). However, the use of the Hindu mother-goddess as the basis of national Selfhood is ultimately an exclusionary move that largely reflected male anxieties and ambitions and reinforced the idea that India is a fundamentally Hindu civilisation.

Contrary to Bagchi's reading of the mother-figure as a passive, victimised entity, Tanika Sarkar (2001, p. 253) argues that the mother of Bengali female cults was not simply a figure of enslavement, since feminine cults also represented power and resurgent strength. For instance, femininity was linked to martial valour in the nationalist iconography of the *Swadeshi* (self-reliance) period of agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 which universalised the image of Kali as Mother India (Sarkar, 2001, p. 255). Indeed, the common image of Kali is depicted in two contradictory ways. Bankim saw Kali as a representation of exploitation, deprivation and shamelessness while other poets and writers such as Mukunda Das praised her ability to destroy evil, transcend death and incite her tired and oppressed sons to wreak revenge on her behalf (Sarkar, 2001, p. 255-6). Even Bankim, although he celebrates the essential martial nature of man to differentiate him from woman, hints in his novels that it is, in fact, the woman that is the true warrior (Ray, 2000, Ch. 1).

Sarkar (2001, pp. 256-7) discerns in the two representations of Kali an inner tension within nationalism toward female strength. After the militancy and violent victory of Kali, she

transforms into Durga, a warrior goddess depicted by Bengali nationalists as the archetypal, gentle and domesticated mother. Hence, the activism of the mother ends when, either through her calm strength or vengeful violence, she incites her patriotic sons or *santans* into fighting for justice and regeneration. But where, one might ask, are the mother's daughters? Sarkar (2001, p. 265) argues that the woman's patriotic role was expected to be confined to the family as the preservers of the purity of the spiritual domain – the one area that was thought to be free from foreign rule – and as the flesh and blood mothers who would inspire the patriotism of the sons in the household.

Partha Chatterjee (1986, p. 147) suggests that while for Bankim and Tagore, Mother India carried a passionate, utopian meaning, for later nationalist figures like Nehru, Mother India was 'just another political slogan' that was used simply because it had become part of the language which 'the masses' spoke at political meetings. Yet, the representation of the nation as mother occurred throughout both Nehru's *Autobiography* as well as *The Discovery of India*, both of which were texts that were written for those of his ilk rather than 'the masses'. Furthermore, Nehru continued to use the expression even though he was aware that it did not concur with his rationalist vocabulary of politics. He says at one point in his *Autobiography*:

It is curious how one cannot resist the tendency to give an anthropomorphic form to a country. Such is the force of habit and early associations. India becomes *Bharat Mata*, Mother India, a beautiful lady, very old but ever youthful in appearance, sad-eyed and forlorn, cruelly treated by aliens and outsiders, and calling upon her children to protect her...And yet India is in the main the peasant and the worker, not beautiful to look at, for poverty is not beautiful...We seek to cover truth by the creatures of our imaginations and endeavour to escape from reality to a world of dreams (Nehru, 1980, p. 431).

I want to suggest, and will seek to show in the remainder of thesis, that Nehru was unable to break this ‘habit’ because Mother India came to symbolise a postcolonial modernity that desired to be at once derivative of, and distinct from, Western modernity.

2.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to broadly trace the development of the metadiscourse of Indian civilisation from its articulation in colonial writings by the likes of James Mill, William Jones and Friedrich Schlegel to its rearticulation by Indian nationalists like Nehru, Savarkar and Gandhi. The term ‘civilisation’ is often used problematically to reduce complex societies to the product of some underlying essence. We see this clearly in the writings of the Orientalists, the Romantics and the Utilitarians, in which Indian civilisation is depicted as, among other things, a Hindu civilisation, a non-rational civilisation and a despotic civilisation. Many of these stereotypes continue to be given salience, albeit for different purposes, in contemporary Western discourses.

Of all the nationalist writings on Indian civilisation that I have examined only Gandhi’s managed to escape from a post-Enlightenment framework with its civilisational scale and hierarchical positioning of tradition and modernity. Indeed, the way in which Gandhi provided an alternative language of dissent and political engagement is nowhere clearer than in his notion of civilisation. The conceptions of Indian civilisation found in Nehru and Savarkar’s writings, on the other hand, were both ensconced within a modern geopolitical imagination in which Europe was at the pinnacle of social development and the territorial nation-state was the political ideal. To be sure, both Nehru and Savarkar were anti-colonial nationalists who fought against British rule. Hence, for Nehru this invoked an ambivalence

whereby his acceptance of a modern geopolitical imagination needed to be balanced against a critique of a Western modernity that had produced colonialism and imperialism. Thus, Nehru's Indian civilisation contained within it the attributes – the 'spirit of renunciation', for instance – that would allow the creation of an Indian modernity that would be superior to Western modernity. Gandhi, on the other hand, saw the problem in modernity itself – for him it was modernity that degraded true civilisation. In contrast to both Nehru and Gandhi, Savarkar, while critical of British rule, did not make the same connection between colonialism and modernity. Rather, he employed a historicist notion of civilisation similar to that in Western discourses and argued that Indian civilisation had long ago reached the pinnacle of social development and simply needed to revitalise its cultural nationhood and military strength to succeed in the modern world.

In the chapters to follow, I will continue to examine the nationalist rendering of Indian civilisation as I trace the enactment of India's postcolonial identity in its foreign policy discourse. I begin, in the next chapter, by looking at India's relations with China, beginning with the immediate post-independence period and leading up to the India-China war in 1962. In doing so, I concentrate on a particular colonial narrative – on India's vulnerability to invasion and conquest – and explore the Indian leadership's post-Independence engagement with it.

3 ‘LADY WITH A PAST’¹⁹: THE INDIA-CHINA WAR AND INDIA’S AMBIVALENT DISCOURSE OF DANGER

3.1 Introduction

In April 2005, India and China signed an agreement to resolve the border dispute that led to war more than 40 years ago. On his visit to India, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao revived the slogan ‘Hindi Chini, Bhai Bhai’ (‘India-China, brotherhood’) and the concept of Panchsheel (Five Principles of Coexistence), both of which were made the basis of the India-China relationship in the 1950s before the war in 1962 (Rediff, 2005). Consequently, 2006 was declared the India-China Friendship Year, and 2007, the India-China Year of Friendship Through Tourism. This attempt to reestablish India-China relations along the lines of friendship and brotherhood invoked a time in the immediate post-independence period when the relationship constituted an important element of India’s postcolonial identity. In this chapter I trace the genealogy of the discourse of India-China friendship and analyse India’s border conflict with China in 1962 as a crucial performative moment in the enactment of India’s postcolonial identity. I argue that India’s discourse on the war saw the collision of a long-standing narrative on Indian civilisation’s vulnerability to conquest and invasion with a postcolonial discourse of civilisational friendship with China based on the idea that both countries possessed the ancient wisdom to create a better modernity, one in which nation-states would cooperate rather than clash.

¹⁹ This phrase is used by Nehru (1946, p. 563) to describe India in one of his more poetic moments in *Discovery of India*.

Both the narrative on India's vulnerability to invasion and the discourse of friendship with China were gendered discourses. The former relies on tropologies of gender and sexuality, the latter, a depiction of civilisational sisterhood and nation-state brotherhood. I therefore begin the chapter by examining the gendered narrative of India's vulnerability to invasion and conquest in both Western and nationalist discourses on Indian civilisation. I then proceed to examine the way in which this historical narrative shaped British India's geopolitical discourse and gave India a central role in the establishment of geopolitics as an area of academic study in the Britain in the 19th century. I argue that the narrative of India's vulnerability to invasion and conquest constituted what Agnew and O Tuathail call the 'practical geopolitical reasoning of its policy makers'. According to Agnew and O Tuathail (1992, p. 191) 'it is through discourse that leaders act, through the mobilisation of certain simple geographical understandings that foreign-policy actions are explained and through ready-made geographically-infused reasoning that wars are rendered meaningful'. They make a distinction between practical geopolitical reasoning – which they define as the 'common-sense' type of reasoning that is dependent on the 'narratives and binary distinctions found in societal mythologies' – and the formal geopolitical reasoning of strategic thinkers who 'produce a highly codified system of ideas and principles to guide the conduct of statecraft' (O Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 194). Both types of geopolitical reasoning are inherently reductionist for they work by whittling down the complex geographical realities of the world into geopolitical abstractions that can be controlled and manipulated (O Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 195). My examination of the 1962 India-China war will reveal just how much of British India's geopolitical reasoning was adopted by the postcolonial leadership even though they made a conscious effort to resist it.

The 1962 border conflict between India and China has generated significant academic debate. The most comprehensive accounts of the conflict are Neville Maxwell's

'revisionist' *India's China War* and Stephen Hoffmann's 'post-revisionist' *India and the China Crisis*. Going against the dominant international understanding at the time of the war as an unprovoked aggression by China against India, Maxwell (1972) argued that China was in fact committed to a conciliatory approach to the problem of converting ambiguously defined borders into the boundaries of modern nation-states. He claims that, by contrast, Nehru had from the outset followed a policy of non-negotiation with regard to the India-China border and was implicitly committed to the use of force to impose India's territorial claims. Further, in a recent article, Maxwell argued that India effectively forced the war on China through expansionist and irrational behaviour which, he speculates, was 'perhaps traceable to the psychological wound inflicted on Nehru and his generation by the sundering of India to create Pakistan, which imparted mystical or religious significance to territorial issues' (Maxwell, 2006, p. 3877). As I will show, however, there was nothing mystical or religious about India's attitude toward borders – India was driven by the logic of a modern geopolitical imagination even as it sought to enact an identity that was opposed to the strictures of realist power politics.

Hoffmann's *India and the China Crisis* draws on extensive interviews and is guided by the International Crisis Behaviour (ICB) theoretical model developed by Michael Brecher and colleagues, which focuses on the link between perceptions and war. Hoffmann (1990, p. 265) argues that 'Indian decision-making in many ways followed what might be called "normal" practices, found in governments elsewhere...India's 1962 tragedy came about not just from practices that are peculiar to India but also from behaviours that may be quite usual in international affairs'. These 'behaviours' result from the level of perceived threat and takes place in the context of the fundamental worldview of the decision-makers and their semi-permanent images of international and domestic realities. As the threat

perception changes so do worldviews and images. From this account it would appear that India pursued the ‘usual’ behaviour of a nation-state in an anarchical international system.

My concern here is not to rehearse the debate on the causes of the war. Indeed, what ‘actually’ happened in 1962 is not as important as explaining how these events were narrated within India. In keeping with an approach that asks *how* rather than *why* particular foreign policy decisions are made, my purpose here is to analyse how the Indian discourse on China, in general, and the White Papers released during and after the war by the Indian government, in particular, created the necessary – if not sufficient – conditions for the war to take place.

3.2 The Invasion and Conquest of Indian Civilisation

The feminisation of colonised territory and the metaphor of rape have been enduring tropes in discussions of colonial relations. However, as many authors have noted, the use of heterosexual rape as a metaphor for imperialism is more about the emasculation of colonised men than the possession of the colonised female body (Sharpe, 1993; Krishnaswamy, 1998). Complicating Edward Said’s (1995, p. 222) argument that the sexualisation of the Orient in common phrases like ‘the veils of an Eastern bride’ or the ‘inscrutable Orient’ express the cultural, temporal, and geographic distance between the Orient and the Occident, Sara Suleri (1992, p. 16) argues that, ‘the colonial gaze is not directed to the inscrutability of an Eastern bride but to the greater sexual ambivalence of the effeminate groom’. The colonial encounter, Suleri (1992, p. 77) contends, depended on a ‘disembodied homoeroticism’ driven by ‘competing male anxieties’. The evocation of a violated female body as a metaphor for colonial practice deflects from ‘a contemplation of

male embattlement, the figure of which more authentically dictates the boundaries of colonial power' and 'invents an arena for transfers of power that must always take place offstage, complicating for its antagonists – caught in the throes of colonial intimacy – a sense of the spoil for which they fight' (Suleri, 1992, p. 61). As Vinay Lal (1995, p. 122) puts it, the 'overdetermined metaphor of rape layers another politics, the politics of simultaneous desire and domination' between the 'masculine' coloniser and the 'effeminate' colonised. I will discuss the trope of effeminacy in the next chapter. In this chapter, I want to suggest that the role of the woman as sign in the trope of rape as a metaphor for imperialism should not be minimised, for the metaphor of rape does not always 'violently reproduce gender roles' as Jenny Sharpe (1993, p. 67) suggests, but sometimes unsettles and reverses them. I will explain this further as I look at the metaphor of rape that underlies the narrative of Indian civilisation's vulnerability to conquest, a narrative that can be found in both colonial and nationalist writings.

3.2.1 The Aryan Invasion Theory

According to Orientalist scholars' Indian civilisation began with the invasion and conquest. William Jones (1790, pp. 58-9; 1788b, p. 422) argued that civilisation was brought to India by invading peoples from Iran who were speakers of an Indo-European language that was the ancestral forebear of Sanskrit and who practiced a 'primeval religion' which provided the basis of the caste system (Jones, 1788a). Jones described these peoples as a 'race' of conquerors or 'the Hindu race' however, the term 'race' at this time was conceived of as cultural and linguistic rather than biological. Jones's original conception of the 'Indo-European' language family (later termed Aryan²⁰ by the Orientalist scholar Friedrich Max Muller) came about after his discovery of the link between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin and

²⁰ A corruption of the word which appears in the *Rig Veda* as *arya* and in the *Zend Avesta* as *airiia*.

laid the basis for what would eventually become, what Thomas Trautmann (1997) calls, the racial theory of Indian civilisation. The link between language and race was of great importance for the German Romantics because the theory of Aryanism was one part of their quest to find the origins of the German *Volk* (Metcalf, 1994, p. 82). Seeing India as the cultural cradle of humankind, Schlegel (1889) argued that the ‘Teutonic races’ of northern Europe were descendents of a primordial race of Indians whose language and culture was the source of all others. However, the Indo-European/Aryan idea with its connotations of kinship between Indians and Europeans was rejected by scholars of the 19th century under the influence of race science. Equating race with civilisation, 19th century race science was built on the dichotomy between the dark-skinned savage and the light-skinned civilised European (Trautmann, 1997, p. 162). The philological theory of race, in which the latter could be grouped with the dark-skinned Indians on the basis of common linguistic origins was an affront to the civilisational logic of race science. Such was the influence of race science on European thought at the time that philologists found themselves obliged to construct a theory that acknowledged the claims of both language and race (Trautmann, 1997, p. 204).

The racial theory of Indian civilisation rests on the idea that the constitutive event through which Indian civilisation came into existence was the clash between an invading ‘race’ of fair-skinned, civilised, Sanskrit-speaking Aryans from the northwest and the dark-skinned, barbarous aboriginal inhabitants of the sub-continent called *Dasas* or *Dasyus*. The identity of the latter was much debated, but upon the discovery of a language group separate from the Indo-Aryan in 1816, these ‘Dravidian’²¹ speakers of South India were commonly assumed to be the descendents of the original inhabitants of India (Ali, 1998, p. 108-9;

²¹ From the Sanskrit term *Tiravitam* which refers to the South and, in Vaisnava literature, as the language spoken there.

Philip, 2003, p. 195). As a result of this intermixing, it was thought that the inferior Dravidians had corrupted their Aryan conquerors and this was thought to explain why the Indian branch of the Aryan peoples had degenerated while the European branch had triumphed. In some theories caste was equated to race and Brahmins were thought to be the last remaining 'pure blooded' Aryans who had not intermixed. Thus, there developed a hierarchy of Indian races from the dark-skinned pure Dravidian jungle-dwellers to the civilised, or at least civilisable, light-skinned Brahminical, Aryan types. Brahmins were therefore, able to give scientific credence to a hierarchical reading of their scriptures that placed other Indian communities in subordinate positions in relation to their own (Philip, 2003, p. 143-4; Baden-Powell, 1972; Risley, 1999).

In the 1920s the urban ruins of Harappa in Punjab and Mohenjo Daro were discovered in the Sind. Dating back to the third millennium BC, well before the composition of the Vedic corpus, these ruins and further discoveries of numerous other ancient towns in north India and present-day Pakistan indicated the existence of a vast urban civilisation, which was termed the Indus Valley civilisation. Evidence of the abandonment of these settlements was seen by some, such as the British archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler, as irrefutable evidence that invading Aryans had vanquished pre-existing Dravidian societies (Bhatt, 2000, pp. 587-8).

A trope of rape underlaid the Aryan invasion theory in a somewhat unconventional way that reversed the masculine conqueror/feminine victim binary. In particular, the early Aryans were thought to have possessed a 'manly independence' that was overwhelmed by the 'overheated female matter of India' (Sinha, 1995, p. 20) (Inden, 1990, p. 119-20). For Maurice Bloomfield, an American Professor of Sanskrit, the decline of the Aryans was due to India's languid, tropical climate which had 'conquered the conquering Aryan, whose

stock was no doubt the product of a more northerly and invigorating climate' (Quoted in Inden, 1990, p. 102). Hence, while the emasculation Indian men may have been the central concern in the gendered discourse of Aryan invasion this is achieved by highlighting the influence of women and femininity in Indian culture. As we shall see below, the notion of India's immutability despite being repeatedly conquered was a common theme in Western discourses and complicates the depiction of India as a submissive object of desire for male conquerors. Rather, the female characterisation of India emerges as a source of threat and anxiety – ultimately untameable even to the bearers of a superior European rationality.

3.2.2 Desire, Disunity and Conquest

According to Hegel, India's attraction to outsiders lay in its riches. Reprising medieval representations, he argued that,

from the most ancient times downwards, all nations have directed their wishes and longings to gaining access to the treasures of this land of marvels, the most costly which the Earth presents; treasures of Nature – pearls, diamonds, perfumes, rose-essences, elephants, lions, etc. – as also treasures of wisdom (Hegel, 1956, p. 142).

As a result, India had been repeatedly conquered:

The ways by which these treasures have passed to the West, has at all times been a matter of World-historical importance, bound up with the fate of nations. Those wishes have been realized; this Land of Desire has been attained; there is scarcely any great nation of the East, nor of the Modern European West, that has not gained for itself a smaller or larger portion of it (Hegel, 1956, p. 142).

For James Mill (1848a, p. 234), 'it appears that the people of Hindustan have at all times been subject to incursions and conquest, by nations contiguous to them on the north-west'. Even though the caste system had allotted one fourth of the population for military activity, India had 'given way to every invader' (Mill, 1848b, p. 209). He found that this was due to

the 'simple, and rude' character of the 'Hindu' military system but he also blamed India's inherent disunity, which Mill attributed to the caste system (Mill, 1848b, p. 209). It was the inability to unite different states under a common power 'which has rendered India so easy a conquest to all invaders; and enables us to retain, so easily, that dominion over it which we have acquired' (Mill, 1848a, p. 200). Yet, Mill argued that while India was easily and often invaded, its society remained largely unaffected. The Muslim conquest for example, 'was to no extraordinary degree sanguinary or destructive' for while 'it substituted sovereigns of one race to sovereigns of another...it altered not the texture of society' (Mill, 1848a, p. 164). For Marx (1959, p. 29) too, it was India's divisions that made it 'the predestined prey of conquest' and India's past had consisted of a succession of invaders 'who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society'. Likewise, for Schlegel (1889, p. 509), 'the history of India since the time of Alexander the Great certainly presents little more than a series of foreign conquests and internal revolutions...'. Yet, these conquests made little difference to Indian society for they 'would seem rather to intimate a constant interchange of rulers and dynasties than any actual alteration in the laws and constitution'.

Alexander the Great, was a common figure in early Western depictions of Indian history even though there was no mention of his supposedly momentous incursion in 332 BC in Indian texts until the Christian era (Lal, 2003b, p. 272). Nonetheless, this event was thought so important that the historian Vincent Smith (1924) felt the need to devote an entire chapter to the episode in his *The Early History of India* which replaced Mill's *History of British India* in 1904 as the hegemonic text on Indian history. The story of Alexander's Indian foray allowed Western scholars to situate India within the singular vision of European history which underlies the modern geopolitical imagining of the world as a hierarchically ordered, structured whole. It brought India into a global frame of

reference and emphasised its need for the guiding hand of European rationalism. Mill (1848b, pp. 168-9), for example, argued that, ‘the people of Hindustan and the ancient nations of Europe came in contact at a single point. The expedition of Alexander the Great began, and in some sort ended, their connexion’ and ever since India had stagnated. He argued that,

From the scattered hints contained in the writing of the Greeks, the conclusion has been drawn, that the Hindus, at the time of Alexander’s invasion, were in a state of manners, society, and knowledge exactly the same with that in which they were discovered by the nations of modern Europe...they have presented a very uniform appearance during the long interval from the visit of the Greeks to that of the English (Mill, 1848b, p. 170).

Similarly, for Hegel (1956, p. 142), ‘Alexander the Great was the first to penetrate by land to India’ and as such, the episode is presented as the precursor to India’s ‘necessary fate...to be subjected to Europeans’.

3.2.3 Invasion and Conquest in Indian Nationalist Thought

How did Indian nationalists engage with the writing of Indian history as one of continuous invasion and conquest? In the case of the Aryan invasion theory, Indian nationalist anthropologists, like the so-called father of Indian physical anthropology, Ramaprasad Chanda, modified the racial theory of Indian civilisation in various ways but the basic elements remained. Chanda was concerned to show that Dravidians had been misrepresented by colonial ethnographers and argued that Dravidians/*Dasas/Dasyus* were, in fact, a civilised, mixed race. Colonial ethnographers, he argued, had confused Dravidians with the ‘pre-Dravidian Nisada type’, represented only by the ‘savage’ jungle tribes of central and southern India (Philip, 2003, p. 195).

The theory of Aryan invasion underpinned the drive in south India to counter what was deemed to be Brahmannical domination. From the time of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee onward there had been a strong connection made between Aryan purity and high caste Hindus (especially Brahmins), and non-Aryan impurity and low castes, particularly those that had converted to Islam (Chakravarti, 1990, p. 50). Many 19th century British theorists had, thus, argued that south India consisted of races that had been oppressed by the Brahmannical understanding of the caste system (Bayly, 1995, p. 198). The anti-Brahmannical Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu, which was founded in the 1940s by E.V.R. Naicker, built on these notions to emphasise a Dravidian unity of race to bring together low caste south Indians against Brahmins who were portrayed as Aryan invaders from the north (Hellmann-Rajanayagam, 1995, pp. 136-140).

The theory of Aryan invasion figured prominently in Savarkar's Hindu nationalist discourse. Savarkar was adamant that Hindus were a race – the product of the welding of the invading Aryans and indigenous non-Aryans – and that India's unity was based on a racial unity: 'the Hindus are...united not only by the bonds of the love they bear to a common motherland but also by the bonds of a common blood' (Savarkar, 1938, p. 17, 94, 105). For Savarkar there was no question of the manly Aryan being overwhelmed by the feminine indigenous non-Aryans. Rather, Vedic blood had flowed

down from the altitudes of the subline [sic] Vedic heights to the plains of our modern history fertilizing much, incorporating many a noble stream and purifying many a lost soul, increasing in volume and depth and richness... (Savarkar, 1938, p. 107).

The idea of Aryan invasion was eventually discarded by later Hindu nationalists who could not countenance a theory that suggested that Aryans were initially foreign to India and that Hinduism had hybrid, syncretic origins (Bhatt, 2001). Madav Gowalkar, the second leader of the Hindu nationalist organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, the

National Volunteer-Servers Organisation), which was established in 1924, maintained that the theory of Aryan invasion was a colonial myth propagated to disparage Hindus and instead argued that, 'we Hindus have been in undisputed and undisturbed possession of this land for over 8 or even 10 thousand years before the land was invaded by any foreign race' (Quoted in Bhatt, 2000, p. 587).

As for why India had proved such easy prey to invaders, Savarkar argued that the influence of Buddhism and its notions of 'universal brotherhood' and nonviolence had sapped the 'virility' of the Hindu race leaving it at the mercy of the Huns and Shaks, which he described as 'barbarian hordes' inferior to Hindus in culture and only superior in strength (Savarkar, 1938, p. 28). Having seen the disastrous political consequences of Buddhist expansion, the Hindus turned away from the 'mumbos and jumbos of Universal Brotherhood' and became 'intensely self-conscious as an organism', eventually expelling the invading Huns and the Shaks from India. Thereafter, the re-militarised India relied on the 'valour of her arms' to leave her 'in an undisturbed possession of independence for centuries on centuries to come and enabled her once more to be the land where peace and plenty reigned' (Savarkar, 1938, p. 36, 31, 53). Bringing to mind the Romantic depiction of India as a land of imagination he then argued that the 'undisturbed enjoyment of peace and plenty lulled' India into a 'sense of false security and bred a habit of living in the land of dreams' (Savarkar, 1938, p. 54). Consequently, '...she was rudely awakened on the day when Mohamad of Gazani crossed the Indus...and invaded her' (Savarkar, 1938, p. 54). Borrowing from Western discourse the image of the bloodthirsty Muslim, or as Huntington would later put it, the idea that 'Islam has bloody borders', Savarkar argued that not just India but many other 'nations and civilizations fell in heaps before the sword of Islam of Peace!!' (Savarkar, 1938, pp. 54-55). He argued this, despite evidence from contemporary sources, in both Sanskrit and regional languages, that Indo-Muslim invaders were never

identified by their religion but rather by their linguistic or geographical identities (Eaton, 2000-2001, p. 77).²²

Savarkar (1938, p. 55) goes on to claim that after ‘the Mohamedans’ opened the floodgates, India was deluged by ‘nearly all of Asia, quickly to be followed by nearly all Europe’. Still, despite centuries of this ‘ghastly conflict...India single-handed kept the fight morally and militarily’ (Savarkar, 1938, p. 56). And, importantly, it was because of ‘this prolonged furious conflict’ that ‘our people became intensely conscious of ourselves as Hindus and were welded into a nation to an extent un-known in our history’ (Savarkar, 1938, pp. 56-57). For Savarkar then, it took these repeated episodes of invasion to give form to the primordial sense of nationalism which he argued had been present in India for five thousand years.

The narrative of India’s vulnerability to invasion and conquest also served a productive role for Nehru. As Suleri (1992, p. 17) notes, in his *Autobiography* Nehru (1980b, p. 429) invokes a stereotypical metaphor of rape to depict colonial relations:

They seized her body and possessed her, but it was the possession of violence. They did not know her or try to know her. They never looked into her eyes, for theirs were averted and hers downcast through shame and humiliation.

However, Suleri overlooks the fact that Nehru’s invocation of this trope did not end here. In his later *Discovery of India*, which was written when India was on the verge of independence, Nehru invokes the trope of heterosexual rape to depict a more general historical narrative on India’s vulnerability to invasion and conquest. In this narrative the

²² Hence, the term Turuska was used to refer to Turks and the geographic term Yavana was used for those from Greece and West Asia. The cultural term ‘melecca’, meaning impure, was also at times used in Sanskrit writings to refer to non-Sanskrit speakers but this was applied to those who lived in India as well as to outsiders.

nation-mother becomes less a victim and more an uncontrollable woman: ‘Shameful and repellent she is occasionally, perverse and obstinate, sometimes even a little hysteric, this lady with a past’ (Nehru, 1946, p. 563). Despite being ‘overwhelmed again and again, her spirit was never conquered, and to-day when she appears to be the plaything of a proud conqueror, she remains unsubdued and unconquered’ (Nehru, 1946, p. 563). Thus, Nehru’s nationalist discourse transforms the trope of rape from a sign of victimisation to a sign of the resilience of Indian civilisation’s unique ‘spirit’ – the same undefinable spirit that, for him, made postcolonial India a distinctly different postcolonial state. In Nehru’s narrative, which I shall explore in greater detail in the next chapter, the trope of rape layers an ambivalent postcolonial politics of simultaneously desiring to mimic a masculinely coded modern West while disavowing it with the assertion of India’s femininely coded civilisational difference. Thus, in this ambivalent politics the sign of woman is crucial. Moreover, while Nehru (1980b, p. 430) blamed India’s political disunity for its vulnerability to invasion and conquest, he also argued that India had an inherent cultural unity that would buttress its passage toward modernity: ‘Though often broken up politically her spirit always guarded a common heritage and in her diversity there was ever an amazing unity’.

For Nehru (1946, p. 114), as it was for Gandhi, the story of Alexander the Great was depicted as one of resistance:

Alexander’s invasion of India in the fourth century B.C. was, from a military point of view a minor affair. It was more of a raid across the border, and not a very successful raid for him. He met with such stout resistance...that the contemplated advance into the heart of India had to be reconsidered.

Likewise, for Gandhi (1999b, p. 1) it was in India ‘that Alexander the Great, though victorious, for the first time met a foe, under King Porus, who shattered his dream of a world-wide dominion’. Gandhi (1999a, p. 306) argued that ‘India certainly has not proved

unconquerable’ yet the ‘wonder of all wonders seems to be that the Indians...are irrepressible in spite of centuries of oppression and bondage’. It should be noted, however, that unlike his fellow nationalists Gandhi placed little contemporary political value in historical awareness of the past (Lal, 2003a, p. 125). Take, for instance, his reply to the sceptical ‘Reader’ in *Hind Swaraj* who asks for historical evidence for the efficacy of *satyagraha*. Gandhi (1938, pp. 77-9) answers that it was

necessary to know what history means. The Gujarati equivalent means: “It so happened”. If that is the meaning of history, it is possible to give copious evidence. But, if it means the doing of kings and emperors, there can be no evidence of soul-force or passive resistance in such history. ...History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of world...

However,

Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not and cannot take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or the force of soul.

In any case, if we recall from the first chapter, Gandhi did not argue that India was a subject nation because of its vulnerability to invasion. Rather, in *Hind Swaraj* he argued that, ‘the English have not taken India; we have given it to them’. This was because, as Skaria (2006, p. 5066) notes, Gandhi did not follow the modern tradition of seeing domination as the taking away of power and agency, and he did not treat resistance as the recovery of agency. Instead, Gandhi insisted on the subordinated taking responsibility for their subordination. Subordination here is conceptualised not as the loss of power but as the loss of the *swa*, which is usually translated as ‘own’ or ‘self’, but which Skaria (2006, p. 5065) argues also carries connotations of ‘the proper’. The absence of the proper in modern civilisation constituted the basis of Gandhi’s critique in *Hind Swaraj* because a true civilisation, for him, was attentive to the proper. The adoption of modern civilisation as urged by other nationalists would, for Gandhi, remove the proper and turn India into an

object of desire over which control could be exercised. For this reason Gandhi (1938, p. 99) refused a place for both the railways and the military in India because both would enable control over the subcontinent while facilitating the creation of India into an object:

We cannot tolerate the idea of your spending money on railways and the military. We see no occasion for either. You may fear Russia; we do not. When she comes we shall look after her. If you are with us, we may then receive her jointly.

Gandhi's rejection of the idea of viewing the world as an object to be controlled flowed from his understanding of truth as an experiential, moral notion rather than a cognitive notion. As Bilgrami (2003, p. 4164) has argued, a cognitive notion of truth, for Gandhi, led to the modern view of reality as something to be conquered, mastered and abstracted which in turn creates a world in which there is no scope for exemplary action to be the basis for a moral community.²³

The making of India into an object to be controlled was indeed the goal of the British and, as Gandhi suggests, it was an enterprise that was fraught with anxiety over the perceived threat from Russia. I will examine this anxiety in the next section by looking at how the colonial discourse of India's vulnerability manifested itself in colonial political geography – a branch of knowledge, or governmentality in Foucault's terms, aimed at justifying and guiding the administration of Europe's colonial ventures. As Edward Said has argued, geography was an integral part of the project of orientalism. The 'Orient' as a geographical entity was a construct created to support and reflect the simultaneous creation of the geographical entity of 'the West' (Said, 1995, p. 5).

²³ As discussed in chapter one, Gandhi's moral vision was linked to exemplars rather than principles since moral principles have the potential to give rise to criticism and, therefore, violence.

3.3 The Defence of British India: Imperial Geopolitics and its Object of Desire

Perhaps the first word regarding imperial Britain's attitude to India's security should go to its much-despised, geopolitically-minded former viceroy Lord Curzon (1906, pp. 130-1) who described India's strategic position as follows:

She is like a fortress with the vast moat of the sea on two of her faces, and with mountains for her walls on the remainder. But beyond those walls, which are sometimes of by no means insuperable height and admit of being easily penetrated, extends a glacis of varying breadth and dimensions. We do not want to occupy it, but we also cannot afford to see it occupied by our foes. We are quite content to let it remain in the hands of our allies and friends: but if rival and unfriendly influences creep up to it, and lodge themselves right under our walls, we are compelled to intervene, because a danger would there by grow up that might one day menace our security. This is the secret of the whole position in Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet, and as far eastwards as Siam. He would be a short-sighted commander who merely manned his ramparts in India and did not look out beyond; and the whole of our policy during the past five years has been directed towards maintaining our predominant influence and to preventing the expansion of hostile agencies on this area which I have described.

Curzon's views on India's defence often varied markedly from his contemporaries. However, the passage above encapsulates the importance of India to the security of the British empire and its role as one of the driving forces behind British strategic culture in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Moreover, it is a good example of how India came to be rendered as a unified geographical entity in colonial discourse.²⁴ In Curzon's gendered narrative, India is a geopolitical space of desire. She is easily conquered and in her permissiveness, poses a threat to her British master. This is the sort of 'geopolitical

²⁴ See Edney (1997) for an examination of the role of map-making and surveying in producing India as an object that could be controlled. This process began with the maps produced by James Rennell for the East India Company and continued to the end of the Great Trigonometrical Survey under George Everest.

sighting' that O Tuathail (1994, p. 270) has called 'pornographic voyeurism' – 'an obscene will to see [and, therefore, control] everything' alongside 'a systematic refusal to see the real'. Curzon's geopolitics operates here as 'ego-politics', securing his identity as a rational and hard-headed realist (O Tuathail, 1994, p. 270).

The main point of British India's vulnerability had long been identified as the north-west frontier. It was here that the British were most militarily vulnerable and it was also where India had faced invasions in the past from Afghanistan and Persia (Dawson, 1923, p. 72). Thus, the colonial narrative on India's vulnerability came to constitute an important part of British policy, giving it an air of geopolitical destiny and 'common sense' that put it above critical scrutiny. Yet in the precolonial period the north-west frontier was not a frontier at all but the centre of an Indo-Persian and Indo-Islamic economic, cultural and political zone that had stretched between Afghanistan and Punjab for two thousand years. The linear demarcation of a north-west frontier by the British in the 19th century was thus an entirely new innovation that destroyed traditional historical links (Bose, 2002, p. 56).

In the 19th century neither the Shah of Persia nor the Amir of Afghanistan appeared to pose much direct threat. Rather, Persia and Afghanistan's relations with Russia were considered crucial to India's security since, from early in the 19th century, Britain's main preoccupation where 'the expansion of hostile agencies' was concerned was the threat posed by Russia. It was thought that if Persia and Afghanistan were weak and amenable to Russia this would pose a serious danger to the integrity of India's borders. For this reason the British attempted to keep both Persia and Afghanistan friendly and independent, even intervening militarily if the need arose as it did in 1856 when the Shah of Persia sought to gain control of Herat in Afghanistan (Mahajan, 2002, pp. 21-22).

As rival hegemon of the post-1815 world Britain and Russia saw themselves as enemies primarily because of Britain's perception of Russia's threat to its Indian Empire – the possession of which qualified it for the status of a great power (Mahajan, 2002, pp. 11-12). This Anglo-Russian rivalry was played out in central Asia and was famously termed 'the Great Game' by Rudyard Kipling (1987) in *Kim*, a fictional story that was inspired by Kipling's own experiences as a journalist in the North-West Provinces.²⁵ The frontier in Kipling's *Kim*, emerges as a barrier between the civilised and the barbarous – a masculine, homosocial space in which both Indian and British men would fight to defend a benevolent empire. As such, the frontier was a marked contrast to the urban centres where British rule was coming under heightened challenge (Krishnaswamy, 1998, p. 128). Thus, not only did the 'Russian threat' turn India into an object of geopolitical desire, it also served to perpetuate the politics of colonial masculinity and helped to keep alive the myth of Britain's civilising mission.

While the Great Game was being played out in Central Asia, back in Great Britain, Halford Mackinder was busy trying to fulfil the Royal Geographical Society's (RGS) goal of turning a collection of practices (geography) into a coherent, scientific, academic discipline (Geography). The RGS was driven in this regard by the actions of the Prussian and French states to establish academic geography in universities and schools as a way of disciplining students into official understandings of national territory. Geographical education in Britain came to be seen as vital to giving the British empire territorial and commercial meaning (O Tuathail, 1996, pp. 84-5). Halford Mackinder became a key figure in the RGS's campaign after the success of his lecture tours of Britain on 'the New Geography',

²⁵ The phrase 'the Great Game' was, however, apparently not Kipling's own invention but was borrowed from the writings of a chess-playing Bengal cavalry officer called Arthur Connelly. See Alan Sandison's explanatory notes in *Kim* (Kipling, 1987, p. 300).

which he undertook in 1885 and 1886 as part of the adult education programs provided by the Oxford University Extension movement in provincial England.

Meanwhile, a similar educational operation was underway in India, aimed at trying to inculcate the 'irrational Hindu mind' with pedagogical geography's 'correct', 'scientific' view of the earth (Edney, 1997). The scientific map and the terrestrial globe – which by the 20th century had become the ultimate symbol of geopolitical power and mastery – acquired unparalleled status, both in and out of the classroom, as the tool with which to wean the 'natives' away from their myths about India's central position in the wider world toward an understanding of India as simply one of many bounded territorial entities to span the face of the earth (Ramaswamy, 2002, pp. 156-7).²⁶

The spatialisation of India and the articulation of its strategic importance to Britain formed an important part of Mackinder's theories. In his first address to the RGS in 1887 on 'The Scope and Methods of Geography', Mackinder used India ostensibly as a special illustration of the explanatory power of geography in trying to account for why Delhi and Calcutta were chosen as the old and new capitals of India. In doing so, however, he was also implicitly arguing for the importance of geographical knowledge to the maintenance of the British Empire. He argued that India's existence as a 'wealthy civilized community' and its appeal to 'the conqueror' was due to its geography. Moreover, there were two kinds of conquerors, 'land-wolves and sea-wolves' and it was because of geography that some succeeded and some failed. For instance, Alexander the Great (a land wolf) could not conquer India because he took a wrong turn that led him away from the route that is the only path to Delhi. With its position 'at the head of the Jumna-Ganges navigation, the

²⁶ Sumathi Ramaswamy (2002, pp. 166-7) emphasises that little is still known about the extent to which the colonial effort to disseminate cartographic literacy was internalised by ordinary Indians.

place of transshipment from land to water carriage' Delhi was the 'natural centre of commerce' and the 'natural base of operations for the Asiatic conqueror'. The same was true of Calcutta which, because of its position at the 'junction of river and sea shipping', was a commercial centre and the 'natural basis of operations for the conquerors from over the sea', such as Britain (Mackinder, 1951, p. 28). Thus, according to Mackinder, the deciphering of India's geography had the ability to decide the fate of its would-be conquerors and, therefore, India's fate as well.

In his 1904 address to the RGS, which was entitled 'The Geographical Pivot of History', Mackinder enunciated his conception of the Heartland. In brief, Mackinder argued that 'Euro-Asia' was the strategic pivot on which world history has turned. While it was once controlled by the Mongol Empire this pivot area, which he later called the Heartland, was now in Russia's grasp (Mackinder, 1951, pp. 41-42). The Anglo-Russian rivalry now became an inevitable clash of sea power and land power and the British colonial occupation of India – which was a haphazard and highly contingent phenomenon at best – was imparted with a sense of destiny and intentionality. Britain, he argued, was 'compelled to make a steady advance in India' in order to fend off the Russian advance which was 'knocking at the landward gates of the Indies' (Mackinder, 1962, p. 134). India's strategic function in the British empire was thus to act as a 'bridgehead' in Britain's military front against Russia. In this way, Mackinder provided the theoretical, 'scientific' support for the ideas of his friend and patron Lord Curzon who argued that India's geographical position would 'push her into the forefront of international politics' as 'the strategical [sic] frontier of the British Empire' (Curzon & Raleigh, 1906, p. 130). Underlying the discourses of both Curzon and Mackinder however, was a sense of the fragility of Britain's hold on India and, hence, the vulnerability of its place in the world.

Like Mackinder, Nehru regarded geography as permanent, natural and immanent. He wrote in *Discovery* that, ‘the accidents of geography have had a powerful effect on determining national character and history’ (Nehru, 1946, p. 452). However, for Nehru, unlike Mackinder (1962, p. 2), this did not mean that geographical factors, such as the ‘uneven distribution of fertility and strategic opportunity’, made wars inevitable. Indeed, Nehru (1946, p. 539) devoted an entire section in *Discovery* to a critique of realism and geopolitics:

Whatever the mass of the people may think foreign policy remains a preserve for the experts in charge of it and they are usually wedded to a continuation of old tradition...but it is a curious realism that sticks to the empty shell of the past and ignores or refuses to understand the hard facts of the present, which are not only political and economic but also include the feelings and urges of vast numbers of people. Such realism is more imaginative and divorced from to-day’s and to-morrow’s problems than much of the so-called idealism of many people.

Moreover, ‘Geopolitics has now become the anchor of the realist and its jargon of “heartland” and “rimland” is supposed to throw light on the mystery of national growth and decay’ (Nehru, 1946, p. 539). The geopolitical theories of Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman, another ‘founding father’ of the discipline, looked ‘very clever and realistic’ but were actually ‘supremely foolish’ for they were ‘based on the old policy of expansion and empire and the balance of power, which inevitably leads to conflict and war’ (Nehru, 1946, p. 540). In fact, ‘Self-interest’ Nehru (1946, p. 540) wrote, ‘should drive every nation to...co-operation in order to escape disaster in the future and build its own free life on the basis of others’ freedom’. However,

the self-interest of the “realist” is far too limited by past myths and dogmas, and regards ideas and social forms, suited to one age, as immutable and as unchanging parts of human nature and society, forgetting that there is nothing so changeable as human nature and society...war is considered a biological necessity, empire and expansion as the prerogatives of a dynamic and progressive people, the profit motive as the central fact dominating human relations, and ethnocentrism, a belief in racial

superiority, becomes an article of faith...Some of these ideas were common to the civilizations of east and west; many of them form the back-ground of modern western civilization out of which fascism and Nazism grew (Nehru, 1946, pp. 540-1).

Thus, while Nehru may have subscribed to the narrative on India's vulnerability to conquest, he did not accept the legitimacy of British India's geopolitical reasoning. His narrative on invasion emphasised India's un-conquered, irrepressible spirit and he was convinced that India 'will always be in favour of peace and co-operation and against aggression' (Nehru, 1946, p. 536). The next section looks at Nehru's attempt to put this critique of geopolitics into practice by anchoring India's postcolonial identity in a discourse of civilisational sisterhood with China and considers why this failed to prevent the creation of the conditions that gave rise to the India-China war of 1962.

3.4 The India-China War

3.4.1 Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai

According to Nehru (1942, p. 28), China was 'India's sister in ancient history' and, in Indian discourse, India and China's civilisational sisterhood laid the basis for a modern-day friendship based on 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai' or India-China brotherhood. As far back as the 1927 Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Brussels representatives of the two countries highlighted a shared civilisational identity. A joint India-China declaration at the Congress, co-authored by Nehru said that 'for more than three thousand years the people of India and China' had been united 'by the most intimate cultural ties' (Keenleyside, 1982, pp. 212-213). Writing about these ancient cultural links in *Discovery of India* Nehru (1946, p. 199) emphasised the thousands of years of trade and the diffusion of Buddhism

into China, although – in a way reminiscent of the Romantic comparison of India as a land of imagination and China as a land of reason – he lamented that India did not learn more from China:

During these thousand years and more of intercourse between India and China, each country learned something from the other, not only in the regions of thought and philosophy, but also in the arts and science of life. Probably China was more influenced by India and India by China, which is a pity, for India could well have received, with profit to herself, some of the sound commonsense of the Chinese, and with its aid checked her own extravagant fancies. China took much from India but she was always strong and self-confident in her own texture of life.

Expressions of India-China solidarity went beyond the merely rhetorical. The first links between Indian and Chinese nationalists were established in the early 1900s when revolutionaries on both sides travelled to Japan, buoyed by Japan's defeat of Russia (Saklani, 1999). The Chinese scholar Tan Yun-Shan undertook three visits to India in the 1930s and other Chinese scholars and religious leaders made a number of war-time goodwill missions to India (Keenleyside, 1982, p. 213). In 1938, during the Sino-Japanese War, the Congress party sent a medical team to China, set up a China relief fund and called for a boycott of Japanese goods (Keenleyside, 1982, pp. 217-18). In 1935 the Sino-Indian Cultural Society was founded, Nehru went to China in 1939 and Chiang Kai-shek reciprocated in 1942 (Keenleyside, 1982, p. 213).

For both Nehru and Gandhi, India and China were vital to the maintenance of peace in Asia. Addressing a Chinese delegation visiting New Delhi in 1947 Gandhi (1999g, p. 249) said, 'Peace in Asia depends on India and China. These two countries are large. And if they build their edifices on the foundation of ahimsa they will become known among the great countries of the world'. For Nehru, China and India were predisposed to peace and cooperation: 'Ancient societies like India and China...tended to concentrate on the

cultivation of those virtues which made the individual less self-centred and willing to cooperate – tact, poise, balance were essential’ (Quoted in Jaffrelot, 2003, p. 64). Here Nehru was echoing the sentiments of Rabindranath Tagore (2002, p. 15) who wrote in 1917:

The lamp of ancient Greece is extinct in the land where it was first lighted; the power of Rome lies dead and buried under the ruins of its vast empire. But the civilization, whose basis is society and the spiritual ideal of man, is still a living thing in China and in India.

Although Nehru had previously expressed admiration for Chiang Kai-shek and had a well-known antipathy toward the Indian Communist Party, under his leadership, India became one of the first countries in the world to recognise the communist government of the People’s Republic of China and even took to championing its case for recognition by the United Nations. Nehru reasoned that the rise to power of the Chinese Communists was less a victory for communism than a win for Chinese nationalism and Asia’s resurgence (Maxwell, 1972, pp. 87-88). In any case, although Nehru condemned the communist world’s reliance on ‘force and the hydrogen bomb’ he argued that it was ‘a little wiser in its approach. It does not forget how human beings react and takes full advantage of the passionate dislike in Asia and Africa of colonialism and racialism’ (Quoted in Boquerat, 2005, p. 217). Just as India’s civilisational values would prevent it from going down the violent path of Western modernity, Nehru reasoned that eventually China’s ancient civilisation would temper its Marxist dogma.

China’s invasion of Tibet in 1950 was the first incident to produce unease from the Indian government and provoked public demonstrations against the Chinese. Nehru was initially adamant that China’s claim to Tibet was limited to suzerainty and not sovereignty. In speeches in the Lok Sabha in December 1950 he derided China’s claim that they had ‘liberated’ Tibet: ‘from whom they were going to liberate Tibet is...not clear’. Moreover,

‘...since Tibet is not the same as China, it should ultimately be the wishes of the people of Tibet that should prevail...’ (Nehru, 1961, pp. 302-3). However, despite facing domestic criticism from parties sympathetic to the Tibetans, from those who wanted to continue the British policy of using Tibet as a buffer state and from elements who saw this as the first indication of the looming threat of Chinese expansionism, Nehru eventually continued with his public advocacy of India-China friendship, albeit in a more qualified way. In a speech in 1951 he argued that even though ‘China in her new found strength has acted sometimes in a manner which I deeply regret’ it had to be remembered that this was in reaction to ‘...the long period of struggle and frustration, the insolent treatment that they have received from the imperial Powers, and the latter’s refusal to deal with them in terms of equality’ (Nehru, 1993, p. 475). Reiterating the narrative of close civilisational bonds he went on to say that:

We in India have two thousand years of friendship with China. We have differences of opinion and even small conflicts...when we hark back to that long past something of the wisdom of that past also helps us to understand each other. And so, we endeavour to maintain friendly relations with this great neighbour of ours, for the peace of Asia depends upon these relations (Nehru, 1961, p. 186).

