

# India as a Foreign Policy Actor – Normative Redux

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Radha Kumar

## Abstract

This paper analyses India's behaviour as a foreign policy actor by looking at India's changing relations over the past decade with the EU, US, China, Japan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Nepal and, in a historical departure, the former princely state of Sikkim. It argues that though India has almost always been a normative actor, Indian foreign policy is today transiting from abstract, and frequently '*unrealpolitik*,' views of what constitutes normative behaviour. India's 'Look East' policy has been the cornerstone of this transition, indicating that economic growth, maritime capability and peace and stability in its neighbourhood are key goals of India's present behaviour as a normative foreign policy actor.

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# INDIA AS A FOREIGN POLICY ACTOR – NORMATIVE REDUX

RADHA KUMAR\*

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## 1. Introduction

Observers of Indian foreign policy are often puzzled by its inchoate combination of idealist rhetoric on international issues, post-modern nitpicking in negotiations and isolationist behaviour when it comes to matters of national interest. “What does India want?” they ask in frustration: “Do you want to be a major power, or do you just want to score points?”

The question is difficult to answer. When India achieved independence in 1947, the country’s founding fathers assumed it would be a leading international player, expanding rules for normative behaviour in relation to goals as well as means. But though India’s founding fathers produced grand policy visions, such as the 1946 Asian Relations Conference for an institutional structure to buffer Asia against the cold war, they were unable to translate their sweeping goals into action. The Asian Relations Conference ended with minor agreements on educational cooperation (Gonsalves, 1991).

Sixty years later, India’s new policy-makers define India as ‘a rising power’ that is today beginning to match global goals and means in order to achieve the most favourable results for its citizens, and at the same time expand normative principles for inter-state and transnational behaviour. India’s steady 8-9% growth over the past decade, and the Indian government’s proactive diplomacy in the same period, allow Indian policy-makers to bring context and substance to the normative principles that their predecessors advocated – a development that one leading Indian analyst describes as “crossing the Rubicon” from idealism to pragmatism (Mohan, 2003), and another as “India Unbound” (Das, 2002); both phrases indicate what a large leap it is. Indian policy-makers used to advocate principles divorced from political reality, to use Morgenthau’s definition (Morgenthau, 1982), but today they seek to combine normative principles with national interest. The transition is not easy to make, and as so often happens in the early phases of policy change, the conceptual shift in approach has outpaced the implementers: most of the desk officers and/or their superiors who make policy through case-by-case practice.

Morgenthau was ill-placed to derive the consequent point that flows from his distinction – the transition from principles that are divorced from political reality to normative principles based on national interest is one of the most complicated transitions to make, especially in post-colonial countries. As other papers in this series have pointed out, categories of what is normative vary from culture to culture, and are hotly debated across cultures (Tocci, 2007, pp. 2-3). However, Indian foreign policy is curious in this regard: traditional views of what is normative are very similar to European and US principles, but the colonial and cold war experience led Indian policy-makers to be skeptical of European and US claims to normative behaviour on the one hand, and on the other to distrust their own normative heritage. Prior to the new policy-making described above, Indian positions on normative behaviour in international

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\* Professor Radha Kumar, Director of the Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution at Jamia Millia Islamia University and trustee of the Delhi Policy Group, is a specialist on ethnic conflicts and peace processes.

forums often appeared schizophrenic: Indian representatives claimed idealist positions, but often defended reprehensible regimes on grounds of state sovereignty even when there was no clear national interest involved. While India's new policy-makers have jettisoned the abstract normative positions of their cold war predecessors, elements of the old position-taking remain, especially amongst Indian policy implementers.

Part of the problem is that Indian policy-making is shaped by two major strands that have never been synthesised to create a doctrine that takes into account the national interest: one, traditional principles drawn from the *Gita* and *Mahabharata* and most heavily from the doctrine of statecraft framed by the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC scholar-statesman, Kautilya (also known as Chanakya); and two, modernist principles that uneasily combine Enlightenment values with a passive, sometimes dependent *realpolitik*, instilled by the experience of British colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most Indians perceive the two strands as internally conflicting, especially when it comes to issues of normative behaviour.

Traditional Indian foreign policy doctrine highlights the following key principles: firstly, the behaviour of states should adhere to rule-based or legal norms, with the important corollary that the law must enshrine an ethical worldview whose core principle, derived from the *Mahabharata* and *Gita*, is that war is the worst of last resorts.<sup>1</sup> The canonical text of Indian statecraft, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (laws of political economy), which remains the most widely quoted text by Indian policy-makers,<sup>2</sup> laid down that the primary goals of a good government were to provide peace, security and prosperity for its citizens. The best governments, said Kautilya, adhered to the norms set out in the *Dharmashastras* (laws of principle and duty), which formed the state's judicial system and should be administered by a group of judges and ministers.

Secondly, the most effective means of delivering these goals were normative means such as international alliances, trade, infrastructure development and free movement across national borders (Kautilya, Book VI, Chapters 1 and 2; and Book VII, Chapter 1).

Thirdly, the behaviour of a state should be assessed by the transparency of its actions. Before a government act or agreement could be implemented, the group of judges and ministers that administered the law would have to decide whether the government's acts and agreements were valid or void. The criterion for valid agreements was that they should be transparent (Kautilya, Book III, Chapter 1).<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, transparency was also underlined by US President Woodrow Wilson in his 14 Points and held to be the turning point after which quiet diplomacy was increasingly supplanted by public diplomacy.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the *Arthashastra* highlighted three key pillars of normative statecraft: engagement with the world, adherence to rule-based norms and transparency. Written for the most outward looking of India's several empires, the Mauryan dynasty, whose rule spanned the Indus valley and was home to one of the greatest universities of its time: the Buddhist seat of Taxila (now in

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<sup>1</sup> See Arjuna's dialogue with Krishna in *The Bhagavad Gita* in which Arjuna refutes Krishna's doctrine of war as a necessary and temporary evil, saying that no principle can justify the taking of human life.

<sup>2</sup> To cite but a few examples of how widely he is referred to, see Sinha (2002), Government of India (1997), Vittal (2002) and Ansari (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Agreements reached in secret were automatically void – although if negotiated by government representatives, the motives of the negotiator and the costs and benefits of the secret agreement would have to be weighed before declaring it void (Kautilya, Book III, Chapter 1).

<sup>4</sup> "... open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view" as quoted in Rai (2003).

Pakistan), the *Arthashastra* based its normative principles on national interest, and has been described as an “interest-based framework that (saw) international relations as an interlocking pattern of the foreign policy priorities and dispositions of crucial states” (Gyngell & Wesley, 2007, p. 188; Cohen, 2001, p. 15).

Kautilya’s thinking included a distinctly realist strand. The neighbourhood was viewed as a core foreign policy priority and defined as a set of concentric circles. If the proximate neighbour was an enemy, the enemy’s next-door neighbour would be an ally and his neighbour would be an enemy: a kind of Swiss roll version of containment (Kautilya, Book VII, Chapters 2 and 18). He also counseled further and more general realist precepts: greater powers should be cultivated, equal or weaker powers could be defeated through judicious alliances, and weaker powers could be attacked, patronised or ignored.

These views led to a debate on whether Kautilya was the ultimate political realist who, in Weber’s words, made Machiavelli seem naïve (Livingstone, 2004, p. 88); or whether the *Arthashastra* skilfully combined elements of idealism with *realpolitik* serving the national interest (Boesche, 2003; Alagappa, 1998, pp. 74-75). The latter characterisation is more convincing – Kautilya believed that alliances for peace were preferable to war even if war highlighted a country’s primacy over others. He emphasised the role of diplomacy and assigned two types of diplomats to negotiate: envoys who would issue *démarches* and envoys who would make agreements (Book I, Chapter 16). He also set humanitarian standards for civilian protection during and after war (Book VII, final chapter).

Had the traditional strand remained dominant in Indian foreign policy doctrine; it would have been easy to classify India as a normative (although not necessarily naively idealist) international player. But British colonialism added a new element to Indian foreign policy – that of dependency. Whereas previous empires had been rooted in India and adopted foreign policies that served Indian state interests, Britain was a far-away country and India’s foreign policy was adapted to suit British interests. Thus what I term “*unrealpolitik*” international action (because it subordinates national interests to that of other countries) entered into Indian foreign policy. *Unrealpolitik* behaviour gained strength through the education policy framed by T.B. Macaulay in 1835, who argued that the Indian education system should generate contempt for native traditions and respect the superiority of European values and practice.<sup>5</sup> This led successive generations of Indian policy-makers and analysts to doubt their own ability to frame the national interest.

Indian attitudes towards norms based on Enlightenment values were also complicated by the fact that these values arrived in India as a consequence of empire and were most often invoked to justify contempt for natives. Hypocrisy would have been bad enough; but here hypocrisy was combined with brutality towards an entire populace. No wonder that in the decades that followed Indians have tended to view European and to some extent American references to normative behaviour with scepticism – and are unable to distinguish between normative and non-normative Western behaviour. Most Indian policy-makers and analysts do not, for example,

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<sup>5</sup> “I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues... I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia... We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population” (Macaulay, 1835).

see a difference between European policies in Bosnia and Kosovo, and the US and allied invasion of Iraq. Humanitarian intervention, they argue, is not distinct from regime change or ‘shock and awe’: it is merely a cover for imperial design (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2003, pp. 44-45; Dixit, 1999; Swamy, 1999; Naqvi, 1999).

How do these views affect India’s behaviour as a foreign policy actor? During the cold war, India’s positions in the international arena were mostly normative but divorced from political reality (Morgenthau, 1982) and were directed to exclusively ‘milieu goals’ (Wolfers, 1962, pp. 67-80). From 1920, when Indian National Congress leader MK Gandhi sent a delegation to the Paris Peace Conference to demand that the territories of the former Ottoman Empire be granted the same rights to self-determination as those granted to the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire – qualified in this case as the right to Muslim rule (Ghose, 1991, pp.128-129) – India’s foreign policy focus was on decolonisation and multilateral constraints over Great Power domination. Furthermore, Indian leaders sought consensus rather than using economic, political or military pressure to influence world affairs, an approach that lasted well into the 1990s.

Under Prime Minister Nehru (1946-64), India actively aided state and nation-building in newly decolonised countries, especially in Africa, where the Indian Army and civil service helped countries such as Kenya, Egypt, Tanzania and Zimbabwe to build administrative and/or defence institutions, and spearheaded UN action against South Africa’s apartheid (Reddy, 1985). Nehru’s efforts were less successful in Asia. His hope that Asia’s countries might set up a cooperative network that could prevent Great Power conflict shifting to the Asian theatre in the aftermath of WWII proved to be unrealistic (Gonsalves, 1991). The Chinese revolution, followed by the Korean, Vietnamese and Cambodian wars, brought the cold war into the heart of Asia.

