

# *Scholarship on India's International Relations: Some Disciplinary Shortcomings*

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*An assessment of scholarship on India's International Relations (IIR) shows some significant weaknesses. At the global level, the discipline has not kept pace with rising interest in India. There is an appreciable degree of theoretical content in IIR, but it is relatively narrow in range. At the Asian level, interest in IIR is weak and, with exceptions, lacks engagement with theory as well as breadth of scope. In India, the discipline exhibits a wider spread but low-level theoretical content and relative isolation. Taken as a whole, the field needs greater creativity, theoretical depth and breadth of scope. The article concludes with a brief assessment of the reasons for these shortcomings and identifies the pathway to develop IR in India as a more vibrant discipline.*

**Keywords:** India, International Relations, research

For anyone who has been in the field for even a short while, it is hardly a revelation that the state of International Relations (IR) in India leaves much to be desired. This article seeks to argue that disciplinary weakness pervades all writings on IIR issues in different ways. At the global level, there is some analytical depth, though not enough, while the focus of research is excessively narrow. At the Asian level, there is insufficient depth and range. Finally, in India, the academic net is more widely cast, but there is inadequate theoretical rigour. The main concern of this article is to assess the quality of the disciplinary subfield of IR in India. It also explores the degree of serious international and Indian interest in IIR and its range, depth and innovativeness. The article is based on a review of the literature on IIR in high quality journals, which are in the forefront with respect to quality of work in any area of academic enterprise. It does not survey books on IIR for reasons of

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manageability, but that is defensible because most high quality research and writing that appears in books is foreshadowed by the central ideas appearing in journals.<sup>1</sup>

The next section of the article undertakes an empirical study to answer four key questions. First, does scholarly interest in India reflect rising media, public and policy interest abroad? Second, is there a balanced distribution of research among the key sub-fields of IR? Third, what does the level of theoretical content tell us about the state of the discipline today? And fourth, to what extent have Indians gained entry into the highest levels of scholarship outside the country? Comparable aspects of the discipline in India are also assessed. In the subsequent section, I engage in a more difficult and certainly debatable exercise of gauging the quality of scholarship both inside and outside India. I identify the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the work done so far in three major subfields of IR most common in the literature. In the concluding section, I summarize the findings of the study, account for the shortcomings identified, and briefly address the task of infusing creativity and vitality into the discipline.

### **IR Studies on India: An Empirical Picture**

#### *Global Level*

This study begins with a statistical account of research articles on India from ten major international journals at the global level. The journals are drawn from a list of the top ‘high-impact’ IR journals—a citation-based ranking published by Thomson Scientific (Journal Citation Reports 2007). The ten journals cited here are, in order of rank, *International Organization*, *International Security*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Foreign Affairs*, *World Politics*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Affairs*, *Marine Policy*, *Journal of Peace Research and Washington Quarterly*.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1 looks at the proportion of articles on IIR. The time frame of 36 years is divided into two equal periods, 1973–90 (Period-I or P-I) and 1991–2008 (Period-II or P-II). While there is always an element of arbitrariness in fixing cut-off dates, in this case, the periodization has been decided by the following considerations: (i) availability of a sufficient number of journals over a fairly long time frame; (ii) equal distribution of the two time periods; and (iii) identification of 1991 as a watershed year, when India began attracting the world’s attention with its economic liberalization and accelerated economic growth—a year which coincided with the end of the Cold War.

<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, this does tolerate a drawback, for Indian scholars tend to focus much more on books than on IR journals, most of which are published abroad and difficult to penetrate. For a dataset encompassing both books and journals, but over a shorter time span, see Sharman (2008).

<sup>2</sup> *Marine Policy* is classified as an IR journal and does incorporate a significant number of articles on environmental and other maritime issues that most ‘mainstream’ scholars tend to neglect.

**Table 1**  
**Distribution of Articles on India (World, High-Impact Journals), 1973–2008**

<i>Journal</i>	<i>Impact Ranking, 2007</i>	<i>Articles on India, 1973–90 [P-I]</i>	<i>Articles on India, 1991–2008 [P-II]</i>	<i>% change</i>
1. <i>International Organization</i>	1	3	0	-100
2. <i>International Security</i> (From 1976)	1	5	13	160
3. <i>Journal of Conflict Resolution</i>	3	6	3	-50
4. <i>Foreign Affairs</i>	5	7	21	200
5. <i>World Politics</i>	6	5	3	-40
6. <i>International Studies Quarterly</i>	7	1	1	—
7. <i>International Affairs</i>	11	2	5	150
8. <i>Marine Policy</i>	13	—	3	—
9. <i>Journal of Peace Research</i>	16	6	7	16.67
10. <i>Washington Quarterly</i> (from 1982)	21	2	31	1450
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>37</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>135.14</b>