That India had come to terms with Chinese sovereignty in Tibet was made clear in the trade agreement signed in April 1954 which was called the ‘Agreement between India and China on trade and intercourse between *Tibet region of China* and India’.²⁷ This agreement established that relations between India and China were to be carried out according to the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence or Panchsheel which consisted of the following: (i) Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; (ii) Mutual non-aggression; (iii) Mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; (iv) Equality and mutual benefit; (v) Peaceful coexistence. It seems paradoxical and even hypocritical that

²⁷ Emphasis added. See White Paper I for the text of the agreement.

such an emphasis on peaceful coexistence should make an appearance in an agreement that legitimised China's invasion of Tibet but responding to debate in the Lok Sabha over the agreement, Nehru (1961, p. 304) argued that India had little choice but to accept China's actions for,

where did we come into the picture unless we wanted to assume an aggressive role of interfering with other countries? Many things happen in the world which we do not like and which we would wish were rather different but we do not go like Don Quixote with lance in hand against everything that we dislike; we put up with these things because we would be, without making any difference, merely getting into trouble.

Panchsheel, then, was another way of coming into the picture – one that produced a framework in which a shared anti-colonial identity, based on civilisational sisterhood and modern nation-state brotherhood, could become dominant. What was important for Nehru was highlighting the commonalities between India and China and this entailed downgrading the invasion of Tibet to a difference of opinion. Thus, during Chou En-lai's visit to India in June 1954 the focus of Nehru's public speeches was the two thousand years of 'peaceful commerce of ideas, of religion and of art and culture'. According to Nehru (1961, p. 306), even though India and China 'each has her own special cultural inheritance' and are different in many ways, 'we have been good neighbours and friends and have not come into conflict with each other during the millennia of history'. This was 'the witness of the past, and as we stand on the fine edge of the present in this turbulent world of ours, we can learn a lesson from that past, which will help us in the present and in the future'.

3.4.2 The Spectre of Chinese Aggression

Despite Nehru's attempts to cover the emerging cracks in his discourse on India-China friendship another discursive construction of China as expansionist and aggressive began to gain ground.

B.N. Mullik (1972, pp. 78-80; 1971, pp. 84-85), the former director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), has recounted in his memoirs conversations in which Nehru described China as a country that had displayed an aggressive streak throughout its history and was now being governed by aggressive leaders and an aggressive political philosophy. This leadership had obtained hegemony over a vast country by waging an unceasing war for the past twenty years and once it had achieved political and economic stability Nehru thought it was inevitable that it would seek to extend its influence over Asia. Moreover, he argued that China and India had been vying for supremacy for hundreds of years in Central Asia, Tibet, Burma and South-East Asia and was bound to continue for a long time yet.²⁸ In the modern age, according to Mullik's account, Nehru thought China may seek to do this simply by proving its superiority over India in political and economic areas or it may take the easier options of occupying territories under false pretexts or supporting local communist forces in other countries to further their real goal of promoting the Chinese national interest. It was for the purpose of tempering China's aggressive tendencies that Nehru, according to Mullik, was trying to build a friendship with China and have its communist government recognised in the United Nations. Sarvepalli Gopal's (1979, p. 190) semi-authorised biography of Nehru has revealed that this belief in Chinese expansionism was also repeatedly expressed in private letters.

²⁸ As we shall see in the next chapter, Nehru argued that India had established its role in these areas mainly through a peaceful cultural expansion.

If Nehru had reservations about China, the IB and other Indian leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who was a prominent nationalist before becoming Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in the post-independence government, were adamant about China's expansionist tendencies. Unlike Nehru, however, the IB and Patel saw the threat as emanating from China's communist ideology. According to Mullik (1971, p. 109), the Chinese would not stop with overrunning Tibet but would 'come right up to the borders of India and also claim those parts of northern India, Bhutan, northern Burma etc. which had been shown in Chinese maps as coming under the jurisdiction of the Chinese Emperors'. Nehru (1961, p. 305) had argued that 'great countries' like India and China, are 'after some hundreds of years of being submerged, are coming up' and should not 'get mixed up and tied up with the rather superficial arguments, important as they might be, of communism and anti-communism'. In contrast, the IB's concerns were driven by a deep fear of 'International Communism' establishing itself in India. It was thought that the Chinese presence on the frontier 'would open up for the Communists of India to build bases on the frontier of Tibet and thus they would be able to get all forms of material and moral assistance from the Chinese' (Mullik, 1971, p. 109). Likewise for Sardar Patel, China's communist imperialism was 'ten times more dangerous' than the imperialism of the Western powers due to its 'cloak of ideology' which conceals 'racial, national and historical claims'. He wrote in a letter to Nehru in 1950 that a strong, united communist China posed a threat to India's north and north-east frontiers as well as to parts of Assam and Burma {Quoted in Mullik, 1971, p. 117-8}.

Still, Nehru remained unconvinced by these arguments and whatever suspicions he had of China's aggressive tendencies, he repudiated the idea that they would be directed against India. In a private memo written in 1953 to members of his staff Nehru (1999a, p. 594-6) dismissed the concerns of S. Sinha, an Officer on Special Duty in the Ministry of External

Affairs, who had written him a note titled 'Chinese Designs on the North East Frontier'. He admonished Sinha for lacking objectivity, being too imaginative and not understanding India's broader foreign policy, by which he presumably meant the advocacy of friendship and cooperation. Nehru further added that India's frontier borders were settled and not open to discussion except for 'minor tracts here and there'. He wrote that although he could not read the 'Chinese mind' he felt that 'it is completely impracticable for the Chinese Government to think of anything in the nature of invasion of India. Therefore I rule it out'.

By 1959 the correspondence on border issues had intensified and as China became aware of the steadfastness of the Indian position it started adopting less friendly and more strident language in its condemnation. A number of incidents fuelled the situation including the Indian discovery of China's construction of a highway from Tibet to Sinkiang running across Aksai Chin in 1958; the Tibetan revolt in March 1959 and the decision by the Indian government to grant asylum to the Dalai Lama; alleged mistreatment of Indian nationals in Tibet and mutual accusations of territorial encroachment. The Tibetan incident, in particular, produced a letter from the Chinese foreign secretary that was considered especially incendiary by India. In it, China accused India of interfering in its internal affairs by playing 'an objective role of encouraging the Tibetan rebels' (India, 1954-1959, p. 74). In language that was unusual for a diplomatic correspondence the letter then exclaimed:

Our Indian friends! What is your mind? Will you be agreeing to our thinking regarding the view that China can only concentrate its main attention eastward of China, but not south-westward of China, nor is it necessary for it to do so...Friends? It seems to us that you too cannot have two fronts (India, 1954-1959).

India reacted with hostility to what was perceived as the statement's threatening undertones. The reply, which was written in the name of the foreign secretary but drafted by Nehru, said that the Indian government had found the Chinese letter, '...not only not in consonance with certain facts but ...wholly out of keeping with diplomatic usage and courtesies due to friendly countries'. The statement went on to say that India had avoided interference in China's internal matters and would continue this policy, but that this did not mean that it would 'discard or vary any of their own policies under any pressure from outside' (India, 1954-1959, p. 77). This was the first appearance of a discourse that positioned China as a bully that was trying to push India into subservience. It was a discourse which would come to dominate India's relations with China.

Tensions were further heightened in September when, in a letter, Chou En-lai made what Nehru thought were vast claims on Indian territory. In a speech to the lower house or Lok Sabha of the Indian Parliament in September 1959 he again suggested that China was trying to bully India which is 'not the way to be friends with anybody or to maintain our dignity or self-respect' (Nehru, 1961, p. 344). In another speech to the Lok Sabha, Nehru detailed the contents of Chou En-lai's letter and began articulating his ideas on the gulf that separated India and China. He spoke of China's lack of understanding of India, of how it valued Indian friendship to a 'very small extent', and of how China forgotten 'that India is not a country which can be ignored even though she may speak in a gentler language' (Nehru, 1961, pp. 346-358).

However, it was the Kongka Pass incident of October 1959 – in which a small detachment of Indian police officers became involved in a shooting incident with Chinese troops – that finally convinced Nehru of China's hostile intentions. The skirmish resulted in the deaths of several Indian officers and one Chinese soldier and there were wounded personnel on

both sides. Moreover, several Indian officers were captured and held by the Chinese for almost one month. Chinese and Indian accounts of what transpired at Kongka Pass are, not surprisingly, contradictory with each side accusing the other of shooting first. For the Chinese, the Kongka Pass in Aksai Chin was a boundary feature on which they had legitimately established a post. The patrolling Indians were therefore trespassing on Chinese territory and their actions indicated their intent to capture the Chinese post (India, 1959-1960, pp. 29-34). The Indian side, on the other hand, argued that the Kongka Pass was in Indian territory, that the Chinese troops were the trespassers and that the purpose of the patrol was to locate a scouting party that had set out the previous day and had not returned (India, 1959-1960, pp. 10-22).²⁹

The Chinese version of events was given little credibility in India due to accounts from the released officers of their mistreatment at the hands of the Chinese forces and because India suffered the most casualties and with. For Nehru, the incident had confirmed his worst fears about China and in November 1959 he expressed these openly in public speeches to the Indian Parliament. He argued that China had developed a 'sensation of greatness' early on in history and thought it natural 'that other countries should pay tribute to them' (Nehru, 1961, p. 362). In another speech a few days later, Nehru argued that as a result of the 'semi-isolation in which revolutionary China has grown up in the last ten years with no contacts except with a limited circle of nations' they had developed a 'one-track mind' whereby they sought to achieve their national interests at the expense of everything else (Nehru, 1961, p. 367). Looking through history, he said, China had an '...inherent tendency to be expansive when she is strong'. Given China's growing strength and the given the 'abnormal state of mind' created by the revolution, China posed a definite danger

²⁹ The missing party had been captured by the Chinese the day before the shooting incident on the 20th of October, 1959.

to India. Indeed Nehru said that he doubted there was 'any country in the world which cares less for peace than China today' (Nehru, 1961, pp. 369-370). He vowed to keep seeking a peaceful solution but India's 'honour' and the 'integrity of its territory' was at stake and 'you cannot barter your self-respect and honour' (Nehru, 1961, p. 363). Moreover, Nehru was adamant that the Chinese Government needed to realise the importance of the Himalayas to India's 'history, tradition, faith, religion, beliefs, literature, and culture'. The border dispute thus became a battle for the 'innermost being' of Indian civilisation because, China, by contesting the validity of India's traditional borders, was questioning the very existence of the Indian nation (Nehru, 1961, p. 364).

Indian discourse was now clearly producing China as the Other to the postcolonial Indian Self. Where India had spread its culture peacefully, China had done so with violence. While India's unity was organic and natural, China's had to be enforced through the sword. If other countries sought India's leadership in the region it would be consensual and not by stealth or military coercion as China may seek to do. While Nehru had initially sought to build a common anti-colonial identity based on ancient civilisational links between China and India, this was shaken by China's invasion of Tibet. Although Panchsheel was an attempt to restore the latter, it had become evident by the end of 1959 that this would not be sufficient.

Chou En-lai visited India in April 1960, during which he repeated the Chinese proposal that the status quo be maintained along the actual line of control pending negotiations. Yet, by now Nehru's position had become more entrenched than ever. In the Indian imaginary China had taken on all the characteristics of a colonial Other. Any lingering doubts about Aksai Chin had disappeared in the face of historical evidence that had been provided to him by the director of the Historical Division at the Ministry of External Affairs and he

now considered India's case 'foolproof' (Hoffmann, 1990, pp. 82-83). Moreover, Nehru's view of China's bullying behaviour had come to be shared by top MEA officials like J.S. Mehta and Sarvepalli Gopal (Hoffmann, 1990, pp. 59-61). Thus, the Indian government once again rejected the Chinese proposal and in November 1961 took the decision to become more active in defending what it considered to be Indian territory (Hoffmann, 1990, pp. 88-92). For this purpose, the government resolved to prevent further Chinese advance and develop an Indian presence in Aksai Chin through the establishment of posts and patrols. Defence Minister Krishna Menon later refuted the idea that this constituted a forward policy and B.N. Mullik denied that Nehru had ever referred to it as such (Mullik, 1971, p. 318). According to Menon, 'a forward policy means trying to get into someone else's territory like Lord Curzon tried to do...Establishing posts in an area which belongs to us cannot be called a forward policy' (Quoted in Mullik, 1971, p. 319). Still, if one considers the territory in question to be anything other than indisputably India's there are surely parallels between Britain's paranoia over Russian encroachments along the frontiers of the colonial possession that gave Britain its imperial identity and postcolonial India's fears of China's claims on the supposedly natural, traditional and eternal boundaries of an ancient Indian civilisational state.

3.4.3 The Forward Policy and the Border War

The Indian leadership remained confident that India's military activity would not lead to an escalation in conflict. This thinking was driven by MEA and IB assessments of past incidents during which Chinese troops had refrained from confrontation with their Indian counterparts when they had come into contact. While there were also examples of the Chinese reacting with gunfire to Indian activity at the Konga Pass and at Longju in August 1959, these were probably treated as exceptions rather than indicating a pattern of

behaviour. Chinese actions in the early stages of the forward policy also implied an unwillingness to carry through with an attack even though this may have initially appeared their intention. The lesson learned from this was that if Indian troops held firm to their positions, the Chinese would back down. Moreover, there was a genuine conviction among civilian officials that if China were to react with force to India's forward moves, the army would be able to cope with it. This was despite the indications to the contrary from military personnel who had warned Nehru of the numerical, logistical and tactical problems involved in executing the forward policy (Hoffmann, 1990, p. 98-100).

The belief that India was in full control of the situation on the Sino-Indian border was shattered on the 10th of October 1962 when a Chinese assault unit of about 800 troops supported by mortar fire confronted an Indian platoon of about 50 men near Tseng Jong in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) on the eastern side of the border. The Indian patrol managed a retreat but not before suffering casualties. Six officers were killed and eleven were wounded while five remained unaccounted for (Hoffmann, 1996, pp.152-3). On the 20th of October the Chinese began their full assault attacking various Indian posts in the NEFA and in Ladakh with the goal of taking all that India had gained through its forward policy and pushing Indian troops back to China's 1960 claim line, which was considerably further behind the 1959 actual line of control. After one month of hostilities the Chinese had achieved their immediate military objectives. They announced a cease-fire on the 21st of November and, on the 1st of December, began withdrawing troops.

China's ceasefire plan was tacitly agreed to by India and although it refused to accept China's demarcation of the line of control it was forced to tolerate it. China later refused to agree to proposals put forward at the Colombo conference which had been organised by Sri

Lanka and several other non-aligned states³⁰ to discuss the India-China situation. The Colombo proposals called on China to give up territory occupied after the 8th of September 1959 which to China was seen as legitimising India's earlier forward policy. Likewise for India, the China's line of control did not align with either a customary boundary or the pre-war administrative reality (Hoffmann, 1996, pp. 226-8). Without the means or inclination to challenge it, however, India has mostly abided by the Chinese line of control since 1962 with relatively few major incidents. The exceptions have been clashes during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war and at Nathula Pass on the Sikkim-Tibet border in 1967. Troop build-up occurred in 1986-87 following the establishment of rival posts in the disputed Sumdorong Chu Valley and in 1986 after India moved to make the NEFA (or Arunachal Pradesh as it had been known since 1972) an official state of the Indian union (Hoffmann, 1996, p. 231).

3.4.4 The Chinese 'Betrayal'

There was a genuine sense of surprise and betrayal among the Indian leadership that the border dispute had culminated in a fully-fledged war. Even though much of the leadership had expressed the belief that China had an expansionist past it was still thought highly unlikely that it would launch a full attack on India. According to Krishna Menon, up until as late as October 1962 neither he nor Nehru foresaw China initiating a major war against India (Brecher, 1968, p. 148). How could the leadership have been so wrong about the consequences of India's forward policy?

Neville Maxwell has sarcastically likened India's forward policy to a form of Gandhi's *satyagraha* because India employed it with the confidence that it would impart on them 'a kind of moral unassailability which would dissuade the Chinese from attacking' just as it

³⁰ Burma, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia and the United Arab Republic (Egypt).

had dissuaded the British during the nationalist era (Maxwell, 1972, p. 182). For Maxwell, this reflected Nehru's perception of India as a uniquely moral and peaceful nation that was renowned for its pacific ways around the world: 'India's reputation in the world would go with the patrols into Aksai Chin like a moral armour'. He goes on to argue that the forward policy was deeply illogical because it rested on the belief that the Chinese would remain impassive while India 'gradually and laboriously built up positions of strength from which to attack them' (Maxwell, 1972, p. 182).

Aside from the fact the British often did resort to force against the nationalist *satyagrahis*, I would argue that more than assuming the existence of moral unassailability India was working from the assumption that its efforts to construct a shared anti-colonial, civilisational identity would prevent any misunderstanding of its actions. When it became clear that this would not be the case, any sense of a shared identity collapsed. Instead, China was either portrayed as an eternal civilisational Other or as an ancient friend that had betrayed that friendship and turned into an aggressor. The latter discourse can be found in the MEA's background paper on the conflict, which was published in November 1962 and titled *China's Betrayal of India*. This document depicts the India-China relationship in seven stages from '2000 years of goodwill' to a retroactive reading of the Tibetan situation in 1959 as 'the first rebuff', followed by successive episodes of growing animosity leading up to the final 'naked aggression' in 1962 (India, 1962). Krishna Menon who, among those in the Indian leadership, was perhaps the most amenable to China, expressed similar sentiments of betrayal in his interviews with Michael Brecher. The Chinese, according to him, wanted to discredit India and Nehru in order to gain hegemony in Asia (Brecher, 1968, p. 155). India, however, 'wanted to believe in trust' and thought that China would not want to jeopardise their friendship by waging war (Brecher, 1968, p. 148). Moreover, Menon tended to ascribe the war to extremists in the Chinese leadership and to China's

paranoia about the US, thus implying that the war was not an inevitable product of Chinese ideology but atypical behaviour that could have been prevented (Brecher, 1968, p. 324). This view however, was not the majority opinion.

The charge of betrayal indicates the existence of a previously established trust and friendship. However, as Chinese propaganda grew more and more unrestrained this notion of betrayal gave way to the idea of China as a civilisational Other. An editorial published in October 1962 in the *People's Daily* accused Nehru of having an expansionist philosophy, wanting a 'great Indian empire', of using violence to suppress India's progressive forces and of provoking border disputes with its neighbours to gain economic aid from the United States (China, 1962, pp. 93-134). Such propaganda was used in India as evidence that the border war had been an inevitable outcome of China's long-term hostility to India. For instance, Subimal Dutt – who was foreign secretary from 1955 to 1961 and Ambassador to the Soviet Union thereafter – cites the *People's Daily* editorials in his memoir as evidence that China's 'deeply held' suspicions of India meant that even if India had given up Aksai Chin it was 'most improbable' that war would have been avoided (Dutt, 1977, p. 134). Likewise, Nehru argued in a briefing to the IB in early 1963 that the cause of the border war as a 'basic eternal conflict between China and India'. He argued that 'the two civilizations had fought each other over centuries and none had so far been able to overcome the other'. India had posed a threat to China, and 'had to be humiliated' because its political structure had offered an alternative model to other countries in the region (Mullik, 1971, pp. 454-5).

The India-China war destabilised India's postcolonial identity in a number of ways. Before the war, Nehru's prescriptions for ensuring India's security revolved around political unity and military self-sufficiency through economic strength. In March 1954 during a debate in

the Lok Sabha Nehru had responded to demands that the government focus more on defence by saying that, 'we can argue that we can add to our strength by getting arms from outside. But, any kind of dependence on others means that we are not really free. We would become vulnerable' (Nehru, 1999a, p. 386). The India-China war challenged both of these conceptions of security. The need to import arms to fight the war undermined Nehru's assumption that India could wait until it was economically strong to become militarily self-sufficient.³¹ The India-China war thus explicitly threatened the very basis of India's fledgling postcolonial modernity. Paraphrasing comments made by Nehru in the Indian parliament, Sarvepalli Gopal (1984, p. 223) put it this way:

With independence, there was a general feeling that India had reached harbour and, safely anchored, could devote herself to peaceful development; but the world was cruel and had forced India to revise her approaches. China, and the world, had betrayed India and forced her much against her will, to take to war. Her efforts at peace and following the paths of peace had been knocked on the head.

The India-China conflict, therefore, had also threatened India's postcolonial difference as a nation-state charting a different, non-violent path to modernity. Reinscribing China as a civilisational Other was, thus, an effort to re-secure India's postcolonial identity. Nehru was convinced that China had hoped that as a consequence of the war India would implode and break up. Instead, India had united as never before and the war had forced India to replace 'her' usual complacency with a new defiant and determined attitude (Mullik, 1971, p. 448). Returning to his metaphor of India as a violated but irrepressible woman in a speech in the Lok Sabha on the 14th of November 1962, Nehru said that China should be thanked for taking an action that

...suddenly lifted a veil from the face of India. During the last three weeks or a little more we have had a glimpse of the strength of the serene face of India, strong and yet calm and determined, that

³¹ India was willing to accept arms from any country willing to supply them during the war. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Canada, Japan, Israel, and Germany all contributed to India's war effort (Boquerat, 2004, pp. 23-4).

face, an ancient face which is ever young and vibrant. We have not had [sic] seen her face, but rather this House saw a million faces representing that face of India or Bharat Mata (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1962, p. 1645).

During this debate in the Lok Sabha many Members made reference to history repeating itself. According to S.N. Chaturvedi, for instance:

We have failed to learn lessons from our failures, for history has repeated itself...The hoards of Central Asia are again on the march and we are confronted with the organised might of a dictatorship based on terror and reeking with blood (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1962, p. 1643).

However, in response to exhortations from Members that India 'brutalise' itself in response to China's aggression, Nehru again asserted India's postcolonial difference:

Brutality is a thing which we have associated with certain movements which we have objected to or rejected. By becoming brutal and thinking in those brutal ways we lose our souls and that is a tremendous loss. I hope that India which is essentially a gentle and peace-loving country will retain that mind even though it may have to carry on war with all its consequences to the utmost (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1962, p. 1647).

3.4.5 Borders: Traditional, Imperial, Postcolonial

In his analysis of the India-China war, Hoffmann (1990, pp. 25-28) goes beyond the ICB model in one important respect. He points to the importance of Indian nationalism in the border conflict. The Indian leadership, he suggests, was wedded to a notion of historical borders which existed long before the British established their state structure. Indeed, the depiction of India as a cohesive and territorially well-defined entity was a major concern to Nehru who argued that geographical features, such as the Himalayas, provided natural barriers that kept India culturally exclusive for thousands of years (Nehru, 1946, p. 452). Hence, Nehru sought to show that the borders of British India were not simply

demarcations conceived for imperial purposes but were often, in fact, formalisations of traditional, customary boundaries. For instance, in a letter to Chou En-Lai on the 22nd of March, 1959, Nehru pointed out that the border between India and Tibet – called the McMahon Line after Henry McMahon who was responsible for delimiting it – may have been sanctioned by international agreements between China and British India but it was also a ‘traditional frontier’ that ‘follows the geographical principle of watershed on the crest of the High Himalayan Range’ (India, 1954-1959, p. 55).

Right from the beginning, then, there was a fundamental discrepancy between the way India and China viewed the legacy of imperial borders. From the Chinese point of view, the Sino-Indian boundary delimitations were a bitter reminder of British aggression and powerlessness. China too believed in the existence of traditional customary boundaries but thought India’s claims greatly exceeded ‘the extent to which it has always exercised its actual jurisdiction’ (India, 1961, p. CR33). Thus, the borders that India claimed were neither morally, legally or traditionally valid, as Chou En-Lai’s first letter to Nehru, dated 23rd January 1959, made clear (India, 1954-1959, p. 53). Yet, India, it seemed, was following outright the Himalayan policies of the British. It was an attitude that puzzled Chou En-Lai, as can be seen in his letter to Nehru on the 8th of September 1959, given India and China’s shared experience of imperial aggression (India, 1959, p. 27).

Nehru, however, was deeply offended by what he saw as China’s allegation that independent India was seeking to benefit from the British aggression against China, and reiterated in his reply to Chou En-Lai that the boundaries of India were ‘settled for centuries by history, geography, custom and tradition’ (India, 1959, p. 34). The McMahon Line, which China considered illegal, was depicted as a correct representation of the customary border that had been accepted for centuries. The McMahon Line had

'formalized the natural, traditional ethnic and administrative boundary in the area' (India, 1959, pp. 39-40). These two differing opinions laid the basis for the rigidity of the subsequent Indian and Chinese positions on the Sino-Indian border. On the Indian side, most of the borders of British India were valid and not open to negotiation. This was especially true of the McMahon Line. Since 1950, Nehru had held to the position that the McMahon Line was India's non-negotiable, north-eastern boundary and by 1954 when he issued a directive ordering India's borders to be precisely marked on maps, the Line was given as a full international border despite the fact that it was yet to be demarcated on the ground (Maxwell, 1972, p. 68, 77). Only minor adjustments to the claim lines would be countenanced but China was first required to withdraw from Aksai Chin, an uninhabited high-altitude desert on the western edge of the Sino-Indian frontier, which India included completely within its territory. This border too was not demarcated and, while British opinion at times considered it a necessary buffer in anticipation of Russian advance, the British claim on the area was itself ambiguous (Maxwell, 1972, p. 78). Nehru admitted that the Aksai Chin area was more ambiguous than the McMahon Line yet this did not alter his demand that much of it was Indian territory (Nehru, 1961, p. 354). The Indian position was that the British did not always reinforce traditional boundaries for strategic purposes and because of their incomplete knowledge of Indian geography (Hoffmann, 1990, pp. 25-6). If, then, an Indian claim departed from British historical records, as the Chinese would later argue, it could be put down to this reason. The Aksai Chin claim is a case in point. Chou En-Lai had argued in his September 1959 letter that early British maps by John Walker corresponded closely to Chinese maps but were later changed to put Aksai Chin into Indian territory (India, 1959, pp. 28-29). Nehru responded that Walker had been using information from Henry Strachey, an army captain who 'knew little or nothing about Aksai Chin' and drew the natural boundary erroneously (India, 1959, pp. 36-7).

China's approach to the Sino-Indian border was in keeping with how it dealt with the matter of imperial borders in general. Despite its misgivings over how the borders had come to be marked and its belief in the accuracy of only its own version of the traditional, customary boundary, China took the view that it would be counterproductive to pursue claims over lost territories with its neighbours. Thus, since it had been established as the effective boundary, China had stated in January 1959 that it was prepared 'to take a more or less realistic attitude towards the McMahon Line' and, given time, was confident of reaching a 'friendly settlement' on the matter (India, 1954-1959, p. 53). As for Aksai Chin however, this had 'always been under Chinese jurisdiction. Patrol duties have continually been carried out in that area by the border guards of the Chinese Government' (India, 1954-1959, p. 53). The Chinese position, then, appeared to be this: regardless of tradition and custom or imperial treaties and agreements, the Sino-Indian border should be decided on the basis of the actual circumstances on the ground and through a process of negotiation. This may not have appeared to be an unreasonable proposal to the Chinese but it was one that did not take into account the strength of Nehru's conviction about the timelessness of India's borders – a conviction that was seen as necessary given the exigencies of nation-building. It also did not anticipate the extent of the threat perception felt by a newly-independent country whose history had been written as the story of successive invasions and periods of subjugation at the hands of foreigners. This became a prominent narrative once China took on the role of the Other to India's postcolonial Self however, it continued to compete with India's self-fashioning as a peaceful, moral nation which did not think that its actions would be ever be perceived as aggressive. This produced a peculiar situation whereby India became increasingly concerned about threats to its territorial integrity while failing to recognise that its defensive actions could be perceived as threatening.

At the heart of the India-China dispute, was the matter of 'traditional' borders. Yet, the question of what 'traditional borders' actually were and whether they can ever be reconciled to the demands of the modern nation-state is something that neither government addressed. In effect, the idea of 'traditional borders' usually referred to the use of 'natural boundaries' which were made up of natural features such as watersheds. However, the concept of natural boundaries comes from the modernist idea of the state as an organic entity and was a product of the transference of biological ideas into the emerging social sciences and into the nationalist rhetoric of politicians in 19th century Europe (Agnew, 1998, p. 100). In pre-colonial South Asia, with its enormous diversity and decentralised forms of governance, ambiguous boundaries consisting of large zones rather than linear borders were usually the norm. When natural features, such as watersheds were used to mark territory they constituted a series of separate points and there was not necessarily agreement or consultation with the inhabitants of these areas on how these points were to be joined together. The British practiced ambiguity in the drawing of the borders of British India only so far as it was necessary for its buffer policies (Hoffmann, 1990, p. 26). Some regions on the India-China border such as Aksai Chin were enmeshed in these buffer policies whereas others, such as the McMahon line, were the result of wanting a distinct line of separation between India and China. Postcolonial states in their striving to conform to the modern geopolitical ideal of defined borders and distinct national identities cannot tolerate any ambiguity and it was this that was a driving motivation on both sides of the India-China war.

3.5 Conclusion

China's journey from civilisational sister to civilisational Other in India's foreign policy discourse is indicative of the ambivalence that characterises India's postcolonial modernity. Its desire to conduct its relations with other states on the basis of cooperation and friendship, rather than the geopolitical preoccupations of British India or the Cold War anxieties about Communism, were clearly evident in India's discourse on China. Yet, the 1962 war made clear postcolonial India's grounding in a modern geopolitical imagination in which distinct borders are a basic necessity. The result of India's dispute with China over the borders of British India was the inscription of China as a civilisational Other in a revived narrative of India's vulnerability to invasion and conquest. The recent effort to reinscribe China as a civilisational friend still faces the problem that both India and China are still heavily invested in a modern geopolitical imagination.

4 THE SEARCH FOR A SCIENTIFIC TEMPER: INDIA AND NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In 1996 the Indian government submitted a Memorial to the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. In this carefully argued Memorial, India concluded that the use of nuclear weapons in a first attack or even as retaliation would be illegal under international law (India, 1998a, p. 72). Further, the Memorial stated that India considered the theory of nuclear deterrence ‘abhorrent’ since it implied that the ‘keeping of peace or prevention of war is to be made dependent on the threat of horrific indiscriminate destruction’ and because it justified the stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction ‘at an enormous expense’ (India, 1998a, p. 73). Finally, the Memorial argued that if it is the case that the use of nuclear weapons is against international law, then, as with biological and chemical weapons, the manufacture of nuclear weapons itself must be considered illegal (India, 1998a, p. 74). Yet, just two years later India conducted nuclear tests and declared itself a nuclear weapons state. In March 2006 India reached an agreement on civil nuclear energy cooperation with the United States which, in the words of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2006), ‘offered the possibility of decades-old restrictions being set aside to create space for India’s emergence as a full member of a new nuclear world order’. On the same day that Singh was heralding the global acceptance of India’s nuclear weapons, Jayant Prasad, India’s Permanent Representative at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva was reiterating India’s belief that the ‘very existence of nuclear weapons, and of their possible use or threat of their use, poses a threat to humanity’ and that India ‘remained committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon free world, to be achieved through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear

disarmament' (Prasad, 2006). As these two examples illustrate, India clearly has an ambivalent, contradictory relationship with nuclear technology. It would be easy to dismiss India's advocacy of disarmament as a superficial mask for its realpolitik pursuit of nuclear weapons. For example, in his discussion of India's refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on the grounds that it did not include contain a clause for disarmament, Sumit Ganguly (1999, p. 158) argues that, 'Although India's argument was couched in moral terms, a more pragmatic consideration – namely keeping its nuclear weapons option open – guided its decision not to sign the treaty'. However, disarmament is a long-standing and consistent feature of India's foreign policy discourse that governments of all hues have upheld. Even today, as we saw above, when India believes it is on the cusp of being recognised as a nuclear weapons state it still feels obliged to engage in a discourse of disarmament that reiterates a self-image of morality and ethical conduct.

In this chapter I reject the idea that India's nuclear program can be understood as an inexorable march toward weaponisation. Instead, I will argue that making sense of the origins of the apparent contradictions in Indian nuclear policy gives us some important insights into India's postcolonial identity. Specifically, I suggest that taking India's disarmament discourse seriously reveals the ambivalent, and ambiguously gendered, nature of India's postcolonial identity. This ambivalence and ambiguity stems from the need to critique Western modernity and its attendant politics of masculinity and race while accepting the charge that India's failure to become modern was the reason for its succumbing to colonial rule. In the modern geopolitical imagining of Indian civilisation, India's inability to develop a scientific outlook and modern technology was seen as a civilisational 'lack' that led to its failure to reach the standard of civilisation set by Europe and, eventually, its subjugation by Britain. In this context, nuclear technology took on a special significance as an explicit example of both the promise and the violence of Western

modernity. The emphasis on the production of nuclear technology promised to instil in India what Nehru referred to as a 'scientific temper' and provide a cheap source of power for India's economic development. Indeed, as Itty Abraham (1998, p. 20) has argued, the nuclear reactor – along with the dam, the steel mill, and new planned cities like the Le Corbusier-designed city of Chandigarh – was a 'technological artefact' which the postcolonial state hoped would 'transform traditional landscapes through their sheer power'. Yet, because the nationalist critique of the dehumanising nature of Western modernity constitutes a vital part of India's postcolonial identity, the outright adoption of a technology which had the capacity to unleash an unprecedented level of destruction was untenable. The discourse of disarmament is an attempt to resolve this dilemma by recourse to India's moral strength, which is seen as the innate attribute of an Indian civilisation gendered as feminine and the basis of its postcolonial difference.

By examining India's nuclear discourse as an enactment of its postcolonial difference it becomes possible to explain some of the anomalies in India's nuclear behaviour such as the 24 year gap between its nuclear tests and its remarkably consistent and prominent advocacy of nuclear disarmament. Scholars who have attempted realist explanations for India's decision to nuclearise in May 1998 have cited the security threats, both real and perceived, posed by Pakistan and China (Malik, 1998; Ganguly, 1999). Ganguly (1999, p. 149) has argued, for instance, that 'India's perceptions of external threats and the reactions of the great powers to its security played a *fundamental* role in driving the nuclear program' (emphasis added). Indeed, the threat of the 'Chinese Bomb' has been a factor in Indian debates on nuclear weapons since the 1962 India-China war and China's nuclear tests in 1964 (Krishna, 1966). However, the perception of external threat fails to account for the timing of India's nuclear tests in 1998 since they were conducted at a time when India-China relations had been steadily improving. This logic also seems flawed in the case

of Pakistan since, given the reactive nature of Pakistan's military policy, there is little to support the argument that Pakistan would have acquired nuclear weapons regardless of whether India had exercised the nuclear option and, therefore, posed a threat that had to be pre-empted. Moreover, India's nuclearisation was bound to provoke Pakistan into nuclearising, thus making India's edge in conventional forces irrelevant.

Other scholars have sought to explain India's nuclearisation on account of the character of the Hindu nationalist-led that was leading the coalition government that made the decision to nuclearise (Vanaik, 2002). This argument certainly has some merit and, indeed, it is one that I pursue in this chapter, for the tests were very much in keeping with the hypermasculine, aggressively modernising facet of Hindu nationalism that advocates the creation of a militaristic Indian state. However, as we shall see, it was a Congress government that first breathed life into India's nuclear weapons program and it was a Congress leader that gave the go-ahead for India's first nuclear test in 1974 and laid the groundwork for the second test in 1998. Explaining India's decision to nuclearise must, therefore, go beyond both a strategic rationale and party political ideology and take into account the broader historical and contemporary context that allowed and encouraged the Indian government to undertake this step.

In this chapter I argue that understanding India's nuclear policies requires an analysis of the racially gendered construction of India's postcolonial modernity and the central role given to science within it. To begin, I take as my point of departure a comment from Bal Thackeray, the leader of the militant Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena party, who declared his support for the 1998 tests on the grounds that 'we have to prove that we are not eunuchs' (CNN, 1998). This statement draws on the complex, competing and deeply gendered preoccupations of India's nationalist leaders regarding modernity and progress. I will

explore this genealogy in the first section of the chapter. I will then look at the importance given to nuclear energy by the postcolonial state and examine India's foreign policy discourse on nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament as a performative enactment of its postcolonial difference.

4.2 Science, Violence and Indian Civilisation

4.2.1 Colonial Masculinity and Native Effeminacy

By invoking the figure of the eunuch to describe India's pre-nuclear character, Thackeray was drawing on what Nandy (1983, p. 4) calls the 'language of the homology between sexual and political dominance' that saturated colonial discourse from the middle of the 19th century. This discourse constructed a gendered and racialised hierarchy of effeminised, non-white Indians against masculine, white Europeans. The stereotype of the effeminate Hindu draws on hegemonic codings of both race and gender and can be traced back to the beginnings of colonial rule in the 18th century. Since masculinity is frequently constructed as a cornerstone of modernity and white Europeans were thought to be at the pinnacle of modernity the pathologising of the Indian male as effeminate, due to both mental and physical weakness, became an integral part of the ideology of the British civilising mission and was used extensively in 19th and 20th century writings on India (Krishnaswamy, 1998; Sinha, 1995).

Both the Romantic scholars, like Friedrich Schlegel, and the Orientalists, like William Jones, were heavily reliant on the language of effeminacy in their writings on India. For Schlegel the Indian mind was dominated by the faculty of imagination rather than reason while Jones described Indians as 'soft and voluptuous' (Inden, 1990, p. 94)

(Krishnaswamy, 1998, p. 21). Utilitarian discourse drew on this as evidence of England's moral superiority since the English language and English literature were thought to be rational, energetic and masculine (Krishnaswamy, 1998, p. 21-3). According to James Mill (1848a, p. 465) 'Hindus possessed a feminine softness both in their persons and in their address'. For Mill (1848a, p. 517) '...the Hindu, like the Eunuch, excels in the qualities of a slave'. By contrast, '...the Mohammedan is more manly, more vigorous' (Mill, 1848a, p. 517). Mill (1848a, p. 150) admitted the existence of Indian scientific learning only to dismiss it because, according to him, Indians had cultivated their understanding of the astronomical and mathematical sciences '...exclusively for the purposes of astrology; one of the most irrational of all imaginable pursuits; and one of those which most infallibly denote a nation barbarous...'.

Likewise, for Thomas Macaulay (1870, p. 517, 611) 'there never perhaps existed a people so thoroughly fitted for a foreign yoke' because,

the physical organisation of the Bengalee is feeble even to effeminacy...During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and more hardy breeds. Courage, independence, veracity are qualities to which his constitution and his situation are equally unfavourable.

Moreover, 'His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak even to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance...' (Macaulay, 1870, p. 611). In his famous Minute on Education he wrote that to perpetuate Indian learning would be to give 'artificial encouragement to absurd history, absurd metaphysics, absurd physics, absurd theology' and would create a

breed of scholars who find their scholarship an encumbrance and a blemish ...and whose education is so utterly useless to them that, when they have received it, they must either starve or live on the public all the rest of their lives (Macaulay, 1952, p. 730).

While all Hindu men were thought to show signs of effeminacy, by the 19th century the label came to be applied most often to the men of Bengal – the capital of British India and the site of the most extensive contact between the British and the ‘natives’. The late-19th century construct of the effeminate Bengali *babu* referred specifically to the elite, Hindu, Bengali man who had a Western education. The Bengali *babu* was set apart not only from the manly Englishman but was also distinguished from the so-called ‘martial’ races, such as the Gurkhas, Marathas, Rajputs and Sikhs. The martial race theory – the notion that some communities are more biologically and culturally suited to military occupations than others – emerged at a time when colonial rule came under increasing challenge by the same section of the Indian middle class population that had once mediated between the British colonial administration and the wider Indian population. The colonial classification of martial and non-martial Indian races had a long history in the colonial practice of favouring certain sections of the Indian elite over others and, as Sinha (1995, p. 8) suggests, was based on peculiarly colonial understandings of the Indian caste system and ‘the ways in which certain attributes of masculinity were supposedly distributed in traditional Indian society’. However, it was only fully developed in the period of heightened agitation after the Indian army mutiny in 1857 when it became necessary to justify the selective recruitment of officers to the army (Sinha, 1995, Ch.2).

The martial race theory gained credence from its association with 19th century European race science. Among the explanations that scholars devised to explain Indian effeminacy were the hot climate, the Indian diet and the early age of marriage and motherhood. According to Macaulay (1870, p. 517), for instance, Bengalis were a ‘race...enervated by a soft climate and accustomed to peaceful employments’. The caste system, the matrifocal nature of Hinduism and the overwhelming of the ‘manly Aryan spirit’ through intermixing with Dravidians were a few of the other causes cited. These explanations drew on 19th

century 'scientific' theories of race, which, as we saw in the last chapter, were initially based on language and then replaced by biology. Colonial administrator and anthropologist Herbert Risley (1999) did the most to apply the 'scientific methods' of the time – anthropometry and craniology – to build a race-based ethnography of Indian society. These ideas on the physicality of race pervaded colonial institutions including in the management of prisons and penal policy and in the recruitment to, and the management of, the army and the police (Arnold, 2004, pp. 261-2). Risley (1999, pp. 275-6) was particularly concerned with aligning caste with race and, for him, the structures of caste reflected the effeminate nature of the 'Indian intellect':

It is clear that the growth of the caste instinct must have been greatly promoted and stimulated by certain characteristic peculiarities of the Indian intellect – its lax hold of facts, its indifference to action, its absorption in dreams, its exaggerated reverence for tradition, its passion for endless divisions and sub-division, its acute sense of minute technical distinctions, its pedantic tendency to press a principle to its furthest logical conclusion, and its remarkable capacity for imitating and adapting social ideas and usages of whatever origin.

The effeminate Indian 'mimic man' was a trope that was deeply unsettling to the colonial imagination because of its ability to transgress gender roles and, in its 'capacity for imitating', to threaten the boundary between coloniser/colonised. Thus, for all of Macaulay's (1870, p. 611) bluster, his prose is riven with contradiction and the effeminate Bengali ultimately emerges as a figure of threat: 'With all his softness the Bengalee is by no means placable in his enmities, or prone to pity...Nor does he lack a certain kind of courage which is often wanting in his masters'. As we shall see, it was this element of threat that some Indian nationalists tried to exploit in their engagement with the trope of effeminacy.

4.2.2 Reclaiming Martial Valour

The colonial construct of the effeminate Bengali was a product of what Nandy (1983, p. 32) calls the hypermasculinity of British culture during the colonial period – a culture that:

de-emphasized speculation, intellection and *caritas* as feminine, and justified a limited cultural role for women – and femininity – by holding that the softer side of human nature was irrelevant to the public sphere. It openly sanctified – in the name of such values as competition, achievement, control and productivity – new forms of institutionalized violence and ruthless social Darwinism.

Bengali leaders and intellectuals did not so much refute the effeminate *babu* tag as internalise it and try to find ways to overcome it by resorting to a hypermasculinity of their own – hyper-Kshatriyahood – an exaggeration of a sub-tradition of Indian masculinity that emphasised martial valour (Nandy, 1983, p. 52). The figure of the Kshatriya warrior was linked to the original primeval conquerors, the Aryans, as well as the more recent ‘martial’ Rajputs and it was thought that only a recovery of these values would rehabilitate Indians from their current state of weakness (Chakravarti, 1990, pp. 48-9). Likewise, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee argued that India’s subject status was due to Indians being weak and effeminate. Hence, he advocated the development of a strong, militant, unified nation and the restoration of pride through a recreation of the past that recovered the Hindu ‘warrior’ (Chakravarti, 1990, p. 49). Similarly, Sarala Debi sought to reclaim a heroic martial history akin to that of the Marathas, Sikhs and Rajputs for the humiliated Bengalis who, she argued, had been robbed of their national heritage by foreigners (Chowdhury-Sengupta, 1995, pp. 301-2).

Swami Vivekananda’s attempt to reform Hinduism was based on the understanding that contemporary Hindu emasculation was due to the move away from textual Brahmanism and Kshatriya values, which had taken Hindu society away from the Aryan qualities they

originally shared with the West. Thus, he instructed his followers: ‘No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men. It is a man-making religion I want. I want the strength, manhood, kshatravirya or the virility of a warrior’ (Quoted in Krishnaswamy, 1998, p. 44). Vivekananda and Bankim’s exhortations did not go unheard. Police raids in the early 20th century on the hideouts of Bengali revolutionaries committed to violent insurrection against the British often discovered copies of Vivekananda’s speeches and Bankim’s *Anandamath* along with biographies of the Italian revolutionary nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini (Heehs, 1993, pp. 25-6).

Bengali writers also contrasted the image of the effeminate *babu* against an image of ideal Aryan womanhood which was militant, courageous and capable of mothering fearless sons. In particular, the figure of the medieval Rajput heroine who took up arms and preferred death to surrender came to embody this ideal of heroic Aryan womanhood in late 19th century Bengali writings (Chowdhury-Sengupta, 1995, pp. 291-293). However, this was not intended to challenge dominant gender roles. Sangeeta Ray’s reading of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s two novels *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudurani*, for instance, shows that ultimately the female rebels in these novels represent “woman” as the metonymic ideal of the disembodied feminine that helps generate a particular Hindu masculinity, while marking “woman” as the signifier of a sacrosanct traditional domesticity’ (Ray, 2000, p. 49).

The preoccupation of the Bengali elites with physical regeneration culminated in their leadership of the national volunteer movement in 1885. This movement demanded the extension of membership to the Volunteer Force – which was established after the 1857 Indian rebellion to suppress internal dissension – to Indians. These demands were rejected by the colonial authorities on the basis of fears that such a Volunteer Force would consist

primarily of effeminate *babus* who were eager for political power rather than the ‘warlike races’ who were already permitted into the regular army. This led to the claim that it was the colonial authorities who were now responsible for emasculating Bengali men (Sinha, 1995, p. 93). As Sinha (1995, p. 94) and Nandy (1983, p. 8-11) have argued, however, this critique of colonial policies had little to offer by way of a radical challenge to colonial rule for it was thoroughly invested in the politics of colonial masculinity.

4.2.3 Rediscovering Hindu Science

As noted earlier, 19th century race science was employed to give the martial race theory scientific credence. The politics of colonial masculinity was therefore legitimised through the authority of science. It was also the authority of science, however, that was behind the drive to ‘rediscover’ an indigenous ‘Hindu science’ – a movement that I argue should also be seen as a response to the labelling of Hindu men as effeminate.

One of the consequences of the cultural authority invested in science as a vehicle of freedom, power and progress was the emergence, in the middle of the 19th century, of a number of organisations run by Western-educated, upper-caste Indian men aimed at encouraging the development of a scientific culture. After originally appearing in Bengal, this movement quickly spread to different regions of India and was taken up by religious leaders, literary figures, philosophers and scientists alike. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, for example, wrote numerous essays, novels and satires expressing his belief in the superiority of scientific reason and using the language of science and rationality to interpret and defend Hinduism against the colonial assault (Prakash, 1999, pp. 57-8). Aurobindo Ghose – for whom the Bengali ‘race’ had a ‘boundless intellect’ but ‘a frail constitution and a temper mild to the point of passivity’ – tied together the need for physical and cultural

regeneration when he argued that India could only regain her former glory by worshipping the mother goddess as ‘the Shakti [strength] of war, the Shakti of wealth, the Shakti of science’ for these ‘are a thousand times more prolific in resources, weapons and instruments than ever before in recorded history’ (Quoted in Heehs, 1993, pp. 20, 66).

By the late 19th century the push for a scientific disposition became widespread in the emerging middle class culture centred on the Hindi language and literature and religious revivalism in north India. Key to this was the re-examination of ancient Indian texts and traditions, which were now identified as ‘Hindu’, with the goal of finding within them a body of indigenous scientific knowledge. In doing this, members of this elite were building on the work of Orientalist scholars who had long held that India had once flourished in field of scientific endeavour. Dayananda Sarasvati, the leader of the Hindu revivalist organisation, the Arya Samaj, argued in his numerous writings and speeches that only a return to the timeless and scientific truths of the Vedic Hinduism of the ancient Aryans would help Indian civilisation overcome such corruptions as the caste system and idol worship (Prakash, 1999, p. 92). The Aryans, then, represented a masculine ideal not just because they were physically strong, but also because they possessed the capacity for scientific reasoning. Showing ancient texts like the Vedas to be scientific provided proof of Indian civilisation’s basis in universal, timeless laws. As Prakash (1999, p. 89) argues, ‘Hindu’ texts could be ‘projected as the basis for a unitary modern community of Indians, while the contemporary division of Indians into different religions, sects and cults could be seen as corruptions introduced by the passage of time’. Thus, Hindu science gave Indian civilisation an ontological unity that was crucial for justifying nationalist claims to independent, modern nationhood. As we shall see, nuclear science was similarly linked to modernity and nationalism in postcolonial India and understanding the links between

science, masculinity, modernity and nationalism is, thus, crucial to making sense of India's nuclear politics.

