Thematic section
Exclusion with Access: Performative Inclusivity in Global IR

What Happens When Non-Western Voices Enter International Relations? Kautilya and the Politics of Access

Nikhil Goyal
University of Toronto, Canada, ORCiD: 0009-0005-1631-8827, corresponding address: n.goyal@mail.utoronto.ca

Abstract
This paper shifts the focus from the familiar question of why is there no non-Western theory in International Relations (IR) to a process-oriented inquiry of what happens to non-Western perspectives when incorporated into IR? While critical IR scholarship has explored the way ethnocentrism, essentialism and empire shapes knowledge within IR, the mechanisms and processes of marginalisation that occur when non-Western voices are included in IR remain less understood. To address this gap, the paper conceptualises marginalisation not as a static outcome but as a dynamic process unfolding in stages. Drawing on the case of Kautilya, an Indian strategic thinker, and autoethnographic accounts of engaging with Kautilya as student, researcher and teaching assistant in both India and Canada, I develop the concept of 'exclusion with access'. I argue that 'exclusion with access' encompasses two key dynamics. First, 'exclusion with access' offers a lens to analyse the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in IR, particularly the superficiality, tokenism and symbolism of diversity and inclusion in the discipline. Second, 'exclusion with access' represents a distinctive stage of integrating non-Western thought into IR, one succeeding the stages of exclusion and formal exclusion. Ultimately, by proposing the lens of 'exclusion with

access', I propose challenging the binary of inclusion-exclusion in IR and exploring the specifics, conditions and mechanisms of integrating non-Western voices into IR.

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Introduction

Global IR and related approaches can be seen as responses to the foundational question, 'Why is there no non-Western theory in IR?' by Acharya and Buzan in 2007. Over the past fifteen years, critical scholarship in International Relations (IR) has attempted to rigorously answer this question, succeeding in explaining the ways by which ethnocentrism, essentialism and empire affect knowledge production in the discipline (Jones 2006; Persaud & Sajed 2018; Darby & Paolini 1994; Obendorf 2015; Vitalis 2018). Several approaches, such as relational IR (Qin 2018), worlding in IR (Tickner & Waever 2009) and others, validate these findings, highlighting how non-Western voices are marginalised and systematically neglected in the discipline. Despite the widespread use of the term 'marginalisation' in IR, little remains to be studied about the processes, mechanisms and specifics of marginalisation in IR and how it operates. For example, while it is true that questions of race, gender and colonialism (Chowdry & Nair 2002; Bell 2013; Parashar 2016; Chowdry & Ling 2010) have remained at the margins of the discipline, recent developments have shown an increasing engagement with these questions, be it via conferences, thematic issues, coursework, etc. This then invites the question, what should one make of 'marginalisation' in IR, given the evolving contours of the discipline? This contribution addresses this gap by moving beyond the well-known question 'Why is there no non-Western theory in IR?' to a specific and process-oriented question: 'What happens to non-Western voices when they are introduced in IR?'[1]

Given the depth of explanations for why there are no non-Western voices in IR, exploring the 'what' question becomes logical, as it allows for examining the multiple layers and meanings of marginalisation within the discipline. This line of inquiry becomes important for a) uncovering the hierarchies and nuances that exist among non-Western traditions themselves (Bilgin 2008) and b) for understanding positionality and its role in the construction of marginalised or non-marginalised in the discipline (Gani & Khan 2024). Second, the 'what' question allows us to conceptualise marginalisation not as a fixed outcome but as a

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1   In this context, 'non-West' is used as a shorthand to refer to critical traditions in IR, such as race, gender, queer, indigeneity and other marginalised perspectives within the discipline.

dynamic process unfolding through distinct steps, phases or cycles. Moreover, asking 'what happens' allows to move beyond the binary understanding of traditions and discourses as marginalised or non-marginalised by encouraging us to view marginalisation along the spectrum, encompassing formal inclusion, partial inclusion and ghettoisation stages.

