

## **CONTENTS**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Strategic culture and a variety of its interpretations</b>                | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Double reading the Indian symbolic discourse</b>                          | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>I –The Grotian roots of Indian strategic thought</b>                      | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Does India have a strategic culture?</b>                                  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Six schools of thought and three traditions of international theory</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| <b>First reading - the rationalist discourse of Nehruvianism</b>             | <b>12</b> |
| <b>II –Reinterpreting Indian strategic thought</b>                           | <b>15</b> |
| <b>Context and early origins of Pakistan’s strategic culture</b>             | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Second reading: Looking at Nehruvianism through the Kautilyan glasses</b> | <b>19</b> |
| <b>Conclusion</b>  | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Notes and References</b>  | <b>22</b> |

## THE DYNAMICS OF INDIAN GRAND STRATEGY

# READING THE SYMBOLIC DISCOURSE OF INDIA'S STRATEGIC CULTURE

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### **Introduction**

Most studies of grand strategies invariably commence with an attempt at defining the term “grand strategy”, and then proceed to ask whether a certain country even has a grand strategy; from there, the analysis often meanders into the past to locate the historical influences on the construction of a particular strategic thought and finally takes account of the prevalent strategic environment or the existing realities that temper the thought into strategic behaviour. This is a reasonable scheme, although fraught with the complication that grand strategy being a “social construct” is subject to differing interpretations depending on the level and nature of “socialization” of the interpreter with its various dimensions.

Just to give a demonstration of the first point, here is how a prominent historian tackles the issue: “*We might begin our examination of the issues involved in grand strategy with an effort to describe what we mean by the term.*”<sup>1</sup> Professor Murray concludes that a clear and satisfactory definition of grand

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strategy is difficult to formulate due to the complexity and uncertainty of historical dynamics involved in its making. And more importantly, it also requires an appreciation of the present — besides a deep understanding of the past — and a willingness to think about the future in terms of the objectives of the political unit being examined.”<sup>2</sup> Barry Posen has tried to simplify the matter by defining it in terms of “means and ends” which is the general perspective that goes with the term “strategy”, i.e. by defining it as a “*collection of military, economic, and political means and ends with which a state attempts to achieve security.*”<sup>3</sup> And more concisely: “*A grand strategy is a nation-state’s theory about how to produce security for itself.*”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the editors of a recent book on India’s grand strategy start by defining the grand strategy as “*the combination of national resources and capabilities — military, diplomatic, political, economic, cultural and moral — that are deployed in the service of national security.*”<sup>5</sup> This, one may note, is quite similar to Posen’s conception of grand strategy and only a slight variation on Basil Liddel Hart’s original definition that uses the term war instead of national security. Nonetheless, the point is that whether a theory, a concept or a positive guide for action, grand strategy is a social construct which means that it is more prudent to attempt to observe it in terms of its effects rather than trying to trace its origins to some centralized document. Although sometimes it is equated with national security strategy, and sometimes the grandeur of the term imposes restraint on modest analysts,<sup>6</sup> the concept, as Professor Murray has explained above, remains esoteric.

This is also one of the reasons why the second step as described in the beginning is often necessitated. Whether or not a country has a grand strategy at all is often a subject of intense debate even in case of superpowers like the United States. Consider for example, Robert D. Kaplan lamenting the absence of long-term thinking in American foreign policy. Drawing comparisons with the grand strategy of the Roman Empire, Kaplan writes: “*America must, therefore,*

*contemplate a grand strategy that seeks to restore its position from something akin to Rome's third system to its second; or to its first.*"<sup>7</sup> Similar doubts over the existence of grand strategy have been raised in the case of China as well with proliferation of titles like "China's Quest for Grand Strategy"<sup>8</sup> or "Is China a Status Quo Power?"<sup>9</sup> In the case of India, misgivings also abound, with entire volumes dedicated to attempts at resolution of the mystery.<sup>10</sup>

