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Constructivism, identity and neoliberal (in)security

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Abstract. How do we understand the relationship between 'national security' and a global capitalist economy? I argue in this article that liberal constructivist scholars have tended to ignore the constitutive effects of the global economy in the process of distancing themselves from 'materialist ontologies' and 'rationalist epistemologies'. I contend that an important aspect of state identities is that they are dynamic and are historically constituted in and through a relationship to global capital. Only by paying close attention to this fluctuating terrain, can one make sense of the security practices of nation-states. In the latter half of the article, I illustrate my argument with an analysis of the Indian nuclear tests of 1998.

> The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom – and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy and free enterprise.
>
> *George W. Bush, 17 September, 2002*

> The concept of 'free trade' arose as a moral principle even before it became a pillar of economics. If you can make something that others value, you should be able to sell it to them. If others make something that you value, you should be able to buy it. This is real freedom, the freedom for a person – or a nation – to make a living.
>
> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002*

In September 2002, almost exactly a year after the attacks on the World Trade Center, the United States government released a much awaited document. Rather routinely entitled 'The National Security Strategy of the United States of America' (hereafter, the NSS), this spells out both the manner in which the Bush administration intends to secure the US, and the enemies that the US needs securing from. Not surprisingly, a consistent theme in the document is the notion that the nature of national security threats has changed dramatically. What is striking is that even in these changed times, part of the strategy of 'securing the nation' is one that various US governments have actively pursued since the end of World War II. As indicated in Section VI of the NSS,

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[1] I use the term 'neoliberalism' (in the title and throughout the article) to refer to the ideology that promotes liberalisation/deregulation of domestic economies and their greater integration with a 'global economy'.

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the United States remains committed to '[igniting] a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade'.[2] Reiterated through the document as an important way to ensure 'enhanced national security', this commitment seems to draw its strength from the 'decisive victory of the forces of freedom' – a not too subtle commentary on the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union.

The NSS document provides an extremely interesting and clear illustration of the manner in which questions regarding national security are closely interwoven with constant invocations of the desirability of a particular kind of global economy. This interweaving presents to IR scholars a question that has become sidelined in recent discussions in security studies: how are 'national security' and the global capitalist economy interrelated? Groups of scholars – particularly those subscribing to the traditions of neoliberal institutionalism and historical materialism – have in the past focused on variants of this question. However, they have treated the structure of the global economy as either making possible greater interdependence, and hence cooperation among nation-states, or ascribing certain structural positions ('core'/ 'periphery') that engender dependent relationships among nation-states. In both cases, the concept of state identity as dynamic, historically constructed structures of meanings that constitute both 'national security' and 'threats' gets overlooked.

In contrast, the recent constructivist turn in security studies has been largely responsible for opening up analytical space by focusing on questions of identity, such as what national security means, how those meanings have come about, the nature of the subject (the nation-state) that needs to be secured and the kind of threats it needs securing from.[3] By focusing on these questions, constructivists have argued convincingly for the need to understand state interests and identities – and consequently, security practices – as 'socially constructed'. However, in the process of emphasising the social construction of identities and interests, constructivists have generally tended to ignore the important constitutive role of the global economy. This overlooking is particularly puzzling because the collapse of the Soviet Union (usually treated as a transformative moment in security debates)[4] was also

[2] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, pp. 1, 17.

[3] Here I refer to a group of scholars who have identified themselves/ been identified as embodying a 'mainstream constructivist position' as against a more 'radical' or 'critical constructivist' one. Often hailed as embodying a 'liberal constructivist position', scholars who could be classified as belonging to this group have made their mark in the field of security studies. Apart from Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, who are most closely identified with the 'security communities' literature, this group would include scholars like Richard Price, Alexander Wendt, Peter Katzenstein, Thomas Risse-Kappen, Elizabeth Kier, and Martha Finnemore. In this article, I do not engage with feminist and post-structuralist scholars whose work has contributed immensely to the opening up of the security debates within IR. For an analysis of the differences between the 'mainstream' constructivist and more critical perspectives, see Richard Price and Chritian Reus-Smit**,** 'Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism', *European Journal of International Relations*, 4:3, pp. 259–94.

[4] For example, Ken Booth, 'Security and Emancipation', *Review of International Studies,*17 (1991), pp. 313–26; Barry Buzan, *People, States, Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in a Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd edn. (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1991); Ole Waever et al. *Identity, Immigration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (London: Pinter, 1993); David Campbell, *Writing Security* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson and Raymond Duvall (eds.), *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

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heralded as the triumph of a particular world order – a neoliberal economic one. Given that constructivist scholars have opened the doors for thinking about security in the context of a 'transnationalized'/'global' international system, how do we make sense of this disciplinary overlooking and what are its consequences?

I argue in this article that state identities, historically constituted in and through a relationship to global capital, are neither given nor stable. The rapidly expanding scope of neoliberalism – the 'spread of free markets and free trade' (variously described as economic liberalisation, economic restructuring or economic globalisation) – has serious implications for the nature and meanings of these shifting, historically constituted state identities. Only by paying close attention to this fluctuating terrain can one make sense of the security practices of nation-states. I further argue that making this analytical move entails going beyond the liberal constructivist turn in security studies.[5] Global economic processes have almost faded into the background of recent security discussions partly because of the manner in which constructivist scholars have sought to differentiate themselves from other schools of theorising – particularly neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. Distancing themselves from the positivist epistemologies and structural analyses of these schools, constructivists have tended to emphasise the 'cultural-institutional environment' within which political identities are constructed and projected. The trouble with this framing is that the 'cultural'/'social'/'normative' is more often than not posited as an explanatory variable that is distinct from material factors, including those that would be termed 'economic'. I argue that this implicit ontological distinction on which the constructivist analysis of security rests is problematic, especially in the context of an expanding neoliberal world order that is constitutive of the identity of its basic units – the nation-states. Given this, I argue that the one cannot make sense of national security policies without treating processes of neoliberalism as the inescapable grounds for such practices. In this article, I use the example of the Indian nuclear tests of May 1998 to illustrate my argument.

This article is divided into two parts. In the first part, I argue that their attempts to distance themselves from 'materialist ontologies' and 'rationalist explanations', have led liberal constructivists to ignore the important constitutive effects of the global economy on identity. This analytical blind-spot has serious consequences for their analysis of the security practices of states. I further argue that we cannot overcome this lack by merely going back to the theoretical traditions that have taken into account the structural importance of the global economy. I refer here specifically to the historical-materialist tradition, which falls into the trap of ascribing fixed positions to states in the context of a definite structural logic of the global economy. I acknowledge the important insight of this tradition that states occupy structural positions within a global capitalist economy. However, in order to truly make sense of security issues, it is necessary to focus not only on the production of a neoliberal

[5] In this article, I look mainly at the analytical shortcomings of liberal constructivism in security studies. In doing so, I do not directly address two very important schools of thought that have profoundly shaped the nature of security studies, that is, neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. Two examples of work within these traditions are: Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); and Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

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economic order, but also the manner in which the identities of nation-states themselves are [re]constituted by these processes.[6]

In the second part of the article, I use the notion of state identity shaped in the context of a neoliberal economic world order to analyse the Indian nuclear tests of 1998. Contrary to most International Relations (IR) analyses which have focused on the strategic rationale, or 'norm-violating' aspect of the event, I build on existing postcolonial scholarship to argue that we need to understand the Indian nuclear tests as a performance of Indian state identity. I further argue that one can make sense of this performance only by (a) understanding the modern Indian nation-state as having a specific postcolonial identity that was constituted in and through a particular relationship to global capital, and (b) contextualising it in the effects of the economic liberalisation programme of 1991 on India's postcolonial identity.

