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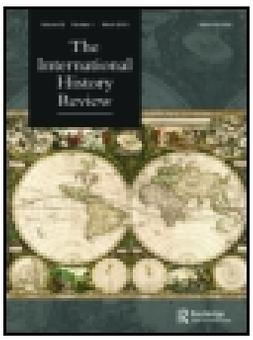

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An Asian Drama: The Asian Relations Conference, 1947

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ABSTRACT
The Asian Relations Conference has long served as a historical footnote to the more famous Bandung Conference of 1955. In this paper, however, I argue that this Conference needs to be read and analysed independently. As the opening act of decolonial solidarity, this Conference juxtaposes the moment and the movement of decolonisation, alerting us to the promises and pitfalls of both. In particular one needs to be conscious of its Eurocentric readings which almost always place the 'Third World' within the context of the Cold War project and thus are incapable of understanding its historical relevance.

KEYWORDS
Asianism; Bandung; decolonisation; development; migration; international order

Introduction

> The long night of India is coming to an end. We were fatalistic. We believed that it was destined that we should be dependent and exploited; that we should be dominated and subjected. Alas! alas! alas! that that period was ours; but no longer, not from tomorrow's dawn; nay, not from this hour when we part.
>
> Fellow Asians, as I called you the other day, my comrades, my kinsmen, arise; remember the night of darkness is over. Together, men and women, let us march forward to the Dawn.[1]

These words of Sarojini Naidu, the poet and president of the Asian Relations Conference (ARC), echoed across the *Purana Qila* (Old Fort) in Delhi to an audience of more than 20,000 on 2 April 1947. At least one person in that audience was not impressed. 'Pure rhapsody … saved from absurdity by flashes of humour', reported the British high commissioner, Terence Shone, to Whitehall.[2] Dismissing Naidu's rhetorical flourishes, Shone proffered a self-admittedly 'realistic' assessment of this gathering of 193 delegates and 51 observers from 34 different contingents. 'Behind this [Asian] idealistic attitude,' he wrote, 'lay a clear desire for economic and political self-assertion, while *it was sometimes suggested that Asia, or at least South East Asia, constituted a "third world"* which had its part to play in restoring to equilibrium a balance of power at present too exclusively dependent on the opposed worlds of America and Russia.'[3]

The 'third world' that Shone signposted, a full 5 years before the routinely accepted 'invention' of the term by Alfred Sauvy in 1952,[4] had gathered in response to an invitation from Jawaharlal Nehru. Incidentally, Nehru's invitation had been sent out the same day, 7 September 1946, as he had made his famous radio address in which he defined the basic tenets of India's future foreign policy: non-alignment, anti-colonialism and anti-racism,

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a reconciliatory attitude towards the West, and world peace.[5] Quite fittingly, the Conference became the inaugural act of this vision.

Many a tome have expended words on the meaning of 'third world', but curiously little has been written on this particular gathering for which it was first used. Indeed, 'Third Worldism' is coeval with a conference that came 8 years later, Bandung.[6] The ARC often only serves as a footnote to Bandung, although the two conferences – while seemingly similar from the perspective of the present – were also remarkably different events of their own time. In many ways, the world in 1947 was quite different to the world in 1955.

Sequentially, this essay unravels in four parts. The first section argues for dislocating the origins of the 'Third World' from Bandung. The proclamations of Bandung being the natal moment of decolonial thinking are sustained in part through mythical accounts. Bandung needs to return to history without losing its seminal importance and thus, there is a strong requirement to rest the 'Third World' on multiple historical legs. In this context, I argue for reading the ARC not as Bandung's 'precursor', but on its own terms.

The second section will briefly discuss how the Conference came about, drawing on its direct links to the Institute of Pacific Relations conferences. The non-political character of the Conference, commented upon by various observers, stems in part from the template the Conference borrowed from and not any lack of political commitment. The third section will focus on some of the ideas that were fleshed out at the Conference and discuss how the ARC wrestled with the contradictory pulls of decolonial internationalism and postcolonial inter-nationalism. Finally, I will note how the participating Western observers reported on the Conference and argue that these observers were intent on reading the ARC through the lens of the Cold War, invariably refusing to see it as anything except an anti-Western. We will observe the variances of the written word on the Conference – its inflections, long silences and vast exaggerations – and situate the narrative of the Conference within both the moment and the movement of decolonisation, alerting us to the promises and pitfalls of both.

Dislocating Bandung

Although acclaimed as the 'inaugural moment' or the 'birth' of Third World(ism),[7] Bandung's memorialisation veers between myth and history.[8] Brian Roberts and Keith Foulcher note that 'while we know very little about the Bandung Conference, the Bandung myth has continued to grow.'[9] Julian Go observes that the politics of Bandung and, indeed, of decolonisation, in its replication of colonial modernity was marked by 'less a historical change than continuity'.[10] For these authors, Bandung only affirmed nation-state, modernity and development, even if it provided them with a non-Western gloss. Imbued with this spectre of unoriginality, our memories of Bandung have consequently become more anecdotal than archival, and more celebratory than contextual.[11] In opposition to this, others have articulated the need for 'examining the excess of meanings invoked by Bandung to understand and reflect on the affinities, visions and projects of decolonization' to 'illuminate *the life of other international relations*'.[12] Narendran Kumarakulasingam puts 'History' itself in the spotlight and invites us to see a 'Bandung beyond Bandung' (more appropriately Bandungs beyond Bandung) through an 'over-reliance on memory and belief'.[13] For Walter Mignolo, Bandung was the founding moment of an 'epistemic reconfiguration' of the Third World. Indeed, if Bandung is a myth and Richard

Wright, many would argue, its griot,[14] it is, what Chinua Achebe would call, a benevolent one that celebrates the solidarity of the oppressed.

The 'Third World' certainly needs its own signposts of solidarity,[15] but over-reliance on meanings also robs such gatherings of the texture of their debates and thickness of interactions, and accords them a teleological, de-contextualised salience. So although Christopher Lee calls Bandung 'a pivotal moment placed in the mid-century between colonial and post-colonial periods, between the era of modern European imperialism and the era of the Cold War',[16] we must remember that all the countries invited to Bandung, except Gold Coast (Ghana),[17]were firmly post-colonial. Independent statehood was in fact one of the criteria for invitations. The Cold War was already past its first phase – Stalin had died, the Korean war had just ended, 17th parallel now divided North and South Vietnams, and many of the countries represented were already firmly ensconced on either side of the Cold War divide.

Let us then temporally dislocate 'Third World' to a moment when symbolically, (to use the slogan of World Social Forum) another world was possible; literally, at least with the current evidence in hand, the term was first used; and methodologically, we will not have to hide history underneath memory. If, as Lee argues, the inaugural moment of 'Third World' could only come from a place of liminality, our archival eyes need more thoroughgoing engagements with earlier events.

The historical weight of Bandung is heavy.[18] Indeed, the ARC has been analysed either as Bandung's precursor[19] or as its 'other'[20]. Even extended analyses, such as Abraham's[21] and Singh's[22], are interested in tracing specific ideas about diaspora citizenship and Asianness rather than writing a history of the Conference. They also invariably append the Conference itself to Bandung. A notable exception to this is Carolien Stolte, who analyses the Conference more as a culmination of the inter-war Asianism and calls for viewing it separately from the post-War conferences such as Bandung.[23] However, as I would argue below, the ARC could indeed be seen as a response to, and not a culmination of, the inter-war inflections towards Asianism. The Conference itself ended up exposing the limits of Asian solidarity. In sum, my argument departs from Stolte, Singh and Abraham, for the Conference here is situated in a particular transitional moment in which a decolonial vision is at variance with a postcolonial vision. So, the following analysis will shine light on how the postcolonial international was imagined at the Conference and discuss its various internal and external critiques.

The immediate post-Conference analyses reveal a clear West/non-West divide. Sisir Gupta notes in his *India and Regional Integration* that almost all Indian analysts viewed the event as a 'landmark in Asian history',[24] while Western analysts predominantly viewed it either as 'realpolitik' or as its absence. Indeed, in his five-page discussion on the ARC, all the criticisms in Gupta's book come from the German-American scholar Werner Levi who in turn relies on two observer reports – one from the Chatham House observer, Nicholas Mansergh, and the other co-written by the two Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) observers, Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff.[25]

These contrasting analyses are also reflective of the moment in which the Conference was organised. It was organised at the cusp of India's independence, an event that W.E.B. Du Bois hailed as 'the greatest historical date of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' for it reverberated as a call for the independence of the colonised, coloured peoples across Asia, Africa and the Americas.[26] India was between the 'long night' and

'the dawn', between colonialism and a post-colonial era. And so was much of the colonial Asia, ready to be tipped over to independence. The Cold War was yet not Cold enough, the camaraderie of the war alliance was yet to wean away fully and the Berlin blockade was still a year in future. More importantly, the 'Third World' hadn't yet fragmented into alliances.

