

Identity, Culture, and National Interest: A Pragmatic Application of Constructivist Theory to the Lhotshampa Expulsion

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ABSTRACT

The Bhutanese state has constructed their identity, domestically and internationally, against the Lhotshampa people, a broadly Hindu Bhutanese-Nepali people, who feature as the ‘*Other*’ in the process of identity construction. This group of marginalised people has been expelled from Bhutan through ethnic cleansing. The monarchy and ruling elite see the Lhotshampa as a threat to their power and have imposed policies designed to homogenise Bhutan. We explore this Bhutanese construction of identity. Through the case studies of Bhutanese-Nepalese and Bhutanese-Lhotshampa relations, we review the literature on both ‘critical’ and ‘conventional’ constructivism with focus on identity in the domestic and international spheres. The primary question of investigation is to what extent theorists can reconcile critical and conventional constructivism through the case study of Bhutanese national identity and the type of insights that gives us into the nation of Bhutan and its identity. We attempt to reconcile two complementary but ontologically differing theories through a pragmatic approach. Constructivist theorists in the realm of identity are deployed to explain how the Bhutanese government has acted. We find that through Bhutan, a pragmatic approach can be taken to partially reconcile the constructivisms to understand identity domestically and internationally. The findings suggest identity is central to Bhutan exercising its sovereignty, to the detriment of the Lhotshampa. The government claims

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homogeneity at home, providing a domestic base of control to pursue international interests; interests which reinforce that identity of homogeneity.

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Introduction

The ethnic cleansing of the Lhotshampa people in the 1980s and the 1990s started primarily with the Bhutan Citizenship Act of 1985 and the census undertaken in 1988 by the state which both helped to deprive many Lhotshampa people of citizenship. The King recognising that Bhutan only had “its culture and identity” pursued policies such as that of “One Nation, One People” (One Nation), which included ending the teaching of the Nepali language in schools and enforced adherence to Bhutanese social customs (Hutt, 2011 & Theys, 2016). These policies resulted in over 100,000 refugees, with some remaining in Nepal, being taken in by third countries (Rizal, 2004). On the surface, Bhutan actively weakened state, however, the country created and reinforced an identity in the name of national interest.

Through examining identity, constructivism can give key insights into aspects governing state actions including the events prior (Cho, 2012). Identity, after all, “in telling you who you are, strongly [implies] a particular set of interests or preferences” (Hopf, 1998). Identities, however, are not fixed (Campbell, 1992); they are “shaped by the social milieu in which they live” (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001). Constructivists concern themselves with understanding the developmental process of this ‘social milieu’. Constructivism is broadly dividable into two: “critical” and “conventional” (Hopf, 1998). Critical writers reject the idea that state identity and insecurity could somehow be “pre-given” and instead posit that they are mutually constitutive as “state identity

enables crises” and “crises enable state identity” (Cho, 2009 & Weldes, 1999). They take state identity as something to be investigated to help explain insecurity. Conventional constructivists, to examine “top–down/deductive mechanisms and causal relationships between actors, norms, interests, and identity”, label the state as “ontologically prior to the state system” (Checkel, 2008). These differences in focus lead them to look at identity domestically and internationally respectively. The constructivisms focus on two different locations for state identity and action, as well as this they both have advantages in their respective application. In treating the two as “different analytical frameworks”, we will attempt to utilise this pragmatic approach to explore expressions of Bhutanese identity domestically and internationally (Cho, 2012).

The primary goal here is to outline a possible pragmatic approach through the case study of Bhutanese national identity and the type of insights that gives us into the nation of Bhutan and its identity. We first explore relevant constructivist theory and the form a pragmatic approach would take, before moving onto critical and conventional applications.