I

Constructing 'security'

In recent years, a rapidly expanding body of work identified as 'constructivist' (either by the scholars themselves or by their IR audience) has become quite visible in various subfields within the discipline of IR. The field of security studies is no exception. In this section, I will briefly discuss the liberal constructivist take on questions of security. In doing so, I will highlight two concepts – the idea of a 'cultural institutional context' and the analytical category of 'identity' –that form the crux of their intervention. I will argue that despite enabling an interesting critique of mainstream security studies, the constructivist analysis of security remains limited. I will further argue that this limitation stems from a flawed ontological distinction between materialist and ideational factors which shapes constructivists' attempts to distinguish themselves from neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists. In making my argument, I will focus on a particular text that attempts to provide a comprehensive articulation of a constructivist position on the question of security – the volume on culture and national security edited by Peter Katzenstein.[7]

In the introductory essay that situates the contribution of the volume, Katzenstein argues that despite their important insights into a structural understanding of national security, both neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists are limited by their

[6] In this, my project is fairly similar to Mark Laffey's intervention in security studies to the extent that we both attempt to foreground 'transnational liberalism' in analysing questions of national identities and hence, security practices of nation-states. Mark Laffey, 'Adding an Asian Strand: Neoliberalism and the Politics of Culture in New Zealand', in Jutta Weldes et al. (eds.), *Cultures of Insecurity*, pp. 233–60.

[7] To explore the nuances of each of the contributions would be beyond the scope of this essay. I focus here primarily on the two essays by Peter Katzenstein and the conceptual piece co-authored by Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter Katzenstein. Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security', pp. 1–32; Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity and Culture in National Security', pp. 33–78; Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Conclusion: National Security in a Changing World', pp. 498–528. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security.*

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rationalist framework.[8] Hence, despite the difference in the emphasis (with the former concentrating on the nature of conflict in the international system and the latter's focus on the conditions that made cooperation possible), both schools of thought end up with predetermined notions of who the actors are and what their interests ought to be. Understanding questions of national security then becomes a matter of defending those interests.

The constructivist position encapsulated in the book starts from a starkly different position – that 'interests' are not ontologically prior to (or for that matter, waiting to be 'discovered' by) actors. This position substantially changes the main question that scholars of security then need to ask. If the national interests that need to be secured in and through national security policies are themselves defined, how do we understand the processes of definition? To paraphrase Katzenstein, the contributors of the volume seek to understand the 'defining', and not the 'defending' of national interest. They do this by adopting a 'sociological perspective on the politics of national security'. In other words, rather than an exclusive focus on material capabilities ('power' in the traditional sense), their approach is informed by a focus on the cultural-institutional context within which actor interaction takes place. The main analytical argument that frames the empirical essays in the book is that identities of political actors, rather than being given (as an instrumental rationalist view might imply), are socially constructed in the context of a particular cultural-institutional environment. And, it is by focusing on these two factors – the environment and identity – that one can make sense of the processes through which 'national interests' are defined and security policies shaped.

The cultural environment that provides the context for security policy is seen as having 'three layers' – the layer of formal institutions and arrangements like NATO or the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); world political culture as embodied in institutions like sovereignty, international law or 'norms of proper enactment of sovereign statehood'; and certain international patterns of 'amity' and 'enmity'.[9] While the role of formal institutional arrangements in the realm of security have been acknowledged even by mainstream security scholars, the more 'cultural' elements have more or less been swept under the rug of material capabilities. It is these elements – 'most often norms' – that figure prominently in the various contributions to the volume.[10] The reason why these elements become important is because they help shape identity. At a very simple level, identity refers to the images of 'self' that actors construct and project, in and through their interactions with 'others'. While acknowledging that the nation-state cannot be compared to an individual, the authors argue that there is a construction and projection of a collective identity both at the levels of the nation (nationalism) and state (enactment of state sovereignty). This collective identity becomes an important element that links the cultural-institutional context to the question of national interest.

[8] Ibid., p. 14.

[9] Ibid., p. 34. See also Alexander Wendt, 'Collective Identity Formation and the International State', *American Political Science Review,* 88:2, pp. 384–96.

[10] The authors do not provide too clear an explanation of what they mean by norms. Starting with a definition that emphasises that norms are basically 'collective expectations about proper behavior of a *given* identity', they go on to argue that norms might sometime act to constitute – that is, *give* – identities to actors. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security,* p. 52. My own emphasis.

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While starting from a claim about the accepted importance of identity in international politics, the authors do not acknowledge that this does amount to having a single conception of what it means.[11] The authors' own understanding of identity is spelled out a bit more clearly in a footnote.[12] They claim that identities – constituted as they are by the mutual referencing of the 'self/other' – come in 'two basic forms': that which is intrinsic to an actor and that which can only be constructed intersubjectively in a social structure.[13] This of course leads to the obvious question of what kind of identity is 'intrinsic' to an actor in a social structure and how do we make sense of it? The authors however do not really explain or even attempt to justify their claim. They just provide an example stating that, for instance, 'being democratic is an intrinsic feature of the US state relative to the structure of the international system'. Instead of addressing the question, this example has the unfortunate effect of opening up a can of worms. [14]

The lack of clarity on an important conceptual issue does not arise because of mere oversight on the part of the scholars concerned. I argue that this conceptual problem has deeper roots. Throughout the laying out of the volume, one can see the constant referencing of the 'constructivist' position to that of the neorealist and neoliberal institutional perspectives.[15] This underlines the important fact that constructivist scholarship in security studies has mainly taken the form of a critique of the materialist ontology and empiricist methodology that has dominated the field.[16] In terms of analysis, the latter theoretical framework has meant an objective understanding of challenges to security/ national security as something that was 'out there'. Such an assumption also entails the idea that this reality could be easily accessed by the analyst through a 'three-step process':

> First, there is the specification of a set of constraints. Then comes the stipulation of a set of actors who are assumed to have certain kinds of interests. Finally, the behavior of the actors is observed, and that behavior is related to the constraining conditions in which these actors with their assumed interests, find themselves. [17]

This, as Katzenstein points out, is a framework that 'highlights the instrumental rationality of actors', and is common to neorealism and neoliberal-institutionalism.[18]

[11] 'A large literature on national identity and state sovereignty attests to this important aspect of international politics'. Ibid., p. 59.
[12] Ibid., fn. 85, p. 59.
[13] This distinction is similar to what Wendt refers to as the 'corporate' and 'social' identities of the state. In a later formulation, he expands the 'social identity' category to include what he terms, 'type', 'role' and 'collective'. Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization,* 46 (1992), pp. 391–425; *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 224–33.
[14] On this issue, see Ido Oren, 'The Subjectivity of "Democratic" Peace: Changing US Perceptions of Imperial Germany', *International Security*, 20 (1995), pp.147–84; and *Our Enemies and US: America's Rivalries and the Making of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
[15] The schematic diagram on p. 38 (discussed in pp. 43–52) makes a slight gesture at situating the constructivist position as against others such as the Marxist, Statist, and Bureaucratic Politics models. But, for the most part, the authors are very clear about who they are arguing with/against. For instance, in positioning the empirical essays in the field of security studies, the main question they ask is 'What is the relationship of the "cultural", "institutional", and "constructivist" arguments of this volume to those of realism and liberalism?', p. 68 (Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*).
[16] For a greater explication of this point, see Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 1994).
[17] Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security,* p.14.
[18] Ibid.

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In attempting to distance themselves from this 'economic mode of theorizing' that characterises neorealism/neoliberal institutionalism, the authors end up circumscribing their main analytical concepts. In a manner strangely evocative of 'the specification of a set of constraints', 'identity' is presented as having two forms: an 'intrinsic' and an 'intersubjective' one. This distinction, presented as it were, more as a caveat, ends up producing a rather flat and ahistorical understanding of an important social concept.[19] Furthermore, while delineating the 'cultural-institutional context', the authors make it obvious that their main 'object' of inquiry is norms – be it tracing the emergence, effects or changes in normative structures. Implicit in this framing is a distinction between 'normative'/'ideational' and 'material' structures which precludes the constructivist position from even looking at structures such as the global economy as having a constitutive effect on identities.