**Source:** Author's calculations.

The table shows a significant increase (135.14 per cent) in the number of articles on India from P-I to P-II. But this is largely confined to four journals: *Washington Quarterly* (1,450 per cent), *Foreign Affairs* (200 per cent), *International Security* (160 per cent) and *International Affairs* (150 per cent). Of these, three are geared towards policy makers and the fourth, *International Security*, while strongly theoretical, tends to focus on current policy-relevant issues. Of the remaining journals, which are oriented towards the discipline of IR rather than directly to policy, only one—*Journal of Peace Research*—shows a slight increase in the number of articles on India. The rest show either no change or a decline. This means that top-level scholarship among academics has not kept pace with the changes on the ground, which have sparked increased interest in India on the part of policy makers and the media.

Table 2 looks at the distribution of articles in the above journals by topic. The topics are divided into five categories: Nuclear, Other Hard Security issues, Foreign Policy, Economic Relations and Non-IR (i.e., domestic politics) issues—the last one is included to show how it compares with IR issues. In P-I, the distribution across topics is fairly even, with the largest being ‘Foreign Policy’ and ‘Non-IR’ issues and the smallest being Economic Relations. In P-II, two sets of IR Issues—Foreign Policy and Nuclear—show a spurt, as do Non-IR Issues. While ‘Other Hard Security Issues’ show a marginal increase, it is puzzling to find a decline of interest in Economic Relations when India has embarked on the trajectory of a rising economic and military power. This indicates that the discipline tends to be somewhat narrow in its focus, leaving significant spaces in IR such as international political economy (IPE) to more specialized journals. Given the close linkage between economic power and strategic issues, there is clearly a cause for concern about an enterprise that prides itself on being inter-disciplinary.

There is also a rather high concentration on Nuclear Issues. Of all IR issues, these account for 20.69 per cent in P-I and 28.07 per cent in P-II. The surge in papers on Nuclear Issues in P-II is not altogether surprising since it reflects a major area of global interest compounded by periodic India–Pakistan crises under the nuclear shadow. But juxtaposed with the declining interest in economic issues, it draws attention to a distortion in the discipline, at least where IIR is concerned.

It is useful to examine the theoretical content of the papers on IIR because the level of theoretical work, which demands a high degree of rigour, reflects the fundamental strengths of any discipline. Table 3 shows the distribution between non-theory-driven papers (policy-oriented or simply descriptive-analytical) and theory-driven papers. The proportions for the entire period (P-I + P-II) seem reasonable, with one-third being theory-driven. Interestingly though, there is a significant decline in theory-driven papers from 46.67 per cent in P-I to only 27.27 per cent in P-II. Here again, there is a cause for concern. The content of the output in P-II is skewed in favour of policy, largely owing to a sharp increase in P-II by *Washington Quarterly*, which is a policy-focused journal. To be fair, if we

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Articles by Topic (World, High-Impact Journals), 1973–2008**

<i>Journal</i>	<i>Nuclear Issues</i>	<i>Other Hard Security Issues</i>	<i>Foreign Policy Issues</i>	<i>Economic Relations</i>	<i>Non-IR Issues</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>International Organization-I</i>	1	-	-	1	-	2
<i>International Organization-II</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>International Security-I</i>	4	-	1	-	-	5
<i>International Security-II</i>	11	-	-	-	2	13
(from 1976; incomplete)						
<i>Journal of Conflict Resolution-I</i>	-	5	-	-	1	6
<i>Journal of Conflict Resolution-II</i>	-	2	-	-	1	3
<i>Foreign Affairs-I</i>	-	-	3	-	4	7
<i>Foreign Affairs-II</i>	3	2	7	1	6	19
<i>World Politics-I</i>	1	-	-	2	2	5
<i>World Politics-II</i>	-	-	-	1	2	3
<i>International Studies Quarterly-I</i>	-	-	1	-	-	1
<i>International Studies Quarterly-II</i>	-	-	1	-	-	1
<i>International Affairs-I</i>	-	-	2	-	-	2
<i>International Affairs-II</i>	1	-	2	-	2	5
<i>Marine Policy-I</i>	-	-	-	-	3	3
<i>Marine Policy-II</i>	-	-	-	-	2	2
<i>Journal of Peace Research-I</i>	-	5	1	-	-	6
<i>Journal of Peace Research-II</i>	1	3	1	-	2	7
<i>Washington Quarterly-I</i>	-	-	1	1	-	2
<i>Washington Quarterly-II</i>	-	5	16	-	10	31
Total-I	6	10	9	4	10	39
Total-II	16	12	27	2	27	84
GRAND TOTAL	22	22	36	6	37	123