The Pragmatic Approach

Both constructivisms lean towards either the internal or external configurations of state identity which, when utilised together, can provide a pragmatic approach. In doing so we can gain insights into how identity politics surrounding a state affect security or diplomacy in international relations (Cho, 2012). Critical constructivism can explain how identity themselves can often produce insecurity, whereas conventional constructivism shows the role identity plays in connecting “environmental structures and interests” (Cho, 2009 & Katzenstein, 1996). A pragmatic approach involves selecting aspects of both critical and conventional constructivist theory based on their merits. This approach seeks not to synthesise the two branches on an ontological level but to use each to investigate internal or external identities of a state.

Critical theorists hold that the state has “no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (Campbell, 1992). The state, as well as identity, is in constant production and reproduction that can never be completed (Ibid). If stopped, this would expose the lack of foundations, and ultimately the stasis death of the state (Ibid). Identity, additionally to critical constructivists, “can only be established in relation to what it is not”, there cannot be an *Us* without an *Other* (Weldes, 1999). This difference and the presence of the *Other* to an *Us* thus acts as mutually constitutive in forming identity. Insecurity is also a by-product of this process whereby *Otherness* transforms difference into a threat to the self (Ibid).

Campbell places state identity as the “outcome of exclusionary practices in which resistant elements to a secure identity on the ‘inside’ are linked through a discourse of ‘danger’ with threats identified and located on the outside ” (Campbell, 1992). In these exclusionary practices, we can see two primary ways through which this is achieved, ‘foreign policy’ and Foreign Policy. ‘Foreign policy’, in the first sense, is any practices which differentiate or exclude, and as a result turn subjects into the *Other* or foreign. This differentiation and exclusion informs the activities of Foreign Policy. Our focus, however, is the internal construction of state identity, but in Campbell’s work Foreign Policy is the most privileged of the “discourses of danger” which tell citizens what they are meant to fear and at the same time creates the dangers in which state identity is situated (Ibid).

In further explaining the importance of “discourses of danger”, Campbell states that danger or threat requires enforcing boundaries on a group (Ibid). Danger in this sense is of paramount importance when it comes to the boundary making processes of the two types of foreign policy. “A notion of what ‘we’ are is intrinsic to an understanding of what ‘we’ fear”; this distinction does not only create a community with an internal/external divide,

it aids in creating “a moral space of superior/inferior” (Ibid). Through ordering the world via discourses of danger and foreign policies, ambiguity can be constrained or “disciplined ... in terms of the spatial form of inside/outside” (Ibid). The outside is seen as contradictory, juxtaposed, and conflicting to the inside, the outside challenges the “purity” of the ordered (Ibid).

Weldes, through similar analytical tools to Campbell, argues that “the construction of crises ... occurs in tandem with the construction and reconstruction of state identity” (Weldes, 1999). These processes are mutually constitutive, “state identity enables crises” and “crises enable state identity” (Ibid). State identity provides the target of said crisis as “after all, crises must be crises for some subject” (ibid). A “crisis thus depends on the discursively constituted identity of the state” (ibid). Crises in enabling state identity provides the facilitation for the internal consolidation of state power. This is done via three important processes: “the building of state machineries”, “[enhancing] the control exercised by a state over its population”, and “[refining] and [elaborating] the relations of power within the state itself” (ibid). These processes secure state identity and rearticulate what is the *Other* and the *Us* (ibid).

Conventional scholars focus more on the external affects of state identity, like Barnett who explores “the relationship between identity and alliance formation” (Barnett, 1996). Identity, here, can provide attenuated links between states and Barnett “asserts that state identity offers theoretical leverage over the issue of the construction of threat and the choice of alliance partners” (Ibid). He states, regarding alliance formation, that “identity, in short, makes some partners more attractive than others” (Ibid). Secondly, which is where we can utilise his work, that identity “also suggests that the maintenance of that alliance”, or here cordial relations, “can be dependent on the parties’ mutual identification” (Ibid). Adversely, “a change in identity can undermine [an] alliance’s foundation” (Ibid).