In his introductory essay, Katzenstein argues that the main analytical move of the 'Cultures of National Security' is to present a framework which privileges 'social factors'. How is this done? His response to that question is very straightforward:

> The effort to test sociological, culture-based explanations against economic, interest-based explanations centers on identifying and describing problems overlooked by existing scholarship and specifying the social factors, here state-identity and the cultural-institutional context, that shape conceptions of actor interest and behavior.[20] (My emphasis.)

However, in their attempt to distance themselves from this mode of analysis, Katzenstein (and, one supposes, his fellow constructivists) end up subscribing to a notion that explanations which focus on economic factors are necessarily interest-based ones. Consequently, their notion of state identity is one wherein the 'social' is essentially distinct from the 'economic'. In and through this analytical move, the constructivist position virtually cedes any analysis of security issues in the context of the global economy to traditional security studies – particularly the neoliberal institutionalist scholars.

The theme of 'economic' issues is revisited in the conclusion when the question of the future of security studies is briefly discussed. Relating the developments in international politics to the need to broaden the scope of security studies, Katzenstein argues for the inclusion of 'nonmilitary issues' and 'non-state actors' in security discussions. 'Economic issues' fall squarely into the former category. While there is a slight nod to the connection between 'economy' and 'security' in terms of pointing out that issues of 'military conversion' have always been of interest to traditional security studies scholars, the emphasis here is on the need to study the 'non-traditional' security implications of economic issues. These issues, opened up for scrutiny presumably by the constructivist intervention in security studies, include problems of food security ('in Africa'), human rights violations ('in Haiti'), and the

[19] A further reflection of this somewhat strange distinction can be found in Wendt's statement regarding the four 'national interests' that exist outside of social context – to preserve and further physical security, autonomy, economic well-being and collective self-esteem. The implicit assumption here being that all four have a universal, fixed and given meaning that is not open to social [re]production. See Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 235–7. For a well-argued critique of this understanding of identity, see Maja Zehfuss, 'Constructivism and Identity: A Dangerous Liaison', *European Journal of International Relations*, 7 (2001), pp. 315–48.

[20] Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security,* p. 30.

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potential insecurity for 'rich countries' caused by the underdevelopment of their neighbours.[21] Each of these is considered to be primarily an economic issue that needs to be studied by security scholars because of their potential implications. For instance, the relative inequality between neighbouring states might result in mass migration (from the less developed to the more developed state), causing social strife and an increasingly tense border situation. This brief discussion of 'economic issues' and security is striking for two reasons: one, there is a presumption that for developed countries, the interweaving of security and economic issues takes place only in the context of their interactions with less developed countries; and two, the framing of the problem still rests on the notion that the economy is something discreet and can only be seen as a factor that occasionally intrudes/affects the domain of security.

Identity in the context of a global economy

My contention is that one of the main structures we need to take into account while analysing state identity and state practices is that of the global economy. At one level, the point I am making here about the constitutive effects of the global economy and its links to questions of security is not really a new one.[22] Scholars belonging to a historical-materialist tradition have emphasised the importance of economic structures in understanding questions of conflict and cooperation in the international system.[23] Focusing particularly on the manner in which transnational coalitions between various fractions of capital are made possible, scholars in this tradition have argued for understanding the international system as characterised by a specific, post-World War II form of imperialism. More than merely one nation-state dominating all others, or a particular bloc of capital dominating a nation-state, the imperial system envisaged by the historical-materialists is 'a complex process by which particular fractions of capital, acting through the branches of the imperial and peripheral state, act to facilitate the forms of internationalisation of capital

[21] Ibid., p. 574.

[22] While acknowledging the important contributions of neoliberal institutionalist and certain neorealist scholars in looking at the global economy as either providing incentive for cooperation or rationale for conflict, I do not engage with them in this essay because their focus has never been on the *constitutive* effects of the global economy. Examples of the former tradition include, Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); and Kenneth A. Oye (ed.), *Cooperation Under Anarchy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986). The best exemplar of the latter is perhaps, Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[23] Within the discipline of International Relations, the main proponents of this tradition include Robert Cox, Stephen Gill and Mark Rupert. Admittedly, the focus of this scholarship has not been on questions of security. Dealing primarily with questions of international political economy, scholars of this tradition have focused not just on the production and demise of US hegemony, but also on the spread of 'transnational liberalism' within the global economy. See for instance, Robert Cox, *Production, Power and World Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Stephen Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mark Rupert, *Producing Hegemony: The Politics of Mass Production and American Global Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

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most relevant to their interests'.[24] This system is produced in and through the involvement of not just interstate institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), but also the socialisation of a particular group of professional elite in the Third World to consensual norms regarding developmental options.[25]

It is in the context of analysing the production of the imperial system that questions of 'security' are briefly touched by scholars belonging to the historical-materialist tradition. In some ways, the issues that they highlight are those that have traditionally been considered the core of security studies – mainly, the phenomenon of militarisation. On the one hand, the process of socialisation mentioned earlier leads to a situation wherein the leaders of military organisations are generally loyal to the world-view propounded by the imperial state.[26] On the other, through the provision of military aid and direct military collaboration with peripheral states, the imperial state's military agencies are able to have access to the territories of the periphery.[27] A combination of the two methods reveals the manner in which military force acts as an important tool for sustaining the imperial system.

The insights regarding the phenomenon of socialisation of various strata of Third World elites, as well as the connections between militarisation and the [re]production of the imperial system are indeed important – particularly in the context of the intensification of what has variously been termed 'transnational liberalism'[28] or 'globalization'.[29] However, despite these important insights, the analysis afforded by this framework remains limited. In this context, the structural positions available to nation-states in the context of the global economy are basically of two kinds: the 'imperial'/'hegemonic'/'core' state(s) and the 'peripheral' states. Furthermore, agency in this hierarchical system is restricted to the nation-states who belong to the former category. It is the ruling elite of the 'hierarchically top-tier' states who have a decisive say in the formation of the 'transnational consensus' into which others are gradually socialised. In this world-view, the peripheral ('Third World') nation-states have very little role to play other than

[24] The 'internationalisation' of capital generally refers to a more limited form of economic globalisation wherein national constraints still matter and nation-states still have a role to play. Jim Glassman, 'State Power beyond the "territorial trap": the internationalization of the state', *Political Geography*, 18 (1999), pp. 669–96. For further discussions of the concept of internationalisation, see Peter Dicken, 'Transnational Corporations and Nation-States', *International Social Science Journal*, 49: 151 (1997), pp. 77–89; and Linda Weiss, *The Myth of the Powerless State: Governing the Economy in a Global Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

[25] The imperial system is of course hierarchical and the 'consensus' regarding developmental norms is more or less fixed by the countries in the top level of the hierarchy. Despite not having much say in the formation of the consensus, Third World elites are ideological recruits generally trained in the universities of the advanced capitalist countries or the IMF institute. For elaborations of the argument, see Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10 (1981), pp. 126–55; and *Production, Power and the World Order*.

[26] James Petras and M.H. Morley, 'The US Imperial State', in J.F. Petras. (ed.), *Class, State and Power in the Third World: With Case Studies on Class Conflict in Latin America* (London: Zed, 1981), pp. 1–36.

[27] Glassman, 'State Power Beyond the 'Territorial Trap', pp. 684–5.

[28] John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[29] James Mittleman (ed.), *Globalization: Critical Reflections* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 1996).

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gradually be socialised into the imperial system.[30] Hence, questions of 'security' in the context of the global economy end up being translated in terms of the means through which the hegemonic/imperial state attempts to maintain its dominance through influence/control of the military agencies of the peripheral states.