**Source:** Author's calculations.

**Table 3**  
**Content: Non-theory-driven v/s Theory-driven (World, High-Impact Journals), 1973–2008**

<i>Journal</i>	<i>Non-theory-driven</i>	<i>Theory-driven</i>
<i>International Organization-I</i>	2	1
<i>International Organization-II</i>	–	–
<i>International Security-I</i>	5	–
<i>International Security-II</i>	6	7
<i>Journal of Conflict Resolution-I</i>	–	6
<i>Journal of Conflict Resolution-II</i>	–	3
<i>World Politics-I</i>	1	4
<i>World Politics-II</i>	1	2
<i>International Studies Quarterly-I</i>	1	–
<i>International Studies Quarterly-II</i>	–	1
<i>International Affairs-I</i>	2	–
<i>International Affairs-II</i>	4	1
<i>Marine Policy-I</i>	–	–
<i>Marine Policy-II</i>	3	–
<i>Journal of Peace Research-I</i>	3	3
<i>Journal of Peace Research-II</i>	3	4
<i>Washington Quarterly-I</i>	2	–
<i>Washington Quarterly-II</i>	31	–
Total-I	16	14
Total-II	48	18
GRAND TOTAL	64	32

**Source:** Author's calculations.

**Notes:** Non-theory-driven as %.

Period-I: 53.33

Period-II: 72.73

Total (I+II): 66.67

Theory-driven as %

Period-I: 46.67

Period-II: 27.27

Total (I+II): 33.33

take into account only the peer-reviewed journals, the theoretical content has increased from 47.83 per cent in P-I to 56.67 per cent in P-II. Thus, while the overall output at the highest global level has grown in spite of a decline in theoretical content, the peer-reviewed journals, though remaining stagnant, have shown some increase in theoretical depth. However, as will be seen, this depth is offset by a degree of conceptual lethargy.

Table 4 shows the distribution of authors by their origin. The authors are divided into three categories by location and ethnicity: (1) non-Indians; (2) ethnic Indians settled abroad; and (3) Indians residing in India. Authorship for each article is counted as a maximum of 1, so that for papers written by more than one individual,

**Table 4**  
**Distribution of Authors by Location and Ethnicity**  
**(World, High-Impact Journals), 1973–2008**

	<i>Non-Indian</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Indian Origin Located Outside India</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Indian Origin Located in India</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Total for the Period</i>
P-I	22.75	61.49	8.75	23.65	5.50	14.86	37.00
P-II	41.50	43.68	40.50	42.63	13.00	13.68	95.00
Total (P-I+P-II)	64.25	48.67	49.25	37.31	18.50	14.02	132.00

**Source:** Author's calculations.

**Note:** In columns c and d, no distinction is made between Indian and non-Indian citizens.

the weightage is apportioned equally among the authors. The table shows non-Indian authors as predominant in P-I (61.49 per cent); however, despite such significant increase in numbers, their proportion to the total has declined significantly to 43.68 per cent in P-II. The contribution by authors of Indian origin living outside India increased sharply (by 362.86 per cent). As a proportion of the total for each period, their percentage increased from 23.65 per cent in P-I to 42.63 per cent in P-II. This highlights the rising presence of persons of Indian origin in the field of India-related IR, with much of the input coming from the United States (US) through the journals published there. It complements the broader evidence of the growing profile of the Indian diaspora, especially in the US. The number of Indian authors based in India has grown two-fold, but this has a small base. As a percentage of the total, it has actually declined from 14.86 per cent to 13.68 per cent. Given the rising wealth of the country and the growing role of the middle class, this stagnation is significant.

#### *Asian Level*

Table 5 shows the distribution of articles on India among the Asian journals. The number of IR journals with an Asia-wide focus is quite small. Of these, many are of recent origin and cannot be used in a longitudinal study. A much shorter ten-year time span (1999–2008) is adopted to accommodate seven journals. As in the previous section, this is divided into two equal time periods for the purpose of gauging the trends, with P-III extending from 1999 to 2003 and P-IV from 2004 to 2008. The journals surveyed are *Asian Affairs*, *Asian Survey*, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Pacific Affairs* and *Southeast Asian Affairs*. Journals that are published in India or India/South Asia-specific are excluded from this portion of the study and are examined separately because they represent an Indo-centric output.