### **Strategic culture and a variety of its interpretations**

The difficulty of multiple interpretations forces one to ask the following question: what exactly is one interpreting when analysing the grand strategy. Certainly, there is some empirical evidence to consider like military modernization, analysis of the strategic environment, statements of the leaders, doctrinal declarations etc. But these, one may argue, may only reflect a response to the immediate strategic environment or components of the operational strategy rather than a reflection of a long-term ideational commitment rooted in past experience. This brings to the fore the question of strategic culture, strategic thought or strategic predisposition in consideration of grand strategy. Alastair Iain Johnston has investigated the link between strategic culture and strategic behaviour. Johnston argues that contrary to the conventional view, the strategic culture approach is not incompatible with limited forms of rationality that inform strategic choice by narrowing down the strategic options through invocation of historical choices and analogies. However, the approach does not support the instrumental rationality embedded in neorealism which relies on a historical and non-cultural methods of rational choice theory and ignore the burden imposed by the past in favour of utility maximization.<sup>11</sup>

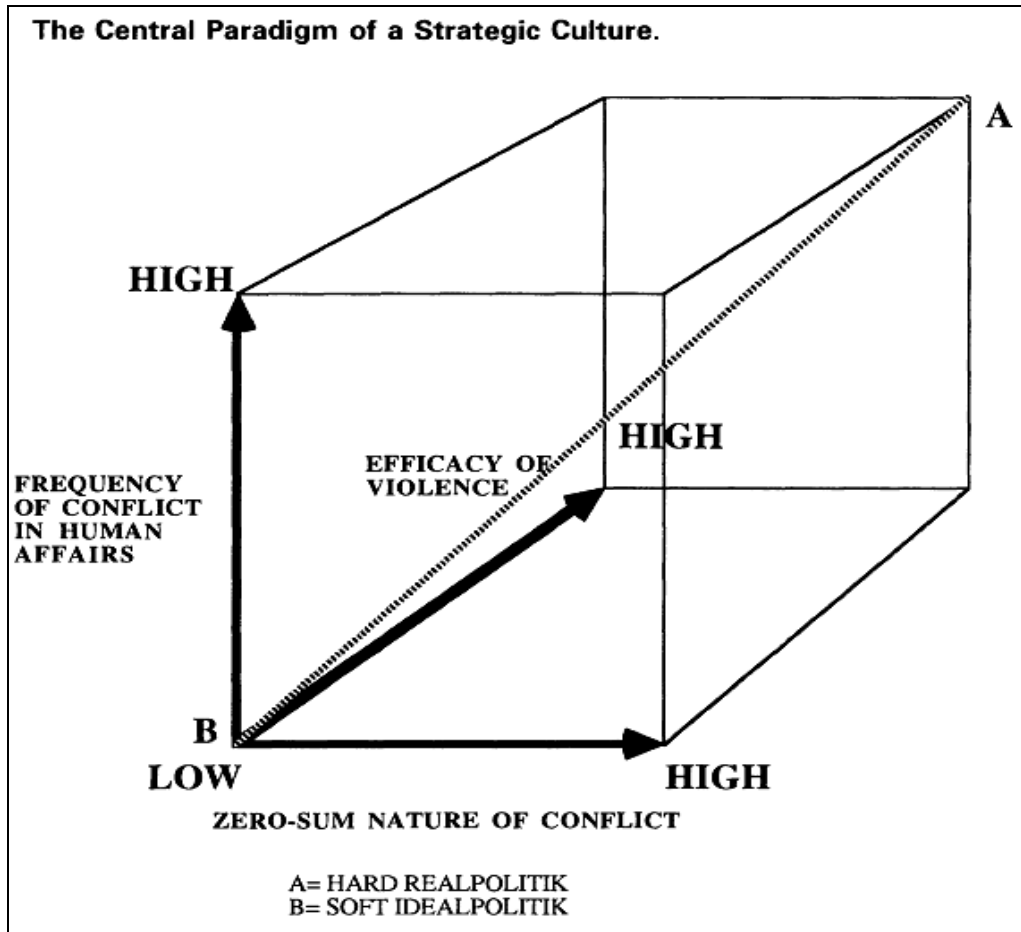
And as already discussed above, grand strategy is not about instrumental rationality, but it is also not just about the strategic culture or the ideas derived from a consideration of the past. Johnston cautions that a symbolic discourse