This juncture was alive to the enormous possibilities of 'internationalism' of the inter-war era, which by the time Bandung came around had turned into state-centred 'inter-nationalism'. Decolonial internationalism of the inter-war years, as Ali Raza, Franziska Roy and Benjamin Zachariah argue, brought together the oppressed peoples of the world as citizens of the world. This imagination was more global than national, and encompassed a range of actors from individuals to supra-state actors who were able to look through the straightjacket of state sovereignty. Postcolonial inter-nationalism, in contrast, froze the national frame as the ultimate form of political community. Nation-State became the primary interlocutor for any international imagination.[27] Indeed, Itty Abraham terms the moment of independence as a moment of betrayal; a moment in which rich and novel understandings of political community were jettisoned for state sovereignty.[28] Bandung then becomes an after-event, one that already had its path set. The ARC, in contrast, organised four and a half months before India's independence, encapsulated both the romance of internationalism and the incumbent reality of inter-nationalism. The Conference, as Levi noted, was organised with 'great circumspection and without undue optimism'.[29]

This liminality also allows us to cast a critical gaze on two major inflections of decolonial thought: anti-Westernism and a trenchant romanticism of alternatives. Anti-Westernism often serves as a lament for the absence of alternatives and further self-critique. The cohesion of Bandung was achieved partly because it evaded discussions on difficult matters, or, as Itty Abraham has noted, already assumed them sorted within the framework of statehood.[30] The ARC, despite its resolve to not discuss political matters, ended up discussing some of the most important political issues facing the decolonised world, such as intra-Asian colonialism, the uses of pacifist foreign policy in the wake of colonialism, the citizenship rights of the diaspora, and, quite remarkably, the question of women rights. Predictably, the Conference also evaded some other important political questions – China-Tibet, being one – but it is important that Tibet was invited despite China's objections. Indeed, the romance of decolonisation met the reality of statehood in the Conference, quite literally. While the promise of a new beginning was being celebrated in conference halls of Delhi, its violence was evident on the streets of the same city. Communal tensions were high and the city was under curfew for several periods during the Conference. Indeed, the public expressions of high ideals by the Indian delegates were interspersed with concealed concerns over the imminence of a civil war in the country.[31]

The template

In his inaugural address on 23 March 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru stated that India may have organised the ARC but 'the idea of such a Conference arose simultaneously in many minds and in many countries of Asia.'[32] In an earlier speech at the Bombay branch of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) in August 1946, he however traced this idea to the League

against Imperialism at Brussels in 1927 where he had met leaders from all across Asia and Africa. Colonialism, he believed, had isolated Asian countries from each other and hence an Asian conference would help bring about a 'psychological revolution', a new imagination of Asia. Importantly, his vision of Asia was quite different from the two preceding geopolitical visions of twentieth century Asia: the Soviet-led Asianism and the Japan-led pan-Asianism. Moscow-led efforts such as the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East (1920) and the League against Imperialism (that Nehru was later suspended from in 1932) were limited by their affiliation to communist-sympathisers. The Japanese-led efforts were significantly devoured by their own racialised versions of 'Asia for Asians'.[33] In contrast, Nehru's Asianism was universalist. For him, an Asian federation of some kind (an idea popular among Indian leaders in the 1920s) was only a step towards a greater, world federation. He also included New Zealand and Australia, parts of East Africa (Egypt) and some Soviet republics in his Asian vision. Significantly, Nehru's Asia was also a historical and geographical corrective to earlier Indian inflections towards Asianisms which looked either east, such as the Greater India Society, or west, such as the ideas of Aga Khan III, and both of which masked imperial tendencies.[34]

In fact, the idea for the Conference had actually originated from the journalist B. Shiva Rao. Shiva Rao was closely associated, first, with the Indian Institute of International Relations (IIIA) and, then, its rival the ICWA. In early 1945, as an ICWA delegate, he had attended the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) Conference in Hot Springs, Virginia. Here, the delegation's leader, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, had expressed dissatisfaction at how Asian problems were discussed with 'old thoughts in new worlds' and that Western countries were not 'prepared to give up preconceived ideas'.[35] From Hot Springs, Shiva Rao had travelled to San Francisco for the founding UN conference, where the marginalisation of Asian views continued. Along with a few other Indians – J.J. Singh, Syed Hossain, Krishanlal Shridharani and Anup Singh – Shiva Rao conceived of a parallel conference of Asian countries. In September 1945, after his return to Delhi, Shiva Rao proposed the idea to the ICWA and subsequently, with the Council's backing, to Nehru.[36] Nehru's involvement made the Conference a much grander affair than Shiva Rao had originally anticipated and accordingly the ICWA decided to organise an IPR style conference.

Set up in 1943, as a breakaway faction of the Chatham House-affiliated India Institute of International Affairs (IIIA), the ICWA was at the time engaged in a bitter rivalry for legitimacy with the IIIA. The colonial and communal fault lines had divided these two organisations, both of whom claimed non-political and non-partisan status. The IIIA had the backing of the Viceroy and the Muslim League, while the ICWA was closer to the Indian National Congress and was, accordingly, seen as an upper-caste Brahmin-dominated institute. In the preceding years, the two organisations had battled for legitimacy at the IPR conferences. Consequently, the organisation of an IPR-style conference in India was also designed to put a stamp of legitimacy on the ICWA over the IIIA as the premier International Relations institute in India.[37] Following exactly the pattern of the IPR, the ICWA decided that the conference would be non-political, would not pass any resolutions and that discussions would take place in round table groups composed of experts from different countries.

Deemed a social and cultural event, the draft agenda of the Conference originally included security and defence, but these issues were purposely taken off. Indeed,

development and equality, as opposed to military security, were presented as the main concerns of Asian nations. The final list of agenda items included, national movements for freedom, migration and racial problems, economic development and social services, cultural problems and women's issues. The Conference gave a common platform to labour and women's issues, hitherto discussed in specially-convened, issue based conferences/forums such as the All Asia Education Conference, Benaras (1930), All Asia Women's Conference, Lahore (1931) and the Pan-Asiatic Labour Conference, Colombo (1934). In placing the issues of social-economic development, labour and women at the centre of the new Asian imagination, the Conference organisers did indeed make a remarkable beginning in global politics.[38]

Expectedly, India had the largest delegation of 52 delegates and 6 observers, which included politicians, trade union leaders, academics, civil servants and business leaders. The original invitations, sent to governments as well as cultural groups, had asked each country to send a delegation of 16 members. Importantly, 38 special invitations were sent to women's organisations and eminent women leaders in Asia.[39] However, the representations differed. Strong delegations came from the Southeast Asian countries: Indonesia (32), Burma (21), Ceylon (20) and Malaya (14). Representations also came from India's South Asian neighbours – Afghanistan (7), Bhutan (2) and Nepal (8). The Chinese delegation constituted only 9 members, exceeded even by its South China Sea maritime neighbour the Philippines (10).[40] Four representatives from Tibet walked for 21 days crossing plateaus and mountain passes to reach India and participated despite protests from China.[41] And so did a 10-member Jewish delegation from Hebrew University of Palestine, amidst the disapproval of the Arab League delegation which had observer status. Egypt and Turkey were other countries from the Muslim West who sent delegations, although Syria, Lebanon and Yemen were desisted by Jinnah's Muslim League, which boycotted the Conference, from accepting invitations.[42] A Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) delegation of 3 members arrived with the hope of securing support against the French.[43] They reported that two squads of their messengers had been killed while smuggling their credentials through Bangkok.[44] Their rivals in Indo-China, the French who controlled Cambodia, Cochin-China and Laos, had also been able to secure an invitation (after they complained to the Indian representative in Saigon for being left out), as they were worried that DRV would use the Conference to legitimise itself.[45] The Soviet republics – Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – sent separate delegations. Observers were also invited from institutions in the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States and the United Nations. Glaringly absent was Japan, whose representatives could not come because of General MacArthur's embargo on any foreign travel.[46]

The Conference secretariat in Delhi prepared background material. In total, ninety-four pamphlets and five books were published, many of them however were not ready until the closing stages.[47] Although the invitations had been sent as early as September 1946, only in March 1947 were all responses received. In fact, the Mongolian and Korean delegations arrived on the last day, the latter because they had missed their flight in Shanghai, and representatives from Kirghizia (Kyrgyzstan) and Turkmenistan landed the day after the closing plenary. This was attributed largely to the problems of communications, but this also meant that delegations had little time to read the material.[48]