**Table 5**  
**Distribution of Scholarly Articles on India (Major Asian Journals), 1999–2008**

Journals	P-III: 1999–2003	P-IV: 2004–08	% Change
<i>Asian Affairs</i>	9	6	–33.33
<i>Asian Survey</i>	35	22	–37.14
<i>Australian Journal of International Affairs</i>	3	3	–
<i>Contemporary Southeast Asia</i>	1	4	300
<i>Journal of Contemporary Asia</i>	9	1	–88.88
<i>Pacific Affairs</i>	6	3	–50
<i>Southeast Asian Affairs</i>	1	2	100
Total	64	41	–35.94

**Source:** Author's calculations.

Overall, there is a marked drop in interest in India between P-III and P-IV (–35.94 per cent), with four out of the seven journals registering a decline, notably *Asian Survey* (–37.14 per cent), which published more than half the papers on India in both periods (54.69 per cent in P-III and 53.66 per cent in P-IV). The two journals *Contemporary Southeast Asia* and *Southeast Asian Affairs*, which have recorded a growth, do so from a very low base of one each during P-III. The overall decline in the number of published articles on India in Asia is surprising. One would expect a higher level of interest owing to geographical proximity and the more immediate geopolitical impact of the growth of Indian economic and military power. This is clearly an area that needs to be investigated.

The distribution of articles by topic is given in Table 6. Here, the distribution is quite different from that of the global-level journals. The largest number of papers is in non-IR issues (54.69 per cent in P-III and 53.66 per cent in P-IV). Among IR issues, the proportion of papers on Nuclear Issues is again high (48.28 per cent in P-III; 21.05 per cent in P-IV). Notably, all of the papers on Nuclear Issues are published in journals based in the US, Australia and Canada. Their strong interest in nuclear topics is not unexpected since P-III was the period of the 1998 tests and the India–Pakistan crises of 1999 and 2001–02. But precisely for the same reason, it is remarkable that not a single article on nuclear issues relating to India has appeared in any other Asia-focused journal. Thus, we find that Asian journals are either deeply interested in nuclear issues related to India or not at all. What they do have in common is a distinctly low level of interest in other IR issues.

With regard to the distribution of non-theory-driven and theory-driven articles, Table 7 shows a pattern that is highly skewed in favour of the former. Only one journal, *Asian Survey*, carries articles on India that are theory-driven. The rest have none at all. In all fairness, however, it must be acknowledged that newer journals, which are not included here, such as *Asian Security*, do have theoretically informed articles on India. As percentages, the theory-driven papers constitute



**Table 6**  
**Distribution of Articles by Topic (Major Asian Journals), 1999–2008**

<i>Journal</i>	<i>Nuclear Issues</i>	<i>Other Hard Security Issues</i>	<i>Foreign Policy Issues</i>	<i>Economic Relations</i>	<i>Non-IR Issues</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Asian Affairs-I</i>	–	–	3	–	6	9
<i>Asian Affairs-II</i>	–	–	–	–	6	6
<i>Asian Survey-I</i>	11	1	3	3	17	35
<i>Asian Survey-II</i>	2	–	6	–	14	22
<i>Australian Journal of International Affairs-I</i>	3	–	–	–	–	3
<i>Australian Journal of International Affairs-II</i>	1	–	1	1	–	3
<i>Contemporary Southeast Asia-I</i>	–	–	1	–	–	1
<i>Contemporary Southeast Asia-II</i>	–	1	3	–	–	4
<i>Journal of Contemporary Asia-I</i>	–	–	–	1	8	9
<i>Journal of Contemporary Asia-II</i>	–	–	–	1	–	1
<i>Pacific Affairs-I</i>	–	1	1	–	4	6
<i>Pacific Affairs-II</i>	1	–	–	–	2	3
<i>Southeast Asian Affairs-I</i>	–	1	–	–	–	1
<i>Southeast Asian Affairs-II</i>	–	1	–	1	–	2
<b>Total P-I</b>	14	3	8	4	35	64
<b>Total P-II</b>	4	2	10	3	22	41
<b>Grand Total</b>	18	5	18	7	57	105

**Source:** Author's calculations.

**Table 7**  
**Content: Non-theory-driven v/s Theory-driven (Major Asian Journals), 1999–2008**

<i>Journal</i>	<i>Non-theory-driven</i>	<i>Theory-driven</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Asian Affairs-I</i>	4	–	4
<i>Asian Affairs-II</i>	6	–	6
<i>Asian Survey-I</i>	27	8	35
<i>Asian Survey-II</i>	18	4	22
<i>Australian Journal of International Affairs-I</i>	3	–	3
<i>Australian Journal of International Affairs-II</i>	3	–	3
<i>Contemporary Southeast Asia-I</i>	1	–	1
<i>Contemporary Southeast Asia-II</i>	4	–	4
<i>Journal of Contemporary Asia-I</i>	9	–	9
<i>Journal of Contemporary Asia-II</i>	1	–	1
<i>Pacific Affairs-I</i>	6	–	6
<i>Pacific Affairs-II</i>	3	–	3
<i>Southeast Asian Affairs-I</i>	1	–	1
<i>Southeast Asian Affairs-II</i>	2	–	2
Total P-I	51	8	59
Total P-II	37	4	41
Grand Total-P-I + P-II	88	12	100