Wendt, on the other hand, focuses on the international state structure and how identity can act as a conduit for said structure and national interest (Wendt, 1999). National interests or “the reproduction requirements” of states are impacted by “the international system” (Ibid). Wendt delineates four types of identity; however, we are only concerned with his first type, the foundationalist, more internal ‘corporate’ identity (Ibid). The corporate identity like the nation state itself in this thinking is “ontologically prior to the state system” (Ibid). “People and land” constitute this form of identity and this allows us to focus on how actors can reproduce other aspects of its identity abroad (Cho, 2012 & Wendt, 1999). For Wendt identities “imply but are not reducible to interests” as “an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is” (Ibid). The utility provided here is that we can have a focus on how identity has been constructed through state relations and to examine that impact on national interest.

Although national interest is influenced by the international system, the concept is still “constrained by the nature of corporate stateness” (Ibid). In treating national interest as a locus for state identities to play out, we can explore the effects of said identity. Wendt posits four national interests, however, only two are pertinent to Bhutan: physical survival and autonomy (Ibid). These two most clearly show developments within the international system impacting Bhutan’s national interests. Physical survival refers to the “survival of the complex” and although maintaining survival is important, “it is not enough for a state-society complex to merely survive, it must also retain its “liberty”” (Ibid). Closely linked to this, the idea of autonomy refers to the ability to be unconstrained in “responding to internal demands or ... contingencies in the environment” (Ibid). Through national interests and the varied expression of them then, we can see how the international system has impacted state identity in the form of the national interests.

Wendt states his focus is on “the structure and effects of states ... systems” rather than domestic identity (Ibid). In taking state’s corporate identity for granted we can look more to the international systems and its effects on “pre-social interests” (Ibid). National interest can show well how the international environment shapes a state’s identity, as shown through changes to their national interest. Although with Wendtian thinking, said interest is “constrained” by the corporate nature of states (Ibid). The corporate nature of a state is a question that goes unanswered in Wendt’s writings with Wendt himself acknowledging that his thinking struggles with explaining this internal aspect of identity. Wendt, however, admits that his weakness in examining a state’s corporate identity can be solved by moving the responsibility for analysis to Campbell (Wendt, 1999). Weldes and Campbell are crucial for understanding the relational nature of a state’s corporate identity to that of difference and the *Other* (Cho, 2009). A hole which is left unanswered by Wendt that Weldes expands on well in the case of crises, where the *Us*, difference and the *Other*, are all produced in “a mutually constitutive process” (Weldes, 1999). Whilst the two constructivisms do conflict on their meta-theoretical foundations, they can still provide insights into one another (Cho, 2012).

For example, critical constructivism can delve into aspects of conventional theory that are left unanswered. This process, however, can be burdensome when dealing with country-to-country relations, if the identities of those states are continuously being produced and reproduced to no end. This can be partially solved when linked to conventional theory. Rather than continuously going “all the way down” for state identities in inter-state relations (Wendt, 1999), critical theory can provide a temporal ‘snapshot’ of state identities which can form the basis for conventional theories taken for granted corporate identity. Both constructivisms provide insights into state identity at different levels and stand together better than they do alone. By adopting this pragmatic approach, whereby the conventional is

used for more externally facing matters and critical for those more internal subjects, we can deemphasise the ontological and theoretical infighting that distracts from application. Constructivism should not be treated as a single strand of theorising but “a heterogamous research approach: that is, it readily combines with different fields and disciplines” (Hopf, 1998).

Application

Here, Phuntsho, a leading historian, will be used to discuss the Bhutanese interpretation of events surrounding the ethnic cleansing. Phuntsho, however, can be said to be biased against Nepali identity as evidenced by the labelling of Nepali migration into neighbouring Sikkim as a “cultural invasion” (Phuntsho, 2013). Rizal, a leader of the Lhotshampa human rights movement, will be utilised to gain an appreciation of the Lhotshampa perception of events from the time-period. Hutt, a leading Western scholar in Himalayan politics, provides an expertly balanced account of the events drawing on first-hand evidence.