(strategic culture) may or may not have any causal implication on strategic choice or operational doctrine. Johnston further argues that strategic culture is an ideational variable or a “*system of symbols (argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious.*”<sup>12</sup>

Strategic culture, according to Johnston, consists of two parts: the first deals with larger questions of a more philosophical kind that help define strategic environment through deep engagement with historical sources. These inquiries may be pursued to obtain answer to questions like the role of war in human affairs, the gradation that can help distinguish different adversaries (enemy, rival, foe etc.) and the utility associated with the use of force as deduced from historical experiences. This is the “central paradigm” or “symbolic discourse” of the strategic culture and its modes of inquiry, one may note, can only be pursued by the actors who are socialized in the key precepts of the symbolic discourse. The second part or the “operational discourse” flows from the central paradigm and deals with “ranked strategic options” at the operational level. The above range of ranked strategic preferences can be *realpolitik* oriented, i.e. offensive and dealing with zero-sum threats at the higher end of the three variables of central paradigm or these could be *idealpolitik* at the accommodationist end (see fig 1).<sup>13</sup> Thus here Johnston links the symbolic set with the strategic behaviour and provides a holistic definition of grand strategy as interpreted through the lens of strategic culture.

This brings us to the problem at hand and also the central premise of this paper. What Johnston has not discussed is that grand strategy or rather the interpretation of it elicits response, especially from those who are a feature of its centralizing discourse, i.e. the adversaries who are the objects of these ranked

strategic preferences and who are the part of the strategic environment being interpreted. These actors are socialized in a different set of cultural assumptions, which form the main theoretical framework for the interpretation of the opponent's strategic culture. And as Karl Popper has argued, observations are made under a "horizon of expectations" which acts as a frame of reference, and attains meaning only within this (theoretical) setting.<sup>14</sup> Same can be argued for interpretations that they are made under a previously formed frame of reference. And if that is the case, then a symbolic discourse will be interpreted differently by a different set of actors in a different society based on their own set of strategic cultural assumptions.



**Fig-1:** The Central Paradigm of a Strategic Culture [from Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 47]

### **Double reading the Indian symbolic discourse**

Based on the above premise, this paper asks the question that how India's strategic culture or strategic predispositions are interpreted by Pakistan? To answer the question, it will attempt to examine the dominant symbolic discourse of India's strategic culture as interpreted by Pakistan under its own set of dominant strategic cultural assumptions. This will be done through deconstruction of the discourse by double reading, once under the Indian assumptions and the second time under the Pakistani assumptions. Double reading is a post-structural textual strategy in which the first reading is a faithful reproduction of the dominant discourse through its original set of argumentation to see how it has achieved stabilization. The text or discourse, Jaques Derrida argues, can never achieve full coherence as it has always and invariably resorted to cover-ups and exclusions which are the target of the second reading. The aim is to understand how the discourse is put together and always threatened with its undoing, not to reach any conclusion about its veracity or accuracy. Both versions of the discourse exist simultaneously and in perpetual tension.<sup>15</sup>

### **I –The Grotian roots of Indian strategic thought**

This paper focuses on the "central paradigm" or the "symbolic discourse" of the dominant Indian strategic culture and will not concern itself with the "ranked strategic preferences" which in essence do not form part of the discourse. It will not attempt to construct the discourse through consideration of historical cultural artefacts, but will restrict itself to identifying the dominant strategic culture from among the multiplicity of coexisting Indian cultures that form part of the main Indian strategic discourse; as Johnston has identified, a number of cultures can coexist though "*there is usually one dominant culture whose holders*

*are interested in preserving the status quo.*"<sup>16</sup> Thus the main problem here is to identify the dominant culture, and the only judgement that will be made about a particular culture will be whether it is on the *realpolitik* or the *ideapolitik* end of Johnston's continuum.

