

## Peer-Review

Mantravadi, Meghana. 2025. "Engines of Postcolonial Ambition: Development, Diplomacy, and the Making of Modern India." *Journal of High School Science* 9 (3): 182–200. <https://doi.org/10.64336/001c.142528>.

I enjoyed reading your manuscript. It is very well written and presented; even down to poignant excerpts from interviewing your grandfather. Congratulations. I would very much like to have you publish this in the *Journal of High School Science*. You will however need to include your own perspective on this essay; i.e. what you think should have been the course of events (although hindsight is always 20/20). We do not publish purely narrative essays, therefore a section titled (perhaps) "Perspectives" would make this piece of erudition acceptable for publication in the *Journal*. I have included my own perspective below, you can either adopt it as is or construct your own (or a hybrid). If you need more clarification, please do not hesitate to email. We can also set up a google meet if necessary.

### **Perspective**(*you can write your own or adapt this as necessary*)

The problem with India's repudiative (as opposed to an authenticative) stance (in this case, against both ostensibly 'exploitative' capitalism and authoritarian centralized planning) is that only those policies get formulated - and become adopted - which rebut these doctrines; and not necessarily because they possess any inherent situational or pragmatic merits of their own. It prompts a reverse 'Zelig' phenomenon, where being non-aligned either forces an ossified, risk-averse 'middle-of-the-road' policy or stagnation into a morass bereft of any ideology; in India's case characterized by Gandhian luddite self-sufficiency or Nehruvian state-directed long-term planning. Without any recourse to market oriented efficient allocation of capital, or the brutal but necessary creative destruction that follows demand shifts and/or corrections following geo-political, sociological and/or demographic upheaval or paradigm change; this ideology-agnostic, non-aligned, *un-manifesto* blunders on into an eventual anachronistic chasm.

Being aligned with an ideology does not necessarily imply subservience to it. Consider the case of China which reaps capitalist gains while steadfastly following a one-party communist ideology. Most of the EU has a taxpayer funded 'cradle-to-grave social and health safety net for its citizens, while simultaneously adopting a *laissez faire* policy of freely allowing financial markets to allocate capital. Ideology can hence be – and indeed has been - molded to best serve a nation's interests; it need not be imposed as unmodifiable dogma. Therefore, rejecting all available ideologies outright on the basis of their origination tenets, and instead operating in a 'non-aligned' ideological vacuum is inimical to a nation's interests.

As India is finding out, decades of top-down long-term planning, restrictive access to and allocation of capital have stifled macro-innovation (the IITs' now turn out graduates who migrate en'mass out of the country), have created Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) 'nav-ratnas' that no private enterprise is willing to invest in at auction, have created a hierarchy of byzantine bureaucratic mandarins and administrative bottlenecks in a system reminiscent of patronage and perfidy. It is only now playing catch-up by a shock-and-awe dose of liberalization under Narendra Modi's Hindutva ideology characterized by haphazard, ill-considered grandiose action – but action nevertheless.

Had India conceived its own ideological *gestalt* during the cold war; and operated on its dictats; or tweaked a capitalistic model to serve its own needs; it would now be eons ahead as measured by the quality of life for its citizens, than where it finds itself now.

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I am writing to confirm that I have incorporated the suggested revision by adding my perspective to the closing paragraph of the manuscript. Please let me know if this update meets the journal's expectations or if any further modifications are required.

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You will still need to clean up content; no footnotes; need a references section with sequentially numbered references throughout the manuscript. No reference cited more than once (for different page numbers for example, as you have done with the footnotes).

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I was wondering if you would be amenable to changing your last paragraph along the lines below (or something similar):

The Cold War may have been waged with ideology-backed missiles elsewhere, but in India it played out through exogenously borrowed and incongruously implemented, five-year plans, fertilizer subsidies, and outright food and/or material/armaments aid in vacillating and ingratiating attempts to maintain non-alliance. In the end, few symbols capture this uneasy smorgasbord of global entanglement with domestic aspiration better than the Soviet tractor: a foreign machine repurposed for fertilizer and monoculture intensive cultivation, utterly unsuitable for Indian subsistence farming, yet appearing to forge a uniquely postcolonial path, one field at a time.

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I've just submitted my essay, incorporating the changes you recommended

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Please also write an abstract as well as submit your manuscript in word format. Please make sure the references are not repeated (different page numbers in the same paper do not count as different references).

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I've revised the final paragraph and adjusted the formatting style as requested.

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Can you write a short Introduction in the attached document and email it to me please?  
Please also include your school affiliation and address on the bottom of the front page.

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Accepted