In this context, I turn to the case of Kautilya, an Indian thinker popular for his work on statecraft, economics and public administration, for conceptualising 'exclusion with access' in IR.[2] It is important to note that the novelty of this contribution does not lie in its focus on Kautilya per se, as numerous works on the interpretation and application of Kautilya precede my own. Rather, the innovation lies in conceptualising 'exclusion with access' through my engagement with Kautilya as a student, researcher and teaching assistant in India and Canada, and through autoethnographic accounts of my experiences. Autoethnography as a methodology entails evaluating self as a source of knowledge and knowledge building (Brigg & Bleiker 2010). Autoethnography as a methodology is central in circumventing the self–other dichotomy or researcher–researched dichotomy, subjecting self to rigorous reflection and interrogation, and highlighting the inevitability of self in research (Löwenheim 2010; Doty 2010; Hamati-Ataya 2014). The roots of autoethnography can be traced to critical traditions of research in social sciences, such as feminism, postcolonialism, relationism and others, often writing about the personal experiences of exclusion and marginalisation and the need to be seen, heard and recognised (Brigg & Bleiker 2010). Autoethnography, therefore, offers space for developing connection with research and writing by increasing its intelligibility and receptivity to its readers (Doty 2010). Critiques of ethnography often focus on its perceived lack of rigour and its supposed self-indulgence as a research practice (Brigg & Bleiker 2010: 781). Such critiques, however, conflate science and knowledge into a singular enterprise, aligning with the neopositivist strand of science. These views overlook pluralist conceptualisations of science advanced by Jackson (2011, 2015), which recognise the distinctive role of reflexivity and reflexive methods in research methodology. Moreover, the predominant scepticism toward autoethnography arises from hegemonic approaches, as autoethnography challenges dominant ways of knowing by exposing the tensions between hegemonic expressions of power and the particularities of lived experience (Hamati-Ataya 2014).

In this essay, I argue that 'exclusion with access' represents two key dynamics. First, exclusion with access offers a lens to analyse the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in IR, particularly the superficiality, tokenism and symbolisms associ-

2   I would like to acknowledge Dr Jayashree Vivekanandan, 'The eyed side of the glass: transnational curation and the politics of exhibiting the Empire in a post-imperial world' for its thought-provoking engagement with ideas of inclusion and exclusion and inspiring this thematic section.

ated with diversity. Second, it represents a distinctive stage of integrating non-Western IR thought into IR led by contestations and struggles over inclusion of critical voices in the discipline. This third stage is characterised by the increased presence of marginalised perspectives in the discipline, with inclusion existing in appearance but not in substance. This stage presents a moment in critical scholarship when non-Western voices are granted access into IR but without power, recognition and freedom. To make the abovementioned points, I will first start by problematising the inclusion–exclusion binary in IR by looking at works on pedagogy in IR and political theory. In the next section, I present a conceptualisation of 'exclusion with access in IR' to think of inclusion–exclusion in the field. Finally, I reflect on personal experiences of reading Kautilya and coming to a similar conclusion of 'exclusion with access'.

Problematising the inclusion–exclusion binary

The debate on inclusion and exclusion in International Relations (IR) has a long and complex history, originating notably in the postcolonial critiques of the 1990s (Krishna 1993; Darby & Paolini 1994; George & Campbell 1990). Since then, the discourse has evolved, intersecting with several major epistemological and ontological divides within the discipline, such as the positivist versus post-positivist, materialist versus ideational and Western versus non-Western dichotomies. Central to these are questions of knowledge production, such as whose knowledge is recognised, how it is constructed and what approaches are valid for understanding global realities (Acharya & Buzan 2007, 2017; Lundborg & Vaughan-Williams 2015; Witt et al. 2022). These debates have catalysed in the emergence of diverse and innovative approaches to IR, calling for the exploration of new research terrains or rethinking the boundaries/relevance of the discipline itself (Acharya 2014; Tickner & Blaney 2012; Layug & Hobson 2022). While these questions have always constituted the heart of discussion of IR discipline, the discussion of non-inclusion and inclusion have become prominent since the postmodernist and postpositivist turn in IR and the changing power configurations in the international system – i.e. the rise of Asia, the Global South and BRICS. These developments and discussions have put non-inclusion back on the table, pursued rigorously since the 2000s. Despite the proliferation of these critical interventions, a persistent limitation remains – i.e. under theorisation of inclusion in IR. Most critiques of Western IR do not sufficiently interrogate the meaning of inclusion, nor do they address the dynamics that follow once alternative approaches are included within the discipline. This points to a need for nuanced analysis that moves beyond the binary of inclusion and exclusion and scrutinises the politics of practices of recognition, validation and marginalisation in knowledge production in IR. To advance this argument, it is instructive to turn to scholarship on pedagogy in IR and political theory, which illustrates the inadequacy of simplistic approaches of inclusion.