Nevertheless, in the 1940s-1960s, India achieved considerable soft power across Africa and Asia (especially in the latter through its film industry, Bollywood), and wielded quiet diplomacy to effect an agreement between the US and China during the Korean War (1951) and protect dissidents in Hungary (1956).<sup>6</sup> In the early years of the cold war, India founded the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) along with Indonesia, Yugoslavia and Egypt at the Bandung Conference of 1955. Even if the NAM was treated as a mosquito-like irritant by the US and UK for much of its existence, it did keep the idea of an alternative to the cold war alive in Asia (Gonsalves, 1991).

Following the 1962 war with China – which was largely Tibet-driven and in which India suffered a crushing defeat – and Nehru’s death in 1964, Indian foreign policy veered back to *unrealpolitik*, which in this case put the interests of the USSR above its own. *Unrealpolitik* reached its zenith under Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1966-75 and 1978-84), during which period India aligned itself firmly with the USSR and its economy became dependent on the Soviet military-industrial complex. Although Indian foreign policy retained a normative element in bilateral relations, in multilateral forums it adopted normative policies only rarely, such as sanctions against apartheid South Africa and support for a Palestinian state – not least because both of these positions were also supported by the USSR.

With the end of the cold war, India experienced what some called an opportunity to combine normative and *realpolitik* goals (Kumar, 2006), and others defined as a conflict between the two

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<sup>6</sup> See Nehru’s speech in the Lok Sabha (House of Commons) on 19 November 1956, (available on the website of the Embassy of India in Budapest: <http://209.85.175.104/search?q=cache:iyhjhZG0FHgJ:www.indianembassybudapest.org/html/TnCMinister/Press%2520Release%2520-%252024%2520oct.htm+India+on+Hungary+in+1956&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=in>).

(Mohan, 2003). But Indian policy-makers were slow to take advantage of this new opening. After the long winter of the cold war, when India was estranged from the US and to a lesser extent from Western Europe, the end of the cold war caught India unprepared and Indian diplomats withdrew into a lengthy introspection from which the country emerged at the turn of the century having lost most of its policy edge in East and Central Europe. The rise of Hindu nationalism during the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) years in government (1998-2003) further shattered India's relatively strong relations in the Gulf and North Africa. It was only in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that Indian policy-makers made a concerted effort to re-engage with the world; and this time it was the Kautilyan strand in Indian foreign policy that came to the fore.

In contrast to India's cold war leaders, the country's new policy-makers came to the conclusion that if India was to pull its weight internationally it would have to become an economic and regional power (Dasgupta, 2003, pp. 92-111; Schiff, 2006). This was a view that had been cogently put by Kautilya and kept alive during most of the Mughal Empire because its rulers became native to India, but was then lost during colonial rule and the cold war.

After the first wave of economic liberalisation in 1990-91, when many of the bureaucratic constraints on industrial growth were lifted, wave two of economic liberalisation prioritised resource and infrastructure development. The new policy-makers believed that neither could be achieved without integration into the global economy – as the past decade had shown with the spectacular rise of Indian information technology (Das, 2002). So they swung into an active diplomatic campaign to improve relations with the major powers, identified as the US, EU, Russia, Japan and China (Dasgupta, 2003) and implement a 'Look East' policy in the wider Asian neighbourhood, especially the ASEAN countries where the Indian 'footprint' had a long reach (Saran, 2003, p. 115).

India, which had eschewed membership of multilateral forums under Indira Gandhi, joined a slew of regional trade and security organisations in the short span of a decade, such as ASEAN, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Asian Regional Forum, the Asia-Europe Meeting process and the East Asia Summit. Finally, India's new policy-makers also recognised that India would fail as a regional power until it could turn its South Asian neighbours around. As a result, the Indian government launched several new peacemaking initiatives – with Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Nepal, and Sri Lanka – hoping that these could help pull South Asia out of the slough of hostility and poverty that it had slipped into following independence from British rule.

Former Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran (2003, p. 115) put India's renewed focus on its neighbourhood as follows:

Proximity is the most difficult and testing among diplomatic challenges a country faces. We have, therefore, committed ourselves to giving the highest priority to closer political, economic and other ties with our neighbours in South Asia... We regard the concept of neighbourhood as one of widening concentric circles around a central axis of historical and cultural commonalities... pursuing a cooperative architecture of pan-Asian regionalism is a key area of focus of our foreign policy. Geography imparts a unique position to India in the geo-politics of the Asian continent, with our footprint reaching well beyond South Asia and our interests straddling across different sub-categories of Asia – be it East Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, South Asia or South-East Asia.

The new diplomacy had mixed results. On the whole it yielded rich dividends for improved relations with the major powers and East Asia; but South Asia proved to be an uphill climb. Turmoil in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh put peace initiatives with India on a back burner, the Sri Lanka conflict re-escalated, Nepal underwent a revolution and Myanmar another wave of authoritarian crackdowns.

How did India respond to the troubles in its neighbourhood? This paper looks at eight case studies of India's foreign relations – with Pakistan, China, Japan, the US, Nepal, Sikkim (now an Indian state), Myanmar and the EU – to examine what kind of foreign policy actor India is, accounting for varied purposes and power. Do India's current foreign policy actions conform to its founding fathers' vision? If they are different, can they still be called normative? Have Indian views on what constitutes normative foreign policy changed? What can other countries expect from India?

## 2. The Case Studies

The eight cases discussed below reflect different aspects of India's relations with its neighbourhood. One was a neighbouring country (Sikkim), three are neighbouring states (Pakistan, Nepal and Myanmar), two are part of the wider neighbourhood and are closely involved in South Asia (China more than Japan), and two are not neighbours but are deeply engaged in South Asia (the US and EU) and discuss their South Asia policies with India. The methodology used is adapted from Tocci (2007). The table below indicates how the selected case studies reflect the different stylizations of foreign policy. Most of the examples are drawn from the current period, but one – Sikkim – is historical, although we analyse the current impact of an Indian action undertaken 20 years ago.

The Indian cases do not fit entirely into Tocci's framework. For example, India's goals and means with Pakistan were normative, but the results were mixed normative and status quo; with a hesitant foray into *realpolitik*, India-Japan relations are relapsing into a cross between status quo and *realpolitik*. Similarly, India's merger of Sikkim was imperial but the results are beginning to be normative. India's goals as well as means with Myanmar had strong normative elements, but the results so far have been status quo. India's goals with the EU were also initially status quo, and the means had a minor normative strand, but the results are normative. Nevertheless, the categories serve to sharpen contrasts of detail which add to our understanding of India as a foreign policy actor.

Figure 1. Indian foreign policy: Selected case studies

Type of Actor	Normative		<i>Realpolitik</i>		Imperial		Status Quo	
	Intended	Unintended	Intended	Unintended	Intended	Unintended	Intended	Unintended
Goals	Peace & regional integration	Cooperation & coexistence	Commercial	Economic & political support	Stable border	Stable relations	<i>Realpolitik</i> with normative strand	Maintain bilateral relations
Means	CBMs talks trade	Trade border talks	Naval exercises	Military cooperation Govt. to Govt. Diaspora	Annexation	Political pressure/open borders	Political/aid pressure	Strong bilateral/wary EC/EP
Result	Moving to normative	<i>Realpolitik</i>	Mixed	Norm changing	Integration	Greater acceptance	Status Quo	Moving to normative
Case Study	Pakistan	China	Japan	US	Sikkim	Nepal	Myanmar	EU



## 2.1 Normative Intended: India-Pakistan Peace Initiatives 1998-2008

### *Normative Goals*

In late 1998, India and Pakistan began talks to end a half-century of hostility. Indian goals, as spelt out by Prime Minister Vajpayee (1999a and b) at the launch of the Delhi-Lahore bus service in February 1999, were to show support for a strong and stable Pakistan; settle disputes through peaceful negotiations; end terrorism; put Kashmir talks on a fast track; liberalise trade and visa regimes; set up mechanisms for nuclear risk reduction; and work with Pakistan to make the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) a substantive regional organisation.

Although these goals were clearly normative, many doubted the seriousness of their intent, including then General Musharraf (Parthasarathy, 2003). One reason for doubt was the immediate context. The 1998 peace initiative was undertaken under international pressure, following nuclear tests by the two countries initiated by India.<sup>7</sup> International response to the tests was severe: the US and some European countries slapped sanctions against India and Pakistan (James Martin Center, 1998) causing considerable economic damage, especially to Pakistan, where there was a military coup one year later.

Lending weight to the sceptics, the first few years of the peace process oscillated between highs and lows, its lowest points being the Kargil war of 1999, sparked by Pakistani incursions into the Indian region of Jammu and Kashmir (Centre for Contemporary Conflict, 1999) and the Indian Parliament attack in 2001, allegedly launched by Pakistan-based armed groups. The Pakistani leadership, in particular the army, was a reluctant partner in the peace process. In this context could/would India persist in its pursuit of normative goals? As framed by the national policy debate, India's choice was between two options – either strike the bases of armed groups in Pakistan and shock the government into abandoning its dual policy once and for all (Bedi, 2001), or persist with normative behaviour in the belief that external and internal circumstances would move Pakistan towards a normative path as well.

India chose to remain within narrowly defined normative boundaries. India snapped diplomatic ties and moved troops to the border with the demand that Pakistan act against armed groups responsible for terrorist attacks in India (Vajpayee, 2001). These actions were normative to the extent that they did not violate international law by entering Pakistani territory. They were also intended to be norm-setting – by massing troops on the border, the Indian government aimed to signal what would not be tolerated from across the border. Alongside this however, the massing of troops acted as a form of coercive diplomacy (George, 1991, p. 4)<sup>8</sup> or strategic coercion (Freedman, 1998): President Musharraf arrested close to 1,000 armed radicals and closed down their offices.