The problem with such a framework is that despite its emphasis on historically contingent class struggles, it ends up overriding the particular histories and political struggles of each nation-state in favour of an overly structural outlook.[31] In doing so, it fails to appreciate the manner in which state identities, constituted in and through a relationship to the global economy, are themselves contingent and historically produced. Moreover, even if the international system of states is constituted as a hierarchy, all states constituted as 'peripheral' are neither similar nor do they necessarily 'act' in the same way. At times when they do 'act' similarly as in, say, adopting a capital-intensive form of militarisation over a labour-intensive form, making sense of their security practices involves more than merely situating them in a predetermined structural context.[32]

State identities are constituted in and through a relation to a global economy. However, state identities are neither fixed nor stable and can only be [re]produced through reiterative performances in different terrains. For example, the identity of an internationalist welfare state can be performed through the adoption of particular sets of domestic economic policies as against others (such as emphasising state planning and the building of a strong public sector as against a set of policies that favours disinvestment by the state), taking a particular stance on security issues (as having only a limited defence expenditure or voluntarily giving up the nuclear option), or participating in a particular multilateral forum (be it the 1955 Bandung Conference, the UN peacekeeping operations or the EU).While seemingly distinct, practices in these different terrains need to be understood as being part of a larger performance of a particular state identity. In some cases, the interweaving of different terrains is quite obvious. One such example is the NSS of the United States. The overview of the international strategy of the United States begins with the following declaration by the President:

> Our Nation's cause has always been larger than our Nation's defense. We fight as we always fight, for a just peace – a peace that favors liberty.[33]

[30] Though admittedly, there is an acknowledgement that resistance to processes of internationalisation might be greater in the peripheral states because these measures are seen as being imposed by external forces.

[31] A variant of the neorealist tradition that has been referred to as 'neoclassical realism' goes beyond structuralism to argue that state behaviour is driven by relative material capabilities which in turn are mediated by intervening unit-level variables such as elite perceptions. I do not engage with this literature in this article partly because, despite attempts to demarcate minor areas of difference, they (unlike the historical-materialists) belong to a tradition that has been the subject of strenuous critique by constructivist scholars. Furthermore, their discussions of the global economy (couched in the language of 'interests' and 'variables') are limited to the extent of highlighting relative material power. For a review of this literature see Gideon Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, 51 (1998), pp. 144–72. I would like to thank Ron Krebs for bringing this article to my attention.

[32] For an analysis that borrows heavily from the historical materialist tradition and reveals some of its limitations, see Alexander Wendt and Michael Barnett, 'Dependent State Formation and Third World Militarization', *Review of International Studies*, 19 (1993), pp. 321–47.

[33] Speech by President Bush in West Point, New York, 1 June 2002.

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The idea that the duty of the United States is to build a 'balance of power that favors freedom' is one that pervades the entire document. Interestingly, the document does not shirk from defining the kind of 'liberty' that is the 'cause of the Nation' – a cause while being 'larger than' the nation, is essential to the nation's survival. Once again, in the words of George W. Bush:

> The United States will stand beside any nation determined to build a better future by seeking the rewards of liberty for its people. Free trade and free markets have proven their ability to lift whole societies out of poverty – so the United States will work with individual nations, entire regions, and the entire global trading community to build a world that trades in freedom and therefore grows in prosperity.[34]

Without over-emphasising the irony of building a 'world that trades in freedom', it is quite obvious that one cannot understand the contemporary security practices of the United States without carefully analysing its relationship to the production of a neoliberal economic world order. The relationship between 'state identity' and the world economy – something that is missed by both liberal constructivists and historical materialists – is key to understanding the terrain within which state practices have meaning. This is true not just for the state that is considered central to the production of world order, but also those that have been constituted as 'peripheral'.

In the remaining part of the article, I use this notion of a historically contextualised state identity – grounded as it were in a constitutive relationship to global capital – to make sense of the Indian nuclear tests of May 1998.[35] The '98 tests were particularly puzzling because the position of the Indian state with regard to nuclear proliferation had been remarkably consistent for nearly five decades. In spite of a series of tests in 1974 (which it characterised as a 'Peaceful Nuclear Explosion'), the Indian state, known to possess 'nuclear capability', had been a strong advocate of a 'global nuclear disarmament' and had always professed a desire to work towards a 'nuclear-free world'. The tests seemed counter-intuitive in several other ways. By openly 'going nuclear', India egged Pakistan on to conduct its own nuclear tests, setting up a new and dangerous trend of nuclear brinkmanship in the sub-continent; it further alienated China, the other Asian nuclear power with which it shared a border (and a history of boundary disputes); and it risked international notoriety and economic sanctions at a time when it could ostensibly afford neither. Scholars of International Relations have for the most part tried to account for this seemingly strange event by focusing on notions of 'reasonable strategic logic' or 'strategic defiance'.[36] Each set of accounts has been well-critiqued on the grounds of their inability to both substantiate the claims of 'strategic logic' as well as explain the timing of the tests. Without going into the details of those accounts in this article, I will merely point out that the mainstream IR explanations of the Indian nuclear tests fall into the rubric of the neorealist/neoliberal institutionalist framework that has been critiqued by constructivist scholars. In

[34] Introduction to the National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 17 September 2002.
[35] India conducted a series of three tests on 11 May 1998 and followed it up with two more tests on 13 May.
[36] See for instance, Amitabh Mattoo (ed.), *India's Nuclear Deterrent: Pokhran II and Beyond* (New Delhi: Har Anand, 1999); George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1999); Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001); and Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

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keeping with the main constructivist claim, I argue that we cannot really make sense of the Indian nuclear tests of 1998 without understanding it as a performance of 'Indian' identity. However, this identity has to be understood as being constituted in and through a relation to global capital – a relationship that emerged out of the particular historical experience of colonialism and was fundamentally challenged by the economic liberalisation programme of 1991.

II

Identifying 'India'

> India has never considered military might as the ultimate measure of national strength. It is a necessary component of overall national strength. I would therefore say that the greatest meaning of the [nuclear] tests is that they have given India *shakti*, they have given India strength, they have given India self-confidence.[37]

The idea of India regaining its 'self-confidence' and its *shakti* (strength) as a result of the nuclear tests of May 1998 was the main theme in public discussions of the event. Official versions of the tests claimed that as against the ambiguity (and 'weakness') of the earlier years, India had moved to a position of 'clarity and strength'.[38] India had stood up to the US, and gate-crashed into a select club. Commenting on the triumphalism characterising most media and official accounts of the tests, a prominent critic of the government noted that 'suddenly every Indian feels a nuclear bulge in his biceps'.[39] What purpose did this 'nuclear bulge' serve? The framing of the nuclear tests as a 'Road to Resurgence' seemed to indicate that in the past there had existed an 'India That [Could] Say No', but had lost its way. [40] What was the nature of this 'India' and under what conditions had it lost its self-esteem? Furthermore, why did it make sense for India to regain its self-confidence through a series of nuclear blasts? What was the identity-logic that enabled and gave meaning to the associations between a 'nuclear bulge' and a 'resurgence of self-esteem'?

In recent decades, there has been a vast literature that has argued for understanding the identity logic that is constitutive of 'India' to be specifically postcolonial. [41]

[37] Prabhu Chawla, Interview with Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, *India Today*, 25 May 1998, p. 39.
[38] Cited in Shiv Visvanathan, 'Welcome to the Patriot Games', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 23 May 1998, p. 1225.
[39] Ibid.
[40] These and other headlines (such as 'A moment of pride') are oft-cited in the numerous analyses (both, supportive and critical) of the Indian nuclear tests. See for instance, Arundhati Roy, 'The End of the Imagination', *The Guardian*, 11 August 1998; Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, *New Nukes: India, Pakistan and Global Nuclear Disarmament* (New York: Interlink Books, 2000), p. 44.
[41] While scholars differ on their exact understanding of what 'postcoloniality'/'the postcolonial condition' means, what holds this often diverse group together is a turning away from a treatment of the 'postcolonial' as a 'chronological condition'. Apart from Itty Abraham's analysis of India's nuclear programme, some examples of postcolonial scholarship in the discipline of International Relations include: Sankaran Krishna, 'The Importance of Being Ironic: A Postcolonial View on Critical International Relations Theory', *Alternatives*, 18 (1993), pp. 385–417; Phillip Darby and A.J. Paolini, 'Bridging International Relations and Postcolonialism', *Alternatives*, 19 (1994), pp. 371–98; and Himadeep Muppidi, 'Postcoloniality and the Production of International Insecurity: The Persistent Puzzle of US – Indian Relations', in Weldes, et al. (eds.), *Cultures of Insecurity*, pp. 119–46.