The postcolonial moment: Imaginations and contestations

The limits of Asian solidarity

Leading up to the Conference, Western capitals were awash with concerns that the real motive of the Conference was the creation an Asian bloc, reminiscent of similar Japanese efforts in the 1930s. In his inaugural speech, Nehru announced, 'We have no designs against anybody; our is the great design of promoting peace and progress all over the world'.[49] But, in the same breadth, he announced that the Asians no more wanted to be 'playthings of others'.[50] Nehru was opposed to forming an exclusive regional formation. To him, Asia was a stepping stone to creating 'One World' – a term, taken from the American politician Wendell Willkie's 1943 book of the same name.[51] In the past Nehru had advocated 'a federation of China, India, Burma, Ceylon and Afghanistan and possibly other countries',[52] another time a Southern Asian Federation of India, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Burma,[53] but, importantly, he viewed these as temporary steps to a World Federation and not as exclusive and competitive regional blocs. While World federation ideas were quite in currency at the time, primarily among British liberals,[54] Nehru's vision differed in one particular aspect. British visions of a World Federation viewed it as an organic expansion of the British Commonwealth. Nehru, in contrast, placed Asian countries at the centre of this imagination. Asian countries, without the burden of war hanging over their heads and the needs of development uniting them, were naturally inclined to co-operate, unlike countries in the West.

His call for a greater unity was also an assertion of his implacable opposition to the fragmentary tendencies within India – the continuation of princely states and the demand for Pakistan – as he saw no future for small nations.[55] In his incremental internationalism, narrow nationalism had no space and Nehru minced no words in arguing that nationalism 'must not be allowed to become aggressive and come in the way of international development'.[56] Quite unlike his mentor Gandhi who had argued for a completely decentralised federation composed of villages, Nehru's teleology of federation was upwardly mobile.

While the calls for Asian Federation were endorsed by Solomon Bandaranaike of Ceylon and Aung San of Burma,[57] Southeast Asian delegates reminded the gathering of the Japanese fascist rule that they had suffered, cautioning against an uncritical and rhetorical romanticism about Asia.[58] Consequently, the delegates from Indonesia, Malaya and Vietnam appealed for more immediate and concrete collective measures which advanced decolonisation and kept Asia away from bloc-politics. A Malayan delegate proposed a 'neutrality bloc' for Asia, implying not only non-participation in colonial wars but also a refusal to supply belligerents with war materials. The Vietnamese delegate carried it a step further and appealed for a 'fighting federation', asking the attendees their help in ousting the French. With Nehru in attendance, he appealed the Indian government to accord recognition to the Communist Government of Vietnam and intervene at the United Nations on its behalf.[59] Burma turned attention squarely back at Nehru and India, pointing out that Indian armed forces had been used a tool of colonialism by the British and Vietnam added that the French still enjoyed access to Indian bases for refuelling planes.[60] Nehru was urged to concretise Asian solidarity through material, not just rhetorical, actions. This appeal came in the background of an incident a few months earlier. In November 1946, the French had bombarded the coastal Vietnamese city of Haiphong, killing 6000 people. In response, India's leader Sarat Chandra Bose had gathered a volunteer

force, named 'Vietnam Brigade', to dispatch to Indo-China to fight the French. The brigade was stalled as Nehru had refused to provide it transport or any finance.[61]

Nehru rose to deny the allegation that India had provided refuelling facilities for military planes, clarifying that it was only for hospital planes. Furthermore, he informed the Conference that his government had withdrawn all Indian forces deployed in Indonesia. But he refused to provide material help to ongoing independence movements, arguing that India's support to other freedom movements could only be moral. Any alternative to moral support in Vietnam, he argued, was akin to declaring a war on France. Given the complexity of the conflict, he counselled working towards narrowing the area of conflict, rather than enlarging it.[62]

Not many were enthused by Nehru's moralising. By making a sharp distinction between the moral and the material, Nehru seemed to move away from the novelty of his own foreign policy assertions in the past. In 1936, as the president of the Indian National Congress, Nehru had commissioned – and written a long preface to – a pamphlet written by the secretary of Congress's Foreign Department, Ram Manohar Lohia. The pamphlet reflected on the necessity and nature of India's support in a future war involving major powers. While accepting that one side could be morally more virtuous than others and thus worthy of India's help, both Nehru and Lohia ruled out any form of military support. Lohia reasoned that military support strengthened governments, not people; and the governments eventually used such weapons against their own people.[63] Nehru acknowledged that military help might be necessary at times, but this option involved becoming a party to the war and thus the 'remedy may be as bad as the disease'.[64] However, both agreed that there were different, and more ingenious, ways to help the morally superior party in the war. Economic sanctions, for instance, they argued in the pamphlet, was an appropriate punitive action. Indeed, the Indian National Congress often used economic boycott as a political strategy internally (in the non-cooperation movement) and had also advocated it against Japan after the Manchurian invasion. Nehru wrote that economic sanctions were 'powerful and on the whole peaceful; though their effect might not be immediate, it is far reaching. It is quite possible to control the aggressor by economic sanctions alone'.[65] Later, some months before the formation of Nehru's cabinet in 1946, India became the first country to impose economic sanctions on South Africa – a policy Nehru's government endorsed.

At the Conference, the Vietnamese delegates had neither asked for imposing economic sanctions, nor had they directly appealed for military support. They requested support at the United Nations and others suggested creating a neutrality bloc, measures which would have signalled a more committed intent than just the moral support. Nehru refused to even acknowledge these requests which, as Evelyn Colbert has pointed out, contrasts sharply with Nehru's ongoing and subsequent policy with regard to Indonesia. India used its diplomatic weight at international platforms to campaign for the Dutch exit from Indonesia. Nehru's cold reception of Vietnam vis-à-vis Indonesia, Colbert avers, was largely because the Indian government expected to enter into negotiations with the French over its enclaves in India. Furthermore, France was a veto-wielding power at the UN (and hence consequential for India's position of Kashmir) while the Netherlands was not.[66] Even members of the Indian delegation were puzzled by Nehru's stance on Vietnam. The Indian scientist V.K.R.V. Rao criticised Nehru's binary between moral and material help and pointed

out that there were various methods to help fellow Asian countries short of a declaration of war.[67]

Nehru's dogmatic insistence on nothing but moral support was irksome to many. At one point, later in the discussions, when a Philippine delegate proposed 'a policy of peaceful resistance' with regard to Burma, Daw Saw Inn, a Burmese delegate, was irritated and replied that, 'the Burmese are a nation of fighters' and the Gandhian peaceful resistance was totally inappropriate to her country.[68] J.A. Thivy, the Malayan delegate who had proposed 'neutrality bloc', argued that the bloc was a positive concept which could be used to 'immobilise' the colonial powers, i.e. prevent any kind of assistance – workforce, economic resources and military bases – to colonial powers in suppressing freedom movements in Asia as well in a war among themselves.[69]

The sharp exchanges on the question of forming a bloc and creating a tangible support mechanism were indicative of the strong political differences among Asian countries about how they envisioned Asia's future. Admittedly, the aversion towards military intervention into the affairs of others was an important normative concern, deeply embedded in concerns about postcolonial nations replicating their colonial predecessors. Nehru's assertion, first, about Asian Federation as only a precursor to a World Federation, and, later, a refusal to concede anything but a moral transgression on sovereignty alerts us to the complicated imaginings on sovereignty. For Nehru, transcending sovereignty could only be a moral act in the beginning. Until enough momentum was created through generation of solidarities, sovereignty could not be sidestepped even in the support of other anti-colonial movements. This was novel indeed, but his refusal to go beyond the material/moral binary also stifled any progressive move towards reimagining sovereignty.

Intra-Asian imperialism, race and gender

Although European colonialism globalised the political idea of state sovereignty and its ritualistic celebration of borders and boundaries, its economic function was buttressed through an absolutely opposite practice, labour migration. Consequently, it created a large Indian and Chinese diaspora who had little political, economic or social rights in their adopted countries vis-a-vis the European populations. However, they also grew up to be economically more prosperous than indigenous populations in many countries, which created further cleavages between the Indian and local populations. Hence, intra-Asian colonialism, racial ill-treatment and diaspora citizenship were all imbricated in a web of relationships with unclear hierarchies. So, in the Conference, while fears were expressed about the impending Indian and Chinese imperialism, Indians and Chinese communities in these countries complained of racial ill-treatment and retraction of political rights.