The Congress coalition government that took over in 2004 built upon the peace initiatives begun by Vajpayee, with the difference that they did not respond coercively to ensuing terrorist attacks, of which there were many. They focused instead on getting additional institutional

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<sup>7</sup> Inexplicably, the Indian nuclear test decision made by the Hindu nationalist government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seemed to pay little attention to its potential regional or international impact – it was conducted for primarily domestic purposes, as a show of strength to BJP voters (Bhaskar, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> As put by George (1991, p. 4): “The general idea of coercive diplomacy is to back one’s demand on an adversary with a threat of punishment for noncompliance that he will consider credible and potent enough to persuade him to comply with the demand”. As an exercise, India’s foray into coercive diplomacy failed because the Indian government was unable to convert Musharraf’s response into cooperative mechanisms, such as extradition, police cooperation and intelligence-sharing.

structures for engagement in place, such as the 2004 South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and the 2006 Joint Mechanism for Counter-Terrorism; using existing multilateral structures such as the World Bank under the Indus Waters Treaty; and encouraging Track II inputs in policy-making (Kumar, 2005; Khatri, 2007). These steps demonstrated that India had expanded its range of normative actions. Under the Joint Mechanism, the Indian government moved to share information with a historical enemy in order to strengthen rule of law; by using the Indus Waters Treaty, it accepted multilateral arbitration on selected issues; and it sought advice from civil society, heretofore a severely limited practice. Finally, for the doubters claiming that India would only pursue peace initiatives that served its narrow national interests and stall on Kashmir (Amin, 2005; Quraishi, 2004), Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was able to put Kashmir talks on a fast track, both between New Delhi and dissident Kashmiris, and between India and Pakistan.

### ***Normative Means***

After its foray into coercive diplomacy, India focused on five normative means to make peace with Pakistan: confidence-building measures (CBMs), arbitration, negotiation, trade and security cooperation. First, the CBMs that India used combined conventional means such as military-to-military hotlines and regular meetings of border forces, with aspirational means (i.e. means that addressed the aspirations of the affected people), such as opening new travel routes between divided Punjab, Kashmir, Sindh and Rajasthan, easing visa and trade regimes and encouraging people-to-people exchanges. In early 2005, India and Pakistan reopened the Srinagar-Muzaffarbad road which had been closed since 1949, linking the two parts of divided Kashmir. This soft-border CBM had a major trust-building effect on India-Pakistan relations, inducing Pakistani policy-makers to begin to believe that terrorism was not the only lever they had over India on Kashmir.

Second, in 2005 India and Pakistan agreed to use a multilateral forum to adjudicate their dispute over building a dam in their shared river in Jammu and Kashmir (the Baglihar dam), and went to a World Bank-appointed tribunal for arbitration.<sup>9</sup>

Third and again beginning in 2005, India and Pakistan engaged in negotiation and trade relations, setting up a regular schedule of meetings at foreign secretary, additional secretary and joint secretary levels to negotiate disputes, trade, consular and security issues. The greatest progress was made on the Kashmir dispute – in which the back-channel contacts between envoys appointed by the governments of Pakistan and India allegedly reached a near consensus. While some progress was made in trade, it was slow and appeared to make two steps forward and one step backward. Though trade negotiations took place at both the regional (SAARC) and bilateral levels, little progress has been made at the regional level, where SAFTA is indefinitely postponed.

Finally as far as security affairs are concerned, in 2007 India and Pakistan agreed to set up a Joint Counter-Terrorism Mechanism. This is still largely a paper body, but it signifies that India is getting closer to setting the norm for security cooperation against non-state armed groups.

### ***Results – Normative Interrupted***

The tangible normative achievements of the India-Pakistan peace process are considerable. Between 2003 and 2007, trade between the two countries trebled to \$600 million (this is still a

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<sup>9</sup> Under the 1963 Indus Waters Treaty (<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSOUTHASIA/Resources/223497-05737253588/IndusWatersTreaty1960.pdf>).

very low volume; India's trade with Sri Lanka, which is much smaller than Pakistan, is \$1billion). The Baglihar dam dispute, stalemated for a quarter-century, was settled in 2006 by a World Bank-appointed arbitrator, who ruled in favour of India. Both the Line of Control in divided Jammu and Kashmir and the border between India and Pakistan have been softened through reopening pre-partition routes (so far four routes have been reopened, two each in Jammu and Kashmir). Since 2004, the number of people travelling between the two countries has increased twenty-fold; the Indian High Commission in Islamabad issued an average of 8,000 visas a day in 2006, up from 400 a day in 2005. Figures for Pakistani visas are not available (Sarwar, 2005).

Back-channel talks progressed so well that by 2005-06, the Pakistani government ended its support for armed groups operating against India (although they did not crack down on their non-government sources of funding) and by late 2006 it seemed that a resolution of the Kashmir dispute might be achieved in 2007. Then in March 2007, Pakistan began its plunge into internal turmoil with a clash between the army and the judiciary and a series of violent crises have occurred since, the latest being the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on 23 December 2007. The peace process stands suspended.

### ***Conditioning Factors***

In the immediate aftermath of the nuclear tests, external factors such as international sanctions pushed India and Pakistan into normative peace overtures. Once peace overtures had begun, however, external factors exerted a greater influence on Pakistan and internal factors on India. Pakistan's 1999 Kargil intrusions led US President Bill Clinton to demand immediate Pakistani withdrawal; then the 9/11 attacks of 2001 focused international attention on Pakistan's role as a host to Islamic militant groups. From 1999, the US and European governments put pressure on Pakistan to enter a peace process with India and cutback support for armed groups, and this pressure grew exponentially after the 9/11 attacks and the Madrid and London bombings. At the same time, the US-NATO stabilisation mission in Afghanistan allowed Pakistan to play yo-yo with armed groups fighting in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Although Pakistani support for these groups has much reduced over the last years, the Pakistani government remains selective in its choices of which groups it cracks down on and which it still supports (The Daily Times, 2008). Furthermore, as internal violence grew from 2005 on, the Pakistan Army's room to manoeuvre vis-à-vis different armed groups has shrunk. Benazir Bhutto's assassination threw the military-mullah dilemma into stark relief.

These external pressures on Pakistan had a trust-building impact on India, that Pakistan's dual policy could not be easily sustained in the post-9/11 climate. Yet external factors alone cannot account for India's normative policy course. Between 1999 and 2006, key internal determinants affected India's policy approach. Firstly, India's accelerated economic growth – in particular, the IT (information technology) boom which took place at around the same period – led Indian policy-makers to argue that growth could increase and be better sustained if regional trade prospered, and that in turn was dependent on peace with India's neighbours. Secondly, the positive impact of peace initiatives on Jammu and Kashmir was immediate. Thirdly, India's US diaspora, which was part of the growth story, actively supported a peace process with Pakistan, and this influenced both Indian policy-makers and civil society (Kumar, 2005).

## 2.2 Normative Unintended: 'Chindia', 2005-07

### **Normative Goals**

The economist-politician Jairam Ramesh (2005), currently Minister of State for Commerce, wrote a book on the potential impact that India-China relations could have on the world if the two countries worked together as 'Chindia'. Chindia rapidly became a concept that defined India's new policy towards China: to boost trade bilaterally and evolve common strategies in the global marketplace, settle border disputes and develop cooperative mechanisms in Asia. A third goal emerged as a result of India's growing economic and strategic ties in East and South-East Asia – to avoid being, or being seen as, a counterweight to China. India has been careful to deal with China within the normative frameworks that the Chinese leadership agrees to (Puri, 2005 and 2006; Varadarajan, 2007a and b).

In April 2005, the two countries signed a Strategic Partnership and set up high-level talks to resolve their border disputes. In January 2006 they agreed on a Memorandum for Enhancing Cooperation in the Field of Oil and Natural Gas that permits joint bids on energy assets in third countries. In May 2006 India and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding for joint military exchanges and exercises, collaboration in counter-terrorism, anti-piracy and search-and-rescue efforts. In December 2007 they held their first joint military training exercise and in January 2008 announced they would formulate a joint global economic strategy, including common action in the World Trade Organisation and on regional climate change, and agreed on civil nuclear energy cooperation.

These are normative goals and policies insofar as they are grounded in cooperation and international agreements without being directed against third parties. For India, however, pursuit of the normative goal of cooperation has also entailed subordinating other normative objectives, such as support for Tibetan Buddhists. India continues to offer sanctuary to the Dalai Lama, but has recently traded recognition of Tibet as part of China for Chinese acceptance of Sikkim as part of India (BBC, 2003), a classic *realpolitik* action. More significantly, India's energy cooperation with China has led India to ignore normative requirements in both Sudan and Myanmar until 2007, when a course correction began.

### **Normative Means**

Bilateral negotiations between India and China are supposedly governed by the normative 'Panchsheel' or five principles of peace – respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence – which are also applied to border settlement negotiations.<sup>10</sup> In policy practice, these normative means have been essentially respected as far as trade, climate change and border negotiations are concerned. In 2003 China and India agreed to reopen the Nathu La pass between Sikkim and Tibet, combining a soft border policy with recognition of each other's claims. Though there are complaints that China has violated the Panchsheel principles over 100 times in the past year by patrolling the Indian side of the border in Arunachal Pradesh, the Indian government has downplayed these violations, saying they are dealt with through the joint border cooperation mechanism (Singh, 2006; Muckerjee, 2008). Both countries at first ignored a fresh wave of human rights violations in Sudan and Myanmar,

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<sup>10</sup> Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India, signed on 29 April 1954 and expanded two months later to cover all bilateral relations between India and China, reiterated in the 1993 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility on the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas (<http://mea.gov.in/celdemo/panchsheel.pdf>).

where they have high energy (and in the latter, security) stakes at play; yet China has now used its good offices in Sudan and India is attempting to do so in Myanmar.<sup>11</sup>

However, China has shown a disconcerting readiness to drop normative means for *realpolitik* ones. For example, under the Panchsheel principles the two countries agreed to exchange maps in order to facilitate border negotiations, and have exchanged maps where the less contentious middle sector is concerned. But the talks have moved to the more contentious northern and eastern sectors, and the Chinese are now refusing to exchange maps (Raman, 2008). China has also used norm-challenging means, such as nuclear and arms aid to Pakistan. Though this declined during the late 1980s and early 1990s, it grew sharply following India's tests in 1998, and was again upped following the India-US civil nuclear energy pact. China recently aided Pakistan's building of the Chashma II and unsafeguarded Khushab reactors with the promise of more reactors to come, supplied plutonium and provided components for ballistic missiles (Paul, 2003; Parthasarathy, 2007). In fact, the bulk of Chinese arms sales are to India's neighbours (Malik, 2001). Indeed, China sometimes seems to make hay from India's normative actions in its neighbourhood – for example, when India suspended arms sales to Nepal in 2005 to put pressure on the King to restore democracy, China stepped in place, though only briefly.<sup>12</sup>

### **Non-Normative Results**

The results thus far have not been normative. Chindia has worked where the two countries' national interests coincide, chiefly in the areas of trade and the pursuit of energy. It has not worked when it come to security issues – though the boundary talks may yet reach normative results based on soft borders and freedom of movement. China has in fact continued to pursue a mixed and partly non-normative approach towards India. China's support for India's observer status at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the pacts signed in 2005-06, especially for joint energy acquisition when China had previously outbid India, imply that normative policies have been pursued only when they have coincided with Chinese national interests (lower energy prices). Yet China's policy goal following the 1962 war, according to the secret talks between Nixon and Zhou Enlai,<sup>13</sup> was the containment of India by arming Pakistan and wooing the US, and from the late 1970s China helped Pakistan develop a nuclear weapons programme. This policy appears to linger on in current Chinese policy (Johnston, 1998, p. 63; Griffin, 2006). China's "string of pearls" naval bases in the Indian Ocean stretching from Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal to Gwadar in Pakistan, may be primarily directed at economic expansion, but nevertheless encircle India (Prakash, 2007). While signing several strategic pacts with India, the Chinese government has denounced the growing India-US and India-Japan relations as attempts to contain China, initiate strategic competition in East and South-East Asia and wreck the non-proliferation regime (Jacob, 2006; Rediff News, 2007; People's Daily, 2006 and 2007).