For instance, Stienstra (2000) makes a valuable contribution by arguing that teaching sensitive issues such as female genital mutilation requires more than incorporating gendered perspectives into reading lists. She emphasises the necessity of engaging with broader issues like cultural narrowness, the nature of resources used and the pedagogical techniques that shape learning (Stienstra 2000: 241). Drainville (2003) extends this critique by warning against the alienation that can occur when International Studies is taught abstractly, removed from the lived realities of students and communities. He advocates for pedagogy that is attuned to material realities and recognises the political character of teaching practices (Drainville 2003: 245), resisting the tendency to merely 'add voices' to the discipline. In the context of postcolonial IR, Behera (2007) underscores the structural challenges faced by scholars in the Global South, particularly the expectation to either align with Western epistemic standards or risk marginalisation. Her work reveals how systemic biases continue to frame the terms of participation within the discipline (Behera 2007: 359). Complementarily, Hagmann and Biersteker (2014) call attention to the gaps between critical scholarship and teaching practices in IR, advocating a shift away from publications analysis as a marker of progress in the discipline to investigating ways of teaching IR in everyday academic contexts. Andrews (2020) provides empirical support for this, revealing that non-Western, feminist, Marxist and postcolonial approaches remain marginalised even within top graduate schools around the world. He emphasises that even where their perspectives are included, they are often exoticised or peripheral, reinforcing existing hierarchies within the discipline (Andrews 2020: 377). Discussing the African context, Andrews highlights the stark dependency of African IR syllabi on Western intellectual traditions or the absence of structured introductory courses in many African institutions (Andrews 2020: 377). This broader pedagogical–publishing divide, as noted by Ettinger (2020), reinforces the pedagogy and scholarship divide with the relationship between critical research and teaching remaining weak (Ettinger 2020: 344). Together, these interventions demonstrate that discussions around inclusion and exclusion in IR obscure embedded forms of epistemic politics than elaborate the same. Therefore, it can be concluded that what is often celebrated as 'diversity' or 'inclusion' in IR remains entangled in processes of marginalisation, exoticisation and tokenisation in the IR discipline.

Another factor in understanding the inadequacy of the inclusion–exclusion debate is the varied disciplinary understanding. An example is IR practices in the Arab world where IR, despite American influence, has a disciplinary practice in the region of American dominance with localisation and innovation of pedagogy – i.e. syllabi and scholarship (Darwich et al. 2021: 414). This brings to attention the spatiality of discussions of inclusion and exclusion in IR and the need for specificity in inclusion–exclusion discussion and asking the question: for whom? Another factor that explains the fragility of the inclusion–exclusion debate is

discussions on 'what is IR?' Thaddeus Jackson (2017) offers a compelling analysis when he asks IR readers and practitioners to move beyond the conversation from 'This is/is not IR' to 'Why is this IR?' Furthermore, he claims:

> The open-ended question rather than the categorical statement allows for responses and dialogues, rather than procrustean efforts to fit non-traditional objects, approaches, and orientations into prefabricated definitions or efforts to storm the academic castle and throw out the rulers, only to establish new rulers in their places. (Jackson 2017: 35)

The analysis blends with Kamola's (2020) argument about the reification of IR as an object with expectations mounted on critical work to transform IR into something while ignoring the material relations that organise its disciplinary practices (Kamola 2020: 249). On critical approaches and Global IR itself, Kamola finds these critiques hard to reach their full potential given the neoliberal environments in which they exist (Kamola 2020: 265). The struggle of decolonisation Kamola describes is not only of including new voices, approaches and lenses to IR but also of remaking the discipline by engaging with the realities of higher education around us (Kamola 2020: 270). These claims highlight another central limitation of the inclusion–exclusion debate, one that is of believing that adding new voices in IR is sufficient for unmaking the discipline (Ettinger 2020). All of this makes one rethink that boundaries of inclusion–exclusion in IR circumvent simplistic understandings of diversity and plurality of voices in the representative sense and include more substantive engagement with materiality, context and space (Drainville 2003; Stienstra 2000; Kamola 2020).

Alongside pedagogical research in IR, another field that challenges the inclusion–exclusion debate is political theory, in particular discussions on cross-cultural comparison and dialogue as a tool for deparochialisation of political thought. Highlighting the limits of simplistic cross-cultural comparisons, Jenco (2007) challenges simplistic inclusion–exclusion debates, arguing that merely incorporating non-Western content into Western theoretical frameworks risks reinforcing ethnocentrism (Jenco 2007: 741). She proposes a 'methods-centred approach' that prioritises non-Western interpretive practices, engaging with them as sources of both substantive and methodological insight (Jenco 2007: 741–742). Through detailed analysis of Chinese thinkers Wang Yangming and Kang Youwei, Jenco (2007) illustrates how practices like Wang's 'study of the mind-and-heart' (Jenco 2007: 746) and Kang's 'study of the classics' (Jenco 2007: 750) offer alternative epistemologies grounded in their own cultural and linguistic contexts. These methods, which involve embodied, exegetical engagement with classical texts, reveal non-Western traditions as sites of knowledge production, not merely objects of inclusion (Jenco 2007: 751–752). Similarly, Tully's (2020) approach to 'dialogue' as a tool for deparochialisation presents an interesting