**Source:** Author's calculations.

**Notes:** Non-theory-driven as %.

Period-I: 86.44

Period-II: 90.24

Total (I+II): 88.00

Theory-driven as %

Period-I: 13.56

Period-II: 9.76

Total (I+II): 12.00

only 13.56 per cent in P-III and 12.00 per cent in P-IV. This is a much lower proportion than is the case at the global level. Even in *Asian Survey*, the proportion is still small (22.86 per cent in P-III and 18.18 per cent in P-IV) compared to the average at the global level. It reflects not only the generally low interest in theory in Asia that is endemic in India as well, but also a general theoretical frailty on India-related IR topics since many non-Asians write in these journals.

Table 8 shows the distribution of authors in Asian journals. Non-Indian authors constitute the largest category in both periods (44.78 per cent in P-III, 48.24 per cent in P-IV), followed by individuals of Indian ethnicity settled abroad (40.30 per cent in P-III, 32.48 per cent in P-IV), with Indians at home trailing well behind (14.93 per cent in P-III, 19.29 per cent in P-IV). There is a noticeable, though relatively small, fall in the second category, and a corresponding rise in the third, though in the latter the Indians remain remarkably few in number. Once again, scholars in India do not show much penetration of the academic world outside

**Table 8**  
*Distribution of Authors by Location and Ethnicity (Major Asian Journals), 1999–2008*

	<i>Non-Indian</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Indian Origin Located Outside India</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Indian Origin Located in India</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Total</i>
Period-I	30.00	44.78	27.00	40.30	10.00	14.93	67.00
Period-II	18.33	48.24	12.33	32.48	7.33	19.29	38.00
Total (I+II)	48.33	46.03	39.33	37.46	17.33	16.50	105.00

**Source:** Author's calculations.

their country. This reflects the low level of interest that scholars in other countries appear to have in India. Undoubtedly, it is also the consequence of the weaknesses identified earlier in IR in India.

#### *Indian and India-centric Journals*

Journals in this category are comparable to the preceding ones only in a limited way. First, the proportion of articles on India obviously does not apply owing to the nature of the focus of the publications. Second, most of the authors are from India, especially for the Indian publications. Third, these journals are too few for comparative purposes: there are only three Indian journals strong in IR—*International Studies*, *South Asian Survey* and *Strategic Analysis*, apart from *India Review*, which is published in the US. The UK-based *Contemporary South Asia* has a low IR content of about 30 per cent. Only two—*International Studies* and *Strategic Analysis*—have a fairly long publication history. However, these journals are comparable with those at the other levels in two respects, i.e., distribution of topics and theoretical content.

The range of topics covered in all of them is wide. For instance, during 2001–08 only 25.07 per cent of the articles published in *Strategic Analysis*, which is often viewed as a hard security journal, focused on hard security.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, 57 per cent of the content in *International Studies* focuses on the category of 'Other' IR issues, i.e., excluding nuclear, other hard security and foreign policy issues.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, and in distinct contrast with global level journals, the number of articles on nuclear issues in the three Indian IR journals is relatively small. During 2001–08, the proportion of papers on the subject in these three journals was just 2.5 per cent, 10.45 per cent and 10.79 per cent respectively.<sup>5</sup> The last is quite

<sup>3</sup> Calculated by the author.

<sup>4</sup> Calculated by the author.

<sup>5</sup> Calculated by the author. To obtain a wider perspective, book reviews were also included in the count.

remarkable for a journal with its home in a think tank that focuses on strategic issues and is funded by India's Ministry of Defence.

With regard to theoretical content, it is fairly substantial in all the journals, though *International Studies* is the only publication which carries a significant number of articles directly addressing issues in IR theory. *India Review* represents a valuable addition to the literature on IIR because of its spotlighting of Indian issues, its inter-disciplinary focus and its encouragement of historical and theoretical content. It leans somewhat towards traditional security: nuclear issues comprise 17.54 per cent of its content and other hard security issues 31.58 per cent, totalling 49.12 per cent during 2002–08.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, its coverage of political, economic and social issues (31.58 per cent) is sufficient to give it a balanced look on the whole. Thus, in comparison with the literature on IIR in other categories, the content here is more broad-based and also displays a significant degree of theoretical interest.