### **Does India have a strategic culture?**

First though, one may like to run through with the argument on whether India has a discernible tradition of strategic thought or not, as many observers have leaned towards the latter view. George Tanham argues that India due to the lack of political unity over the greater part of its history, the Hindu conception of eternal time that divests it of its importance and a fatalist view of life has been unable to forge a tradition or culture of coherent strategic thought. Maurya and Gupta empires provided the only instances of indigenous political unity and they too failed to congeal India into a modern nation state. The individual Indian states have never formed a collective stance towards foreign invaders, implying that there has never been a sense of the Indian subcontinent as a single political entity. The British developed a strategy for defence of India over the years but Indians were not part of that strategic process. Indians consider Hinduism as the primary basis of political unity but cultural unity cannot substitute for political unity.<sup>17</sup>

One could argue over these assertions a little further and through a longer gaze at history to ascertain how valid are Tanham's arguments. The dissimilar trajectory of political evolution of China and India is often a subject of much historical debate with China emerging as a unified empire at the end of the Spring and the Autumn (770-476 BC), and the Warring States (476-221 BC) periods. China's political evolution as a unified empire so early in its history is often cited as the main reason for its rich strategic tradition which implies that state formation and state building or in aggregate the evolution of the political order in a society plays a major role in the development of its political thought. Or one



may sum up the relation between political order and grand strategy as: “how a state is formed is how it theorizes about its security”.

Francis Fukuyama argues that the political order is constituted of three main institutions that include the *state*, the *rule of law* and the *accountable government* and that a successful modern liberal democracy combines all three in a stable balance.<sup>18</sup> Comparing the case of China and India, Fukuyama further argues that both China and India evolved from tribal to state level societies at around the same time, but around twenty-five hundred years ago, the Indian trajectory deviated from that of China due to the rise of the Brahmanic religion which limited the power of the political community and was in a sense responsible for modern Indian democracy. Religion, Fukuyama has consistently argued, is the major source of the evolution of the institution of the rule of law.<sup>19</sup> In its development from tribal to state level society, India did not pass through a five-hundred-year period of sustained and intense warfare as China did. Indian states did fight with each other but not to the bitter end as in the case of China, and thus there was not an intense pressure to develop modern state level institutions. The Mauryas united the subcontinent to a large extent but could not fully consolidate their rule over core areas, and thus lasted only 136 years. The Mauryan feat was replicated again only at the birth of modern India in 1947.<sup>20</sup>

Thus the birth of China in warfare and the birth of modern India through a political struggle is the point and the counterpoint to historian Charles Tilly’s observation: “how war made states and how states made war.”<sup>21</sup> Fukuyama further points out that the effect of Brahmanic dominance in India during its formative and later years was such that unlike China, the elites became custodians of ritual and social power instead of economic and coercive power, thus putting a check on the limits of political power of the political elite, subordinating the warrior class such as the Kshatriyas to the Brahmins and effectively putting an institutional constraint on their war-making proclivities.<sup>22</sup> Without further

belabouring the point, here one can decisively disagree with Tanham and argue that strategic culture is not just derived from the institution of state but from the entire gamut of political order that is to say the *rule of law* and the *accountable government*, in addition to state formation. In this sense, India does have a strategic culture though it is rooted less in the institution of warfare and more in the institution of the rule of law. And this is what explains the dominance of a strategic culture and identifying most closely with this line of thinking is *Nehruvianism*.

### **Six schools of thought and three traditions of international theory**

One can argue like Johnston has done that a multiplicity of strategic cultures can coexist in a society along the continuum of *realpolitik* to *idealpolitik*. And although Johnston has not indicated it, yet arguably the thought is more elaborately expressed in the work of Martin Wight. Wight, taking a sweeping view of the international relations theory, argued that the principal ideas could be categorized under the three philosophical traditions, i.e. *Realists*, *Rationalists* and *Revolutionists* and these three traditions could be related to three political conditions such as that of anarchy, international institutionalization among the sovereign states (international society as understood today), and a commonwealth of nations or a world society.<sup>23</sup> Wight further contends that the three traditions are not mutually exclusive as they influence, change and affect each other, and as they interact losing their pure inner identity. And thus there has been over the past two centuries, tendencies like the erosion of rationalism by revolutionism, of rationalism by realism and of realism by revolutionism. One can say that there has been a confluence or convergence of the three traditions with overlapping concepts from one infiltrating the other.<sup>24</sup> This is a useful analytical framework, especially in case of multicultural, heterogeneous and pluralist polities like India where multiple perspectives are more likely to coexist than in more homogeneous

or authoritarian polities. Nonetheless, even through this interaction, convergence and confluence, one should be able to identify the dominant strain or proclivity.

