

There are multiple states which will become more important to Australia in the coming decades. Each has its own challenges and eccentricities. This submission will focus on one state which is likely to be important in Australia's future; India. We need to engage with India with consideration of India's cultural and political history to enhance future diplomatic and strategic relations.

With India being an emerging power and Australia a middle power within international system there is an imperative for both nations to play an important role within the Indo-Pacific Region.

India is an emerging power with a growing economy and a military which is undergoing force modernisation. This modernisation provides India with the capability to respond to a greater number of threats around its region. Additionally, the force modernisation includes the development of indigenously designed systems. There have been limited successes up to this point, however India is moving towards a viable system. It would be beneficial for Australia to continue to develop stronger relations with India. India's GDP has grown rapidly from US\$523.968 billion in 2002 to US\$2.095 trillion in 2015 according to World Bank figures. This rise in power, both economically and militarily, has resulted in conditions which are favourable to India.

While India's economic prosperity is increasing, there continue to be intense border conflicts between India and its neighbours, specifically China and Pakistan. These disputes have to be carefully monitored to ensure that tensions do not escalate, especially because all parties involved have nuclear capabilities. However, through

careful management it may be possible to maintain the situation. Additionally, as China becomes more important to Australia it will be necessary to develop relations with India in a way which does not appear to be a containment strategy against China. It is unlikely that India will develop a formal alliance with Australia due to holding a position of strategic autonomy. This needs to be respected and accepted by Australia.

India is a country with a population of 1.3 billion people. The social construction of India is built on a horizontal democracy and a vertical caste system. The contradiction between the major social structures is responsible in part for the unique character of India. While the general public is not specifically interested in the foreign or defence relations of their homeland there is a long history of political thought within India. Some of this has been articulated in epic poetry such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The *Arthashastra* was a text created to discuss statecraft and is the Indian equivalent of Machiavelli's *The Prince* but was written much earlier. These three texts and the *Vedas*, religious texts, continue to influence the thinking of the foreign policy elites. Other authors who have had an influential role in strategic thinking within India are Gandhi, Vivekananda and Nehru. These influential thinkers and texts form the centre of Indian political thought. As such, given the growing importance of India to Australia, as outlined above, there is utility in Australian diplomats, policy advisors and academics studying and understanding these important and influential texts.

Several of the world's religions originated in India and as such the philosophical depth found within Indian traditions are comparable to Western philosophy. It is important to consider the potential influence which Indian philosophical teachings may have on the West, especially Australia, if we encourage students and diplomats to study these traditions. An example of the importance in considering the Indian worldview can be seen in the Hindi word for India, *Bharat*, which translates into English as seeker of knowledge or enlightenment. This is important to consider when developing relations with India that the West sees India as a single concept while Indians understand their home to be comprised of multi-level complexity which is hidden when viewed through a Western lens.

There has been good work done by the Australian government in general, and DFAT in particular, when developing the relationship between Australia and India. However, there is still a lot of work that can be done to further improve the long-term relationship as India becomes more important to Australia in the coming decades.