### **The State of the Discipline: A Review of Three Major Segments**

This section examines three of the four major IR subfields identified in Tables 2 and 6. The analysis is confined to the nuclear, other hard security and foreign policy issues. The articles on economic relations are too few to be judged as a category in comparison with the first three. First the major themes covered under each category are highlighted and the literature on India assessed in relation to the broader literature on the same theme. Second, the areas in which innovative or particularly insightful research is being done are identified. Finally, the overall strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the literature are assessed, and attention drawn to key issues that call for closer scholarly attention.

Here, I have not confined myself to the journals mentioned in the preceding section. Rather, I sifted through a much wider range of works, again restricted to journal publications, in order to make a qualitative assessment. Given the large number and wide range of writings on India-related IR, this involved a degree of arbitrariness in selection, but I tried to cast my net as wide as possible. The time frame is restricted to 1999–2008, which to my mind is reasonable in sketching a broad contemporary picture.

#### *Nuclear Issues*

The global literature on nuclear issues covers a wide array of topics and approaches. Chief among the topics addressed are arms control, arms race, command and control issues, crisis dynamics and management, deterrence, missile defence,

<sup>6</sup> Calculated by the author.

proliferation (with a heavy concentration in this area), and the nature of the post-Cold War nuclear order. Despite the general decline in interest in issues relating to nuclear relationships, there are innovative efforts to advance our understanding of how crises develop through the use of poliheuristic theory and prospect theory (DeRouen and Sprecher 2004; Haas 2001). Deterrence still attracts a few analyses based on game theory and quantitative data sets, but there is also an effort to venture into new areas such as the relationship between deterrence and evolutionary psychology and deterrence by the weak of the strong (Smith 2003; Thayer 2007). The increasing influence of the constructivist approach is also reflected in the literature (Tannenwald 2005).

In contrast, studies on India or India-related nuclear topics are narrower in scope and less innovative. Comparative studies are rare: there is little effort by scholars to assess, for instance, the dynamics of the India–Pakistan relationship from the broader perspective of general patterns observable among nuclear rivals.<sup>7</sup> There are few efforts to go beyond standard strategic analysis to engage in theoretically informed exploration in the nuclear context.<sup>8</sup> Two areas of concentration can be identified. One is the question of stability/instability, with much scholarship focused on recurrent India–Pakistan crises and the related issue of limited war under the nuclear shadow (Ganguly 2008; Kapur 2008; Khan 2003; Rajagopalan 2005; Sagan 2001). Another is the India–US nuclear agreement, which generated intense debate (Ganguly and Mistry 2006; Luongo and Williams 2009; Mian and Ramana 2005; Mistry 2006; Potter 2005).

Some of the work is clearly of high quality. The debate over the India–US nuclear agreement has produced a wide range of policy-relevant work that has dissected virtually every aspect of the subject across its strategic, political and economic dimensions. Also relevant to policy, but with greater theoretical content, is the stability/instability debate, which examines in some depth the key questions such as the viability of limited war and the efficacy of coercive diplomacy (Ganguly and Kraig 2005; Tarapore 2005). Some interesting work appears in the form of studies relating to specific issues such as nuclear accidents, subcritical testing and the physical consequences of nuclear accidents and nuclear war (Batcher 2004; Mian, Ramana and Rajaraman 2001; Rajen 2003). There is also some theoretical work in a collection of articles published by *India Review* on deterrence and IR theory (Sridharan 2005).

The major weaknesses in the literature are: (1) a tendency to lean heavily on Western, especially American, Cold War discourse on the basic concepts of deterrence despite the enormous difference in the practice of deterrence (in arsenal

<sup>7</sup> For an exception, see Rajagopalan 2000. This is dated just before our period of review, but is worth mentioning because of its exceptional value. See also Basur 2007/08.

<sup>8</sup> Two exceptions are Basur (2001) and Das (2003).

size, sophistication and posture) between its Cold War and contemporary South Asian theatres; (2) a narrow framing of many of the debates—notably in the stability/instability and the nuclear deal issues—in proliferation terms, which hampers a comparative understanding of the conduct of nuclear politics generally; (3) the relative shallowness of the theoretical content of the debate with respect to comparative perspectives and theoretical depth, such as the remarkable absence of a study of India and China, which have very similar nuclear doctrines and postures; and (4) the paucity of in-depth studies on such issues as arms races, escalation, missile defence and disarmament—a surprisingly neglected issue.