Before discussing the six identified schools of Indian strategic thought, one may note a glaring tendency among the Indian writers who explicate on strategic matters. And that is the consistent short shrift given to Kautilya's work *Arthashastra* in contradiction to the (erroneous) belief that it is somehow a central paradigm of Indian strategic thought. Bajpai et al. feel that *Arthashastra* does not have the status of canonical bible in Indian strategic thought that is perceived to be.<sup>25</sup> This matter will be taken up during the *second reading*. For now, one may focus on the six schools identified in the same volume referred above, and try to locate the rationalist origins of the predominant discourse that is *Nehruvianism*.

Bajpai et al contend that in Modern India, there are three major and three minor schools that reflect the Indian grand strategic thought with certain differences and certain similarities on foreign policy issues. The three major schools are Nehruvianism, Neoliberalism and Hyperrealism while the minor schools include Marxism, Hindutva and Gandhianism. Nehruvianism is focused on the importance of communication and negotiation to tackle security issues while Neoliberalism concerns itself with exploration of free trade and market economy as a means of dealing with the external world. Hyperrealists view the world through the lens of power and believe in mediating external rivalries through the use and threat of use of the military instrument. Of the three minor schools, Hindutva is the most important as it has lately aligned with the hyperrealists in adopting a hard line approach to external relations. But what is of more concern, more so for India than the external powers, is its similar stance towards the cultural and religious diversity which forms the core of Indian national narrative. Gandhianism remains a useful but not very powerful influence in the foreign policy domain; nonetheless its founding and core principles are substantially aligned with Nehruvianism though they have not formed part of the

external dynamics being of a revolutionist nature. Marxism also remains a peripheral influence in external relations.<sup>26</sup>

Casting these schools of strategic thought in terms of Wight's distinction, one may note that Hyperrealists are clearly Hobbesians (realists) while Marxists and Gandhians are clearly revolutionists. Hindutva is a universalizing ideology thus having revolutionist strains but with a significant infiltration of Hobbesian component. Neoliberals have a major revolutionist strain which is somewhat moderated by rationalism, while Nehruvians are mainly rationalists (in the Groatian sense) with strands of revolutionism as well as realism. Nehruvianism is the founding tradition of India and though substantially diluted over the years due to changing strategic environment, it has nonetheless retained its influence in the strategic discourse to the extent that it serves as a referent for the deviants. And despite Hindutva's claims to the centralizing power of Hinduism in forging political unity, it can be argued as Fukuyama has demonstrated that Hinduism has never exercised that power. And in fact the weight of history, as far as Brahmanic institutional influence in forging a strong tradition of the *rule of law* is concerned, is also in favour of Nehruvianism. Thus it represents the middle ground in Indian grand strategic thinking and remains the most influential strategic culture despite quite forceful argumentation in recent years against its core precepts.

### **First reading — the rationalist discourse of Nehruvianism**

As already explained, this paper is concerned only with the symbolic discourse or the central paradigm of the dominant Indian strategic culture, not its operational set. Therefore, no doctrinal aspects will be discussed here. Only the key elements of the centralizing discourse that is the triad indicated by Johnston that includes the *place of warfare in human affairs*, the *nature of enemy* and the *efficacy of violence* will be faithfully reproduced as required by the strategy of

deconstruction and contextualized against the claims of rationalism made above in this paper.

Fortunately the task is made simpler since the first part of the analysis has been adequately handled by Kanti Bajpai in his 2003 essay, “Indian Strategic Culture.”<sup>27</sup> Bajpai argues that Nehruvians believe in the possibility of peace among states through communication and better understanding, however, the prospects of war in an anarchic international realm remain a possibility in certain cases which obliges the states to remain prepared for such eventualities. The effects of anarchy may be attenuated through effective recourse to the precepts of international law, international institutions, exercising restraint, diplomacy, interaction among societies and solidarity with citizens of other societies. Nehruvians display little faith in the institution of the balance of power feeling that it is bound to break down, as well as resort to overt militarism due to the futility and debilitating effects of arms races on the material well being of societies.<sup>28</sup>