The 2008 declarations made during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's first visit to China, suggest that some of these irritants are becoming less salient. Chinese opposition to the India-US nuclear energy agreement is down to mild from vociferous (Chandrasekar & Raghavendra, 2008). More significantly, China discussed Pakistan for the first time with India and the 'Vision

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<sup>11</sup> See Myanmar section below.

<sup>12</sup> China asserted that the dismissal of parliament was 'Nepal's internal matter', and supplied the King with arms while other countries cut off military aid (Asian Centre for Human Rights, 2005). China revised its policy following pressure from the US, UK, EU and UN.

<sup>13</sup> Record of Historic Richard Nixon-Zhou Enlai Talks in February 1972, George Washington University, Document 3, p. 7 ([http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/publications/DOC\\_readers/kissinger/nixzhou/13-07.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/publications/DOC_readers/kissinger/nixzhou/13-07.htm)).

Statement' issued by Singh and Jiabao indicate Chinese acceptance of India's growing role in Asia:

The (two countries) will explore together and with other countries a new architecture for closer regional cooperation in Asia and make joint efforts for further regional integration of Asia...The two countries will strengthen their coordination under the framework of Asia-Europe meeting and are committed to strengthening and deepening Asia-Europe comprehensive partnership.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, in bilateral policy areas China's goals appear to be *realpolitik*; but in multilateral areas of engagement, including South and East Asia, India and China are progressing towards normative cooperation. However, it should be noted that China sought to engage with India only after the US did so, which implies *realpolitik* goals. And in the "Vision Statement" of 2008 China has wangled an extraordinary Indian commitment to "oppose any activity that is against the one China principle,"<sup>15</sup> without an evident *quid pro quo*.

Indian suspicions, roused by China's non-normative actions, have led to irrational Indian responses at times. Though the two countries agreed to reopen Nathu La in 2003, it was eventually opened only in 2006 because Indian security analysts feared that infrastructure development on the Chinese side of the pass could bring Chinese arms and troops to the Indian border in hours, and therefore resisted improvement of roads on the Indian side. While China-India trade has risen rapidly, doubling to \$38 billion in 2005-07, the trade deficit, which was in India's favour in 2005, has grown to \$9 billion, a result that unfavourably impacts the quest for normative relations as far as India is concerned.

### **Conditioning Factors**

External factors have clearly played a role in explaining India's non-normative results in its relations with China. China's deep engagement in South Asia often leads it to pursue actions that could be inimical to Indian interests. China's infrastructure development, including military infrastructure in Tibet, has heightened Indian fears that China is gaining an unassailable military edge (Rakshak, 2008). India's growing ties to the US and Japan and in South-East Asia could challenge China's domination in East and South-East Asia. The two countries are engaged in maritime rivalry in the Indian Ocean.

Yet non-normative results are also explained by internal factors. The two countries have a tendency to overreact to each other's actions, due to their prior history of mistrust and misperception. As sinologist John Garver (2000, p. 311) commented: '[w]hat exists in the Indian Ocean is a classic security dilemma in naval guise. Each side acts to defend itself, but in doing so, threatens the other'.

## **2.3 Realpolitik Intended: India-Japan Maritime Cooperation, 2006-07**

### **Realpolitik Goals**

India-Japan Maritime Cooperation is primarily directed towards protecting commercial sea lanes in the Indian Ocean and East Asian straits, through which over 60% of the two countries' energy imports travel, though a subsidiary interest is joint disaster management. The Indian and Japanese navies first worked together in a relief mission for the tsunami-affected in 2004, along

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<sup>14</sup> For the full text of China-India joint document, see *China View* ([http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-01/14/content\\_7422097\\_3.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-01/14/content_7422097_3.htm)).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

with the US and Australian Navies. In 2006, the two countries announced they would boost military cooperation in counter-terrorism and safety of regional maritime traffic and international cooperation for disaster management (Suryanarayana, 2006). In 2007 they held joint exercises with Singapore in the Malacca Straits, with the US off the Japanese coast and in the Bay of Bengal with the US, Singapore and Australia. They also held a quadrilateral meeting on the sidelines of East Asia Summit.

These goals could be classified as normative, were it not for the US and China factors. China had blocked initial Japanese efforts to join multilateral patrols in the Malacca Straits, opposed the Japanese and Indian bids for seats in the UN Security Council and was reluctant to have India at the East Asian Summit. Both India and Japan, therefore, have a common interest in ‘multi-polarity’ in East and South-East Asia, against dominance by a single country or a bipolar US-China divide (Saran, 2003). To this however, Japanese Prime Minister Abe added in 2007 the proposal that India join Japan to create an ‘Arc of Freedom and Prosperity’ constituted by democracies in Asia,<sup>16</sup> which would by definition exclude China, prompting Chinese accusations of a policy of containment.<sup>17</sup> The proposal did not take off because the Indian government did not respond and it was shelved when Prime Minister Fukuda replaced Mr. Abe. At present India-Japan maritime cooperation can be considered *realpolitik* with a normative strand, as it conforms to international law and is not directed against any other country.

### **Attempted Realpolitik Means**

The term *realpolitik* does not apply to Japan-India maritime cooperation in itself. Japan briefly attempted *realpolitik* means when Prime Minister Abe proposed the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, which would have antagonistically challenged growing Chinese domination in Asia, but the idea has been indefinitely shelved. A secondary point is that although maritime cooperation is now an established mechanism between the two countries, more normative cooperation, such as working together for the Sri Lankan peace process, is on a back burner. This indicates that the two countries are still more comfortable cooperating in traditional areas of national interest convergence and not moving beyond these into more normative terrain.

### **Realpolitik Results**

The impact of India-Japan maritime cooperation has been to exacerbate Chinese suspicions of Japan and its opposition to any US-Japan-India alliance (Zhaokui, 2007). Although the US, as a partner in Japan-India maritime exercises, made clear that the joint exercises were not part of an effort to contain China (Armitage & Nye, 2007), as did the Indian and Japanese leaders (Abe, 2007; Varadarajan, 2007), China’s relations with Japan plummeted since Prime Minister Koizumi’s adoption of a ‘normalisation’ policy that entailed overturning Japan’s post WWII ban on military missions overseas (although he authorised solely civil-military missions) and saw him visiting war memorials that also housed the graves of accused war criminals from the Japan-China war (Calder, 2006, pp. 4-7). Moderating these *realpolitik* results however is the fact that China will not allow its suspicions to compromise its relations with India, and Japan and China are slowly mending fences.

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<sup>16</sup> The concept of an Arc of Freedom and Prosperity had been outlined by the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Taro Aso, at the Japan Institute of International Affairs on 30 November 2006 ([www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0611.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0611.html)).

<sup>17</sup> See [www.expressindia.com/fullstory.php?newsid=91247](http://www.expressindia.com/fullstory.php?newsid=91247).

### **Conditioning Factors**

External factors set the context for India's *realpolitik* approach towards Japan. China had reached equilibrium with the US under the Nixon administration in the late 1970s and had grown dominant in East and South-East Asia during the 1990s, when the Clinton administration was focused on European integration and the wars in former Yugoslavia. But Japan's new military exercises and the revival of traditional suspicions through the 'normalisation' policy reignited Chinese fears of an alliance to contain it, fears that some US analysts fanned by advocating a US-India alliance as a counterweight to China (Carpenter, 2001; Weiss, 1999; Hill & Associates, 2005).

Yet, as far as internal determinants are concerned, what diminishes the degree of *realpolitik* in India-Japan relations is the fact that India is not prepared to join in a policy expressly aimed at containing China. Both Japan and India have strong economic ties with China. At the same time, analysts in both countries perceive Chinese statements of mistrust as an attempt to restrict their expanding international and Asian roles (Chellaney, 2007).

## **2.4 Realpolitik Unintended: The US-India Civil Nuclear Energy Agreement, 2005-07**

### **Realpolitik Goals with a Normative Strand**

The US-India civil nuclear energy agreement was negotiated for *realpolitik* goals, to allow India to free itself from 'nuclear apartheid' as former Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh put it (1998, pp. 41-52), gain access to civil nuclear energy technology and supplies, while continuing to be an unrecognised nuclear weapons-possessing state. The US goal was to acquire a stable ally in an increasingly and dangerously unstable South Asia post-9/11. Though the agreement was based on India's normative conduct – India had not exported nuclear technology or material to other countries and had not threatened use of nuclear weapons in war – the fact that the two 'estranged democracies' (Kux, 1994) only came together post-9/11 suggests *realpolitik* intent and behaviour. The end of the cold war provided an opportunity for India and the US to develop a common cause, but the 1998 Indian nuclear tests simultaneously propelled the two into dialogue and brought US pressure on India to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). After 9/11, US policy underwent a drastic revision – following the 9/11 attacks the US and India worked together in counter-terrorism and military-military relations. For the first time the two countries began to 'cooperate for their greater security' (Gaffney, 2003).

### **Realpolitik and Normative Means**

The means that India and the US used to push through the agreement were primarily normative: negotiations, diaspora support including lobbying, trade, international backing (Russia, France, Mr El Baradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency IAEA). However the agreement itself both broke established norms and set new ones. It bypassed the existing regulations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and set the new norm of exception for a responsible democracy. The Indian government was itself unsure of whether the agreement was *realpolitik* or normative – in other words, whether the agreement intended to project India's power abroad or whether it contributed to improve and diversify India's civilian energy supplies – and it did not promote the civil nuclear energy agreement as being about either weapons or energy. Thus, although the agreement was one of several, including collaboration in space research and agricultural development, the visible markers of US-India relations in 2005-07 were accelerated military-military ties, comprising naval and air exercises, mountain warfare training, counter-terrorism and border monitoring practices.