As Itty Abraham has noted, both Indian and Chinese representatives were faced with stringent criticisms of their diaspora from their neighbours.[70] The Southeast Asian representatives alleged that these diasporic communities did not have their 'bodies and minds' in their adopted countries,[71] were 'narrow minded' and 'refused to assimilate' with the local societies.[72] Malaya, Burma, Indonesia and Ceylon drew particular attention towards the economically and demographically exploitative nature of the Indian and Chinese communities in the region.[73] To this, both the Indians and the Chinese delegates responded differently. While the Indians were more forthright about their 'indifference to the

condition of overseas Indians' and, indeed, implied that their 'right to return' be taken away, the Chinese were ambivalent about cutting ties with their overseas population.[74]

Abraham sees the Indian 'indifference' as a 'complete reversal of long-standing policy' by 'the Indian Congress Party, for their overseas compatriots.'[75] Indeed, he avers this as an instance of India (and China) further entrenching themselves into the international system of state sovereignty and a denial of the pre-independence promise of the Congress. My reading is different.

Three months before the Conference, the interim Indian government had secured a hard-fought victory over South Africa at the United Nations General Assembly on the question of racial discrimination against Indians in that country.[76] Indeed, two members of the South African Indian community – Yusuf Dadoo and Monty Naicker – were in attendance at the ARC. The South African Indian community was in the middle of a passive resistance movement against the Ghetto Act of Jan Smuts' government in South Africa. From early 1900s, South Africa had pushed for the return of Indians in South Africa. In 1927 and 1932, two agreements were signed between the two governments, advocating 'voluntary repatriation'. In fact, schemes of Indian repatriation were often advanced by colonial governments from West Indies to Australia. The Indian government and the Indian National Congress had consistently opposed these schemes, and instead asserted the rights of Indians in these colonies to be granted citizenship rights as members of the British empire. With their eye on the white settler nations, acknowledging the 'right of return' was a dangerous path to tread, both for the Indian government as well as the Indian diasporic populations for they could be forcibly returned. At the Conference, one delegate had even enquired about the possibility of settling the surplus populations of India and China in the Soviet Union.[77] Two years later, the South African Prime Minister Daniel Francois Malan even suggested to Nehru that in a one-time arrangement like the India-Pakistan partition, India take back 250,000 Indians from South Africa.[78]

Aligned to this were also concerns, amply expressed in the Conference by both Southeast Asians and Indians that many Indians tended to be fence-sitters on colonialism in their countries of residence. The Southeast Asian delegates – Ceylon, Burma, and Malaya – asked that the Indian and Chinese governments make laws that called upon these residents to make the critical choice of either becoming citizens of their adopted countries and gain political rights, or retain their Indian or Chinese allegiance without political rights.[79]

The Indian delegation took the position that each state should have the right to determine the future constitution of its nationhood. But it also argued that 'racial discrimination' of any form towards national groups in other countries could not be sanctioned through any laws. Interestingly, the Australian observers in the Conference chose to selectively report only on the first part, implying that the Conference participants had endorsed the White Australia policy of restrictive immigration by acknowledging each country's right to decide on its population. But they conveniently ignored the second part, i.e. that all countries must frame anti-racial laws.[80]

Indeed, the opinions on the race issue were very strong to the extent that many delegates were keen on the Conference adopting a formal resolution. When the organisers reminded the delegates that they could not formally endorse any resolutions, Leilamani Naidu, one of the Indian delegates, argued that the Conference was the only existing organ of Asian opinion and without any concrete resolutions it was ineffectual. Vijaya

Lakshmi Pandit asked what was the point of talking loudly on race at the United Nations when an Asian Conference could not even suggest measures to their own governments.[81] In any case, although no resolution was passed, there was a strong agreement on both issues: Indian and Chinese communities were expected to formally declare their allegiance to their adopted countries, while their hosts accepted the principle of non-racial discrimination in their migration policies.[82]

The insistence on non-racialism, however, should also not be taken uncritically, especially if one considers India's own ambivalent position towards Africans. In inter-war international diplomacy, Indian diplomats often made a nuanced argument about race and civilisation. Their argument ran that while racial distinctions were unnatural and discriminatory, societies differed on the scale of civilisation. Hence, differential treatment on the basis of civilisational advancement was accepted, while racial discrimination was not. While Asian civilisations were seen to be at par with the West, Africans were seen to be further down the civilisation scale. Consequently, Indians were satisfied as long as Africans were discriminated against on the basis of civilisation, not race.[83] Even, Nehru, otherwise liberal and attentive to racial discrimination, could not hide his own 'civilisational' bias against Africans.[84]

Excited by the news that India was organising a conference of colonised nations, six African leaders from Kenya had written to Nehru asking for African representation at the Conference.[85] In his reply, while explaining that the Conference was limited to Asian countries, Nehru invited observers from Kenya. He accepted another request they had made: he announced that India will offer scholarships to Africans to study in India. His rationale for these scholarships however was, as he revealed to Shafa'at Ahmad Khan, former Indian High Commissioner to South Africa, that 'this will indicate to Africa and to the world how much interested we are in *the advance and progress of backward peoples*.'[86] This new 'brown man's burden' was not only limited towards Africans. Similar views were also shared by the Conference delegates on the tribal populations of India, Indonesia and Burma. A Conference report notes that 'the aboriginals must be able to develop on their own culture so that in the future they could themselves chose between their tribal style of life and the civilisation of materially more advanced populations.'[87]

Importantly, the Conference discussed women's movements as an important part of the broader Asian movement and not as a separate issue meant for women's conferences.[88] Patriarchy was seen in conjunction with colonialism and war, and emphasis was placed on women's emancipation being linked to the end of imperialism as well as of war-making.[89] Indeed, women were identified as the main harbingers of change in world politics. Women delegates also repeatedly called out the patriarchal mind-set of their own fellow male delegates and in no uncertain terms reminded them that 'Woman's cause is man's, they rise and fall together'.[90]

Development as decolonisation

In noting the continuities of colonialism in the postcolonial world, Dipesh Chakrabarty points to the 'developmentalist side of decolonisation whereby anti-colonial thinkers came to accept different versions of modernisation theory that in turn made the West into a model for everyone to follow'.[91] The will to catch up with the West on the linear scale of development was indeed strong, for Nehru once said 'What Europe did in a

hundred or a hundred and fifty years, we must do in ten or fifteen years'.[92] In Asia, barring India (and Japan), no other country had any industrial base to speak of. Hence, anxieties about securing the desired temporal leaps of modernisation were palpable. So, while over a hundred people in attendance for the Round Table on 'Economy and Development' failed to reach consensus on a chairperson,[93] there was complete agreement on development as salvation for the Third World. Indeed, even notional inflections to alternative ideas, such as Gandhi's stance on modernity and industrialisation, were discarded straight away.[94]

In this development anxiety, the 'First World' served as a desire, but the 'Second World' provided the model.[95] Soviet Union had, after all, already made that temporal leap that the Third World needed. Soviet planned economy served as template for planning and rapid industrialisation as well as strong state intervention in welfare mechanisms. Sharp differences however emerged once again on whether a stronger Asian response was required. Bandaranaike proposed the formation of an Asian, or at least Southeast Asian, economic bloc, by which these countries would trade predominantly with each other. Seeing strong shades of isolationism in this, V.K. Krishna Menon protested. He argued that Asia could not industrialise without the co-operation of the West and the notion of an Asian economic bloc was anachronistic.[96] While Menon held strong views against trade protectionism, he turned sharply to the left when it came to the role of foreign capital. Earlier in these discussions, an Indian industrialist, Homi Mody, had advised caution against crippling the domestic private industry and argued for continuing with foreign capital.[97] Krishna Menon argued that the receiving country should have the right to default on such loans if economic hardships followed out of any political and economic conditionalities of the lender.[98]

In modernisation theory, as scholars have argued, economics works as a rationality of ordering and progress, while culture provides the scale of difference.[99] Much of the anti-colonial response to modernisation invariably followed the same template: economics provided the rationale for imitation of the West, albeit the desire was to outpace the West, but culture provided the difference, or indeed the mask of originality to imitation. The reason why Japan was,[100] and remains,[101] the model of what Mignolo calls 'de-westernisation',[102] is precisely this. Japan outpaced the West to become Westernised, but also retained its own culture and difference to become something more.