Critical

State identity can be considered the “outcome of exclusionary practices” (Campbell, 1992), and in Bhutan, the state has practiced direct exclusionary practices through the removal of citizenship from many Lhotshampa people and expulsion. Here, we will explore this direct occurrence of Campbell’s foreign policy in the Bhutanese context. Labelling the unrest as a crisis, additionally enables us to apply Weldes’ understandings of crises’ mutually constitutive nature (Weldes, 1999).

The census of 1988 served as the rationale to expel many of the Lhotshampa and saw its origins in previous censuses conducted by the Bhutanese state (Rizal, 2004). Bhutan historically has seen Nepali immigration dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries and in 1928 was perceived as a “major problem” (Phuntsho, 2013). Censuses conducted by Bhutan were to “ensure

that the population was composed of bona fide tax-paying residents” and the census of 1979 enabled Bhutan to expel Nepali and Indian immigrant workers (Hutt, 2011). The 1979 census laid the groundwork for Bhutan to practice Campbell’s foreign policy in everything but name. The official Royal Government of Bhutan (RGB) reasoning behind the census of 1988 was to distinguish “between illegal immigrants and Bhutanese citizens” (Dorji, 1994), and to prove citizenship locals had to provide “30-year-old land-tax receipts” (Rizal, 2004). This was undertaken only in the southern parts of Bhutan, where the Lhotshampa were the majority, and providing these documents was often hard as land-tax receipts were only required after 1964 (Rizal, 2004).

By looking at the 1988 census and the following expulsions as “exclusionary practices”, we can see these efforts as securing a state identity under Campbell’s writing (Campbell, 1992). We must therefore, in the vein of Campbell, ask what is under threat by illegal immigrants and in this case, it is a constructed image of Bhutanese state identity. As proclaimed by the government of Bhutan in 2016, Bhutan is the “Last Buddhist Kingdom” (RGB, 2016). Bhutan’s identity was and is not fixed but performatively created. This performance was against the Lhotshampa, as they represented difference. To be Lhotshampa, was to wear different clothes, speak a different language, and follow a different faith. A Bhutanese state therefore did not teach Nepali, it taught the national language of Dzongkha, citizens of the state do not wear Nepali *daurā śuruwal*, they wear the *gho* or the *kira*. Moreover, to be a Nepali or Lhotshampa state meant annexation into India, as we will show later.

A difference and *Otherness*, to Campbell, creates “a moral space of superior/inferior” (Campbell, 1992) and the Bhutanese case is no different. The discourse from the time of the expulsion framed the Lhotshampa as *Ngolops* (anti-nationals), exacerbating the idea of the Lhotshampa people and their culture as contradictory to their own (Amnesty International, 1992). Not only were Lhotshampa

framed as being an antithesis to the Bhutanese state, but they were also seen as less than ordinary citizens. They were considered a “mercenary menace” that were not to be recognised as equals as it would “threaten the very core of its ethnic and national identity” (Sinha, 1994). The unrest was due to “madness” rather than the ethnic cleansing (Thinley, 1994). In establishing this moral space, the state can “[cope] with new occurrences of ambiguity or contingency” (Cho, 2009). The environmental situation for the constructed Bhutanese state and political elite was, according to Prime Minister Thinley, a “state of siege” with an aggressive China in the north, the annexation of Sikkim and the Lhotshampa in the south calling for widespread reform (Thinley, 1994). This identity enabled a “construction of a certain crisis” allowing state power to be consolidated by the political elite (Cho, 2009). The Lhotshampa situation can be understood as a conflict between the political elite and Lhotshampa peoples in which the elite won (Sinha, 1994). Reforms backed by the Bhutan People’s Party calling for greater equality were seen as an attempted “take over” where their political change would have led to Nepali rule through election (Thinley, 1994). The King’s and elite’s authority “was unquestioned and no political dissent aimed at changing the status quo succeeded to do so” (Phuntsho, 2013). The Lhotshampa were seen as rebels who the government accused of “terrorist activities of arson, robbery, extortion of money, kidnapping, and murder”, repression to the government, now appear justified (Phuntsho, 2013). Through these events the Bhutanese state was strengthened. The discourse was not of the Bhutanese Lhotshampa protesting an unjust government but dissidents and anti-nationals committing rebellion against a state who had accepted an “alien population” only now to be the victim (Hutt, 2011, Phuntsho, 2013 & Thinley, 1994).

