



Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Ms Pratiksha Rai, Registration Number: 2072104, PhD Scholar at the Department of International Studies, Political Science and History, School of Social Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) will defend her PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Thursday, 29 January 2026 at 11.00 am in Room No. 628, 6th Floor, R&D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru - 560029, Karnataka, India.

Title of the Thesis	: Gorkha Community and Politics of Identity in the Darjeeling Hills: Security Implications for India
Discipline	: International Studies
External Examiner - I	: Dr Anshuman Behera Professor National Institute of Advance Studies Indian Institute of Science Campus Mathikere, Bengaluru Karnataka - 560012
External Examiner - II	: Dr Vivek Mishra Professor Academy of International Studies Jamia Millia Islamia Central University Ghaffar Manzil Colony Jamia Nagar, Okhla New Delhi - 110025
Supervisor	: Dr Anurag Tripathi Associate Professor Department of International Studies, Political Science and History School of Social Sciences CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Bengaluru – 560029 Karnataka

The members of the Research Advisory Committee of the Scholar, the faculty members of the Department and the School, interested experts and research scholars of all the branches of research are cordially invited to attend this open viva – voce examination.

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 20 January 2026

A handwritten signature of the Registrar (Academics) is placed above the title.

Registrar (Academics)

Registrar (Academics)
CHRIST (Deemed to be University)
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ABSTRACT

The assertion of ethnic identity is a critical factor influencing socio-political and economic dynamics. Identity is free flowing, adaptive and hence socially constructed in different spaces over time. The Indian-Nepali community identified as the Gorkhas, categorized as an ethno-linguistic group, embodies a meta-identity that integrates multiple distinct ethnicities. Within this framework, the demand for a separate state by Gorkhas who have been domiciled in India since the pre-colonial era, has emerged as a recurring political phenomenon. The earliest formal demand for a distinct administrative framework was submitted to the British Indian government in 1907. However, the Indian-Nepali population has frequently faced challenges to their identity, often being labeled as foreigners from Nepal. To counter this narrative, the "Gorkha" identity was constructed to distinguish Indian-Nepalis from Nepalese citizens, emphasizing their unique historical, cultural, and ethnic disassociation from the Bengali majority within West Bengal. The Darjeeling Hills and the broader region of North Bengal hold immense geopolitical significance. Situated near Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and the former Kingdom of Sikkim, this region shares porous borders that heighten its security sensitivity. The Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950 has further complicated the identity of Indian-Gorkhas by blurring the distinctions between them and Nepalese nationals. The region's strategic importance is underscored by the "Chicken Neck Corridor" or Siliguri Corridor, which serves as the crucial link between India's northeastern states and the mainland. Episodes of unrest, often associated with statehood movements in the Darjeeling Hills, have periodically disrupted this vital passage, posing serious challenges to India's national security. This study emphasizes the importance of borderland studies in understanding how regional identity movements impact national security, particularly in the Eastern Himalayan region, where India shares borders with strategically sensitive and often hostile neighbors. These dynamics highlight the precarious nature of governance in border regions and the need to address the roots of identity-based anxieties that fuel these movements. Additionally, this research integrates a human security perspective, drawing upon Maslow's hierarchy of needs, to explore how the absence of self-fulfillment and safety exacerbates insecurity. For communities in the Darjeeling Hills, the lack of clarity regarding identity and recognition fosters a state of anxiety that undermines peace and stability. Ensuring that individuals and communities achieve both safety and self-actualization is essential for resolving these tensions and fostering a harmonious society. This study thus seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how regional identity movements intertwine with human security concerns and broader national security imperatives in India's Eastern Himalayas.

Keyword: *Ethnopolitics, Gorkhaland, Darjeeling, Gorkhas, Social Constructivism, Borderland, National Security, Statehood Movement, Separatism, Core- Periphery Relations.*

Publications:

1. **Rai, P.**, Tripathi, A. (2024). The Rai's struggle for Indigenous Identity. *Economic and Political Weekly*. <https://www.epw.in/journal/2024/42/letters/rais-struggle-indigenous-identity.html>
2. **Rai, P.** (2024). Migration and Multiculturalism: Neo Populist Tendencies in American Exceptionalism. In *Encyclopedia of New Populism and Responses in the 21st Century*. Springer Nature. https://link.springer.com/rwe/10.1007/978-981-99-7802-1_80
3. **Rai, P.**, Tripathi, A., Mukhia, A. (2025). Colonial legacies and regional separatism: comparative analysis of statehood demands in Coorg and North Bengal. *The Round Table*, 114(3), 301–320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2025.2502442>
4. Paul, S., **Rai, P.** (2025). Fair skin, unfair trade and invisible victims. *The Round Table*, 114(3), 335–337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2025.2473479>