4.2.4 Gandhian Nationalism and Maternal Moral Strength

Not all nationalists subscribed to the politics of colonial masculinity. Under the influence of Gandhian movements in the 1920s the charge of effeminacy against Indian men took on a new and disruptive meaning. One of Gandhi's (1938, p. 44) major points in *Hind Swaraj* was that 'Strength lies in absence of fear, not in the quantity of flesh and muscle we may have on our bodies'. In this early tract Gandhi appears to connect weakness, cowardice and a lack of self-control with emasculation, unmanliness and effeminacy. Writing about the British suppression of the mounted marauders, the Pindaris, he says, 'It is...better to suffer the Pindari peril than that someone else should protect us from it and thus render us effeminate' (Gandhi, 1938, p. 43). In the original Gujarati, the word used was *abada*, meaning 'without strength' and also at the time a word for women (Skaria, 2006, p. 5068). However, Gandhi distinguished between different forms of femininity, in particular, weak femininity and strong femininity and it was the former that he referred to on the rare occasions when he used the conventional language of effeminacy.³² Indeed, Gandhi sought to separate courage and activism from aggression by recognising its compatibility with strong femininity, which he associated with motherhood. This was a move that contained truly radical potential to disrupt the authority of colonial rule (Nandy, 1983, p. 54). Thus, to return to his remarks on Pindaris, for Gandhi it was the job of Indians to win over the marauders, not by physical coercion, but through friendship and fearlessness.

³² I am grateful to Revathi Krishnaswamy for clarifying this point in a personal correspondence.

In associating courage with femininity Gandhi was drawing on a cultural tradition inspired by the Bhakti religious tradition which emphasised positive androgyny and dynamic womanhood to articulate an alternative model of masculinity (Krishnaswamy, 1998, p. 45). Thus, as Krishnaswamy (1998, p. 19) suggests, the notion of the effeminate Indian man was not just a false, colonial stereotype but a 'misvalued and distorted recognition of something real in Indian culture'. Similarly, Ashis Nandy (1983, p. 48) argues that by preserving something of India's 'androgynous cosmology and style' Gandhi was able to produce a 'transcultural protest against the hyper-masculine world view of colonialism'. To borrow Leela Gandhi's (Gandhi, 1996-1997, p. 110) words, Gandhi sought to ground resistance within a 'feminised semiotic'. However, the androgyny that Gandhi extolled did not involve a transcendence of the gender dichotomy or an equal focus on both femininity and masculinity. Rather, he sought to give men access to an essentialised understanding of femininity that would liberate them from an activism wedded to violence and aggression.

Gandhi's understanding of femininity followed from his view that women possessed moral power far in excess of men. In an article written in 1930 for *Young India* he wrote: 'To call women the weaker sex is a libel...If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage?' (Gandhi, 1999d, p. 57). If, for the early Bengali nationalists the true patriotic defenders of Mother India consisted of a select group of elite, Hindu men (revolutionary militants and world-renouncing holy leaders), for Gandhi the true patriots of Indian civilisation were women and peasants. Both were thought to possess the life-affirming qualities of motherhood – women because of their biology and peasants because of the nature of their labour (Sarkar, 2001, p. 258). Furthermore, it was women, for Gandhi (1999d, p. 9), who

were most suited to his brand of non-violent resistance for women were ‘the very embodiment of renunciation and compassion’. A man, he stated, ‘understands the dharma of non-violence through his intellect whereas a woman has imbibed it even before her birth’ (Gandhi, 1999d, p. 9).

Thus, while Gandhi did not speak of devotion to an abstract Mother India or an Aryan ideal of womanhood, he too put an emphasis on women’s roles as mothers, albeit as activist mothers who were directly involved in the nationalist movement rather than as just inspirational symbols. Urging women to join the boycott of foreign cloth in 1921 Gandhi (1999e, p. 78) wrote:

The economic and the moral salvation of India thus rests mainly with you. The future of India lies on your knees, for your [sic] will nurture the future generation. You will bring up the children of India to become simple, god fearing and brave men and women, or you can coddle them to be weaklings, unfit to brave the storms of life and used to foreign finery which they would find it difficult in after life to discard. The next few weeks will show of what stuff the women of India are made. I have not the shadow of a doubt as to your choice. The destiny of India is far safer in your hands than in the hands of a Government that has so exploited India’s resources that she has lost faith in herself.

Given the superior qualities of women, Gandhi implored men to feminise themselves so as to gain the courage and moral strength that women possessed (Fox, 1996, p. 42). As Leela Gandhi (1996-1997, p. 112) argues, ‘by disassociating the sign of positive femininity from the home and relocating it in the world’ Gandhi was able to accommodate and mobilise a variety of women – those who ‘stand in some structural or temporal relationship to the institution of marriage’ as well as those who have remained unmarried in favour of political activism. Hence, the assumption of leadership by women in the salt marches of 1930 – a protest against the colonial regime’s tax on salt – despite Gandhi’s disapproval on

the basis that ‘they were destined to do greater work in this struggle than merely breaking salt laws’ (Gandhi, 1999d, p. 58). Nor did women shy away from protests that turned violent. Trained to act as a protective cordon between male nationalist protestors and the British police, female activists often found themselves on the front lines of police brutality (Fox, 1996, p. 46).

Yet, although he made a space for women in the nationalist movement and wrote in favour of the need for legal and social equality between men and women, Gandhi’s own patriarchal assumptions were rarely challenged by his followers or his critics. In contrast, other aspects of his political thought and praxis were contested from various perspectives – such as, for example, from the Marxist and Dalit standpoints – and this resulted in him on occasion changing his positions (Hardiman, 2003, p. 116). However, in the absence of a feminist challenge, Gandhi’s focus never turned to changing gender roles or contesting gender stereotypes. Rather, he employed an essentialised notion of femininity which held the maternal, nonsexual woman to be the paragon of non-violence and morality to fashion a morally superior counter-model of Indian masculinity in which the feminine would be absorbed by the male. As Krishnaswamy (1998, p. 46) argues, ‘in Gandhian nationalism, as in various forms of Hindu militancy and subaltern insurgency, femininity, particularly maternity, serves as an important discursive site for the mobilization of male interests and aspirations’. Thus, even though women and femininity had a major role to play in Gandhian nationalism ultimately it was men (by embodying a maternal masculinity) who were responsible for redeeming Indian civilisation since, as he wrote in *Hind Swaraj*, it was ‘Because the sons of India were found wanting, its civilisation had been placed in jeopardy’ (Gandhi, 1938, p. 39).

4.2.5 Keeping Science In Its Place

If Gandhi did not follow the early nationalists by seeking national regeneration through a hypermasculine search for martial valour, he also departed from them in his attitude to scientific reason and modern technology. For Gandhi, valuing reason above all else would hinder the achievement of non-violence and, thus, true civilisation because a technological frame of mind fosters an abstract view of the world and relies on an understanding of truth as cognitive rather than as lived, moral experience (Bilgrami, 2003, p. 4164). He lamented in a speech in 1938:

Nowadays I am relying solely on my intellect. But mere intellect makes one insane or unmanly. ...My innermost urge is for pure non-violence. My weakness is that I do not know how to make it work. I use my intellect to overcome that weakness. If this intellectual cleverness loses the support of truth, it will blur my vision of non-violence, for is not non-violence the same as truth? Mere practical sense is the covering for truth. ...The reasoning faculty will raise a thousand issues. Only one thing will save us from these and that is faith (Gandhi, 1999i, p. 63).

Yet a common misunderstanding, Gandhi (1986b, p. 310) noted, was that he was opposed to science whereas in fact he thought that ‘we cannot live without science, if we keep it in its right place’. Keeping science in its right place meant a rejection of what Nandy (1987, p. 136) calls ‘scientism’ and ‘technicism’, the former for its promotion of hard materialism and its reduction of human rationality to a narrow objectivity and objectivism and the latter for its instrumental use of technology and its hierarchisation of the relationship between nature and humans and between those that possess technology and those that do not. Nandy (1987, pp. 137-8, 160) argues that Gandhi promoted a plural vision of science and technology that did not privilege its modern forms and denounced any technology, including aspects of traditional technology – which he considered ethically and cognitively superior to modern technology – that were alienating or dehumanising.

It was for this reason that in *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi (1938, pp. 93-5) condemned machinery such as cotton mills as a modern technology that was used to impoverish India and had begun to 'desolate' both Europe and India. Instead he celebrated the *charka* or spinning wheel, which he considered a morally superior and non-dehumanising traditional technology that could be used to resist colonialism. Given that Gandhi (1999d, p. 92) considered the spinning wheel an exemplary type of traditional technology and regarded spinning to be the natural domain of women, it could be argued that Gandhi's understanding of ideal technology aligned it with the feminine and was thereby another key part of his radical challenge to the model of colonial masculinity.

4.2.6 The Inevitability of Science

Gandhi's views on science and technology won little sympathy from the man he had anointed his political heir. Indeed, as I noted in the previous chapter, Jawaharlal Nehru (1980b, p. 73) often wrote of how Gandhi bewildered him:

Gandhiji...was a very difficult person to understand, sometimes his language was almost incomprehensible to an average modern...Often we [members of the Congress] discussed his fads and peculiarities among ourselves and said, half-humorously, that when Swaraj came these fads must not be encouraged.

Among such 'fads' was Gandhi's belief, expressed in a letter to Nehru in October 1945, that truth and non-violence could only be realised in village life. Nehru replied that he could not understand this reasoning for villages are 'backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent' (Nehru, 1972, p. 554). Similarly, Gandhi's thoughts on machinery and modern civilisation were dismissed as old ideas and Nehru

doubted that whether more than a very few people, and even Gandhi himself, were convinced that they could be applied to modern conditions (Nehru, 1980b, p. 77).

In fact, Nehru attached enormous significance to the ‘scientific temper’. For him, ‘The scientific temper points out the way along which man should travel. It is the temper of a free man’ (Nehru, 1946, p. 512). Humankind’s ultimate purposes were to gain knowledge, realise truth and appreciate goodness and beauty – science was considered indispensable for all of these (Nehru, 1946, p. 513). However, according to Nehru (1946, p. 54), Indian civilisation had abandoned scientific methods and rational inquiry for superstition and it was for this reason that it had been left behind. A mastery of modern science was therefore vital if India was to catch up with the West and successfully become modern. He said in 1955:

Often our people fail to realize what the modern world is all about. How did Europe and the US advance? Why were they able to conquer us? It is because they had science through which their wealth and economic and military strength grew. Now they have even produced the atom bomb. All these things stem from science and if India is to progress and become a strong nation, second to none, we must build up our science (Nehru, 2001a, p. 31).

As we see in the quote above, Nehru saw a clear link between foreign aggression and technical advancement. It was an issue on which he elaborated in a letter to Gandhi in 1945:

There is today in the world a tremendous acquisitive tendency both in individuals and groups and nations, which leads to conflicts and war...From the economic or political point of view an isolated India may well be a kind of vacuum which increases the acquisitive tendencies of others and thus creates conflicts (Nehru, 1981, p. 555).

Hence, India could not afford to isolate itself, but at the same time it could not safely cooperate with the world without being technologically and culturally advanced and 'In the present context of the world we cannot even advance culturally without a strong background of scientific research in every department' (Nehru, 1972, p. 555).

At the same time, Nehru's conviction that the adoption of modern technology was indispensable for India's progress and security was complicated by his status as a nationalist who could not advance an outright mimicry of the colonial oppressor he was trying to cast out. He wrote in *Discovery of India* that India today 'swings between a blind adherence to her old customs and slavish imitation of foreign ways'. However, '...there can be no real cultural or spiritual growth based on imitation' (Nehru, 1946, p. 564). Thus, while he thought Gandhi's criticisms of modern civilisation in *Hind Swaraj* were 'completely unreal' he agreed with Gandhi that a large part of the world 'appears to be bent on committing suicide' and that this may be 'an inevitable development of an evil seed in civilisation that has grown' (Nehru, 1981, p. 556). Unlike Gandhi, Nehru (1946, p. 511) did not identify modern science as being at the root of this 'evil' but he did critique it for ignoring 'the ultimate purposes' and looking 'at fact alone'. He argued that for all science had achieved in building up a glittering civilisation 'there was some essential lack and some vital element was missing' for 'science had told us nothing about any purpose in life' (Nehru, 1946, p. 511). Moreover, he feared that man's inability to control himself would result in science running amok (Nehru, 1946, p. 512). Still, despite 'realising these limitations of reason and scientific method, we have to hold on to them with all our strength, for without that firm basis and background we can have no grip on any kind of truth or reality' (Nehru, 1946, p. 512). Nehru then tried to argue that science itself was not at fault for its limitations. Rather, the problem was that 'the west is still far from having developed the real temper of science. It has still to bring the spirit and the flesh into

creative harmony'. India, however, was uniquely placed to develop this 'real temper of science' by which he meant a combination of what he considered the highest ideals of the modern age: humanism and the scientific spirit (Nehru, 1946, p. 558). As he explained:

In India in many way obvious ways we have a greater distance to travel. And yet there may be fewer major obstructions on our way, for the essential basis of Indian thought for ages past, though not its later manifestations, fits in with the scientific temper and approach, as well as with internationalism. It is based on a fearless search for truth, on the solidarity of man, even on the divinity of everything living, and on the free and co-operative development of the individual and the species, ever to greater freedom and higher stages of human growth (Nehru, 1946, pp. 514-5).

Thus, Nehru sought to draw on India's moral and cultural traditions to create a modern, scientific world-view that was distinctly Indian. This, however, was a significant departure from Gandhi – a traditionalist who borrowed elements from modernity and fit them into a traditional world-view (Nandy, 1987, p. 161) Whereas Gandhi subordinated science and technology within a world-view that promoted an alternative model of masculinity in which the feminine was a source of moral power, Nehru was too desperate to hold on to modern notions of reason and science to be in a position to seriously challenge the colonial ideology of progress or its attendant politics of masculinity. Instead, Nehru sought to draw on India's traditions in order to fit them into a modern world-view which valorised modern science and technology at the expense of non-'expert' thinking and local knowledges.

As a consequence of this Nehru displayed a profound ambivalence toward the feminine, which can be seen in his treatment of the nationalist symbol of Mother India in his writings. Initially, in his autobiography, Nehru (1980b, p. 429) invokes an image of Mother India as a victim: 'woeful accumulations of superstition and degrading custom' had 'borne her down' In his later *The Discovery of India* an anxiety emerges that she is not so

much a victim as an unruly woman who refuses to be tamed by modernity. Hence, he wrote:

About her there is the elusive quality of a legend of long ago; some enchantment seems to have held her mind...There are terrifying glimpses of dark corridors which seem to lead back to primeval night, but also there is the fullness and warmth of the day about her. (Nehru, 1946, p. 563).

As the last part of the sentence in the passage above indicates, however, while Nehru's Mother India possessed some dangerous non-modern elements she was also the source of wisdom that would prevent India's postcolonial modernity from going down the degenerative and violent path of Western modernity:

I was eager and anxious to give her the garb of modernity. And yet doubts arose within me. Did I know India? – I who presumed to scrap much of her past heritage? There was a great deal that had to be scrapped, that must be scrapped; but surely India could not have been what she undoubtedly was, and could not have continued a cultured existence for thousands of years, if she had not possessed something very vital and enduring, something that was worthwhile. What was this something? (Nehru, 1946, p. 50).

Nehru never seemed to come to a conclusive answer as to the nature of this 'something' but he seemed to have come close when he later discussed the establishment of a 'certain idealist and ethical background to the whole culture' by the ancient 'Indo-Aryans' which 'persisted and still persists' and helped those 'at the top' to 'help together the social fabric and repeatedly rehabilitated it when it threatened to go to pieces' (Nehru, 1946, p. 95). Putting it more poetically in his autobiography, he wrote, 'Behind and within her battered body one could still glimpse a majesty of soul' and now as 'India puts on her new garment, as she must, for the old is torn and tattered, she will have it cut in this fashion, so as to make it conform both to present conditions and her old thought' (Nehru, 1980, p. 432). Hence, 'Though her attire may change, she will continue as of old, and her store of wisdom will help her to hold on to what is true and beautiful and good in this harsh, vindictive, and

grasping world' (Nehru, 1946, p. 563). Like Gandhi then, but to a lesser degree, Nehru too grounded resistance in a feminised semiotic.

India's postcolonial identity thus emerges as a woman in drag – a mother that needed to be disciplined (by her best and brightest modern children) into wearing the distinctly masculine garb of modernity while retaining the moral, feminine spirit that is the guarantee that she does not lose her distinctly Indian identity and succumb to copying the hypermasculine modernity of the West. However, it is important to note that while science and technology – as elements of the garb of modernity – were gendered masculine in Nehru's postcolonial modernity, they were not raced as white. To the contrary, science was seen as the great equaliser, a way to bring an end to global racial discrimination and discord. For Nehru, although 'the West brings science' this does not mean that India must become Western to reap the benefits of science and technology {Nehru, 1980, p. 432}. Rather than follow his predecessors in trying to identify an indigenous scientific tradition for India, Nehru instead presented modern science as a neutral product of human history, devoid of ownership by any one particular group of humans and available to all to use for their development. Science then, was a tool with which to reconcile India to a modern geopolitical imagination in which Europe was seen as the standard of social development.

4.3 Ambivalence and the Postcolonial Condition

4.3.1 Nuclear Technology and Postcolonial Modernity

The adoption of a scientific outlook was central to India's project of postcolonial modernity but it was one type of technology – nuclear technology – that was particularly acclaimed as 'a symbol of the modern times' (Nehru, 2003, p. 40). In the Constituent

Assembly debates on nuclear energy in 1948 Nehru elaborated on the importance he attached to it:

Consider the past few hundred years of human history; the world developed a new source of power, that is steam – the steam engine and the like – and the industrial age came in. India with all her many virtues, did not develop that source of power. It became a backward country in that sense; it became a slave country because of that. The steam age and the industrial age were followed by the electrical age which gradually crept in, and most of us were hardly aware of the change. But enormous new power came in. Now we are facing the atomic age; we are on the verge of it. And this is obviously something infinitely more powerful than either steam or electricity (Nehru, 1987, p. 427).

Thus, if the lack of a scientific temper meant that Indian civilisation had missed the steam age, the industrial age and the electrical age, Nehru was adamant that modern India was not going to miss the atomic age. Hence, nuclear technology emerged as a ‘theatrical science’ used to ‘create the illusion of spectacular development’ (Nandy, 1988). Yet, while in his speeches on nuclear energy Nehru maintained a conviction that it would be the future vehicle of progress his words also revealed an anxiety about the uses of nuclear technology. The enormous destructive capacity of nuclear technology, as displayed in Japan in 1945, preyed heavily on Nehru’s mind. Indeed, the struggle between the evil represented by the atom bomb and the ‘spirit of humanity’ was the defining conflict facing the modern world (Mirchandani, 1968, pp. 3-4). Still, as he made clear in a speech to the National Physical Laboratory in 1947, this could not be allowed to hinder India’s pursuit of nuclear energy. India, he noted,

may have to follow other countries in having a great atomic energy research institute also, not to make bombs, I hope, but nevertheless I do not see how we can lag behind in this very important matter, because atomic energy is going to play a vast and dominating part, I suppose, in the future shape of things (Nehru, 1984, pp. 377-8).

The tensions inherent in the promotion of nuclear technology for peaceful uses became apparent in the 1948 Constituent Assembly debates on nuclear energy. When questioned by S.V. Krishnamurthy Rao on what he regarded to be the excessive secrecy provisions of the proposed Atomic Energy Act for a peaceful nuclear program, Nehru would admit that he did not know how to distinguish between the peaceful and military uses of atomic energy when the science used in both were almost identical (Nehru, 1987, p. 426). At this early moment, Nehru was forced to come to terms with the fact that he could not divorce India's nuclear energy program from its military implications simply by proclaiming the program to be peaceful.

Thus, Nehru faced a discursive dilemma. How could a potentially violent product of modernity be neutralised into a benign instrument for the development of postcolonial India? How could the hypermasculine garb of nuclear technology not weigh down Mother India and upset postcolonial India's carefully crafted gender ambiguity – its maternal masculinity? Fortunately, he still had India's civilisational heritage to fall back on. India would draw on its heritage – an 'ancient belief' in an 'inner, spiritual strength' – to use a potentially violent technology for peaceful purposes (Nehru, 2003, p. 42). In a speech on non-violence and modern India in 1956, he noted that nuclear technology 'can bring complete ruin upon the world or contribute to progress. It depends on how it is used. But more important, is ultimately the kind of human beings who will use it' (Nehru, 2003, p. 40). An attempt to produce India and Indians as the 'right kind of human beings' to have nuclear technology was made in India's foreign policy discourse through the strong advocacy of global nuclear disarmament – a crusade that was presented as the product of India's civilisational heritage.

4.3.2 Disarmament and Discrimination

Together with the policy of nonalignment, disarmament constituted the basis of India's immediate post-independence foreign policy. The two policies repudiated the notion that there were only two ways of behaving in the world, realist or idealist, communist or anti-communist, and were therefore key elements in India's attempt to find an alternative way of discursively and practically constructing the international system and India's place within it – one that (apparently) refused the constraints of Western frameworks. As we shall see however, as a performative enactment of India's postcolonial identity India's discourse of disarmament is, in fact, an ambivalent discourse that reveals the tension between India's mimicry of, and resistance to, Western modernity.

For Nehru, the Cold War was not primarily a battle between communist and anti-communist forces but was rather about the quest for power and domination over smaller or weaker powers (Mullik, 1972, p. 137). 'We have chosen our path' he argued of non-alignment, 'and we propose to go along it, and to vary it as and when we choose, not at somebody's dictate or pressure' for, India's 'thinking and our approach do not fit in with this great crusade of communism or crusade of anti-communism' (Nehru, 1961, p. 69). Disarmament was vital to the success of non-alignment, and vice-versa, for it offered a way out of the 'mental military bloc' of the Cold War (Nehru, 1961, p. 11). Nehru ridiculed the idea of nuclear deterrence: 'If the hydrogen bomb is thus elevated to the level of being the custodian of peace, the inter-war nuclear race would claim that it stands justified as a peace agent' (India, 1988b, p. 75). Against the system of instrumental reason that underpinned nuclear deterrence and the Cold War, Nehru emphasised that 'if we aim at right ends, right means must be employed. Good will not emerge out of evil methods. That was the lesson which our great leader Gandhi taught us...' (India, 1988b, p. 110).

In establishing India's authority to moralise to the rest of the world, Nehru was careful to note in a speech at the Carnegie Endowment in 1956 that he did not mean 'to imply that people in India are more virtuous than others' (India, 1988b, p. 58). However, 'the capacity for big scale vice is not with them. And therefore, therefore we can moralise more easily than others can' (India, 1988b, p. 58). India was among the first countries to propose the major non-proliferation regimes in existence today. Among India's initiatives under Nehru's leadership was the 'Standstill' proposal of 1954 for the suspension of nuclear tests and shortly after his death in 1964, India with seven other non-aligned countries put forth a proposal for a non-proliferation treaty (India, 1988a).

Yet, when the latter was formalised in 1968, India – then under the leadership of Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi – refused to be party to it. Like her father, Indira Gandhi drew on civilisational narratives to argue that India's leadership of the 'battle for peace...is not a new thing for us; it is something that goes way back into our history and tradition' (India, 1988b, p. 183). Moreover, she too was convinced of India's need rid itself of superstition and develop a scientific temper in order to become modern. Speaking to engineering students in 1967 Gandhi said, 'Scientists and technologists should make it their mission to spread the scientific temper, so that our forward march is not blocked by obstacles of superstition' (Gandhi, 1975a, p. 72). Yet, this did not mean that science should be given unqualified support for 'we believe in the commingling of the humanist and scientific tradition, of the best in the old and new' (Gandhi, 1975a, p. 72). Like Nehru, Indira Gandhi argued that India's postcolonial modernity would be unique in its resistance to the dehumanising features of Western modernity: '...the entire meaning of the Indian experiment is to achieve progress without violence. And also to see how we can retain what is good and of value in our tradition while taking advantage of science and technology' (Gandhi, 1975b, p. 96). Thus:

science and technology are not ends in themselves; they are only means by which you can do something. We hope to use them in the Indian context so that we remain Indian, India retains her identity and yet is able to progress (Gandhi, 1975b, p. 96).

Her government's rejection of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, on the basis that it put the onus for nuclear control only on non-nuclear states and failed to include a time-bound plan for universal disarmament saw the emergence of a dimension in India's disarmament discourse that drew attention to a hierarchical and discriminatory global order and introduced the expression 'nuclear apartheid'.

This dimension was not completely absent in the Nehruvian period. On the one hand, Nehru saw nuclear technology as a tool for fostering international cooperation and breaking down cultural, political and geographical barriers. In 1960, for instance, Nehru hailed India's collaboration with Canada on its second nuclear reactor as a symbol of the power of modern technology to make the world smaller (Nehru, 2003, p. 204). On the other hand, the ability to master modern science on its own was considered an important element of India's independence. As Raja Ramanna (1991, p. 61), one of India's leading nuclear scientists put it:

It was a spirit of self-reliance which guided the scientific programmes in India in the years that followed [independence]. Although we were prepared to receive assistance and advice from all friendly countries...we were not to take orders from anybody in the choice of our programmes nor undermine our capability of tackling problems in-house.

Thus, Nehru expressed anxiety that the restriction of nuclear technology could reinforce global hierarchies and endanger India's future. In 1954, in a speech in the Lok Sabha, Nehru expressed his unease over American proposals to establish an organisation for the 'so-called international control' of nuclear energy. Nehru feared that any such organisation

would be dominated by certain countries and that 'it may be to the advantage of countries which have adequate power resources to restrain and restrict the use of atomic energy' at the expense of 'power-starved' countries like India (India, 1988b, pp. 38-9). By referring to the 'so-called international control' of nuclear energy Nehru was effectively raising questions about the notion of the 'international community' and the racial hierarchies that this concept conceals. In 1956 these concerns were made clear to the world when India protested against the safeguards proposed for the statute of the planned International Atomic Energy Agency on the grounds that they would place a large part of the world under certain controls that the other part would be free from (Mirchandani, 1968, p. 229).

Nehru displayed considerable foresight in anticipating the discourse of non-proliferation that came to dominate the issue of nuclear technology after 1964 – the year that China conducted its first nuclear test. Coming just two years after the India-China war, China's nuclear tests generated enough anxiety in India to spark a debate over whether India should seek out a nuclear umbrella or develop nuclear weapons of its own. The secretary of the Congress Party, K.C. Pant urged the government in 1966 to follow China and give up its policy of 'nuclear celibacy' (Mirchandani, 1968, p. 48).³³ Such a move would be in keeping with realist precepts which suggest that the China's nuclearisation would heighten India's insecurity and lead it to seek out nuclear protection either from an ally or from a nuclear weapons program of its own. There is evidence that Nehru's successor as Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, secretly broached the idea of seeking nuclear protection from the United States (Abraham, 1998, p. 125). However, he had little support for this from members of his government and ultimately stuck to the original disarmament script, stating that India 'will try to eliminate the threat and terror of nuclear weapons rather than

³³ This sort of sexualised language is akin to that encountered by Carol Cohn (1987) in discussions on nuclear strategy among 'defence intellectuals' in the United States.

enter into competition with other countries to make or produce atom bombs here' (Noorani, 1967)(Quoted in Mirchandani, 1968, p. 29). Other statements, from Defence Minister Y.B. Chavan and Indira Gandhi, who was then Minister for Information and Broadcasting, highlighted India's postcolonial difference as marked by its self-restraint and morality. Both declared that even though India had the technological know-how to produce a nuclear bomb it would never use nuclear energy for anything other than peaceful purposes (Mirchandani, 1968, p. 30).

If India's response to China's nuclearisation was marked by restraint, the reaction of the United States was not. Two days after China's test the President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson, declared that 'Nuclear spread is dangerous to all mankind' and, four months later, Vice-President Humphrey voiced his opinion that a more pressing issue than curtailing the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union was 'the prevention of further proliferation of nuclear weapons in Asia' because the presence of nuclear weapons in Asia would result in major political and economic instability (Quoted in Mirchandani, 1968, p. 115). Humphrey's patronising suggestion that Asia was less-equipped to deal with advanced weaponry reinstated a racially hierarchical global order in which some continued to remain the objects rather than the subjects of history. Needless to say such a colonising act was not well received in India. As Mirchandani (1968, p. 121) in his contemporary account of this debate put it, '...talk of non-proliferation to non-nuclear powers comes with ill-grace from nuclear powers who themselves continue feverishly to proliferate weapons of mass destruction'. India's official response to the Western discourse of non-proliferation emerged in the negotiations for an international nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) committed signatories to 'seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time and to continue negotiations to this end'. Further, it aimed to:

facilitate the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons, the liquidation of all their existing stockpiles, and the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery pursuant to a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control (Arms Control Association, 1968).

India refused to sign the treaty on the basis that it failed to seek a binding commitment from the five declared nuclear powers to complete disarmament, did not contain a clear ban on the use of nuclear weapons and lacked a specific clause for negotiations on a comprehensive test ban. India argued that the NPT simply legitimised the vertical proliferation of the five declared nuclear powers while insisting on the 'renunciation of the sovereign right of unrestricted development of energy by some countries only' (Quoted in Abraham, 1998, p. 140). This was unacceptable to V.C. Trivedi, India's representative to the UN, who declared at the 1967 Eighteen Nation Disarmament Commission that the 'civil nuclear Powers can tolerate a nuclear weapon apartheid but not an atomic apartheid in their economic and peaceful development' (Trivedi, 1967, p. 234). Following Nehru he went on to say that 'It is completely wrong to deduce that what is evil is science and technology, skill and progress' and although the

Indian delegation does not deny that the technology involved in the production of a nuclear weapon is the same as the technology which produces a peaceful nuclear device...That does not mean, therefore that only the poor and developing nations should be denied all technology for fear they may use it for military purposes (Trivedi, 1967, p. 234).

Azim Hussain (1968, p. 332), a member of the Indian delegation to the United Nations, reiterated this discourse linking racial discrimination and a techno-masculinist ideal of

development when he raised the spectre of neo-colonialism in a statement on non-proliferation in May 1968:

the proposed treaty creates a juridical discrimination between States according to whether they possess nuclear weapons or not, regardless of the fact that it is unwise to divide the world into a few “haves” and a lot of “have-nots”, who would become dependent on the goodwill of the ‘haves’ in regard to development in the vital area of nuclear energy, thereby making them subject to pressures.

Indira Gandhi’s statement on the matter also highlighted the issue of discrimination and tapped into fears of a continuing colonial global order: ‘We shall continue our efforts for nuclear disarmament because it is only through nuclear disarmament that discrimination would be eliminated and equality between nations re-established’ (India, 1988b, p. 177). For Gandhi, resistance to the NPT was framed along the lines of anti-colonial nationalism.

Resisting the NPT thus meant producing a unified, independent and resurgent India:

not signing the treaty may bring the nation many difficulties. It may mean the stoppage of aid and the stoppage of help. Since we are taking this decision together, we must all be together in facing its consequences. I personally think that although it may involve sacrifice and hardship, it will be the first step towards building the real strength of this country and we will be able to go ahead on the road to self-sufficiency (India, 1988b, p. 178).

Thus, the addition of the language of nuclear apartheid reveals India’s disarmament discourse as a split discourse signifying the desire for both sameness and difference. Ostensibly it is an assertion of resistance against the continued dominance of the colonial impulse and its attendant politics of racial hierarchy. Yet, it is underpinned by the acceptance of a model of techno-scientific development derived from the very Western frameworks it purports to be resisting.

4.3.3 The ‘Peaceful’ Nuclear Explosion

During the negotiations for an NPT it emerged that India would be staunchly opposed to a treaty that banned ‘peaceful’ nuclear explosions for nuclear energy programs. There is little separating peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs) from their military counterparts other than the question of intent. However, given that both the United States and the Soviet Union had extensive PNE programs they had long enjoyed a degree of international legitimacy. On the 18th of May, 1974, ten years after Prime Minister Shastri first sanctioned work toward a PNE program, India conducted its first nuclear test at Pokhran in the Rajasthan desert. Yet, what might have been construed as a major shift in Indian foreign policy was not even acknowledged as an act of foreign policy.

The statement announcing the explosion was released by the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and emphasised that the test had been undertaken for reasons of technological development, particularly in the area of mining and earth moving operations, and reiterated that India had no intention of producing nuclear weapons and remained strongly opposed to military uses of nuclear explosions (India, 1974, p. 146). Official government statements were not provided until three days after the event on the 21st of May. Echoing the AEC statement, India’s Minister for External Affairs called the test an experiment that was ‘an important landmark in the development of nuclear technology for peaceful and economic uses’ (Singh, 1974, p. 147). Specifically addressing Pakistan’s claim on the 19th of May that India’s nuclear program was always aimed at producing nuclear weapons, Singh maintained that India had ‘no intention of developing nuclear weapons’ and that ‘Pakistan’s allegations of hegemonistic designs have no basis at all and are, to say the least, uncharitable’ (Singh, 1974, p. 148). Indira Gandhi’s statement on the matter also came on the 21st of May and emphasised that ‘India is not a “nuclear weapons” country, as we do not have any bombs and we do not intend to use nuclear knowledge or nuclear

power for any other than peaceful purposes' (Indian and Foreign Review, 1974a, p. 7). Countering claims of economic profligacy and highlighting the indigenously-produced nature of the technology used in the test, Gandhi emphasised that the test had been conducted with 'No new budgetary provision...there was no foreign exchange expenditure and no dependence on any other country' (Indian and Foreign Review, 1974a, p. 7).

As the negative international reaction grew – Japan, Canada, Sweden, the United States all released statements to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) indicating that they considered India's nuclear test to be contradictory to efforts to hinder nuclear weapons proliferation – the Indian political leadership made more statements insisting on the peaceful nature of the nuclear explosion (United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1974, pp. 150-155). On the 23rd of March India's representative to the CCD, B.C. Mishra (1974, pp. 171-2) said that since the Indian government had made clear that the nuclear explosion was carried out for peaceful purposes 'we do not understand how we are accused of contributing to the proliferation of nuclear weapons'. India, Mishra said, was 'somewhat pained' at reading Pakistan's submissions because 'there is an attempt to portray a picture of lack of restraint on the part of India in conducting this peaceful explosion'. Yet,

As the whole world knows, India has been in a position to manufacture nuclear weapons, if it so desired for several years now. It is out of a sense of responsibility and commitment to a principle that the Government has consistently maintained a policy of not using nuclear technology for weapons purposes.

An official government press note issued on the 24th of May repeatedly stressed that the nuclear test was a triumph of Indian science for peaceful purposes. Not only was it a 'hundred per cent Indian effort' but it marked the first time in history that a country had tested its first nuclear device underground (Indian and Foreign Review, 1974b, p. 8).

As for the timing of the test the Indian political leadership left this unexplained and there still remains no hard evidence that may be drawn on to conclusively answer this question. India's technical ability to conduct a nuclear explosion prior to 1974 is not in doubt. In a speech in London in 1964 Homi Bhabha, the founder of the Indian nuclear program, declared that India had the capacity to carry out a nuclear explosion within eighteen months of a decision to do so (Ramana, 2003, p. 225). Various scholars have speculated that the test was an attempt to divert attention away from mounting domestic problems.³⁴ The test was conducted at a time when a nation-wide railway strike was reaching its pinnacle and inflation was increasing by as much as 20 per cent following the global oil price rise in 1973 and the shortage of wheat due to the failure of the monsoons. Yet, this overlooks the fact that the decision to undertake preparations for the test had been made three years prior at the peak of Indira Gandhi's popularity after her sweeping electoral victory and India's defeat of Pakistan in the Bangladesh war (Nandy, 1974, p. 966).

This suggests that the test should be seen in a broader context – as an attempt to performatively enact India's postcolonial modernity – rather than as an opportunistic decision based on domestic political expediency. According to Raja Ramanna, who was one of the scientists involved in the test, despite facing opposition from some of her advisors up to the last moment, 'Mrs Gandhi decreed that the experiment should be carried out on schedule for the simple reason that India required such a demonstration' (Ramanna, 1991, p. 89). The military leadership was notably absent from the select group of men privy to the test, which consisted wholly of scientific and political advisors. This was clearly meant to be demonstration of India's techno-scientific ability rather than its military

³⁴ See, for instance, Ganguly (1999, p. 160).

might. However, the fact that Indira Gandhi made her first comments several days after the tests, and not in an announcement to the nation but in an interview with an American newsmagazine, indicates that while the political leadership initially intended the test as a self-explanatory demonstration of Indian science, the adverse international reaction which linked the explosion to military ends meant that it instead marked a critical foreign policy performative moment in which India's self-representation as a distinctly different modern postcolonial state was in danger of failing. In the belated pronouncements of the Indian political leadership we see the Indian state confronting the impossibility of enacting its postcolonial difference and, therefore, insisting on its postcolonial subjectivity all the more.

4.3.4 Beyond the PNE

For Itty Abraham (1998, pp. 164-5) India's inability to confine the signification of the 1974 test to the domain of development meant that, ultimately, it was an event that moved India's nuclear energy establishment and its political leadership 'from a mythic space of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence [and disarmament] into an every-day realm of naturalised fear, threat, danger and insecurity'. He suggests that in the years following the 1974 test:

They began to re-imagine the history of the Indian nuclear programme to fit these 'facts', they began to build long- and short-range rockets and ballistic missiles, and they began to change the state's self-representation. ...Ideological sustenance could now be drawn from the dominant discourse of International Relations, the currency and speech of inter-state interaction.

There is indeed evidence that in the years after the test there was a conscious effort to gear the Indian nuclear program toward military development. According to Abraham (1998, p. 103), this shift began in the late 1950s and early 1960s after the completion of India's first

nuclear reactors and was due to the realisation that nuclear energy might not be able to deliver the ideological or techno-economic benefits expected of it. The response of the nuclear science establishment, Abraham argues, 'was to situate atomic energy within another realm of state activity, equally central to the state's ideological mission, equally justified in terms of *raison d'état*: they decided to build bombs'. For Abraham (1998, p. 106), it is 'the conjuncture of state and science, and the internal structure of the modern state form – the immanence of national security – that allows this shift to come about and produce a new, equally postcolonial, atomic energy enterprise devoted to making bombs'. However, Abraham undervalues the significance of India's postcolonial difference – the 'mythic space' – in its postcolonial identity. What may have been a relatively easy shift in focus for the scientific establishment was far more difficult for a postcolonial state anchored in an identity carefully balanced between the performative enactment of India's postcolonial difference and a strong desire to imagine itself along the lines of the nation-state of a modern geopolitical imagination. As we have seen above, the nuclear explosion did threaten to upset this balance however, as we shall see, it did not have the power to change India's self-representation altogether.

In the years after the 1974 test the nuclear science establishment quietly went about improving the design of India's nuclear device and lobbying for further nuclear tests without portraying their proposed tests as the beginning of a nuclear weapons program. Nonetheless, the political leadership – which in 1977, after the end of a three-year period of authoritarian rule by Indira Gandhi, now consisted of a broad-based coalition government led by the Janata Party – continued to enunciate the discourse of disarmament. According to Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1977b, p. 185), the then-Minister for External Affairs 'We are not a nuclear weapon power and have no intention of being one'. Further, India had 'hardly showed any initiative in the seventies in and of the disarmament forums where

India relegated itself more and more to a back seat' (Vajpayee, 1978, p. 210). For a 'peace-loving nation like India this was hardly the right posture. We have fully endeavoured to correct this position' (Vajpayee, 1978, p. 210).

George Perkovich (1999, pp. 242-3) has written that in late 1982 or early 1983, after Indira Gandhi was returned to power, Raja Ramanna and another leading nuclear scientist, V.S. Arunchalam, presented to her their argument that a nuclear test was necessary for India's technological advancement. They were careful to present the test as a scientific experiment rather than the beginning of a nuclear weapons program. According to Perkovich (1999, p. 243), after initially agreeing to the test, Gandhi quickly changed her mind. The reasons for this are unknown and the allegation that American pressure was involved remains unsubstantiated. K. Subrahmanyam (1998), the doyenne of Indian strategic analysis, has claimed that Indira Gandhi's son and successor as Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, approved the beginning of a nuclear weapons program in 1988 after the failure of the nuclear weapon states to heed his calls for disarmament – which included an 'Action Plan', presented to the UN to eliminate nuclear weapons by 2010 and a proposal for a nuclear weapon-free Asia. Whatever the truth of this claim, it has nowhere been suggested that Rajiv Gandhi contemplated marking this shift with a nuclear test or considered revising his opinions on the evils of the policy of nuclear deterrence, which he once described as 'the ultimate expression of the philosophy of terrorism holding humanity hostage to the presumed security needs of a few' (India, 1988b, p. 282).

Similar sentiments were expressed by P.V. Narasimha Rao when he was External Affairs Minister in 1982. Addressing the UN General Assembly's special session on disarmament Rao said: 'Nuclear war doctrines are, in essence, doctrines of terrorism practised by nation States' (India, 1988b, p. 213). Thirteen years later, in 1995, Rao was Prime Minister and

the nuclear scientific establishment was again pushing for nuclear tests in order to improve and demonstrate their technological innovations. Like Indira Gandhi before him Rao apparently agreed to the tests only to rescind his permission. According to K. Subrahmanyam, Rao (2004, p. 593) explained his change of heart to him as being due to a lack of consensus among his economic, administrative and scientific advisors. Clearly, even in 1995 when India's nuclear weapons program was at an advanced stage, the impetus to cross the nuclear test threshold and risk stripping India's nuclear program completely free of its peaceful associations still did not exist.

In 1996, another one of Nehru's visions, a global agreement to end nuclear testing, became a potential reality in the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT obliged signatories to undertake 'not to carry out any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion, and to prohibit and prevent any such nuclear explosion at any place under its jurisdiction or control'. Further, signatories were required to 'refrain from causing, encouraging, or in any way participating in the carrying out of any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion' (Arms Control Association, 1968). India's position at the CTBT negotiations was strikingly consistent to that taken thirty years ago at the talks for an NPT. According to Arundhati Ghose (1997, p. 239), India's chief negotiator, the treaty did not meet India's requirement that it be secured in a framework of global disarmament and include a time bound framework for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Moreover, India wanted a truly comprehensive test ban that would prevent the continued refinement of existing nuclear weapons through laboratory testing. Instead, the treaty was anchored in a framework of non-proliferation and India's concerns were not taken seriously:

It appeared that the United States was neither interested in India's concerns nor receptive to the Indian proposals that reflected these concerns. The United States appeared to be mainly interested in

bringing Russia and China within a control regime...The United Kingdom and France clearly viewed the CTBT as a pure non-proliferation measure aimed at non-nuclear states. They would not even consider qualitative capping of their weapons development through this Treaty (Ghose, 1997).

Thus, India's decision not to sign the treaty was based on '...its approach towards nuclear disarmament, its perception of a potential threat from the existence of nuclear weapons, its strategic circumstances and, above all, the unanimous rejection by the Indian Parliament of what was seen as an unequal, dangerous and coercive treaty' (Ghose, 1997, p. 239). If there was a difference in this position and that taken previously with regard to the NPT it was the gesture toward the vocabulary of political realism in the reference to 'strategic circumstances'. Trivedi and Husain both raised the issue of security in their statements during the NPT negotiations as did Indira Gandhi. Yet, it was clear that security was conceived of in terms of economic development and the inherent dangers posed by nuclear weapons to all countries rather than as the search for military security in an anarchical world filled with states driven to maximise their power. Even though Ghose breaks with this to an extent it is important to note that she fails to elaborate on what these strategic circumstances are, and that this point is furtively sandwiched between references to traditional concerns about disarmament, the threat from existing stockpiles, and discrimination. In highlighting that India is 'above all' against an unequal and coercive treaty Ghose is obviously keen to emphasise in the continuity of India's postcolonial difference as a country driven by its commitment to a non-colonial global order more than the imperatives of geopolitical self-interest.

Nonetheless, the appearance of the language of strategy in a discourse that was previously free of it indicates the increasing difficulty of enacting India's postcolonial difference while attempting at the same time to function as a modern nation-state in an international

system in which, despite the end of the Cold War, the norms of 'realism' continue to dominate. Strands of thinking that promote a coercive international relations have always been present in India and usually come to the fore after times of crises, as can be seen in the debates following China's nuclearisation. However, despite brief surges of popularity such thinking has remained necessarily marginalised in a country that sought to anchor its identity in an exceptionalism of postcolonial difference by repudiating the violent and dehumanising elements of modernity. If India's response to the CTBT indicated hesitant signs of an increased willingness to join the nuclear mainstream, the nuclear tests of 1998 seemingly marked its full submission to the international norms of power politics and a radical break in its ambiguously gendered, ambivalent postcolonial identity. But was this really the case?

4.4 The End of Postcolonial Ambivalence?

4.4.1 Hindu Nationalism, Modernity and Nuclear Weapons

For Itty Abraham, 'crossing the test threshold was symbolically significant as it sought to signal identity with dominant international norms of nuclear meaning' (Abraham, 2004, p. 4999). Indeed, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that was in power at the time had long promoted a nuclear policy that was geared toward realist norms of military power which are in keeping with the Hindu nationalist ideology on which the party was built. The goal of V.D. Savarkar (1949, p. 302, 201), the founding ideologue of Hindu nationalism, was to 'Hinduise all politics and militarise Hinduism' and he urged 'all Hindus to get themselves re-animated and re-born into a martial race' by re-learning the 'manly lessons' taught by Manu, Rama and Krishna who, for him, epitomised masculine Hinduism. Like Nehru, Savarkar believed that 'science would lead all material progress and would annihilate

superstition’ (Quoted in Corbridge, 1999, p. 227). However, when he exhorted a group of high school students in 1953 to bring ‘the secret and science of the atom bomb to India and make it a mighty nation’, he had in mind a more militaristic vision than Nehru’s dream of nuclear energy driving India’s economic development (Quoted in Corbridge, 1999, p. 227).

Savarkar followed the early nationalist leaders in attributing India’s subjugation at the hands of the British to the degeneration of a once strong and masculine Hinduism based on martial valour, courage, physical strength and organisational efficiency (Banerjee, 2006, pp. 67). Savarkar was a mentor to the Mahatma Gandhi’s assassin, Nathuram Godse, who declared at his trial:

the teachings of absolute *ahimsa* (non-violence) as advocated by Gandhiji would ultimately result in the emasculation of the Hindu community and thus make the country incapable of resisting the aggression or inroads of other communities, especially the Muslims (Quoted in Veer, 1994, p. 96).

According to Godse, it was Gandhi and his feminine, devotional brand of Hinduism that was responsible for the partition of India, which both he and Savarkar referred to as the ‘vivesection of the Motherland’: ‘Gandhiji failed in his duty as the Father of the Nation. He has proved to be the Father of Pakistan. I as a dutiful son of Mother India thought it my duty to put an end to the life of the so-called Father of the Nation who had played a very prominent part in bringing about vivisection of the country – our Motherland’ (Quoted in Nandy, 1980, p. 83). In killing Gandhi – who, because of his ‘old superstitious beliefs such as the power of the soul, the inner voice, the fast, the prayer and the purity of mind’, had failed in his duty as father of the nation to defend the Mother – Godse thought he would be ensuring that India would be ‘practical, able to retaliate, and would be powerful with the armed forces’ (Quoted in Nandy, 1980, p. 91). Thus, ‘the nation would be free to follow

the course founded on reason which I consider to be necessary for sound nation-building’ (Quoted in Nandy, 1980, p. 91).

Like Godse, Savarkar needed to masculinise the Motherland in order to put it on the correct path to modern nationhood. Indeed, Savarkar’s interchangeable and inconsistent uses of the terms ‘motherland’ and ‘fatherland’ in *Hindutva* indicates his unease with the feminine. Unlike Nehru’s ambivalence to feminine, which was partly resolved with an incorporation of Mother India’s wisdom and morality into his vision of Indian modernity, Savarkar’s gender identity crisis is resolved when the beleaguered motherland in need of protection from her loyal sons or masculinised daughters like the Rani of Jhansi³⁵ transforms into a disciplinarian fatherland that tolerates no ambiguity in his children. For instance, writing about the need for Indian Muslims and Christians to convert to Hinduism or forever be positioned outside the nation, Savarkar declared: ‘Ye, who by race, by blood, by culture, by nationality possess almost all the essentials of Hindutva and had been forcibly snatched out of our ancestral home by the hand of violence – ye, have only to render wholehearted love to our common Mother and recognise her not only as Fatherland (*Pitribhu*) but even as a Holyland (*Punyabhu*); and ye would be most welcome to the Hindu fold.’ (Savarkar, 1938, p. 146).