In 1991 Jigme Singye Wangchuck proclaimed, "If I, as the King, cannot protect the sovereignty and integrity of our country and ensure a secure future for our people, then it is my duty to accept full responsibility and abdicate" (Wangchuck, 1991 in Thinley,

1994). Wangchuck was referencing the period of internal instability with Lhotshampa resistance and protest. Before the process of homogenisation started by the government, The Lhotshampa people in Bhutan did not represent an objective threat or crisis. The period leading up to, and during, the crisis similarly was a “social [construction] that [was] forged by state officials in the course of producing and reproducing state identity” (Weldes, 1999). The Bhutanese state in pursuing policies of homogenisation under the name of national security and survival, saw the ever-increasing violent demonstrations as “an armed rebellion seeking to overthrow the ruling regime ... loyal to the Nepalese power abroad” (Phuntsho, 2006). In contrast, the Lhotshampa protestors saw the crisis as one of “an innocent people who had been pushed beyond endurance by overtly discriminatory practices” (Hutt, 2011).

Similarly, a “notion of what ‘we’ are is intrinsic to an understanding of what ‘we’ fear” and as well the inverse can be true, whereby fear or crisis enables identity (Campbell, 1992 & Weldes, 1999). Crises are “important means ... for the production and reproduction of state identity” and without this constant reinforcement the state would cease to exist (Weldes, 1999 & Campbell, 1992). In the case of Bhutan, it is not enough simply to be the “last bastion of *Mahayana* Buddhism in the Himalayas”, a bastion needs to be “besieged” (Dorji, 1994 & Thinley, 1994). In this circumstance, violent protests against the “last Buddhist Kingdom” and the annexation of Sikkim enabled the Bhutanese state to claim a threat to their nation, reproducing state identity of a “last bastion” (RGB, 2016). In this crisis, the benefits to the state are visible. Firstly, in the empowerment of the central state, the 1988 Census, unlike its predecessor, was undertaken not by district officials. The government conducted the census directly (Hutt, 2013). Secondly, the state was able to identify those involved in the protest and remove their citizenship. The Bhutan Citizenship Act of 1985 states: “Any citizen of Bhutan who has acquired citizenship by naturalization may be deprived of

citizenship at any time if that person has shown by act or speech to be disloyal in any manner whatsoever to the King, Country and People of Bhutan.” (RGB, 1985). Those who did not flee willingly were made to leave as they were either related to a suspect demonstrator or a relative had already left (Hutt, 1996). If this did not work prisoners were submitted to “ill-treatment and torture, including rape” (Amnesty International, 1992). By removing those who did not conform with the government’s strict homogenisation policies, the remaining Lhotshampa were “integrated into the northern culture” (Phuntsho, 2013). Lastly, in refining and elaborating the power relations within the state, as mentioned prior the expulsion of the Lhotshampa and enforcement of the traditional Bhutanese culture over others strengthened the ruling elite.

Conventional

Both Bhutan and Nepal share many characteristics that would suggest the two states would be on good terms. They are both members of regional organisations and in addition, both lie in between China and India vying for control (Government of Nepal (GN), 2017). Yet relations among the two Himalayan states have been described as “lukewarm” (Parajuli, 2019). The expulsion has tainted relations and despite numerous rounds of Joint Ministerial Meetings, negotiations over the issue have been repeatedly stalled (Minorities at Risk Project, 2004). In explaining these awkward relations, we will examine how Bhutanese national interest, as well as Nepalese and Bhutanese differing identities, have strained relations with Nepal.