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At one level, this implies paying close attention to the particular historical experience of colonialism from which the modern Indian nation-state emerged. However, at another level, the one aspect of postcoloniality that various scholars have highlighted is that it implies a particular connection between 'modernity' and the 'nation-state'.[42] In the following section, I lay out an analysis of India's nuclear policy to show that this understanding of postcoloniality is extremely important to make sense of the origin and development of India's 'nuclear capability'. However, ultimately it can offer only a limited insight into the security practices of the modern Indian nation-state because of its failure to take into account the constitutive relationship between a 'postcolonial identity-logic' and the global economy.

Understanding postcolonial modernity

> India is now a nuclear weapon state. This is a reality that cannot be denied. It is not a conferment we seek; nor is it a status for others to grant. It is an endowment to our nation by our scientists and our engineers. It is India's due, the right of one-sixth of mankind.[43]

The aftermath of the 1998 tests saw a series of statements being made both within official and public discourse about the 'pride in [our] scientists' accomplishment', 'Indian technology being on par with the developed world' and a 'renewed sense of pride in the nation'. These statements, as Itty Abraham notes in his lucid analysis of India's nuclear programme, were eerily similar to those made in the aftermath of the 1974 tests.[44] Apart from the strangeness of similar statements being repeated after a space of 25 years, what was striking was the seeming cogency of the associations. After all, themes such as national pride, development and nuclear energy were quite diverse. But in the context of the nuclear tests, they seemed to be strung together in a way that, at least initially, made sense to both the actors who articulated them and the 'Indians' who were the 'audience'.[45] To understand the logic of this association, we need to look at the meanings and implications of modernity in a postcolonial context.

The goals of the postcolonial project, as Itty Abraham argues, are the same as those of modernity's if one believes the latter to be a deep commitment to secularism, applying science to better human life, and trying to arrive at a rational ordering of

[42] For variations of this argument, see Itty Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State* (London: Zed Books, 1998); Himadeep Muppidi, *Competitive Economic Restructuring in the Global Economy: A Critical Constructivist Approach*, Ph.D thesis, University of Minnesota, 1998; and Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[43] Suo Moto statement by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Parliament, 27 May 1998: http://www.india.gov

[44] Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb*.

[45] The news of the tests was greeted with joyous celebrations and an over-90 per cent approval rating. The Leader of the Opposition, Congress President Sonia Gandhi echoed the Prime Minister by claiming the '[the] nuclear question is a national matter, not a partisan one. On this, every Indian stands united'. However, this was a gross simplification of the issue and completely tried to paper over the long history of anti-nuclear activism in India. The protests over the tests became more vocal with the passage of time and even found expression in later sessions of the Indian parliament.

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life. [46] However, what makes the postcolonial condition interesting that it emerges into a world whose 'rules are already defined'. Therefore, what results is a condition characterised at the same time by a 'desire to become modern [as well as] the recognition of modernity's absence'.[47]

The desire to 'become modern' was not hard to explain in the context of India's colonial past. For one, the Indian nationalist elite, themselves products of India's encounters with 'modernity' saw much to be thankful for in the legacy of the British Empire – Western education, the judicial system, and social reforms to name but a few. Moreover, a major stream of nationalist discourse held that India had become colonised partly because it remained stuck in a 'pre-modern' time warp at a time when countries of the West had embraced scientific development and 'modernity'.[48] As Nehru stated in his remarks to the Indian Science Association, '[a]ll the world over, it is because we forget the scientific approach that many of our troubles arise'.[49] In the Indian case, modernity to a large extent became conflated with science and technological development, leading to state policies in post-independence India that emphasised the 'method and spirit of science'.[50]

The importance of this analysis is that it permits us to understand how even while underscoring his opposition to the development of nuclear weapons, Nehru was involved in spearheading a move to establish an Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) that would 'develop and control the use of Atomic energy' in India.[51] The desire to 'catch up with the West' manifested itself in the creation of a nuclear establishment that was cloaked in secrecy and characterised by an urgency to show its scientific capabilities. Supported by Nehru, often in the face of political opposition to its secrecy, the AEC, free from legislative overseeing, succeeded in building the first Indian Atomic Reactor in 1955. The success of the AEC, however, did not prevent India from actively lobbying for nuclear disarmament at a global level. Proposals such as the 'Standstill Agreement' (1954)[52] and the Joint Memorandum to the Eighteen-member Disarmament Committee (August 1966) [53] were indicative of India's active participation in the move to comprehensively ban nuclear testing and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that was signed on 1 July 1968 did not reflect the demands that India and other

[46] Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb,* p. 18.
[47] Ibid., p. 19.
[48] The most fervent advocate of 'becoming modern' in the Indian context was of course Jawaharlal Nehru, who later became independent India's first Prime Minister. An earlier exposition of these views can be seen in his elaborate engagement with Indian history. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New York: John Day, 1946).
[49] Cited in Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb*, p. 49.
[50] See Prakash, *Another Reason*, p. 3.
[51] In a speech to the Indian parliament, Nehru declared: 'A new weapon of unprecedented power both in volume and intensity, . . . is being tested, unleashing its massive power as a weapon of war . . . I have stated publicly as our view that these experiments . . . should cease'. Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1956–April 1961*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India (1961), p. 191.
[52] The main elements of the Standstill Agreement are spelled out by Aabha Dixit, in her essay, 'Status Quo: Maintaining Nuclear Ambiguity', in David Cortwright and Amitabh Mattoo (ed.), *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Weapons* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p. 55.
[53] For a more detailed description of the non-aligned proposal see, William Epstein, 'Give More to Get More', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 50 (1994).

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non-aligned states had been making for the duration of the negotiations. Apart from the lack of any specific clause that made provisions for the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban, the treaty also contained no explicit ban on the use of nuclear weapons. In its existing form it appeared to be merely a boundary-making exercise that would legitimise the arsenals of the five nuclear weapons states.[54] Arguing that any acceptance of the NPT would imply the acceptance of the legitimacy of nuclear weapons possessed by the P-5, the Indian state refused to become a party to the treaty. What was interesting at this juncture was that representatives of the Indian state couched their refusal to accept the treaty in terms of their stand against any form of neo-colonialism. Despite emerging in a world where the 'rules were already defined', the postcolonial condition did not imply that those rules would be blindly accepted.

The Indian state continued channelling funds into its nuclear programme, making it possible, as it were, for Indira Gandhi to declare in 1974 that 'India needed a demonstration'.[55] Following the executive diktat, the nuclear establishment performed its duty: on 18 May 1974, India announced the successful completion of its first nuclear test. The so-called 'Peaceful Nuclear Explosion' (PNE) conveyed to both the domestic and international audiences that the nuclear establishment in India was technologically equivalent to any in the West. Scholars have argued that one of the main reasons for the 'demonstration' was the need for Mrs. Gandhi to shore up her rapidly dipping popularity.[56] Whether or not that is accurate, conducting a nuclear test was seen as (and as it turned out, rightly so) as a means to demonstrate to primarily the Indian public, that India (and relatedly, Indira Gandhi) was a power to be reckoned with. 'Nuclear power', 'development' and 'national pride' came together in Indian imaginary in a way that wouldn't be repeated for quite some time.

It is the time lag between the first and second series of nuclear tests that underscores the limitations of understanding the postcolonial identity-logic as something merely characterised by a particular relationship to modernity. Abraham, for instance, argues that the period that followed '74 was one in which the political leadership tried to come to terms with the shift from a 'mythic space of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence into an everyday realm of naturalized fear, threat, danger and insecurity'.[57] For him the 1974 tests marked the end of one journey (informed as it were by the postcolonial project) and the beginning of another – one

[54] Admittedly there was a commitment among the signatories 'to work towards universal nuclear disarmament' (Art. VI), but this was couched in sufficiently general terms as to render it a formal concession of dubious value.