The transformation of the motherland into the fatherland was not, however, the destabilising move that it was for Nehru. This is because the Hindu nationalist conception of Indian identity is one in which the masculine is already immanent in the feminine Mother India. Modernity is not a masculine, Western garb that must be put on because all the values that it signifies – instrumental reason, rationality, a ‘scientific temper’ – can be

³⁵ The Rani of Jhansi was a near-legendary figure who died fighting the British in the rebellion of 1857. Savarkar portrays her as a heroic mother defending her son’s inheritance by giving up her femininity and fighting to the death dressed as a masculine warrior.

found in the glorious past of 'Hindu civilisation'. It was within this framework that the BJP's nuclear policy was formulated and this was why the BJP had never expressed the kinds of reservations about nuclear technology held by past Indian governments.

Indeed for Jaswant Singh, the BJP coalition government's first External Affairs Minister, the main value of nuclear technology was its military potential. In a speech given in May 1997 at a conference in the United States on the future of nuclear weapons Singh (1998) bemoaned the fact that in 1974 'India demonstrated an ability, but disclaimed the intent' and argued that

Had we straight thereafter conducted a series of other such tests and established clearly our ability, then it would have been easier to cope with all the confusion of subsequent years, these current international pressures, and all the other difficulties of today. Instead, we went into a nuclear trance; pretense replaced policy.

Like Nehru, Singh argued that India became a subject nation partly because it had missed the industrial revolution. However, this was just one, and not the main, factor. Singh (1998) put much more emphasis on India's complacency and failure to evolve a tradition of 'strategic thought':

We thought... "What does India, well-meaning India, have to fear from any quarter?" To my mind, this was, in turn, both a consequence and a cause. This mentality was the consequence of a failure to evolve an Indian state, and became the cause, in turn, of failing to do so even after Independence.

India's flaw, then, lay in its 'high-civilizational sense of chivalrous warfare' and its 'belief that our opponents would also fight in the manner to which we subscribed. Invaders down the ages routinely, therefore, outmaneuvered us because we remained wedded to the tactical doctrines of honor...' (Singh, 1998).

Here we see Singh reiterating the depiction of Indian civilisation as essentially moral and ethical. However, for Singh this was a liability and not an asset. Overcoming this flaw in the contemporary world meant that ‘We have to leaven our idealism with geopolitical realities’. Unfortunately postcolonial India had only perpetuated the problem, for ‘Gandhian pacifism’ and nonalignment had ‘relegated strategic thinking to an irrelevancy’ (Singh, 1998). To remedy this, the BJP’s election platform had promised to carry out a comprehensive strategic defence review, re-evaluate India’s nuclear policy, and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.

Singh made the speech quoted above only a few days before the nuclear tests were carried out, however, he gives no indication of what is to come and it is more than likely that he was not aware of just how soon his government would awaken India from its ‘nuclear trance’. Comments made at a press conference on the 17th of May by A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, the then-Secretary of the Department of Defence Research and Development, indicate that the decision to carry out the tests was made in early April, about one month after the BJP came into government. Apart from Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee (previously External Affairs Minister in the Janata coalition government) and his deputy Lal Krishna Advani, the other political figure involved in the decision to test was Rajendra Singh, an officer of the Hindu nationalist organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (Corbridge, 1999, p. 241). It is probable that, like Defence Minister George Fernandes – the leader of the socialist Samata Party – who was under the impression that a decision on the nuclear option would be made after the strategic defence review, Jaswant Singh – a relative newcomer to the BJP – was not informed of the decision until the very last moment (Muralidharan & Cherian, 1998).³⁶ The three chiefs of services were also kept

³⁶ Indeed, journalist Christopher Kremmer (2006) quotes an unnamed Western diplomat’s account of Singh’s reaction to the phone call informing him of the nuclear tests which implies that Singh was only told about the

uninformed of the decision until the day prior to the explosion. The absence of military leaders and high level ministers in the decision-making process is reminiscent of the 1974 ‘demonstration’ and hints at more continuity between the BJP and previous Indian governments than the likes of Jaswant Singh – who came to office with the expressed intent of making India ‘strategically minded’ – would like to admit. How then, does the post-test foreign policy discourse of the BJP government compare with that following the 1974 nuclear test?

4.4.2 The 1998 Nuclear Tests

The first statement about the 1998 nuclear tests was made by Prime Minister Vajpayee on the evening of the 11th of May announcing the underground explosion of a fission device, a low yield device and a thermonuclear device and congratulating the scientists and engineers on their achievements. Confirmation that these tests were intended as part of a nuclear *weapons* program was given shortly afterwards by the Prime Minister’s Principle Secretary, Brajesh Mishra, who stated that ‘These tests have established that India has a proven capability for a weaponized nuclear programme’ (Muralidharan & Cherian, 1998). Another departure was Mishra’s comments implying that there was now a greater willingness to sign the CTBT.

Two days later, on the 13th of May, two more explosions of low yield devices were carried out. The same day a letter to U.S. President Bill Clinton from Vajpayee explaining the rationale behind the tests was leaked to the *New York Times*. As in 1974 when Indira Gandhi’s first explanation for India’s nuclear test was made to an American newsmagazine rather than the Indian public, Vajpayee’s first extensive comments on the 1998 tests were

tests after the fact: ‘(Jaswant Singh) brought us into a tight group around him, and said, “You won’t believe this—India has just tested. Only five people knew. I have to go on TV tonight. This is dumb, dumb, dumb”’.

made to a foreign audience. In the letter, Vajpayee expressed his deepening concern ‘at the deteriorating security environment, specially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past’ and, making obvious reference to China and Pakistan, goes on to note that:

We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state. At the hands of this bitter neighbor we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years. And for the last ten years we have been the victim of unremitting terrorism and militancy sponsored by it in several parts of our country, specially Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir (New York Times, 1998, p. 14).

It later emerged that this was one of eight identical letters prepared for the Group of Eight countries prior to the test. Clearly, the Vajpayee government had prepared for the test in anticipation of presenting to the world a new India, driven solely by the tenets of political realism. Yet almost immediately after the tests had been conducted there were indications of the government backing away from the position taken in the letter. In a rather contradictory press release on the 15th of May regarding the UN Security Council’s presidential statement rebuking the tests, the government initially states, ‘The tests which our scientists carried out are not directed against any country’ but then goes on to repeat:

It is because of the continuing threat posed to India by the deployment, overtly and covertly, of nuclear weapons *in the lands and seas adjoining us* that we have been forced to carry out these tests, so that we can retain a credible option to develop these weapons, should they be needed for the security of India’s people... (India, 1998d)(emphasis added).

We also see in this statement, however, the re-emergence of an older discourse – that of disarmament and discrimination. The UN Security Council’s position on India’s tests, the statement said, was unacceptable because:

India is a responsible member of the international community, and has consistently supported the United Nations. We were among the first to propose, and continue to promote, the goal of general and complete disarmament, and the elimination of all nuclear weapons. To this end, we have made a series of concrete proposals for the consideration of the international community, and the nuclear weapon states in particular. Every one of these has been thwarted and distorted for their own purposes by the nuclear weapons states (India, 1998d).

Similar sentiments were again expressed in Vajpayee’s interview with an Indian newsmagazine on the 25th of May in his first attempt to explain the rationale behind the tests to a domestic audience. Vajpayee (1998b) explained the timing of the tests as simply delivering on an election promise and said that India had just responded to the ‘stark global and regional reality’ that it lives surrounded by nuclear weapons. He highlighted the significance of the tests by declaring that ‘India is now a nuclear weapons state’ although ‘Ours will never be weapons of aggression’. Further explaining this Vajpayee said:

India has never considered military might as the ultimate measure of national strength. It is a necessary component of overall national strength. I would, therefore, say that the greatest meaning of the tests is that they have given India shakti, they have given India strength, they have given India self-confidence.

Here Vajpayee seems to be attempting to put to rest the ghost of Gandhi and his identification of strength with non-violence and moral courage while resuscitating the spirit of Aurobindo Ghose and his exhortation to worship the mother as Shakti. Yet, when asked whether his government’s nuclear policy constituted a radical departure from that of previous governments Vajpayee replied in the negative: ‘My Government’s policy is consistent with the nuclear disarmament policy that successive governments have

followed'. Moreover, he distanced his government from previous indications that India would now be more willing to sign the CTBT, stating that 'There is no question of India accepting any treaty that is discriminatory in character'.

Vajpayee's subsequent statement in the Indian Parliament on the 29th of May also cited strategic insecurity as a rationale for 'going nuclear' while still attempting to mark continuity rather than a dramatic departure from the conception of India's postcolonial identity that was constructed in the foreign policy discourse of previous governments. The tests, Vajpayee said, '...are a continuation of the policies set into motion that put this country on the path of self-reliance and independence of thought and action'. Thus,

The present decision and future actions will continue to reflect a commitment to sensibilities and obligations of an ancient civilisation, a sense of responsibility and restraint, but a restraint born of the assurance of action, not of doubts or apprehension (Vajpayee, 1998a).

This statement is repeated in the paper submitted to the Parliament as an accompaniment to Vajpayee's statement with the addition of a passage from the Bhagavad Gita extolling the value of action: 'Action is a process to reach a goal; action may reflect tumult but when measured and focussed, will yield its objective of stability and peace' (India, 1998c). Also in this paper, India's 'restraint' was depicted as its defining difference:

This is where our approach to nuclear weapons is different from others. This difference is the cornerstone of our nuclear doctrine. It is marked by restraint and striving for the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

Here Vajpayee (1998a) sought to encompass the discourse of India's postcolonial difference based on civilisational morality into a Hindu nationalist conception of masculine strength based on physical or military power – in this case described as 'the assurance of action'.

India's 'restraint', and Pakistan's lack of it, framed Vajpayee's response to Pakistan's retaliatory nuclear tests on the 28th of May. In another speech to the Indian Parliament on the 29th of May Vajpayee described Pakistan as obsessed with India and irrationally insecure about its security even though India was committed to friendship based on justice and mutual respect and had never sought to take advantage of its size to dominate Pakistan. Emphasising India's responsibility, Vajpayee said that India was prepared to offer a no-first-use-agreement to Pakistan and would voluntarily declare a moratorium on further testing (India, 1998c). As for Pakistan's allegations that India was preparing to attack its nuclear facilities these were nothing but, '...crude manifestations of the traditional Pakistani mindset of hostility against India' (India, 1998b).

In the months after the 1998 nuclear tests various other continuities in India's nuclear discourse became apparent. Reiterating a thirty-year old argument Jaswant Singh made the Indian government's case for the tests in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* in an article entitled 'Against Nuclear Apartheid'.³⁷ Running through all of Vajpayee's statements after the nuclear tests was another key component of India's postcolonial identity – the celebration of its techno-scientific prowess. The draft nuclear doctrine released in August, 1999 clearly seeks to display a hard-headed clarity in India's strategic intentions and yet it also contains a section devoted to disarmament. Thus, while the BJP may have begun its term in office determined to discipline the meanings attached to the nuclear program, its inability to do so indicates that ambivalence continues to define India's postcolonial modernity.

³⁷ For a detailed examination of the BJP's use of the discourse of 'nuclear apartheid' see Biswas (2001).

4.5 Conclusion

In contemporary India, the satellite town of Gurgaon near New Delhi is perhaps the most obvious recent example of a modern technological ‘artefact’, its shopping malls, call centres, and affluent suburban enclaves representing both the means and the ends of social transformation in a country now ensconced in a neo-liberal model of economic development. Cities like Gurgaon differ drastically from the older post-independence planned cities like Chandigarh in that they are neither completely dependent on the state for infrastructure nor are they driven by the desire for equitable societies with opportunities and services for all. Still, if state-led development is now passé and Chandigarh is no longer the technological artefact it once was, the hailing of the India-US nuclear deal³⁸ in 2006 by the Indian middle classes indicates that the nuclear reactor still retains considerable symbolic value in contemporary postcolonial India. So too, however, does India’s discourse of disarmament – a remarkably consistent discourse that continues to mark India’s postcolonial difference.

In this chapter I have argued against the claim that India’s nuclear program can easily be understood as the result of the realpolitik power and security compulsions of a state in an anarchic international system. Rather I have attempted to show that making sense of India’s nuclear policies – its promotion of nuclear disarmament, pursuit of nuclear energy, the 24 year gap between its nuclear tests and its refusal to abide by international norms of non-proliferation – requires an understanding of the ambivalent nature of its project of

³⁸ The fate of this so-called 123 agreement, remains uncertain due to opposition from the Left parties, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the BJP and the United National Progressive Alliance, an opposition alliance of eight regional parties. Their opposition to the agreement rests on the argument that the agreement violates India’s strategic and foreign policy autonomy by tying it too closely to the US while compromising the development of a self-reliant nuclear energy program (Ramakrishnan, 2007). An analysis of this impasse is beyond the scope of this thesis however, it is notable that the debate over this issue has centred on traditional foreign policy discourses of self-reliance and anti-colonialism. Thus far, it seems that different representations of the issue have begun to compete with the government’s official representation, which apparently does not fit with well with broader societal discourses.

postcolonial modernity. Paying attention to the sex and gender codings in India's identity discourses adds to this argument for it reveals that the dominant discourses of Indian nationalism partly ground resistance in a feminine semiotic. Thus, India's postcolonial identity as a civilisational-state is produced as female, feminine and masculine at the same time, for its mimicry of a masculine, modernising state is balanced by a feminine civilisational morality that is linked to the nationalist imagining of India as Bharat Mata or Mother India and which it upholds as its postcolonial difference.

So far I have analysed two foreign policy discourses, on friendship and on disarmament, that usually receive scant attention in studies of Indian foreign policy. The discourse on friendship, I have suggested, ultimately came into contention with a narrative of India's vulnerability to invasion and conquest whereas the discourse of disarmament was from the beginning tied to, and undermined by, a narrative of India's economic backwardness which drove its civil nuclear program. The next chapter concerns another of India's foreign policy discourses – one of kinship which has animated India's relations with its immediate neighbours. This aspect of India's foreign policy has been neglected, but I argue that it offers important insights into the way India imagines its postcolonial Self.

5 HEGEMONIC DESIRES?: INDIA, SOUTH ASIA AND THE POLITICS OF KINSHIP

5.1 Introduction

Much of the scholarly work on India's relations with its neighbouring states has been preoccupied with the question of whether India is a regional hegemon or has pretensions toward regional hegemony. In particular, many scholars have suggested that India has pursued an American-style Monroe Doctrine in South Asia. In this chapter, and the next two chapters, I will examine the process by which South Asia has been designated as a region in Indian foreign policy discourse while paying particular attention to the narratives that have been evoked and the subjectivities and foreign policy responses that have been produced. In most definitions the term 'South Asia' is taken to refer to India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the Maldives. Although the term occasionally occurred in Indian foreign policy discourse in the 1950s, it only gained meaning and popularity in the 1980s, long after the terms 'South-east Asia', 'West Asia' and 'Central Asia' became commonplace. Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose (2004, p. 3) argue that although the term is of recent historical provenance, it is useful because unlike the term 'Indian subcontinent', it is politically neutral. Yet, while South Asia may indeed be 'an acultural, emotionally empty, territorial concept', as Ashis Nandy (2005, p. 542) puts it, the very act of defining certain geographical areas as regions works to normalise a particular view of the world. Just as India as a nation-state is the result of a modern geopolitical imagination so too is South Asia and this makes it a far from politically neutral term. As O Tuathail and Agnew (1992, p. 194) argue, 'To designate a place is not simply

to define a location or setting. It is to open up a field of possible taxonomies and trigger a series of narratives, subjects and appropriate foreign-policy responses’.

I begin this chapter by examining the arguments in scholarly discourse about India and the notion of regional hegemony. I will then suggest an alternative framework for understanding India’s behaviour before undertaking an analysis of how the countries now taken as constituting South Asia were treated as an area of interest in the foreign policy discourse of the Nehruvian era when anti-colonialism and the attempt to create a broader Asian identity were at the forefront.

5.2 India, South Asia and Hegemony

In 1983 during India’s deepening involvement in Sri Lanka’s civil war, Bhabani Sen Gupta (1983) argued that a regional security doctrine, which he called the ‘Indian Doctrine’, was emerging under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. According to Sen Gupta (1983, p. 14) the doctrine, which was later termed the ‘Indira Doctrine’, was based on the idea that India would not tolerate external intervention in a conflict in any South Asian country if the intervention had anti-Indian implications and, moreover, that no South Asian government should seek any such intervention. In the event of an ‘intolerable threat to a government’, that government should seek help from neighbouring countries but any move to exclude India would be seen as a posture hostile to India. Subrata Mitra (2003, p. 405), who argues that India has been a ‘reluctant hegemon’ in South Asia, suggests that this thinking dominated Indian policy after India’s intervention in Pakistan’s civil war in 1971 but waned in about 1992 after its disengagement from Sri Lanka’s civil war.

Neil DeVotta (2003, p. 368) claims, however, that the Indira Doctrine, which he argues 'was no doubt India's version of the United States's Monroe Doctrine', continues to be central to India's ambitions. He suggests however, that the pressures of containing domestic insurgencies in Kashmir and north-eastern India have left it militarily overextended and unable to exercise its military capabilities as effectively as it did in the 1980s. A.Z. Hilali (2001) agrees that an Indian Monroe Doctrine has been pursued since 1972. However, he argues that regional dominance has, in fact, been India's ongoing motivation since 1947. He claims that the Indian leadership, beginning with Nehru, have seen themselves as the successors to British Raj and have adopted colonial strategic concerns as their own. In addition, Hilali (2001, p. 740) states that due to India's 'self-perceived greatness' nothing short of global domination was on the agenda: 'it is one of the core beliefs of the country's leaders that India's manifest destiny is to be not only a regional hegemon but a global power as well'. India, he argues, 'sees itself as a regional power...and is determined to extend its political and military reach beyond South Asia' (Hilali, 2001, p. 747). According to Hilali (2001, pp. 739-40), Nehru's dream 'was to transform India into Akhund Bharat (Greater India) to rule over the world'.

Hilali's view is shared by Devin Hagerty (1991, p. 363) who argues that 'although it was never enunciated explicitly or officially, successive Indian governments have systematically pursued an active policy of denial in South Asia similar to that applied to the Western Hemisphere by the United States in the 19th century'. Likewise, Raja Mohan (2003, pp. 238-9) claims that a Monroe Doctrine has been at the heart of India's policy towards the subcontinent. Mohan cites a speech by Nehru in 1947 in which he declared that 'the doctrine expounded by President Monroe had saved America from foreign aggression for nearly a [sic] 100 years, and now the time has come when a similar doctrine must be expounded with respect to Asian countries' (Nehru, 1985, p. 133). Mohan (2003,

p. 238) argues that while India did not have the power to keep the great powers out of Asia this goal was eminently achievable in South Asia. Thus, 'India has attempted to uphold a regional security order on the premise that the subcontinent must be an exclusive sphere of influence for itself and that it must prevent other powers from intervening in the region'.

Surjit Mansingh (1984, pp. 288-291), has also noted why the Monroe Doctrine may be seen as relevant to South Asia. India's extension of direct administration to outlying areas, she suggests, may be somewhat reminiscent of the US's westward expansion. Parallels can also be drawn between India's consistent rejection of foreign interference in South Asia and the US determination to prevent European influence in the Americas. In addition, the activities of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), which was created in 1968 for the collection and analysis of intelligence information specifically from India's neighbours, brings to mind the covert interference of American intelligence agencies in South and Central America. Despite all this, she argues that 'no Indian version of the Monroe doctrine has functioned in southern Asia. Nor can it function' (Mansingh, 1984, p. 292).

Of all the authors surveyed, Mansingh is the only one who attempts to explain in a substantial way why India's behaviour could be compared to the US Monroe Doctrine even though she ultimately rejects the analogy. Moreover, implicit in the discussions on India's quest for regional hegemony is the assumption that it is natural, and even expected, that large states will try to dominate their smaller neighbours. DeVotta (2003, p. 365) for instance, writes that India's inability to undertake regional interventions as an 'efficient and dependable regional hegemon' may have 'adverse ramifications for South Asia's smaller states'. As O Tuathail (1992, p. 196) has argued however, 'American involvement with world politics has followed a distinctive cultural logic or set of presuppositions and orientations'. The Monroe Doctrine was initially expounded by James Monroe to prevent

further colonisation in the Americas. Eventually, however, it became essential to the perpetuation of the myth of the Americas that forms an important facet of US identity. This myth treats the Western Hemisphere as the geographic *tabula rasa* on which the religiously ordained advance of civilisation, freedom and progress would be advanced by the descendents of the Christian European settlers. Moreover, Joane Nagel (1998, p. 251) has argued that both the Monroe Doctrine and the project of westward expansion, known as Manifest Destiny, was tightly interwoven with a ‘racialized, imperial masculinity, where adventurous, but civilized white men tame or defeat inferior savage men of colour...’. Simply noting the similarities between India and the United States and theorising from this basis, risks obscuring the fact that India’s relations with the world have been conditioned by a different cultural logic particular to its distinct historical experience and can lead to misleading arguments based on erroneous assumptions.

This is clear in the case of Hilali, who – without providing convincing evidence to back his claims – argues that territorial and political expansionism lies at the heart of India’s motivations. As we shall see, Nehru did raise the notion of an ancient Greater India but he did so to emphasise Indian civilisation’s cultural influence and not its territorial expansionism. In addition, the fact that the ‘Indira Doctrine’ was never clearly enunciated by Indira Gandhi herself marks a fundamental difference from the United States’s Monroe Doctrine – the principles of which were constantly articulated by American officials in various administrations. This cannot be dismissed as readily as Hagerty does.

Mansingh argues that several elements work against the development of an Indian Monroe Doctrine. These include, the presence of Pakistan, which with external assistance, has held Indian power in check; the lack of an extensive network of economic levers; the absence of a legitimating theory of racial superiority as the basis of hegemony; India’s espousal of

nonalignment in place of great power protection and ‘the genius of Indian society’ which ‘does not appear to lie in political expansionism’ (Mansingh, 1984, p. 293). Mansingh’s conclusion is supported by Bhabani Sen Gupta who, fifteen years after he suggested the emergence of the Indian Doctrine, came to the conclusion that ‘India has neither the power nor the culture, nor the mentality, nor the wherewithal to be a truly hegemonic power’ (Rasgotra, 1998, p. 69).

Sankaran Krishna’s (1999) analysis of India’s actions in South Asia also notes India’s lack of expansionist ambitions. Krishna argues that during the Nehru era there was a clear tension between the self-fashioning of India as a non-violent country that was a new and peaceful force in the world and the self-fashioning of India as the inheritor of British power in the subcontinent. However, he suggests that the 1971 war with Pakistan marked a critical rupture whereby India’s self-fashioning as a pacifist nation was transformed into that of a regional hegemon (Krishna, 1999, p. 22). Still, he posits that India’s effort to attain regional hegemony is distinctive in that it is not driven by territorial expansion and concludes that India wants to be seen as a consensual leader in the region and therefore a hegemon in the Gramscian sense (Krishna, 1999, p. 27). While Mansingh points out that, unlike the United States, India has not been driven by a theory of racial superiority, Krishna (1999, p. 28) argues that India’s ambitions to consensual leadership are made on the basis of its superior model of nation-building compared to that of its neighbours.

I would argue, however, that India’s pretensions to regional leadership are based on more than just an assumption of the ideological superiority of its nation-building apparatus. Rather, I suggest that India’s behaviour toward its South Asian neighbours is conditioned by the desire to enact its difference as a civilisational, postcolonial state that abjures the domination of others and is, thus, coded with an ambiguous maternal masculinity.

5.3 India, Soft Power and Civilisational Influence

5.3.1 Soft Power

The idea that nation-states exercise cultural power rather than rely on military might is central to Joseph Nye's notion of 'soft power'. According to Nye (2004, p. x) soft power 'is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies'. For Nye (2004, p. x), whose focus is the United States, the cultivation of soft power is essential because

when you can get others to admire your ideals and to want what you want, you do not have to spend as much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction. Seduction is always more effective than coercion and many values like democracy, human rights and individual opportunities are deeply seductive.

Although he focuses on the United States, Nye (2004, p. 88) does discuss India briefly. Citing the success of the Nobel Prize winning author V.S. Naipaul and the American box-office success of Indian movies, the growth of the Indian call-centre industry and the Indian diaspora in the United States, Nye argues that India's soft power is on the rise, however, at this point trails behind the US, Europe and Japan. The Indian bureaucracy, the Kashmir conflict and the 'recent revival of Hindu extremism' are said to be tarnishing India's democratic credentials and therefore its attractiveness (Nye, 2004, p. 89). Nye's measures of soft power are both West-centric and inconsistent – it is as though only Western validation proves the possession of soft power. Yet, Indian movies have long found success in non-English speaking countries as varied as Greece, Nigeria, Iran and

Egypt and, indeed, India currently sells a billion more cinema tickets around the world than the American film industry (Loudon, 2007).³⁹ Moreover, the many inadequacies of American democracy such as low voter turn-outs and the deprivation of civil liberties in the wake of the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001⁴⁰ are not similarly cited by Nye as significantly reducing the soft power of the United States. As Roxanne Doty (1993, p. 314; 1996) has shown this is a common conceit in North American social science literature. Whereas corruption and inefficiency are treated as attributes that are constitutive of the identity of 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' countries, corruption in Western, 'developed' countries, such as the United States, is contained to domestic boundaries and is not seen as constitutive of their identities in international relations.

Nye's conception of soft power is also under-theorised and under-developed. As Janice Bially Mattern (2005, p. 591) has noted, for example, Nye's notion of attraction is metatheoretically problematic because he theorises attraction as being at once natural and socially constructed. Nye (2004, p. x, 111) implies that certain values, such as 'democracy, human rights and individual opportunities' are universal and naturally attractive but at the same time he emphasises the need to create shared values through public diplomacy: 'soft power means getting others to want the same outcomes you want'. Bially Mattern's (2005, p. 583) alternative conceptualisation of attraction in world politics defines it as constructed through representational force – 'a nonphysical but nevertheless coercive form of power that is exercised through language'. More specifically, she argues that narratives employ representational force when they are organised in a way that threatens the audience's subjectivity if the audience does not submit, in words and actions, to the viewpoint of the

³⁹ See also the Special Issue of *South Asian Popular Culture* on 'Indian Cinema Abroad: Historiography of Transnational Cinematic Exchanges', (2006) Vol. 4, No. 2.

⁴⁰ Not to mention the war on Iraq, although to be fair, this began after the publication of Nye's book.

author of the narrative (Bially Mattern, 2005, p. 596). Thus, where Nye suggests that an international system ordered by soft power would avoid the destructive competitiveness of a system organised by hard power, Bially Mattern (2005, p. 611) argues that where soft power relies on representational force it ‘promotes a “power politics of identity” in which domination is played out through the representations that narrate “reality”’. I argue in this chapter that India provides a good illustration of the way in which representational force works as ‘soft power’ in foreign policy discourse. In particular, I suggest that India draws on a narrative of its civilisational influence to fashion itself as an influential but benevolent force in the world.

5.3.2 India’s Civilisational Influence

According to Hegel (1956, p. 142), ‘The spread of Indian culture is pre-historical, for history is limited to that which makes an essential epoch in the development of spirit. On the whole, the diffusion of Indian culture is only a dumb, deedless expansion; that is, it presents no political action’. Hegel regarded India as being dominated by a feminine imagination, an inferior form of reason than thought – which is the product of the masculine reason of spirit. Lacking the active will to order the world, ‘the people of India’, he argued, ‘have achieved no foreign conquests but have been on every occasion vanquished themselves. And as in this silent way, Northern India has been a centre of emigration, productive of merely physical diffusion’ (Hegel, 1956, p. 142).

Hegel’s ideas were the product of a combination of Utilitarian and Romantic discourses on Indian civilisation both of which inscribed India as a stagnant civilisation that lacked the will to order the world. British Orientalist scholars tended to agree. According to Arthur MacDonell, for instance, ‘early India wrote no history because it never made any’ (Quoted

in Lal, 2003a, pp. 57-8). French Orientalists thought differently. The work of French Indologists like Sylvain Levi, Jules Bloch, Jean Przyluski and George Coedes on Hindu or Hindu-Buddhist monuments in Cambodia and Java and on Sanskrit and Pali texts and inscriptions found in various locations in South East Asia drew a picture of a flourishing, dynamic Indian civilisation (Bayly, 2004, pp. 713-4). These scholars saw a parallel between the French *mission civilisatrice* – which they contrasted to what they saw as the narrow and racist imperial ideology of the British – and ancient India’s civilising dynamic in Asia. For Sylvain Levi, the far East was ancient India’s Mediterranean (Bayly, 2004, pp. 714-5).

This was a claim that was enthusiastically promoted by a group of scholars in Calcutta, who in 1927, on the eve of the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore’s voyage to Southeast Asia, formed the Greater India Society. Tagore’s contemporaries gave him the title *biswakabi* (global poet) because of his penchant for global ocean voyages (Bose, 2006, p. 233). His voyage to Southeast Asia, at the invitation of archaeologists in Java, was a ‘*tirthajatra* [pilgrimage] to see the signs of the history of India’s entry into the universal’ and while there he aimed ‘to collect source materials there for the history of India and to establish a permanent arrangement for research in this field’ (Quoted in Bose, 2006, p. 235). One of Tagore’s travelling companions, the philologist Suniti Kumar Chatterji, became a key figure in the Greater India Society and Tagore himself was listed in the Society’s publications as its honorary *Purodha* (spiritual head) (Bose, 2006, p. 245; Bayly, 2004, p. 710). Among the discoveries that amazed Tagore in Indonesia was the pervasive but distinctly different ‘Hindu’ religious sentiment on the island of Bali, the presence in Balinese vocabulary of Sanskrit words, the prevalence of Indian modes of envisioning the unity of natural and sacred space, and the unique ways in which the Indian epics

Ramayana and *Mahabharata* had been interpreted and suffused the dance and drama of even its Muslim inhabitants (Bose, 2006, pp. 254-7).

Tagore's pride in the glory of India's transcendence of its boundaries was at the same time marked by a concerted attempt to downplay instances of Indian military aggression against Southeast Asia (Bose, 2006, pp. 259-60). Instead, he emphasised the idea of cultural exchange and depicted Southeast Asians as active historical agents. He made no effort to hierarchise Indian culture as a superior or purer cultural source. Moreover, rather than treating India as a monolith Tagore highlighted the influence of certain regions in the spread of cultural influence. His purpose was not to buttress a territorially-bounded vision of an Indian nation-state with a sense of historical achievement. Indeed, in lectures on his voyages abroad he railed against the evils of government by the territorial 'Nation':

During the evolution of the Nation the moral culture of brotherhood was limited by geographical boundaries, because at that time those boundaries were true. Now they have become imaginary lines of tradition divested of the qualities of real obstacles. So the time has come when man's moral nature must deal with this great fact with all seriousness or perish. The first impulse of this change of circumstance has been the churning up of man's baser passions of greed and cruel hatred. If this persists indefinitely, and armaments go on exaggerating themselves to unimaginable absurdities and machines and storehouses envelop this fair earth with their dirt and smoke and ugliness, then it will end in a conflagration of suicide. Therefore man will have to exert all his power of love and clarity of vision to make another great moral adjustment which will comprehend the whole world of men and not merely the fractional groups of nationality (Tagore, 2002, pp. 110-11).

Instead, as Sugata Bose (2006, p. 233) suggests, Tagore imagined the interregional arena of the Indian Ocean as a common cultural milieu that possessed a distinctive unity. Speaking in Japan, he said:

I cannot but bring to your mind those days when the whole of Asia from Burma to Japan was united with India in the closest tie of friendship, the only natural tie which can exist between nations. There

was a living communication of hearts, a nervous system evolved through which messages ran between us about the deepest needs of humanity. We did not stand in fear of each other; we had not to arm ourselves to keep each other in check; our relation was not that of self-interest, or exploration and spoliation of each other's pocket; ideas and ideals were exchanged, gifts of the highest love were offered and taken; no difference of languages and customs hindered us in approaching each other heart to heart; no pride of race or insolent consciousness of superiority, physical or mental, marred our relations...(Tagore, 2002, pp. 11-12).

The aims and ideas of Tagore's followers in the Greater India Society, among them Kumar Chatterji, R.C. Majumdar, P.C. Bagchi and Kalidas Nag, were more narrowly nationalist and India-centric. Like Tagore these scholars emphasised India's cultural expansion rather than military conquests and were not interested in violence or authoritarian state power like the movements for a Greater Germany or a Greater Syria. However, rather than highlighting cultural interchange their emphasis lay in presenting India as a civilising force diffused through an ancient cultural colonialism that stretched into Burma, Java, Cambodia, Bali, Vietnam, and sometimes, to societies in the Pacific and the Buddhist world including Ceylon, Tibet, central Asia and Japan (Bayly, 2004, p. 713). They did so to repudiate the image of Indians, and Bengalis in particular, as effeminate, other-worldly dreamers and instead represented them as men of action. At the same time, however, they sought to distinguish India's benign cultural colonialism from the armed conquest of the British and the Muslims (Bayly, 2004, p. 721). Take, for instance, the writings of Phanindranath Bose:

The ancient Hindus of yore were not simply a spiritual people, always busy with mystical problems and never troubling themselves with the questions of 'this world' ...India also has its Napoleons and Charlemagnes, its Bismarcks and Machiavellis. But the real charm of Indian history does not consist in these aspirants after universal power, but in its peaceful and benevolent Imperialism—a unique thing in the history of mankind. The colonizers of India did not go with sword and fire in their hands; they used . . . the weapons of their superior culture and religion [to bring] the world under

their sway. Wherever they went, they conquered the world through their culture... (Quoted in Bayly, 2004, p. 712).

Bose's vision of Greater India was an especially Hindu supremacist one – his major concern was highlighting Hinduism's proselytising initiatives and showing that the diffusion of 'Hindu' culture continuing even after the 'coming of the Moslems' which, according some Orientalist scholarship, was when India began to stagnate (Bayly, 2004, pp. 724-726). It must be noted that not all of Bose's colleagues shared this same preoccupation. His, however, was the strand of thinking that the Hindu nationalist leader V.D. Savarkar (1938, p. 152-3) was drawing on when he declared in *Hindutva*:

Let our colonists continue unabated their labours of founding a Greater India, a Mahabharat, to the best of their capacities and contribute all that is best in our civilization to the upbuilding of Humanity...The only geographical limits of Hindutva are the limits of our earth!

Likewise, in a speech in 1937 he spoke of,

...our co-religionists and country-men abroad who have been building a greater Hindusthan without the noise of drums and trumpets in Africa, America, Mauritius and such other parts of the world and also to those who as in the island of Bali are still holding out as remnants of the ancient world Empire of our Hindu Race. Their fortunes too are inextricably bound up with the freedom and strength and greatness of Bharatvarsha [India] which is the...Fatherland and the Holyland of Hindudom as a whole (Savarkar, 1949, p. 3).

Here Savarkar was connecting the earlier Indian forays to foreign countries with contemporary Indian labour migration. This was a concern he shared with Greater India scholars like Kalidas Nag who rejected the notion that the Indian diaspora should develop pan-Asian solidarities and loyalties. Instead Nag saw the Indian diaspora as the future agents of an Indian-led quest for Asian cultural renewal (Bayly, 2004, p. 729).

Nehru's (1946, p. 201-2) notion of Greater India combined Tagore's emphasis on cultural exchange with the Hindu supremacists' focus on strengthening nationalist pride in Indian civilisation's historic accomplishments:

During the past quarter of a century a great deal of light has been thrown on the history of this widespread area in south-east Asia, which is sometimes referred to as Greater India.

...From the first century of the Christian era onwards wave after wave of Indian colonists spread east and south-east reaching Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Siam, Cambodia and Indo-China.

Nehru (1946, p. 207) argued that from an examination of ancient records we could see Indian civilisation,

bubbling over with energy and spreading out far and wide, carrying not only her thought but her other ideals, her art, her trade, her language and literature, and her methods of government. She was not stagnant, or standing aloof, or isolated and cut off by barriers and perilous seas.

So that there is no hint of this being Hegel's 'dumb, deedless expansion', Nehru (1946, p. 202) emphasised that 'the most remarkable feature of these ventures is that they were evidently organized by the state' and 'situated on strategic points and on important trade routes'. Moreover, 'the military exploits of the early Indian colonists are important as throwing light on certain aspects of the Indian character and genius which have hitherto not been appreciated' (Nehru, 1946, p. 201). However, like both Tagore and the Greater India scholars Nehru was cautious not to over-emphasise the military nature of India's expansionism. While the 'early colonizing ventures of the Indian people' were driven by 'trade and adventure and the urge for expansion' these 'early colonists settled down, more followed and thus a peaceful penetration went on. There was a fusion of the Indians with the races they found there and also the evolution of a mixed culture' (Nehru, 1946, p. 203).

Sylvain Levi's influence on Nehru's thinking on Greater India was evident. 'Just as Hellenism spread from Greece to the countries of the Mediterranean and in Western Asia', Nehru wrote, 'India's cultural influence spread to many countries and left its powerful impress on them'. Like Kalidas Nag before him⁴¹ he quoted Levi approvingly:

"From Persia to the Chinese Sea," writes Sylvain Levi, "from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time and to hold her place amongst the great nations summarising and symbolising the spirit of Humanity" (Nehru, 1946, p. 210).

However, unlike Nag who described a rather one-sided process of 'Indianisation', Nehru emphasised the agency of the recipients of India's 'cultural colonisation'. Writing about the expansion of Indian culture and art, for instance, Nehru (1946, p. 210) said: 'In each of these countries⁴², Indian art encounters a different racial genius, a different local environment, and under their modifying influence it takes on a different garb'.

For Nehru (1946, pp. 209-10), Indian civilisation's ancient past had a contemporary relevance:

Everywhere an intense and narrow nationalism has grown, looking to itself and distrustful of others; there is fear and hatred of European domination and yet a desire to emulate Europe and America; there is often some contempt for India because of her dependent condition; and yet behind all this there is a feeling of respect and friendship for India, for old memories endure and people have not forgotten that there was a time when India was a mother country to these and nourished them with rich fare from her own treasure-house.

⁴¹ See Bayly (2004, pp. 722-3).

⁴² China, Japan, central Asia, Tibet, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Java

We see here then, a clear hierarchy – ‘India was a mother country’ – that differentiates Nehru’s ideas of Greater India from Tagore’s, even though he shared Tagore’s concerns for building friendships across national boundaries based on what Faisal Fatehali Devji (2005, p. 86) has called an ‘antiquated geographical imaginary’.

Gandhi expressed no interest in the idea of a historical Greater India or in uncovering the ‘history of India’s entry into the universal’ like Tagore. He once argued that India had ‘been aptly called the nursery of many blended cultures and civilizations’ and often expressed the sentiment that India should be a source of hope for the whole world, and for Asia in particular (Gandhi, 1999f, p. 408). Indeed, such was India’s responsibility that ‘If India fails, Asia dies’ (Gandhi, 1999f, p. 408). However, these sentiments had little to do with advocating any sort of leadership role for India or with painting India as a civilisational fount. Rather, they should be read in the context of Gandhi’s critique of modern civilisation and his plea for India to be the vanguard against its encroachment in Asia. Still, Gandhi too drew from an antiquated geographical imaginary that traversed the Indian Ocean. As Devji (2005, pp. 85-6) points out, from the title of his earliest work *Hind Swaraj* it is immediately apparent that Gandhi’s geographical imagination is something quite different to the official territoriality of the British empire. Gandhi’s use of the Arabic word *Hind* to refer to India, even though it was a term that had become archaic in both his native Gujarati and in English, indicates the continued relevance in his mind of a geographical imaginary derived from pre-colonial Indian Ocean trade routes.

Prior to 1300 Indian commerce was mainly concerned with China, Central Asia and West Asia and after 1300 India expanded its trade with Southeast Asia and East Africa (Subrahmanyam, 1995, p. 754; Frank, 1998). By the 15th century the Indian Ocean trading network was dominated by several port city/states that stretched between Melaka in

Southeast Asia to Aden in West Asia (Subrahmanyam, 1995, p. 756). Apart from occasional instances of piracy the Indian Ocean trading network was mostly peaceful, for it operated on the tacit understanding that no party would attack the ships of its competitors. Until the arrival of the Portuguese in the late 15th century, no power had attempted to exercise dominance over the network by force. The Portuguese, however, brought with them a culture of naval warfare and, unable to compete on a commercial basis, attempted to assert a proprietorial right over the waters of the Indian Ocean (Ghosh, 1992, pp. 286-8; Lal, 2003b, pp. 280-281).

As Sanjay Subrahmanyam (1995, p. 763) has shown, Gujarat was the linchpin of the western Indian Ocean trade in its heyday. Pursuing ‘not the abstract routes of colonial capital so much as the traditional ones of Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean’, Gandhi followed the journey of his Gujarati forebears (Gandhi was a *baniya*, one of the most prominent merchant communities) to Africa in search of work (Devji, 2005, p. 86). *Hind Swaraj* was written en route to South Africa where he worked as a lawyer for two decades and it was his time there that clarified his ideas on nationalism and resistance through *satyagraha*. It was in dealing with the fragmented Indian diaspora and building relationships with the Chinese diaspora in South Africa that Gandhi learnt the importance of negotiating unity by accommodating difference rather than resorting to mere transcendence (Bose, 2006, pp. 152-170). Devji (2005, p. 86) argues that for Gandhi ‘the Indian presence and struggle in South Africa seemed for him to exist in the same imperial-international (or Muslim-Gujarati) world as the Indian presence and struggle in India itself’. Bose (2006, p. 168) suggests that like many Indians before him, Gandhi ‘...extended his regional homeland abroad and connected it back to a larger, extraterritorial conception of India...’.

Is it any wonder then, that the first instance of mass politics in the history of Indian nationalism under Gandhi's leadership was the Khilafat movement of 1919? The Khilafat movement sought the protection of the sultan of the defeated Ottoman Empire who claimed to be the caliph – the chief source of Islamic authority – and, thus, fused territorial nationalism with extra-territorial religiously informed universalism. As Devji (2005) and Skaria (2002b, pp. 976-979) argue, it was this movement that provided Gandhi with the first avenue to put into practice his politics of friendship, one of the facets of his 'neighbourly nationalism', that I discussed in the second chapter. For Gandhi, the Khilafat issue presented an opportunity for the creation of a lasting friendship between Hindus and Muslims – a friendship based on absolute difference but full equality – and he was adamant that this friendship be unconditional and not dependent on some sort of bargain:

I place the Khilafat issue above all others. I discovered the weapon of non-co-operation in the form we know while thinking about the Khilafat. I feel very much about this issue because I am a staunch Hindu. If I wish to see my religion protected against seven crores of Muslims, I must be ready even to die for the protection of their religion. Similarly, for the Hindus as well freedom will remain a meaningless ideal until Hindus and Muslims develop unity of heart; till such time, cow-protection will remain an impossibility.⁴³ I do not believe that the Muslims will betray us once their end has been achieved. Those who believe in religion do not betray anyone. I do not know of a single instance in history of a great sacrifice by the Hindus having gone unrewarded. What was done before now was a kind of bargaining. There is no place whatever for bargaining in our dealings today. The Hindus should help the Muslims as a matter of duty and look to God for reward (Gandhi, 1999c, p. 288).

Elaborating any further on Gandhi's politics of friendship would take us too far afield, however, the purpose of raising it here is to show that like Nehru and Savarkar, Gandhi also had a notion of a Greater India even if he did not articulate it as such. Where Nehru

⁴³ Muslim leaders had made repeated offers of Muslim renunciation of cow slaughter in accordance with Hindu practice in return for support for the Khilafat movement.

and Savarkar's visions of Greater India were influenced by a territorially-bound nationalism, Gandhi's had more in common with Tagore's aspiration for an extraterritorial universalist anti-colonialism.

5.4 India, Asia and Panchsheel

In the immediate post-independence period South Asia was not identified as a distinct geopolitical area because, as Nehru (1961, p. 42) put it, '...our neighbours now are all the countries of the world so that we cannot relate our foreign policy just to a few countries around us...'. The countries that now constitute South Asia were subsumed within the larger category of 'Asia' and Nehru's emphasis, at this time, was the creation of a pan-Asian identity based on the shared experience of colonialism and exploitation by Europe and a pre-colonial history of cultural exchange. He opined on the latter in a speech in 1953. 'Asianism', Nehru (1999a, p. 559) said, was 'not a very beautiful word' and to put the diverse countries of Asia 'into one basket and call it 'Asianism' has no meaning to me'. However, 'it has a certain meaning to me when I think along different lines' for 'apart from geography which brings these countries nearer to each other...[it is] cultural and other association, sometimes extending to two or three thousand years or more, which naturally has brought us nearer to each other and made to us some extent understand each other, there is the major fact of common experience for a long period of time for these countries of Asia – common experience, common suffering, being subject to domination for a long period'. As a result, 'we have drawn mentally, you might say psychologically and morally, nearer to one another'. What underpinned this drive for a pan-Asian identity and why did it fall by the wayside?

According to A. Appadorai ‘the first (ever) expression of an Asian sentiment’ can be ‘traced to August 1926 when the Asian delegations to the non-official International Conference for Peace held at Bierville declared in a memorandum that Asia must have its rightful place in the consideration of world problems’ (Quoted in Chakrabarty, 2005, p. 4814). The idea took further shape at the first Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in March 1947 and at the Asian-African Conference at Bandung in 1955. In his address to the Asian Relations Conference Nehru defined Asia broadly and in keeping with pre-colonial Indian Ocean trade routes by including Egypt and the Arab countries of West Asia, Iran, and the countries of Southeast Asia as well as Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Burma and Sri Lanka (Nehru, 1961, p. 249).

Gandhi (1999h, p. 222) also spoke at the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 where he said that wisdom had originally flowed to the West from the East and urged Asia ‘to conquer the West through the love of truth’. If, however, as I suggested earlier Gandhi was working within an antiquated geographical imagination and aspired to an extra-territorial universalism, the force of Nehru’s Asianism was often blunted by of his adherence to the modern geopolitical imaginary of territorial nation-states striving to achieve the standards of ‘development’ set by the West. At the Bandung Conference, Nehru insisted that participants be fully-fledged and accredited nation-states and refused to accept the equal involvement of anti-colonial movements such as the ones still fighting imperial dominance in Malaya, Vietnam and various parts of Africa (Bose, 2006, p. 281).

Moreover, contending with the desire to revitalise old civilisational links were fears about India reverting to its pre-modern past and these were projected onto Asia. In Nehru’s speeches we find a familiar narrative in which ‘Asia’ could easily be replaced with ‘India’. Just as he had previously argued of India, Nehru (1961, p. 251) argued that Asia’s purpose

was to promote 'peace and progress all over the world'. If India's future was Asia's future then so was its past:

Far too long have we of Asia have been petitioners in Western courts and chancelleries. That story must now belong to the past. We propose to stand on our own legs and to co-operate with all others who are prepared to co-operate with us. We do not intend to be the playthings of others (Nehru, 1961, p. 251).

Like India, Asia had been lost in time but was now striving toward modernity:

In Asia we have been kept down and are now trying to catch up with others who are ahead of us. We have been engrossed in things of the past and time has passed us by. We have not been able to keep pace with it and so we must run now (Nehru, 1961, p. 264).

He then, however, turned to highlighting Asia's postcolonial difference and, like Gandhi, pointed to the disastrous consequences that the hypermasculine desire to dominate the world has had for Europe. There was a 'basic difference' Nehru (1961, p. 262) asserted, '... in the European approach to problems and the Asian approach' for Asia had comparatively less of the 'fear complex' that was driving European power politics. As for the recent aggressiveness and expansionism of Japan, which did not quite fit with this 'Asian approach' Nehru (1942, p. 457), like Tagore (2002) before him, saw this as partly due to Japan's Westernisation: 'Japan not only followed Europe in industrial methods, but also in imperialistic aggression'.

Nehru (1961, p. 250) stressed the equal status of all countries in Asia and, in a speech in 1947, emphasised that India had no desire for leadership. Nonetheless, he gave India a central position in this Asian identity:

apart from the fact that India herself is emerging into freedom and independence, she is the natural centre and focal point of the many forces at work in Asia. Geography is a compelling factor, and

geographically she is so situated as to be the meeting point of Western and Northern and Eastern and South-East Asia.