Barnett’s work on alliance formation can be used to explain why Bhutanese-Nepalese relations remain lukewarm. We can attribute three strands to Bhutanese and Nepalese identity that is shared: geographical location of the Himalayas, culture, and system of governments. Firstly, their location presents the same regional problems as parts of their borders to the north are claimed by China (BBC, 2020 & Kumar, 2010). Secondly, in culture, Bhutan

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and Nepal vary considerably. Bhutan whilst being an ethnically and linguistically diverse country, like Nepal, consider themselves a Buddhist homogenous state with one state language (RGB, 2008). In reality Bhutan contains multiple ethnicities, religions, and languages (Theys, 2016). Unlike Bhutan, Nepal sees themselves as a “multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural” (GN, 2015). However, 81.3% of the population follows the Hindu religion (GN, 2012). Lastly, in systems of governance, Bhutan is a recent democratic constitutional monarchy. The country transitioned from a system of absolute monarchy in 2008 through royal initiative (Phuntsho, 2013, & Turner et al, 2011). The Nepalese transition to democracy, however, was one of civil war resulting in the country voting to abolish the monarchy in 2006 (Jha, 2014). These large differences and minor similarities form the context within which relations have not improved.

Bhutan, as described by King Jigme Singye, is a “small country between giant and powerful neighbours’ [has] no resources, only its culture and identity” (Hutt, 2011). The said culture and identity are of even greater importance when taking into consideration the effects of the “international system” on the “pre-social interests” of Bhutan (Wendt, 1999). The former King was referencing government action in enforcing a national dress code as part of the “One Nation” policy (Theys, 2016). Included in this was the forced adherence of the “*Driglam Namzha*”, this consisted of the observation of traditional “Bhutanese architectural style, dress, manners, [and] official etiquette” (Hutt, 1994). This *Bhutanisation* process not only enforced Bhutanese culture and identity onto its population but also ran counter to and threatened Lhotshampa identity (Maung, 2016). The teaching of the Nepali language was removed from schools in 1989 and the census of 1988 striped many Lhotshampa peoples off their Bhutanese nationality (Phuntsho, 2013 & Hutt, 2011).

The 'One Nation' policy was continuously justified by the government as protecting Bhutanese sovereignty and identity (Whitecross, 2017). A state acting to protect one's sovereignty and identity is a given under Wendtian thinking, but the nature or method is not (Wendt, 1999). Bhutan undertaking homogenisation and ethnic cleansing against Lhotshampa in the name of its national interest is also not a given. The national interest of states is influenced by their corporate identity and as aforementioned, the international system (Ibid). Through physical survival and preservation of autonomy we can explain how developments in the international system have impacted on Bhutan's national interest. States can vary in how consciously they pursue this protection but in Bhutan this was direct as the 4th King Jigme Singye believed that "Bhutan's unique cultural identity, in the absence of military might or economic power, was its defining strength for its sovereignty" (Phuntsho, 2013).

In tracing the external factors that impacted the expressions of Bhutanese identity we can look to three events in both Nepal and India: most importantly the Indian incorporation of the state of Sikkim in 1975, a movement to create a Nepali speaking region inside India for the Gorkha people, and paranoia over a so called "Greater Nepal" being formed (Rizal, 2004). The incorporation of Sikkim coloured the Bhutanese interest of physical survival due to fears that the same could happen to Bhutan as it was protests led by Nepalis that caused India to intervene a problem in Sikkim which Bhutan also saw under its 2nd and 3rd Kings (Boland-Crewe and Lea, 2005 & Phuntsho, 2013). Although the annexation of Sikkim was caused by calls for democracy (Boland-Crewe and Lea, 2005), it was interpreted as "cultural invasion" due to "Nepali immigration" (Phuntsho, 2013). The familial relations between the ruling dynasty of Sikkim and the Bhutanese monarchy helped to increase fears (Rizal, 2004). Both Sikkim and Bhutan have also been guided by India in the matters of foreign policy and if annexation occurred, the country would no longer be the "last Buddhist Kingdom", a direct threat to the "survival of the

complex" (National Legislative Bodies/National Authorities, 1949, RGB, 2016 & Wendt, 1999). Although calls for a Gorkhaland, comprised of parts of provinces inside India, have been concrete and violent, they do not on their own consist of a threat to Bhutan's identity or independence as it was planned to be within India (Besky, 2017, Khawas, 2009, & Hutt, 1996). "Greater Nepal" on the other hand, represents a less developed concept which leans towards paranoia. The idea involved an expanded Nepalese state over the Himalayas covering all areas of Nepali speakers (Rizal, 2004 & Phuntsho, 2013).