Hence, culture emerged as the dominant site of the politics of difference. 'Asian culture', it was argued, stood in stark contrast to the western materialist spirit which caused 'suicidal conflicts of modern age'. Consequently, it was necessary to 're-write history on rational and human lines, to link politics with morality, to subordinate the idea of nationalism to the concept of human brotherhood and to develop an active appreciation for the cultures, the religions and the attitudes of other people'. 'All forms of narrowness … were the negation of the basic concept of Asian culture'.[103] The imagination of Asia as a cultural space which stood in stark contrast to the materialism and Manicheanism of western culture was not a novel idea, of course. But the proposals to codify and institutionalise it through national history writing and the fashioning of an inter-Asian institutional architecture indicated an important move in this direction.

Nehru had proposed a central Asian Institute in his opening speech. An inventory of tasks, including translation of Asian classics, preserving historical monuments, increasing communication between the various countries, conducting comparative research on

Asian countries and facilitating inter-Asian intellectual exchanges, were identified. A curious but controversial proposal was the idea of developing an Asian language.[104] Alfred Bonne, the Jewish delegate and professor of psychology, suggested developing a new language on the model of Esperanto, which should express innately Asian values; primary among them was the love for humanity. This fusion of language as science (Esperanto) and language as values irked some. Wen Yuan Yang, a Chinese delegate, commented sarcastically that Japanese schools had taught *Esperanto* before the war but there was little proof of such sentiments for humanity flourishing there.[105] Leilamani Naidu added that language was a constructed medium of exchange and did not have innate properties of its own.[106] In the end convenience triumphed over imagination, as a Georgian delegate who did not speak English, pitched in favour of using English as the common language until an Asian language was developed.[107] Interestingly, while the role of language in construction of national identities in Asia is often highlighted,[108] the need for a pan-Asian language was soon lost in the din of nationhood. It is unlikely that a proposal was ever taken up again in another Asian gathering, certainly not in Bandung.

What came of it?

The closing plenary of the Conference was addressed by, among others, Mahatma Gandhi and the prime minister of Indonesia, Sutan Sjahrir (who was flown in a chartered plane by Nehru).[109] Gandhi's appearance, greeted with a homage of silence at the urging of Sarojini Naidu, was contrasted by Naidu's description of Sjahrir as an 'atom bomb'. Among the many messages received, mostly from Asian individuals, organisations and political outfits, was a call for colour solidarity from the National Council in Nigeria.[110] Importantly, the plenary decided to convene the next meeting of the Conference in two years' time in China. A permanent organisation, named the Asian Relations Organisation (ARO), was also launched. Jawaharlal Nehru was named its president and B. Shiva Rao and Han Lih-wu (China), its general secretaries by a provisional council of 30 members, one from each country. The organisation was to devote itself to 'the study of Asian and international affairs' and like the IPR it would comprise of the National Councils which would have no party or political affiliations. Nor were the Organisation or the National Councils allowed to participate in political propaganda. The responsibility for convening the next ARC was placed on the Organisation and the Council could also convene special or regional conferences for special purposes in the meantime.[111]

There is a considerable debate about what this new Organisation was meant to do. G.H. Jansen, journalist and former Indian diplomat, argued that ARO was a compromise between those who wanted a permanent official organisation and those, like Nationalist China and the Philippines, who were opposed to this on the ground that the organisation included many countries that were not fully independent and hence did not represent their states.[112] Western observers who reported on the Conference, almost unequivocally, wrote that the Organisation became a tussle for Asian leadership between India and China. However, one report also notes that there was little agreement even within the Indian delegation about whether the 'nascent institute's charter should be vague or clear cut, the objectives purely cultural or partly political, the framework loosely or tightly knit, the membership by groups or by national units'.[113] Pre-Conference discussions among Indian delegation members also suggest that all that India proposed was an unofficial

body modelled on the IPR, beyond that there was little by way of agreement.[114] Nehru himself was unsure and had asked Krishna Menon to draft a note which went 'a little further' than the IPR.[115] An unintended effect of this refusal to purposely look towards a more concrete political foundation was the coming together of the Southeast Asian countries to create a more viable Southeast Asian organisation. Indeed, immediately after the Conference, a number of Southeast Asian delegates stopped over in Rangoon at the invitation of General Aung San to work towards such an organisation.[116]

The ARO, however, was short-lived. Although six national councils were founded, the ARO secretariat was scarcely able to get responses from them. Meanwhile, the prospects for the next conference in Nanking (China) in April 1949 became considerably dim by the middle of 1948, as the civil war in China peaked. Instead, the Philippine government offered to provide the alternative venue.[117] Eventually when the conference did take place in Baguio (the Philippines) in May 1950, participation was limited to India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Thailand, New Zealand, Australia and the Philippines. But its mandate also had changed considerably from the original idea of the Asian conferences. This Conference hoped to create a permanent Asian Regional Organisation which Nehru believed was an effort to create an anti-communist organisation in the region. He counselled his delegation to stay away from such efforts.[118] The Indian delegation accordingly shot down a proposal for military cooperation that the Philippines and Australia were keen to pass.[119] The ARO, with nothing much to do, was quietly closed down in 1955.[120]

Coda

How must one evaluate this Conference, or let us ask the more generic question – how must one read any international conference? We can analyse the words we read, but how do we judge the words that were not said, the sentiments that were not expressed, or strategies that remained hidden? On the inanities – the arrangements, the organisation – one could still have a relatively objective view. P.N.S. Mansergh, the observer from Chatham House, and Terence Shone, expecting to be disappointed, commented that the arrangements were 'surprisingly good'. Although Mansergh added that '[l]ike a dog walking upon its hind legs the remarkable thing was not that they do not do it well but that they do it at all'.[121] On more substantial issues however, the language of mainstream international relations allows us only the view of the sceptic: a contest for power in which India and China are the main actors and all others the supporting cast. And this is exactly how the British and other observers read it.

Four days before the Conference, the Secretary of State for India had written to the Viceroy warning about the 'dangerous possibilities' of 'anti-imperialists and large Soviet delegation … villify[ing] us' and further 'pave the way for establishment of a permanent secretariat of ostensibly innocent form but containing Soviet element planted for political purposes'.[122] The British establishment saw the Conference as 'Nehru's baby'[123] and his almost personal desire to be the leader of Asia and replace Britain as the dominant power in Asia.[124]

In his report, Shone wrote that India looked at the Conference to claim a leadership role in the continent, while another Chatham House observer, W.W. Russell, quoted a 'non-Asian observer' that 'Nehru was anxious to recapture his place on the world stage which he may have lost through his non-cooperative war effort'.[125] Nehru's active participation

in plenaries and many discussion groups may have convinced many Asians of his commitment to Asian solidarity, but Russell was convinced that '[Nehru's] personal vanity has had full play … to the detriment of the day-to-day administration of India'.[126] Mansergh felt that 'this Kashmiri aristocrat might be destined to fill the role of Kerensky in an Indian revolution [who] gave the impression of being a man of many gifts [but] lacked the single-minded purpose which carry leaders through a revolutionary epoch'.[127] Mansergh and Russell also noted Nehru's failure to achieve a leadership role in the Conference, due in part to the sterling performance of the Chinese delegates.[128]

Interestingly while arguing that Nehru and India were seeking a leadership role, these reports take a sudden u-turn to explain why no Asian bloc was formed. Russell wrote that the Indian delegation 'had succeeded in assuring the world that India had no political aim in forming an Asian bloc' and Mansergh blamed it on the 'lack of realism'.[129] The British imagination was, to use Russell's framing, at 'full play' when another British official posted in Malaya noted a year later, on the formation of the Malayan National Council of ARO, that ARO was a means of 'organising Indians throughout as a fifth column, from which to carry on anti-British and anti-imperialist propaganda with the aim of ultimately supplanting themselves in the area'.[130] Indeed, one can find one reference after another to how Western governments thought that India's rhetoric of anti-colonial solidarity was ultimately aimed at gathering new colonies for itself.[131] These also spilled into academic efforts. A 1946 book, published in London, had warned of India's ambition to secure a 'Brown Empire'. The author Ersyne Wyse warned:

> There is lustful envy of virility in India, virility of head and arm as well as loins. The strength of Britain, America and Russia is assumed to arise solely from the infallible tonic of industrial and military might. As the world's most ardent absorber of aphrodisiacs, India sees in a strong dose of the same potion just what it needs to accomplish its imperious desires in Asia.[132]

What also irked Western observers was that while India's imperial ambitions were obvious, the country's refusal to acknowledge Britain's imperial tutelage was scandalous. Mansergh lamented that 'not one compliment was paid to Britain or to the British Commonwealth' for its contribution to the development of colonies. Although he confessed that criticisms of imperialism were less than expected, he felt that the Indian delegates believed that British represented 'a retreating imperialism' and therefore 'delegates could afford to be tolerant and kind'. This 'provocative tolerance' was, he wrote, 'somewhat patronising' towards the British.[133] The observers of the IPR, Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff reported that the round table reports were 'pedestrian' partly because of the 'refusal to utilize the fruits of western experience'.[134]