[55] Raja Ramanna, *Years of Pilgrimage* (Delhi: Viking, 1991), p. 89.

[56] The main focus of this article is of course the 1998 tests. But, it should be kept in mind that the PNE was conducted a short period after the famine and drought-like situation of the late 1960s when India had to approach the United States for surplus stocks of wheat to help with the situation. Even as India struggled to come to terms with aftermath of the famine, it got embroiled in a war with Pakistan (1971). Despite the brief spurt of popularity following the victory in Bangladesh, Mrs. Gandhi's government also had to deal with the effects of the immense refugee flows (apart from the cost of the war itself) on the Indian economy. Even though the early 1970s did see a series of good harvest production and improved public sector performance, between January 1973 and January 1974, inflation went up by 20 per cent. See Surjit Mansingh, *India's Search for Power: Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy, 1966–1982* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1984), and A.K. Roy, 'Pokhran Tests and Emergency', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 June 1998, pp. 1610–11.

[57] Abraham, *Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb*, p.165.

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in which the Indian state drew its 'ideological sustenance' from the 'dominant discourse of International Relations' (Realism) that emphasised the need to maintain national security in an anarchical world. It was but natural for this journey to culminate in the nuclear tests of 1998.

Quite apart from the fact that this analysis ends up falling back on realism as the discursive framework to understand the Indian nuclear tests of 1998, it seems to suggest that the postcolonial condition can end with a single performance. Akin to a fall from grace, a single act drags 'India' from its 'mythic space of non-alignment' to an 'everyday realm of insecurity'. This of course only raises the question why India had to inhabit this everyday realm for nearly 24 years before coming out as a nuclear weapons state. Contrary to Abraham's position, I argue that the 1998 tests were indeed a performance of postcolonial Indian identity – a performance that can be understood only by highlighting the relationship between the postcolonial identity-logic and the global economy.

The politics of a 'national' economy

India became independent on 15 August 1947. However, as various postcolonial scholars have pointed out, this emergence of a sovereign nation-state did not mark a complete break from the past. For one, independent India inherited a number of British institutions such as the Army and the Indian Civil Service. Further, the process of imagining India had begun long before Indian independence was attained.[58] Given that the questioning of British rule in India began to a large extent from a mounting dissatisfaction over the material conditions in the country, it is not surprising that 'imagining India' entailed questioning the relationship between the nation, the state and the economy.[59] Explanations of the impoverishment of the Indian nation rested on a particular rendering of the economic history of India – a rendering in which the colonial state was an exploitative agent, focused on draining the riches of the nation. Moreover, unlike other exploitative rulers in Indian history, the British colonial state was not concerned with using some of the wealth they 'drained' from India to improve the lot of the Indian people. Rather, its goal was to use the resources of the Indian nation to serve the interests of metropolitan capital.[60] It was in the context of its inability, and actually lack of desire, to provide for the prosperity of the nation that the failure of the British colonial state became most apparent.

In a nuanced analysis of the meaning of postcoloniality in the Indian context, Himadeep Muppidi argues that the 'nationalist movement had to struggle – through

[58] In a remarkable analysis, Partha Chatterjee charts the manner in which the project of nationalism – of imagining India – was formulated, contested, and reformulated over a period of more than five decades. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

[59] Muppidi, *Competitive Economic Restructuring*.

[60] For arguably the most compelling exposition of this view, see R.C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India*, 2nd edn., vols. I & II (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co.), 1906. See also, Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 302.

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contestatory social claims – to establish viable and persuasive articulations that differentiated the Indian nation (the Self) from the British Empire (the Other)'.[61] Differentiating the colonised 'self' from the colonial 'other' had a very important implication – that Indian postcoloniality would be the '[erasure of] an economically exploitative relationship'.[62] The struggle against colonialism necessitated a state that would be markedly different from the colonial state – a state that would not only cut down existing exploitative economic relations, but would also steer the productive forces of the nation in a manner that would promote the welfare of the people.

Embodying this logic, the Preamble of the Indian Constitution proudly declares that India was now both 'sovereign' and 'socialist'.[63] In terms of state practices, this implied that India was free to chart its own course – the Indian state would act as a protector of the nation (and national resources) by not only staving off greedy exploiters (the foreign investors – equated with the colonisers) but also by actively investing in a broad-based public sector. Consequently, the economic policy of the sovereign Indian nation-state was characterised by an emphasis on state planning and the promotion of self-reliance (*swadeshi*).[64] This, as Muppidi convincingly argues, basically meant that intrinsic to the production of the space of the modern Indian nation-state was the recognition of the need for state-sponsorship in the building of an industrial sector as well as an indigenous technological base. Despite contestations, this recognition remained the dominant constitutive element of India's postcolonial identity for over four decades.

Regardless of the party in power, what characterised 'India' was its determined refusal to be ensnared in exploitative relations in the context of the global economy. This was evident not just in the strict controls that the state exercised over the question of foreign investments, but also in its highly publicised struggles with giant multinationals. Two examples are illustrative of this point. In 1977, George Fernandes – the industries minister in the Janata cabinet and a staunch advocate of *swadeshi* – led a huge battle against Coca-Cola and IBM. Arguing that the two MNCs had violated Indian investment rules, Fernandes succeeded in 'kicking them' out of India. The general distrust of foreign investors was even more obvious in 1983 when a British industrialist of Indian origin – Swraj Paul – tried to acquire more than 50 per cent stock in two Indian companies. Arguing that foreigners (even if in this case the foreigner in question was of Indian origin) had always exploited India for their own benefit, sections of the Indian parliament, egged on by H.P. Nanda, the owner of one of those companies, Escorts, successfully blocked Paul's

[61] Muppidi, *Competitive Economic Restructuring*, p. 145.

[62] Here, I emphasise a very small part of Muppidi's elaborate analysis of 'postcoloniality'. He frames Indian postcoloniality as '[neither] a revolution, nor a total break from the colonizer, but a carefully mediated separation that would erase an economically exploitative relationship without erasing the 'benefits' of modernity that it had brought'. This framing shows how the relationship to 'modernity' can still be understood as an important aspect of the 'postcolonial identity-logic' while not losing sight of economic relations. Ibid, p. 153.

[63] The opening line of the Preamble declares that India is a 'sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic'.

[64] Even prior to independence, the most important sections of the Indian capitalist class embraced the idea that state planning was necessary to mobilise the resources of the Indian nation and protect them from Western capital. For an illustration of this, see Nehru's discussion of the 1938 National Planning Committee, in *The Discovery of India*, pp. 395–402.

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attempts to gain a foothold in Indian industry.[65] In these battles staged on the terrain of the global economy, the Indian 'Self' always held its own against the exploitative 'Other'. It was this constitutive relationship that was fundamentally challenged by the economic reforms undertaken in 1991.