standpoint for considering inclusion and exclusion in political thought. His concept of dialogue, especially the distinction between 'genuine' and 'false' dialogue, plays a central role in illustrating the dangers of self-serving and deceptive dialogue, risking an understanding of the other on its own terms (Tully 2020: 28–31). Tully (2020), drawing on Gadamer, distinguishes 'genuine dialogue' from 'strategic-instrumental' and 'deliberative-imperative' dialogues (Tully 2020: 28), with 'genuine dialogue' standing for 'openness and receptivity' (Tully 2020: 26) and 'false' dialogue for disingenuousness and deception. Therefore, Tully's (2020) focus on dialogue and deparochialisation presents a novel way of thinking about inclusion–exclusion in IR. Instead of understanding inclusion as adding voices and exclusion as erasing one, it makes one think of inclusion–exclusion through the lens of dialogue and the characteristics of that dialogue. This approach helps circumvent the 'us' vs 'them' dichotomy and moves towards an intersubjective understanding of inclusion–exclusion. In sum, the above discussion highlights the inadequacies of mainstream understandings of inclusion and exclusion in IR and the need for engagement with specificities, dynamics and differences in understanding inclusion-exclusion in IR.

Conceptualising 'exclusion with access'

As established above, the inclusion–exclusion debate is not necessarily helpful given the broad stroke characterisation of inclusion–exclusion in discussion and the challenges of considering the two together. While 'exclusion with access' comes across as a new term, I believe the term shares resonances to discussions of tokenism, ghettoisation and partial inclusion in social sciences. Blending some of the earlier discussions and the specifics of IR, I propose an understanding of 'exclusion with access', both as a concept and a process.

As a concept, I propose understanding 'exclusion with access' as a standpoint for interrogating the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in IR and thinking about the two together. It is useful for escaping the binary of the inclusion–exclusion debate within IR and critiquing discussions of diversity in IR. Furthermore, the concept is helpful in focusing attention on practices of tokenism and symbolism in IR and rethinking the meaning of inclusion and exclusion in IR. 'Exclusion with access', therefore, offers us the lens for investigating the working of power in discussions of inclusion–exclusion in IR, prompting one to question if visibility alone is a sufficient bar for inclusion or if we could think of visibility as a mask for pacifying demands of disciplinary transformation. Emphasising the superficiality of 'inclusion' in IR, the concept of 'exclusion with access' highlights the need for engaging meaningfully with questions of difference, critique and epistemic boundaries to think about deparochialisation and decolonisation in IR reflexively. The analytical framing of 'exclusion with access' offers a useful device for dissecting inclusion from empowerment, and access from representation.
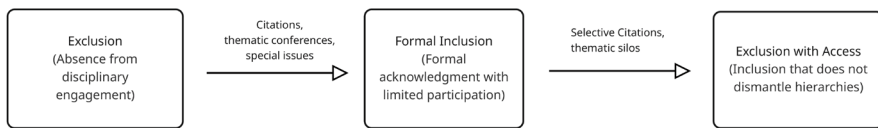
Beyond understanding 'exclusion with access' as a conceptual tool, I also propose an understanding of 'exclusion with access' as a stage in integrating non-Western thought into IR scholarship, one succeeding the stages of exclusion and partial integration. To start, the first stage of non-western scholarship can be called 'exclusion', characterised by the dismissal of non-Western voices in IR due to lack of scientific rigour, objectivity and relevance. The exclusion is justified by the support of Eurocentric/positivist paradigms in the discipline and the portrayal of non-Western voices as unscientific, particular and localistic. The second stage of scholarship is 'formal inclusion', where paradigm/research shifts cause contestations and struggles for inclusion of non-Western voices in the discipline, creating space for critical voices in the discipline. This stage of having a seat at the table or a voice in the system is supported by developments like thematic sections, special issues and acknowledgements, marking the inclusion of non-Western voices in the discipline. However, having a seat at the table does not translate into integration – i.e. meaningful inclusion and disciplinary transformation.

The inclusion of non-Western voices in IR is often marked by disciplinary containment, with non-Western voices formally present but with circumscribed influence. This represents the third stage of 'exclusion with access', where the presence of non-Western voices neither dismantles disciplinary hierarchies of positivism, rationalism and Eurocentrism, nor challenges their fixation to specific journals, special issues or comparative cases. Moreover, while much of the discussion on 'exclusion with access' centres on structural hierarchies between the Global North and South, it is important to recognise that similar hierarchies also exist within the Global South itself. Certain intellectual traditions, regions or linguistic communities often enjoy greater visibility and legitimacy than others, shaping whose voices are amplified and whose remain marginalised. Recognising these intra-South dynamics shows that 'exclusion with access' operates along multiple, intersecting hierarchies rather than a simple North–South binary.