The British delegates also gave prominent place in their reports to the columns of *Dawn*, the mouthpiece of the Muslim League, which had boycotted the Conference, calling it an 'Asian fraud'. Critiquing Nehru and his Hindu parochialism, the *Dawn* wrote that 'this ambitious Hindu leader' had 'thrust himself upon the Asian nations as their leader and through his attainment of that prestige and eminence to further the designs of Indian Hinduism'.[135] In another article, the *Dawn* saw the 'spirit of Hindu economic ambition' which was planning 'a great economic infiltration into these Asiatic countries'.[136] The Congress aligned press, in return, was critical of the Muslim League. *The National Herald* published a cartoon that showed people from all over Asia walking into the Conference venue, ignoring a Muslim street showman who had been trying hard to get their attention

for his 'Pakistani sideshow'. While reporting this, Terence Shone argued that this was an effort by the 'Hindu media' to soft-pedal India's internal problems.[137] An Australian observer wondered if the ARC was 'a stage play to divert attention from real issues'.[138]

India's internal problems were also highlighted by the two IPR delegates. They wrote that: 'those Indians who were running the organisation succeeded in side-tracking discussion on the problem of Indian minorities overseas, presumably on the ground that it might lead to undesirable publicity for India's own communal strife which they definitely wanted to soft-pedal, or might serve as a basis for discussions of the Chinese position in Southeast Asia.'.[139] As we have noted that the issue of Indians and Chinese overseas was discussed at length, so there is little truth to their assertion that the issue was side-tracked. Further, the Indian organisers refused to pass a resolution on this not because they were concerned about internal strife in India, but because they were following the template of Thompson and Adloff's own organisation. The IPR observers also conveniently ignore to report that the demand for a resolution also came primarily from Indian delegates. However, most importantly, they connect India's internal problems to the problems of India's minorities abroad, disingenuously manufacturing a connection where there existed none. Their view on the formation of the Asian Relations Organisation was crudely racist when they noted: 'It is an Oriental practice to go politely along with a power one has to propitiate and then to practice obstruction through inaction.'[140]

As one reads these reports, there is clearly an attempt to find a concealed motive behind the Conference. Little acknowledged is the fact that the Conference was not meant to herald a Cold War-style Asian bloc or impose Indian imperialism. It was only, as Nehru wrote to the Gaekwar of Baroda, 'an exhibition of fellow-feeling among the peoples of Asia'.[141] If at all, an internal critique of the Indian delegation was that 'our people did too much of talking and at times talked at cross purposes', but there was a satisfaction that 'whatever the defect our delegation may have had, they do not detract from the grandeur of the conception of an all-Asian conference and the remarkably harmony that prevailed… .'[142]

Aware of both its limitations and promise, Nehru wrote his own assessment to the Indian diplomat K.P.S. Menon:

> The Conference has left an abiding impression in India and made large numbers of people Asia conscious. It has broadened their horizon and made them feel that India is rapidly developing into a country which influences Asian and world politics. Many of our politicians, immersed in national affairs, have been forced to come out of their grooves of thought. … From a strictly practical point of view, the Conference did not achieve very much or, it is more correct to say, it has not achieved much so far. But there is an almost unanimous consensus of opinion that it has achieved much in some other way which is not easy to measure.[143]

Nehru's continued insistence that there can be no Asian bloc is usually read in these reports as his realisation that China would emerge as the natural leader of such bloc. But, if such was the case, why hold an Asian conference at all and give a 'full play' to the Chinese? Bloc politics had been the dominant theme in Europe's violent engagement with Asia since the nineteenth century; its reiteration in Asia was a mimicry of a model strongly despised by Nehru. And this was evident all throughout the years Nehru was at the helm of governance in India. Many in the Conference did not agree with him, as we have seen above, but those disagreements were driven more by the need to defeat colonialism altogether, rather than the desire to dominate the world. Indeed, Gandhi used the

platform to indict any future India that engaged in such practices. When responding to a query about the possibility of war with Europe, he said: 'I would feel extremely sorry if India having won her independence, essentially – rather predominantly – through non-violent means was going to use that for the suppression of other parts of the world – leave alone Asiatic powers – but even European powers, although the European races have been exploiting the different races inhabiting this vast continent until now. I will be very sorry.'[144]

While most Western reports imagined a stark rivalry between India and China in the Conference, the Chinese delegates themselves saw none. Indeed, a report submitted to the China's Institute of Pacific Relations lauded Nehru, Naidu and Gandhi for exemplifying 'the virility and intellectual qualities of Indian leadership', and highlighted the prejudices of Western observers:

> One American observer [Thompson] told me that she had expected to find Sino-Indian rivalry for leadership at the Conference but that she had not found it to be so; that she felt other delegations respected Soviet and Chinese delegations in particular; and that Nehru is the leader of Asia in the minds of the people of Southeast Asia because of his policies and internationalism.[145]

The language of the Conference was one of Asian solidarity, but this was not unadulterated romanticism either. Southeast Asian countries were very critical of every form of imperialism, whether it came from Europeans or non-Europeans. Indian and Chinese communities were warned about becoming the new colonisers and both India and China were quick to realise this. Checks against these criticisms were incorporated into Nehru's diaspora policy which mandated Indians abroad to identify with and positively contribute to the development of their adopted countries. To be sure, some contentious issues were deliberately not discussed. The Conference had decided to not discuss bilateral contentious issues, so when Tibetan delegates were invited, they expected to discuss border dispute which Nehru advised them not to. The large 15 $\times$ 15 ft Asian map that served as the background of the stage during the opening and closing plenaries showed the Chinese boundary of Tibet marked in white paint so that it was scarcely visible from a distance.[146] Likewise, the jibes exchanged between Jewish and Arab delegations and Ho Chi Minh's representatives and the French Vietnam delegation were indicative of the dual nature of sovereignty: sovereignty was both emancipation as well as entrapment. After the Conference when the Jewish National Council applied for affiliation, Nehru, who was now the Prime Minister of independent India, asked it to be filed and no response was sent.[147] As Appadorai acknowledges, this reflected the dual position that Nehru was in – but it also highlights how the rituals of statehood and sovereignty killed the promise of the Conference.

Is there then a way to read the Conference without prejudice? May be not. But the text and texture of the Conference needs to be situated in the liminal moment between the 'internationalist' and 'inter-national' eras. The Conference simultaneously enunciates and betrays these moments. This ambivalence is neither deliberate, not contrived. But, it is ingrained in the moment. The *Dawn* had called the Conference 'An Asian Fraud'. But, Gunnar Myrdal's 'Asian Drama' is perhaps a more appropriate metaphor for this conference. One of the definitions according to the Oxford Dictionary online is: 'an exciting, emotional, or unexpected event or circumstance'. The ARC was just that; but in a theatrical sense, the

Conference also served as a stage for the performance of a more textured, complex and variegated vision of world politics. A Conference to which both Arabs and Jews were invited, where Tibetans and Chinese shared a platform, and North and South Vietnam had representations would become hard to imagine soon after. The Conference was critical of the Indian and Chinese imperialism, just as much it was critical of the West. It saw rigorous debates on the ideas and manifestations of Asianism, did not make *a priori* assumptions about who would be included and who excluded, and assumed both labour and gender equality as central to any new internationalist vision. By the time Bandung came along, this internal reflectivist and dialogic spirit of Delhi 1947 had been considerably tempered in favour of a forceful anti-Western position, which rested on an uncritical acceptance of state sovereignty. In the broader context of international history, a richer engagement with such crucial moments allows us to reflect more critically on the life and death of possibilities in international politics.