### **Unrealpolitik Results**

In some ways, the *realpolitik* goals of the two countries were illusory. In the US, the thrust of improved relations with India had always had a strong normative strand, summed up in the phrase launched during President Clinton's visit to India in 2000 but which has become common currency since then: "the world's largest and oldest democracies" (Albright, 2000; Ros-Lehtinen, 2005; Thain, 2004). Yet in India there was an opposing normative push: the governing UPA coalition, in power with Indian Communist Parties that are inimical to the US, was always going to have a hard time selling to its partners a significantly closer relationship with the US. The civil nuclear energy agreement is at present stalled; only time and the US presidential elections in November 2008 will show what impact this will have on US-India relations.

The Indian domestic opposition to the civil-nuclear energy agreement appears to have revived the *unrealpolitik* strand in Indian foreign policy. From the BJP's accusations of compromising India's nuclear weapons programme<sup>18</sup> to the Communist parties' argument of compromising the independence of India's foreign policy,<sup>19</sup> neither influential political group is prepared to recognise that the agreement is a testimonial of confidence in Indian democracy. While the BJP sought and failed to negotiate a similar agreement during its government, according to former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot (2004), the Communists' argument that the US-India civil nuclear deal makes supplies conditional on Indian support for or participation in US foreign policy 'adventures', suggests that the Indian government is liable to subordinate its national interest to that of another country. The example they use – Iran – points to the contrary. The Indian government's position on Iran's nuclear programme is somewhere between the Russian and Chinese positions and the European one. India is opposed to Iran acquiring nuclear weapons but advocates negotiations rather than coercive instruments to resolve the impasse (Sivaswamy, 2005).

### **Conditioning Factors**

The factors blocking an agreement that is clearly in India's national interest are solely internal and reflect domestic politics in India. The Communist parties see the US as an imperialist hegemon with whom India should not have strong relations; the BJP is not willing to let the agreement go through on the Congress' watch. Hence, opposition by these parties has put the agreement in jeopardy. The Communist parties delayed negotiations with the IAEA until January 2008, which represents the next step for getting the Nuclear Suppliers Group on board. Meanwhile, as the US begins the race for Presidential nominations, time is running out for Congress to ratify the agreement.

## **2.5 Imperial Intended: Sikkim's Merger with India, 1975**

### ***Imperial Goals with an Ambiguous Normative Thread***

Though the official Indian position is that India acted on the will of the people in admitting Sikkim to the Indian Federation,<sup>20</sup> the merger was widely criticised as annexation (Datta-Ray, 1984). It is fairly clear that India's primary goals were to maintain Sikkim as a buffer against China, a role it had played during British rule, which was carried over after Indian independence

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<sup>18</sup> "Indo-US nuclear deal: Unacceptable, BJP will renegotiate", *Organiser*, 9 December 2007.

<sup>19</sup> "N-deal will erode India's independent foreign policy: Karat", *Rediff News*, 8 November 2007.

<sup>20</sup> See [http://sikkim.nic.in/sws/sikk\\_his.htm](http://sikkim.nic.in/sws/sikk_his.htm).

through a treaty placing Sikkim under the Indian foreign and security policy umbrella. Within these confines, the Indian leadership also acted normatively by pushing Sikkim's monarch, the Chogyal, to democratise. In 1955 the Chogyal established a state council, but it worked mostly in the breach. Following failed negotiations and public riots, India ultimately occupied Sikkim. In May 1975, Sikkim became the 22<sup>nd</sup> state of the Indian Union and the monarchy was abolished. The speed with which India acted and the presence of Indian troops suggest India's goal was more imperial than normative. India was criticised for exploiting ethnic divides – the Chogyal represented the Bhutia tribes that had left Bhutan and the Sikkim Congress' base was Nepali settlers who constituted 75% of Sikkim's population – and accused of rigging the referendum on merger as cover for the annexation of Sikkim.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Imperial Means***

The means that India used in 1975 were clearly imperial insofar as they were coercive and in breach of international law. From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, the new Chogyal tried to negotiate an amended treaty that would give Sikkim an international personality: the Indian government was offended, and the Sikkim National Congress opposed his move (Gupta, 1975, pp. 798-790). In 1973 public riots broke out against rigged elections to the state council. The Indian government stepped in to negotiate a tripartite agreement between the Chogyal and Sikkim's political leaders, with India as guarantor. Under the agreement Sikkim would have an elected State Assembly based on proportional representation for all ethnic groups. The tripartite agreement in 1973 was arguably more normative than imperial: had the Chogyal agreed to a constitutional monarchy, with ethnic power-sharing, the crisis might not have occurred. However, the new Assembly voted for a constitutional monarchy; the Chogyal resisted and in early 1975 Sikkim's Congress Prime Minister appealed to the Indian Parliament for Sikkim to become an Indian state. Indian troops moved in and seized the capital Gangtok, disarming the Palace Guards. Under the army's supervision, a referendum was held within 72 hours in which 97.5% of the people voted to join India.

### ***Normative Results***

Although China and Nepal refused to recognise Sikkim's new status and there was considerable international criticism, pressure was not severe enough to reverse the merger. Sikkim's neighbours, Bhutan and Nepal, feared Indian intentions towards them – Bhutan was under India's security protection, Nepal had an open border and a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India – but these fears allayed over time.<sup>22</sup> Sikkim slowly stabilised and has gradually become one of the most peaceful and prosperous states in India's North-East. Today Sikkim is seen as India's gateway to China. The Nathu-la Pass, once part of the ancient Silk Road that linked China, Tibet and India, was reopened in 2006 following a negotiated agreement between India and China, 44 years after it was closed during the 1962 India-China war. This normative result was accompanied by an imperial quid pro quo – India recognised the Tibet Autonomous Region as part of China and China recognised Sikkim as part of India. As a symbolic Chinese rebuff, the date chosen for Nathu-La's opening was the Dalai Lama's birthday (Lague & Gentleman, 2006).

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<sup>21</sup> "Fairy Tale's End", *Time*, 5 May 1975 (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,913029,00.html?iid=chix-sphere>).

<sup>22</sup> See [http://www.ipcs.org/Military\\_militaryBalance2.jsp?database=1002&country2=Bhutan](http://www.ipcs.org/Military_militaryBalance2.jsp?database=1002&country2=Bhutan).

### **Conditioning Factors**

Internal factors explain the normative strand underpinning India's goals in Sikkim. The Indian government was under pressure from Sikkim's political parties such as the Sikkim National Congress to intervene, not least in view of the close ties between the Sikkim and Indian National Congresses. The failure of the Chogyal to democratise and the Sikkim political parties' support for the merger with India provided a further normative push to India's interventionist approach. Alongside this, external factors explain how and why India was able to pursue its (partly normative) goals in Sikkim through coercive means. The annexation of Sikkim was in fact relatively undisturbed because there was little international pressure to reverse it. The US response was representative:

The Indian absorption of Sikkim does not directly involve the US. We have never questioned India's protecting authority over Sikkim and its new status raises no question of direct American legal obligation to an existing sovereign state. Nevertheless, there is public interest in Sikkim because the Chogyal married socialite Hope Cooke. She is now separated from the Chogyal and living in New York. So far she has made no statement on events, although she was previously outspoken for greater Sikkimese autonomy. We have not been queried by the press about Sikkim. If we are, we plan to take a 'no comment' line.<sup>23</sup>

## **2.6 Imperial Unintended: India's Engagement in the Nepal Peace Process, 2005-07**

### ***Imperial Goals Mutating to Normative***

India's chief priorities in Nepal were initially based on *realpolitik* goals similar to those in Sikkim, to have a reliable and dependent buffer between India and China. In 1950, India signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Nepal which bound the two countries together in defence and trade; the India-Nepal border is the only open border in South Asia. However, India's behaviour changed to normative in the 1990s – in 1996, India began to alter the economic dependency relationship, providing Nepal with quota-free access to Indian markets and boosting Nepali exports to India to \$425 million per year. By this time, the security arrangements under the 1950 Treaty remained mostly on paper. The political relationship between Indian and Nepali leaders had dwindled to the point that India did not attempt to intervene when the Nepali Maoists began an armed movement in 1996, and India remained quiescent even when the Maoists were reported to have spread to almost half of Nepal's 75 districts by 1999.<sup>24</sup>

India's goals changed more decisively to normative after the ruling monarch was assassinated in 2001. When the king's brother Gyanendra took office, a standoff between the monarchy and Nepali Maoists accelerated and civil war broke out in 2002. Indian policy-makers initially supported the king against the Maoists, as did much of the international community, including the US and China. India altered its policy only in early 2005, when the king dismissed Nepal's parliament, constituted by India-brokered peace negotiations in 1990-91. Indian goals shifted to seeking peace between the Nepali king, the parliament and the Maoists; and supporting a constitutional process to resolve conflict over the nature of the Nepali state. When ethnic conflict broke out in the Terai region of Nepal, India pressed for reconciliation and minority representation. In a major departure from India's prior policy goal to resist international engagement in its neighbourhood, the Indian government expanded its pursuit of normative

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<sup>23</sup> Briefing Memorandum by the Acting Assistant Secretary of State to the Secretary (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e8/97052.htm>).

<sup>24</sup> Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research: Conflict Database: "Nepal Conflict Summary" (<http://www.pcr.uu.se/database/conflictSummary.php?bcID=203>).

goals in 2006 by cooperating with the international community to support the peace process and help implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

### ***Imperial Means, Replaced by Normative***

India initially attempted to retain the monarchy in Nepal, backing the king and continuing military aid to the Royal Nepal Army. By late 2004, however, it was evident to most observers that the king could not subdue the Maoists militarily. The Indian government soon moved to a more interventionist but normative approach, facilitating a peace process in Nepal in coordination with the US, UK, EU and UN. There was shuttle diplomacy between Khatmandu and New Delhi; and political pressure was deployed on a wide range of tracks – by erstwhile Indian royals intermarried with the Nepali royal family; Indian political parties with links to the Nepali parliamentary parties (Congress) and Communists with ties to the Nepali Maoist leaders who had studied in India (Communist Party of India-Marxist); as well as India-Nepal military to military, intelligence and civil society relations.

In November 2005, India brokered a 12-point agreement between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance of constitutional political parties, which led to an extension of the Maoist cease-fire declared two months earlier. The agreement called for an end to the ‘autocratic monarchy’, parliamentary democracy and elections for a Constituent Assembly. The Maoists agreed to place their arms under UN supervision or “any dependable international body”, provided the Royal Nepal Army did so too.<sup>25</sup> Although army-Maoist clashes resumed, the agreement gave India along with the international community (now including China) leverage to pressure the king into restoring the parliament in April 2006. Hectic international, including Indian diplomacy, ensued, in which India also used aid as a lever, offering a package of USD 315m in August 2006.<sup>26</sup> In the same month, despite discomfort with a UN presence on its eastern border, the Indian government looked the other way when the constitutional parties and the Communists requested a UN mission in Nepal. In November 2006, the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, after which the Alliance formed an interim government that was supposed to oversee elections.