In sum, the range and depth of the scholarship in this area is limited and somewhat disappointing. Its strengths are largely in the area of policy relevance, but its narrowness inhibits disciplinary development. Cutting-edge works on the frontiers of the discipline are almost entirely absent. This is evident across the board in all three author categories. Some major questions and issues that have not been addressed call for attention. Why is it that when deterrence obtains at a minimal level, India's nuclear weapons development programme displays an expansionist bent? Why is there a Cold War type nuclear rivalry between India and Pakistan, but not between India and China? How does nuclear deterrence thinking influence the conceptualization of disarmament? Above all, IR in India needs to examine its own experience thoroughly and jettison the lens of American deterrence theory if it is to be truly productive.

#### *Other Hard Security Issues*

Here again, the range of topics is very wide at the global level and relatively narrow with respect to this category of writing on India. Common to both global and India-specific literatures are issues of force design, civil–military relations, the relationship between culture and security strategy, the phenomenon of enduring rivalry and various aspects of national security strategy.

There is an important difference with respect to the concept of power. In the global literature, considerable effort has gone into the study of power for decades and the subject continues to exercise the best minds (e.g., Goldstein 2007; Izumikawa 2007; Rathbun 2008). The comparable literature on India is thin in theoretical content, though there are notable exceptions (Ganguly and Pardesi 2007; Mistry 2004; Mitra 2001; Paul 2006; Raja Mohan 2006). For the most part, one finds straightforward general assessments of where India stands vis-à-vis the rest of the world and its capacity to influence or resist global structures and processes. That said, there is an array of thoughtful quality studies on such topics as borders, the Indian Ocean 'base race', national security formulation and military studies, covering the social composition of the Indian army, civil-military relations and the revolution in military affairs (Berlin 2004; Chandran and Rajamohan 2007; Coates 2008; Hilali 2001; Khalidi 2001/02; Staniland 2008). In contrast

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with the work on nuclear issues, the work on hard security issues is more encouraging in range. Much of this comes from the work done in India-based journals, notably *Strategic Analysis*. Region-specific scholarly journals located outside India, such as *Contemporary South Asia* and *India Review*, have provided some impetus to raising the level of scholarly output.

The analysis presented here has obvious limitations since its coverage is restricted to journals, but the increasing number of writings appearing on the Internet reflects a growing interest in these issues on the part of a rising number of experts within India. A research industry of sorts on military-strategic issues is thriving, thanks to the steadily rising output of think tanks such as the Centre for Air Power Studies, the Centre for Policy Research, the Centre for Security Analysis, the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies and the National Maritime Foundation. Their efforts will eventually produce a higher quality analysis in greater quantities, some of which will find its way into scholarly journals. But theoretical depth may remain a problem for the near future since the impetus for that has to come from academia. And there is not much sign of this happening. A number of issues deserve more attention. What are the likely operational implications of India's current military modernization programme and how will it impact on its neighbours, adjacent regions and the major powers? How does the nature of civil-military relations affect India's military planning and acquisition process? How do India's peacekeeping operations compare with that of other countries? These and other questions merit closer scrutiny.

### *Foreign Policy*

Like much of the global literature on foreign policy issues, the work on Indian foreign policy tends to concentrate on bilateral and multilateral relationships. The realist approach is predominant in both the sets. There is surprisingly little questioning or refashioning of this approach to hard security issues given the constraints on the exercise of military power among the major players today (Väyrynen 2006). While political leaders regularly reveal a degree of sensitivity to the increasing interdependence of the world around them, the same is not reflected in the academic literature. During 2001–08, studies on the India–Pakistan relationship are most frequent, accounting for a little over a third of the output. The ranking in frequency of appearance is India–Pakistan (35.85 per cent), India–US (18.18 per cent), India–China (16.67 per cent), which includes several articles comparing the two rather than exploring their relationship, India–Southeast Asia (7.58 per cent), and India–South Asia excluding Pakistan (6.57 per cent), followed by a host of others.<sup>9</sup> Russia, an old partner of India during the Cold War era, draws little scholarly interest. A remarkably low level of interest is also evident

<sup>9</sup> Calculated by the author from a wide range of Indian and non-Indian journal articles.

with regard to the Indian Ocean, the politics of trade policy, or international environmental issues. Little effort is made to engage with theoretical issues such as decision making.