Notes

1. Sarojini Naidu quoted in Asian Relations Organisation (henceforth, ARO), Asian Relations: Being a report of the proceedings and documentation of the First Asian Relations Conference, March–April 1947 (New Delhi, 1948), 254.
2. Terence Shone to Secretary of the Cabinet, 25 April 1947, B[ritish] L[ibrary], I[ndia] O[ffice] R[ecords] and P[rivate] P[apers], Despatch No. 36, File 20/1 1947, IOR/L/I/1/152, p. 4.
3. Ibid., emphasis mine.
4. It is not clear whether Shone used the term 'third world' on his own or reproduced its usage from the Conference. His phrasing and the deliberate use of quote marks for third world strongly suggest the latter. This is surely the first known use of the term to signify a group of countries that remained outside of the two power blocs. Another French writer, Claude Bourdet, also seems to have used the term in 1949. See, Leslie Wolf-Phillips, 'Why "Third World"?: Origin, Definition and Usage', *Third World Quarterly*, ix (1987), 1311–27; Christoph Kalter, 'From global to local and back: the "Third World" Concept and the New Radical Left in France', *Journal of Global History*, xii (2017), 115–36.
5. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Foreign Policy – Selected Speeches 1946-1961 (Delhi: Publications, Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961), 1–3.
6. Hee-Yeon Cho and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 'Bandung/ Third Worldism', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vi (2005), 473–5.
7. Laura Bier 'Feminism, Solidarity and Identity in the Age of Bandung: Third World Women in the Egyptian Women's Press' in Christopher Lee (ed.), *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Aftrelives* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 144.
8. See, George M. Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference, Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press,1956); Michael Leifer, Dilemmas of Statehood in Southeast Asia (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1972), 136-7; Robert Vitalis, 'The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Ban-doong)', *Humanity*, iv (2013), 261–88; Quynh N. Pham and Robbie Shilliam (eds.) *Meanings of Bandung: Postcolonial Orders and Decolonial Visions* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016); Brain R. Roberts and Keith Foulcher, 'Introduction', in *Indonesian Notebook: A sourcebook on Richard Wright and the Bandung Conference* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 1–31; Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture', in Lee, Making a World After Empire, 45–68.
9. Roberts and Foulcher, 'Introduction', 3.
10. Julian Go 'Modeling States and Sovereignty: Postcolonial Constitutions in Asia and Africa' in Lee, Making a World After Empire, 107.
11. Vitalis, 'The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah'.
12. Pham and Shilliam, 'Introduction', 4, emphasis in original.

13. N. Kumarakulasingam, 'De-Islanding', in Pham and Shilliam, Meanings of Bandung, 52.
14. Roberts and Foulcher, 'Introduction'.
15. Walter Mignolo calls Bandung 'the equivalent to the French revolution for the history of Europe' (avoidably asserting the need to validate Bandung against an event in Europe). See, http://www.rowmaninternational.com/books/meanings-of-bandung, accessed 3 March 2017.
16. Lee Making a World After Empire, 9.
17. Only six African countries were present at Bandung: Ethiopia, Egypt, Gold Coast (Ghana), Liberia, Libya and Sudan.
18. In studies of international order, the 'Bandung divide' makes all other pre- and post- efforts at 'third world solidarity' historically appended in their relevance to the 'Bandung moment'. See, for instance, the recent special issue of the Australian Journal of International Affairs. 'Beyond Bandung: The 1955 Asian-African Conference and its Legacies for International Order', Australian Journal of International Affairs, lxx.
19. For an illustrative sample, See, Itty Abraham, 'From Bandung to NAM: Non-Alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947–65', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, xlvi (2008), 195–219; Vijay Prashad, The Darker Nations: A people's history of the Third World (New York: New Press, 2007); G.H. Jansen, *Non-Alignment and the Afro-Asian States* (Prager: New York, 1966).
20. See, for instance, Anthony Reid, 'Bandung Conference in Southeast Asian Regionalism' in See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (eds.) *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2008), 22.
21. Itty Abraham, 'Bandung and State Formation in Post-Colonial Asia', in Seng Tan and Acharya, Bandung Revisited, 48–67.
22. Sinderpal Singh, 'From Delhi to Bandung: Nehru, "Indian-ness" and "Pan-Asian-ness"', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, xxxiv (2011), 51–64
23. Carolien Stolte, '"The Asiatic hour": New perspectives on the Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi, 1947' in N. Miskovic, H. Fischer-Tine, N. Boskovska (eds.) *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi - Bandung – Belgrade* (London: Routledge, 2014), 57–75.
24. Sisir Gupta, *India and regional integration in Asia* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), 37.
25. Werner Levi, *Free India in Asia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952).
26. W.E.B. Du Bois, 'The freeing of India', *Crisis*, liv (1947), 301–4.
27. See, Ali Raza, Franziska Roy and Benjamin Zachariah, 'Introduction: The Internationalism of the Moment: South Asia and the Contours of the Interwar World' in idem. (eds), The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views, 1917–39, (New Delhi: Sage, 2014). Historians have similarly pointed to the chasm between pre-independence 'Federal Utopias' and the post-independence reality of nation-state in French African colonies, and debated the feasibility of alternative political visions. See, Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Richard Drayton, 'Federal Utopias and the Realities of Imperial Power', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, xxxvii (2017), 401–6. For a similar discussion on South Asia, see, Sankaran Krishna, 'Oppressive Pasts and Desired Futures: Reimagining India', *Futures*, xxiv (1992), 858–66.
28. Itty Abraham, *How India Became Territorial: Foreign Policy, Diaspora, Geopolitics* (Stanford University Press 2014).
29. Werner Levi, Free India in Asia.
30. Abraham, 'Bandung and State Formation'.
31. P.N.S. Mansergh, 'Report: The Inter-Asian Relations Conference', [Chatham House Archives, London], F.No. 3/6/INDa 1-2, p. 10; J.A. McCallum, 'Personalities at the Asian Relations Conference', *The Australian Quarterly*, xix (1947), 44.
32. ARO, Asian Relations, p. 1
33. See Sven Saaler and Victor J. Koschmann (eds.), *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, Regionalism, and Borders* (London: Routledge, 2007); Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Eri Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan's War 1931–1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Christopher W. A. Szpilman, 'The Dream of One Asia: Ôkawa

Shûmei and Japanese Pan-Asianism,' in Harald Füss, ed., *The Japanese Empire in East Asia and Its Post War Legacy* (München: Iudicium, 1997), 49–63.

34. Carolien Stolte and H. Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905-1940)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, liv (2012), 65–92. Aga Khan had also advanced the idea of East Africa being colonised by India in the 1910s.
35. Globereuter Eastern, 20 January 1945.
36. B. Shiva Rao Papers, II Instalment, Nehru Memorial and Museum Library, Delhi, f. 98.
37. Vineet Thakur and Alexander Davis, 'A Communal Affair over International Affairs: The Arrival of IR in Late Colonial India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, xl (2016), 689–705.
38. ARO, Asian Relations, pp. 3–8.
39. 'News Item: Inter-Asian Relations Conference', BL, IORPP, F. 20/1 1947, IOR/L/I/1/152.
40. ARO, Asian Relations Conference, p. 8.
41. See correspondence in, 'Proposed holding of an Inter-Asian Conference by the Indian Council for World Affairs in Delhi', [National Archives of India, New Delhi], E[xternal] A[ffiars] D[epartment], F.N. 14 (19) – CC/46, Vol. II.
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47. Mansergh, 'Report', 3.
48. ARO, Asian Relations, 12.
49. ARO, Asian Relations, 24.
50. ARO, Asian Relations, 24.
51. Wendell Willkie, *One World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943).
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55. Nehru, Toward Freedom, 365.
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57. Gupta, India and Regional Integration, 35.
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59. Mansergh, 'Report', 8; ARO, Asian Relations, 71–2.
60. ARO, Asian Relations, 74; Mansergh, 'Report, 8.
61. Goscha, Thailand, 249–50.
62. ARO, Asian Relations, 77–8.
63. Ram Manohar Lohia, 'Foreign Policy of Indian National Congress and the British Labour Party' in Mastram Kapoor (ed.), Collected Works of Ram Manohar Lohia, vol. iii (New Delhi: Anamika, 2011 [1936]), 71.
64. Nehru in Lohia, 'Foreign Policy', p. 62.
65. Ibid.
66. Evelyn Colbert, 'The Road not taken: Decolonisation and Independence in Indonesia and Indochina', *Foreign Affairs*, li (1973), 619–20.
67. ARO, Asian Relations, 69.
68. ARO, Asian Relations, 85.
69. ARO, Asian Relations, 87.
70. Abraham, 'Bandung and State Formation'.
71. ARO, Asian Relations, 96.