By this time, the Indian government had created a twin-track approach: foreign office representatives focused on working with Nepali constitutional parties and Communist MPs worked with Nepali Maoists, an approach which intensified when a new threat of ethnic conflict emerged in 2007. In January 2007, tensions over the non-representation of Madhesi (a group of Hindi-speaking ethnic communities) in the constitutional process sparked violent protest in the southern Terai region bordering India. The interim government tried to quell the protest by force; but when that led to increased violence, they hastily amended the interim Constitution to provide greater Madhesi representation. The gesture did not work as the amendment was not made through consultation with the Madhesi representatives (Philipson, 2008). Relations between Madhesi groups and Nepali Maoists rapidly worsened, and in the summer of 2007, Indian Communists set up meetings for the Maoists with Madhesi representatives, while Indian foreign office representatives consulted with the interim government. As a result, Prime Minister Koirala invited Madhesi representatives to a meeting in which he promised that representation for the Constituent Assembly elections would be increased for the Terai districts

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<sup>25</sup> The 12 Point Understanding Between the Parties and the Maoists ([http://www.advocacyforum.org/pdfcoll/12\\_Point\\_Agreement\\_between\\_spa\\_and\\_maoist.pdf](http://www.advocacyforum.org/pdfcoll/12_Point_Agreement_between_spa_and_maoist.pdf) Asian Centre for Human Rights <http://www.achrweb.org/Review/2005/103-05.htm>).

<sup>26</sup> “India Announces \$215 Million Aid For Nepal”, *European Media Monitor (EMM) NewsExplorer* (<http://press.jrc.it/NewsExplorer/clusteredition/en/20060812,RSS-allheadlinenews-146387e47c6c1ea48b0605a2d9ac80a5.html>).

in proportion to the population. He also proposed that the new Constitution would include provisions to strengthen the federal structure.<sup>27</sup> In early 2007, the Maoists joined the interim government, but were not able to agree with the Seven Party Alliance on two critical issues. While the Comprehensive Peace Agreement stripped the king of his powers and property, it left the issue of the monarchy to be decided by a Constituent Assembly.<sup>28</sup> The Maoists wanted Nepal to be declared a republic immediately, whereas the Seven Party Alliance upheld the process laid down in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The issue of elections was even more contentious. The Maoists wanted a proportional electoral system in which parties would be elected according to their share of the vote; the constitutional parties wanted a combined system of proportional and ‘first past the post’. In September 2007, the Maoists walked out of the interim government; in October the Indian government stressed the importance of holding elections (Pradhan, 2007), in November the Communist MP Sitaram Yechury went to Nepal to discuss elections with the Maoists, and in early December the Indian Prime Minister’s envoy, Shyam Saran, was in Nepal for talks with the government as well as with the Maoists. In mid-December the Nepali government introduced a Bill to provide for an electoral system that would be 58% proportional and 42% first past the post.<sup>29</sup> Elections are scheduled for April 2008; the Maoists rejoined the interim government in January 2008 and their head, Prachanda, is set to contest elections.

### **Non-Normative Results**

Despite the hectic efforts of the international community, and by India, the peace process has not delivered on the ground. The ceasefire has held, but the breakdown of law and order continues. The UN Mission in Nepal, which was set up in January 2007 under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, registered 2,855 weapons each from the Nepal Army and the Maoists in April 2007 (the figure has now grown to 3,475); meanwhile, the process of integrating Maoist fighters into a retrained Nepal Army is yet to be agreed, although there were meetings between the Maoists and the Nepal Army in autumn 2007.<sup>30</sup> Maoist fighters began to leave the cantonments in which they were sequestered under the peace agreement by mid-2007. In December 2007, after the UN verified the remaining 19,602 Maoist fighters in cantonments (Martin, 2007), analysts warned they would leave as well (ICG, 2007). Sporadic conflict has returned to Maoist-affected regions; intimidation, extortion and kidnappings have increased and in many areas Maoist groups have set up parallel administrations (UN Security Council, 2008).

Madhesi groups have begun to arm and the biggest one, the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (Jwala Singh group), has declared a boycott of the April elections unless they are “conducted by an interim government formed after a round table conference with participation of the parties

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<sup>27</sup> Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, “News Update from Nepal, 2 August 2007” (<http://fesportal.fes.de/pls/portal30/docs/FOLDER/WORLDWIDE/ASIEN/BERICHTE/BERICHTE2007/NEPALNEWS0807.PDF>, ‘Nepal Invites Madhesis, Promises Federalism’; *WhatIsIndia.com*, [http://www.whatisindia.com/stories/2007/02/wis\\_ds\\_20070201\\_nepal\\_invites\\_madhesis\\_\\_promises\\_federalism.html](http://www.whatisindia.com/stories/2007/02/wis_ds_20070201_nepal_invites_madhesis__promises_federalism.html)).

<sup>28</sup> The Comprehensive Peace Agreement between Government of Nepal and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), article 3.3 (<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/VBOL-6VSHK8?OpenDocument>).

<sup>29</sup> “Nepal House bill for fixing mid-April deadline for polls”, *NDTV.com*, 16 December 2007 (<http://www.ndtv.com/convergence/ndtv/story.aspx?id=NEWEN20070036115&ch=12/16/2007%208:28:00%20PM>).

<sup>30</sup> “Nepal Army not hindering PLA integration, Inclusive Democratic Nepal”, 25 November 2007 (<http://nepal-democracy.blogspot.com/2007/11/nepal-army-not-hindering-pla.html>).

led by Madhesi groups, organisations and fronts”.<sup>31</sup> Although the Nepal Army has raised a new battalion of 850 personnel of Madhesi and Terai origin, the step appears to be too little too late. Serious security discussions between the Maoists and the Nepal Army would help, but there is no indication yet that the Indian government will play the mediating role here.

### ***Conditioning Factors***

India’s shift to an active role in brokering peace in Nepal was due to a combination of external and internal factors. As far as external factors are concerned, proactive roles by the US, EU, UK and UN made the Indian government nervous but it had no means of blocking them. Indian representatives concluded it was better to use India-Nepal ties creatively to bring about peace agreements. As far as internal determinants of Indian policy are concerned, the Indian Communists were anxious to facilitate a peace process and opposition parties were using the ruling Congress coalition’s relative passivity as a weapon to accuse them of weakness. Given the historic relationship with Nepali parties, there have been strong domestic constituencies in India favouring an active Indian role in resolving the crisis in Nepal.

## **2.7 Status Quo Intended: Inching From *Realpolitik* to Normative, India-Myanmar 2007-08**

### ***Status Quo Goals with a Developing Normative Strand***

Before the junta’s crackdown on the Burmese monks’ peaceful protests in September 2007, India’s goals with Myanmar were to improve relations with the junta in order to counter growing Chinese economic and military – especially naval – domination of the country, deal jointly with cross-border insurgent groups and bring Myanmar into its ‘Look East’ policy as a gateway to South-East Asia, which could also aid economic growth in India’s North-East (Khosla, 2003, p. 607).

These goals were a shift from India’s earlier policy of supporting the pro-democracy movement, whose leader Aung San Suu Kyi had studied in India. Indian strategic analysts began suggesting a rethink of relations with the junta in 1992, when they found that Myanmar was becoming militarily and economically dependent on China during its international isolation after the 1988 arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi. The fear that Myanmar’s dependency on China might adversely affect India’s security grew when Myanmar leased the Coco Islands to the Chinese government in 1994, where China established a maritime reconnaissance and electronic intelligence station and built a base. The Coco Islands are a crossing point for seaborne traffic between the Bay of Bengal and the Malacca Strait, and the perfect strategic spot for monitoring Indian naval facilities and naval movement across the eastern Indian Ocean (Ramachandran, 2005).

Despite these imperatives, India’s policy in 1992-98 combined support for the pro-democracy movement and developing working relations with the junta, which were mostly confined to cross-border issues such as smuggling, narcotics and containing cross-border insurgent groups. The shift to closer relations began in 1998, when the BJP-led government came to power. By this point analysts were arguing for a new policy based on a number of strategic considerations: for their maritime security, India, ASEAN and Japan all had an interest in balancing Myanmar’s dependency on China; in economic terms Myanmar was rich in resources, its energy potential made it a desirable ally and internally India and Myanmar had mutual interests in counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency cooperation (Bhaskar, 1999, pp. 432-434).

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<sup>31</sup> *South Asian Media Net*, 19 January 2008 (<http://www.southasianmedia.net/cnn.cfm?id=458216&category=Militancy&Country=NEPAL>).

Between 1998 and 2006, India's economic and military relations with Myanmar developed rapidly. When the latest phase of the pro-democracy movement began in 2003-04 and was stonewalled by the junta, the Indian government's first response was silence. But the junta's drift towards increasing isolation, as symbolised by the 2005 decision to move the capital to the remote Pyinmana region of central Burma roused international fears and consequent international pressure on India and China to exert their influence on the junta. Although India's response to these calls was extremely cautious, in early 2006 Myanmar signed a gas agreement with China that was earlier promised to India (A. Kumar, 2006), a gesture that could be construed as a warning.

Following domestic outcry at the Indian government's silence to the brutal attacks on pro-democracy monks, India's goals began to shift from status quo to normative, and from October 2007 Indian officials began to call for "inclusive political reforms", release of political prisoners and an enquiry into human rights abuses during the crackdown (Dikshit, 2007). India has also begun to discuss Myanmar with the UN, UK, EU and US. However, although the call for democratisation was repeated in talks with the junta – from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's first meeting with Myanmar's Prime Minister Lieutenant General Thein Sein in November 2007, to his discussion with Myanmar's Foreign Minister in January 2008 – India did not apply substantive pressure, leading some analysts to posit that India continued to support the status quo (Lintner, 2007). The expansion of India's economic and strategic cooperation with Myanmar in January 2008, with an agreement to build a port at Sittwe, suggests that India continues to put status quo goals above normative ones;<sup>32</sup> but the Indian government's suspension of arms sales to Myanmar following the September 2007 crackdown<sup>33</sup> may also suggest that India is using a two-track policy of engagement and selective embargo to achieve the normative goal of democratisation of Myanmar along with good relations with India.