As regards the questions pertaining to the central paradigm of the Nehruvian strategic culture, Bajpai contends that for Nehruvians, war is a reluctant choice, one that is and will be made as an action of last resort. Violence exists in the minds and it is from minds that it has to be eradicated. Even when it occurs, Nehruvians believe, it can be limited and the best way to avoid its occurrence is through inter-state dialogue. As to the question of the nature of enemy, Nehruvians respond that enmity is not permanent but rather a result of ideological moorings to which the adversarial leadership attaches itself in order to justify their claim to leadership. Adversary elites actively engage in propaganda and rhetoric to delude the ordinary masses who are otherwise not interested in continuing relationships of hatred. Thus communication, people-to-people contact and friendship at the societal level can help eradicate many misgivings that are

usually cultivated by the elites who are interested only in perpetuating their own privileged position in society.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, government-to-government contacts are also a vital part of the communication paradigm that Nehruvians recommend, as they help reduce misunderstandings. Another way of reducing tensions among adversaries and enhancing cooperation among friends is through the use of the good offices of international organizations as that helps promote understanding through the institutional mechanisms of the international society. To the question of utility of the use of force, Nehruvians are convinced that extensive use or threat of use of force is counterproductive in the settlement of inter-state disputes and rivalries, which must be settled through negotiations and institutions as a first resort. Thus maintaining large forces is, in the end, not to anyone's interest as they sap vital resources which can otherwise be employed for the welfare of people.<sup>30</sup>

How faithfully does the Nehruvian discourse follow the rationalist tradition of international relations? Wight describes rationalists as those who value the import of international intercourse under the condition of anarchy. Clearly, Nehruvians meet this fundamental condition. This is opposed to the revolutionists who believe in the primacy of an international moral community or a world society (as opposed to the international society of the rationalists that advocates adherence to its norms and values) such that it takes precedence over motives of individual states. Thus the rationalists as well as the Nehruvians are internationalists as opposed to the revolutionists who are cosmopolitans. Another important difference is that the rationalists do not have universalist pretensions whereas the revolutionists intend to overcome the international anarchy through adherence to a uniform moral code. Clearly again, on that count as well Nehruvians are rationalists rather than idealists as often they have been accused of. The rationalism of the Rationalist doctrine is not contextualized in terms of the instrumental rationality which focuses on maximizing expected utility, but it

rather reflects the epistemological compromise over Cartesian rationalism that privileged pure reason as a source of knowledge without recourse to sensory experience, Lockean and Humean empiricism that accords primacy to the sensory experience and the Groatian understanding of international law that accepts both the principles of natural law as well as the customary law (as found in custom and treaty). Thus they truly represent a middle ground between the Hobbesians and the revolutionists. On this count as well, the Nehruvian discourse with its emphasis on international institutions and treaties is quite close to the rationalist tradition. Wight argues that figures like Grotius, Locke and the founding fathers of the American revolution were all rationalists in the sense that he has described the term, as were Tocqueville, Abraham Lincoln and the United Nations.<sup>31</sup> Nehruvianism, on most accounts, can also be thus identified with the rationalist tradition lying between the *realpolitik* and *idealpolitik* extremes of the Johnstonian continuum.

## **II –Reinterpreting Indian strategic thought**

This section will look at the rationalist discourse of Nehruvianism through the lens of previously formed expectations of another actor, which in essence implies a double interpretation, or an interpretation of the meaning accorded to the term by the first interpreter. It will look at how Pakistan interprets the discourse of Indian strategic culture, in this case Nehruvianism, under the burden of its own past.

### **Context and early origins of Pakistan’s strategic culture**

Perhaps nothing captures the Pakistani dilemma better than Thucydides writing of the Athenian ambassadors’ address to the Lacedaemonians: “*overcome by three of the greatest things, honour, fear, and profit, we have both accepted the dominion delivered us and refuse again to surrender it, we have therein done nothing to be wondered at, nor beside the manner of men. Nor have we been the*

*first in this kind, but it hath been ever a thing fixed for the weaker to be kept under by the stronger.*”<sup>32</sup> For Pakistan, this could be Indians pontificating about the realities of power.