72. ARO, Asian Relations, 93.
73. ARO, Asian Relations, 74.
74. Abraham, 'Bandung and State Formation', 57-58, ARO, Asian Relations, 95.
75. Abraham, 'Bandung and State Formation', 63.
76. On this, see Manu Bhagavan, *The Peacemakers: India and the Quest for One World* (Harper Collins, 2012).
77. Mansergh, 'Report', 7.
78. Department of Foreign Affair, 'Addendum to New bulletin 101, September 24, 1953,' SAB, BPA, vol. v, Ref. 18/10, N[ational] A[rchives] of S[outh Africa], Pretoria.
79. ARO, Asian Relations, 92.
80. See, J.A. McCallum, 'The Asian Relations Conference', p. 17; Anon, 'White Australia upheld at inter-Asian conference, Sun (Sydney), 6 April 1947, 5. For the Australian perceptions of the Conference, see, Julie Suares 'Engaging with Asia: the Chifley Government and the New Delhi Conferences of 1947 and 1949', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, lvii (2011), 495–510.
81. ARO, Asian Relations, 105.
82. ARO, Asian Relations, 98–101.
83. Vineet Thakur, 'Liberal, Liminal and Lost: India's first diplomats and the narrative of foreign policy', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xlv (2017), 232–58
84. For more on this, see Antoinette Burton, *Brown over Black: Race and the Politics of Postcolonial Citation* (Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2012).
85. They had also requested that Nehru convene a further conference of Asian and African leaders.
86. Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, second series (SJWN-II, henceforth), Vol. I, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 1984, 506. Emphasis mine.
87. ARO, Asian Relations, 101.
88. Sumita Mukherjee, 'The All-Asian Women's Conference 1931: Indian women and their leadership of a pan-Asian feminist organisation', *Women's History Review*, xxvi (2017), 363–81.
89. This is discussed at length in Stolte, 'Asiatic Hour'.
90. This was Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. ARO, Asian Relations, 233.
91. Chakrabarty, 'The legacies of Bandung', 45.
92. Quoted in Chakrabarty, 'The legacies of Bandung', 53.
93. The matter was solved over an adjournment and the Sri Lankan delegate, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike (later the prime minister of the country) was chosen. Mansergh, 'Report', 3.
94. For one of the earliest exposition of Gandhi's ideas, see Mohandas K. Gandhi, 'The future of India', International Affairs, 10, 6, 1931: 721–739. The famous Gandhi-Nehru conversation in 1945 on alternative ideas for post-independence India is reproduced in M.K. Gandhi, 'Gandhi-Nehru Letters' in Anthony J. Parel (ed.) *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 149–55.
95. On development as a discourse of salvation, see Arturo Escobar, Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
96. ARO, Asian Relations, 113; Mansergh, 'Report', 6.
97. W.W. Russell, 'Strictly Confidential: The Indian Delegation and its Contribution', 16 April 1947, CHA, File No. 3/6/INDa 1-2, 4-5.
98. Apart from Mody, the British observer W.W. Russell noted, the Indian delegation was generally 'left of centre, on this topic, favouring nationalisation of basic industries, planning on a large scale, controls; and foreign borrowing only in the last resort' (Russell, 'Strictly Confidential', 5). Also see, Shone to Cabinet Secretary, 25 April 1947, Despatch No. 37, BL, IORPP, File 20/1 1947, IOR/L/I/1/152, p. 5.
99. David L. Blaney, and Naeem Inayatullah. 'Neo-modernization? IR and the inner life of modernization theory,' *European Journal of International Relations*, viii (2002), 103–37.
100. Aydin, Anti-Westernism in Asia.
101. For instance, South African president Thabo Mbeki often invoked Japan as the neo-liberal alternative for the Global South, see http://archive.unu.edu/unupress/mbeki.html, accessed 4 March 2017.

102. See, 'Delinking, Decoloniality & Dewesternization: Interview with Walter Mignolo' at http://criticallegalthinking.com/2012/05/02/delinking-decoloniality-dewesternization-interview-with-walter-mignolo-part-ii/, accessed 4 march 2017.
103. ARO, Asian Relations, 203.
104. ARO, Asian Relations, 193–94.
105. ARO, Asian Relations, 204; Mansergh, 'Report', 7.
106. ARO, Asian Relations, 205.
107. ARO, Asian Relations, 195.
108. Alyssa Ayres, *Speaking Like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
109. Shone to Cabinet Secretary, 25 Apr.1947, BL, IORPP, Despatch 36, File 20/1 1947, IOR/L/I/1/152, p. 8.
110. ARO, Asian Relations, 260.
111. Telegram No. B289, 'Permanent Asian Relations Organisation: Establishment Decided upon at Delhi Conference, I&B Deptt.', 2 April 1947, BP, IORPP, File 20/1 1947 IOR/L/I/1/152. Also see, ARO, Asian Relations, 255–7.
112. G.H. Jansen, Non-alignment and the Afro-Asian States, 69-70; Amitav Acharya, *Whose Ideas Matter: Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2009), 75–6.
113. Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, 'Asian Unity: Force or Facade', *Far Eastern Survey*, xvi (1947): 97–9.
114. B. Shiva Rao to Tej Bahadur Sapru, 14 March 1947, BL, IORPP, The Sapru Correspondence: Letters to and from Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru (1872-1949), IOR Neg 4994.
115. SWJN-II, Vol. ii, 57.
116. Goscha, Thailand, 255.
117. The Inter-Asian Conference, etc. (Note from PN Mansergh on his meeting with A. Appadorai at Chatham House), 29 November 1948, CHA, File No. 3/6/INDa 1-2. Meanwhile, Nehru organised a Conference on Indonesia in 1949. Although, as we have noted, the ARO was constitutionally equipped to organise a special conference, Nehru chose to make it an official ministerial conference organised by the Indian government.
118. SWJN-II, xvii, 389–390.
119. Nicholas Tarling, Britain, *Southeast Asia and the Impact of the Korea War* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005), 21.
120. A. Appadorai, 'The Asian Relations Conference in Perspective', *International Studies*, xviii (1979), 283.
121. Shone to Cabinet Secretary, 25 Apr.1947, BL, IORPP, Despatch 36, File 20/1 1947, IOR/L/I/1/152, p.6; Mansergh, 'Report', 4.
122. Despatch – Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, External Department Ext. 5895/47, BL, IORPP, File 20/1 1947, IOR/L/I/1/152.
123. Wavell to Pethick Lawrence, 12 March 1947, BL, IORPP, IOR/L/PO/10/24, p. 71.
124. Russell, 'Strictly Confidential', 2.
125. Russell, 'Strictly Confidential', 2.
126. Russell, 'Strictly Confidential', 2.
127. Mansergh, 'Report', 14.
128. Mansergh also wrote an anonymous report (as was the tradition for publication in the journal Round Table). Anon, 'The inter-Asian relations conference', *The Round Table*, xxxvii (1947): 237–47.
129. Russell, 'Strictly Confidential', 2; Mansergh, ' Report', 16.
130. Foreign Office, Confidential – P.F. Grey to H.T. Bourdillon, 9 June 1948, BL, IORPP, F7558/1288/61, IOR/L/PS/12/4670. This is despite the fact that most of the internal reports from the Conference had noted that the Indians were far less anti-Britain and made fewer references to British colonialism than many other delegations.
131. Two more such examples: J H. Le Rougetel, 'Visit of Mr R G. Menzies' (1961), Correspondence respecting Commonwealth Relations: volume IV. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Southern Rhodesia, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the Irish Republic, at United Kingdom National Archives, DO 201/04, pp. 120-121; J. H. Cleveland, 'Visit

of Prime Minister Nehru – Visit of Prime Minister Nehru of India to Canada and the USA - Subjects for discussion, 1956', R219-103-1-E, p. 2, at Library and Archives Canada.
132. Erskine Wyse, Brown Empire (London: Background Books), 16.
133. Mansergh, 'Report', 13.
134. Thompson and Adloff, 'Asian Unity', 97–99.
135. Mansergh, 'Report', 4.
136. Dawn, 4 April 1947, quoted in, Final Session of Asian Conference, I&B Deptt., 3 April 1947, BL, IORPP, File 20/1 1947, IOR/L/I/1/152, p. 8.
137. Shone to Cabinet Secretary, 25 Apr.1947, BL, IORPP, Despatch 36, File 20/1 1947, IOR/L/I/1/152, p. 1
138. J.A. McCallum, 'Personalities', 44.
139. Thompson and Adloff, 'Asian Unity', 99.
140. Ibid.
141. SWJN-II, ii, 259.
142. KPS Menon to Jawaharlal Nehru, 30 June 1947, NAI, EAD, F.N. 14 (19) – CC/46, Vol. II, f. 197.
143. SWJN-II, 2, p. 523.
144. Final Session of Asian Conference, I&B Deptt., 3 April 1947, p. 8–9.
145. Daniel N. Lew, 'Report on First Asian Relations Conference', China Institute of Pacific Relations, 8 April 1947, CHA, File No. 3/6/INDa 1-2, p. 3.
146. Shone to Cabinet Secretary, 25 Apr.1947, BL, IORPP, Despatch 36, File 20/1 1947, IOR/L/I/1/152, p. 3.
147. Appadorai, 'The Asian Relations Conference in Perspective', 283.

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