Introducing the economic liberalisation programme in June 1991, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao argued that contrary to public perception, the reforms were not being initiated because of pressure from the IMF.[66] In fact, his government (like all post-independence regimes) remained committed to 'rapid industrialization'. However, the nature of the global economy had changed and his government had realised that, in order to be competitive in a global economy, India needed to choose a different path. The 'different path' that the reformers envisaged included a deliberate withdrawal from the 'non-productive' public sector, inviting and ensuring a smooth path for foreign direct investment.[67] Manmohan Singh, the Finance Minister, claimed in his budget speech to the Indian parliament that the 'grave economic crisis' facing the country required 'determined action on the part of [the] government'.[68] However, that action would not in any way imply a reneging on 'our nation's firm and irrevocable commitment . . . to serve the interests of the people'.[69] Despite the government's claims that India remained sovereign and committed to the goals of protecting and furthering the welfare of its people, the liberalisation programme became a highly contested issue. Opponents and critics of all political hues accused the government of lacking 'self-respect', of buckling down under the pressure of international agencies, of mortgaging India's 'economic sovereignty' and of 'selling out' to the foreigner yet again.[70]

The reasons for these intense and often violent debates are not hard to understand. As I have argued earlier, a crucial constitutive element of India's post-colonial identity was a very particular relationship to the global economy – a relationship in which a benevolent state guarded the nation against economic marauders. The adoption of economic 'reforms' meant that the state was committed to dismantling the safeguards that were once considered essential for the development of the Indian economy, and was now in the business of inviting foreign investors. Drawing a link between the Indian prince who granted special trading rights to the East India Company in the eighteenth century and the Congress government that introduced liberalisation in 1991, an opposition member remarked, 'when Mir Jaffer allowed East India Company to carry business in India, he did not visualize the political ramifications of it. He thought it was just a trading company.'[71]

[65] See 'Discussion *re* Reported Investment in Indian Industries and Take-over Bids of Indian Companies by Certain Non-Resident Indians', *Lok Sabha Debates*, 24 August 1983.

[66] For more detailed accounts of the Prime Minister's speeches, see *P.V. Narasimha Rao: Selected Speeches* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1995).

[67] Ironically, one of the first MNCs to re-enter India after the liberalisation was Coca-Cola – the soft drinks giant that had been forced to leave in undignified haste nearly a quarter-century back.

[68] The General Budget, 1991–92, *Lok Sabha Debates*, 24 July 1991.

[69] Ibid.

[70] As Muppidi and other scholars have pointed out, the relationship of various political parties to the economic liberalisation programme is more complicated than that, with several parties such as the Communist Party of India (Marxist) which initially opposed the programme on ideological grounds, actually adopting it later.

[71] Bhogendra Jha, *Lok Sabha Debates*, 14 September 1991.

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By turning its back on the 'old methods', and accepting the IMF-imposed conditionalities, the ruling elite were seen as undermining the difference between the colonial and the postcolonial Indian state.[72]

> Today, the IMF just opens the door. They impose the IMF's conditions. They want India to open its womb to foreign capital. They want to take us back to pre-1947 days.[73]

Despite staunch rebuttals by the government and its supporters, the economic reforms continued to be the grounds for furious contestations over questions of Indian identity.[74] The government position on the question of economic liberalisation was indeed seen as a mark of a country that had become so weak that it no longer could hold its own in the international arena. In fact, the popular discourse surrounding the initiation of liberalisation held that the foreign exchange reserves had been so low that the Indian finance minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, had to approach the IMF with a begging bowl.[75] The structural adjustments initiated in 1991 were part of the *quid pro quo* demanded by the IMF. These were demands to which India could no longer say 'No'. The economic liberalisation programme fundamentally disrupted a constitutive element of India's postcolonial identity, enabling a discourse of 'lost self-esteem'. However, how do we make sense of attempts to regain this self-esteem through a series of nuclear blasts?

Securing 'India'

The coalition government under whose *aegis* the 1998 tests took place was led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – a fact that analysts were quick to highlight. Subscribing to a right-wing *hindutva* ideology, the BJP and its predecessor, the Jana Sangh, had always been strong advocates of 'going nuclear'. In the context of electoral gains which finally made it possible for a BJP-led coalition to form a national government, it did not really seem surprising that the government chose to exercise its nuclear option.[76] However, any explanation that over-emphasises the role of the BJP in carrying out the nuclear tests risks losing sight of certain important facts. One, the BJP had been in power for a relatively short period of time before the tests were conducted. The institutional mechanisms for tests, however, had been put in

[72] Manmohan Singh, the Finance Minister who steered the liberalisation programme, was a high-ranking official at the IMF. This was also true of several top-level bureaucrats associated with the Rao regime, giving credence to Robert Cox's notion of 'socialisation' of Third World elite.

[73] Nirmal Chatterjee, *Lok Sabha Debates*, 30 July 1991.

[74] Muppidi's analysis of economic restructuring provides a more elaborate exposition of a similar argument. See especially, chs. 4 and 5. Muppidi, *Competitive Economic Restructuring,* pp. 100–176.

[75] The entire debate on the question of economic liberalisation in the Indian parliament was peppered with references to Indians becoming 'beggars', going with a begging bowl to the IMF, and needing to accept the conditionalities since beggars could not afford to be choosers. See for instance, Discussions on the General Budget, *Lok Sabha Debates*, 30–31 July 1991.

[76] See for instance, Bidwai and Vanaik, *New Nukes*; Sumit Sarkar, 'The BJP Bomb and Aspects of Nationalism', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14 July 1998, p. 1725; for an analysis of the connections between the language of 'nuclear apartheid' (used by the Indian government in the international arena) and the exclusionary practices of the *hindutva* ideology, see Shampa Biswas, '"Nuclear Apartheid" as Political Position: Race as a Postcolonial Resource?', *Alternatives*, 26 (2001), pp. 485–522.

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place long before that. More importantly, the Congress government under Narasimmha Rao had tried to conduct a nuclear test twice – in 1995 and 1996. The only reason that India was not a 'nuclear weapons state' before the BJP came to power was because the CIA came know of the Rao government's plans – plans that were given up under pressure from the United States.[77] Any explanation of the rationale behind the Indian nuclear tests therefore needs to go beyond a *hindutva* angle.

The change in India's nuclear policy can be traced to the early 1990s, around the same time that the economic liberalisation programme started taking effect. Entangled in contestations about the meaning of the reforms and its implications for Indian national identity, the Congress government began to channel funds into the somewhat dormant nuclear programme. It was this investment that paid off by the mid-1990s when the government was informed by the nuclear establishment that it was capable of carrying out nuclear tests. The sovereignty of the Indian nation that critics accused the government of undermining was to be performed in the realm of 'national security'. Unfortunately for the government, its attempts to actually conduct the tests came to naught. The BJP's coming to power did not mark a major turning point in this context. Despite its lip-service to the concept of *swadeshi*, the BJP government did not attempt to turn back any of the liberalisation measures that had been put in place by its predecessor.[78] In fact, it continued the national policy set in motion by the Congress government by planning a new series of nuclear tests. On 11 May 1998, the Indian government announced that 'at 1545 hours, India conducted three underground nuclear tests in the Pokhran range'.[79] This was followed by two more tests on 13 May, at which time the government announced the successful completion of the planned series. This 'success' was in large measure due to the fact that the planning of the tests had taken place under conditions of high secrecy. This time, the US had 'no notice of preparation and could [not] talk to the Indians and persuade them not to do it'.[80] India was now indeed a 'nuclear weapons state'.[81]

[77] In late 1995, the CIA detected signs of activity near the Pokhran range and alerted the Clinton administration to the possibility of an Indian nuclear test. The Clinton administration responded by immediately mounting diplomatic pressure on India and spelling out in detail the implications that a nuclear test would have for the Indian economy. World News, CNN interactive, 12 May 1998.

[78] Less than a month before conducting the nuclear tests, Yashwant Sinha, the Indian Finance Minister articulated his government's understanding of *swadeshi* in a speech that was an exercise in rhetorical and ideological contortions at the Harvard Club: '*Swadeshi* is pro-globalization because it is pro-Indian without being anti-foreign. And that is the important message from India: you can be pro your own country without being anti any other country. *Therefore, swadeshi is the best means of globalization*.' Quoted in Narayan Keshaven, 'Swadeshi goes global', *Outlook*, 27 April 1998, p. 45 (my own emphasis).

[79] Press Release, Ministry of External Affairs, External Publicity Division, New Delhi, 11 May 1998.