The differing feature between 'exclusion with access' and 'formal inclusion' is the difference in the degree of intentionality, with the former marked by a strategic espousal of representation and diversity, and the latter marked by the enthusiastic stage of welcome and reception. Access therefore becomes a mask for hiding hierarchies in knowledge, characterised by intellectual silos and silencing, with non-Western voices recognised not for influencing the pedagogical and research priorities of the discipline but for their representational use. This poses a challenge for critical scholarship in IR with increased access on one hand and limited epistemic influence on the other, inviting questions on relevance, efficacy and the utility of critical voices in IR. In sum, 'exclusion with access' captures a stage in scholarship where critical voices are neither outside

the discipline nor empowered enough to alter its foundations. Critical voices within IR have had limited success in influencing transformative outcomes. Despite the epistemological advancements of critical scholarship, the translation of these perspectives into classroom discussions or introduction into the mainstream remains severely limited (Hagmann and Biersteker, 2014; Ettinger, 2020). Even in instances where critical approaches are incorporated into the mainstream, they are often constrained by practices of othering or essentialism. They either face assimilation into the mainstream frameworks because of the terms set by the Global North or they are marginalised as alternatives or peripheral in discussions (Behera 2007; Acharya & Buzan 2007, 2017). The disconnect between scholarly advancements and pedagogical and policy influence highlights the powerlessness of critical scholarship in pursuing deparochialisation. Recognising this is essential not to dismiss progress, but to diagnose the limitations and challenges of existing mechanisms and thinking in the meaning of decolonisation and pluralism in IR.

Figure 1: Exclusion with Access

Source: Author

Engagement with Kautilya: Reflections and experiences

To better understand the workings of exclusion, inclusion and 'exclusion with access' in IR I now turn to my own experiences of learning and teaching Kautilya in India and Canada. To give some background, Kautilya, also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta, was an ancient Indian scholar, strategist and statesman traditionally credited as the chief adviser to Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the Mauryan Empire (c. 317–293 BCE). He is renowned for the *Arthaśāstra*, a seminal work on statecraft, economics and warfare. While popular tradition links him directly to the Mauryan court, scholarship suggests the text may be a layered compilation from different periods, with portions possibly added centuries later (Gautam 2013: 39). Kautilya within IR has often been understood as a realist, alongside thinkers like Thucydides, Clausewitz, Machiavelli and Morgenthau (Liebig 2013; Gray 2014) with parallels drawn between theories of the *Mandala* (circle of states), *Matsya Nyaya* (law of the big fish) and *Shadgunyas* (principles of foreign policy) and ideas like anarchy, balance of power and prudence in politics. While particularities of these ideas remain challenged in scholarly works, (see Shahi 2014; Dutta & Dadbhade 2014; etc.) the predominant perceptions of Kautilya remain similar to those that have been presented.

My engagement with Kautilya began in August 2020 when I started a Master of Arts in Diplomacy, Law and Business in India. The degree was my first formal entry into IR, as IR constitutes a specialised degree in India, offered predominantly at the master's level. As an enthusiast uninitiated into the discipline, my introduction to IR began with training in the isms (realism, liberalism and constructivism) and a survey of themes like feminism, critical security, Marxism, among others. During the time I pursued my degree, there was no mention or inclusion of Kautilya in course manuals or in class discussion. My introduction to Kautilya was accidental as I heard his name during a Zoom webinar. The webinar was intended to recruit research interns for a research centre, with Kautilya being one of the thinkers included in a research pitch for the project 'Indian Political and International Thinking'. Listening to Kautilya, a familiar reference motivated me to join the centre and to be associated with the research project. My interest in joining the project stemmed from my fascination with learning about Kautilya and exploring links between Kautilya and IR.