These issues became salient in Bhutanese politics and identity/national interest formation during the backlash to the process of *Bhutanisation*. The violence took form in a similar style to that of the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front, with beheadings and police killings (Amnesty International, 1992, p.10 & Hutt, 1996). *Bhutanisation* became seemingly self-justifying and empowered the hard liners inside the RGB as fear of violence from Lhotshampa protests grew (Hutt, 2011). Furthermore, the government began to use the term anti-national to refer to those who took part in violence (Amnesty International, 1992). This cemented the belief that to protect Bhutan's national identity it had to pursue its national interest of homogenising the nation through privileging its culture. Nepalese identity had become counter to Bhutanese identity.

Conclusion

A full synthesis of conventional and critical constructivism is difficult, if not counterintuitive to achieve. However, a pragmatic approach using each for a specific face of identity, can help to avoid ontological debates that detract from application. Theory provided by Campbell has enabled us to explore the direct exclusionary practices in which the Bhutanese state has undertaken to form the "last bastion of Mahayana Buddhism in the Himalayas" (Dorji, 1994). In addition, we have explored how Lhotshampa-ness became inferior in the discourse of Bhutan as tensions escalate.

We have shown, using Weldes, how through the apparent crisis, the Bhutanese identity of a last bastion was self-fulfilling. The Bhutanese state identity in part constructed the crisis, the Lhotshampa did not in themselves represent a physical threat to the “last Mahayana Buddhist Kingdom”. They threatened to blur the lines of distinction made possible through the “outcome of exclusionary practices” (Campbell, 1992).

This helps, in part, to uncover the corporate identity that is taken for granted in Wendt’s writings as people and land. The open question of corporate identity can be solved by the work of Campbell, with Wendt even stating this (Wendt, 1999). Once this snapshot of corporate identity has been taken, we can focus on the effects of the “international system” on the “pre-social interests” as we have here with Bhutan (Ibid). Wendt’s focus is more on the external “structure and effects of states ... systems” rather than a “all the way down” approach to state’s identity (Ibid). Identity is a conduit for the international structure and national interest, whereby events are interpreted due to a state’s identity. As we have shown, physical survival and security can illuminate how Bhutanese identity and national interest has been shaped by developments in Sikkim and Nepal. We have similarly spoken of Bhutanese anxieties surrounding developments in Indian and Nepalese politics which have produced insecurity. The effects of Indian and Nepalese politics can also be seen through national interest.

The extent to which one can reconcile the two constructivisms through the case study of Bhutan is in the form of a pragmatic approach. Through toning down the ontological differences, we have applied differing “analytical frameworks for capturing the construction of a state’s identity at home and abroad” (Cho, 2012). We have also highlighted how the Lhotshampa people were used unwillingly to form the “last Buddhist Kingdom” (RGB, 2016) and how this led to developments in Nepalese politics being perceived as threats. Furthering this, we have tried to show the strengths

constructivism can bring in operating as two different analytical tools, to provide a deeper understanding of state identity, domestically and internationally.

Bhutan has developed a strong culturally homogenous identity for itself despite, very much, being the opposite. Whilst this identity may have safeguarded the country in some regard, the Bhutanese state has done so to the detriment of over 100,000 people. The Lhotshampa people have been forcibly driven from their homeland and are currently in diaspora. This is not an endorsement of the actions of the Bhutanese state rather an explanation of how identity has been perceived and functioned in the case study. Many of the refugees have been relocated to other countries and Bhutan is unlikely to repatriate any of them. The country gains a perceived strength in being a bastion of Buddhism and the last Shangri-la.

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