As a result, 'streams of culture' had flowed into India and also had spread out from India and 'influenced vast numbers of people' (Nehru, 1961, p. 250). He reiterated these sentiments two years later in 1949 in a speech to the Constituent Assembly when he argued that India 'inevitably has to play a very important part in Asia' but 'not because of any ambition of hers, but because of geography, because of history and because of so many other things' (Nehru, 1961, p. 22). Thus, as he said in 1949, although it was foolish to suggest that India assume the leadership of Asia, 'a certain special responsibility is cast on India. India realizes it, and other countries realize it also. The responsibility is not necessarily for leadership, but for taking the initiative sometimes and helping others to cooperate' (Nehru, 1961, p. 44). Thus, Nehru cast India in a maternal, nurturing role, rather than a paternal, disciplinarian role. A private note outlining how independent India should behave in the United Nations General Assembly reveals that this careful inscription of India as a leader rather than as a facilitator was made with an awareness that any talk of India's leadership of Asia 'does not help us in any way and merely irritates others and creates suspicion' (Nehru, 1988, p. 611). Nevertheless, Nehru (1988, p. 611) states in this note that he regarded India as 'the natural leader of South East Asia⁴⁴ if not of some other parts of Asia also' for 'there is at present no other possible leadership in Asia and any foreign leadership will not be tolerated'.

Despite this caution it seems that Indian pretensions to leadership in Asia were less than subtle. According to the representative of the Philippines to the Bandung Conference in

⁴⁴ It is not clear which countries Nehru meant by South East Asia. He does, however, omit China, which he places in a separate category with the Far East.

1955, Carlos Romulo, Nehru's 'pronounced propensity to be dogmatic, impatient, irascible, and unyielding ... alienated the goodwill of many delegates [at Bandung]' (Quoted in Chakrabarty, 2005, p. 4813). For him, Nehru typified 'the affectations of cultural superiority induced by a conscious identification with an ancient civilisation which has come to be the hallmark of Indian representatives to international conferences' (Quoted in Chakrabarty, 2005, p. 4813). On the other hand, it must be noted that Romulo had covertly offered to act as the principle protagonist of US concerns at the conference and had a vested interest in presenting an image of discord at Bandung (Jones, 2005, pp. 857-8). For the United States, which was grappling domestically with the issue of race, Bandung raised the prospect of a racial division between Asia and the West which, it was feared, would be used by China and, thus, the Soviet Union to further the cause of communism (Jones, 2005).

Rather than being attributable to a sense of cultural superiority perhaps Nehru's drive to exert influence in Asia was driven by his fear that postcolonial India would not succeed as modern nation-state if it could not play a leading role in the world. Consider the following passage, taken from a speech in the United States in 1949 when Nehru (1961, p. 595) once again brought up the issue of parallels being drawn between the roles of the US and India in their respective regions:

I have been asked whether it had struck me that there might be a certain parallels between the United States in the early years and India. It has, in the sense that a big country grew up here. Certain relatively smaller countries were around it – to the south especially – and economically and otherwise they were influenced greatly by the presence of this dominating country in the north. So I was asked how the presence of a big country like India affected the surrounding smaller countries and whether it had the same type of effect. The parallel is not exact. Nevertheless, there is much in it. Whether we want to or not, in India we have to play an important role. It is not to our liking, because we have enough burdens of our own and we do not wish to add to them. But, as I said, we

just cannot choose in the matter. India, in Southern, Western and South-Eastern Asia, has to play a distinctive and important role. If she is not capable of playing it properly, then she will just fade out.

In the passage above we see the reiteration of particular narrative about the decline of Indian civilisation. The idea that if India does not play an important role in Asia ‘she will just fade out’ was previously expressed in Nehru’s *Discovery of India*. India’s deterioration, Nehru (1946, p. 209) argued, was because ‘the more she withdrew into her shell, intent on preserving herself, uncontaminated by external influences, the more she lost that inspiration and her life became increasingly a dull round of meaningless activities all centred in the dead past’. Thus, not only was India’s leading role in Asia due to its civilisational influence, but the incorporation of the narrative of India’s civilisational decline into its post-independence foreign policy discourse produced a type of practical geopolitical reasoning in which India’s success and security as a modern state was dependent on it playing a ‘distinctive and important’ role in Asia. This privileging of India meant that pan-Asianism culminated as less of a common identity within a shared interpretive framework and more as a way for India to enact its own postcolonial identity.

For Nehru the basis of India’s attraction in Asia and elsewhere lay in the strength of one of its ideas in particular, that is the concept of Panchsheel or the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. Adapted from Buddhist philosophy, in which it was a code of personal ethics, and also espoused by Indonesia in a different form as the basic principles of government, Nehru’s Panchsheel – as noted in the previous chapter – was initially enunciated as the basis for relations between India and China in the 1954 trade agreement between India and China on Tibet. Nehru (1961, p. 100) argued that Panchsheel was about more than just the maintenance of political sovereignty. Rather,

this idea of Panchsheel lays down the very important truth that each nation must ultimately fend for itself. I am not thinking in terms of military fending, but in terms of striving intellectually, morally, spiritually, and in terms of opening out our windows to ideas from others, and learning from the experience of others. Each country should look upon such an endeavour on the part of the other with sympathy and friendly understanding and without any interference or imposition.

Panchsheel, according to Nehru (1961, p. 101), 'is not a new idea for us in India. It has been our way of life and is as old as our thought and culture'. Thus, Panchsheel was a product of Indian civilisation and the attempt to reintroduce it to the modern world was a way of enacting India's postcolonial difference in an era of Cold War hypermasculinity when military hard power dominated world politics.

Nehru (1961, p. 68) acknowledged that the policy had not won universal support, however, he was convinced that the absolute correctness of the idea meant that, 'I can assure this House that even though many Governments may not publicly approve of Panchsheel, people in many countries have been attracted to it more and more'. Indeed, 'even people who do not accept it...still pay tribute to it' because, 'there is no other way nations can behave to each other. The alternative would be conflict and the dominion of one over the other' (Nehru, 1961, p. 105). Pursuing this line of argument in a speech in the Lok Sabha in 1955, he said:

Am I going to be told by any country that this is disagreeable? If they are for aggression let them say so; similarly, let them say if they are for internal interference in other countries' affairs – much of it is taking place, I know but nobody recognizes that; nobody admits to that rather – I do say that the Panchsila are a challenge of Asia to the rest of the world...Let each country search its mind and answer whether it stands or non-aggression and non-interference (Nehru, 2001a, p. 314).

For Nehru (2001a, p. 314), 'either you admit coexistence in the modern world or you admit conflict and co-destruction. That is the alternative to it'.

Likewise, in speech in 1956 he argued that peaceful co-existence was equivalent to democracy and civilisation: 'Restraint in behaviour, restraint towards one's neighbor, consideration for the neighbour is the badge of civilization' (Nehru, 1980a, p. 380). In both these speeches Nehru was employing what Bially Mattern calls representational force. He was attempting to secure India's postcolonial Self by leaving the audience, in this case those who were not favourable to Panchsheel (for example, the United States), with no room to refuse India's representation of 'reality'. As a representation of attraction, Panchsheel was linked to a representation that opposed peaceful co-existence to war, destruction and barbarism. Hence, countries that did not subscribe to Panchsheel were threatened with being categorised as aggressors, imperialists and war-mongers.

The pinnacle of Panchsheel's influence in Asia came shortly after it was enunciated in 1954 during India's involvement in the Geneva Conference which was convened to find a resolution to the first Indochina war. India was elected to lead the International Supervisory Commissions charged with the task of implementing the Geneva agreements. On the one hand, for Nehru (1961, p. 401) the Geneva Conference was another reminder of the 'territorial, racial and political imbalance in the modern world' since even though they were concerned with the countries and peoples of Asia, the main participants were non-Asian states. On the other hand, 'the historic role of this conference was that it was the alternative or the deterrent to what threatened to lead to the third world war' (Nehru, 1961, p. 402). The influence of Panchsheel was evident for:

It is a notable feature of the Indo-China settlement that it provides for the establishment of the independence of the three States – Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia – and seeks to safeguard their sovereignty on the pledges of mutual respect of each other's territorial integrity, freedom from interference in each other's internal affairs, and the undertaking not to enter into military alliances

with other States. Thus, the Indo-China States bid fair to find a place in collective peace rather than in war blocs (Nehru, 1961, p. 403).

Moreover, the Conference was considered recognition of India's leadership in the world for, even though India had not been a formal participant in the Conference and had not sought a place on the Commissions, 'a place for India on the Commissions was proposed by every participant and on every occasion. Finally, India's chairmanship of the Commissions became one of the necessities for a settlement' (Nehru, 1961, p. 403).

This optimism, however, did not last for long. The establishment of the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in Manila in September 1954 had, according to Nehru (2001a, p. 307), 'upset any ideas of peace in that area that previously existed or any ideas of security and the whole conception lying behind the Geneva Conference which was a conception...of coexistence'. During talks with Mao Tse-tung, Nehru (2000, p. 9) said that he regarded SEATO to be the US's ploy to counter the Geneva Agreements – to which the US was not a signatory – and re-establish its strength and influence in Asia. Indeed, he argued that the 'Manila Treaty is inclined dangerously in the direction of spheres of influence to be exercised by powerful countries' and as a result, although, 'we have thought that one of the major areas of peace might be South-East Asia' the Treaty 'takes up that very area which might be an area of peace and converts it almost into an area of potential war' (Nehru, 1961, p. 89). In a thinly veiled reference to the US, Nehru (1961, p. 90) explicitly tied SEATO to a form of neo-colonialism: 'in the South-East Asia Treaty there are certain colonial powers, certain powers not colonial in themselves but interested in colonialism, and certain associated countries, all of which try to decide or control the fate of this great area of South-East Asia'.

The deepest blow to establishing Asia as a 'zone of peace' though, was of course the India-China war of 1962 in which India's original counterpart in Panchsheel 'betrayed' the five principles in the worst possible way. Nehru may have expected Panchsheel to be ineffective with the United States, since its conception of its Self depended on a different definition of morality – one linked to anti-communism rather than anti-colonialism – but China's behaviour was particularly affronting. It was assumed that the Tibet agreement had been an acknowledgement that India had established a measure of attractiveness and influence over China just as it had with Indonesia and Burma whose subjectivities were dependent on similar ideas of moral righteousness in world politics. In this case, however, India miscalculated the extent to which the non-use of force to resolve conflicts was central to China's constitution of its Self.

5.5 Family Ties

How did the main countries now identified as constituting South Asia – Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan – fare during Nehru's drive for a pan-Asian identity? From his extensive interviews with the Defence Minister, Krishna Menon, Michael Brecher (1968, pp. 329-330) concluded that Menon did not recognise South Asia as a distinctive subordinate system and thought of it only as an extension of India's role in the world as an arbiter of nonalignment and peace. However, an analysis of the foreign policy discourse shows that Panchsheel did not form the basis of India's representation of its attraction when it came to most of these countries. Instead, the discourse emphasised an attraction rooted in kinship which did not rely on representational force but rather assumed the existence of an attraction derived from a 'pre-existing common lifeworld' (Bially Mattern, 2005, p. 608).

India's sisterly affection for Nepal was expressed in a speech given on the eve of Nehru's departure from Kathmandu after his first visit to Nepal in 1951: 'Mountain-girl Nepal, daughter of the Himalayas, young sister of India, I have come here at last' (Nehru, 1951, p. 173). In a speech in 1956 he argued that so strong were the permanent bonds of culture that held Nepal and India together that it was not necessary to emphasise Panchsheel (Nehru, 1961, p. 438). Reiterating these sentiments in another speech in 1959 Nehru (1961, p. 439) argued that in 'the present-day world we try to make friends with all countries. But naturally, our relations should be closer and our ties stronger with those countries which are our old friends, companions and neighbours'. Moreover, 'it is necessary that our hearts should be clear, that we should look at each other with the eyes of love, and trust each other'.

Yet, amidst this discourse of familial affection is a familiar narrative of India's vulnerability to invasion. A geopolitical reasoning inherited from British India's policy-makers which placed much emphasis on buffer states to ward off threats from the north is clearly evident in India's discourse on Nepal, with which it signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in July 1950 agreeing to joint consultation on security threats to either country. The Himalayas loomed large in Nehru's (1951, p. 173) geopolitical imagining of familial identity and he tied this identity to the survival of India and Nepal as independent nation-states:

My mother country, India, is the offspring of the mountains and the sea that surround her and she has inherited something of their immemorial character. The Himalayas are the guardians and the sentinels of India and Nepal and their white capped peaks welcome friends and are a warning to those of hostile intent. With these common and perpetual guardians, the fate of India and Nepal is linked closely together. Both of us must preserve this precious heritage which guards our freedom.

Similarly, a note written by the Indian President Rajendra Prasad (1952, p. 233) attempts to distinguish between the geopolitical uses made of Nepal by the British and India's interest in Nepal by emphasising the familial bonds between the two, this time using the language of race:

The people of Nepal and India are one, and except some who are of Mongol origin all Nepalis are Indians. In a situation like this it would be wrong to think of Nepal and India as separate entities. I told him [the King of Nepal] that so far as the Indian Government was concerned it couldn't think of such a proposition since that would imply that India wanted to swallow Nepal. The Indian Government wouldn't even dream of it, but as a neighbour we are duty bound to help Nepal and we will help....Buddhism travelled to Tibet and China from Nepal. So the country is of great historical importance. It was always regarded as part of India, but the British held it as an independent country to serve their ends.

In a speech in 1960, in the presence of the Prime Minister of Nepal, Nehru's (1961, p. 439) expressions of sisterly affection transformed into brotherly love: 'The relationship between Nepal and India is age-old, based on geography, religion, culture, customs...It is there like the relationship between brothers. The bond of love between them is inviolable'. Despite his re-inscription of Nepal from a 'mountain-girl' to a manly state Nehru had become increasingly frustrated with Nepal both for its seeming inability to follow the lead of India in the contemporary era by donning the masculine garb of modernity. As he explained in a letter to Clement Attlee in 1950 in the midst of Nepal's leadership crisis:

India has no designs on Nepal's independence and seeks no special advantage for herself. But neither India nor Nepal can escape geography or resist the forces of modern political trends. All that India seeks is to ensure Nepal's security and her own by timely and wise adjustment of old institutions and usages to new needs (Nehru, 1993, p. 381).

In this regard India's civilisational influence, it seemed, was failing to have an impact. He wrote in a letter in 1950: 'On the advent of independence in India, many people in Nepal

and many Nepalese in India naturally looked towards India and thought that our advice would result in substantial changes there' (Nehru, 1993, p. 365). Yet this natural attraction between the Nepali people toward India was not reflected by their government for, although the Nepali government was at first apprehensive about India, once they 'realized that we would confine ourselves to advice only, they lost that feeling of apprehension and ignored what we told them' (Nehru, 1993, p. 365). Indeed, it was clear to Nehru (1993, p. 370) that 'the Rana regime in Nepal is not only backward and reactionary in the extreme, but is also inefficient and incapable of any kind of progress'.

The end of the authoritarian rule of the Rana family in 1951 was initially seen as an unmitigated success for India and an opportunity to exercise its influence more effectively. In a cable to Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, India's first Minister for Communications, Nehru (1993, p. 399) wrote:

Authoritarian regime is broken up and process of change to full popular government begun. World recognizes this as India's victory. Whole set-up and our relations with Nepal changed. It would be wrong in not treating it as such victory and thus minimizing its significance and our capacity to influence future developments.

Yet by 1954 Nehru (1999b, p. 452) was again disillusioned: 'Nepal has disturbed me. There are two aspects of this. One is the total incompetence and corruption of the administrative apparatus. Nothing seems to improve there'. Moreover: 'American activities there have increased greatly and are definitely aimed at creating anti-India feeling and encouraging reactionary elements there' (Nehru, 1999b, p. 452). Nehru's concern about American, and to a lesser extent British, interference in Nepal were expressed repeatedly from the mid-1950s and fed into a discourse of danger in which foreign powers were actively working against India's influence and thus instigating instability. However, in this case, the interference was actively being encouraged by Nepal's leaders. It was suggested

that India's commitment to non-interference in Nepal's internal affairs was being exploited by the various political factions in Nepal to develop contacts with the Americans and strengthen their challenges to the Nepalese government (Nehru, 1999a, p. 586).

Moreover, India's insistent request to the Nepalese government that 'any treaty of Nepal with a foreign country should be considered in cooperation with us and after reference to us' was repeatedly ignored (Nehru, 1999b, pp. 462-3). A friendship treaty between Nepal and France, for instance, was discussed in 1954 without India's knowledge (Nehru, 1999b, p. 462). Further, a cable sent to the Indian Ambassador in Moscow from Subimal Dutt (1956, pp. 388-9), the Foreign Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs in July 1956, expressed his and Nehru's surprise and exasperation at Nepal's move to allow the Soviet Union to establish an embassy in Kathmandu without consulting India:

the Nepalese Government have not told us anything about it although in view of our special relationship with them and the far-reaching implications of the proposed move we would have expected them to consult us. We are taking the matter up with the King of Nepal through our Ambassador, pointing out the implications of these developments and expressing our surprise and regret at the failure to keep us informed of them.

The frustration was compounded when in September of that year Nepal undertook talks with China to establish an agreement on trade, diplomatic relations and other matters, again without first consulting India. Moreover,

according to Chou En-lai Nepalese Government have stated to him that they have exchanged notes with USA concerning such matters as Consular representation, treatment of nationals, etc. All this is news to us. We seem to know less about Nepalese foreign relations than foreign countries (Nehru, 1956, p. 390).

Thus, even while Nehru publicly articulated love and kinship with Nepal, he was aware that Nepal could not be coerced into acknowledging India's attractiveness. Writing in a

cable to the Indian Ambassador in Nepal in 1956 he argued that, 'we must reconsider our attitude towards Nepal' for,

we are concerned at the attitude of the Nepalese Government to us in this [the Sino-Nepalese agreement] and other like matters. They have not only bypassed us and practically ignored us, but have done so with discourtesy. This is obviously a deliberate attitude to emphasize their own complete independence from us (Nehru, 1956, p. 390).

Noting that, 'I think the time has passed when we should interfere in any way or you should protest too the King or the Prime Minister' Nehru (1956, p. 390) said:

the policy of thrusting help in the hope of winning goodwill is always unsafe and sometimes leads to harmful reactions. The other country thinks that we are trying to buy their goodwill. Instead we get their ill will. Anyhow, we can neither afford to help them much nor do we desire to do so in existing circumstances. They are perfectly free to go their own way and we shall go our own way.

Nepal did not regard the unity of the subcontinent to be as important to its subjectivity as India expected. Indeed, the opposite was true – Nepal perceived India as more of a threat to its subjectivity than any other state and sought to enact its sovereignty in its various treaties with other countries.

The same sort of attraction based on kinship that India sought to exercise in Nepal was employed with Bhutan. Like Nepal, Bhutan shared 'a special tie, personal tie' with India for 'we are all the children of the Himalayas (Nehru, 1999a, p. 592). In a speech in New Delhi at a banquet for the Maharaja and Maharani of Bhutan in 1954, Nehru (1999a, p. 592) reassured them that as a 'large country' and an 'ancient land' that had in the past 'always extended the hand of friendship out to neighbouring countries' India would always be there to help 'not only materially but to help you with affection and understanding of your problems'. Moreover, there was more than just an expectation that Bhutan would

concede to India's hegemony since it had formally agreed in the 1949 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation to be guided by India's advice in its foreign relations in exchange for India's non-interference in its internal affairs. As Nehru (1949, p. 80) made clear to the Indian Ambassador to Nepal in 1949:

...in the international sense Bhutan is subordinate to India, because she can have no foreign relations and cannot declare war or peace. As a matter of fact Bhutan remains autonomous only because we choose to allow it to remain so. Even financially it is dependent upon us and it can carry on only because of the subsidy we give.

Yet, it soon became apparent that, like Nepal, Bhutan would not so readily concede to India's version of 'reality'. India's demand for a resident Political Agent in Bhutan was resisted because it evoked memories of the British method of exercising indirect colonial rule. Despite his own abhorrence of colonialism Nehru (1999a, p. 594) could not understand Bhutan's sensitivities. Reporting on his talk with the Maharaja of Bhutan in a note in 1954 he said:

I did not understand why the Maharaja or his Government should be apprehensive in this matter. That showed a certain lack of confidence in us. We should proceed on a basis of accepting each other's *bona fides* and having confidence in each other

The idea was later given up in favour of maintaining India's self-representation as a non-coercive nation-state. Nehru (2001b, p. 313) thus instructed that instead of asking for closer political contacts India '...should lay greater emphasis on the social and economic side. Even there, there should be no attempt at any imposition. Help should be given when asked for and not thrust upon Bhutan'.

On the eve of Sri Lanka's independence Nehru (1987, p. 534) delivered a message in New Delhi heralding Sri Lanka's impending freedom which indicated that here too an attraction rooted in kinship was to be the basis of India's foreign policy:

No country can rejoice more at this change than India which has been and is like an elder brother to Lanka. Geography, tradition, culture, religion and economic interest all combine to bring Lanka and India close to one another.

Continuing with this theme in a cable to D.S. Senanayake Nehru (1987, p. 534) wrote:

I send you fraternal greetings on the attainment by Ceylon⁴⁵ of independence. Simhala Dweep is once again sovereign and free India looks forward to even closer cooperation than in the past with her kin and neighbour in tasks of mutual interest and in common endeavour, with other friendly nations, for emancipation of people still struggling for their liberties and for establishment of enduring world peace

Emphasising the bonds of 'race' at a flag-raising ceremony commemorating Sri Lanka's independence Nehru (1987, p. 535) said:

...Ceylon, though a separate country, is hardly away from us or apart from us. Not only history but what I saw myself with my own eyes in Ceylon reminded me that we were of the same blood, that we were kith and kin, that our minds had the same texture, in fact, that we came out of the same material.

Yet, India's relations with Sri Lanka quickly became dominated by the latter's unwillingness to grant citizenship rights to people of Indian descent living in Sri Lanka despite their long presence in the country. In a note reporting an unofficial discussion with the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in 1955 Nehru (2001a, p. 275) expressed his dismay at the deteriorating relations with Sri Lanka and the difficulty of finding a resolution to the

⁴⁵ Sri Lanka was called Ceylon until 1972.

problem. Repeating a sentiment he had expressed previously in a speech in the Lok Sabha in 1954 and in a letter to the Chief Ministers in 1952, Nehru wrote that ‘the real difficulty was the fear of the Ceylonese that India might absorb them’ – a fear that ‘was wholly unjustified’ (Nehru, 1961, p. 298; 1996, pp. 639-640; 2001a, p. 276). Still, India’s attempt to exercise an influence over Sri Lanka had to be consensual and based on attraction:

...we have always to remember this fear of the Ceylonese. Any so-called pressure tactics on our part tend to increase this fear, and therefore, make the solution a little more difficult. They begin to look away from India in matters of trade etc. and rely on some distant country like England or, it may be, even Australia rather than India. And yet, every interest of theirs, including their basic cultural outlook, draws them to India, if but this fear was absent (Nehru, 1999b, p. 557).

In a note written on the 25th of May 1955 to the Secretary General and the Commonwealth Secretary Nehru (2001a, p. 275) sought to find an explanation for India’s deteriorating relations with Sri Lanka. He pointed out that while India ‘used to have problems with Burma...they were all resolved, and there was the greatest friendship between India and Burma. Why could we not achieve that friendship between India and Ceylon?’ The Sri Lankan High Commissioner had offered an explanation that appealed to Nehru in an unofficial discussion which Nehru (2001a, p. 276) summarised in the note:

The High Commissioner then said that the background in Ceylon was different from that of India. India had gone through a great struggle, while Ceylon had no such experience.⁴⁶ I agreed and pointed out how a struggle conditions a people as it had done in India, as to some extent it had done in Burma though their struggle started in wartime. In Pakistan, the people certainly were partly conditioned by the Indian struggle for freedom, but not so the leaders. In fact, they had opposed that struggle.

⁴⁶ The Sri Lankan nationalist movement was largely engaged in a legalistic form of agitation and ultimately achieved its independence as a result of India’s independence movement.

Given the opinion expressed in the noted cited above about Pakistan's leaders it is not surprising that the language of kinship was noticeably missing from India's foreign policy discourse on Pakistan. Indeed, the only individual to use it was the Pakistani Prime Minister, Mohammad Ali who, according to notes on discussions between the Indian and Pakistani leadership in 1955, made the following allusions to kinship: 'India was a big country, the big sister of Pakistan. She was a great nation and there had been much progress in India. India should therefore, be generous and magnanimous' (Nehru, 2001a, p. 257). Nehru, (1961, p. 465) however, could only go as far as separating the Pakistani people from the Pakistani leadership and noting that:

A large number of people in Pakistan have their friends and relatives in Pakistan. When people come over from the other side and meet their old friends, they embrace one another; they forget, for a moment, the new barriers that have sprung up between them and talk of old times with nostalgia.

Hence, in the case of Pakistan, instead of appealing to a common life-world to enact India's attractiveness, India reverted to a representationally forceful narrative in which India's attractiveness was established on account of the superior nature of its postcolonial modernity.

Nehru's (1961, p. 469) understanding of the difference between India and Pakistan was explained in a debate in Parliament in 1951:

We wanted a peaceful solution of our internal problems and a joint effort to win our freedom. We hoped we could live together in that freedom. The supporters of Pakistan had a different gospel. They were not for unity but disunity, not for construction but for destruction, not for peace but for discord, if not war. I do not think that the people of Pakistan are any better or any worse than the people of India. But fortunately, a certain ideal was before us in this country during the last twenty or thirty years which naturally affected our thinking and action. And in spite of everything that ideal continues to be our guiding star. That is the major difference between our policies today and those of Pakistan.

The 'ideal' that Nehru mentions above was undoubtedly the secular nationalism of the Congress Party. It is important to remember, however, that for Nehru Indian civilisation was always predominantly secular. Thus, secularism in postcolonial India was not just a modern appendage but a modern manifestation of a traditional orientation. In *Discovery of India* he wrote:

...the whole history of India was witness of the toleration and even encouragement of minorities and of different racial groups. There is nothing in Indian history to compare with the bitter religious feuds and persecutions that prevailed in Europe. So we did not have to go abroad for ideas of religious and cultural toleration: these were inherent in Indian life (Nehru, 1946, p. 382).

This tradition of tolerance also apparently influenced the framers of the Indian Constitution, who according to P.K. Tripathi, 'contemplated a secularism which is the product of India's social experience and genius' (Quoted in Pantham, 1997, p. 526). Indeed, the meaning of secularism in India is at variance with its Western understanding as a separation between religion and the state. Instead, the Indian Constitution requires the state to be equally respectful of all religions. Thus, as Pantham (1997, p. 524) points out, the opposite of 'secular' in India is not 'religious' but 'communal', meaning religious intolerance.

In his representationally forceful narrative directed at Pakistan the non-choice offered was either to refuse secularism and be cast as an uncivilised, intolerant, non-modern and backward state or accept Indian attractiveness and sustain an identity as a modern nation-state. This was the same non-choice offered to Muslims in the period leading up to the partition of India. In *Discovery of India* Nehru (1946, p. 351) wrote of the difference between Hindus and Muslims in India in this way:

There were many reasons, many contributory causes, errors and mistakes on every, side, and especially the deliberate separatist policy of the British Government. But behind all these was this psychological background, which itself was produced, apart from certain historical causes, by the delay in the development of a Moslem middle class in India. Essentially the internal conflict in India, apart from the nationalist struggle against foreign domination is between the remnants of the feudal order and modernist ideas and institutions.

Whereas the Congress Party, ‘undoubtedly represents the historic process of growth toward these new ideas and institutions, though it tries to adapt these to some of the old foundations’, on the Muslim side, ‘feudal elements have continued to be strong and have usually succeeded in imposing their leadership on their masses’. Moreover, ‘the difference of a generation or more in the development of the Hindu and Moslem middle classes’ had produced a ‘psychology of fear’ among Muslims. However,

Pakistan, the proposal to divide India, however, much it may appeal emotionally to some, is of course no solution for this backwardness, and it is much more likely to strengthen the hold of feudal elements for some time longer and delay the economic progress of the Moslems (Nehru, 1946, pp. 351-352).

Similarly after Partition at a public meeting in Bangalore in 1951 Nehru (1994, p. 314) said:

no modern civilized state can be other than a secular State. It is a sign of going back, to some hundreds of years back, to the Middle Ages of Europe, if you can think of anything but a secular State. Apart from that it is the only civilized way to solve the State’s problems.

Accordingly, Pakistan, which had been ‘built on a communal theory’, was

bound to suffer, as every country must suffer that follows that kind of policy. That is to say the country suffers not because of the inability, it suffers because of the internal forces that it creates in its own land...Because it is an out-of-date, and fantastically wrong basis for a nation to progress, a country that adopts that cannot go ahead (Nehru, 1994, p. 315).

By inscribing Pakistan as non-modern, backward and driven partly by the emotional pull of religion Nehru, it would seem, is feminising Pakistan. However, it is important to note Nehru's frequent separation of the Muslim 'masses' from the Muslim leadership for this splitting allows him to feminise Pakistan in order to hypermasculinise it. Thus, a 'psychology of fear' – which Nehru (1946, p. 383) considered irrational – had led the Muslim masses to be seduced by a leadership promising security through a nationalism tied to aggression and intolerance. Speaking in Parliament in 1950 Nehru (1961, pp. 460-1) opined that as far as India was concerned, '...our old practice, our background – in fact our very theory of State – compels us to follow a humanitarian policy'. In contrast, Pakistan '...had agreed to a cultural and human approach as the basis of the partition but such an approach does not follow from the policy of a state which is Islamic in conception' (Nehru, 1961, p. 460). In India's foreign policy discourse on the dispute over Kashmir Pakistan was hypermasculinised and accused of raping Kashmir, which was hyperfeminised as a passive object of desire – a 'fair' and 'lovely' land that India had to protect (Nehru, 1961, p. 446).

Following the first military confrontation in 1948 due to infiltration into Kashmir by what India claimed were Pakistani-backed insurgents, Nehru (1961, p. 450) said in a press statement:

...the people of Kashmir are suffering from a brutal and unprovoked invasion, and we have pledged ourselves to help them to gain their freedom. To that pledge we shall hold and we shall do our utmost to redeem it. We seek their freedom not for any gain to us, but to prevent the ravishing of a fair country and a peaceful people.

The infiltration of Kashmir was written into the narrative of India's vulnerability to invasion that constitutes its discourse of danger. This is underscored by the following

passage from *The Story of the Integration of Indian States* by V.P. Menon (1990, p. 413) who, as secretary to the Ministry of States, worked with the ‘Iron Man of India’ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to ensure the integration of the Princely states and other hostile states into the Indian Union:

Ever since the time of Mahmud Ghazni, that is to say, for nearly eight centuries...India has been subjected to periodic invasions from the northwest. And within ten weeks of the establishment of the new state of Pakistan, its very first act was to let lose a tribal invasion through the northwest. Srinagar today, Delhi tomorrow. A nation that forgets its history or its geography does so at its peril.

The contrast between a hypermasculine Pakistan and an India whose ambiguous gendering rested on a careful balancing between a masculine modernity and a feminine civilisational morality, was made even sharper in 1953 after Pakistan joined in a military pact with the United States, bringing the Cold War and the Western system of military alliances right ‘to the borders of India’ (Nehru, 2001a, p. 258). For Nehru (1961, p. 471; 1999b, p. 423), since ‘one of the symbols of freedom has been the withdrawal of foreign armed forces’, by inviting foreign troops back to Asia, Pakistan had become ‘practically a colony of the US’. Indeed, in a speech to the National Press Club in New York in 1954 Mohammad Ali was reported to have criticised non-alignment, endorsed the Cold War ideology of peace through armed strength and advocated a military alliance with the United States for this purpose (Nehru, 2000, p. 11). This too was a continuation of the politics of Partition. As Ashis Nandy (1997, p. 911) has argued and as we have seen above in Nehru’s writings, ‘Pakistan is seen as a product of the conspiracy between India’s erstwhile British rulers pursuing a ‘divide and rule’ policy and the religion-based parties in the region. Pakistan is seen as the illegitimate child of the West’. After its military alliance with the United States, this ‘bastard of the West’, as Nandy puts it, was seen to have a new surrogate father – one that was as antithetical to India as the British.

5.6 Conclusion

The ‘Gujarati thalassocracy’⁴⁷ that animated Gandhi’s antiquated geographical imagination and the ‘Sanskrit cosmopolis’⁴⁸ that inspired Nehru’s notion of greater India have largely been forgotten as world cultural formations. This is a pity considering the very un-cosmopolitan analyses of cosmopolitanism today, much of which derives its inspiration from Kant and Stoicism and is imprisoned within the cage of European intellectual history.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the idea, if not the substance or the spirit, of the Sanskrit cosmopolis lives on in India’s foreign policy discourse as the basis of a narrative that extols the cultural influence of Indian civilisation.

In this chapter I have suggested that an examination of India’s foreign policy discourse on Asia and South Asia reveals a representation of postcolonial India as the inheritor of a culturally influential but militarily benign civilisation. In doing so, I argued against the conventional view that India has pursued a Monroe Doctrine-style policy of regional hegemony in South Asia and instead drew attention to a discourse of friendship in Asia and a discourse of kinship which envisaged a South Asian familial identity with India in a maternal role. Both discourses produce a blurring of the separation between the domestic and the international but do so in ways that also encompass the notion of India as morally grounded civilisation that repudiates the violence of hegemony. Nonetheless, these potentially radical ideas were ultimately subordinated to a territorial nationalism and were circumscribed by narratives of India’s backwardness, in particular, its vulnerability to

⁴⁷ Subrahmanyam (1995)

⁴⁸ Pollock (1996)

⁴⁹ For an attempt to escape from this cage and rewrite the history of cosmopolitanism see the special issue of *Public Culture* on ‘Cosmopolitanisms’, (2000), Vol. 12, No. 3.

invasion and the fear that unless India played an active role in the world it would stagnate. Once again, therefore, we see the ambivalence of India's postcolonial modernity, with the desire for difference intersecting with the adoption of a modern geopolitical imagination. In the next chapter, we will see this tension heightened even further by India's involvement in Pakistan's civil war as India struggled to articulate its postcolonial modernity as a critical mimesis that disavowed identification with an aggressive mode of international behaviour.

What role did the narrative of India's vulnerability to invasion play in its drive to obtain nuclear technology and its eventual development of the nuclear bomb? India's nuclear policies will be the focus of the next chapter, which not only builds on the idea of the ambivalent nature of India's postcolonial modernity, but also goes further to show the importance of taking into account the sex/gender codings, in particular the tropes of femininity and masculinity, that are inherent in India's identity discourses.

6 SOVEREIGNTY, INTERVENTION AND SOUTH ASIA I: INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1970s

6.1 Introduction

We saw in the last chapter that India's attempts to enact a representationally forceful narrative of its civilisational influence in its foreign policy discourse have been mixed. Its effectiveness with Pakistan, for instance, has been limited because Pakistan's subjectivity was not constituted by the same vision of postcolonial modernity in which only secularism can deliver progress. In 1971, however, one part of Pakistan did seem to endorse the attractiveness of India's postcolonial modernity when it broke away with India's help and declared itself the secular state of Bangladesh. In this chapter and the next, I will examine the two major interventions India has undertaken, both of which took place in neighbouring countries, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, which were engaged in civil conflicts. As foreign policy performative moments international military interventions are particularly fraught times for the enactment of sovereign subjectivities. As Cynthia Weber (1998, p. 93) argues, almost without exception, 'modern nation-states justify their interventions into target states on behalf of the sovereign peoples within the target state who – because of some political crisis – lack the political and symbolic resources to represent themselves as sovereign'. For Weber (1998, p. 93), intervention discourses not only enact the sovereignty of the select group in the target state but they also enact the sovereignty of the intervening state – 'a state that *is* sovereign because it performs the act of recognition of the repressed sovereign faction within the target state'. In India's case I argue that although military interventions have indeed served to performatively enact Indian sovereignty, they have threatened another aspect of India's postcolonial identity – its postcolonial difference as a

state that abjured the domination of others. How then, did it become possible for India to undertake interventionist policies in the 1970s and 1980s? How did the India-Pakistan and India-Sri Lanka relationships become constructed in a manner that enabled India to take on the task of ‘solving’ the internal problems of Pakistan and Sri Lanka?

In this chapter I examine the lead-up, execution and aftermath of the 1971 war with Pakistan that led to the creation of Bangladesh. The first part of the chapter examines India’s involvement in the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan. I begin by noting the continuities from the Nehru period in Indira Gandhi’s foreign policy discourse and then go on to an examination of the Indian narrative of the Bangladesh crisis. While the Bangladesh war was the major foreign policy ‘event’ in the 1970s, it was followed by a short period of authoritarian rule and the election, for the first time, of a non-Congress Party government. Both of these events had important foreign policy dimensions and serve to illustrate my argument that foreign policy discourse can be read as an enactment of state identity. Thus, the second part of the chapter will focus on Indira Gandhi’s Emergency, the election of the Janata government and the return of Indira Gandhi to power. Throughout this chapter and the next I take note of the designation of the region of South Asia emphasising, in particular, the alternating inscription of South Asia as a space of danger or as a space of desire (for the enactment of India’s civilisational influence and postcolonial difference).

6.2 Indira Gandhi, India and South Asia

In 1971, Nehru’s daughter Indira Gandhi had been India’s Prime Minister for five years following her father’s death in 1964 and the short-lived prime ministership of Lal Bahadur

Shastri. It is often said that foreign policy under Indira Gandhi's tenure saw a radical change from idealism to realism (Dixit, 2004). Surjit Mansingh (1984, p. 24) describes 'flexibility and pragmatism' and 'her concern for the tangible over the moral' as her hallmarks. An analysis of Indira Gandhi's foreign policy discourse, however, shows some marked continuities in the enactment of India's postcolonial identity.

As she made clear in an article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1972, Indira Gandhi (1975a, p. 204) shared her father's understanding of India's past: 'Two centuries and more of history marked by foreign intervention, domination and exploitation left India backward, apathetic and stagnant. The general scene was one of decay, reflected in the misery of the masses'. However, she also shared his scepticism toward the notion of spheres of influence based on military might. In a speech in 1970 she said:

Most of these super-powers would like to have spheres of influence. Although we are very friendly with them we do not agree with this attitude of theirs and we are certainly not going to help them to have this kind of sphere of influence. The only sphere of influence we want is one of friendship and of mutual help... (Gandhi, 1975a, p. 140).

In a speech in Kathmandu she articulated her commitment to the policy of peaceful coexistence, which she too believed was the product of the benign nature of Indian civilisation:

India does not covet others' territory. Nor does it seek to impose its ways or will on any nation. We accept the freedom of nations to choose their own destiny; we do not seek to interfere in the affairs of others. Our belief in peaceful co-existence is not a matter of expediency. It is rooted in our tradition and way of life (Gandhi, 1971b, p. 404).

Although Nehru's preoccupation with producing a pan-Asian identity was absent, as in the previous period, there was little inclination in the first phase of Indira Gandhi's leadership

(1966-1977) to demarcate the region as a particular area of foreign policy concern. Foreign policy discourse on Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan continued to emphasise the ties of kinship. Speaking in December 1972 on an agreement with Bhutan on postal services, India's Communications Minister H.N. Bahuguna (1972, p. 379) talked of the 'impregnable bond of friendship and brotherhood between our two people'. Likewise, Sri Lanka was 'a respected sister nation for which we have great affection, regard and friendship' (Gandhi, 1971b, p. 397). The rancour over the issue of people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka had subsided after an agreement in 1964 in which India agreed to grant citizenship to about two-thirds of the stateless tea plantation workers of Indian origin while Sri Lanka granted citizenship to the remaining one-third. Speaking in Colombo in 1967 Indira Gandhi (1971b, p. 397) used the resolution of this issue – which affected almost one million people, none of whom were consulted in the negotiations leading to the 1964 pact – to emphasise the familial nature of the relationship between India and Sri Lanka: 'Our relations are too close for either of us to allow minor matters to interfere with our traditional friendship'. Indira Gandhi's (1966, p. 112) speeches on Nepal also contained a familiar familial discourse. Speaking in New Delhi in 1966 she said:

Nepal and India are two independent and sovereign countries but both children of the Himalayas. They follow independent policies of peace and non-alignment and co-existence and friendship. These policies are characterized by a deep sense of shared history and common aspirations and a basic sense of kinship between our peoples which is, perhaps, unparalleled elsewhere in the world.

Moreover, while she admitted there had been problems between Nepal and India, 'these problems are basically small and incidental to the much larger fact of Indo-Nepalese friendship' (Gandhi, 1971b, p. 401).

Indira Gandhi's foreign policy discourse on Pakistan also consisted of continuities from the Nehru era as can be seen in India's responses to the 1965 war with Pakistan and the

hijacking and bombing of an Indian Airlines plane at Lahore airport in 1971. The 1965 war began when Pakistani army officers covertly crossed the cease-fire line into Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir and ended after three weeks when both sides agreed to a United Nations-sponsored cease-fire. In January 1966 Prime Minister Shastri and Pakistani President Ayub Khan entered into peace talks mediated by Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin in Tashkent. The talks culminated in the Tashkent Declaration, which was signed by both parties on the 10th of January, the day before Shastri died of a heart attack. Initially hailed as a 'remarkable achievement' by the External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh, the Declaration did much more than just signal the official end of the war (Singh, 1966a, pp. 10-11). In Indian discourse, the Tashkent Declaration was an exercise in representational force, which reiterated the attractiveness of India's postcolonial modernity by endorsing the principles of peaceful coexistence, friendship and the non-use of force to resolve disputes despite Pakistan's protestations that none of these were possible before the Kashmir question had been resolved.

Not surprisingly then, India's euphoria over the Tashkent Declaration did not last long. In a statement in the Lok Sabha on the 26th of April 1966 Singh (1966c, p. 104) complained that Pakistan had failed to end its negative propaganda on India, had continued to insist on making Kashmir the main issue of discussion and had taken to labelling India an aggressor. In this, they were 'receiving encouragement from their new-found friend and ally, China' (Singh, 1966c, p. 104). Indeed, 'this intransigent attitude of Pakistan is traceable to this collusion and this alliance between China and Pakistan' (Singh, 1966b, p. 204). China had by this time partly replaced the United States as the barrier to India's civilisational influence in Pakistan. According to Singh (1966c, p. 105; 1966a, p. 58), China's condemnation of the Tashkent Declaration, on the grounds that Pakistan had been compelled to sign it, was designed to convince Pakistan that the Chinese were the 'sole

saviours of Pakistan’ and was in line with the ‘central philosophy of China’s way of thinking these days’. That is, ‘the theory that there cannot be peaceful co-existence’ and ‘the principle that war is inevitable’ (Singh, 1966a, p. 58). Again there were attempts by Singh and other members of the Indian Parliament to separate the people of Pakistan from the belligerent Pakistani government. As one unnamed member of the Lok Sabha interjected during Singh’s speech: ‘The people of Pakistan are already friendly to us; it is the Government of Pakistan which is creating all this trouble’ (Singh, 1966c, p. 105). As Singh (1966b, p. 204) himself put it: ‘I have every sympathy with the people of Pakistan when their leaders slip into this China way of thinking’. This separation of the Pakistani people from the Pakistani government was in evidence again in the discourse following the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane in 1971. In this instance, Indira Gandhi condemned the Pakistani government for giving ‘indirect encouragement’ to the hijackers. However, she too was careful to separate the Pakistani Government from the Pakistani people who had ‘shown friendliness towards the stranded passengers and crew’ (Gandhi, 1971a, pp. 34-5).

India’s intervention discourse on the 1971 conflict continued to enact the difference of India’s postcolonial modernity. At the same time, India’s intervention in Pakistan’s civil war marked a critical foreign policy performative moment – one that had the potential to significantly alter its self-representation as a nation-state that repudiates domination.

6.3 'Liberating' Bangladesh

Of the scholarly works⁵⁰ that attempt to explain the war that led to the creation of Bangladesh, Richard Sisson and Leo Rose's *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* is perhaps the most comprehensive. The authors have drawn on extensive interviews with 'political leaders, their principal advisers and associates' to understand and reconstruct the 'decisional structures and processes' that characterised the war and to gain insight into the 'relations between motivation, calculation, and context' in order to explain why the war was 'fought when at the outset the principals neither anticipated nor wanted them' (Sisson & Rose, 1990, p. ix, 1). As Abraham (1995, 23) has pointed out in his critique, however, the evidence that Sisson and Rose produce in the book is at variance with this initial assumption that the war was an outcome that neither side wanted. In particular, some of the evidence they present suggests that the Indian leadership had begun to prepare for the possibility of war as early as March or April and in the latter half of 1971 consistently rejected overtures from the United Nations and third-party mediators to assist in finding a peaceful settlement (Sisson & Rose, 1990, Ch. 9). Abraham (1995, pp. 25-6) attributes this disjuncture to the authors' desire to construct a consistent narrative and to discover the 'essential truth' of why the war occurred. This meant eliminating the varying interpretations gleaned from multiple interviews and prioritising particular strands of information. By contrast, my analysis of the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 does not rest on the hypothesis that there is only one story to be told and my concern is not to arrive at a penultimate explanation for the war. Instead, I look specifically at how India constituted the events of 1971 and the possibilities this created for the performative enactment of its identity as a postcolonial nation-state.

⁵⁰ See for instance, Ayoob (1972), Palit (1972), Kumar (1975).

6.3.1 Setting the Scene (March – December 2)

The Indian narrative on the 1971 conflict can be discerned in the speeches of its leadership from March 1971 to 1972. In this narrative of a family drama there are three main characters: the ‘Bastard Son’ – Pakistan; the ‘Benevolent Mother’ – India; and the ‘Long-Suffering Wife’ – the people of East Pakistan.⁵¹ The Long-Suffering Wife had been torn from West Bengal by the British at the turn of the century and had opted for life with the Bastard Son upon the partition of India in 1947. After many years of abuse and neglect, however, the Long-Suffering Wife rebelled against the Bastard Son and expressed her desire for freedom. In Pakistan’s first democratic elections in December 1970 the Awami League, led by Mujibur Rahman – who had campaigned on a platform of autonomy for East Pakistan which had long been dominated and discriminated against by West Pakistan – won a sweeping victory in East Pakistan winning 160 out of the 162 seats it was allotted. Meanwhile, the Pakistan People’s Party led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto won 81 out of the 138 seats allotted to West Pakistan (Mansingh, 1984, p. 214). The victory was hailed by Indira Gandhi (1972, p. 11-12) because ‘Shri Mujibur Rahman has stood for the values which we ourselves cherish – the values of democracy, the values of secularism and the values of socialism’ and ‘the people’ of East Pakistan ‘had stood behind him and behind these values’.

However, Mujibur Rahman who, as the leader of the majority party had expected the Prime Ministership, faced resistance both from Bhutto and the Pakistani army – whose financial base and political power was threatened by the Awami League’s demand for the equitable division of resources and revenue between East and West Pakistan (Marwah, 1979, p.

⁵¹ I partly draw from Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1957, pp. 260-61) in devising this cast of characters. However, while Cantwell Smith appears to see his extended family analogy as a somewhat flippant indulgence, as I have tried to show in this thesis, the discourses that enact state subjectivities are sexed and gendered in important ways.

559). The Bastard Son – the Government of Pakistan – had, according to Indira Gandhi (1972, p. 13), ‘chosen to flout the mandate of the people’ by refusing to ‘transfer power to legally elected representatives’ and by arbitrarily preventing ‘the National Assembly from assuming its rightful and sovereign role’. Upon the failure of talks in March 1971 between Mujibur, Bhutto and General Yahya Khan to resolve the constitutional issue of autonomy, the Pakistani army took over in East Pakistan, with a wave of brutal repression against anyone deemed to be opponents of the military regime (Mansingh, 1984, pp. 214-5). The hypermasculine brutality of the Bastard Son was once again in evidence: ‘The people of East Bengal are being sought to be suppressed by the naked use of force, by bayonets, machine guns, tanks, artillery and aircraft’ (Gandhi, 1972, p. 13). India, which had ‘always desired and hoped for peaceful, normal and fraternal relations’ with Pakistan, had expected that the elections ‘would help us to get closer’. Instead, found herself reunited with her long-lost daughter, East Bengal – ‘in grief for their suffering, concern for the wanton destruction of their beautiful land and anxiety for their future’ (Gandhi, 1972, pp. 9, 13).