While serving as the research assistant on the project, I began looking into IR – in particular the relationship between Kautilya and IR. Before starting, my preliminary thoughts of Kautilya oscillated between the two extremes: exclusion and inclusion. On one end, there rested a belief that Kautilya could be a possible case of exclusion in IR because of the absences of his name in the courses I audited or the difference in contexts of the 3rd Century BCE and the 21st Century. On the other end, there also rested a belief that Kautilya could possibly be included in IR in India given the grandeur and memory associated with the person locally. One central observation that emerged from researching Kautilya and IR was that scholarship on Kautilya has grown rapidly over the past decade compared to before. Yet, the overall body of work could be said to be limited when compared to political thinkers like Machiavelli, Hobbes and Plato. Second, there exists two dominant strands of scholarship on Kautilya. The first is the generalist account on Kautilya, the second is the specialised accounts. The generalist accounts on Kautilya were characterised by attempts at translating or simplifying ideas to new audiences for mass or general consumption (for example Boesche 2003; Vittal 2015; Jha 2016; Singh 2016) of enquiry. On the other, specialised accounts of knowledge on Kautilya are characterised by discussions that go beyond simplistic ideas of translating his words to exploring questions of method, history and interpretation (for example, Gautam 2013; Olivelle 2013; McClish & Olivelle 2012; McClish, 2019). The former dominates the latter and constitutes the base for the day-to-day/popular understanding of Kautilya with the public and in rhetoric. Another observation on the scholarship on Kautilya is the attempts at comparing Kautilya to Western thinkers and their likes as a means to reassert legitimacy of Kautilya as a thinker (for example, Sil 1985; Boesche 2002; Dutta & Dadbhade 2014). Alongside this, a reactive and an emerging scholarship has taken shape that actively tries

to dislodge the assumptions and parallels of Kautilya with Western thinkers by advocating an understanding of Kautilya on its own terms (for example, Shahi 2014, 2019; Bisht 2019; Gray 2014).

Starting with exclusions, Kautilya as a thinker has not made inroads into the IR classroom, as it is omitted from both syllabi and classroom discussions. This is not to discount that there are spaces wherein Kautilya is discussed and made part of classroom training; however, this does not seem to be a pan-Indian reality. On the other, it is more common to find Kautilya in Political Science syllabi of universities, offered as an elective under the broader course titled Indian Political Thought.[3] For example, my own classroom experience had nothing to offer on Kautilya as Kautilya was neither on the reading list nor explicitly discussed. Moreover, my attempts at engaging with Kautilya or his work was met with either indifference or passing remarks about his work. However, there was no deep discussion about why, how or in what ways Kautilya is relevant to IR or his relevance to the discipline. Even the electives I pursued, that offered critical perspectives on IR, did not include him in any meaningful way. What I encountered during my master's was the dominance of simplistic perceptions of Kautilya (folklore, stories and popular culture) rather than nuanced understandings of his thought.

In contrast to this pedagogical neglect and exclusion of Kautilya in India, a parallel development I observed during my master's in India was the resurrection of Kautilya as a thinker and seminal figure in international politics, economics and public administration. For instance, there were efforts at portraying/recognising Kautilya as the bedrock of Indian strategic thought (Kamal 2023) or as foundation of Indian foreign policy (Liebig 2013). There were also attempts to reinterpret the past by linking Kautilya to heads of state; one case in point is Nehru who mentions Kautilya in his book 'Discovery of India' to assert the timelessness of Kautilya in India's past. Alongside this, I also witnessed the growing invocation of Kautilya over the past decade, be it in naming institutions, events, conferences or fellowships. For example, the think tank India Foundation offers the Kautilya Fellow Programme to foster conversations and research on Kautilya. Similarly, the Indian Ministry of Finance and NITI Aayog organises the annual Kautilya Economic Enclave to deliberate India's geopolitical, economic and technological rise and to articulate India's long-term leadership vision. The establishment of the Kautilya School of Public Policy is another example of invoking Kautilya in attempts to reform public policy education in India and contextualise policymaking to domestic needs. References to Kautilya in public speeches, journalistic writings and policy documents have increased over the last decade, with senior diplomats, ministers and heads of state invoking Kautilya in their speech-acts (Liebig 2013).

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3   I hereby draw attention to the artificial divide observed between IR and Political Science in India, with departments of IR existing independently.

Much of this renewed interest is linked to India's geopolitical rise and efforts to shape a distinct identity of India in global politics. It is to this end that Kautilya is used symbolically as a token of national pride and means for articulating India's position domestically and internationally. This resurgence is visible in academia as well, with a growing number of publications, conferences and multi-volume works such as 'Indigenous Historical Knowledge: Kautilya and His Vocabulary' on Kautilya. Transnational interest in Kautilya can also be observed from collaborative projects, such as those between the Institute of Defence and Strategic Analysis (IDSA) in New Delhi and the South Asia Institute (SAI) at Heidelberg, Germany, or the one between IDSA and the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) in Singapore, exploring Kautilya in a transcultural perspective.