### **Status Quo and Normative Means**

The means India used to develop relations with the junta were chiefly status quo means: high-level military exchanges, sale of initially non-lethal military supplies such as uniforms but later military sales including light combat aircraft and strategic economic cooperation such as building roads and ports. While the junta crackdown was in progress, Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Murli Deora flew to Myanmar to sign an agreement to explore gas in three new blocks off Myanmar's southwestern Arakan coast. But India has also used normative means – Burmese dissidents and refugees continue to be sheltered in India. Moreover, the means India has used to improve relations with the junta changed between 1997 and 2007 from being normative to *realpolitik* and back to normative again. India initially shared the then ASEAN view, that integration into South-East Asian trade and institutions would open Myanmar's isolationist junta to political reforms. The first initiative that India took in 1997 was a follow-up of this policy: the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). BIMSTEC initially comprised Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, but soon expanded to include Myanmar, and later Bhutan and Nepal. BIMSTEC covers 13 'Priority Sectors' for cooperation: trade and investment, technology, energy, transport and communication, tourism, fisheries, agriculture, cultural cooperation, environment and

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<sup>32</sup> "India developing Myanmar port", *The Hindu Business Line*, 8 January 2008 (<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2008/01/08/stories/2008010852640100.htm>).

<sup>33</sup> "India stresses Myanmar political reforms", *United Press of India*, 2 January 2008 ([http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/Top\\_News/2008/01/02/india\\_stresses\\_myanmar\\_political\\_reforms/6441/](http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/Top_News/2008/01/02/india_stresses_myanmar_political_reforms/6441/)).

disaster management, public health, people-to-people contact, poverty alleviation and counter-terrorism and transnational crimes.<sup>34</sup>

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, India's goals became more overtly *realpolitik*. In 1998, India and Myanmar signed agreements to promote border trade (intended to improve economic conditions in their troubled border regions),<sup>35</sup> agricultural development and technology. Then in 2000 India began non-lethal military sales to Myanmar and in 2006 it began military sales, such as T-55 main battle tanks, and 105 mm light artillery guns, pledging further to sell armored personnel carriers, light combat aircraft and small naval vessels.<sup>36</sup> The plans to supply light combat aircraft were permanently shelved following pressure from the EU, as some of the aircraft's components originated from EU member states that backed sanctions against Myanmar.

From 2006 India started, albeit reluctantly, to take UN normative concerns on board, meeting the UN envoy to Myanmar on his visits to the region. The Indian government also started coordinating with the US, UK and EU. Military sales were suspended following the 2007 crackdown (Bedi, 2007), and the Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon, followed up a meeting with Mr. Gambari with a visit to Myanmar in mid-February. India is, thus, moving from status quo back to normative means in Myanmar.

### **Status Quo Results**

The results thus far have been status quo. There were initial glimmers of hope in November 2007 – the junta appointed Labour Minister General Aung Kyi to mediate with Aung San Suu Kyi and allowed her to meet the National League for Democracy's executive committee (whom she had not met for four years). Aung San Suu Kyi issued a statement through UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari that she was ready to cooperate with Burma's military junta "in the interest of the nation".<sup>37</sup> Suu Kyi's supporters feared "that she had fallen victim to another ploy by the junta to win time and deflect mounting international criticism".<sup>38</sup> The suspicion was based on the fact that no meeting between Suu Kyi had taken place by the time of this writing and her party executive was not allowed to meet her again. In January 2008, the NLD asked for another meeting with her in order to discuss national reconciliation,<sup>39</sup> the junta has yet to respond.

India's efforts at opening up the junta through regional integration via BIMSTEC failed; worsening relations with Bangladesh over terrorism issues have led Bangladesh to stall on implementing the pipeline agreement with India and Myanmar. It remains to be seen whether Indian diplomacy, along with Chinese pressure, can soften the junta.

### **Conditioning Factors**

External pressure from the US, EU and UN contributed to India's partial and gradual shift from status quo to normative goals and means. However perhaps more important has been China's gradual shift under international pressure, easing India's own move. Although China twice

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<sup>34</sup> See BIMSTEC's website (<http://www.bimstec.org/>).

<sup>35</sup> See [http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Foreign\\_Policy/FP\\_1998/myanmar\\_fp1998.html](http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Foreign_Policy/FP_1998/myanmar_fp1998.html)

<sup>36</sup> "India, Myanmar Set to Increase Military, Energy Cooperation" (<http://www.india-defence.com/reports-2772>).

<sup>37</sup> See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7085292.stm>

<sup>38</sup> "Suu Kyi meets NLD colleagues" (<http://www.newsdesspecial.co.uk/2007/11/suu-kyi-meets-n.html>).

<sup>39</sup> "Myanmar Opposition asks Junta for Aung San Suu Kyi Meeting", *Agence-France Press*, 18 January 2008 (<http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/storypage.aspx?StoryId=106031>).



vetoed Security Council attempts to impose sanctions on Myanmar, the Chinese government began to discreetly meet dissidents linked to the NLD in 2006-07, condemned the military crackdown and demanded that the junta “restore internal stability as soon as possible, properly handle issues and actively promote national reconciliation” (Spencer, 2007). As India’s *realpolitik* goals had been formulated in response to China’s growing strategic presence in Myanmar, the Chinese shift meant that India had less to lose from adopting normative goals and means. At the same time, China’s resistance to international pressure on Myanmar, which blocked efforts to put sanctions and a timetable for democratic reforms on the ASEAN agenda in November 2007, has also limited the impact of any normative actions by India. India fears stronger action will bring back the situation of 1988-98, when China consolidated Myanmar within its sphere of influence.

Turning to internal factors, India’s inclination was to pursue normative policy towards Myanmar, but *realpolitik* circumstances, both external and internal, led India to adopt status quo goals and means. Domestic outcry at the 2007 crackdown, when the Myanmar dissidents were headline television news for a month, fuelled by Burmese refugees in India, made clear that there was popular support for an Indian shift in a normative direction.

## **2.8 Status Quo Unintended: The EU-India Strategic Partnership, 2004-07**

### ***Status Quo to Normative Goals***

Despite the fact that India entered a ‘Strategic Partnership’ with the EU in 2004, which was followed by the launch of a Joint Action Plan in 2005, India’s goals are to replicate at the EU institutional level the country’s strong bilateral relations with several EU member states. While EU goals in the strategic partnership have stressed India as a rising power, citing its newly warm relations with the US, its growing relations with China and its Look East policy as reasons for multilateral cooperation with India, especially for peace and stability in South Asia (European Commission, 2004), Indian analysts concluded that the EU’s failure to achieve a Common Security and Foreign Policy made a substantive policy partnership unlikely (Dasgupta, 2003). Moreover, many of them argued, the EU is “not willing to take political risks” with India (unlike the US), it will not put the EU-India partnership at the same level as that with China, and it tends to hyphenate India with Pakistan, though this impression is now fading (Jain, 2005, pp. 6-7). In essence, the EU relationship with India is that of a status quo power, in contrast to the US relationship which is that of a revisionist power, rewriting the rules in India’s favour (Mohan, 2006), a reference to the civil nuclear energy agreement.

European analysts had a more positive view of the relationship, but this too was in terms of its potential rather than practice (Cameron, et al., 2005). Up until 2006, progress was chiefly in space cooperation and to some extent in trade. Although on paper both sides reiterated that their cooperation goals were normative – shared values of democracy and pluralism, commitment to multilateralism, mutual areas of interest in South and West Asia (Government of India, 2004) – in practice there was little coordination on any of these goals.

In 2006 this situation began to change, with the EU gradually coordinating policy towards Nepal with India. By 2007, the partnership had developed to the point that the Joint Statement issued at the November 2007 EU-India Summit said that India and the EU “would preserve and promote peaceful uses of technology through forward looking approaches among countries committed to disarmament and non-proliferation”, rather coyly implying EU acceptance of the civil nuclear energy agreement. The Joint Statement emphasised an EU-India commitment to stabilisation and reconstruction in Afghanistan, an area of cooperation that the Indian government had suggested in 2004 in its “Response” to the EU proposal for a strategic

partnership (Government of India, 2004) but got little purchase due to troops-contributing countries' fears of a hostile Pakistani reaction. The Joint Statement also expressed shared views on the conflicts and/or peace processes in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Each region welcomed the other's inclusion in multilateral structures of which it was part, such as the Asia-Europe Meeting process and SAARC. And the two announced a slew of new collaborations to deal with climate change, such as research and development of alternative energy sources, including bio-fuels and solar energy.<sup>40</sup>

In other words, the goals of the partnership are moving from status quo to normative; a trend that was predicted given the normative self-perception of both regions, but also carries potential for collision between differing perceptions of normative versus "intrusive" behaviour (Abhyankar, 2003).

### **Status Quo Means**

The means that the EU and India used to develop their strategic partnership were chiefly governmental – from ministerial summits to diplomatic and administrative negotiations. Although parliamentary exchanges gathered some steam in 2006 and in March 2007, the European Parliament set up a Delegation for Relations with India,<sup>41</sup> a partner group still has to be set up by the Indian Parliament.

Of the implementing groups set up under the Joint Action Plan, the ones that have worked, in terms of moving to next steps, are in science and technology, alternative energy, bio-fuels, aviation, maritime matters and trade. The soft-power elements of the partnership – civil society and cultural exchanges and think tank round tables – have become marginal. The Civil Society Roundtable set up under the partnership is described in the Summit Statement of November 2007 as "a useful forum",<sup>42</sup> cultural exchanges consist of a small film festival and the think tank roundtables that were envisaged at the 2002 Summit met twice between 2003 and 2004 but were then dropped for unspecified reasons.

Hard-power elements were even more marginal: an India-EU security dialogue was set up only in 2006 though it was announced in 2005, and meets only once a year; the second dialogue was described as "a fruitful discussion on global and regional security issues, disarmament and non-proliferation", in other words nothing concrete. Consultations on terrorism are scheduled to resume in 2008 after a gap of three years,<sup>43</sup> although they were the first priority in the 2005 Summit Statement.<sup>44</sup>

By contrast the political statements on South Asia have grown more concrete – while generalised desire for peace and stability in the subcontinent was expressed in all the summit statements, it was only in the 2006 statement that India and the EU spelt out priority steps country by country, and the 2007 statement was even more concrete. On Myanmar, the 2007 Joint Statement called for dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and the ethnic groups, and support

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<sup>40</sup> India-EU Joint Statement, 30 November 2007 ([http://www.delind.ec.europa.eu/en/political\\_dialogue/summits/eighth/8\\_joint\\_statement.pdf](http://www.delind.ec.europa.eu/en/political_dialogue/summits/eighth/8_joint_statement.pdf)).

<sup>41</sup> "European Parliament keen on Lok Sabha ties", *Nerve News*, 13 June 2007 (<http://www.nerve.in/news:25350053868>).