By May there were significant discursive shifts in Indian discourse. Unable to bear the torment any longer, the worst-off of the Bastard Son’s Long-Suffering Wife finally fled and sought shelter with the Benevolent Mother. What was previously ‘East Bengal’ or ‘East Pakistan’ in Indian discourse was now increasingly ‘Bangla Desh’ and as refugees began pouring across the border into Western India the issue was re-presented as one of domestic security. Although India was proud of her ‘tradition of tolerance’ the burden of caring for three and half million ‘victims of war who have sought refuge from the military terror’ was heavy (Gandhi, 1972, pp. 15, 17). Besides this, the Benevolent Mother was busy with her own problems – the garb of modernity she had been trying to dress herself in since 1947 was proving difficult to wear. Now she was facing a ‘new kind of aggression’ from Pakistan which was characterised as an attempted demographic rape – the entry of

millions of refugees into India which threatened to alter its religious and social demography making it weak and unstable (Gandhi, 1972, p. 50). Millions of people had 'been terrorized and persecuted by the military rulers of Pakistan, and have been pushed inside our territory, jeopardizing our normal life and our plans for the future' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 50). Thus,

what was the problem of another country has now been deliberately converted into a problem for India. This is not just an economic question. It has deep political and social overtones and is a real threat to our security and stability (Gandhi, 1972, p. 50).

Indeed, the refugee influx threatened to tear the garb of modernity from the Benevolent Mother's battered body, for what was at stake was the very essence of the postcolonial modern – the secularism of the society. Most of the refugees that had initially left East Pakistan were Hindu and the government was concerned that Indian Muslims would bear the brunt of their misgivings:

The main question today is that communal tension has grown and the policy of those across our border is to do everything possible to increase it. It is therefore, a heavy responsibility on the people of all parties here to see that Pakistan's rulers do not succeed in this nefarious intention (Gandhi, 1972, p. 32).

Faced with this burden the Benevolent Mother called for help from the 'International Community'. However, the International Community was not only tardy in its response – it was insensitive to the plight of the Long Suffering Wife: 'We are told by some countries that while they may disapprove of what is being done by the military rulers, they cannot be a party to the disintegration of Pakistan' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 20). Indira Gandhi (1972, pp. 20-21) vehemently denied such an intention:

is it suggested that we wish the disintegration of Pakistan? Have we not...at every step tried not only for propriety in our relationship but also for friendship? If there is a struggle between the two parts of Pakistan, it is certainly not of our making but of the rulers of Pakistan.

On the one hand, India sympathised with the International Community: 'every country has some movement of secession. Therefore, every country is afraid of what would happen to themselves if they gave support to Bangla Desh' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 31). India herself was faced with many pockets of discontent, from the Nagas and the Oriyas to the Punjabis and foreign exploitation of this discontent was a major concern. But Indira Gandhi reasoned that this situation was, 'quite different – because it is not just a small part of the country that is asking for its rights. It happens to be the majority of the country, not a small part wanting to go away' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 31). Thus, the issue was not one of secessionism but anti-colonialism.

Indira Gandhi conducted two tours of foreign capitals in 1971 to publicise the plight of East Pakistan and the heavy burden placed on India and to try to persuade those with influence over Pakistan, the United States in particular, to help facilitate the release of the now-imprisoned Mujibur Rahman and open a dialogue with the Awami League. Yet, she gained little other than expressions of sympathy and the behaviour of the United States was regarded by Swaran Singh (1971, p. 102) as 'to say the least extremely callous'. Richard Nixon, with whom Indira Gandhi had a poor relationship, was at this time seeking rapprochement with China and considered Pakistan, with its proximity to China, to be an indispensable go-between. Consequently the United States continued to supply arms to Pakistan and put the responsibility for resolving the issue solely on India (Mansingh, 1984,

p. 143).⁵² While on a visit to Germany she made clear that she held this Western support largely responsible for Pakistan woes:

...unfortunately, all these years, Pakistan has had a very strong Western support and this is what has encouraged them to continue in this [undemocratic] manner. I personally think that this is what is leading to disruption and the weakness of Pakistan. Otherwise, by now, I think, it could have been a strong and unified country such as we are (Gandhi, 1972, p. 96).

Moreover, to her chagrin Indira Gandhi (1972, p. 63) found that people continued to equate India with Pakistan, as if India was just as much to blame for the crisis:

We are tired of this equation which the Western world is always making: it does not matter what Pakistan does; India and Pakistan are equal. We are *not* equal and we are not going to stand for this kind of treatment (emphasis in original).

In order to reinforce this hierarchical positioning of India and Pakistan as sovereign equals but not moral equals and to disavow a hypermasculine identification for India, Indira Gandhi emphasised her (and India's) femininity. When asked at a London press conference in November whether she would shake Yahya Khan's hand, she replied 'I am willing to shake hands, but I cannot shake hands with a clenched fist' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 63). In another interview she was asked to comment to a statement by Yahya Khan in which he said, 'If that women thinks that she is going to cow me down, I refuse to take it' (Caprioli & Boyer, 2001, p. 508). In reply Indira Gandhi (1972, p. 102) said:

⁵² The full extent of Nixon's hostility to India and his tilt toward Pakistan can be discerned in the United States Government's recently declassified Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, some of which are available online: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e7/> Among other things, the documents contain transcripts of conversations in which Nixon tells the British Foreign Secretary that 'the British got out too soon' and that India and Pakistan 'just aren't ready' (Document 146). He calls Indira Gandhi a 'bitch' (Document 150) and refers to Indians as 'bastards' and 'savages' (Documents 189). Discussing Indira Gandhi's visit to the White House Henry Kissinger talks about how much more 'emotionally satisfying' it would have been had Nixon 'been rough with her' although this would have resulted in her 'going back crying to India' (Document 150). Despite his objectivist pretensions, this was clearly not the 'sober', unemotional foreign policy that Kissinger extols in his memoir *The White House Years* (1979).

That woman! I am not concerned with the remark but it shows the mentality of the person. I mean how well has he judged his own capacity to deal with East Pakistan? If he can't judge a section of what was his own country, what weight has his judgement of India? What does he know about it? It's a world which is quite outside his ken.

Not all members of the international community, however, were insensitive to India's position. In August Indira Gandhi signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, thus taking up an offer that had been previously made to Nehru in 1956 and to his daughter in 1969 (Dutt, 1956, p. 389; Mansingh, 1984, p. 140). The reasoning behind Nehru's rejection of the offer in 1956 was explained by Subimal Dutt (1956, p. 389) who wrote in a cable to the Indian Ambassador in Moscow that the Soviet government had:

...suggested a Treaty of Peace and Friendship between India and the Soviet Union based on the Five Principles. The Prime Minister told him that while there was no objection to such a treaty as it would actually represent our present relations, there appeared to be no special need for it. Indeed, it might have some adverse reactions and create misunderstandings in some countries. India was anxious not only for friendship with the Soviet Union but also to help in removing barriers to peace and understanding in the world. Anything that might come in the way of India's role in this respect, would not be helpful

By 1971 Indira Gandhi had decided that there was a special need for a treaty. Clearly referring to the emerging China-US-Pakistan triangle she explained in an interview:

International relations have entered an era of rapid change, the range and direction of which is not predictable. Nations are seeking new ties and are cutting across old rigidities. This is a welcome trend. But some countries are taking advantage of these changes to embark upon opportunistic adventures' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 40).

In light of this, 'we are convinced that the present Treaty will discourage such adventurism on the part of countries which have shown a pathological hostility towards us' (Gandhi,

1972, p. 40). More specifically, 'the Treaty will act as a deterrent against any rash adventurism on the part of Islamabad' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 41).

According to Surjit Mansingh (1984, p. 143), the US's support of Pakistan and rapprochement with China had heightened the feeling of insecurity and isolation that had taken hold in India during the summer of 1971. She also argues, however, that although Indira Gandhi had been warned by both Pakistan and the US of possible Chinese intervention if India interceded militarily on behalf of Bangladesh, she and her advisors were convinced that the China would limit itself to verbal threats rather than undertake military action (Mansingh, 1984, p. 222). Indeed, in July 1971 Indian intelligence had obtained copies of correspondence from April 1971 between China and Pakistan that clearly stated that China would not intervene militarily in an Indo-Pakistan war. The China factor was of such little concern to India that orders were given in July to transfer half of the six army divisions from the north-eastern Sino-Indian border region to the East-Pakistani front (Sisson & Rose, 1990, p. 199).

Given this lack of direct military threat it seems odd that Indira Gandhi would undertake a treaty with the Soviet Union and risk the sort of adverse reaction from other countries that Nehru feared. In fact, she most probably assumed that the treaty could be worded in such a way that would keep the policy of non-alignment intact. Indeed, Article 4 of the treaty specifies the Soviet Union's respect for India's policy non-alignment and the treaty is careful to avoid mention of military cooperation, committing the parties only to 'mutual consultations' in case of threat or attack to either (Mansingh, 1984, pp. 388-9).

Despite these precautions in the Indo-Soviet Treaty, India was accused of allowing itself to be dragged into the clash of Cold War hypermasculinities as the long sought-after trophy

bride of the Soviet Union. During her visit to the United States in November Indira Gandhi was frequently asked if the Treaty amounted to a defence pact and ended India's non-aligned status. In reply, she presented the Treaty as the product of normal diplomatic engagement and highlighted its resemblance to the treaties of friendship India had made with other countries:

We have not signed a defence pact with the Soviet Union, it is merely a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace. We can have discussions with them but it is not a military treaty in any sense of the word (Gandhi, 1972, p. 92).

Moreover,

whatever we now have got from them is all in the normal course, which we would have taken from any country, and which had been agreed to earlier. We certainly hope that should we be in trouble, not only the Soviet Union but other countries also will like to help us (Gandhi, 1972, pp. 92-3).

By the end of her second tour of world capitals in mid-November, Indira Gandhi (1972, p. 105) effectively took the international community out of the picture by revoking its legitimacy as a community of judgment on foundational meanings like sovereignty, intervention and 'the people':

we cannot depend on the international community...to solve our problems for us. We appreciate their sympathy and moral and political support, but the brunt of the burden has to be borne by us and by the people of Bangla Desh...

She made clear in Germany that she considered the response of the United Nations abysmal: '...I will not tolerate their saying, "We will come and see what is happening in India, but we will not prevent the genocide, the mass murder, the raping of women that is taking place in East Bengal"' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 98).

By the end of November there was, thus, another shift in Indian discourse. Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan was now presented as inevitable and Indira Gandhi even expressed her public support for the Mukti Bahini, the guerrilla organisation which was fighting the Pakistani Army in East Pakistan and had been receiving covert aid from India. By now the Mukti Bahini had proven that it had a mass following in East Pakistan and could fight the Pakistani military without heavy Indian support – India could now confidently acknowledge the Mukti Bahini and the Awami league as the representatives of the people of East Pakistan, and thus, as the legitimate bearers of sovereign authority. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on the 30th of November she said:

So far as the present situation is concerned, the Mukti Bahini is facing it very courageously – it is a very difficult fight and they are fighting it very bravely. They have our good wishes, and they have our support (Gandhi, 1972, p. 120).

At the same time there was an emphasis on ensuring that India's self-image as a non-aggressive nation-state stayed intact. Hence, Indira Gandhi's (1972, p. 106) speeches reiterated India's 'self-restraint' and its 'urge for peace, freedom and justice'. India had 'kept quiet, patiently listening to the abuses hurled at us, and watching the growing threat to our security'. However,

as soon as our forces moved forward as a defensive action within our own frontiers, there was a hue and cry abroad and talk of war being imminent. If there is to be war, it is not we who have taken the initiative or threatened anyone (Gandhi, 1972, p. 113).

Thus, the conflict was one that reinforced the attractiveness of India's postcolonial modernity and legitimated India's attitude toward Partition. Discussing the latter during her visit to the United States, Indira Gandhi said:

When the sub-continent of India was partitioned into India and Pakistan it was an unnatural partition. We knew it was bound to create problems, but we accepted it because it seemed to be the price for freedom... (Gandhi, 1972, p. 77).

However,

the world is now realizing the truth of all that we had said not only about Pakistan but about our own country as well. Difference in religion, language, dress and ways of living are not important for national unity (Gandhi, 1972, p. 114).

Adding a rallying call for Indian unity and individual sacrifice for Mother India, she said, 'What is important is upholding the unity and dignity of the nation, every individual puts the nation before self' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 114).

This period prior to the war was, therefore, crucial in several respects. First, Pakistan was divested of its sovereign authority. As Weber (1996, pp. 6-7, 125) argues, for a state to be sovereign it must fulfil two forms of representation – political representation and symbolic representation. Political representation is presupposed on symbolic representation because the 'foundations of sovereign authority and the communities which judge them to be legitimate must be produced (symbolically represented) before they can be politically represented'. Language is grounded by an empirical referent that is the basis for speech. Expressed in sign theory, a signifier (indicator) refers back to a signified (a referent that is represented by the indicator). Thus, in terms of sign theory the state can be considered the signifier that refers back to the domestic community (the signified) in order to prove its sovereign authority. If a state fails to symbolically or politically represent its people then it loses its sovereign authority. As we have seen, in Indian discourse a distinction was made between the government and the people with the source of sovereign authority residing in the latter. As long as the Pakistani government could politically and symbolically represent

the people India recognised Pakistan's sovereign authority. By losing to the Awami League in East Pakistan, and refusing to recognise its legitimacy, the Pakistani government was faced with a divided populace. It, therefore, lost control over the depiction of its people and, thereby, its source of sovereign authority. With Pakistan no longer being able to inscribe its people it was left to India to speak on behalf of the alienated East Pakistani majority. In doing so India redrew the sovereignty/intervention boundary and explicitly identified the qualities for being a legitimate state with secularism, socialism and democracy.

This foundation of sovereign authority itself, however, was unstable – millions of East Pakistanis had fled to West Bengal in India and community leaders had been imprisoned, forced into exile or murdered. Furthermore, if East Pakistanis were asserting their rights as Bengalis who rejected religion as a basis for national unity then why did they not join with West Bengalis in India to affect a pan-Bengali nationalism? The question of exactly who the Bangladeshi people were was not as clear-cut as it seemed. How then did India establish its claim to represent the Bangladeshi people? The answer lies in the logic of simulation.

Simulation, in Jean Baudrillard's (1983, p. 2) terms, is 'the generation by models of a real without origin or reality'. Thus, it is a substitution of 'signs of the real for the real itself' (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 4). India's discourse on East Pakistan was suffused with its own discourse on the threats to its postcolonial modernity – the threat from the refugee influx to India's secular fabric and its economic modernisation. The inaction of the so-called international community only heightened this insecurity. By transforming the East Pakistan issue into one of India's domestic security the Indian people were simulated as the community of judgement on foundational meanings like sovereignty, intervention and 'the

people'. At the same time, by backing the Awami League and covertly arming and, later, publicly supporting the Mukti Bahini India simulated them as the representatives of the will of the Bangladeshi people. In this way, even though the East Pakistani people have been discursively domesticated, by simulating the sovereign will of the Bangladeshi people, India ensured that their sovereign authority was not completely eliminated. Thus India is provided with an 'alibi' with which to justify its intervention (Weber, 1996, p. 128).

6.3.2 Disciplining the 'Bastard Son': The Intervention and its Aftermath

On the 3rd of December, Indira Gandhi (1972, pp. 122-3) addressed a rally in Calcutta in which she explained the fundamental difference between India, the Benevolent Mother and Pakistan, the Bastard Son:

In India, the freedom fighters won elections and formed government. But in Pakistan, they remained behind prison walls, and power was usurped by those who had cooperated with the British rulers during the struggle for freedom.

The 'Bastard Son' was indulged by his irresponsible sponsors: 'When they committed aggression against us, no one told them that it was bad and that they should desist from it. This encouraged them to persist in their folly'. During the speech, she was handed a note with the news that Pakistan had launched an attack on Indian airfields. She ended the speech without publicly announcing the start of hostilities but is reported to have said privately to those with her, 'Thank God they've attacked us' (Frank, 2001, p. 338).

Despite not wanting to be seen as the aggressor Indira Gandhi had approved plans for a military assault on Dhaka on the 4th of December (Frank, 2001, p. 338). Shortly after midnight, she made the official announcement proclaiming that, 'today the war in Bangla

Desh has become a war on India' and declared that 'this wanton and unprovoked aggression should be decisively and finally repelled' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 128). The Mukti Bahini were a 'courageous band of freedom fighters' who 'have been staking their all in defence of the values for which we also have struggled, and which are basic to our way of life' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 128). Thus, '...today, we fight not merely for territorial integrity but for the basic ideals which have given strength to this country and on which alone we can progress to a better future' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 129). What these ideals were was made clear in a speech a week later: 'We are fighting for the principle that no nation can be built upon one religion alone'. Moreover, 'We are fighting for the principle that all nations have a right to be free and that all people have a right to raise their voice for the legitimate demands'. Thus, Indian discourse on the Bangladesh war attempted to secure a sovereign subjectivity linked to anti-colonialism, secularism and democracy. But what would be the implication for those other important aspects of India's self-image – non-violence and non-coerciveness?

On the 6th of December, India granted official recognition to Bangladesh. In her statement in Parliament Indira Gandhi justified the decision as having been undertaken because,

with the unanimous revolt of the entire people of Bangla Desh and the success of their struggle it has become increasingly apparent that the so-called mother State of Pakistan is totally incapable of bringing the people of Bangla Desh back under its control (Gandhi, 1972, pp. 132-3).

The 'so-called mother State of Pakistan' unveiled itself as an abusive father. The Benevolent Mother's disciplining of the Bastard Son involved the enforcement of air superiority to prevent combat in the western sector and a naval blockade in both the West and East that was capable of stopping Pakistani reinforcements in East Pakistan. Moreover, the Karachi port was bombed to prevent the departure of Pakistani ships and Mukti Bahini

was provided with military support where necessary (Mansingh, 1984, pp. 224-5).⁵³ On the 16th of December, Indira Gandhi announced to the Indian Parliament that ‘the West Pakistan forces have unconditionally surrendered in Bangla Desh’ (Gandhi, 1972, pp. 152-3). The next day she declared that India wanted to fashion its relations with the people of Pakistan on the basis of friendship and understanding and that it was ‘this sincere desire which prompted us last evening to instruct our Army, Navy and Air Force to cease operations from 20.00 hours today on all fronts in the West (Gandhi, 1972, pp. 152-3).

As Weber (1999, p. 94) argues, military intervention joins the affirmation of state sovereignty with violence. In international relations, intervention is defined as the violation of one state’s sovereignty by an uninvited intruder. It is rape on an international scale. Indeed, the ‘rape of an ally’ is exactly how Henry Kissinger referred to India’s actions in his conversations with Richard Nixon (United States, 1971). We have already seen how in the lead up to the war, India took to discursively domesticating East Pakistan and then simulating the sovereign will of the Bangladeshi people, thereby blurring the sovereignty/intervention boundary and justifying its intervention by claiming to defend the Bangladeshi people. The advent of the war however, posed a different challenge to India’s postcolonial identity. With India’s claims of postcolonial difference and the importance of morality and non-violence in the performative enactment of its Self, becoming a military aggressor was just the type of hypermasculine action it had to avoid. It did so through a strategy of dissimulation.

Following Baudrillard (1983, p. 5), if ‘To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn’t’ then ‘To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has’. Accordingly, in order to mask its

⁵³ For a detailed account of the war see Palit (1972)

hypermasculinity India adopted a feminine guise. Thus, it limited its actions to gaining control of East Pakistan and preventing further Pakistani penetration into its territory. To do so it utilised a defensive employment of the strategies of encirclement and entrapment, which Weber (1998, p. 99) argues 'are the modalities of female rape of a male' and which carry with them the threat of symbolic castration. The declaration of a ceasefire in the Western sector meant, however, that the threat of symbolic castration remained incomplete. Hence, India avoided a hypermasculine subjectivity by re-engendering itself as feminine. By not continuing its military actions in the Western sector India (and Indira) sought to reassert a maternal masculinity and to retain a necessary hypermasculine Other in Pakistan.

In Indian discourse the Bangladesh war was an unmitigated success both in demonstrating the attractiveness of its ideals and also its ability to fend off the foreign interference. Not only had Bangladesh won its freedom, but India had actively proven its commitment to 'the cause of oppressed people all over the world' and had shown that 'there are severe limitations to super powers in what they tried to do and what they achieved' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 161). The attempt by foreign powers to manipulate the fissiparous tendencies of the region had failed: 'Here in the Indian sub-continent they have always tried to have a balance. What has it meant? It has meant that they wanted to keep India weak...And they wanted to keep the subcontinent divided' (Gandhi, 1972, p. 161).

Instead, India had become stronger and more united – a threat to its sovereignty had been transformed into an enactment of its sovereignty. As for the suggestions that India was, 'pressured into cease-fire by Russians who in turn were being pressured by Americans!

The decision was made right here, at the moment of surrender in Dacca...I am not a person to be pressured – by anybody or any nation’ (Gandhi, 1972, p. 165).⁵⁴

In the wake of the war, India and Bangladesh signed a Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Peace which endorsed non-alignment, peaceful co-existence and mutual consultations in the event of a threat or attack on either party. The Treaty officially brought Bangladesh into the ambit of India’s civilisational influence, based on an attraction of the familial kind. According to Indira Gandhi’s (1975b, p. 622) Parliamentary statement, the Treaty ‘...solemnises the close ties of friendship between our two countries and peoples cemented through blood and sacrifice’.

Negotiations toward a settlement with Pakistan began in April 1972, after Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had secured his position as President of Pakistan, and culminated in the Simla Agreement on the 2nd of July. Like the Tashkent Declaration the Simla Agreement endorsed the principles of peaceful coexistence and, hence, gestured toward the attractiveness of India’s postcolonial modernity. However, unlike the Tashkent Declaration there was no reference to the 1948 UN mediated cease-fire line. Instead, the cease-fire line resulting from the 1971 war, which was more favourable to India, was recognised as the new line of control. Moreover, the Simla Agreement endorsed India’s position of bilateralism and excluded UN involvement in maintaining peace along the line of control (Mansingh, 1984, p. 229). Aside from this, however, India’s position during the negotiations was conciliatory – something that was quite to contrary to the United States’s predictions. A recently declassified memorandum written by members of the National Security Council and sent to Henry Kissinger in 1972 prior to the Simla talks claims that,

⁵⁴ During the conflict, the United States dispatched an aircraft carrier, the *Enterprise*, which briefly touched the southern edge of the Bay of Bengal before moving and remaining south of Sri Lanka.

Mrs Gandhi clearly wants to exploit Pakistan's crushing defeat to resolve problems far beyond those directly connected with the fighting – agreement on a Western frontier, settlement of the Kashmir dispute in India's favour, ending the arms race. ...even if peace talks begin soon, the road to settlement will be long and arduous and Mrs Gandhi will not be inclined to magnanimity (Saunders & Hoskinson, 1972, p. 2).⁵⁵

Yet, India did not demand to keep the territory gained in the western sector, failed to seek monetary compensation for the care of refugees and refused to take advantage of Pakistan's internal political woes to reinforce India's bargaining position (Mansingh, 1984, p. 633). In an interview with Pakistani journalists Indira Gandhi (1975b, pp. 628-635) sought to downplay India's military and political pre-eminence in the region. This 'soft approach', according to one of Indira Gandhi's closest advisors P.N. Dhar (2000, p. 205) was intended to dispel any fears on the part of India's other neighbours, in particular Nepal and Sri Lanka, of 'the emergence of Indian hegemony'. Indira Gandhi's 1972 article in *Foreign Affairs* gives an indication of how India's rendering of the Bangladesh war reiterated the two important narratives of the superiority of India's postcolonial identity and the threat to India from foreign interference. In this article, Indira Gandhi (1975a, p. 209) writes:

the notion of an inherent and insuperable antagonism between a secular India and pre-dominantly Muslim state has been discredited – not through any design on our own but because the idea itself was untenable and the military dictatorship of Pakistan, totally alienated from its own people, had followed a short-sighted and unrealistic policy.

⁵⁵ Interestingly, and more accurately, the same memorandum puts little stock in claims of an India-Soviet alliance: 'There has been no substantial qualitative change in the Indo-Soviet relationship as a result of the war. The so-called "special relationship" is rooted in interests on both sides as are the limitations involved. India has a much greater will and capacity to resist Soviet encroachments on its independence of action than do the Egyptians, for instance' (Saunders & Hoskinson, 1972, p. 4).

Moreover, 'the shock of these events compelled Pakistan to exchange military dictatorship for civilian rule...' and thus to recognise the wisdom of India's path to nation-hood (Gandhi, 1975a, p. 209).

As for the role played by foreign powers in the conflict: 'Just as in the earlier days when the colonial power had used religious sentiments to blunt the nationalist drive in India, some powers sought to use Pakistan to offset India'. The West, China and even the Soviet Union – before it realised the folly of its ways⁵⁶ – had tried to 'play off Pakistan against India' through military assistance and this had the consequence of strengthening the 'militarist oligarchy in Pakistan' (Gandhi, 1975a, pp. 207-8).

6.3.3 Conclusion

Why Indira Gandhi declared a ceasefire in the western sector and the reason for India's conciliatory behaviour at Simla has puzzled the more conventional observers of Indian foreign policy. J.N. Dixit, (2004, p. 137) for instance, argues that by not putting pressure on Pakistan at Simla 'India lost a valuable opportunity for resolving the Jammu and Kashmir problem which even now remains a threat to India's territorial integrity and a disturbing factor in Indo-Pakistan relations'. He also asks 'Why did India not continue the military operations to recapture the whole of Jammu and Kashmir and to destroy the military power structure of Pakistan completely?' (Dixit, 2004, p. 134). However, his main explanation for India's behaviour, that there was an 'unarticulated' message from the Soviet Union that its military support could not be maintained at the levels required if the war was prolonged, seems highly speculative. In any case, by this time the morale of the Pakistani army was extremely low, India's military strength greatly outweighed Pakistan's

⁵⁶ The Soviet Union had offered military equipment to Pakistan in 1968.

and it was far from certain that the United States, given their intractable involvement in Vietnam at the time, would come to Pakistan's aid. Pushing into the western sector would, however, have resulted in a deep split in India's self-image as a peaceful, non-aggressive postcolonial state since it would not convincingly be able to account for its actions by claiming self-defence or humanitarian intervention. Such was the sensitivity to being labelled an occupying force that even the request from Bangladesh's new leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman for Indian troops to remain in the country for six to eight months after the ceasefire was turned down (Dixit, 2004, p. 135). This was probably much to the disappointment of Henry Kissinger who had not only (erroneously) assumed that India would continue its assault into the western sector, but also argued that in the wake of the war, 'the Indian occupation of East Pakistan is going to make the Pakistani one look like child's play' (Quoted in Guha, 2007, p. 460)

The importance of India's self-image in its foreign policy is even overlooked by more critical scholars like Sankaran Krishna (1999, p. 22, 107) who argues that after the 'critical rupture' of 1971 India's self-construction turned from pacifist nation to regional hegemon as 'the rightful legatee of the Raj's role as the strategic center of South Asia'. For Krishna (1999, p. 227) postcolonial India is wrought with an inescapable anxiety to prove that postcolonial Indians were the equals of their former colonial masters. Yet, as I have sought to show in this chapter, and throughout the thesis, the concern has also been to prove that postcolonial Indians were *better* than their former colonial masters because their postcolonial modernity was marked by a rejection of domination and aggression. Thus, in the aftermath of the Bangladesh war Indira Gandhi (1975a, p. 206) was insistent that the military victory had not changed India's fundamental character:

we are not tied to the traditional concepts of a foreign policy designed to safe-guard overseas possessions, investments and the carving out of spheres of influence and the erection of *cordons sanitaires*. We are not interested in exporting ideologies.

As for the international reception of India's actions, Indira Gandhi was convinced that she had world public opinion on her side. In an interview with a journalist on the 22nd of December, 1971 – the contents of which were passed to the American Embassy in New Delhi on a 'strictly confidential basis' and subsequently relayed to the US Secretary of State in a correspondence – she said,

I'm deeply grateful to people of US. I can't tell you how many hundreds and hundreds of letters I have received from eminent people in different fields of activity in US right down to school children in third, fourth, fifth and sixth grades. I've been very greatly touched by their sentiments (Keating, 1971).

Moreover,

As to misunderstanding by President Nixon of India's case. It's not just a question of India's case insofar as Bangladesh is concerned. It's a question of recognizing what India is, what India stands for and what India wants to do. We have never accepted theory of balance of power, and we have no intention doing it now (Keating, 1971).

6.4 Mother India/Indira, The Emergency and The 'Janata Spring'⁵⁷

It would be fifteen years before another intervention on the scale of Bangladesh would be attempted. Much took place in the intervening years, including a short period of authoritarian rule, a period of rule by the Janata coalition and a Prime Ministerial assassination, which had an impact on how the region was inscribed. Before India's

⁵⁷ Ali (1993, p. 97)

intervention in Sri Lanka in the 1980s can be analysed then, it is necessary to examine Indian foreign policy in the remainder of the decade.

6.4.1 The Emergency

By the summer of 1972, Indira Gandhi's slogan *Garibi Hatao* (remove poverty!) had come back to haunt her. Crop failure had led to food scarcity and rising inflation was met with cuts in government expenditure and consequently a spate of industrial action all over the country. Indira Gandhi's response was to further centralise her political authority by funnelling power away from the regional state governments toward the centre. She did so by invoking President's Rule, another legacy of the British colonial administration, to run states directly from Delhi and suspend state legislatures to stem opposition to the Congress Party. Regional issues and conflicts thus became national ones requiring central government intervention. This centralisation of political power was a continuation of a process begun in 1969 when Indira Gandhi split the Congress Party in order to overcome the constraints on her power from the state Chief Ministers and the members of the Congress Working Committee – collectively known as known as the 'Syndicate'. The Syndicate were responsible for her accession to the Prime Ministership in 1966, which they promoted mostly because they thought she was weak and ideologically indistinct enough to be controlled (Kaviraj, 1986, p. 1697). But Indira Gandhi proved to be something altogether different and in the 1970s she saw to it that political power was personalised and centralised to an even greater extent. Not only did she brook no dissent from the Congress Party organisation or her cabinet but she appointed loyalists as state and local leaders and centralised control of the party's finances.

Although Nehru had dominated Indian politics throughout his time in office he was able to see the importance of institution building. As Nandy (1980, p. 122) has argued, even though opposition parties and state governments during Nehru's time were more 'amorphous, unpredictable and irresponsible' he 'treated them *as if* they were powerful and responsible and as if he had to respect them for his own political survival'. This coalitional brand of politics was aided by the internal ideological diversity of the Congress Party (Kaviraj, 1986, p. 168). On the other hand, Indira Gandhi thought that the institutions India had inherited from the colonial era were unfit to lead it into the postcolonial modern era. As she told Ved Mehta in 1966:

I am not afraid to say that the Congress Party has become moribund. It has scarcely a single leader with a modern mind...The trouble is that Congress has never succeeded in evolving into a modern political party. Sometimes I feel that even our parliamentary system is moribund. Everything is debated and nothing gets done. Everything that can be exploited for political purposes is exploited. On top of all this, the inertia of our civil service is incredible (Quoted in Mehta, 1970, p. 501).

Her personalised style of politics was evident as far back as the 1967 election campaign in which she became Mother Indira/India:

My family is not confined to a few individuals. It consists of crores of people...my burden is manifold because crores of my family members are poverty-stricken and I have to look after them...sometimes they fight among themselves, and I have to intervene, especially to look after the weaker members of my family, so that the stronger ones do not take advantage of them' (Quoted in Frank, 2001, p. 303).

This was reinforced by the 1971 election campaign, which set a precedent by focusing almost exclusively on her as an individual candidate. Katherine Frank (2001, p. 303) has suggested that Indira Gandhi's relationship to 'the masses' was both maternal and paternal. In a slightly different vein, I would argue that while Indira Gandhi portrayed herself as the wisest of the modern children who had the responsibility of draping Mother India in her

masculine garb of modernity, she also saw herself as Mother India personified. As a result, she was convinced of her commitment to morality, democracy and pluralism but was also certain that only she could put India on the path to modernity. India's postcolonial identity thus became inextricably tied up with the individual personality of Indira Gandhi and this was reiterated in the Indian discourse on the Bangladesh war. Here Mother Indira became the goddess Durga who defended the weak with a finely honed sense of restraint and morality. She is also, however, an aggressive symbol of female energy who sometimes exists in tension with the domestic ideal celebrated by Mahatma Gandhi.

The opposition to Indira Gandhi's leadership had grown greater by 1974 after her ruthless suppression of a nation-wide railway strike and the emergence of a movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan, a one-time member of the Congress who had fought in the independence struggle and was a founding member of the Congress Socialist Party. In the post-independence period Narayan had been a member of Parliament before retiring from mainstream politics in 1957 to devote himself to the Gandhian Sarvodaya movement which aimed at poverty alleviation at a grass-roots level (Sahgal, 1978, p. 117). In light of the turmoil of the 1970s he decided to make a political comeback with nothing less in mind than a non-violent 'total revolution – political, economic, social, educational, moral and cultural', which included greater decentralisation of political power to local governments (Frank, 2001, p. 367). Narayan's movement spread from Bihar throughout the entire country by drawing together opposition parties from across the ideological spectrum as well as the poorer and voice-less sections of the Indian public like land-less labourers, all broadly committed to a moral and political struggle against Indira Gandhi's government and its claim of an exclusive relationship with 'the masses'. In response, Indira Gandhi alleged that the movement had been instigated and controlled by 'outside forces' and, more specifically, accused Narayan of being backed by the United States through the Central

Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Frank, 2001, p. 367). According to Gandhi's advisor, P.N. Dhar (2000, p. 254), her poor relationship with Richard Nixon and revelations of the CIA's involvement in the overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile had made her increasingly apprehensive about US intentions in India.

In June 1975 Indira Gandhi was found guilty of electoral malpractice for using government equipment at rallies during the 1971 election campaign and employing a member of her staff in her campaign before his government resignation papers had been processed. Despite the relatively minor nature of her offences, the Allahabad High Court initially disqualified her from holding public office for six years and demanded her resignation before announcing that she could remain Prime Minister until her appeal was heard but not vote in Parliament. The ruling revitalised the popular movement against her and consequently Narayan and Morarji Desai, a nationalist leader and former Congress minister who Gandhi had forced to resign in 1969, intensified their efforts to topple her government through civil disobedience.

On the 25th of June Indira Gandhi summoned the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Siddhartha Shankar Ray, a legal expert on the Constitution, to help her devise a constitutionally-sound way of declaring a state of emergency. Chaos was threatening to bring down India, she told Ray, and as a result 'Democracy will come to a grinding halt' (Frank, 2001, p. 374). Moreover, she was in possession of intelligence reports that apparently indicated that Narayan would be calling for the army and police to mutiny that day and that the CIA was implicated. Thus, she argued, 'Some drastic emergent action is needed' (Frank, 2001, p. 374). Ray eventually advised her that Narayan's call for mutiny could be regarded as incitement to 'armed rebellion' – this being one of the conditions necessary in the constitution for the President to declare a national emergency (Frank,

2001, pp. 375-6). On the 26th of June, after thousands of opposition figures – including Narayan and Desai – had been imprisoned using colonial-era preventative detention powers, Indira Gandhi (1977, p. 1) announced in a radio broadcast that Emergency rule had been proclaimed. Citing a ‘deep and widespread conspiracy’ to ‘negate the very functioning of democracy’ and the actions of ‘certain persons’ who ‘have gone to the length of inciting our armed forces to mutiny and our police to rebel’, she said that ‘the forces of disintegration are in full play and communal passions are being aroused, threatening our unity’ (Gandhi, 1977, p. 1). Moreover, ‘Any situation, which weakens the capacity of the national government to act decisively inside the country, is bound to encourage dangers from outside’. Thus, ‘The nation’s integrity demands firm action’. Not only this but, ‘The threat to internal stability also affects production and prospects of economic improvement’ (Gandhi, 1977, p. 2). The official narrative of the Emergency was, therefore, one which reiterated two key aspects of nationalist discourse – the fragility of India’s unity, its susceptibility to foreign manipulation, and the dangers of India reverting to its non-modern, backward past. As Indira Gandhi put it, ‘this is a time for unity and discipline’ (Gandhi, 1977, p. 4).

Hence, in the official narrative the Emergency was an attempt to prevent the failure of postcolonial modernity. It was a narrative, however, that threatened to destabilise another part of India’s postcolonial identity – its postcolonial difference as a pluralistic nation-state that valued morality and non-violence. Even though Indira Gandhi justified the Emergency because of the creation of ‘a climate of violence and hatred’ by the opposition, this could not hide the fact that the Emergency itself was an act which disrupted the discourse of India’s postcolonial difference and made the Indian state the main agent of violence.

It was a tension that was intensified by the activities of Indira Gandhi's son Sanjay who, despite his lack of official political status or electoral mandate, exercised a vast amount of influence during the Emergency. Key among his initiatives for a 'new India' was a sterilisation drive, predominantly through vasectomies, which targeted the non-modern 'masses'. It was an approach that would have found favour among the purveyors of colonial masculinity for whom the lack of 'manly self control' and excessive sexual indulgence were markers of the weakness and effeminacy of the Indian male (Sinha, 1995, pp. 18-19).

Another brutal initiative was a program of urban 'beautification' and regeneration which required the demolition of aesthetically unpleasing slums in Delhi, Bombay, Agra and Varanasi. Neither initiative was free from the use of compulsion. Many of the millions of Indians who were sterilised in the first five months of the Emergency were poor or homeless and were coerced, bribed or forced to undergo vasectomies (Tarlo, 2003). The demolition drives required the relocation of tens of thousands of people who were moved at gunpoint and provided with inadequate alternative accommodation (India, 1978, Ch. XXI). For Jagmohan, the vice-chairman of the Delhi Development Authority and the head of Sanjay Gandhi's 'Action Brigade' the demolitions were seen as a gesture toward rationality, technology and modernity. Justifying the razing of the settlement at the Turkman Gate entrance to old Delhi, which ended in lethal violence, he said: 'Bulldozers were used as a labour-saving technique and for clearing the debris speedily... This practice has been in vogue for the last one or two decades' (Quoted in Frank, 2001, p. 403). Further, 'What had been bulldozed is not the slums but their politics, not the *jhuggi jhonpries* [slum shacks] but physical and mental disease they reared. Bulldozers are instruments of development not of demolition' (Quoted in Visvanathan, 2001). Indira Gandhi pleaded ignorance of these excesses. According to Pupul Jayakar, her friend and

biographer, she ‘hit the ceiling’ when shown evidence of the devastation caused by the haphazard slum demolitions and despite her initial support for the sterilisation program, according to P.N. Dhar, she soon grew ‘uneasy about its human and political implications’ (Frank, 2001, p. 404; Dhar, 2000, p. 341).

Explanations for the reasons behind Sanjay Gandhi’s elevation during the Emergency range from the psychological and emotional issues arising in the relationship between mother and son to political expediency (Frank, 2001, pp. 398- 400). The former arguments tend to be premised on a dichotomised rendering of the subject into a private ‘self’ and a public ‘figure’. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan (1993, p. 115) argues that when the subject is female, this dichotomy is further exaggerated – the public and the private are seen as so separate that the subject can only be explained as a split personality whose ‘private’, ‘feminine’ traits, such as maternal love, inevitably spill into and cause weakness in public behaviour. This reading is evident in the memoir of Gandhi’s Foreign Secretary, T.N. Kaul, in which he puts Indira Gandhi’s ‘errors of judgement’ down to her ‘insecurity’ and Sanjay Gandhi’s ‘strong and dominating influence’ (Kaul, 1995, pp. 147, 151, 162). The latter argument, concerning political expediency, is made by journalist Uma Vasudev and Indira Gandhi’s cousin, Nayantara Sahgal. Both argue that Gandhi’s political style was to be all things to all people – to cater for the entire ideological spectrum. Sanjay Gandhi, they argue, served a purpose as a ‘symbol of the right’ – as Vasudev puts it – or as projecting a ‘new “pragmatism”’ – as Sahgal describes it – while Indira Gandhi could portray an image of radicalism (Frank, 2001, p. 400) (Sahgal, 1978, p. 178). Ashis Nandy (1980, pp. 126-7) also argues that Indira Gandhi made instrumental use of her son – she found in him the absolute loyalty she could not find among her other followers.

To put it slightly differently, I would suggest that the Emergency was an attempt to depoliticise India in order to put it on the path of a pure and unadulterated drive toward modernity. In other words, it was an attempt to resolve the tension in India's postcolonial identity between mimicry and difference in favour of the former. Indira Gandhi, like Nehru, had struggled with this ambivalence but the authoritarian traits in her personality and her lack of 'political self-confidence', as Nandy (1980, p. 119) puts it, made this tension even more acute. Nandy (1980, p. 119) argues that Indira Gandhi was in power at time when 'almost no one granted the authenticity of the Indian experiment; everyone wanted India to be some other country' and this being the case 'she felt herself pressured by the intellectual atmosphere in the country and in the world to put economic attainments above civil liberties'.

However, far from resolving the tension in India's postcolonial identity, the Emergency only intensified it. Indira Gandhi did not just think of herself as a patriotic daughter of Mother India, she identified with Mother India herself, which made it hard for her to justify smothering India in the 'garb of modernity' in complete disregard for its supposed civilisational legacies like tolerance for plurality. Sanjay Gandhi, on the other hand was – according to his mother – a 'doer, not a thinker', a patriotic son who had no qualms about pursuing a modernity underpinned by 'discipline' and not morality (Dhar, 2000, p. 313). P.N. Dhar (2000, p. 351) argues that ultimately, Indira Gandhi 'was not comfortable with the Emergency, and she wanted to get out of it, somehow, anyhow'. According to him she 'was nostalgic about the way people had reacted to her in the 1971 campaign' – when she became Mother India personified – 'and she longed to hear again the applause of the multitudes' (Dhar, 2000, p. 344). During the Emergency, as in 1971, Indira Gandhi was often associated with the goddess Durga in popular discourse. Only now this symbolism was used to represent 'misguided tyranny' rather 'righteous triumph', as Stephanie Tawa

Lama (2001, p. 9) puts it. Late in 1976, Indira Gandhi seemed to herself resort to the metaphor of the goddess Durga, who is often portrayed riding into battle on a tiger's back, to express her predicament to the spiritual leader Krishnamurti, telling him: 'I am riding on the back of a tiger . . . I do not mind the tiger killing me, but I do not know how to get off its back' (Quoted in Tawa Lama, 2001, p. 9).

6.4.2 Foreign Policy During the Emergency

During the Emergency Indira Gandhi (1977, p. 94) gave an interview in which she declared, 'We can no longer afford such slackness or 'softness', as Gunnar Myrdal called it'.⁵⁸ But what did this mean in terms of India's self-projection as a nation-state that abjures domination? In a speech in 1976 she proclaimed that,

Peace and harmony, between nations, as in a society, are necessary pre-requisites of creativity and growth. An atmosphere of confrontation and conflict leads to stultification and waste. If there must be rivalry, let it be peaceful rivalry and peaceful competition. On the Indian sub-continent as elsewhere, we are trying to supplant prevailing suspicions, confrontation and aloofness with trust, cooperation and mutual involvement (Gandhi, 1976, pp. 149-50).

Given that Indira Gandhi had chosen to enforce peace and harmony within India through authoritarian rule, these seemingly benign words could be taken as an ominous sign of her attitude to relations between the countries of the 'sub-continent', as the region had come to be known during this time. In any case a number of events that had occurred prior to the Emergency, including the 1974 nuclear test, the integration of the protectorate of Sikkim into the Indian Union and India's reaction to Nepal's attempts to end their 'special relationship', had already conspired to make India seem like anything but a benevolent

⁵⁸ In his *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations* Gunnar Myrdal argued that India was a 'soft state' unable to maintain the discipline needed to modernise and develop and that an authoritarian regime may have more success.

nation-state. India's dissimulation – its disavowal of a hypermasculine subjectivity during the 1971 war – was fooling no one.

In India's inherited geopolitical reasoning, Sikkim's importance lay in its status as a strategic buffer between India and China. While it was given formal sovereignty under the British, in reality, like the other Princely states it was controlled by a British resident political officer. Upon India's independence, Sikkim was made a protectorate. This meant that India was responsible for Sikkim's defence while the King or Chogyal retained control of internal matters, although the British tradition of instituting a resident political officer in Sikkim was continued. By 1973, the Chogyal showed signs of wanting to change the limited nature of his power to politically and symbolically represent the people of Sikkim. At the same time, however, he was also facing demands from the Sikkim Congress Party for greater political representation in his government.

After the Indian Army intervened to suppress riots against the Chogyal, the Indian government garnered a commitment from him to hold regular elections starting in April 1974. According to P.N. Dhar (2000, p. 290), the Chogyal was by now falling out of favour with Indira Gandhi who was especially concerned about the American connections and 'anti-Indian moves' of the Chogyal's American-born wife. The 1974 election saw the Sikkim Congress win all but one seat in the Sikkim Assembly and in September, India passed a constitutional amendment making Sikkim an associate state of the Indian Union. Faced with being relegated to mere ceremonial status the Chogyal made a complaint in the United Nations denying India's right to interfere in Sikkim. In April 1975, the Indian army was again sent in to Sikkim, this time to take hold of the Chogyal's palace. Soon after, the Sikkim Assembly voted to abolish the monarchy in Sikkim and join the Indian Union as a full state (Mansingh, 1984, pp. 281-2).

In Indian discourse this episode was represented as another win for democracy and written into the narrative of the attractiveness of India's postcolonial modernity. According to P.N. Dhar (2000, p. 298), for instance, the Chogyal's fate was 'an end common to backward-looking monarchs in an era of expanding democratic movements'. Criticism was deflected by underscoring the moral distinction between India's incorporation of Sikkim into its democracy and Pakistan's annexation of the state of Hunza into its non-democracy:

the people of Sikkim elected their own Assembly and chose to have closer connection with India...Pakistan annexed a State called Hunza. No election. No popular will. But hardly any newspaper mentioned it. Whereas Sikkim was spoken of for a whole month all over the world and even in some of our own papers (Gandhi, 1984, p. 727).

Like Sikkim, Nepal's rulers in the 1970s had grown increasingly resentful of India and its insistence on joint consultation regarding matters of security as specified in the 1950 treaty. In response, India agreed to end the activities of its military liaison group and withdraw its military technicians in Nepal. At the same time, however, India also raised the issue of closing the open border between India and Nepal and delayed negotiations to renew the Trade and Transit Treaty, both of which would have been detrimental to Nepal's economy. Eventually, Nepal's King Mahendra signed the Trade and Transit Treaty without gaining the trade concessions he had demanded or ending the 'special relationship' with India (Mansingh, 1984, pp. 284-5). In 1975 when the Trade and Transit Treaty was again up for renewal the new King, Birendra, proposed to make Nepal a 'zone of peace'. India reacted negatively to the proposal fearing that it was a rejection of Nepal's security relationship with India and resorted to the same strategy it employed five years ago by stalling negotiations on trade talks and threatening to close the border (Mansingh, 1984, pp. 286-8).

Despite the hardline approach used in both 1969-70 and 1975 the Indian government attempted to reprise India's favoured self-image as a nation-state that repudiates hegemony of any kind. In a speech in Kathmandu in 1973 Indira Gandhi (1984, p. 653) said: 'I should like to assure that India has neither the desire nor the inclination to be a power – big, small or of any kind, nor to interfere with her neighbours in any way'. In a speech in 1976 External Affairs Minister Y.B. Chavan (1976, p. 38) reiterated the 'bonds of brotherhood' that bound India and Nepal together and urged that both sides 'always be vigilant and make every endeavour to remove any misunderstandings and mistrust that may arise for whatever reason'. On the other hand, if for Indira Gandhi India was facing interference from shady outside forces in its domestic politics, then, for Chavan, the same thing was happening in India's foreign relations: 'I have no hesitation in saying that there are forces whose constant effort it is to sow suspicion and distrust between us. We shall, with our sincerity and vigilance, foil their designs' (Chavan, 1976, p. 38). Thus, despite the efforts to enact an identity rooted in kinship, the region itself was inscribed as a space of danger.