[80] Within the US, anger at the Indian tests was almost overshadowed by the shock of the CIA having no prior knowledge of the Indian state's intentions. The quote by Rep. Lee Hamilton (D–Indiana) is from a larger story on the failure of the US intelligence community. 'CIA caught off guard on India nuclear test: Hearings, Inquiry planned', World News, CNN interactive, 12 May 1998: http://www.cnn.com

[81] Though generally mentioned in the context of the *hindutva* ideology, the hypermasculinity of the 'performance' did not go unnoticed by analysts like Madhu Kishwar. This analysis, I contend, can be extended beyond the BJP's ideology to argue that the 'opening up' of the economy was seen as a kind of emasculation that needed to be overcome by an exhibition of 'national potency', and what could be more potent than a nuclear bomb? Madhu Kishwar, 'BJP's Wargasm', *Manushi*, no. 106, 1998.

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The 1998 tests were conducted by a government that was well aware of the consequences of 'going nuclear'. After all, the previous government had been warned about what it could expect if it exercised its nuclear option – in terms of increased tension in the subcontinent, moral condemnation by the international community, and economic sanctions from the developed world. The nuclear tests were carried out despite knowledge of the consequences because, insofar as the Indian state was concerned, what was at stake was much more fundamental. The neoliberal reforms in India had engendered a strong sense of insecurity. What was being threatened was not merely Indian territory but 'India' itself. Securing India, in this context, required a performance that reiterated Indian sovereignty in ways that made sense to an audience coming to terms with a rupture from a socialist past. Paraphrasing Indira Gandhi's words, what was needed was a 'demonstration' to prove that the postcolonial state had not completely failed. Conducting the nuclear tests in the face of opposition from the 'great powers' was one way of demonstrating that India could still chart its own course – of appearing to keep in with certain Nehruvian traditions even while turning back on the 'old methods'.[82] As Prime Minister Vajpayee asserted in his address to the Indian parliament:

> These tests are a continuation of the policies set into motion, that put this country on the path of self-reliance and independence of thought and action. . . . This crucial decision to opt for self reliance was taken by us when we rejected the Cold War paradigm and chose the more difficult path of non-alignment.[83]

The post-liberalisation period marked by the 'selling [of] Indian assets to foreigners'[84] saw a dimming of this 'independence of thought and action'. It was argued that the structural adjustments made 'under duress' in 1991 'visibly subverted national interests with precedence being given to what are called international obligations over national interests in the name of globalization'. As the 1991 parliamentary debates made obvious, the initiation of liberalisation was seen as both an undermining of Indian sovereignty and a loss of the self-esteem that had characterised postcolonial India.[85]

In the immediate aftermath of the tests, the dominant view was that the tests had in some manner stemmed the 'subversion of national interests'. As an article noted, 'after years of worrying about economic problems and foreign pressure [Indian] voters suddenly feel virile'.[86] In the parliamentary discussions of the nuclear tests,

[82] In one of his early speeches to the Constituent Assembly, Nehru claimed that unlike 'smaller countries', India could not be forced into alliances with 'Great Powers', for '[After] all in the past, as a national movement, we opposed one of the greatest world powers. We opposed it in a particular way and in a large measure succeeded that way . . .' Nehru, *Selected Speeches*, p. 32.

[83] Suo Moto statement by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Parliament, 27 May 1998: http://www.india.gov

[84] *The Economist*, 23 May 1998, vol. 347, no. 8069, p. 37.

[85] '. . . the farmer, who raised the prestige of the country and saved it from becoming a beggar will be greatly disappointed. I remember once the country had to face severe famine during Pandit Nehru's time . . . A poster had been displayed on the wall of a church in Italy in which our hungry children with begging bowls were shown asking for alms. When this fact was brought to the notice of Panditji, the next day he made a statement that our children may die of starvation, but we cannot tolerate the insult to our country,' – C.J. Yadav ; 'The country has to go to the IMF for a loan, surrendering our sovereignty, selling our soul', – V. Gowda, *Lok Sabha Debates*, 30–31 July 1991.

[86] *The Economist*, 16 May 1998, vol. 347, no. 8068, p. 38.

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opposition members, while challenging the government's rationale for the tests, claimed that the tests were an expression of sovereignty – an expression that could be only questioned by Indians themselves and not by any outside power. If any attempts were made to punish India for this exercise of sovereignty, they (the opposition parties) would stand by the government.[87] For, as one parliamentarian claimed, the actual conduct of the nuclear tests was 'a tribute to the country, a tremendous tribute to our scientists and a tremendous tribute to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, Shri Narasimha Rao, Shri Inder Kumar Gujral and all the other Prime Ministers who said, "Go ahead with this programme"'.[88] Even a critic of the BJP, writing in the widely-respected Marxist journal *Economic and Political Weekly,* started his analysis with the claim that '[the] dramatic assertion of the sovereign status and rights of India, after the dreary years of their denigration by the ruling elite as outdated notions in the era of globalization, certainly deserves accolades'.[89]

The government and the opposition parties lost no time in congratulating the scientists involved in the nuclear tests on their achievement. Interestingly, after almost pushing Pakistan to conduct its own nuclear tests, the Indian government lost no time in asserting the superiority of its own nuclear programme by pointing out that, unlike Pakistan which was heavily dependent on Chinese technology, India's nuclear capability arose from an 'indigenous technology'. None embodied this spirit as much as the scientist who was in charge of the nuclear tests – M.A. Abdul Kalam. Almost all media accounts of the triumphant staging of the tests made sure to highlight the fact the 'MIT in his CV stood for Madras Institute of Technology'.[90] The bomb, like its creator, was a product of *swadeshi* technological prowess. It was this prowess that the Indian prime minister claimed to honour by declaring 11 May – the day of the first tests – as 'Technology Day'. Celebrating the tests as an 'endowment of our scientists and engineers' underscored a crucial component of India's postcolonial identity – a celebration of its technological capability, of its ability to 'be modern' on its own terms. By performing the nuclear tests, 'India' had been secured – at least momentarily – in the context of an acute neoliberal insecurity.

Conclusion

As Mark Laffey points out in his analysis of New Zealand's new security practices, 'the central drama of world politics is geoeconomic rather than geopolitical'.[91] A

[87] 'Nobody can question our right to go ahead with this type of testing if we want to . . . But, if some countries here and there talk in a way as if they are questioning our right, they have no business to do that.' Indrajit Gupta (CPM); 'The hands of the five nuclear weapons states are not clean. They have no business to pass judgment on us and no business to impose sanctions on us. If they do so, we will be with you to tighten our belts and march along with you to oppose those sanctions.' Natwar Singh (Congress-I), *Lok Sabha Debates*, 27 May 1998.

[88] Natwar Singh, Ibid.

[89] BM, 'BJP's search for short-cuts to political consolidation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30 May 1998, p. 1299.

[90] Visvanathan, 'Welcome to the Patriot Games', p.1226.

[91] Laffey, *Adding an Asian Strand,* p. 236.

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relationship to the global economy has always been a constitutive feature of state identity. Undeniably, the politics surrounding this relationship has become more intense given the spread of transnational liberalism in the past decade. In this context, it has become even more imperative for analysts to understand the links between the emergence of a neoliberal economic order and the security practices of states. Unfortunately, in their attempts to distance themselves from the 'materialist ontologies' and 'positivist epistemologies' that characterise mainstream security studies, liberal constructivist scholars have tended to ignore the constitutive effects of the global economy on state identities.

As I have shown in this essay, going back to overly-structuralist accounts cannot help address this lack. What is needed is a focus on the ways in which a particular political and historical legacy mediates the relationship between state identity, its reproduction in performative acts, and the global economy. In India, this legacy has to be understood in terms of the postcolonial identity-logic. A similar analysis could be applied to understand the security practices of other states, such as the United States. As even a brief perusal of the NSS makes obvious, the US is not simply structural 'core' or a 'hegemon'. It is an actor with a specific identity that emerges from a history of political struggles, which is itself rooted in an intimate relation to the global economy. In this context, truly making sense of national security entails a focus on the ways in which processes of globalisation (particularly economic globalisation) are [re]constituting the identities of nation-states – creating new forms of insecurities and giving rise to particular kinds of state security practices.

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