<sup>42</sup> See India-EU Joint Action Plan – Implementation Report, presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> EU-India Summit, 30 November 2007 ([http://www.delind.ec.europa.eu/en/political\\_dialogue/summits/eighth/8\\_jap\\_imp-rep.pdf](http://www.delind.ec.europa.eu/en/political_dialogue/summits/eighth/8_jap_imp-rep.pdf)).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> "Political Declaration on the India-EU Strategic Partnership", 7 September 2005 ([http://www.delind.ec.europa.eu/en/political\\_dialogue/summits/sixth/political\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.delind.ec.europa.eu/en/political_dialogue/summits/sixth/political_declaration.pdf)).

for UN efforts, including the human rights Rapporteur; on Nepal and Bangladesh it urged early elections; on Sri Lanka it stressed a ‘credible’ devolution package and reiterated that there was no military solution; and on Pakistan briefly expressed the hope that stability and democracy would soon return. Despite this apparent policy convergence, joint action was only discussed in relation to Afghanistan “to continue cooperating and coordinating their efforts to impart greater strength to... a coherent and united international commitment”.<sup>45</sup>

However, the EU has used normative means to expand the partnership through its funding programmes, targeting university, media and think tank exchanges. The initiative has by and large been one-way: the Indian government has not targeted European universities, media and think tanks; some Indian analysts view EU development assistance as a projection of its soft power (Abhyankar, 2003).

### **Status Quo Results**

The partnership has yielded some soft-power benefits which will aid research and development, especially scientific and technological, in both regions. EU-India trade grew from €40 billion to €47 billion from 2005-06; the EU is India’s largest trading partner, though China is close behind. However, India is the EU’s ninth largest trading partner,<sup>46</sup> and accounts for only 1.4% of EU outflows.<sup>47</sup>

The two are converging in their political approaches to conflict and/or instability in South Asia, but whether this will result in joint policies and coordinated actions is an open question. As of now it appears likely that each will take independent policy action.

Nevertheless, the EU and India are building institutional ties at a number of different levels, which will strengthen the normative elements of the partnership over time. The problem is how much time – meetings are still relatively infrequent and interactions between EU and Indian officials are around one-twentieth of those with China (Jain, 2005). Despite their efforts, the EU is relatively unknown in India and India is known only in those member states with which it already had strong bilateral relations. In sum, EU-India relations will grow steadily but at a low profile; both hard- and soft-power elements of the strategic partnership could be replaced by research and development goals.

### **Conditioning Factors**

The EU-India strategic partnership is overshadowed by the India-US and India-China partnerships, both of which deal with issues of immediate and overweening interest for India. By contrast, although the EU is engaged in South Asia and its neighbours are a priority for India, India has little to gain from EU support, as the EU still has limited leverage in South Asia. However, the American and Chinese attention to India are what influenced the EU to seek a strategic partnership with India in the first place, and in the near term these *realpolitik* factors are likely to influence EU relations with India more than will the normative factors of pluralist democracy that both regions cite as shared characteristics. India’s approach is to use the EU’s competitive reaction to the US in its favour – Indian priorities being to gain scientific collaboration and ensure some freedom of labour movement.

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<sup>45</sup> India-EU Joint Statement, 30 November 2007, op. cit. p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> “EU-India Trade in Facts and Figures”, Brussels, 29 November 2007 ([http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2007/november/tradoc\\_136935.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2007/november/tradoc_136935.pdf)).

<sup>47</sup> “EU-India Trade in Facts and Figures”, Helsinki, 12 October 2006 ([http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/october/tradoc\\_130593.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/october/tradoc_130593.pdf)).

Internally India has yet to come to grips with the EU as an umbrella institution for European countries. Within India, EU member countries are more active diplomatically than the EU is. The EU erroneously sees this as a 'visibility' problem to be solved through better communication and people-to-people contacts, but most Europeans view themselves and are viewed as citizens of a particular European country rather than an overarching European Union. Until some balance is achieved between the EU and the member states, the EU will be seen more as a funding and trading organisation than as a strategic policy-maker.

### 3. Conclusion

What kind of a foreign policy actor is India? From the cases above, a mixed picture emerges, but certain general conclusions can be derived nevertheless.

The most important of these is that Indian policy-makers and a large proportion of its middle class of 250 million perceive the country as a rising power; moreover, this perception is shared by important international players, especially the US, EU and South-East Asian countries. For the first time since it became an independent country, India's leaders describe their new international weight as being based on growing economic clout rather than moral precepts or history (decolonisation). For the first time too, they seek to marry normative goals and behaviour to policies furthering the national interest, broadly defined as extending from traditional to human security for its citizens. Speaking at a think tank in 2007, Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon identified three key goals for India's foreign policy: "Firstly, ensuring a peaceful periphery; secondly, relations with the major powers; and, thirdly, issues of the future, namely food security, water, energy and environment".<sup>48</sup>

The means that he listed to pursue each goal were different. To build peace in the neighbourhood, India looks to create social partnerships, offer economic benefits such as zero tariffs for the poorer South Asian countries, support cross-border infrastructure and development projects, stress 'civilisational linkages' that grew from the ancient flow of people and ideas, and work for intra-regional trade through SAARC, ASEAN and the East Asia Summit. Significantly, Menon described the neighbourhood, as Saran did, in the same terms as Kautilya: "expanding circles of engagement, starting with the immediate neighbourhood, West Asia, Central Asia, South-east Asia and the Indian Ocean region".

There is, however, a slight elision of categories in this description. Looking at the cases discussed in this paper, there is a clear distinction between India's policies in South Asia and India's policies in East Asia. In South Asia, India has increasingly engaged in peace-making both with its neighbours (Pakistan) and between warring factions within its neighbours (Nepal). India has not been so proactive with the one South-East Asian country with which it shares a land border, Myanmar; and is proceeding gingerly in peace-making with its most powerful neighbour, China.

Indian policy-makers, therefore, perceive a greater threat to the country's security from instability in its South Asian neighbours, an assessment that the US and EU share. They also act with more confidence in seeking to resolve the threat, perhaps because South Asian countries share a common regional forum, SAARC (even though SAARC's mandate is restricted to economic cooperation). It is significant that Menon's speech was remarkably silent when it

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<sup>48</sup> Shri Shivshankar Menon, "The Challenges Ahead for India's Foreign Policy", Speech by the Indian Foreign Secretary at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, 10 April 2007 (<http://meaindia.nic.in/cgi-bin/db2www/meaxpsite/coverpage.d2w/coverpg?sec=ss&filename=speech/2007/04/11ss01.htm>).

came to the peace initiatives that India launched in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, indicating that the country's policy-makers are unwilling to 'talk up' their peacemaking capabilities, or include these in their doctrine of international relations. Whether this means that Indian policy-makers continue to have reservations about the scope of normative actions in international relations, as they did during the cold war, is an open question.

India's reservations during the cold war were related to upholding state sovereignty. Hence, while India was one of the UN's largest troops' contributors, it sent troops only under the UN mantle. The only exception was the Indian peacekeeping mission to Sri Lanka in 1980, which resulted in a stalemate and withdrawal; as a result, the initiative did not result in expanding India's peacekeeping tenets. Today, the situation is different. India's sovereignty is not under question; and India's non-normative behaviour in Sikkim is unlikely to be repeated. India's peace initiatives with Pakistan and in Nepal have been sufficiently sustained to indicate that India is being proactively normative in its behaviour with its neighbours. With India having joined the UN Peace-Building Commission, the inclusion of peacemaking capabilities in its foreign policy doctrine is likely to occur in the coming decade.

Turning to the broader Asian neighbourhood, the first striking point is that India's Look East policy indicates a new departure for India, a focus on maritime interests. India has found it easier to develop strong relations with its neighbours at sea than with its land neighbours, and these successes have entered Indian doctrine. Today Indian policy-makers see India "at the confluence of two seas", to use the words of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Indian ruler, Dara Shikoh, and India's Navy is involved in an increasing number of multilateral exercises to improve maritime security.<sup>49</sup>

India's Look East policy has clearly been the primary impetus to India's recent economic growth and has deepened strategic relations with the major powers, whom Menon listed as the US, EU, Japan, Russia and China (in that order). India-US strategic cooperation was founded on maritime security in South-East Asia and the Indian Ocean, as was India-Japan strategic cooperation, and the former was accompanied by a rapid rise in trade. Up until 2005 the US was India's largest trading partner, with a trade volume of \$32 billion that year. The US has now been outstripped as a trading partner by the EU and China, but arguably it was the India-US strategic partnership that prompted the India-EU and India-China partnerships, both of which gained substance only after they took off. Menon tellingly commented that the India-US partnership had a "positive effect... on our dealings with the rest of the world" (Menon, 2007).

That said, India's goals in partnering with the Great Powers were quite different from India's goals with Asia; they were, in Menon's words, "access to markets, high technology and resources crucial to our future economic growth and development". While Indian goals thus mix *realpolitik* and normative elements, the means that India has used are by and large within the normative framework of international law (the EU-India and India-Japan strategic partnerships). But they have also on occasion sought to alter or expand international law (the US-India civil nuclear energy agreement). At the same time, India is developing institutional partnerships, for example between space, technology, defence and agricultural agencies (the EU and US), as well as through membership of regional forums (the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit).

If these points indicate that India is beginning to expand as a normative foreign policy actor and has been able to bring some depth to its normative behaviour as a rising power, it is also worth noting that Indian policy-makers have encountered a surprising obstacle to achieving some of their goals, in particular the civil nuclear energy agreement – domestic political opposition. This

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<sup>49</sup> Cited by Shinzo Abe (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>).

casts doubt on whether there is internal consensus or even clarity on what constitutes the national interest. Similarly, India's China policy appears to be timid to the point of subordinating one strand of national interest, settling border disputes on normative principles and retaining the right to deal normatively with regional issues (Tibet and Taiwan), to another strand of national interest, trade and relations in South-East and East Asia, where China dominates.

These factors indicate that India might remain a rising rather than established power for a longer time than it would take if the country's political parties had an overarching and non-partisan conception of the national interest. This is unlikely to affect India's behaviour as a normative foreign policy actor, although it will dent policy-maker confidence and could mean that India's ability to be effective in its actions will be curtailed. Much depends on how well the India-EU and India-US partnerships develop on the one hand, and how steadily India's Look East policy progresses on the other hand. The potential is good: each set of relationships is based on a strong foundation of goodwill, little strategic competition and diaspora ties. The India-China relationship is more complicated and lacks the foundation that the other three have, but it too could improve as the other three progress.

In short, India is steadily becoming a more influential as well as normative foreign policy actor, despite domestic confusion, and this trend is set to grow over the coming decade.

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