6.4.3 Reinscribing Postcolonial Difference

After initially giving in to her son's demand to postpone the general election for a second time in November 1976, Indira Gandhi reversed her decision two months later and announced that a general election would be held in March 1977. This was despite being advised by the intelligence agencies that she risked losing an election at that juncture (Frank, 2001, pp. 409-10).⁵⁹ Indira Gandhi did indeed lose the election to Janata, a broad coalition of opposition parties. The Janata government declared that India's relations with its neighbours had taken a downward spiral under Indira Gandhi and that, therefore,

⁵⁹ There was much speculation at the time that intelligence reports had assured Indira Gandhi of an overwhelming electoral victory. However, Pupul Jayakar later discovered that the intelligence chief, R.N. Kao had told Gandhi that she risked losing the election if she released members of the opposition from prison (Frank, 2001, p. 410).

repairing these relations would be a priority of the new government. Foreign policy discourse thus became a site for the revitalised reiteration of India's postcolonial difference as a benevolent civilisational nation-state and the Emergency was relegated to the status of an aberration in the narrative of India's postcolonial modernity. As the new Prime Minister Morarji Desai explained in a speech in the Lok Sabha after returning from the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London in June 1977:

When questioned on various occasions [about the return to democracy], I pointed out that the tradition of democracy was rooted in the ancient civilization of India. Foreign rule and such aberrations like the period of emergency, were contrary to our values and our national ethos...the Indian people have an inherent moral courage to judge and elect their own rulers without fear (Desai, 1977a, p. 95).

Likewise, according to the new External Affairs Minister, 'A new India is rediscovering its old personality' (Vajpayee, 1977a, p. 162). In his first speech on foreign affairs in the Lok Sabha, Vajpayee declared the Janata government's commitment to non-alignment and emphasised the importance of not giving the impression of leaning towards a particular bloc as, he implied, Indira Gandhi's government had done. Raju Thomas (1980, pp. 235-6) has argued that initially the Janata defined non-alignment as a Swiss-style neutrality, however, this early speech of Vajpayee's reveals an understanding of non-alignment that is much in keeping with Nehru's:

...non-alignment recognises that in today's nuclear world, war or its inevitability must be ruled out...we reject the need to consign national defence to a committed or dependent military or ideological arrangement. Nonalignment frees a nation from the pressures to borrow foreign models or adopt other ideologies which may be alien to a nation's civilisation or its ethos (Vajpayee, 1977c, p. 90).

After highlighting the importance of non-alignment, Vajpayee reiterated that India had 'no history of conquest or expansionism. We have always tried to win the heart and not the

body' (Vajpayee, 1977c, pp. 90-1). The first priority of his government, Vajpayee (1977c, p. 91-2) said, would be to:

promote a relationship of co-operation and trust with our immediate neighbours...If the Indian sub-continent remains free of tensions, it would command unique weight in the counsels of the world. It can be an example of how our ancient heritage can be transformed to modern progress.

Already, in the few months that Janata had been in power,

the climate for such trust and cooperation with our neighbours⁶⁰ has already shown significant improvement. Some old suspicions and irritants have been removed; with sustained diplomacy and reciprocal response we hope we can move steadily forward (Vajpayee, 1977c, p. 92).

Vajpayee and Desai undertook visits to the capitals of Pakistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh reiterating the importance of 'good neighbourliness', 'friendship', 'brotherhood' and 'beneficial bilateralism'. Moreover, according to Vajpayee (1978, p. 209) 'we have not only professed strict non-interference in the internal affairs of our neighbours, but practised it, often in the face of great temptation to do the contrary'. As a result, 'there is confidence...that India is today prepared to make its due share of sacrifice to promote the well-being and development of its neighbours...' (Vajpayee, 1978, p. 209). Initiatives taken by the Janata government included coming to an agreement with Bangladesh over a long-running dispute on the sharing of water from the Ganges, resolving disagreements with Pakistan on the design of the Salal hydro-electric plant and signing new Trade and Transit Treaties with Nepal. While in Nepal, Morarji Desai highlighted the uniqueness of the Nepal-India relationship – 'No text book on international relations contains an exact parallel to the pattern of relations which exist between our two sovereign nations'. According to Desai (1977b, p. 279):

⁶⁰ Which Vajpayee specifies elsewhere as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

This sub-continent of ours is heir to an ancient civilization with a deep tradition of peace and tolerance. It has no history of conquest or tradition of superiority. It has been the home of many races and many religions. It was only foreign imperialism which vitiated this tradition.

Thus, ‘the subcontinent has the challenge and opportunity to prove to the world that the great tradition of peace of our common civilization thrives even in these troublesome and tension-ridden modern times’ (Desai, 1977b, p. 279). Given these fears about foreign imperialism turning the ‘subcontinent’ into a space of conquest, it is not surprising that like previous governments, the Janata government was also keen to keep foreign powers out of the region. The relationship between China and Pakistan proved to be a particular irritant. Nonetheless, lacking the level of paranoia about foreign interference or the ‘foreign hand’, as it was called, that pervaded Indira Gandhi’s rule, the Janata period of government sought to re-anchor India as a benign civilisational nation-state, both internally and externally, and attempted to render the ‘sub-continent’ as a space in which to enact India’s postcolonial difference.

6.4.4 Indira Gandhi’s Return

In January 1980 Indira Gandhi was re-elected as Prime Minister. How, given her comprehensive defeat in 1977, did she manage this turn-around? As Tarlo (2003, p. 43) has noted, in the years following her defeat Indira Gandhi consistently refused to be cast in the role of dictator that had been assigned to her in the post-Emergency narrative. She dismissed the Shah Commission, which had been set up to investigate the declaration of the Emergency, as politically motivated and told Mary Carras (1979, p. 240-1) that while there may have been some misuse of power, the reports of abuses during the Emergency were greatly exaggerated. She also claimed that she had lost the election in 1977 because she had annoyed the ‘administration, which was against us even before’ and as a result of

'Western involvement' which helped to spread the Janata's propaganda (Carras, 1979, p. 234).

In November 1978 Indira Gandhi won a by-election in rural Karnataka and formally re-entered politics. The election victory was a sign that she was regaining her personal support among the poor, who she had alienated during the Emergency. Meanwhile, the Janata coalition was performing poorly, both economically and politically, and finally collapsed in August 1979. The 1980 election campaign almost proceeded as if the years of Emergency rule had never happened and, as in previous election campaigns, the focus was not on the Congress but on Indira Gandhi as the saviour of India. This was despite the fact that many of the problems facing India stemmed from Indira Gandhi's undermining of the autonomy of state and local governments – the consequences of which India was now fully experiencing. In the 1980s, regional movements had gained political identities and political support throughout India and were stepping up their demands for power.

The case of Punjab was one of the most potent and destructive. After being partitioned in 1947, Punjab went through further territorial reorganisation in the post-independence period. This finally resulted in a state with a majority Punjabi-speaking Sikh population in 1966. Yet, Punjab's grievances over land distribution and water sharing with neighbouring states, among other things, continued. The Sikh political elite and sections of the Sikh population saw the increasing levels of political and economic intervention by the central government as the main source of Punjab's problems (Chima, 1994 632, p. 848). The Congress rival in Punjab, the Akali Dal, was in and out of power in coalition governments in the 1970s, in part due to Congress manipulation of the Akali Dal's political factions (Chima, 1994, pp. 852-3). In 1975, it refused to support Indira Gandhi's Emergency and in 1977, it defeated the Congress and formed an Akali-Janata coalition government. Although

Indira Gandhi was now out of power, she was still concerned with securing Congress rule in Punjab. On the advice of Zail Singh, a former Congress Chief Minister of Punjab, Sanjay Gandhi sought to split the support base of the Akali Dal by creating an alternative political leader who would defy the leadership (Frank, 2001, p. 454-5).

The man they settled on was Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a young and charismatic orthodox *Sant* (religious preacher) who had gained a reputation as a saint-leader who was above the petty politics of the faction-riddled Akali Dal (Chima, 1994, p. 854). Bhindranwale campaigned for the Congress in 1980 but what power it had over him ended soon after the election. Bhindranwale, who argued that it was an insult for Sikhs, ‘the sons of the valiant *guru*, whose symbol is the sword’ to be asked to ‘accept a woman like Mahatma as their *father*’, declared his independence from the Congress and articulated his demand for the creation of a sovereign Sikh state called ‘Khalistan’ (Quoted in Das, 1998, p. 112). Bhindranwale’s campaign included spates of random violence against Hindus in Punjab as well as assassinations of his Sikh opponents. He was arrested in 1981 for allegedly masterminding an assassination of a newspaper editor but was soon released from prison. This was apparently done on the instructions of Zail Singh and Indira Gandhi. The former wanted to destabilise his rival, the Chief Minister of Punjab, and the latter was seeking to retain her support among Delhi’s Sikh community (Tully & Jacob, 1985, p. 71).

Bhindranwale’s militancy and support grew in the wake of his release and yet it would take several years of worsening violence before Indira Gandhi’s government finally and belatedly took direct action against him. In June 1984, faced with the possibility of electoral defeat for the Congress in the upcoming elections in north India and as the violence in Punjab spiralled out of control and negotiations with Bhindranwale failed, Indira Gandhi ordered the Indian Army into the Golden Temple, the holiest of Sikh shrines

and where Bhindranwale had set up his headquarters. Rajiv Gandhi – Indira Gandhi’s eldest son who became politically active after his brother’s death – and his cronies, Arun Nehru and Arun Singh, had devised the invasion plan many months earlier. However, Indira Gandhi had long been resistant to its implementation, according to Arun Nehru because ‘she was scared of attacking a house of God’ (Quoted in Frank, 2001, p. 478).

Her hesitance proved to be justified. Operation Blue Star, as it was called, ended with the death of Bhindranwale but it also resulted in a large number of military and civilian casualties and the destruction of the Golden Temple library with its original manuscripts by Sikh Gurus. Moreover, it proved to be the trigger for the revenge assassination of Indira Gandhi in October 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards. A retaliatory massacre of up to three thousand Sikhs, with the complicity of Congress Party officials, followed in the days after the assassination (Tully & Jacob, 1985).

The way in which the situation in Punjab was dealt with was indicative of a more general line of thinking at this time on the potential political benefits of manipulating ‘ethnic’ discord. At around the same time that the Indian government was promoting and losing control of Bhindranwale, it was embarking on a similar venture in Tamil Nadu that would prove just as precarious. India’s covert military support for Sri Lankan Tamil militants based in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu took place side by side with an overt effort at diplomatic mediation and eventually led to the induction of an Indian Peace Keeping Force into Sri Lanka. It is this episode that will be the focus of the next chapter.

6.6 Conclusion

The decade of the 1970s constituted an important period in the enactment of India's postcolonial identity. The intervention in Pakistan's civil conflict at the beginning of the decade served to enact India's sovereignty but at the same time threatened to undermine its postcolonial difference as a benign power that repudiates domination and the use of force. This being the case, India went to great lengths to ensure that its involvement in this war did not result in a rupture in its self-image. It employed a strategy of dissimulation to mask its military aggression, used a 'soft approach' during the Simla negotiations with Pakistan and ensured that its military presence in the newly-created Bangladesh ended as soon as possible.

If the India's intervention discourse established the 'subcontinent' as a space of fear then the remainder of the decade saw a reinscription of the 'subcontinent' as a space in which India would enact its civilisational influence and its postcolonial difference. As we shall see in the next chapter the 'region' continued to play an important role in the enactment of India's postcolonial identity in the 1980s as India became involved in Sri Lanka's intractable civil conflict.

7 SOVEREIGNTY, INTERVENTION AND SOUTH ASIA II: INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1980s AND BEYOND

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the major foreign policy 'event' of the 1980s – India's intervention in Sri Lanka's civil conflict. As we saw in chapter four, India and Sri Lanka had a difficult relationship in the immediate post-independence period. Nehru's attempts to build a relationship rooted in kinship were undermined because, as he saw it, the Sri Lankan leadership and its people were not 'conditioned' by the same anti-colonial solidarity that cemented India's relationships with its other neighbours. Nonetheless, kinship and benevolence continued to be the basis of India's foreign policy discourse on Sri Lanka. Indira Gandhi (1971b, p. 397), for instance, described Sri Lanka as 'a respected sister nation' and by the 1970s India-Sri Lanka relations had become positively conciliatory. By 1964 the contentious issue of the repatriation of people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka had been resolved and during the 1970s, India moved to resolve the boundary dispute in the Palk Strait (a colonial legacy) and gave up its claim to the island of Kachchativu. Even as Sri Lanka's civil conflict escalated during the 1970s India had been careful not to interfere with Sri Lanka's internal politics. Why then, did India make involvement in Sri Lanka's civil conflict such an imperative in the 1980s?

India's political and military involvement in Sri Lanka's civil conflict eventually resulted in India's longest-running and most expensive war, lasting 32 months, from October 1987 to March 1990 with the loss of 1155 soldiers and at an estimated cost of Rs. 5 crores (Rs. 50 million) a day (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 315). Among the many works that have examined

the intervention⁶¹ Sankaran Krishna's (1999) stands out for its focus on the self-fashionings of the various parties involved and the divergent ways in which they constituted events and social realities. Yet, like scholars who have pursued more conventional approaches, Krishna assumes that India pursued a policy of attaining regional hegemony after the 1971 war with Pakistan. Krishna's argument here is similar to the one made by Itty Abraham on the significance of India's 1974 nuclear test. To re-visit his argument, which I examined in chapter four, Abraham suggested that the 1974 test was the event that moved India 'from a mythic space of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence into an every-day realm of naturalised fear, threat, danger and insecurity.' According to him, 'Ideological sustenance could now be drawn from the dominant discourse of International Relations [realism], the currency and speech of inter-state interaction' (Abraham, 1998, p. 165). As I argued in chapter four, however, Abraham overlooks the significance of the aspect of India's postcolonial identity that rests on maintaining its difference from Western modernity, and so does Krishna. India does not just seek to 'catch up' to the West, it seeks to surpass it on the level of moral superiority. As I have argued, neither the 1974 nuclear test nor the 1971 war resulted in a drastically different self-representation. Indeed, there was a determined effort to make sure that this was not the case. Regarding Sri Lanka, if the desire to be the regional hegemon had become so strong and naturalised by the 1980s then why has India been so unwilling to become involved in Sri Lanka's civil war since 1990?

Unlike Abraham, Krishna does resist slipping into a realist framework of analysis altogether by noting that India's pretensions toward regional hegemony was distinguished by its desire to be seen as a consensual leader, rather than a military or economic power

⁶¹ See for instance, De Silva (1995), DeVotta (1998), Gunaratna (1993)

seeking dominance over its neighbours. He argues that although India's claims to hegemony are based on the notion that it is the inheritor of the British presence in South Asia it is also underlain by a belief in the superiority of its model of nation-building compared to those of its neighbours. However, in dismissing this 'moralistic conviction' in Indian policy making as mere 'hubris' Krishna (1999, pp. 27-8) forecloses the opportunity to analyse this disjuncture in India's self-representation. By contrast, in the preceding chapters I have taken this disjuncture seriously and attempted to explain it by recourse to the narratives that constitute India's postcolonial identity. I take the same approach in my analysis on India's intervention in Sri Lanka by asking, how were background meanings, subjects and subject relationships constructed so that an interventionist policy come to be regarded as necessary? I begin this chapter by undertaking a detailed analysis of how India became involved in Sri Lanka's civil conflict during the 1980s while in the second part of the chapter I undertake an examination of why, when presented with the opportunity to intervene again in 2000, India pursued a resolute policy of non-intervention.

7.2 'Saving' Sri Lanka

7.2.1 The Sri Lankan 'Threat'

In the decades after independence successive Sri Lankan governments adopted a variety of discriminatory policies against the Tamil minority including the use of the language of the Sinhalese majority, Sinhala, as the sole official state language, discriminatory education and employment policies, the abolition of a Constitutional clause protecting minority rights and the instatement Buddhism as the state religion. From 1977 relations between the Tamil and Sinhalese communities rapidly deteriorated and, following anti-Tamil riots in 1977 and 1981, the Tamil opposition, which had thus far been dominated by the middle-class

professional leaders of the Sri Lankan Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), grew increasingly militant. Emergent groups like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) were led by militant, educated youth who had withstood the worst of the government's discriminatory policies.

India's military and political involvement in Sri Lanka was predicated on the production of the civil conflict as a threat to India's postcolonial modernity, in particular the threats to its unity and independence. The production of Sri Lanka as a threat is clear in the following account by J.N. Dixit (1998, p. 14), India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka from 1985 to 1989. Indira Gandhi on her return to office, he says, became 'concerned about Sri Lanka's attitudes and policies' because

Sri Lanka's geographical location so near India, and the deep socio-cultural link between Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils...compelled India to perceive critical developments in Sri Lanka not purely as the internal affair of a neighbour but as an issue which could affect India's own unity and territorial integrity if India did not respect the sentiments of its own Tamil citizens (Dixit, 1998, p. 17).

Moreover, 'Jayewardene's structuring international equations which could potentially be a strategic challenge to Indian security made India perceive Sri Lankan developments as a critically embryonic regional crisis that called for some decisive action by India' (Dixit, 1998, p. 17). Later, he specifies this strategic challenge as coming largely from the United States, which had been given a contract to restore an oil storage facility in the port of Trincomalee and had been granted permission to establish a broadcasting facility in Sri Lanka. The latter, according to Dixit, would have doubled as an electronic intelligence-gathering base. Sri Lanka's overtures to Pakistan and Israel for military aid from 1977 to 1983 were also apparently perceived as a strategic threat (Dixit, 2004, pp. 14-15).

That this threat was neither ‘objective’, nor self-evident is clear however, when one considers how previous governments had reacted to the same situation. In 1972 members of the TULF were unsuccessful in their attempts to gain help from the Indian government and Tamil political parties in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu to resolve their problems with the Sri Lankan Government (Krishna, 1999, p. 97). Moreover, far from expressing solidarity with their ethnic brethren, on several occasions during the 1970s, the Tamil Nadu government arrested and deported Sri Lankan Tamil militants and even when anti-Tamil riots escalated in 1977, there were little more than mild protests in Tamil Nadu (Krishna, 1999, p. 94). During the Janata period, Sri Lanka’s new Prime Minister, J.R. Jayewardene, shifted its foreign policy in a pro-Western and pro-market direction – a development that did not particularly concern India’s Prime Minister Morarji Desai (Krishna, 1999, p. 105). Moreover, even though the Tamil political movement in Sri Lanka was turning into a secessionist movement led by militant youth, according to Thomas Abraham Sr., India’s then-High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Desai was

not really concerned about the Tamil problem there because, from his point of view, it was not central to the security and well-being of the Indian Republic. He therefore did not want to build the problem too much (Quoted in Krishna, 1999, p. 106).

The key difference appears to be that whereas in Janata discourse ‘the subcontinent’ had been inscribed as a space of desire (for the performative enactment of India’s benign civilisational influence), Indira Gandhi turned back to a narrative on the precariousness of India’s unity and its vulnerability to foreign interference. This ensured that ‘South Asia’ – as the region was now increasingly being referred to as the result of efforts to establish an organisation for South Asian cooperation – was reinscribed as a space of fear (of postcolonial disunity and backwardness).

Indira Gandhi's speech at the first meeting of Foreign Ministers for South Asian Regional Cooperation in August 1983 is revealing in this respect. India, she said, did not, 'want to take on more problems' and its 'policy is not to interfere in the affairs of others' however, 'ours is a troubled region. Most of our countries are multi-racial and multi-religious. It would be idle to pretend that we are not affected by what happens elsewhere' (Gandhi, 1986a, p. 416). Here the inter-linked multiplicity of race and religion in South Asia serves a double function. Firstly, it is a source of threatening difference to the modern nation-state and secondly, it is treated as evidence of the lasting civilisational unity of the region which obscures the distinction between the peoples of different sovereign states. It is notable however, that sovereignty is not displaced to the region but to India. Rather than highlighting the role of a regional association in solving problems, such as the conflict in Sri Lanka, the onus was placed on India.

The riots of July 1983 proved to be a turning point. The riots resulted in the deaths of up to 3000 Tamils, the displacement of almost 70 per cent of Colombo's Tamil population to refugee camps, and the flight of more than 160 000 Tamils and much of the Tamil leadership to Tamil Nadu (Krishna, 1999, pp. 115-116). Indira Gandhi's response to the anti-Tamil pogrom and to the question of Indian involvement in Sri Lanka's civil war, more generally, became clear in a speech in the Lok Sabha on the 12th of August. The riots, she said, had caused 'anguish and anxiety' not only to the Tamil population in India but to the entire nation. She had received reassurance from President Jayewardene however, that the 'situation was coming under control and *our people* would soon be returning to their homes' (Gandhi, 1986a, p. 419) (emphasis added). It was 'clear in every forum and in every possible way that India does not pose any threat to Sri Lanka, nor do we want to interfere in their internal affairs'. Still,

I pointed out to President that developments in Sri Lanka affect us also. In this matter, India cannot be regarded as just any country. Sri Lanka and India are the two countries who are directly concerned. Any extraneous involvement will complicate matters for both our countries who are directly concerned. Any extraneous involvement will complicate matters for both our countries. We live in a region where many forces are at work, not only whom wish India or our neighbours well. Forces of destabilization are at work. Hence we must make every effort to minimize any opportunity for foreign elements to weaken us (Gandhi, 1986a, p. 419).

The structure of this speech – first reassuring Sri Lanka that India does not interfere in the internal affairs of others, but citing the close ties between ‘the peoples’ of India and Sri Lanka as the reason why India could not remain a passive observer – was repeated in many of Indira Gandhi’s statements during this period and formed the basis of India’s intervention discourse on Sri Lanka. The Emergency may have been over, but Indira Gandhi’s fear of ‘foreign elements’ destabilising India was now superimposed on the region.

By mid-1984, the Indian government became aware that many in the Sri Lankan leadership seriously feared an Indian invasion to liberate the Tamil majority region of Jaffna (Krishna, 1999, pp. 269-70). Indian diplomats reassured the Sri Lankan leadership that India had no such intention but the Sri Lankan leadership did little to temper their discourse or actions. Given the threat to the ‘respected sister’ Sri Lanka by dreaded ‘foreign influences’, Indira Gandhi (1986a, p. 424) argued that ‘restraint combined with firmness is called for’ ‘Firmness’ took the form of India’s mediation efforts which began in the wake of the 1983 riots with the reluctant agreement of Jayewardene.

This marked the start of what Krishna (1999, pp. 115-127) calls India’s ‘twin-track policy’ – a course of action that had much in common with the strategies employed in Punjab and

in East Pakistan. While publicly advocating the use of India's 'good offices' to facilitate dialogue between the Sri Lankan government and the TULF, the Indian government was at the same time undertaking a second track that involved training, weapons and logistical support to Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups in Tamil Nadu. In Dixit's (2004, pp. 23, 15) account, this covert support began in either 1980 or 1981 although he provides no specific evidence for this claim. What is clear, however, is that by 1984 there was increasing proof of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) providing weapons and training to Sri Lanka's Tamil militants in camps in Tamil Nadu.⁶² Indeed, there is evidence that in April 1984 RAW had helped to organise several militant groups⁶³ under an umbrella organisation called the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF). RAW's presumption of control over these militant groups was, however, nothing but a delusion for the leaders of these groups had covertly signed their own pact committing themselves to an independent Tamil state (Krishna, 1999, p. 134).

Although reports of the training camps were appearing in the media, the Indian government denied the allegations of Indian support even in the face of photographic evidence – a move Dixit (2004, p. 24) describes as unnecessary mendacity:

Our response to Sri Lankan accusations in this regard should have been that if there was Tamil militancy, it was due to the discriminatory policies of the Sri Lankan government against the Tamils and that we had no more comments or explanations to offer

This sort of approach would indeed have been more consistent with India's response to the East Pakistan crisis. However, unlike in that crisis India was not faced with an enormous influx of refugees. Indian claims of internal destabilisation due to the unrest in Sri Lanka

⁶² The newsmagazine *India Today* was the first to report on RAW's activities. See Gupta (1984).

⁶³ Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS), and Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF).

were, therefore, much weaker and made the need to publicly deny Indian military support to the Tamil militants more necessary.

As for the purpose of the seemingly contradictory ‘twin-track policy’, this too is unclear. Krishna (1999, p. 126) argues that the policy was undertaken not so much to achieve a prompt resolution of Sri Lanka’s problems but rather to keep Sri Lanka in a controlled state of destabilisation and achieve a number of the Indian government’s ambitions at once. These included, allowing the Congress Party to portray itself as the defender of Sri Lankan Tamils and thus potentially translate this into votes in Tamil Nadu, preventing Jayewardene from inviting ‘foreign influences’ into the region and showing other South Asian countries the consequences of alienating India. Krishna’s analysis however, is based on the idea that Indira Gandhi was pursuing a coercive hegemony in South Asia. I would argue instead, that her leadership was riven with a deep ambivalence to issues of postcolonial mimicry and difference and this made dogmatic decision-making impossible. Although she may have reinscribed the region as a space of fear, how to deal with this was far from certain. If her authoritarian instincts pulled her in one direction then her ‘Mother India’ persona led her in another. The result was again a policy of dissimulation – the disavowing of India’s military involvement in Sri Lanka – with an overt simulation of India’s sovereign subjectivity as a benign power by forcing Sri Lanka to recognise it as a mediator. In any case, Indira Gandhi’s death in 1984 brought to power someone who was anxious to achieve a ‘quick and decisive’ resolution to the conflict (Dixit, 1998, pp. 24-5).

7.2.2 The ‘Messiah of modernity’⁶⁴: Rajiv Gandhi and the Politics of Mediation

Indira Gandhi’s successor, her son Rajiv, came to power with the expressed intention to ‘take India into the 21st century’ (Quoted in Nigam, 2004, p. 72). While Nehru celebrated the scientists, engineers and architects building India’s new cities, nuclear power plants, steel mills and dams and Sanjay Gandhi had his ‘Action Brigade’ which sought to make India modern through brutal programs of urban beautification and population control, Rajiv Gandhi had his ‘computer boys’ – a coterie of pragmatic unreflective business executives and technocrats, many of whom were class-mates from the elite Doon School near Delhi or Cambridge University (Frank, 2001, p. 474). For instance, Arun Singh, a close friend who helped Rajiv plan Operation Bluestar, supported him in his role as Defence Minister as the Minister of State for Defence. For Rajiv Gandhi and his cronies India’s modernity depended on making India efficient by overhauling the bureaucracy of the developmental state, deregulating the economy and appropriating advanced computer technology. They were the embodiment of what Charlotte Hooper (2001, p. 193) has called, a ‘technocratic masculine elite that has the whole globe as its playground’. In the hagiographic words of T.N. Kaul (1995, p. 172), Rajiv was ‘upright, clean, decent and honest’. He had ‘a scientific temper and was keen to modernise India through the application of advanced science and technology’. According to his science adviser, M.G.K. Menon, Rajiv Gandhi ‘was a man in a hurry’ who believed that India’s emphasis on self-reliance had slowed down its development and, for that reason, he liberalised the importation of foreign technology and expertise (Quoted in Jayaraman, 1991, p. 431; Gandhi, 1987e, p. 96). According to Gandhi (1987e, p. 93), India had ‘missed one bus with the Industrial Revolution’ and ‘didn’t jump on the second bus on time – and that is the electronic revolution or computer revolution – and now we might have to run behind that

⁶⁴ Raman (1991, p. 5).

bus, catch up to it and jump on to it'. As A.S. Raman (1991, pp. 5-6) writes, Gandhi was 'proud to be known as a little Messiah of modernity, eager to take his country forward by giant leaps into the 21st century'. Thus, Rajiv Gandhi's term as Prime Minister was filled with a sense of urgency and this extended into the foreign policy arena as a heightened desire to exercise India's civilisational influence by mediating in Sri Lanka.

That Rajiv Gandhi disapproved of Indira Gandhi's indeterminate political decision-making was first evidenced by his role in devising the plan for the assault on the Golden Temple and became apparent again in relation to Sri Lanka. Just months into his leadership he dismissed his mother's negotiator, G. Parthasarathi, whose slow and cautious style of diplomacy did not fit with his approach to politics. His replacement, Romesh Bhandari, was set to retire in thirteen months and was apparently given the brief of resolving the Sri Lankan conflict in thirty days (Krishna, 1999, p. 133). In an interview, Bhandari revealed that this was part of a larger foreign policy initiative of a 'young prime minister [who] had come in with a massive mandate', who 'was the centre of attraction not only nationally but globally' and who attached the 'highest importance to creating a better climate in the region. Here it was necessary to make our neighbours feel comfortable with a very large country' (Manchanda, 1986, p. 16). With his retirement pending Bhandari 'tried to do in one year what should normally have taken three years' and 'new initiatives, particularly towards the neighbours, had to be telescoped in a span of twenty days – one night to 38-hour visits to the neighbours...' (Manchanda, 1986, p. 16). Rather than a policy shift however, this was a change in style: 'The content of the policy remained the same, it was much more the type of packaging that was different' (Manchanda, 1986, p. 16).

The change in style was also evident in Rajiv Gandhi's attempt to distinguish himself from his mother in his approach to the emerging regional organisation, the South Asian

Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). 'Fundamentally', he said in a speech in 1985, 'our regional security lies in all the countries in the region building together, not confronting each other. Our security lies in building affection between our people, which is naturally there, building goodwill, warm friendly neighbourliness between our people' (Gandhi, 1987e, p. 54). Accordingly, Gandhi initially attempted to couch the India-Sri Lanka relationship within the broader context of institutionalised regional cooperation. The first in-depth talks with Jayewardene were conducted on a flight to Dhaka, where Gandhi was making a goodwill visit in the wake of a destructive cyclone and where the first SAARC summit was to be held in December. Gandhi had persuaded Jayewardene that the joint visit would symbolise their commitment to regional cooperation (Dixit, 1998, p. 25). Moreover, the first round of talks between the Sri Lankan government and representatives of the Tamil groups took place neither in Sri Lanka nor in India but in Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan under the auspices of the Bhutanese government.

On the other hand, Rajiv Gandhi's foreign policy discourse, like his mother's, enacted an identity for India that emphasised its postcolonial difference. In a speech at the National Defence College in 1985 he spoke against the 'traditional' policy of seeking a balance of power and the Indian alternative of promoting peaceful co-existence among nations. The former he said,

means confrontation, rivalry and establishes these as basic values and natural conditions for relations between States. It involves a search for dominance, a search which, the theory postulates, is real, necessary, inevitable. The feeling given is if you lower your guard the enemy will hit you. The strength of the armed forces is a very critical part of this theory. The armed forces are the guarantors and protectors of security in a theory of balance of power (Gandhi, 1987e. p. 50).

'In a nuclear age', he went on to say, 'the balance of power translates into a balance of terror' (Gandhi, 1987e, p. 51). India's alternative, Panchsheel or peaceful coexistence, he

said, was the product of Indian philosophy, which, 'traditionally celebrates diversity'.

Consequently,

We impose no hegemony on anyone – neither [on] God nor on Man, neither on Nature nor on States. It is only with this outlook, this philosophical basis, that the postulate of peaceful coexistence can be put forward – peaceful coexistence, where all States are equal, equal in their sovereignty. All states are accepted as different, different in their social system, in their economic system, different in their religious and other thinking processes. This difference should not necessarily lead to conflict; it should lead to learning from each other, benefiting from each other. We should celebrate this variety and not threaten or feel threatened by its existence (Gandhi, 1987e, p. 51).

As well as the narrative of India's benign civilisational identity, the dangers of regional disunity also animated Rajiv Gandhi's foreign policy discourse. National security, for him, was to be secured through unity and 'friendly, co-operative relations with our neighbours, while maintaining their sovereignty and equality and working for mutual benefit' (Gandhi, 1987e, p. 52). Further, 'We believe in total equality, brotherhood, mutual cooperation. We do not want an Indian hegemony on the countries around us' (Gandhi, 1987e, p. 53). Thus, while Rajiv Gandhi may have embodied a masculinity of technocracy, which he sought to impart into Mother India's garb of modernity, it was still imperative to mark India's distinctness as a nation-state unlike any other. How, given this acknowledgement of sovereign equality with its neighbours, did India come to be hierarchically positioned in relation to Sri Lanka in a manner that allowed it to pass judgement on Sri Lanka's internal situation?

Like his mother, Rajiv Gandhi legitimised India's interest in Sri Lanka on the basis of the supposed ties of ethnicity between Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils and, as in 1971, pointed to the influx of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees (Gandhi, 1987e, pp. 17, 23, 47). Here, the discourses of kinship and brotherhood provide the ideal context for the construction of

a hierarchical relationship that put India in the position of the older brother providing guidance to his less advanced kin. While the refugee influx blurs the line between the domestic and the international, and therefore between sovereignty and intervention, the ties of ethnicity obscure the boundary between statist sovereignty and its other opposite, secessionist ethno-nationalism. The supposed linkage between Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils was buttressed by the history of Tamil or Dravidian nationalism in southern India. However, as Krishna (1999, Ch. 2) has argued, the connection between the two nationalisms and the danger of Tamil Nadu breaking away from India were overblown. There were distinct differences between the historical, political and cultural development of the two nationalisms. For instance, the critique of caste and North Indian, Sanskritic cultural hegemony that underpinned the Dravidian movement in India was wholly irrelevant in Sri Lanka. Moreover, after reaching a zenith in the 1940s, the secessionist character of the Dravidian movement in India progressively diminished after Independence as central governments federalised the political system to an extent that was limited but sufficient for Dravidian political parties like the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) to opt for accommodation in the Indian nation-state. Thus, while there was rhetorical support for the Sri Lankan Tamil militants from the Tamil Nadu government, this was driven by the exigencies of local politics and the Chief Minister, M.G. Ramachandran, 'was always willing to adjust or modify his policies on Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka' (De Silva, 1995, p. 276).

Nonetheless, the bogey of Dravidian separatism became India's alibi for its intervention into Sri Lanka's domestic affairs and, in turn, an alibi for India's sovereignty. For separatist ethno-nationalism to be meaningful, sovereignty must exist because separatist ethno-nationalism implies a violation of state sovereignty, understood as the absolute authority over a territory and a people. Thus, although Rajiv Gandhi's (1987e, pp. 299-

300) advocacy on behalf of Sri Lankan Tamils invoked the transnational ties of ethnicity he also repeatedly emphasised the need to maintain the territorial integrity of both India and Sri Lanka:

Sri Lanka in the south is having tremendous internal problems. They are spilling over into India. We now have almost one lakh refugees on our soils. Our concern is for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The concern is not only of people in the south, but is the concern of everyone in India. We have to see that the refugees go back, go back in honour, go back in safety, go back with the security of expecting and getting full freedom to express themselves, to work, to live within the integrity of Sri Lanka.

The training and arming of the Tamil militants by RAW continued even as the disastrous consequences of the use of this strategy in Punjab became apparent. While India's mediation efforts intensified, it became increasingly evident that, as in Punjab, India was losing its battle to exercise control over the militant groups. Moreover, it soon became clear that 'foreign interference' was as much of a concern to Rajiv Gandhi's administration as it was to his mother's. In a speech in the Lok Sabha on the 29th of April, 1985 Khursheed Alam Khan, the Minister of State for External Affairs, decried what he saw as the foreign meddling in Sri Lanka:

This is a very serious thing because we do not want any foreign agencies so near our country and particularly the SAS which is providing training to the commandos or the Mossad which is a notorious agency like the CIA. Therefore, we never want that these agencies would be allowed to come into Sri Lanka. We have made this very clear to the Sri Lankan government. Similarly, we do not appreciate that they have allowed a broadcasting station of the Voice of America to be installed there; it will not be in the interest of this region and we want that this region should be free from all such agencies. Just as we want that the Indian ocean should be a zone of peace, similarly, we don't want any kind of intrusion into our region (Quoted in De Silva, 1995, pp. 152-3).

The first of India's mediation efforts, in Thimpu, took place in two rounds in mid-July and mid-August in 1985 despite the fact that by this time the fighting between Tamil militants and Sri Lankan security forces had almost escalated into an outright war. As the second round of talks got underway in Thimpu Rajiv Gandhi singled out the conflict and India's mediation efforts in his Independence Day speech. After heralding the maintenance of India's unity and integrity as the biggest challenge confronting India and pointing to the peace agreements reached in the states of Punjab and Assam, both home to separatist movements, he turned to the neighbourhood:

We had also pledged to strive for peace in our neighbourhood. We initiated talks with Sri Lanka and these talks are being continued today in Bhutan. We hope that just as we have been able to resolve the problem in Punjab and Assam, we will also be able to bring about peace in Sri Lanka (Gandhi, 1985, p. 234).

Here it becomes clear that the basis upon which the Indian government is making its claim for involvement in Sri Lanka's internal problems lies in India's 'successes' in Punjab and Assam – the result of India's commitment to 'a politics of conciliation, not of confrontation' and, thus, its civilisational legacy (Gandhi, 1987e, p. 299). Rajiv Gandhi, the model son of modern India clearly wanted to add another peace accord to his credentials.

With neither side ready to make concessions, the Thimpu talks ended in failure. According to Dixit (1998, p. 43), the Sri Lankan government came to Thimpu with no intention of responding in 'any practical and sincere manner to Tamil aspirations' and only agreed to the talks in an attempt to get India to stop giving assistance to the Tamil militants. The Tamil groups, on the other hand, thought that agreeing to the talks would ensure India's continued support of them. Apart from the moderate TULF none of the more militant Tamil groups, who were invited for the first time, sent their senior leadership and

consequently, neither did the Sri Lankan government (De Silva, 1995, p. 163). In other words, both parties feigned compliance to India in order to satisfy the Indian desire to project its benign leadership and civilisational influence.⁶⁵

Despite the failure of the Thimpu talks, it was clear that India still had no intention of giving up its desire to mediate in Sri Lanka's civil conflict. It was decided that following talks between the new Indian representatives, P. Chidambaram and Natwar Singh, and the Tamil and Sri Lankan leadership, Jayewardene and Rajiv Gandhi could announce a peace package at the SAARC summit in November 1986, which was to be held in Bangalore. This was despite the fact that the Sri Lankan government appeared to be intent on readying itself for a military solution to the conflict and even though India had lost any control it once exercised on the now-dominant Tamil militant group, the LTTE, which had withdrawn from RAW's umbrella organisation, ENLF. According to Dixit, Gandhi and his administration were aware of Jayewardene's lack of commitment to a peaceful solution but, nonetheless, felt that India should persevere (Dixit, 1998, pp. 50-1). Such was India's overwhelming desire to enact its self-identity as a benign force for peace that the potentially disastrous consequences could not even be considered.

Chidambaram and Singh's discussions in Sri Lanka culminated in a devolution package that still lacked the key Tamil demands for the merger of the Tamil-majority northern and eastern provinces. In a further step to mollify the Sri Lankan government, and in light of India's loss of control over the Tamil militants, the Tamil Nadu government was ordered by Rajiv Gandhi to disarm the Tamil militants based in India in the lead up to the SAARC

⁶⁵ The only significant document to come out of the Thimpu talks was produced after the chief Sri Lankan representative Harry Jayewardene, the brother of the President, conducted talks with the Indian government in New Delhi on his way back from Thimpu in August. The so-called Delhi Accord consisted of a number of proposals responding to Tamil demands for the devolution of power but it was rejected by the Sri Lankan Cabinet and, consequently, by the Tamil groups (De Silva, 1995, p. 168).

summit (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 164). Gandhi was later informed by RAW that the militants had been demoralised by the operation and that the time was ripe for a quick settlement (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 165).

At the SAARC summit, it was the LTTE, rather than the TULF or a combination of militant groups, which was promoted as the chief representative of Sri Lankan Tamils. This constituted a major shift in Indian policy and gave legitimacy to the LTTE's claim of representing the sovereign authority of Sri Lankan Tamils (Krishna, 1999, p. 140). Nonetheless, dissatisfied with the initial negotiations, the LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran left Bangalore for his base in Madras without even meeting with Jayewardene (Dixit, 1998, p. 59). Not only did India fail to engineer its much longed-for act of reconciliation but Jayewardene's speech at the summit contained a passage referring to India's support for Tamil terrorism and – turning India's rhetoric back on itself – urged a return to the moral principles of peaceful co-existence and non-interference (Dixit, 1998, p. 59).

Even the debacle of SAARC could not shake the Indian government's belief in itself as a mediator. According to Dixit (1998, p. 62), the Indian government had received intelligence reports that the Sri Lankan government were planning a military assault in the next year and Rajiv Gandhi was anxious to persuade 'the Jayewardene Government to return to the path of reason'. As the bearer of morality and reason, Gandhi yet again sent his negotiators to Colombo (Dixit, 1998, pp. 62-3). When this failed, Rajiv Gandhi decided on a new policy of putting pressure on the Tamils and the Sri Lankan government for a negotiated resolution that would maintain the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka while committing India as the direct guarantor of any compromises that may be reached (Dixit, 1998, p. 64-5).

Meanwhile, the LTTE shifted their base from Tamil Nadu back to Jaffna and reports in Sri Lankan newspapers soon emerged claiming that they were planning to unilaterally declare an independent Tamil state in the north and east of the country. The Sri Lankan government reacted to this with an increased show of force and in January 1987, an intensified period of fighting began between the Sri Lankan forces and the militant groups led by the LTTE.

7.2.3 The IPKF in Sri Lanka

In one of many correspondences with the Sri Lankan government in the early months of 1987, Rajiv Gandhi evoked the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi in a letter to Jayewardene in mid-February:

Your ambiguity on the 19th December proposals and the military solution you seem to be seeking lead us to believe that you have rejected the non-violent path of Mahatma Gandhi. I would humbly request you to consider a negotiated settlement, as the violence can only lead to more violence, hatred to more hatred, pushing a lasting solution well out of reach. Escalating violence will compel us to think afresh about the whole situation, consequent on Sri Lanka's rejection of the path of negotiations (Quoted in Gunaratna, 1993, p. 173).

What India now meant by 'thinking afresh' was made clear in a subsequent letter which made it clear that 'India shall not resume its good offices unless military operations are stopped immediately by the Sri Lankan Government' (Quoted in De Silva, 1995, p. 209).

India's demands were rejected and, in March, the Sri Lankan Government Parliamentary Group passed a resolution proclaiming Sri Lanka's right to exercise a military option 'to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka'. The resolution also

disagreed ‘wholly with the request of the Government of India that Sri Lanka should halt its military action unilaterally’ for ‘this request is hardly that which should be made by a mediator’ (Quoted in Gunaratna, 1993, p. 174). Nonetheless, after the visit of Rajiv Gandhi’s special envoy, Dinesh Singh, to Colombo in March, the Sri Lankan government declared a cease-fire for the New Year and Easter holiday period in April. The cease-fire ended when the LTTE carried out two attacks on buses killing over 200 civilians (De Silva, 1995, p. 216). The Sri Lankan government’s response, ‘Operation Liberation’, began on the 26th of May and was aimed at gaining control of the Jaffna peninsula to staunch the flow of militants and weapons from Tamil Nadu and militarily weaken the LTTE. Two days later Rajiv Gandhi made a statement condemning the Sri Lankan government’s ‘massacre of unarmed non-combatant civilians on this scale’ which was ‘totally disproportionate to the avowed aim of exterminating the Tamil militant groups’. The actions were ‘a gross violation of every tenet of human rights. The international community must impress upon the Sri Lankan authorities the imperative need for restraint’. Moreover,

While India was patiently and painstakingly working towards a political solution, it is apparent now that the Sri Lankan Government was buying time for pursuing the military option...India has done everything to find solutions compatible with the unity of Sri Lanka. But by mercilessly bombing a defenceless people and spreading misery, on the basis of only ethnic difference, Sri Lanka is itself putting its unity and integrity in jeopardy (Gandhi, 1987d, p. 190).

The discursive parallels with the 1971 intervention were obvious: the Benevolent Mother India struggles valiantly to protect the long-suffering Tamil People by preventing its respected but misguided sister Sri Lanka from turning to the path of hypermasculine, irrational militarism.

Foreign Secretary Dixit subsequently met with members of the Sri Lankan leadership to tell them that India would not allow the capture of Jaffna and that if the Sri Lankan government persisted with its military operations India would provide logistical support to the LTTE. On the 1st of June Dixit visited Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, A.C.S. Hameed, carrying a statement declaring that given Sri Lanka military operations were 'almost genocidal' and that their economic blockade had caused 'extreme hardships' to the people of Jaffna. This being the case, the statement went on to say, India had decided to send 'urgently-needed relief supplies' to Jaffna by sea from Tamil Nadu under the aegis of the Indian Red Cross on the 3rd of June. The statement emphasised that the convoy was a humanitarian relief operation, that it would not be armed or have an armed escort and would be accompanied by Indian and international media. The 'concurrence of the Government of Sri Lanka may kindly be conveyed urgently so that relief can reach the long-suffering citizens of Jaffna without further delay' (India, 1987b, p. 224). In fact, the number of journalists on the convoy vastly exceeded the number of relief workers. Clearly, in light of Sri Lanka's rejection of India's political mediation, a re-validating performance of India's subjectivity as benign leader and civilisational influence was deemed necessary.

After issuing a statement denying India's allegations of near-genocide and refuting the suggestion that Jaffna needed outside aid, Sri Lanka eventually agreed to receive India's relief supplies in the 'interest of good neighbourly relations' (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 181). However, on the 2nd of June the Sri Lankan government issued a communiqué stating that Sri Lanka did not agree to the sending of relief supplies and would regard unilateral action by India as a violation of Sri Lanka's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 181). Not to be denied, Rajiv Gandhi sent a final message on the 2nd of June to Jayewardene confirming that India would be sending 20 fishing boats to Kalmunai Point off the coast of the Jaffna Peninsula (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 181).

Yet, when the Indian convoy neared Sri Lanka the next day, it was stopped by the Sri Lankan Navy. The Navy crew informed the convoy that they had been directed to protect Sri Lanka's territorial sovereignty and not allow the boats to enter Sri Lankan waters. The statement on the incident from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs condemned the Sri Lankan government's prevention 'of relief supplies from reaching the long suffering people of Jaffna' which made clear that the Sri Lankan government 'is determined to continue denying the people of Jaffna their basic human rights'. Moreover,

The Government and people of India are deeply concerned at the continuing hardships inflicted the Government of Sri Lanka on their Tamil people in defiance of world public opinion. They cannot remain indifferent spectators to the plight of the people of Jaffna, many of whom, have in recent years, fled their homes to seek safety and refuge in India (India, 1987d, p. 227).

We see here a shift in Indian discourse whereby the denial of human rights to 'the people of Jaffna' who are said to have a kinship bond with the people of India, has become the basis for locating the foundation of sovereign authority in the Tamil people and in the 'Government and people of India'. The Government and people of India as the representative of 'world public opinion' also becomes the community of judgment. The Indian 'bum-boats' may have been repelled, however, India was far from finished in its efforts to be recognised as a mediator and benevolent leader.

After having its ships turned back to Tamil Nadu, the Indian government made the decision to airdrop the relief supplies the next day (the 4th of June). The Sri Lankan High Commissioner in New Delhi, Bernard Tilakaratane was informed of the decision shortly before the airdrop was slated to begin and the Indian government released a statement soon thereafter. The statement said that Tilakaratane had been informed of India's continuing commitment to providing humanitarian assistance to 'the long suffering and beleaguered

people of Jaffna'. The supplies were to be para-dropped over Jaffna by transport aircraft, which would be 'duly escorted to ensure their defence in case they are attacked while on flight' and accompanied by some of the obviously all-important media contingent (India, 1987c, p. 227). The statement went on to add that the airdrop had to be carried out because, 'the continuing deterioration of the condition of the civilian population of the Jaffna peninsula, which is of legitimate concern to the Government and people of India, has serious implications for peace and security in the area' (India, 1987c, p. 228).

A later press release, put out jointly by the Prime Minister and Opposition leaders was more conciliatory and attempted to situate India's actions in the realm of its civilisational friendship with Sri Lanka:

It [the airdrop] should be seen against the background of our friendship and good neighbourly relations with Sri Lanka and our consistent wish that the ethnic discord in Sri Lanka be resolved through a political settlement...India continues to stand for a peaceful solution of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka within the framework of the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka (India, 1987a, p. 228).

Despite the speed with which the decision to carry out the airdrop was made, according to Dixit, the action was considered drastic and there was initially some doubt among those consulted⁶⁶ by Rajiv Gandhi about whether it should be taken. Ultimately however, it was decided that Sri Lanka's violence against Tamil civilians had to be stopped and that Sri Lanka's 'defiance of India's mediatory efforts which it had used as a convenience should be neutralised' (Dixit, 1998, pp. 106-7).