Ali Ahmed, writing on the Pakistan dimension of Indian strategic culture, argues that the Indian discourse has leaned towards the *realpolitik* end of Johnston’s continuum over the last four decades, thus exacerbating Pakistan’s security dilemma. This gives legitimacy to Pakistan’s actions rooted in the logic of Hobbesian fear.<sup>33</sup> Ahmed is clearly arguing from the operational level of Johnston’s paradigm but at the same time he attributes the adoption of this realist posture to a shift in symbolic discourse from the left (espoused by Nehruvianism or even Marxists) to the political right due to the rise of cultural nationalism and its alignment with the realists.<sup>34</sup> Ahmed also believes that the early dominance of Nehruvianism has gradually given way to the realist discourse through the rising influence of Hindutva Philosophy, and before that to some extent through “Indira Doctrine.”<sup>35</sup> Ahmed’s prescription for India is to revert to the moderating discourse of Nehruvianism in order to deprive Pakistan’s influential military of its domination of the political discourse legitimized through stoking of the Indian problem.<sup>36</sup>

The analysis above leads to two important conclusions. First, Ahmed’s use of Nehruvianism as a point of reference and comparison for all other schools of thought confirms the pride of place Nehruvianism enjoys within the spectrum of Indian strategic culture — a point earlier raised in this essay. And second, arguments such as above are always based on an underlying presumption: that Pakistan’s strategic culture is unmistakably Hobbesian. Similar arguments pointing to the Indian origins of Pakistan’s realist discourse are also frequently deployed by numerous Pakistani scholars. For instance Hasan Askari Rizvi, writing on the subject of Pakistan’s strategic culture, argues that Pakistan’s security policy is dominated by concerns over Indian agenda for regional



dominance and that Pakistani policymakers believe that an Indo-centric South Asian security model is detrimental for regional peace which is one of the most important pillars of Pakistan's security policy to accord the highest priority to defence needs.<sup>37</sup>

One can broadly agree with both Ali Ahmed and Rizvi's conclusions though with an important caveat. And that caveat relates to the presumed context and origins of Pakistan's Hobbesian discourse to be lying in India's turn to realism and quest for regional dominance. One can argue that these could be valid observations that may have served to reinforce the original discourse but do not form the basis of Pakistan's *realpolitik* strategic culture. Pakistan's case in fact offers minimal challenge to any analyst tasked with determining the weight of history in evolution of its strategic culture, because Pakistan made a deliberate choice to be unburdened by the long history of the Indian subcontinent. Pakistan was thus born an ideal type *self help unit* of the Waltzian world, a *tabula rasa* (though one with a DNA) waiting to be written on by its experience in the world of anarchy.

The question of DNA may be resolved by turning once again to Ali Ahmed who has argued that in case of India, "Hindutva" philosophy has influenced its strategic culture through "*creation of an out-group in the form of an external other, namely, Pakistan.*"<sup>38</sup> Without disputing this conclusion, one can argue that Pakistan's founding philosophy in its divorce of history and its consistent use by its military in legitimating its dominant position in policymaking, has deeply impacted the symbolic discourse of its strategic culture through the creation of an out-group, namely, Hindus (and by extension India), while India's later turn to realism has only exacerbated this original proclivity.

The privileged position enjoyed by the military in Pakistan's external policymaking (and many would argue its society as well) has, in aggregate, led to an institutional imbalance of a kind that has gradually turned the state into what

Samuel P. Huntington calls a praetorian polity. Huntington has argued that a praetorian polity is one in which the level of political participation is far in excess of its institutional capacity to handle it due to weak institutionalization and where “patterns of political participation oscillate violently between the two extremes of *democracy and dictatorship*.”<sup>39</sup> Huntington contends that in terms of institutionalization, India was possibly the best prepared for self-government among those states that attained independence after the Second World War. While in countries like Pakistan and Sudan, the military had strong incentive to fill in the vacuum caused by the gap between the relatively high institutional capacity of the military (and civil) bureaucracy and the poorly equipped political parties.<sup>40</sup> Thus one may contend that this militarist strain in the Pakistani DNA was always prone to push it towards the Hobbesian end of the cultural continuum, and arguably this has played some part, however small it may be, in diluting Nehruvianism in India.