While one can observe simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Kautilya in India, can inclusion and exclusion alone explain the developments around Kautilya? My experiences suggest that Kautilya's introduction into public, academic and policy discourse cannot be understood simply by categories of exclusion and inclusion alone and are exemplary of 'exclusion with access'. Kautilya's incorporation into public, academic and policy domains follows the trajectory of exclusion, formal inclusion and exclusion with access, unfolding through the layered process of symbolic recognition, selective incorporation and academic containment. The proliferation of conferences, fellowships and policy references to Kautilya indicates a deliberate move to reclaim indigenous intellectual tradition and asserting a distinct identity of India in global politics. On the other, the aversion to Kautilya in teaching raises concerns about the meaningfulness of his inclusion and the scope of critical research on the thinker. The symbolic inclusion of Kautilya limits the possibilities on what Kautilya could mean for Indian IR, as strategic inclusion contains the epistemic influence of the thinker. All these characteristics, features and processes reflect the conceptualisation of 'exclusion with access' presented above – a space where inclusion is celebrated yet constrained, acknowledged yet instrumentalised.

I would now like to draw attention to my experience researching and teaching Kautilya in Canada. To start with, it is important to note that Kautilya is not as widely known in Canada as in India, except to those situated in South Asian studies, departments of religion or East Asian culture. This is to say that Kautilya is a case of exclusion in Canada given the dominance of the 'canon' and European thinkers in the curriculum. My engagement with Kautilya in Canada occurred on two fronts, first as a research assistant and, second, as a teaching assistant. As a research assistant, I was involved in a project aimed at deparochialising the political theory teaching; my role was to prepare a resource guide for instructors interested in teaching Kautilya. The task for my position included introducing and explaining Kautilya to pedagogues, while highlighting the thinker's relevance and potential for integration in syllabi. This experience in research differed from

my earlier experience researching Kautilya in India, where limited access and guidance restricted the depth of my understanding. Another factor that shaped my engagement with Kautilya was my situatedness in pedagogical and epistemological debates, enabling me to understand epistemic and ontological questions surrounding Kautilya.

Second, my engagement with Kautilya included introducing Kautilya in a 100-level course in Politics and IR. Kautilya is a part of two undergraduate courses in my department: first a 100-level course in Politics and IR, and second a 200-level course in Political Theory. Within the 100-level course Kautilya is introduced alongside Plato under discussions of propaganda as a source to explain how states exercise control. On the 200 level, Kautilya is introduced directly through first hand translations for exploring ideas of authority, state and society in his work. The 100-level course that I assist uses Kautilya in a representational way, adding diversity to sources of ancient and classical wisdom. Kautilya in this course is introduced as a Hindu/Indian thinker to illustrate for learners that discussions of statecraft predate centuries and that they have been part of political life across space and time. The resource used to introduce Kautilya in the classroom is an Oxford Learning biographical entry of the thinker. On the other hand, the second course engages with translations of Kautilya, such as 'King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kautilya's Arthasastra, a new annotated translation' by Olivelle (2013), which encourages students to read the thinker and understand his thought on its own terms. The approach of this course is not to introduce Kautilya as a look-alike of a Western contemporary but to acquaint students with plurality of thought and interpretations of politics for reaching their own understandings of just and good in society.

While dominance of Western canon and training explains the exclusion of Kautilya in Canada, the openness and receptiveness to Kautilya can be best understood via debates on deparochialisation, decolonisation and creolisation of political science in the West. Long decades of postcolonial, feminist, Marxist and decolonial scholarship have pointed to the Eurocentrism of Political Science and the need to widen the scope of the discipline via different means, such as inclusion, abandonment, contrapuntal reading, erasure of disciplinary boundaries and others, to counter the dominance of the West in Political Science. To these ends, a number of organisations, groups, scholarship and institutions have emerged, trying to broaden the scope and practice of Political Science in the West and Canada. Universities and departments to this end have offered appointments, hirings and funding for projects for teaching post-colonial thought, indigenous thought, comparative political theory and others. The majority of non-western thinkers included in Canada has been an outcome of movements at deparochialising political science and the increasing student interest in learning non-Western political thought. The strategies of inclusion of non-Western thought, however,

differ across the aisle with pedagogies having a textual and comparative understanding of Kautilya to pedagogies using the thinker representationally.