⁶⁶ The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, the Intelligence agencies, the Service Chiefs and the Foreign Office were all extensively consulted (Dixit, 1998, p. 106).

The airdrop proceeded without incident but was an event that shocked the Sri Lankan leadership. Foreign Minister Hameed informed Dixit that the airdrop was a violation of Sri Lanka's territorial integrity, that it amounted to interference in its domestic affairs and that it was an attempt to break-up the country (Dixit, 1998, p. 107). Jayewardene accused India of behaving like a bully and wrote the airdrop into a narrative that is deeply imbedded in the discourse of Sinhalese nationalism:

In the long history of relations between India and the Indian states, we have been invaded 16 times from Indian soil and four times by powers from the Far East and the West...[T]he Indian invasion of June 4 was the 21st (Quoted in Krishna, 1999, p. 152).

The Prime Minister, Ranasinghe Premadasa, and the Minister of Finance and Planning, Ronnie Del Mel, expressed similar sentiments. Both tied the airdrop to the narrative of the threat to the Sinhala nation from repeated invasions from South India (Krishna, 1999, pp. 152-3). For Dixit (1998, pp. 107-8) however, the airdrop was the consequence of humiliating India and damaging its standing as a mediator by refusing to allow its ships into Sri Lankan waters. Only India, according to Dixit could safeguard the interests of Sri Lankan Tamils and prevent the fragmentation of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the 'jubilation and aggressive contempt for India in the Sri Lankan media' following the turning back of Indian ships 'had to be countered by Rajiv Gandhi to sustain his political credibility as Prime Minister and to sustain his image as a person capable of handling negative acts against India...'. Indeed, for Dixit, Sri Lanka should have been grateful that India chose the soft option of airdropping relief supplies rather than the hard military option to break the blockade of Jaffna. India's assertion of its masculinity, in other words, was accompanied by a maternal restraint. As for the criticism that India had violated international law, this was,

valid in formal terms, but it did not take into account the reasons behind the airdrop, namely, the consistent violation of basic human rights of Sri Lankan Tamil citizens by their own government,

and the tension it would have generated in India, which might have affected the unity and territorial integrity of India itself (Dixit, 1998, p. 111).

Here, once again, the discourse of separatist ethno-nationalism is not just a threat to state sovereignty but is productive of it.

The aftermath of the airdrop saw a lull in Sri Lanka's military operations against the Tamil militants in Jaffna, which up to that point had achieved some success. Much to Jayewardene's dismay Sri Lanka received little international sympathy for what it considered to be a violation of its sovereignty (De Silva, 1995, p. 227).⁶⁷ With few other options to exercise, submitting to India's mediation with the guarantee that it would underwrite any agreement appeared to Jayewardene to be an attractive choice (De Silva, 1995, p. 225). Thus, the negotiation process resumed within two weeks of the airdrop.

Events proceeded at a brisk pace. Dixit began preparing a draft agreement at the end of June and after much wrangling and threats by India to withdraw its mediation and give its support to Sri Lankan Tamils, Jayewardene approved the draft agreement in July even though key members of his Cabinet, including Prime Minister Premadasa, remained opposed to it. Obtaining the consent of the LTTE leader Prabhakaran was no easier but eventually Rajiv Gandhi persuaded him to go along with the agreement, even if he did not formally endorse it (Dixit, 1998, p. 150).

⁶⁷ The United States and Britain maintained a studied ambiguity, neither condemning nor approving of India's actions. Indeed, Jayewardene was advised by most Western states to work with India rather than seek a confrontation (Krishna, 1999, p. 155). Although other South Asian countries did raise objections to India's actions, the prohibition on bringing bilateral issues into the ambit of SAARC left Sri Lanka with little option but to come to terms with India's overbearing masculine maternalism.

Rather than regarding the tenuousness of the Sri Lankan government and LTTE support for the agreement as a reason to slow down the process, Rajiv Gandhi decided that a lasting peace in Sri Lanka would only come about if India was a direct guarantor for the implementation of the agreement. As for the concerns about the LTTE, Gandhi was advised his administration and the Tamil Nadu government had enough leverage with the LTTE to gain their acquiescence and that, in any case, India could neutralise the LTTE militarily within two weeks if need be (Dixit, 1998, pp. 154-6). At this point, however, a military conflagration was not a serious concern.

Dixit strenuously denies that India threatened coercive measures to force either party to sign the Agreement (Dixit, 1998, p. 150). Yet, he admits that ultimately Jayewardene signed the Agreement because 'he was given clear indications' that if he did not 'India would totally pull back from its mediatory role and that the general support of India, particularly the Tamil Nadu public, would be available to the LTTE and Sri Lankan Tamils'. He was thus faced with 'preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka or causing the break-up of the nation through a prolonged civil war' (Dixit, 1998, p. 157).

Rajiv Gandhi arrived in Colombo on the 29th of July to sign the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement to Establish Peace and Normalcy in Sri Lanka.⁶⁸ The Agreement established the desire to 'preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka', recognised Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, plural society and ensured that India 'will underwrite and guarantee the resolutions, and co-operate in the implementation of these proposals'. This included providing military assistance when the Sri Lankan government requested it. Of note were the letters pertaining to bilateral relations that were exchanged by Rajiv Gandhi

⁶⁸ For the text of the agreement see Foreign Affairs Record (1987, pp. 252-7).

and Jayewardene at the signing ceremony as an adjunct to the Agreement. In the letters, both countries noted the ‘two millennia of friendship’ they had shared and reaffirmed not to allow their respective territories to be used for activities prejudicial to each other’s unity and security.

Of all the parties involved in the Agreement it seemed that India was the one that was most satisfied by the outcome. Rajiv Gandhi had apparently been able to achieve with Sri Lanka what eluded his grandfather – the affirmation of Indian leadership based on an attraction rooted in a pre-existing civilisational kinship. By giving up its unitary conception of statehood, Sri Lanka was not just recognising India’s superior model of nation-building, but was also acknowledging a shared civilisation heritage of tolerance and plurality. As Gandhi put it at the post-signing reception, the Agreement was a ‘compact in the cause of brotherhood’ that ‘consolidates the historic relationship between India and Sri Lanka. It is not mere geographical proximity which binds us. Ours is a relationship of heart and mind...’ (Gandhi, 1987f, pp. 257-8).

Yet, Gandhi (1987f, p. 258) also used the reception to point to the dangers of regional disunity and, thus, to inscribe South Asia as a space of fear, by quoting the Tamil poet, Subramania Bharati:

Living together is the true life,
Falling apart spells ruin;
Well must this lesson be learned,
No other wisdom do we need.

And evoking India’s civilisational legacy, he ended his speech by saying:

Through this Accord, we resume the journey on which both our countries embarked when Emperor Ashoka, who renounced war and violence, sent his son, Arhat Mahendra, to Sri Lanka with the Buddha's message of non-violence, compassion and justice (Gandhi, 1987f, p. 258).

Many among the Indian leadership, including Chidambaram and Narasimha Rao, were wary about the Indian army moving into Sri Lanka and wanted to see Indian troops play a limited, preferably non-combat, role if necessary (Dixit, 1998, p. 160). With Indian troops in Sri Lanka, the sovereignty/intervention discursive boundary would be difficult to maintain. Moreover, even before the Agreement had been signed it became clear that Sri Lanka intended to take full advantage of the military provisions in the Agreement. Jayewardene indicated that in the light of a renewed outbreak of violence in Sri Lanka and the strain this placed on Sri Lankan security forces, he had no option but to request Indian military assistance, including a sufficiently large Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF), to ensure a cease-fire and surrender of arms by the Tamil militants (Dixit, 1998, p. 169). Rajiv Gandhi was reportedly sympathetic but did not envisage a large Indian military contingent in Sri Lanka (Dixit, 1998, pp. 169-70). The day after the Agreement was signed, 6000 Indian troops arrived in the Jaffna Peninsula. In his announcement in the Indian Parliament on the 31st of July Rajiv Gandhi took care to emphasise that the Indian troops had gone to Sri Lanka at the behest of the Sri Lankan government who had invoked India's obligations and commitments under the Agreement (Gandhi, 1987c, p. 252).

Jayewardene himself attempted to represent Sri Lanka's sovereignty and keep intact the sovereignty/intervention boundary by balancing his call for military assistance from India with requests to the United States, Britain and Pakistan for logistical assistance for the Sri Lankan Army. He also insisted on announcing that the IPKF would be under the supreme command of the Sri Lankan government (Dixit, 1998, pp. 173-4). Yet this attempt to

represent the sovereignty/intervention boundary was unconvincing. The Agreement precluded Sri Lankan leaders from involving other countries in direct activities in Sri Lanka, and the only country that responded positively to the request, the United States, sought India's authorisation before they would commit (De Silva, 1995, pp. 249-50). As for the IPKF, Jayewardene assured Rajiv Gandhi that he would not interfere in operational matters (De Silva, 1995, p. 174). This was clearly an order of simulation with only the signs of sovereignty and a simulated sovereignty/intervention boundary.

The IPKF and the Indian government expected the disarming of Tamil militants to happen quickly and planned on being in Sri Lanka no longer than the end of 1987 or the beginning of 1988 (De Silva, 1995, p. 255). However, on the 4th of August Prabhakaran gave a speech condemning the Agreement, which, he said, was made without the consultation of the representatives of Sri Lankan Tamils and only served India's geopolitical interests. Far from having given up on the idea of a separate state, Prabhakaran had 'unrelenting faith in the proposition that only a separate state of Tamil Eelam can offer a permanent solution to the problem of the people of Tamil Eelam...' and vowed to 'continue to fight for the objective of attaining Tamil Eelam' (Quoted in Gunaratna, 1993, p. 216).

Despite Prabhakaran's speech, the ceremony to mark the hand-over of arms went ahead as planned on the 5th of August as a major media event – the Indian government, as was its wont, had flown in a plane full of Indian and foreign journalists from Delhi and Madras to see the event (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 217). However, the leader of the political wing of the LTTE, Dilip Yogi, attended in place of Prabhakaran. The surrender of arms, in Dixit's words 'was only symbolic. It was a farce' (Dixit, 1998, p. 192). Indeed, by the middle of

August, the LTTE was engaged in fighting with other militant groups⁶⁹ and intelligence reports revealed that weapons and ammunition continued to pour into Jaffna (Krishna, 1999, p. 177).

Meanwhile, the Indian government continued its negotiations with the LTTE to obtain their cooperation on the Agreement. The document that emerged from the meetings was signed by both LTTE and Indian High Commission representatives on the 28th of September and addressed some of the LTTE's major concerns such as the composition of the Interim Council of the merged North-Eastern province.⁷⁰ In return, the LTTE agreed to cooperate in the implementation of the Agreement and surrender their remaining arms.

However, the LTTE almost immediately backed away from the agreement and on the 2nd of October the Sri Lankan Navy intercepted a boat crossing the Palk Straits carrying a group of seventeen senior LTTE members as well as arms and ammunition in contravention of the Indo-Lanka Agreement (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 234). Thirteen of the seventeen men, including Pulendran, one of the LTTE's top leaders, died while in the custody of the Sri Lankan Army after swallowing cyanide capsules, apparently on the orders of Prabhakaran (Krishna, 1999, p. 184).⁷¹ The suicide of his top lieutenants gave Prabhakaran the reason he needed to declare the irrelevance of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and the establishment of the Interim Council.

⁶⁹ It was alleged that RAW was involved in arming the LTTE's rivals in order to weaken it and its opposition to the Agreement but this is a claim that is impossible to confirm.

⁷⁰ For the text of the document see Gunaratna (1993, pp. 233-4).

⁷¹ LTTE members famously wear cyanide capsules around their necks. Those of the captured men without capsules were reportedly given them by the LTTE visitors.

LTTE attacks on the remaining Sinhalese in the North and on Indian soldiers convinced the Indian army chief General K. Sundarji to order the launch of a ground offensive on the 6th of October. This was in contravention of the advice received by the head of the IPKF, Depinder Singh, who warned against the ‘hard option’ due to the risk of becoming embroiled in a prolonged counter-insurgency operation. In addition, Singh was concerned that the number of troops on the ground, while steadily increasing, was not sufficient to cope with the immediate onset of hostilities (Krishna, 1999, p. 185; Gunaratna, 1993, 236). According to Dixit, however, ‘The feeling in New Delhi was...that the LTTE had to be neutralised whatever the scale of the operation’ and he admits that there was little thought given to the consequences of launching a large-scale military operation (Dixit, 1998, p. 212, 214).

‘Operation Pawan’, as it was known, began with a plan to destroy the LTTE’s operational headquarters and capture the leadership, but was a resounding failure.⁷² Prabhakaran and the rest of the LTTE leadership escaped to their forest hideouts and, while there were no casualties among the militants, the IPKF suffered the loss of more than 60 soldiers. Despite this defeat, the IPKF’s second plan to subdue the LTTE was even more ambitious than the first – they aimed to capture Jaffna in four days. Two weeks later the IPKF had achieved their mission at the cost of between 2000 and 5000 civilian casualties, the death of 262 Indian soldiers and between 700 and 800 LTTE cadres (De Silva, 1995, p. 263; Krishna, 1999, p. 190). According to human rights groups, the death and destruction wreaked on Jaffna went far beyond anything the Sri Lankan Army had ever inflicted (Krishna, 1999, pp. 190-1). Moreover, once again, the LTTE leadership and most of its fighters eluded capture. They kept the IPKF, now 50 000 to 60 000 strong, in a

⁷² The LTTE were well aware of the planned attack and knew the details of the IPKF’s operational strategy. Moreover, the IPKF had little knowledge of the territory on which they were fighting and possessed only the most basic maps, some of which were produced in the colonial era (Krishna, 1999, pp. 188-9).

counterinsurgency war in the Northern and Eastern Provinces for another two and a half years. During this time, the IPKF inadvertently became directly involved in the administration of the North and Eastern provinces, even while its heavy-handed tactics isolated more and more of the population (De Silva, 1995, p. 294).

While the carnage in Sri Lanka continued, an incident in the Maldives in November 1988 provided an avenue for demonstrating India's benign leadership. On the 3rd of November, the Maldivian government made a formal appeal for urgent military assistance from the Indian government to prevent the success of a coup that had begun that morning. In the Indian Parliament the next day Rajiv Gandhi (1989, pp. 362-4) announced that the Indian military had been dispatched 'in support of the democratically elected Government of a friendly neighbouring country'. After succeeding in their task of quelling the attempted coup with 'speed and efficiency' and restoring peace, stability and democracy the Indian military were preparing to leave. The intervention in the Maldives was India's ideal intervention. It was short, effective and consensual, it was done in the name of democracy and peace and most importantly, the Indian military withdrew almost immediately once the job was done. Moreover, as Rajiv Gandhi put it 'It is in keeping with our belief that countries in the region can resolve their problems in a spirit of friendship and co-operation, free of outside influences' (Gandhi, 1989, p. 364).

Back in Sri Lanka, the presidential elections were held in December 1988. The two main candidates, the Prime Minister R. Premadasa and Sirimavo Bandaranaike, were both against the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement and were committed to ousting the IPKF from Sri Lanka as soon as possible (De Silva, 1995, p. 300). Premadasa won the election by a slim margin and promptly informed Dixit that he intended to use his inauguration speech to call for the immediate withdrawal of Indian troops and a review of the Agreement. While

Premadasa did not go ahead with this threat, it prompted a revision of India's policies in New Delhi. It was decided that while India would not agree to an immediate withdrawal, or to modifying the Agreement extensively, it would be willing to undertake a phased withdrawal beginning in March 1989 (Dixit, 1998, pp. 279-81).

In April, Premadasa announced a temporary cease-fire and, in May, his representatives began direct negotiations with the LTTE on the de-induction of the IPKF from Sri Lanka (Gunaratna, 1993, pp. 283-88). Evidence later emerged that Premadasa had offered arms and funds to the LTTE to fight the IPKF. In response, RAW attempted to create and arm a new organisation, the Tamil National Army (TNA) which was meant to protect the India-friendly Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) government in the Northeast against the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Forces after the IPKF's departure.⁷³ RAW relied on militant groups opposed to the LTTE to recruit members to the TNA. Invariably these 'recruits' were teenaged boys abducted from their families. Unsurprisingly, these child soldiers proved no match for the LTTE and were massacred by the hundreds (De Silva, 1995, p. 317; Krishna, 1999, pp. 201-2).

On the 1st of June, Premadasa gave a speech in which he rejected the previous timetable for the departure of the IPKF from Sri Lanka. In the speech he announced that he wanted the IPKF to leave Sri Lanka by the end of July, exactly two years since they arrived (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 289). The next day Premadasa sent the first of what would be a series of acrimonious letters⁷⁴ exchanged with Rajiv Gandhi and leaked to the press. Premadasa's letters implied that the IPKF had destabilised Sri Lanka and demanded that the Indian

⁷³ The EPRLF had been elected to head the provincial council established under the provisions of the Agreement but the win had little credibility given the reality of the LTTE's control of the North and the violence and intimidation that accompanied the election.

⁷⁴ The text of the letters is reproduced in Dixit (1998, pp. 371-381).

troops withdraw by the 31st of July. He asked for the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement of 1987 to be replaced with an Indo-Sri Lanka Friendship Treaty and repeatedly stressed that for the IPKF to remain in Sri Lanka for longer than they were welcome would be considered a gross violation of international law. Repudiating the Indian government's desire for a plural and federal Sri Lankan state Premadasa emphasised that he would work for a political solution 'within the framework of our Constitution but must also preserve the sovereignty of our people, the unitary character and the territorial integrity of our country' (Quoted in Dixit, 1998, p. 379). In response, Rajiv Gandhi blamed the Sri Lankan government's failure to implement the proposals of the Agreement for the continuation of Tamil militancy and emphasised the need, 'in the spirit of traditional friendship', for a mutually agreed timetable for the withdrawal of the IPKF, keeping in mind the obligations of both countries under the Agreement.

In the end, neither Premadasa nor Gandhi got their way completely. Eventually, Indian representatives gave up any hope of upholding the Agreement by tying the withdrawal of the IPKF with the effective devolution of powers to the provinces and Premadasa's deadline came and went with Indian troops remaining in Sri Lanka. Instead, an agreement to a phased withdrawal to be completed by March 1990 was reached in September 1989. Rajiv Gandhi, who by this time had well and truly tarnished his image a politically innocent technocrat thanks to a corruption scandal involving the Swedish arms manufacturer, Bofors, was defeated in the general election held in November 1989. One and a half years later, on the 21st of May 1991, he was killed by an LTTE suicide bomber at an election rally in Tamil Nadu. The new National Front coalition government of V.P. Singh was eager to extricate Indian troops from Sri Lanka and tried to expedite the process. The last of the Indian troops left Sri Lanka on the 24th of March, one week before the deadline (De Silva, 1995, pp. 319-20).

7.2.4 Conclusion

In a speech in March 1989 J.N. Dixit gave a speech at the elite United Service Institution in which he explained one of the major reasons why the IPKF was in Sri Lanka:

It is an external projection of our influence to tell our neighbours that if, because of your compulsions or your aberrations, you pose a threat to us, we are capable of, or we have a political will to project ourselves within your territorial jurisdiction for the limited purpose of bringing you back. Sound slightly arrogant! It is not arrogant. It is real-politik and it brings you back to the path of detachment and non-alignment where you don't endanger our security (Quoted in De Silva, 1995, pp. 308-9).

He went on, using the language of counterinsurgency that had been perfected by his counterparts in the United States, in particular⁷⁵, to describe the IPKF as the bulwark against 'mayhem in Sri Lanka' (Quoted in De Silva, 1995, p. 309). Likewise, in his memoir of his time as High Commissioner in Colombo Dixit asserts that the presence of the IPKF freed up the Sri Lankan Forces to fight the militancy of the Maoist Peoples' Liberation Front (JVP). Thus, 'Sri Lanka survives as a united democratic country because of the thankless but important task taken on by the IPKF under directives from the Rajiv Gandhi government' (Dixit, 1998, p. 220). Yet, Dixit ends his memoir as something of a defeated man – one who tried and failed to inject into Indian foreign policy the 'grit, patience and stamina' needed to safeguard the country's interests given the 'amoral nature of international relations' (Dixit, 1998, p. 349):

all of us in the Government of India involved in the Sri Lankan developments between 1983 and 1990 did not comprehend the collective mind-set and political psyche of the Indian people which has generally been averse to assertive or intrusive postures in inter-State relations, even if it affected our national interests. The Indian State despite desiring a regional power status and despite being

⁷⁵ For a discussion of counterinsurgency discourse in the United States see Doty (1993).

keen on safeguarding national interests does not have the stamina to stick to controversial policies in an adversary ambience (Dixit, 1998, p. 350).

Thus, for Dixit, India's premature withdrawal from Sri Lanka was indicative of its underdeveloped masculinity. Dixit's attitude to what happened in Sri Lanka was a marginal view, however, which did not fit well with India's general system of representation – as he himself seems to have recognised. Yet, what Dixit does not recognise is that even at the height of India's intervention, the government itself did not completely immerse itself in the vocabulary of *realpolitik*. Rather, discourses of kinship and brotherhood remained prominent and were vital to the production and maintenance of India's postcolonial identity as a state with a difference, even as it created the conditions necessary for the production of a hierarchy of subjects.

7.3 Reinscribing South Asia

When given the chance to 'finish the job' in 2000, it became clear that whereas in the 1980s an interventionist policy was considered essential and non-intervention became unimaginable, in 2000 the opposite was true. In the years that followed the withdrawal of the IPKF from Sri Lanka successive Indian governments strenuously avoided becoming entangled in Sri Lanka's civil conflict. This was the case even as Norway became involved in facilitating talks between the LTTE and the government and even after Sri Lanka requested urgent military assistance in May 2000 when it appeared that the LTTE were on the verge of capturing the Jaffna peninsula and, with it, 20 000 to 30 000 Sri Lankan troops (India, 2001, p. 2918). In this instance, the BJP government in power at the time ruled out any kind of military intervention, gave promises of humanitarian assistance and emphasised the need for a politically negotiated settlement. They remained steadfast in this

position even when Sri Lanka began requesting military aid from Israel, Pakistan and China and when the United States sent parts of its Fifth Fleet near Sri Lanka in a show of support for the government (DeVotta, 2003, p. 366). As the records of the debate in the Indian Parliament over the issue show, there was cross-party support for the government's policy.⁷⁶ How had conditions changed so drastically in one decade?

Neil DeVotta has attempted to explain India's behaviour by suggesting that even though India remained committed to keeping other powers out of the region and still sought to be recognised as the undisputed regional hegemon, domestic challenges, particularly the insurgencies in the Northeast of India and in Kashmir, have left it militarily over-extended and therefore unable to display its 'hegemonic prowess in the region as it did in the 1980s' (DeVotta, 2003, p. 367). DeVotta thus adheres to the conventional realist focus on the capabilities rather than the intentions of states. However, as we have seen, India's military intervention in Sri Lanka in the 1980s happened as the result of its overwhelming desire to be a political mediator and buttress its credentials as a benign leader rather than a domineering hegemon. Moreover, an examination of the foreign policy discourse of the time gives the picture of an India that was not *unable* but was *unwilling* to undertake the kind of intervention it carried out in 1987. Repeatedly, Members of Parliament raised the memory of India's last intervention in Sri Lanka where the IPKF went 'at the invitation of the Sri Lankan government' but returned as 'unwelcome guests' (India, 2001, p. 2921). One Member, Swaraj Kaushal, suggested that it was the Norwegian government's responsibility to intervene since they were mediating in the conflict (India, 2001, p. 2921). According to another Member, M. Venkaiah Naidu, 'We should not gloss over what happened and what were its repercussions in India, the burden that had fallen on India and

⁷⁶ For the transcript of the debate in the Rajya Sabha see Bhasin's (2001, pp. 2919-2925) edited collection on India-Sri Lanka relations.

the tragedy that had taken place subsequently also' (India, 2001, pp. 2919-2920). Jaswant Singh, who was the External Affairs Minister at this time, stated that given India's previous experience in Sri Lanka 'military intervention in Northern Sri Lanka is not an option that we are even contemplating' (India, 2001, p. 2924). As for the Tamil parties in the Parliament, while they noted that their allies in Tamil Nadu were opposed to the Indian government aiding the Sri Lankan government, they offered their full support to whatever policy the centre wished to pursue (India, 2001, p. 2922). In fact, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi and G.K. Mooppanar, the leader of the prominent Tamil Mannila Congress Party distanced themselves from the LTTE and questioned its right to represent itself as the sole voice of Sri Lankan Tamils (Bhasin, 2001, pp. 2918-2919).

How then, did India arrive in this position? The fear of the 'foreign hand' in the region, which had played a significant role in Indira and Rajiv Gandhi's foreign policy discourses, was notably absent in 2000. Yet, in the early 1990s, following the end of the Cold War, outside interference was still a concern as Eduardo Faleiro, the Minister of State for External Affairs, made clear in a speech given in May 1992:

All of us would agree that external factors continue to impinge upon [the] South Asian region in the [sic] even more powerful ways thereby aggravating the conflicts and distress within the region. ...Significantly, cooperative efforts that culminated in the formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation have its genesis and evolution in internal compulsions. Today, as we all face a phalanx of problems arising from factors extraneous to our region, dialogue and cooperation among ourselves is called for all the more. We realise that we can no longer develop efficiently and progress rapidly by partitioning ourselves from one another (Faleiro, 1992a).

The anxiety about India's ability to 'develop efficiently and progress rapidly' became acute in the 1990s due to the balance of payments crisis, the pressure to liberalise the Indian economy and the rise of the economic power of East Asia. In contrast to East Asia, South

Asia for Faleiro (1992b, p. 214) was a space of lack, bedevilled by bilateral problems, economic problems and environmental degradation:

Regional cooperation is now gaining ground practically in all parts of the world and is the wave of the future. We have to face the harsh reality that if our region does not make an effort and fails to be relevant to rest of the world, then it could be by-passed, marginalised and relegated to the periphery for decades to come (Faleiro, 1992a, p. 212).

Still, for Faleiro (1992a, p. 212), with South Asia's 'ancient traditions and modern institutional structures we have every possibility to turn this region into a dynamic partner for [the] rest of the world'.

By the late 1990s, foreign policy discourse on South Asia shifted again. In January 1997, the then-Minister for External Affairs, I.K. Gujral, gave a speech in Colombo in which he proclaimed that 'the development of close and friendly relations with our immediate neighbours commands the highest priority'. His first bilateral visits, he noted, had been with neighbours. He then went on to discuss the 'Gujral Doctrine', a notion he had first mooted in a speech at Chatham House in 1996:

The "Gujral Doctrine", if I may call it so, states that, first, with its neighbours like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal, India does not ask for reciprocity, but gives and accommodates what it can in good faith and trust. Second, we believe that no South Asian country should allow its territory to be used against the interests of another country of the region. Third, that none should interfere in the internal affairs of another. Fourth, all South Asian countries must respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. And finally, they should settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations (Gujral, 1997, p. 2833).

While the second, third and fourth points had all been articulated previously as elements of India's South Asia policy it was the principle of non-reciprocity that was noteworthy. Also

notable was the lack of mention of Pakistan. Indeed, as ever, Pakistan remained the problematic, Bastard son in the South Asian family:

You might well know of the offer of a dialogue we made to Pakistan soon after our Government took office. Even while we are awaiting Pakistan's response, we are taking unilateral steps to improve the relationship at the people-to-people level. We are also trying to preserve a positive atmosphere, by avoiding polemic and ignoring the occasional hostile rhetoric from across the border (Gujral, 1997, pp. 2833-4).

With regard to Sri Lanka, Gujral, like those before him, noted that 'As a close neighbour, India cannot but be affected by the conflict in Sri Lanka'. However, India's desire was 'to be helpful without being obtrusive' (Gujral, 1997, p. 2835). Whereas previously only India was thought able to protect Tamil interests now, 'The devolution proposals put forward by your Government seem to us to be a reasonable basis for negotiations towards a political solution' (Gujral, 1997, p. 2835). The Palk Straits, the ocean frontier that was 'threatened' by the refugee influx from Sri Lanka was now envisioned as a 'gateway for peaceful commerce and communication among our people' (Gujral, 1997, p. 2835).

During Gujral's tenure as Minister for External Affairs and later as Prime Minister in the United Front government from 1996 to 1998, India signed historic water-sharing treaties with Bangladesh and Nepal and supported the building of a road link between Nepal and Bangladesh – a long-standing Nepali demand. It also offered tariff concessions on 500 consumer goods to promote the South Asian Preferential Trade Area (SAPTA), signed an investment promotion agreement with Sri Lanka, unilaterally reduced tariffs and removed non-tariff barriers on up to 80 products exported from Sri Lanka and offered financial assistance to improve the trade imbalance between India and Sri Lanka (Harshe, 2005, p. 338).

With the coming to power of the BJP in 1998 a reversion to the inscription of South Asia as a space of fear was a distinct possibility. While in opposition the BJP had been vocal on the issue of the illegal migration from Bangladesh across the porous borders of Assam and West Bengal claiming that the Muslim immigrants were threats to ‘national security’ (Harshe, 2005, p. 334). The BJP’s version of the ‘foreign hand’ discourse did arise at various instances during its time in power. In 2003 for instance, the government launched operations to forcibly deport ‘illegally overstaying’ migrants from Bangladesh on the basis that they pose ‘the biggest threat to national security’ (Quoted in Bidwai, 2003). Yet, when in April 2001 India’s Border Security Forces (BSF) clashed with the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) resulting in the death of 16 BSF, the government’s response was surprisingly measured (Harshe, 2005, p. 335).

Likewise, the Kargil war with Pakistan in 1999 was an event that occurred early on during the BJP’s tenure and had the potential to make the dominant representation of South Asia one of fear and danger, particularly because it came after Vajpayee had travelled to Lahore on a goodwill mission to meet the Pakistani President Nawaz Sharif. The Kargil war occurred when Pakistani soldiers crossed the line-of-control (LOC) in the Kargil sector of Kashmir provoking a low-level war in which the Indian Army succeeded in pushing the infiltrators back to the LOC.⁷⁷ There was little support for Pakistan’s actions, even from its allies, the United States and China. Kargil was India’s first televised war and sections of the Indian media depicted India as being at the front line of Islamic terrorism (Tellis, Fair & Medby, 2002, Ch.2). Yet, despite the media frenzy and calls by former army generals, BJP/RSS apparatchiks and strategic analysts like Bharat Karnad for India to respond to the incursion with a policy of ‘hot pursuit’ into the Pakistan side of the LOC, the Indian

⁷⁷ For a good account of the probable reasons for Pakistan’s actions, the perceptions on both sides and the possible consequences see Tellis (2002). For a collection of essays on various aspects of the Kargil war see Krishna (2001).

government publicly disavowed the option of crossing the LOC (Deshpande, 1999; Karnad, 1999; Chaulia, 2002, p. 224; Tellis, Fair & Medby, 2002, p. 25). Moreover, the Defence Minister George Fernandes, attempted to clear the Pakistani government of Nawaz Sharif of any wrongdoing, instead pinning the blame on the Pakistan Army: ‘the Pakistan Army has hatched a conspiracy to push in infiltrators, and the Nawaz Sharif Government did not have a major role. The ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence], which initiates such activities has not played any role’ (Quoted in Swami, 1999). Jaswant Singh called Kargil ‘an aberration’ which did not call into question the government’s policy instigating peace initiatives with its neighbours (Indian Embassy (United States), 1999). Thus, India attempted to use the Kargil war to buttress its self-image as a restrained and responsible nation-state.

In the later years of its tenure, the BJP government officially adopted the Gujral Doctrine as its policy on South Asia. Speaking in 2003 the Minister for External Affairs, Yaswant Sinha (2003a) linked the BJP coalition government’s policy with that of the Janata government’s in the late 1970s:

...our Prime Minister Mr Vajpayee when he was the Foreign Minister in 77-79 made a conscious effort to evolve a good neighbourhood policy. He is the one who encouraged me to follow this policy when I took my present assignment...India remains committed to the good neighbourhood policy of Mr Vajpayee. India remains committed to the Gujral Doctrine and today, I would like to say that we are prepared to move further ahead also in the direction of peace, friendship and prosperity with all our neighbours.

He went on in the speech to support the idea of a South Asian Union, which would replace the ineffective SAARC and SAPTA (Sinha, 2003a). This was an idea he repeated in a speech in 2004 in the United States. Also in this speech he reiterated the tenets of Nehru’s foreign policy: ‘...for all the uncertainties of our times, we have a unique opportunity to

define international relations on the ethic of plurality and equality, consensus and cooperation, compassion and co-existence’ while adding, ‘We have a similar vision for South Asia. For us, the global stage is our calling, but South Asia is our home’ (Sinha, 2004b). At the SAARC summit in 2004 Prime Minister Vajpayee invoked the idea of South Asian kinship: ‘The bonds of religion, language, ethnicity and culture which hold us together as a South Asian family are far more enduring than the relatively recent barriers of political prejudice we have erected’ (Vajpayee, 2004). Likewise for Sinha (2003b):

We approach our neighbours in a spirit of fraternity. We will always be willing to give much more than we receive. We will continue to extend our hands in friendship even in the face of repeated rebuffs from our interlocutors.

In a speech in March 2004 Yashwant Sinha (2004a) expressed this discourse of India’s benign civilizational influence as ‘soft power’. Speaking on the topic of ‘what it takes to be a world power’, he said:

Any quest for power is ... immediately identified with violence, genocide, hegemony and imperialism. ...

It is important therefore that India distances itself from the conventional idea of power, as the ability of a nation to bend other nations to its will through coercive use of force. It is also essential to make clear at the very outset that India approaches the notion of power with an alternate vision and a deep consciousness of its responsibilities. There can be no other way for India.

...

What constitutes Power as far as the nations of the world are concerned? How does India perform in terms of various attributes of power? Academics divide power into two general categories – hard power and soft power. Hard power consists of elements such as military strength, economic resources and technological capacity. Soft power comprises culture, values, social cohesion, the quality of diplomacy and governance.

In *Soft Power* Joseph Nye (2004, p. ix) complains that when the then-Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld was asked at a conference in 2003 what he thought about soft power,

Rumsfeld replied that he did not know the term meant. As I have tried to show, India has always implicitly prioritised something akin to soft power in its enactment of a representationally forceful narrative of Indian civilisation's attractiveness. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that unlike American officials, once the phrase 'soft power' came into common use in academic parlance, Indian officials were quick to engage with it. In his speech, Sinha (2004a) went on to note that while India had many achievements in terms of hard power, in the realm of soft power:

India's influence has spread far and wide since ancient times on the strength of our culture, religion and philosophy. As the land of Gandhi and as a nation that won its independence through a struggle unique in the annals of history, India has an international image that few others can claim

Not only South Asia but also Asia, in general, was again entered into India's foreign policy discourse as the repository for the benign influence of Indian civilisation. According to Sinha (2003c):

If you look at the geography of this continent [Asia], you will find, India is at the heart of it. Not merely must we be geographically in the center of things, but in our engagement also, we must be in the center of things.

India never went out with its sword to these countries. We never went out as conquerors or as colonizers. We went out with our civilizational values, with our culture, with our religion and in friendship and in amity. That is in the historical character of the Indian nation and I do not think that historical character can be altered by contemporary or future events.

7.4 Conclusion

As Rajiv Gandhi walked past the guard of honour on his way to boarding the plane back to India after signing the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement in 1987, a naval rating swung his rifle at Gandhi's head. Gandhi ducked what could have been a fatal blow but was left badly

bruised on his neck and shoulder (Dixit, 1998, pp. 176-7). The incident proved to an apt harbinger of the battering India would later take both militarily and in terms of its subjectivity, in its determination to buttress its credentials as a benevolent leader with a dramatic act of political mediation and to secure itself against a region that was inscribed as a space of fear and danger. India's subsequent reluctance to become involved in Sri Lanka's civil conflict indicates a shift away from this imagining of South Asia toward a renewed interest in fashioning itself as a benign civilisational nation-state that rejects the domination of others. Thus, in this chapter I have again argued against the widespread assumption that India has a firm vision of itself as a regional hegemon. Rather, I have pointed to the resilience of the ambivalence of its postcolonial modernity, which results in a desire to repudiate a geopolitical reasoning dominated by insecurity and power.

8 CONCLUSION

Contrary to conventional approaches to the study of international relations which would either minimise the connection between state identity and foreign policy or would analyse Indian foreign policy as the product of pre-existing realities, subjectivities and interpretive dispositions, this thesis has analysed India's foreign policy discourse as a representational practice that performatively enacts India's postcolonial identity. The result is a study that takes into account the historical and cultural context of the construction of state identity and thereby offers a fuller understanding of India's foreign policy behaviour than studies that draw on the positivist and ahistorical theoretical traditions of international relations. Genealogy has been a crucial method here, as a way of examining discourses of national identity and foreign policy in an analytically coherent manner and as a technique that allows us to analyse contemporary events at a deep structural level. As I argued in chapter three, for example, it is vital to take into account the broader cultural context in order to explain why India waited 24 years after its first nuclear test to conduct another test and why on both occasions – rather than highlighting the military and security implications of the tests – the scientific achievements were emphasised and India's nuclear program was characterised as being unique in terms of its restraint and its commitment to total disarmament. Likewise, in chapter six I suggested that India could have pursued a more aggressive stance toward Pakistan during and after the Bangladesh war and in chapter seven I argued that India could have maintained an involvement in Sri Lanka's civil conflict for much longer than it did. Instead, India was at pains to show that it remained a non-militarist state which had no ambitions for regional hegemony. Moreover, as I argued in chapter two, a historically and culturally contextualised understanding of identity is necessary to explain why India sought to cultivate a policy of friendship with China rather than adopting the geopolitical reasoning of British India, or for that matter, the anti-

communist stance of other democratic states. In all cases, I suggested that in order to be considered meaningful, policy statements were required to align with the general system of representation in society and reproduce India's postcolonial identity – there could be no radical breaks. Thus, even in times of foreign policy change we see policy statements framed in terms of older discourses. For instance, while India may have declared itself a nuclear power, this did not mean that it also embraced the language of *realpolitik*.

What my analysis illuminates then, are certain conditions of possibility – the discursive, political and cultural space in which foreign policy is made. Obviously, given my post-positivist framework, this is not to say that my approach can be used to *predict* India's future foreign policy behaviour. Rather, my conclusions point to the likelihood of particular policy paths. Given its self-image as a non-aggressive state, for instance, it is highly unlikely that India, despite its maritime capabilities, would undertake any 'adventurism' toward the Cocos Islands, as a submission from the Australian Defence Association warned the Australian Senate's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade during an inquiry into Australia-India relations in 1988 (Australian Defence Association, 1988). During the hearing that accompanied the submission, the participants were in agreement that it was near impossible to understand India's intentions without access to confidential strategic documents (Australia, 1989, pp. 204-5). In another context, scholars have lamented that the lack of access to India's diplomatic archives 'stifles academic inquiry' (Zins & Boquerat, 2004, p. 8; Rajan, 1997, pp. 10-12; Noorani, 2005). While I would certainly agree that India's secrecy provisions are excessive and in need of reform, my study has tried to show that public discourse – speeches, interviews and so on – should not be undervalued for what it reveals about the dominant institutional frameworks, knowledges and discursive structures of Indian foreign policy. By analysing

India's self-image as it is produced in this public discourse, we can learn much about intention.

Analysing India's foreign policy as an identity-inscribing discursive practice challenges, not only conventional approaches to international relations, but also Partha Chatterjee's influential understanding of Indian nationalism as split between a 'material' outer realm, in which the superiority of the West is accepted, and a 'spiritual' inner sphere, where India's pre-eminence is assumed. Rather, in this thesis I have argued that while India was seen as materially backward by many nationalists, the solution was not necessarily the wholesale adoption of Western modernity but a striving for a modernity that took into account what they believed was Indian civilisation's greater propensity toward ethical and moral conduct. Thus, a deep ambivalence toward Western modernity lies at the heart of India's postcolonial identity and, therefore, the foreign policy discourse that enacts it. The result, specifically in terms of India's foreign policy, has been a desire to fashion India as a distinctly different postcolonial civilisational-state that brings to international affairs a tradition of morality and ethical conduct that derives from its civilisational heritage. Hence, the prominence of nuclear disarmament in India's foreign policy discourse even after it declared itself a nuclear power and the disavowal of hegemony as a foreign policy goal in favour of exerting a civilisational influence and building relationships based on kinship and friendship.

On the other hand, as a mimicry of subversion, India's attempt to don the 'garb of modernity' while asserting its civilisational superiority is also a mimicry of subjugation for it ties India to colonial narratives of India's past produced by what I have referred to as a modern geopolitical imagination. It is in this sense that the reiterative performativity of mimicry, while being more than just a survival strategy, is still a very limited form of

agency. As we saw in chapter four, for instance, India's oft-proclaimed desire for a nuclear weapons-free world competes with a belief in nuclear technology as the ultimate symbol of 'development'. Likewise, India's discourse on the 1962 war with China revealed the extent to which the postcolonial state had adopted British geopolitical reasoning on India's vulnerability to invasion and the need for rigid and defined borders even while it sought to repudiate it. Similarly, despite its repudiation of hegemony, India's relations with its neighbours have often been strained by the perception of South Asia as a geopolitical space of danger and vulnerability. This is not to say that there was no resistance to this subsumption of Indian civilisation within a modern geopolitical imaginary. Mahatma Gandhi's interventions from the 1920s onward sought to provide another language of dissent by pitting modernity against what he called 'true civilisation'. In doing so, he questioned the costs of modernity's disciplinary practices, its totalisation techniques, its claims to universal rationality and its insistence on reducing human sociality to an emphasis on sameness. Importantly, he resisted the idea that there is no alternative and promoted instead a transcultural, non-violent everyday ethics of duty across difference. The postcolonial Indian state may have largely rejected Gandhi's ethico-political ideal of true civilisation but its very existence remains a potent source of inspiration and possibility.

Taking up Cynthia Weber's suggestion that the foreign policy performative moments that help affect sovereign states are coded with sex and gender performances, I have paid attention, throughout the thesis, to the sex and gender codings of India's foreign policy discourses. This has revealed that India is affected as a sovereign state in ways that challenge typically gendered readings of international relations in which the nation-state is female/feminine in the domestic arena and male/masculine in the international sphere. Contrary to this conventional reading, I have suggested that to varying degrees the

dominant discourses of Indian nationalism, with the exception of Savarkar's brand of Hindu nationalism, grounded resistance in a feminised semiotic. Thus, India's postcolonial identity as a civilisational-state is produced as female, feminine and masculine at the same time because its mimicry of a masculine, modernising state is tempered by a femininely engendered civilisational morality that is the product of the nationalist imagining of India as Bharat Mata or Mother India and which it upholds as its postcolonial difference. Weber's discussion of 'performative states' neglects the importance of considering race but as I have tried to show, in India's case, due to its colonial past and postcolonial present, gender and race are intertwined in important ways. Thus, I have sought to draw out the ways in which India has engaged with the politics of race in international relations as evidenced by its emphasis on pan-Asianism and civilisational friendship with China, and its highlighting of the racial hierarchies that dominate international politics, as seen in its rejection of the discourse of nuclear non-proliferation as 'nuclear apartheid'. Far from simply being imitative of Western modernity, India's postcolonial modernity rested on a morally and ethically superior non-Western identity and both race and gender codings are participate in affecting this identity.

Indeed, the emphasis in India's foreign policy discourse on concepts such as Panchsheel, non-alignment, disarmament and the critiques of realist theories of the balance of power and geopolitics suggest an alternative conception of world order. Yet, as political thinkers, Nehru and Gandhi – who were both central figures in the generation of these ideas – are largely ignored by the Eurocentric discipline of international relations, in both its mainstream and critical strands. There is now growing recognition that there is a desperate need to transcend the Eurocentrism of international relations by thoroughly investigating

its complicity with imperial knowledges and practices and by drawing on non-Eurocentric, non-imperial ideas and histories. India offers a wealth of possibilities in this endeavour.⁷⁸

This thesis, though it has sought to broaden conceptions of foreign policy analysis by linking it to broader societal discourses, has still remained relatively narrowly focussed on the elite foreign policy discourse of policy-makers and bureaucrats. Hence, in order to deepen our understanding of how foreign policy works as a discursive practice it would be useful to undertake an analysis of the statements made in society more generally and the relationship between these representations and official representations. Further analysis must also be undertaken on an important subject this thesis has not broached, that is, India's responses to globalisation and economic liberalisation. How have the policy changes associated with these processes been discursively dealt with? Have they posed a significant challenge to the reproduction of India's postcolonial identity and, if so, has the Indian state been successful in its representative strategies in dealing with the crisis?⁷⁹

The thesis has pointed out the diversity of Indian nationalist thought and consequently the contested nature of India's project of postcolonial modernity. Nonetheless, I have suggested the existence of a consistent desire, across the various identity discourses, to differentiate India's civilisational identity from the national identity of other states. From Mahatma Gandhi's alternative ideal of India as a 'true civilisation', Nehru's expansive and ecumenical imagining of 'Indian civilisation' and even the more exclusionary vision of Savarkar's 'Hindu civilisation', the idea of India as a civilisation has imparted to India's postcolonial identity a sense of what might be termed, exceptionalism. Daniel Bell (1975,

⁷⁸ Toward this purpose see Chimni (2006) for the importance of retrieving Sri Aurobindo's thought in international relations.

⁷⁹ Himadeep Muppidi (2004) and Latha Varadarajan (2004) have already offered some interesting insights on these issues but more is needed.

p. 197) has written of ‘American exceptionalism’ in a way that partly resonates with the argument I have put forward in this thesis. Among other things, he argued that American exceptionalism encompassed the idea that ‘the United States, in becoming a world power, a paramount power, a hegemonic power, would, because it was democratic, be different in the exercise of that power than previous world empires’. However, where the United States located its exceptionalism in its lack of ‘history’, central to Indian exceptionalism has been the metanarrative of Indian civilization – the idea that India is capable of producing a uniquely benign modernity because of the resilience and accumulated wisdom of its ancient civilization.

While the Indian government uses the discourse of civilisational exceptionalism to buttress state power, writers like Ashis Nandy and Vinay Lal, both deeply inspired by Gandhi, employ notions of ‘Indian civilisation’ in more radical ways. Indeed, Lal (1999, p. 216) argues that ‘for dissent to have any future, we will surely have to forgo our allegiance to the nation-state and to impoverished notions of “home”, while we embrace in its fullness the more nurturant ethos of civilization’. While admitting that much exploitation has, and continues, to take place in the name of civilisation, he suggests that

there is no reason why these limitations which are attached to a certain historical discourse of “civilization” should restrain us from probing its ecumenical and emancipatory possibilities, just as there is no compelling argument for supposing that the terms through which “Western civilization” is understood can be suitably deployed for understanding “Indian civilization” (Lal, 1999, p. 216).

For Lal (1999, p. 215), Indian civilisation is characterised by a ‘deep mythic structuring’ which gives it an open-endedness and a capacity for plurality and ambiguity that the modern nation-state cannot countenance. Similarly, for Nandy (2006, p. 55),

Indian civilization literally has hundreds of cultures within what is now technically India, and scores outside. Indeed, this civilization can be considered to be simultaneously a conversation and a

confrontation among cultures that are big and small, powerful and weak, known and obscure, high or low, respectable or disreputable, lovable or despicable.

Moreover, 'civilisation' for him is linked to an explicit political agenda of 'constantly trying to alter or expand its awareness of exploitation and oppression' (Nandy, 2004, p. 442).

The analysis of world conflict through civilisational categories came back into currency with a vengeance in political discourse at the end of the Cold War and gained even more saliency following the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington by Al Qaeda, which for many served as an affirmation of Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis. Perhaps indicating the extent to which the clash of civilizations was being taken seriously, at least as a potential reality, the United Nations at the instigation of President Khatami of Iran declared 2001 as the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations. Others have been more sceptical of the usefulness of a term that has had such a tainted past (Connolly, 1999; Bowden, 2004b). Speaking in the American context William Connolly, for instance, argues that civilisation is 'A perfect term for nervous people who seek to cover cultural defensiveness with a veneer of large-mindedness' and has been revived because 'the nation' now seems too small a unit to combat contemporary sources of insecurity whether they stem from terrorism, migration or globalisation. Yet, I would agree with Lal that the Western discourse of civilisation must not set the terms of engagement with the idea of Indian civilisation or stop us from considering its potential emancipatory and ecumenical possibilities. What this would then mean for India's engagement with the world is something that should be taken up in future studies.

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