### **Second reading: Looking at Nehruvianism through the Kautilyan glasses**

Having established Pakistan’s Hobbesian credentials in their original context, one may now turn to interpret Nehruvianism through its assumptions. The central narrative of Pakistan’s strategic culture is relatively easy to formulate in terms of its three framing queries that is the *frequency of conflict in human affairs*, the *nature of enemy* and the *utility of violence* in the resolution of conflicts. An acceptance of the unpleasant nature of the world and the acknowledgment especially after some harrowing experiences, like for instance in 1971, that life is indeed “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”, Pakistan is not averse to violent conflict in pursuit of what its policymakers describe as *survival in the face of daunting challenges*. It does not shy away from initiating the conflict as in 1948, 1965 and 1999 and more importantly, does not rule out any possible means, for instance irregular forces or lately nuclear weapons, in pursuit of the above indicated objective. Similarly, the nature of enemy is not in question

as the Pakistani DNA makes it a zero sum equation. India is and will continue to remain for Pakistan the *sum of all its fears*. And violence as well as balance of power remain the prime arbiters of Pakistan's dealings with its "Other."

Nehruvianism, from this perspective, is merely a ruse, and the Kautilyan perspective that many Indian writers assiduously ignore, although it assumes the pride of place in Pakistan's interpretation of Indian strategic culture. Kautilya's six-fold policy comprising several common sense realist maxims on administration of an empire and conditions of peace and war, and especially the *Double Policy* that advocates avoiding too many enemies by *making peace with one and waging war with another*, is an evidence of India's duplicity. Interestingly, though Pakistan's alliance making with China and the use of asymmetric tactics are more reflective of this Chankyan maxim. Bharat Karnad has described the Pak-China alliance reflective of certain Chankyan proclivities on the part of Pakistan. For instance he argues that Pakistan's 1963 border agreement with China ceding important territory in northern Kashmir to China is well in line with "*Adistra Sandhi*" (or trading land for peace).<sup>41</sup>

Kautilya's foreign policy theory emphasizes on augmentation of power, obliteration of the enemy, prudence over emotion, enlisting the help of friends, preference of peace over war and just behaviour in victory as well as in defeat.<sup>42</sup> The six methods of foreign policy include: *Samdhi* or making peace through concluding treaties; *Vigraha* or undertaking hostilities; *Yana* or preparing for war; *Asana* or staying quiet; *Samsaraya* or seeking protection of a stronger king that can be compared favourably with bandwagoning; and *Dvaidhibhava* or pursuing peace with one neighbour to pursue rivalry with another in a way that is similar to balancing.<sup>43</sup>

Looked at through this lens, the Nehruvian perspective on the question of *frequency of war* or war being an instrument of last resort is either *Yana* or *Asana* in preparation for *Vigraha*. And the Nehruvian assumption regarding the

impermanence of enmity is either *Samsarya* or *Dvaidhibhava*. On the matter of the utility of the use of force, Nehruvians advocate that extensive use or threat of use of force is counterproductive in the settlement of inter-state disputes and rivalries, which must be settled through negotiations and institutions as a first resort. Through the Kautilyan glasses this is nothing but *Samdhi* especially at a time of weakness, and biding time in this manner whereas the real objective remains the obliteration of Pakistan through use of alternate strategies.

## **Conclusion**

This essay has attempted to articulate the respective central paradigms of dominant Indian and Pakistani strategic cultures within the theoretical framework given by Alastair Iain Johnston. It does so, however, through an alternate perspective based on the post-structural premise that the symbolic discourse of a strategic culture is open to a variety of interpretations. The aim was to uncover the underlying exclusions and tensions in the dominant Indian grand strategic premise by subjecting it to a rival interpretation. It has been seen how the weight of history shapes the interpretive perspective of respective actors in imparting meaning to the discourse of culture. And although the essay is not intended to offer a prescriptive framework for either India or Pakistan, yet in the end one may digress from this general framework ever so slightly to contend that in case of Pakistan, removing the Kautilyan glasses can go a long way in securing a more durable and peaceful security order in South Asia.

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