Once again, can categories of inclusion and exclusion explain engagements with Kautilya in Canada? I would argue that concepts of inclusion and exclusion are insufficient to explain engagements with Kautilya in Canada. Often, exclusion and inclusion are used authoritatively as positions on discourses, speaking rarely on the journeys and processes underlying the inclusion/exclusion. Moreover, exclusion and inclusion fail to explain the simultaneity of processes of inclusion and exclusion at one time, turning a blind eye to co-constitution of processes. Therefore, 'exclusion with access' best explains experiences of engagement with Kautilya as it highlights the visible yet marginal space Kautilya occupies in Canada. To note, 'exclusion with access' operates differently in the Canadian context as Kautilya is neither a national symbol nor a part of public life in Canada. However, this does not mean that 'exclusion with access' does not apply in Canada. We can observe 'exclusion with access' playing out in the academic sphere in Canada, where Kautilya occasionally appears in specialised seminars, guest lectures or thematic conferences, with his presence rarely translating into integration within core curricula or theoretical debates. This reflects the conceptualisation of 'exclusion with access', where access granted through selective invitations, academic acknowledgments or niche research projects remains circumscribed, preventing any meaningful disruption of Eurocentric disciplinary hierarchies. In the Canadian context, the symbolic recognition of Kautilya as part of broader efforts toward deparochialising or diversifying coexists with institutional and epistemic structures that limit his influence to comparative or area studies rather than framing him crucial for theory. The result is carefully managed inclusion, one that satisfies calls for pluralism and representation while ensuring the unchanging theoretical and pedagogical core.

Conclusion

To conclude, the engagement with Kautilya in India and Canada reveal an 'exclusion with access' of Kautilya in both political science and social science. Despite inclusion in pedagogy or scholarship in India and Canada, the engagement with Kautilya is constrained and limited, by not being subject to freedom, recognition or power like others such as Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Carr or others. Most discussions situate Kautilya into either the realist or the Hindu camp, circumscribing its application. 'Exclusion with access' provides a critical lens to problematise the inclusion of Kautilya in Western and non-Western contexts and to probe the conditions, forces and mechanisms of incorporation/exclusion of non-Western thought. This helps in conceptualising non-Western thought in scholarship, pedagogy and politics, inviting scholars to assess whether the visibility of non-

Western thinkers contributes to structural change in knowledge systems or if it merely satisfies diversity goals. It pushes us to question whether inclusion that does not disturb the dominant paradigm is inclusion or merely a sophisticated mechanism of containment. The concept thus holds relevance beyond Kautilya, offering broader applicability in assessing the ways power, representation and epistemology shape global knowledge systems.

While the concept of 'exclusion with access' provides a useful standpoint to examine the conditional inclusion of non-Western thought in IR, it is not without limitations. First, the term risks being conflated with other concepts such as tokenism or symbolic inclusion, which, although related, do not fully capture the strategic, structural and epistemic containment of knowledge. Second, the idea of a 'stage' in the integration of non-Western thought may inadvertently imply a linear or teleological progression, which may not hold across all contexts or thinkers. Third, while this paper reflects on Kautilya, the application of the concept to other thinkers, traditions or geographies would require further contextualisation and comparative analysis. Moreover, the framework primarily draws from interpretive and critical traditions in IR, and its applicability across positivist or post-positivist paradigms remains underexplored.

Future research could explore how 'exclusion with access' plays out across different disciplines beyond IR, such as anthropology, economics or development studies. Comparative studies involving other non-Western thinkers, such as Ibn Khaldun, Confucius or other philosophers, could further refine the concept and its relevance. An interesting area of intervention in this debate could be comparison between the Chinese school of IR and debates on 'exclusion with access', in particular the self-identification of Chinese IR as a school in the discipline, as opposed to attempts of contained inclusion and containment elsewhere. A comparative study could reveal insights into the efficacy and productivity of respective approaches and discussions of academic decolonisation and deparochialisation. Similarly, a comparative study on the Chinese school of IR and Indian IR can reveal to what extent ideology, power and position in the international system shapes the trajectory of 'schooling' or 'exclusion with access' in IR. Additionally, empirical studies on curriculum design, publication patterns and institutional dynamics in both the Global North and South could provide concrete evidence of how 'access' is managed and negotiated. There is also scope to explore how digital platforms, open access repositories and transnational academic networks may either reinforce or challenge the phenomenon of 'exclusion with access'. Finally, interdisciplinary engagement with critical pedagogy, sociology of knowledge and postcolonial theory may offer valuable insights into how to meaningfully move beyond mere access toward epistemic transformation.

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Nikhil Goyal is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, Canada, specialising in International Relations (IR) and Development Studies. His research focusses on pedagogy and IR, examining the pedagogy of IR in India. His other research interests include postcolonial theory, critical IR, and debates on methodology in IR. Before his PhD, Nikhil completed a Master's in Political Theory at the University of Toronto, Canada, and a Master's in Diplomacy, Law, and Business at O.P. Jindal Global University, India.

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