When we look beyond the traditional bilateral approach, researchers' interests are quite wide and eclectic. There are a number of interesting articles on such diverse topics as the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy; identity and foreign policy; the apparent structural anomaly of 'reluctant hegemony'; and the comparative study of sets of countries, in which much attention is given to comparing India and China (Chulia 2002; Devotta 2003; Mehta 2007; Mitra 2003).<sup>10</sup> Yet, important questions remain poorly explored. For instance, while it has become routine to speak of India as the world's largest democracy, little work has been done on democratic peace theory or on the relationship between the patterns of India's democratic evolution and its external policies. An obvious question that has yet to be considered seriously in either policy-driven or non-policy-driven research is why India's military power was viewed with suspicion as far away as Australia in the 1980s, but is not so viewed today when the strategic reach of the Indian Navy is expanding much farther. How have India's historical experience and its strategic thought influenced policy making since independence? How has the evolution of India's domestic politics affected its foreign policy? Such questions remain buried in the morass of routine strategic analysis that pre-occupies scholars both outside and within India, though there are occasional forays into historical analysis and theoretical inquiry.<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusion

The article illustrates the relative weakness of the literature on IIR. Clearly, the weakness of the discipline is not attributable simply to a lack of adequate resources and infrastructure. The quality and quantity of research undertaken outside India is a pointer, since infrastructural problems are much less serious in the developed countries, which produce most of the global and Asian journals surveyed here. The study of Indian domestic politics is of a much higher standard than is the case with IIR.

The main findings in this article are as follows. At the global level, there is little interest in IIR in the highest intellectual circles other than in journals oriented towards the making of policy. This reveals a failure on the part of the global intellectual community to keep pace with, let alone stay ahead of and draw attention to, the changing structure of world politics. The problem is compounded by the narrow intellectual ambit of the work done. Even where there is a clear focus, as

<sup>10</sup> Some examples of comparative studies on India and China and/or others are Huang (2008); Hurrell (2006) and Wadhwa et al. (2007).

<sup>11</sup> For exceptions, see Jaffrelot (2003) and Sridharan (2006).



in nuclear issues, the range of work is restricted to just a few key policy-relevant issues and fails to engage intellectually with the wider ramifications of the subject with stronger and more varied analytical tools. Large areas remain unexplored in each of the three major fields covered, while large spaces relating to economic and environmental issues still await serious inquiry. Though there is theoretical engagement, there is little sign of theoretical creativity. The problem is more acute in all these respects at the Asian level. As regards IIR research output, it exhibits admirable width, but lacks rigour and depth. Overall, the core academic discipline of IR appears laggardly and inclined to stray far behind the media and those writing directly to influence policy.

The purpose of this article is to encourage introspection rather than embroil the discipline in sterile academic infighting. Clearly, there are some significant shortcomings that need attention. Why are we where we are, and what can we do about it? I raise only a few broad pointers. The dissatisfactory state of affairs may be explained as follows. First, global IR, a US-dominated discipline, reflects American policy interests (non proliferation) as well as an academic carryover from the Cold War era (expertise on nuclear issues). While change has indeed occurred in the discipline as a whole (the dominance of realism is receding) the same is yet to reach the study of IIR.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, the study of Indian politics in the US has declined just when there is increasing policy interest in the country and the region around it (Rubinoff 2006). A new generation of scholars now in the making may build a better discipline. Second, global and especially Asian interest in IIR is limited by the more evident focus on the next great power, China. Real strategic interest in India is only now beginning to grow following the accelerated growth of the Indian economy, the global shock of the Indian nuclear tests, and the signing of the India–US nuclear deal. Following a time lag, greater and wider interest in IIR may become evident. Third, as other articles in this Issue show, Indian academia has long been hampered by poor infrastructure and lack of competitive environment. This too is likely to change as the government has begun to focus on overhauling higher education and sharply raised its budgetary allocation (*The Hindu* 2009).

Yet, much remains to be done in more specific ways. Primarily, it is the responsibility of scholars themselves to become more creative. Those in developed countries with greater resources must give a thought to how to go about doing this, either by broadening their perspectives within their existing academic infrastructures or by creating fresh bodies that integrate India studies better with IR. Within India, the academic community needs to be galvanized. If there is a lesson to be learned from this brief exercise, it is that the infusion of resources is not enough. The creation of an international studies association will help create the kind of vibrant community of scholars that IR in India lacks. Priority should be given to

<sup>12</sup> On the recent liberal thrust of the discipline, see Walker and Morton (2005).

theory development, not only by engaging with existing paradigms but also by asking fundamental questions afresh and exploring Indian and other histories. While I do not advocate the notion of a uniquely Indian ‘way’ in IR, I do believe that IR in India as a discipline would benefit immensely if it were to be less an Indian variant of a US-dominated discipline. That requires both greater self-awareness and a closer understanding of the discipline as it is practised around the world. From a more immediate practical standpoint, it would be wise to focus on producing a new generation of doctoral graduates exposed to theoretical and methodological rigour, critical scholarship covering a wide landscape of issues, language skills, inter-disciplinary understanding and historical depth without neglecting policy relevance. An effort in this direction would mark the beginning of a self-generating process of creative scholarship in IR in India.

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